

## LMC WELCOMES NEW FARM POLICY FRAMEWORK

Livestock and Meat Commission for Northern Ireland (LMC) Chief Executive Ian Stevenson has welcomed the principles espoused within the 'Future Agricultural Policy Framework Portfolio', recently published by Northern Ireland's farm minister Edwin Poots. According to the Commission representative the document builds on policy priorities, first identified back in 2018. He said: "Northern Ireland's farming sectors now have a unique opportunity to help develop support measures that meet their specific need. Previously, under the Common Agricultural Policy, the focus was on the development of measures that would have a pan European impact."

Ian continued: "Not surprisingly, the new framework document has a strong climate change focus. However, the four main policy pillars identified back in 2018 have been retained with many of the specific policy proposals for the

beef and sheep meat sectors very much in line with the thinking previously put forward by LMC and other redmeat stakeholder organisations.

Ian pointed to the unequivocal support within the framework document for the attainment of increased productivity levels within local agriculture as a win: win scenario for the beef and sheep sectors. He explained: "This approach recognises that it is possible to grow output in a wholly sustainable manner. It is also a policy perspective that puts Northern Ireland in a very unique situation, relative to other regions of the United Kingdom and the European Union."

Ian is quick to point to numerous facets of beef and sheep development that will encompass the securing of enhanced output levels within individual beef and sheep businesses. These include the use of better genetics, the attainment

of higher herd and flock health standards, the finishing of cattle and sheep at younger ages plus the more efficient use of grass. He commented: "All of these objectives can be secured in a wholly sustainable manner on the back of the required farm investment programmes and a commitment on the part of the Executive to provide farmers with the continuing professional development opportunities they will need as they look to the future."

Where future environmental sustainability is concerned, Ian Stevenson fully recognises the role that farming in Northern Ireland must play in reducing greenhouse gas emission levels. "Beef and sheep farmers will have a key role to play in helping the UK as a whole to meet its net zero emissions' target. But other priorities must also be addressed. These include improvements in water, air and soil quality while also ensuring that biodiversity standards are maintained and built upon. Significantly, the LMC representative does not see the issue of environmental stewardship as a challenge for local farmers: rather he views it as an opportunity. Ian continued: "Protecting the environment must be assessed in the context of farmers delivering for the public good. And in this context, environmental stewardship can and must be officially recognised as an additional income stream for farmers."

In the context of government delivering in ways that enhances the future resilience of farming in NI, Ian heartily endorses the need for the continuation of an 'area based' resilience payment that acts as a basic safety net. He explained: "This form of support will be required to shield farmers from the extremes of volatility in the market place and other challenges that can put severe pressure on their income levels. Yes, markets are generally in a positive place at the present time. But, we all know that this situation can change significantly with little notice."

The proposal within the policy framework document relating to the introduction of a headage sustainability measure within the suckler and breeding sheep sectors also finds favour with the LMC. "Again, this approach will help to build future resilience at farm level," Ian confirmed. "These support measures will also help secure many of the other priorities identified within the new strategy framework."

The need to build improved cohesion within the entire farming and food supply chain is the fourth and final policy pillar discussed within the Poots' framework document. Again, Ian Stevenson concurs with the ideas that have been put forward in this regard. "A chain is only as strong as its weakest link," he stressed. "The need to provide better education and training for all stakeholders involved in supply chain functionality is obvious."

There is also a need to identify and fully recognise the role that each grouping within the supply chain can play. For example, the LMC has provided a valuable cattle deadweight price reporting service for local stakeholders over many decades. In the past we interacted officially with the European Commission. Looking to the future, this communication role will have a very strong UK focus. And, of course, the Commission will continue to provide local farmers with a wide range of other valuable services."

Ian concluded: "The evolution of the Agricultural Policy Framework Portfolio will provide NI's beef and sheep farmers with a unique opportunity to help determine their own futures. A public consultation on the future development of the specific policies espoused by the document will open later in the autumn. "I would heartily encourage all local beef and sheep farmers to take part in this process."

Image 1: LMC's Chief Executive Ian Stevenson



# BTB CAN BE ERADICATED IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Livestock and Meat Commission for NI (LMC) Chief Executive Ian Stevenson believes that the ongoing review of the Bovine TB (bTB) testing and eradication policies followed in NI can provide a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to eradicate the disease, once and for all. The ongoing public consultation on the matter ends on Friday, 10th September. Ian commented: "Total eradication can be achieved. Low incidence countries like New Zealand are role models for us in this regard with clear strategy and plans in place to eradicate the disease. And, of course, here in NI we have already managed to eradicate Brucellosis."

