

## UPDATE ON CALF REGISTRATIONS 2017

THERE were 15,273 beef sired calves registered in NI during December 2017 which was a 10.4 per cent reduction from December 2016 levels when 17,042 beef sired calves were registered on NI farms.

However despite this notable decline in registrations during December 2017 the total number of beef sired calf registrations for 2017 was fairly similar to the previous year at 365,597 head. In 2016 367,418 beef sired calves were registered in NI which gives a reduction of 1,821 head year on year.

The proportion of beef sired calves registered to dairy cows has been steadily increasing in recent years as indicated in Figure 1. During 2014 beef cross calf registrations accounted for 27 per cent of all beef sired calf registrations. This has steadily increased year on year and beef cross calves accounted for 34 per cent of all beef sired calf registrations during 2017.

Limousin continues to be the most popular beef sire used in NI and accounted for 27.3 per cent of all beef calf registrations during 2017. This was back one percentage point from 2016 when 28.3 per cent of registrations were Limousin sired.

Charolais continues to be the second most popular beef breed in NI and

accounted for 23 per cent of all beef sired registrations during 2017. Like the Limousin however the proportion of Charolais registrations declined by one percentage point from 2016 levels when they accounted for 24 per cent of all beef sired calf registrations.

During 2017 Aberdeen Angus in NI was the third most popular beef sire with registrations accounting for 20.3 per cent of all beef sired registrations. This was a 1.4 percentage point increase from 2016 when 18.9 per cent of total beef sired registrations had an Aberdeen Angus sire. In 2015 17.3 per cent of beef sired registrations were Aberdeen Angus.

A total of 29,256 Hereford calves were registered in NI during 2017 and these accounted for 8 per cent of all beef sired calf registrations. This was a slight increase from 28,227 Hereford calf registrations during 2016 which accounted for 7.7 per cent of all beef sired calf registrations in the region.

Simmental calf registrations accounted for 7.3 per cent of beef calf registrations in NI during 2017 with a total of 26,745 calves registered. This was back slightly from 2016 levels when 27,991 registrations accounted for 7.6 per cent of total beef sired calf registrations.

Belgian Blue was the sixth most popular beef sire used in NI during 2017 with a

total of 22,272 calf registrations recorded. These accounted for 6.1 per cent of all beef calf registrations, up slightly from 2016 levels when 21,251 Belgian Blue calf registrations accounted for 5.8 per cent of total calf registrations.

These six beef breeds accounted for 92 per cent of all beef sired calf registrations in NI during 2017 with the remaining 8 per cent of beef calves registered to sires of 56 other breeds during 2017. During 2016 the six major breeds accounted for 92.3 per cent of total beef sired calf registrations with the remaining 7.7 per cent of calves registered to 54 other beef sires.

During 2017 a total of 174,099 dairy sired calves were registered in NI which was a 5.5 per cent reduction from 184,248 dairy sired calf registrations in NI during 2016. Some of this reduction in registrations will have been due to an increasing number of dairy cows served using beef sires.

The number of dairy sired male calf registrations in NI declined from 84,346 head in 2016 to 79,586 head in 2017. This accounts for a 5.6 per cent reduction year on year. Meanwhile the level of calf export has remained steady with 19,588 calves exported during 2017, these will have been predominantly dairy sired male calves destined for Spain.

Figure 1: Calf registrations in NI broken down by suckler and dairy dam.

