

RESPONDING TO CLIMATE CHANGE: FARMERS MUST MEASURE, REVIEW AND IMPLEMENT

Dawn Meats Group head of agriculture Sarah Haire told the last of the four sustainable beef webinars, hosted by the Ulster Farmers' Union, CAFRE, Livestock and Meat Commission, AFBI, NIMEA and NBA, that the time for the beef industry to start actually verifying its sustainability credentials is now.

"The time for talking is over," she stressed. "Telling the world that our beef is produced on a sustainable basis will only get us so far down the track.

"Northern Ireland's beef industry must come forward with real data to verify the claims that it is making, where sustainability is concerned. "And that clock is ticking." Haire continued: "Climate Change is an issue that impacts across society as a whole: not just agriculture. "The upcoming COP 26 summit in Glasgow will add to further drive the narrative on these issues."

According to the Dawn Meats'

representative, the beef industry now has a great opportunity to tell its story, adding: "But the challenges facing the industry are as great, if not greater. "Sustainability and its impact on beef production is a not a new subject. Over the past 20 years the issue has raised its head from a number of perspectives.

"These include animal welfare, antibiotic usage, animal feed, GM soya and the debate, which continues regarding the merits of intensive beef management systems relative to more extensive production practises.

"But the bottom line remains that of delivering a quality product to the consumer on a consistent basis." Specifically where climate change is concerned, Haire confirmed that all of the main supermarket groups in the UK had come up with their own targets. She explained: "Government has come up with its own carbon net zero target for 2050. However, many of the supermarkets

want to reach this target within their own businesses much quicker with targets of reaching net zero by 2040.

Haire went on to point out that the Dawn Meats Group is committed to stripping the emotion out of the climate change debate and focussing entirely on the science based facts, as they are known to be at this moment in time. She continued: "We have customer specific projects. All the customers that we work with have a real commitment to agriculture. "However, these projects are generally small scale.

"But we can't get to where we need to be on our own. This is why industry collaboration is so important moving forward. "The good news is that this collaborative approach is now gaining momentum. It is very heartening to see competing supply chains coming together with the sole aim of securing a more sustainable beef sector.

"All of this dialogue is great. But action

is now needed at grass roots' level. In terms of what beef farmers must do now, Sarah Haire focussed on a number of key action points, all centred around the inter-connected principles of : measure, review and implement.

"This is not rocket science," she commented. "Where information is concerned, there is already a lot of data available to farmers. This includes traceability-related information, calving information plus a range of key performance indicators."

Where the determination of carbon footprint is concerned, Haire recommended that farmers should consider downloading one of the calculators that are currently available online and try it out. She continued: "This may not be a perfect fit for each business, nor will it meet the criteria established by government down the line. But it will provide users with a valuable starting point."

Specific action points highlighted by Haire in the context of beef farmers responding positively to the challenge of climate change include:

- the attainment of enhanced liveweight gains
- improving animal health standards
- improving maternal traits
- using sexed semen
- including clover in grass swards
- using low emission slurry equipment -
- improving grassland management standards

She said: "If we don't measure what we do, we can't manage it and we can't demonstrate it.

Haire concluded by highlighting the recent launch of the Dawn Meats Group Farm Green initiative. It is a multitude of web and social media-based initiatives taking place over the next 12 months, kicking-off with a free webinar entitled: The Importance of Farm Data. The event takes place on Tuesday, 2nd November.

BEEF STEERING GROUP TO DEVELOP GRASS FED BEEF AND CARBON FOOTPRINT CALCULATIONS OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

Plans are fast gaining momentum, which will help deliver a concerted response by the beef industry in Northern Ireland to the challenge of climate change.

At the heart of this work, which has been undertaken by members of a recently established Sustainable Beef Project Steering Group, will be the development of a scheme to verify the credentials of cattle produced in Northern Ireland in the context of the Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) application for Irish Grass Fed beef.