The upfront costs associated with the current bTB testing, associated administration and compensation measures amount to £40m per annum. However, Ian Stevenson believes this to be a very conservative figure. He explained: "Yes, farmers receive direct compensation for the removal of reactor animals. However, this figure does not compensate for the subsequent loss of income, incurred by the impacted businesses. Nor do the current compensation measures take account of the upheaval caused to animals by the

actual bTB testing process and the toll this takes on their subsequent performance. bTB has upfront disease-related implications for Northern Ireland. But one also has to factor in the animal welfare challenges it poses for livestock and, perhaps most importantly of all, the emotional stress it causes entire farming families. Farmers do not want to lose cattle, particularly animals that they have bred-up over many generations. In many ways it is not possible to put a figure on the loss incurred by farming families in having a lifetime's work taken away from them, through no fault of their own."

According to the LMC representative, bTB is also having a very negative impact on the sustainability of the farming industry as a whole. Ian commented: "bTB levels have remained stubbornly high for the last number of years. It's obvious that the current programme of testing and removal of cattle is not working to eradicate this disease. What's more, other countries around the world are fully aware of this fact. The reality is that bTB eradication could open up better access to many new markets around the world for our

beef while also allowing us to increase our footprint across existing markets. Beef sales from NI to external and export markets are currently valued at £1.3 billion per annum. This figure could be enhanced significantly on the back of a successful bTB eradication campaign. This would be a good news story, not just for farming, but for the economy as a whole. The goal of eradicating bTB represents a win-win scenario for NI, from so many perspectives."

So what has to change? Ian Stevenson believes that future eradication policies must recognise that wildlife populations represent a reservoir of bTB with badgers the most obvious infection source in this regard. He explained: "Whether it is a case of cattle giving the disease to badgers, or vice versa, is irrelevant at this stage. The reality is that both animal populations represent a source of bTB infection and, as a consequence, steps must be taken to eradicate the disease from the two groupings." Ian concluded: "Total eradication of bTB must be our clear objective moving forward. Securing this objective will be good news for cattle, badgers and the economy as a whole."



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# WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS

## CATTLE TRADE

### NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 30/08/21	Next Week 06/09/21
<b>Prime</b>		
U-3	384 - 394p	384 - 394p
R-3	378 - 388p	378 - 388p
O+3	372 - 382p	372 - 382p
P+3	318 - 332p	318 - 332p
	Including bonus where applicable	
<b>Cows</b>		
O+3	280 - 300p	280 - 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.

### REPORTED NI CATTLE PRICES - P/KG

W/E 28/08/21	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	402.3	404.4	398.2
R3	397.3	400.1	392.7
O+3	390.0	392.9	380.1

\*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

### REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 28/08/21	Weight Bands			
	<220kg	220-250kg	250-280kg	>280kg
P1	206.8	219.5	235.0	241.4
P2	224.1	252.6	272.7	289.4
P3	232.1	274.4	294.1	298.7
O3	-	281.1	310.3	315.9
O4	208.2	-	302.6	315.5
R3	-	-	-	332.5

### Deadweight Cattle Trade

Base quotes from the plants for in-spec U-3 grade prime cattle this week ranged from 384-394p/kg with the majority of plants quoting at the upper end of this scale for both steers and heifers. This week last year the major processors were quoting 350-360p/kg for in spec U-3 grading steers and heifers. Quotes for good quality O+3 grade cows ranged from 280-300p/kg this week with similar base quotes expected for Monday.

Prime cattle throughput last week totalled 6,788 head. This was a decrease of 311 head from the previous week and 136 head higher than the 6,652 head processed during the same week last year. Cow throughput in NI last week totalled 2,316 head which is a similar throughput to the previous week and 333 head higher than the 1,983 cows processed in the same week in 2020.

Prime cattle imports from ROI for direct slaughter last week totalled 376 head with 159 cows also imported. Exports from NI for direct slaughter in ROI plants last week consisted of two prime cattle and 31 cows while no cattle were exported from NI to GB for direct slaughter last week.

Last week in NI the average steer price was back by 0.2p/kg to 391.1p/kg while the R3 steer price increased by 0.3p/kg to 401.4p/kg. This is an increase of 29p/kg from the corresponding week last year when the R3 steer price in NI was 372.4p/kg. The average heifer price in NI last week decreased by 0.5p/kg to 392.4p/kg while the R3 heifer price was back by 0.6p/kg from the previous week to 401.2p/kg. In the same week in 2020 the R3 heifer price in NI was 370.5p/kg, 30.7p/kg behind current levels. Meanwhile the NI cow trade came under some pressure last week with the average cow price back 6.3p/kg from the previous week to 283.7p/kg. The O3 cow price in NI last week was back by 1.3p/kg to 314.5p/kg. This is 35.3p/kg higher than 279.2p/kg reported in the same week last year.

The deadweight cattle trade in GB improved across the majority of grades last week compared to the previous week. The average steer price in GB last week increased by 1.4p/kg from the previous week to 411.1p/kg with the R3 steer price up by 2.2p/kg to 417.4p/kg. This brings the differential in the R3 steer price between NI and GB to 16p/kg. The average heifer price in GB last week was up by 1.1p/kg to 410.1p/kg while the R3 heifer price increased by almost 2p/kg to 417.2p/kg. The differential in R3 heifer price between NI and GB last week was 16p/kg. The average cow price in GB last week decreased by 2.4p/kg from the previous week to 290.9p/kg and the O3 cow price decreased by almost a penny to 317.9p/kg.