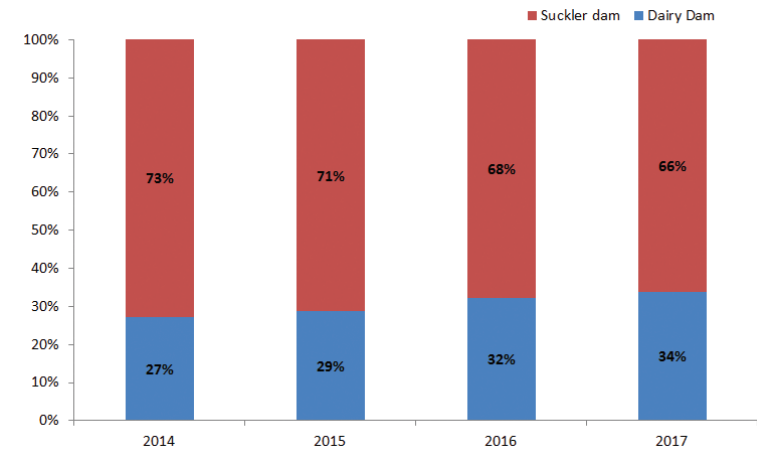
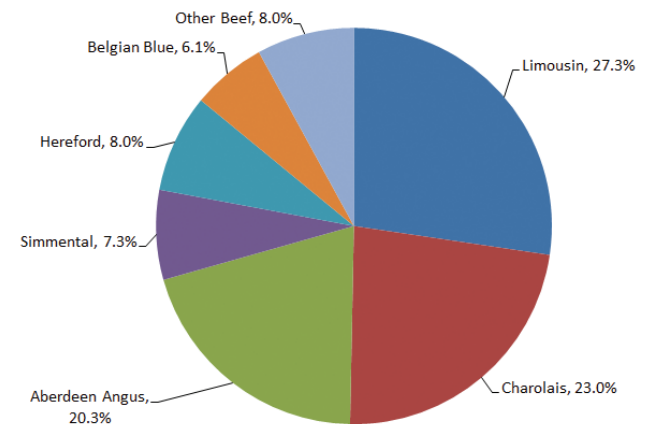


Figure 2: Beef sired calf registrations in NI during 2017 broken down by breed.



# LAMB GRADING UPDATE Q4 2017

## LMC Quarterly

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## FQAS NOTICE ONLINE PAYMENTS

LMC has launched an online payment system for the Farm Quality Assurance Scheme. This allows producers to pay annual membership renewal and initial registration fees through the LMC website.

[www.lmcni.com](http://www.lmcni.com)



**T**HROUGHPUT of lambs by NI processors during the period October to December 2017 totalled 111,856 head, a decrease from the corresponding period in 2016 when 117,856 lambs were killed in NI plants. Reports from industry have indicated that the quality of lambs presented for slaughter during the last quarter has generally been good however analysis of the price reporting statistics have indicated some key changes in the conformation and fat scores of lambs when compared to the same period in 2016.

### Conformation scores

Current market specifications are for R and U grading lambs and during the period October to December 2017, 95 per cent of price reported lambs fulfilled this requirement. This was a slight decline from the corresponding period in 2016 when 97 per cent of lambs were awarded a U or R grade for conformation. However while the overall proportion of lambs killed in NI plants meeting market specification for grade has remained steady there has been some notable changes in the proportion of lambs achieving each

grade year on year.

The proportion of U grade lambs in the NI slaughter mix has decreased from 42 per cent in the 2016 period to 37 per cent in the 2017 period. This was a decrease of five percentage points year on year. While the proportion of U grading lambs in the NI lamb kill has decreased the proportion of lambs awarded an R grade has increased. During the 2017 period 58 per cent of price reported lambs achieved an R grade, an increase of three percentage points from the corresponding period in 2016 when 55 per cent of lamb carcasses were awarded an R grade.

### Fat scores

The current market specification is for lamb carcasses with a fat score of 2 or 3 and during the 2017 period 88 per cent of price reported lambs fulfilled this requirement. This was a slight decline from the corresponding period in 2016 when 90 per cent of price reported lambs met this specification.

During quarter 4 of 2017, 19 per cent of price reported lambs achieved a fat score of 2 while 69 per cent were

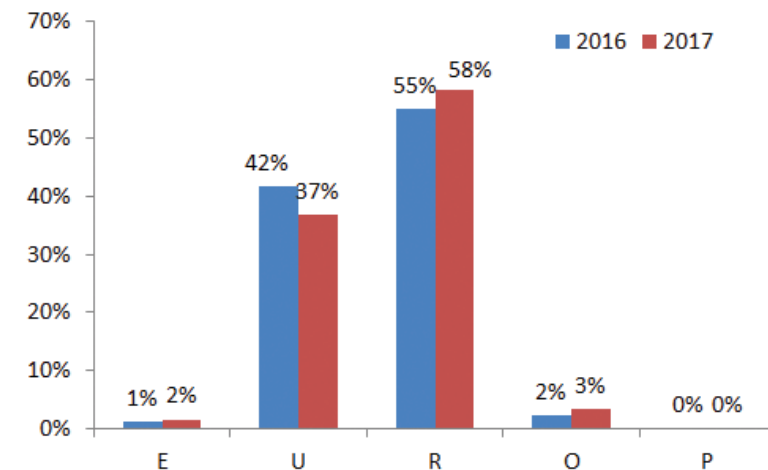
awarded a fat score of 3. This is fairly similar the corresponding period in 2016 when 18 per cent of lamb carcasses were awarded a fat score of 2 and 72 per cent achieved a fat score of 3.