A separate outworking of the project will be the delivery of carbon footprint calculations for beef producers in Northern Ireland. The steering group comprises representatives from the UFU, LMC, NIMEA, DAERA, CAFRE, and AFBI. The Commission's Industry Development Manager Colin Smith addressed these matters courtesy of his presentation to the fourth beef sustainability webinar, recently hosted by a wide range of livestock sector stakeholder organisations.

He said: "The initial challenge that confronted the group was that of

determining whether Northern Ireland could meet the detailed technical specification proposed by Bord Bia within the Irish Grass Fed Beef PGI application that was submitted to the European Commission.

Image 1: LMC's Industry Development Manager



"Northern Ireland's participation within an amended geographic scope of the proposed PGI submission brought two key issues immediately into play."

Colin added: "First of all, would it be possible to design, develop and publish a Northern Ireland grass fed beef standard that would meet the

requirement of the PGI?" "And, secondly, would it be possible to design a verification scheme, again that would meet the requirements of the envisaged grass fed PGI?"

As the work progressed, it became obvious to everyone involved that, with the inclusion of a relatively small number of additional data sets, it would also be possible to establish a base system to gather information required to calculate the carbon footprint of beef enterprises in Northern Ireland.

Colin further explained: "Our plan is to deliver on both of these objectives over the next 12 months." As the LMC representative went on to confirm, Northern Ireland's APHIS system will play a very important role in the development of both the grass fed beef verification system for Northern Ireland and the beef carbon footprint calculations.

"The use of individual animal-related data held on APHIS will be critically important in the development of both projects," he explained.

"The success of both initiatives also

depends on the gathering of additional information on farm in a timely manner. And it is in this context that the farm quality assurance scheme will contribute significantly.

"Approximately 12,000 beef and lamb producers in Northern Ireland are now quality assured. "Moreover, information gathered in this way is not adding significant added cost to the industry."

According to Colin, it should be feasible to include a relatively small number of additional questions within a regular farm quality assurance inspection.

He commented: "This additional information will be central in developing a carbon footprint for the enterprise in question and determining the grass fed status for each individual animal.

The additional questions that will be asked, courtesy of a bolt-on to the farm quality assurance inspection, will reference a number of new subject areas.

Colin Smith again: "But the good news is that the amount of cross over in

terms of the information required to undertake both the carbon footprint calculation and the determination of an animal's compliance with the grass fed scheme is extremely high.

"It was for this reason that the members of the Sustainable Beef Project Steering Group decided to take these two issues forward in tandem."

He concluded: "The grass fed status of each animal will be made available to each producer by way of BovIS. Farmers will also be supplied with the outcome of the carbon footprint calculation. With the systems that we have at our disposal in Northern Ireland we have the opportunity to lead the way in tackling some of the challenges that are coming our way."

Image 2: Cattle grazing in a field



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WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS



CATTLE TRADE

NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 25/10/21	Next Week 01/11/21
Prime		
U-3	386 - 394p	386 - 394p
R-3	380 - 388p	380 - 388p
O+3	374 - 382p	374 - 382p
P+3	320 - 332p	320 - 332p
	Including bonus where applicable	
Cows		
O+3	260 - 300p	260 - 300p

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 remained steady this week ranging from 386-394p/kg for in spec U-3 grade prime cattle. In the same week in 2020, quotes for U-3 grade prime cattle were ranging from 354-360p/kg. Quotes for O+3 grade cows continued to range from 260-300p/kg. With such a range in the base quotes available producers are encouraged to shop around for the best possible deal.

Last week prime cattle throughput totalled 8,032, an increase of 468 head from the previous week. This is an increase of 614 head when compared to the corresponding week in 2020 when cattle throughput totalled 7,418 head. Meanwhile cow throughput in NI last week totalled 2,322 head, back 44 head from 2,366 cows killed during the previous week. In the corresponding week in 2020 cow throughput totalled 2,570 head.