The R3 steer price in ROI last week remained steady from the previous week at 358.1p/kg bringing the R3 steer price differential between NI and ROI to 43.3p/kg. The R3 heifer price was up 0.2p/kg to the equivalent of 361.2p/kg which takes the R3 heifer price differential between NI and ROI to 40p/kg. The O3 cow price in ROI increased by 1.1p/kg to the equivalent of 299.2p/kg, 15.3p/kg below the O3 cow price in NI.

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

	W/E 28/08/21	Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	403.3	367.0	425.0	419.2	421.5	424.0	422.7
	R3	401.4	358.1	424.7	417.1	415.4	412.7	417.4
	R4	397.9	357.6	424.2	418.8	415.6	415.1	420.3
	O3	391.9	343.9	405.6	403.8	392.9	393.2	397.7
	AVG	391.1	-	421.0	411.3	405.1	404.8	411.1
Heifers	U3	405.4	371.9	431.2	426.9	427.6	421.6	427.6
	R3	401.2	361.2	424.2	416.0	416.0	412.3	417.2
	R4	398.7	361.3	425.5	418.7	415.0	415.7	420.0
	O3	392.3	351.4	411.4	402.3	389.1	387.0	394.7
	AVG	392.4	-	422.5	411.5	403.8	399.3	410.1
Young Bulls	U3	395.1	353.8	418.0	417.4	420.2	412.9	418.4
	R3	392.5	344.0	412.3	405.8	414.6	405.1	411.2
	O3	377.0	330.7	380.8	373.2	382.4	384.7	379.6
	AVG	379.7	-	408.6	396.5	404.5	386.0	402.3
Prime Cattle Price Reported	4621	-	6538	6419	6693	4230	23880	
Cows	O3	314.5	299.2	325.4	316.7	316.0	319.4	317.9
	O4	314.1	300.5	327.2	319.7	315.2	313.0	317.5
	P2	275.2	270.2	282.6	272.3	273.6	282.7	276.7
	P3	295.4	289.3	293.7	294.2	291.3	300.3	294.7
	AVG	283.7	-	315.7	298.3	284.1	287.4	290.9

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=85.64p 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

**Image 2: LMC proudly supports love lamb week which is running from 1st - 7th September 2021**



# SHEEP TRADE

## NI SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 30/08/21	Next Week 06/09/21
R3 Lambs up to 21kg	490p/kg	490p/kg

## REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 14/08/21	W/E 21/08/21	W/E 28/08/21
NI L/W Lambs	441.7	450.3	454.3
NI D/W Lambs	471.5	474.7	480.8
GB D/W Lambs	515.8	530.6	530.5
ROI D/W	503.1	512.4	522.9

## Deadweight Sheep Trade

Quotes for R3 grade lambs remained steady this week at 490p/kg up to 21kg with similar quotes expected early next week. Lamb throughput totalled 11,265 head last week, up 138 head from the previous week when 11,127 lambs were processed locally. Exports of lambs from NI to ROI for direct slaughter increased by 333 head from the previous week to total 6,233 head. The average NI deadweight lamb price was up by just over 6p/kg from the previous week to 480.8p/kg. In ROI last week the average deadweight lamb price was the equivalent of 522.9p/kg, up by 10.5p/kg from the previous week.

## Liveweight Sheep Trade

This week the liveweight trade came under some pressure with good numbers passing through the local marts. In Swatragh last Saturday 1,550 lambs sold from 448-500p/kg compared to 2,200 lambs the previous week selling from 496-519p/kg. In Saintfield on Tuesday 688 lambs sold from 440-500p/kg compared to 615 lambs last week selling from 447-511p/kg. This week in Ballymena 2,203 lambs sold from 440-491p/kg (avg 448p/kg) compared to 2,204 lambs last week selling from 435-500p/kg (avg 454p/kg). On Wednesday in Markethill 1,125 lambs sold from 440-468p/kg compared to 1,180 lambs last week selling from 440-477p/kg. The trade for well fleshed cull ewes has remained firm with top reported prices ranging from £127-£183.

## LATEST SHEEP MARTS (P/KG LW)

From: 28/08/21		Lambs			
To: 02/09/21		No	From	To	Avg
Saturday	Omagh	988	459	562	-
	Swatragh	1550	448	500	-
Monday	Kilrea	750	448	466	-
	Massereene	926	440	482	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	688	440	500	-
	Rathfriland	811	440	500	458
Wednesday	Ballymena	2203	440	491	448
	Enniskillen	725	442	490	-
	Armoyle	544	440	503	-
	Markethill	1125	440	468	-

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## Contact us

T: 028 9263 3000  
E: bulletin@lmcni.com  
W: www.lmcni.com