A small number of lambs continue to kill out at a fat class 4L and 4H. During 2017 11 per cent of the price reported lamb kill were awarded a 4L for fat cover and further 1 per cent were awarded a 4H. These figures were

almost unchanged from the same period in 2016.

In addition to meeting market specifications for conformation and fat score NI lamb producers should also be aware that the current market requirements are for carcasses under 22kg. Processors also have a strong preference for lambs/hoggets with FQ status. Bonuses are available in some plants while other plants will not handle non FQ assured lambs.

**Figure 3: Lamb conformation scores during October-December 2016 and 2017**



### FQAS Helpline

If you have had a recent inspection and need help and advice to rectify any non-conformances, contact the

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# WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS



## CATTLE TRADE

### NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 01/01/18	Next Week 08/01/18
<b>Prime</b>		
U-3	350 - 356p	350 - 354p
R-3	344 - 350p	344 - 348p
O+3	338 - 344p	338 - 342p
P+3	290 - 306p	290 - 304p
Including bonus where applicable		
<b>Cows</b>		
O+3 & better	260 - 280p	260 - 280p
Steakers	140 - 170p	140 - 170p
Blues	120 - 130p	120 - 130p

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 30/12/17	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	364.1	365.0	358.0
R3	357.6	359.6	352.9
O+3	348.9	350.6	344.0

\*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

### REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 30/12/17	Wgt <220kg	Wgt 220-250kg	Wgt 250-280kg	Wgt >280kg
P1	167.1	179.3	183.6	198.5
P2	211.9	227.8	226.0	246.5
P3	200.0	238.4	252.6	257.7
O3	-	230.0	265.8	281.7
O4	-	-	280.0	280.9
R3	-	-	-	308.0

## Deadweight Cattle Trade

**B**ASE quotes from the plants for in-spec U-3 grade prime cattle ranged from 350-356p/kg across the major processing plants this week with quotes of 350-354p/kg expected for early next week. The cow trade has remained firm with quotes for good quality O+3 grading cows ranging from 260-280p/kg this week with similar quotes expected for Monday.

The plants have reported good supplies of all types of cattle coming forward for slaughter to meet demand for beef. Due to the Christmas holidays all of the major beef processing plants operated on a three day week last week and as a result there was a notable decline in total cattle throughput. The prime cattle throughput in NI last week totalled 4,605 head compared to 4,336 head during the corresponding week last year. Meanwhile the cow throughput in local plants last week totalled 950 head compared to 1,052 head during the same week last year.

The deadweight trade for prime cattle held relatively steady in NI last week with the average steer price up 2p/kg to 355.4p/kg while the R3 steer price increased by 0.8p/kg to 362.4p/kg. Meanwhile the average heifer price in NI last week increased by 3.8p/kg to 357.2p/kg while the R3 heifer price was back by almost a penny to 361.6p/kg. The differential between NI and GB in terms of average R3 steer and heifer prices was 11.6p/kg and 12.5p/kg respectively last week. The O3 cow price in NI last week was up marginally to 278.7p/kg which places it 8.6p/kg above the average O3 cow price in GB last week.

In GB last week the deadweight trade for prime cattle held steady with price reported figures fairly similar to the previous week. The average steer price in GB last week was unchanged at 363.6p/kg while the average R3 steer price was also unchanged at 374p/kg. There was however some variation in the trade for R3 grade steers across the regions with prices in Scotland holding steady at 380.2p/kg, increasing by 6p/kg in Northern England to 377.4p/kg and coming under pressure in the Midlands (-1.3p/kg to 372p/kg) and Southern England (-2.4p/kg to 367.4p/kg).