Cattle imports for direct slaughter from ROI last week consisted of 332 prime and 136 cows with no cattle imported from GB for direct slaughter in local plants. Exports out of NI to ROI for direct slaughter last week remained at similar numbers to the previous week with one prime cattle and 95 cows. A further 12 prime cattle and 22 cows were exported from NI to GB for direct slaughter.

The NI deadweight trade for prime cattle reported a mixed performance last week. The average steer price was up 0.3p/kg to 392.2p/kg while the R3 steer price was back 0.4p/kg to 400.8p/kg. In the same week last year, the R3 steer price in NI was 367.3p/kg, 33.5p/kg behind current levels. This equates to an additional £117 on a 350kg steer carcass. The average heifer price was back 0.4p/kg to 395.1p/kg while the R3 heifer price was up 0.8p/kg to 403.2p/kg. The average young bull price last week reported a decrease of 0.5p/kg to 374.6p/kg while the R3 increased by 2.3p/kg to 388.9p/kg. Meanwhile the average cow price in NI last week was up 2.2p/kg to 278.9p/kg and the O3 cow price back 1.2p/kg to 310.1p/kg.

Last week the deadweight trade in GB reported increases in prime cattle prices from the previous week. The average steer price was up a penny to 410.6p/kg while the R3 steer price was up 0.2p/kg to 417.7p/kg. The average heifer price in GB last week was up 2.6p/kg to the equivalent of 409p/kg with the R3 heifer price up 1.7p/kg to the equivalent of 418p/kg. Meanwhile the cow trade in GB last week remained under pressure with the average GB cow price back 2.3p/kg to 265.3p/kg. The O3 cow price in GB decreased last week by 1.4p/kg to 294.7p/kg, this places it 15.4p/kg below the equivalent price in NI.

In ROI last week the deadweight cattle trade prices remained under pressure, and this combined with a weakening in the euro against sterling has resulted in declines across all grades. The ROI R3 steer price was back 1.8p/kg to the equivalent of 352.9p/kg, this is 47.9p/kg behind the NI R3 steer price. The R3 heifer price in ROI last week was back 1.5p/kg to 357.2p/kg. Meanwhile the O3 cow price in ROI was back 1.4p/kg to 299.1p/kg.

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

W/E 23/10/21	Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB	
Steers	U3	401.7	362.0	419.8	418.6	425.9	422.4	421.6
	R3	400.8	352.9	419.7	417.4	417.9	415.5	417.7
	R4	399.5	353.3	421.0	424.6	416.3	417.4	421.2
	O3	391.2	337.8	412.3	404.1	395.8	394.0	400.3
AVG	392.2	-	416.8	414.1	405.6	403.6	410.6	
Heifers	U3	406.5	367.1	426.2	428.9	431.4	423.6	428.0
	R3	403.2	357.2	422.5	419.3	417.7	412.8	418.0
	R4	400.0	357.5	420.9	420.1	416.5	413.6	419.0
	O3	393.0	348.2	411.3	399.4	391.4	389.3	395.1
AVG	395.1	-	418.4	412.2	404.1	398.3	409.0	
Young Bulls	U3	390.6	347.3	413.4	421.3	420.8	416.2	417.3
	R3	388.9	340.0	407.9	413.1	416.9	406.5	412.9
	O3	370.9	328.3	379.7	381.0	383.2	383.7	381.9
	AVG	374.6	-	397.5	398.2	398.7	388.1	397.3
Prime Cattle Price Reported	6555	-	6474	6894	7086	4563	25017	
Cows	O3	310.1	299.1	297.5	293.5	294.8	294.3	294.7
	O4	313.2	298.8	301.0	296.5	294.4	289.1	294.8
	P2	267.8	267.7	255.6	249.7	256.4	255.3	255.2
	P3	288.2	287.2	270.2	264.6	273.4	267.1	270.3
AVG	278.9	-	290.9	272.1	262.2	254.6	265.3	