The average heifer price in GB last week was up by a penny to 366.6p/kg last week with average heifer prices increasing in all of the GB regions. The R3 heifer price in GB last week was up by 0.8p/kg to 374.1p/kg last week however while prices improved in Scotland and the Midlands they came under some pressure in both Northern and Southern England.

In ROI last week there was a strong increase in reported prices in euro terms and with the euro gaining slightly against sterling this increase was also apparent in sterling terms. The R3 steer price in ROI last week was up the equivalent of 4.7p/kg to 351.7p/kg. This puts it 10.7p/kg behind the R3 steer price in NI. Meanwhile the R3 heifer price in ROI last week increased by 4.8p/kg to 362.4p/kg which puts it 0.8p/kg higher than the equivalent price in NI. The O3 cow price in ROI last week was the equivalent of 292.7p/kg, 14p/kg higher than the equivalent price in NI.

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

	W/E 30/12/2017	Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	365.1	359.9	382.7	377.1	373.7	375.6	377.0
	R3	362.4	351.7	380.2	377.4	372.0	367.4	374.0
	R4	360.3	353.1	380.1	381.8	368.8	363.5	375.7
	O3	354.5	339.4	360.6	343.3	340.8	337.6	345.9
	AVG	355.4	-	376.5	364.8	357.6	352.0	363.6
Heifers	U3	366.0	374.1	389.5	376.7	382.9	384.7	384.0
	R3	361.6	362.4	380.9	371.0	373.8	368.2	374.1
	R4	358.3	362.3	379.4	375.6	372.1	364.3	374.0
	O3	358.4	349.0	365.6	346.4	346.0	344.8	351.0
	AVG	357.2	-	379.2	366.6	361.7	355.7	366.6
Young Bulls	U3	358.1	357.0	370.8	371.4	373.2	-	372.3
	R3	352.1	345.5	368.9	364.2	360.1	360.0	362.7
	O3	334.2	333.7	332.0	312.0	327.3	329.9	323.8
	AVG	356.2	-	348.9	331.1	342.9	322.2	339.4
Prime Cattle Price Reported		3707	-	4637	4388	4245	2872	16142
Cows	O3	278.7	292.7	265.1	265.1	277.1	258.5	270.1
	O4	280.9	291.5	273.1	263.7	276.0	261.2	271.0
	P2	236.4	265.9	195.8	219.8	211.4	223.6	213.5
	P3	253.9	283.0	213.1	245.2	235.1	244.6	235.7
	AVG	273.1	-	256.3	248.7	241.1	231.5	241.6

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=88.69p 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 LIVELWEIGHT CATTLE MART PRICES NI

W/E 23/12/17	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
<b>Finished Cattle (p/kg)</b>						
Steers	191	208	197	169	190	179
Friesians	139	146	143	120	134	128
Heifers	194	200	196	150	172	158
Beef Cows	140	187	154	115	139	127
Dairy Cows	110	126	115	70	109	90
<b>Store Cattle (p/kg)</b>						
Bullocks up to 400kg	220	244	230	190	218	205
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	205	222	215	170	204	190
Bullocks over 500kg	200	209	204	165	199	182
Heifers up to 450kg	200	220	210	160	199	180
Heifers over 450kg	185	200	192	158	184	170
<b>Dropped Calves (£/head)</b>						
Continental Bulls	250	340	300	140	248	200
Continental Heifers	210	350	280	120	208	175
Friesian Bulls	110	160	125	50	108	80
Holstein Bulls	80	140	95	15	78	45

# SHEEP TRADE

## SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 01/01/18	Next Week 08/01/18
Hoggets >22kg	390-395p	400-405p

## REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 16/12/17	W/E 23/12/17	W/E 30/12/17
NI Lambs L/W	358.1	355.4	-
NI Lambs D/W	384.7	384.9	379.9
GB Lambs D/W	399.5	400.4	405.1
ROI D/W	404.2	412.3	-

## Deadweight Sheep Trade

**Q**UOTES from the major NI processing plants early this week for R3 grading lambs ranged from 390-395p/kg up to 22kg however as the week progressed the plants have increased quotes to 400-405p/kg up to 22kg with similar quotes expected for early next week. Lamb throughput in the local plants last week totalled 4,430 head compared to 5,055 lambs killed in the corresponding week last year. The average deadweight lamb price in NI last week was back 5p/kg to 379.9p/kg. In the corresponding week last year the deadweight lamb price in NI was 373.4p/kg.

## This week's marts

**D**UE to the Christmas and New Year Holidays very few marts operated sheep sales this week however normal service is expected next week. In Saintfield this week 735 lambs sold from 365-410p/kg with a firm trade reported for good quality lambs. In Ballymena this week a large entry of 2,206 lambs sold from 350-402p/kg (avg 370p/kg). On Wednesday this week 423 lambs sold from 358-384p/kg in Enniskillen. A good entry of 1,010 lambs in Markethill this week sold from 350-395p/kg with firm demand for good quality lots. Small numbers of cull ewes passed through the sale rings this week with top reported prices in the region of £90 for well fleshed ewes.

## LATEST SHEEP MARTS

From: 02/01/18		Hoggets (P/KG LW)			
To: 04/01/18		No	From	To	Avg
Tuesday	Saintfield	735	365	410	-
Wednesday	Ballymena	2206	350	402	370
	Enniskillen	423	358	384	-
	Markethill	1010	350	395	-

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## LMC LAUNCHES THREE-YEAR BEEF AND LAMB PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGN

THE Livestock and Meat Commission for Northern Ireland (LMC) has kicked-off a new, three-year advertising campaign, designed to encourage people across Northern Ireland to eat more Farm Quality Assured beef and lamb. The initiative will target consumers by way of television, radio, print, online, social media and outdoor display advertising options.

shops and, if necessary, to ask retailers if they stock Farm Quality Assured beef and lamb products.”



Smith added, “LMC is the only organisation that promotes home-produced beef and lamb in a concerted and ongoing manner. The new promotional campaign builds on the work carried out over recent years in a very innovative way.”

Smith is quick to confirm that red meat

is competing against other dietary protein sources on a continuing basis. “This is particularly the case where lamb is concerned. However, the new campaign addresses this issue head-on. A new series of lamb recipes will be unveiled over the coming weeks and months. Improving the versatility of lamb is a priority moving forward. It is a very traditional meat. However, large numbers of local consumers have never tried it. Again, the new campaign deals with this challenge very creatively.”

Smith also cited the relevance of the ‘[beefandlambni.com](http://beefandlambni.com)’ website as a valuable source of information regarding new beef and lamb recipes, the sourcing of Farm Quality Assured beef and lamb products in Northern Ireland and the commitment of local farmers to produce cattle and sheep of the highest quality.

“The impact of the new campaign will be assessed on an ongoing basis,” he said. “It is important that we get consumer feedback from the every outset, as this will allow us to tweak the campaign as time progresses. Social media outlets will be specifically targeted. It’s all about delivering the



most versatile and relevant messages possible regarding the nutritional benefits of farm quality assured beef and lamb for consumers of all ages.”

Smith also confirmed that the early weeks of January will see the new campaign hit our television screens, along with radio and social media.

“There’s nothing like a positive start to any new initiative,” he explained. “The quality of home produced beef and lamb has always been superior and, yes, the new promotional campaign reinforces this point. However, it also goes well beyond this, communicating the very real benefits which the Farm Quality Assurance Scheme delivers with regard to the overall sustainability of the beef and lamb sectors in Northern Ireland.”

# IT PROVIDING NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR HOME ECONOMICS

It is helping to deliver more effective ways of teaching home economics in schools, according to LMC's Education Manager Cherrie Kenny.

"The Commission is very much to the fore in making this happen," she added. "A case in point has been the development of our interactive nutritional website: [www.food4life.org.uk](http://www.food4life.org.uk). This supports teachers and pupils at both Key Stage 3 and 4 whilst there is also a specific section on the site for those studying home economics to A-level. The site is regularly updated with content that is syllabus-compliant and totally relevant for both teachers and students."

Kenny confirmed that a strong digital platform is helping to make home economics more relevant to students of all ages. "We have spent a lot of time working with teachers to ensure

that the information we communicate either complements or adds to the criteria laid down within the curriculums for the various courses.