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=84.37p 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 23/10/21	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
Finished Cattle (p/kg)						
Steers	240	263	248	200	239	220
Friesians	167	190	181	130	164	150
Heifers	225	251	235	190	224	205
Beef Cows	170	222	187	130	169	148
Dairy Cows	115	145	122	80	114	100
Store Cattle (p/kg)						
Bullocks up to 400kg	230	280	252	200	229	215
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	230	275	245	190	229	210
Bullocks over 500kg	215	247	230	180	214	197
Heifers up to 450kg	220	246	235	190	219	205
Heifers over 450kg	215	266	230	180	214	200
Dropped Calves (£/head)						
Continental Bulls	360	600	400	250	350	300
Continental Heifers	315	540	380	180	310	230
Friesian Bulls	135	185	160	35	130	70
Holstein Bulls	100	125	115	70	95	80

REPORTED NI CATTLE PRICES - P/KG

W/E 23/10/21	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	402.9	407.6	391.9
R3	398.8	401.1	389.6
O+3	391.2	391.4	382.5

*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 23/10/21	Weight Bands			
	<220kg	220-250kg	250-280kg	>280kg
P1	203.4	219.5	228.2	239.4
P2	220.0	243.5	264.5	282.1
P3	260.0	265.6	282.8	290.5
O3	256.0	286.0	306.7	310.9
O4	-	-	310.3	313.3
R3	-	-	320.0	328.5

SHEEP TRADE

NI SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 25/10/21	Next Week 01/11/21
R3 Lambs up to 22kg	505p/kg	500-510p/kg

REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 09/10/21	W/E 16/10/21	W/E 23/10/21
NI L/W Lambs	456.2	459.2	470.6
NI D/W Lambs	480.1	482.4	487.7
GB D/W Lambs	522.6	528.3	529.9
ROI D/W	521.9	524.5	531.3

Deadweight Sheep Trade

Quotes from the plants for R3 grade lambs continued to remain firm this week ranging from 500-510p/kg up to 22kg. There were 8,539 lambs processed in local plants last week, up 1,080 from the week before. In the same week in 2020, 10,783 lambs were processed in local plants. Lamb exports to ROI last week for direct slaughter totalled 7,567, a decrease of 277 lambs from the previous week. The deadweight lamb price in NI last week increased by 5.3p/kg to 487.7p/kg. In the corresponding week last year the average deadweight lamb price in NI was 429.3p/kg. Meanwhile the ROI lamb price was up 6.8p/kg to 531.3p/kg

Liveweight Sheep Trade

Many of the marts have reported smaller numbers of lambs passing through most of the sale rings this week. In Omagh on Saturday 389 lambs sold from 461-539p/kg compared to 977 lambs sold from 484-531p/kg the previous week. On Tuesday in Saintfield 555 lambs sold from 460-551p/kg compared to 832 lambs sold from 455-514p/kg the week before. On Wednesday, Ballymena reported a strong entry of 2,276 lambs sold from 460-511p/kg compared to 980 lambs sold from 440-502p/kg the previous week. In Markethill this week 870 lambs sold from 480-550p/kg compared to 1450 lambs sold from 460-503p/kg the week before. Across the marts this week the cull ewe prices ranged from £118-£183.

LATEST SHEEP MARTS (P/KG LW)

From: 23/10/21		Lambs			
To: 28/10/21		No	From	To	Avg
Saturday	Omagh	389	461	539	-
	Swatragh	930	447	512	-
Monday	Kilrea	800	462	518	-
	Massereene	810	460	476	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	555	460	551	-
	Rathfriland	762	450	549	483
Wednesday	Ballymena	2276	460	511	478
	Enniskillen	802	440	510	-
	Armoyle	412	460	525	-
	Markethill	870	480	550	-

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