"We have developed a wide range of resource materials with a strong food and nutrition focus. All of these can be found on our Food4Life website. These are freely available to all Post Primary schools. We are also in regular communication with the examinations' body CCEA, again to ensure that all the material we produce is fully curriculum compliant."

Kenny added: "Digital learning is complementing traditional educational

methods more and more each day. We know that students using digital learning tools and technology become more engaged in the process and more interested in growing their knowledge base. This can be turned into a good news story for Northern Ireland's beef and lamb sectors. In fact, it's already happening!"

Kenny said that the Food4Life website is also adding to the relevance of the 300 school cookery demonstrations, which LMC hosts during each academic year. "Well over 300 events have been scheduled in secondary schools right across Northern Ireland for the 2017/18 school year," she explained. "These demonstrations are delivered by a 9-strong team of independent demonstrators and provide us with the opportunity to engage directly with the consumers of the future."

## LMC'S ENGAGEMENT WITH STAKEHOLDERS CONTINUES Apace

LMC board members and staff are continuing with a comprehensive round of engagement meetings, involving all of its stakeholder organisations.

Prior to Christmas we met with representatives from the Ulster Farmers' Union and a number of processors, on an individual basis," confirmed Commission Chief Executive Ian Stevenson. "We will meet the other stakeholders over the coming weeks. The key themes arising from these get-togethers will help shape the development of our new three-year strategy and separately, the Commission's 2018/19 business plan."

Stevenson confirmed very strong and positive feedback from all the stakeholders regarding the future role of the LMC within the red meat sector. "The ongoing development of the Farm

Quality Assurance Scheme is seen as being critical, when it comes to assuring the future sustainability of the cattle and sheep sectors in Northern Ireland. The need to effectively promote locally produced beef and lamb on the home market is also regarded as a key priority for the future. Both of these activities underpin the core work undertaken by LMC."

Stevenson went on to highlight six of the main challenges facing the redmeat sectors, identified by all the relevant stakeholder groups as the industry moves into 2018. "Brexit is recognised by all the bodies concerned as the key challenge now facing the beef and sheep sectors. Closely following this, in terms of its importance, is the need to identify new markets for our beef and lamb. Only in this way can we hope to achieve the carcass balance, which processors need in order to deliver the best

possible farmgate prices."

According to Stevenson, delivering future sustainability at farm level is another priority for the grass-based livestock sectors. "Securing higher levels of efficiency is important, in this regard, but we also need to look at more innovative ways of delivering direct support to farmers."

"Developing a more joined-up red meat industry is also important. Our stakeholders all recognise the benefits generated courtesy of the various Walk-the-Line events organised for farmers in 2017 and we want to build on this during the year ahead. Finally, we need to ensure that our beef and lamb processors avail fully of the opportunities that will continue to present themselves on our home market, here in the UK."

## IN MY OPINION: RICHARD HALLERON

THE New Year is now with us and, it seems to me, that the need for the LMC has never been greater. Let me give you one very salient example of what I mean. Over the past 25 years the organisation has been to the fore in developing a farm quality assurance scheme that is the envy of the world. This is a view universally held by meat industry experts, not only here in Northern Ireland but throughout Europe and beyond. Farm quality assurance is delivering an extra £150 on every certified beef animal that goes up a local kill line and I sense this figure may well increase with the passing of time.

The Commission also does a critically important job when it comes to promoting home-produced beef and lamb to local consumers with its role in schools critical in making this a reality. Today Northern Ireland enjoys negligible risk status, where BSE is concerned. This is the safest level of certification which the World Organisation for Animal Health can stand over, where this disease is concerned and again, the Commission played a central role in helping to deliver this decision on behalf of every cattle farmer in Northern Ireland.

As we consider the future, the beef and sheep sectors must look, increasingly, to their own resources as they strive for long-term sustainability. The days are coming to an end when farmers can expect the proverbial 'cheque in the post' to dig them out of a hole. It is in this context that the future impact of the LMC must be gauged. The market is king and what discerns food products that secure premium prices from those that don't are their heritage and the depth of the 'quality assured' principles which they reflect.

The good news is that the Commission has done a tremendous job for every local livestock farmer in helping to make all of this a reality in the here-and-now. It's now a case of building for the future.



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