

Teagasc Notes for week ending Friday 26th June 2020

First Virtual Farm Walk in Waterford

The NDC and Kerrygold Quality Milk Awards crowned the Hearne family from Rathgormack, Co Waterford as the top-quality milk producer in the country in 2019. The awards, sometimes dubbed *'the Oscars of the Dairy World'* celebrates excellence in Irish dairy farming and in 2019 included the area of sustainable dairy farming to champion farmers committed to caring for their environment.

A webinar will take place from the Hearne family farm, national winners of the 2019 NDC & Kerrygold Quality Milk Awards, on Tuesday 30th June at 11.00 am.

The event is organised by Teagasc, with the support of Glanbia Ireland, the National Dairy Council and Ornu, and celebrates the excellence of Irish dairy farming highlighted annually by the NDC & Kerrygold Quality Milk Awards.

The webinar will feature interviews with Kieran Hearne; his Teagasc Adviser, Seamus Kearney; and Glanbia Ireland Milk Quality Manager, Brendan Walsh.

Discussion topics on the day will include:

- Overview of farm performance
- Producing high quality milk with low SCC, low TBC, low thermoduric levels and zero residues
- Sustainable milk production while caring for the environment
- Working smarter not harder

Aside from the webinar, there will be a social media takeover where further information on the farm will be made available throughout the day on twitter, instagram, facebook etc.

In addition, the webinar will mark the 10th anniversary of the Quality Milk Awards – the Hearne family were the tenth winners – and will feature independent judging panel of Professor Patrick Wall, Dr. David Gleeson and Dr. Jack Kennedy talking about what makes a Quality Milk Awards winner.

The Hearne Family Dairy Farm

Rathgormack, Co. Waterford is home to Kieran Hearne, his wife Ann, their four children Laurance, Fiona, Conor, Stephen, and Kieran's mother Ellen. In 2019, the family was awarded the top prize in the NDC & Kerrygold Quality Milk Awards. The Hearne's milk 190 cows and their milk is supplied to Glanbia.

Kieran started farming in 1992. The family had a herd of around 28 cows with some beef cattle in 1992. The Hearne's farm has expanded and become increasingly specialised in dairying and rearing breeding bulls and phased out the cattle enterprise on the farm by 2007. The Hearne's get valued support from The Teagasc advisory team locally in Waterford.

One of the areas that Kieran really excelled in was sustainable farming practices.

Environment and Bio Diversity

The following are some of the **bio diversity measures** carried out on the farm.

1. *New hedgerow & tree plantings* - Kieran has been planting new hedgerows and trees with the past 20 years to improve bio-diversity on the farm and to create shelterbelts for the animals.
2. *Hedgerow management* - Kieran cuts hedges on a 3 to 4 year rotation to allow hedges to thicken into better and higher habitats for wildlife and birds.
3. *Mixed species of planting* - Kieran has used several different species of plantings to add diversity throughout the farm.

4. *Protection of hedgerows* - Hedgerows are protected by fencing from livestock and no spraying takes place within a buffer strip of hedgerows.

Kieran puts huge **value on his environment** in relation to soil, air and water and has put in place the following measures to help enhance his farming practices.

1. *Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme (ASSAP)* - Kieran has watercourses running through his farm and he is involved in the ASSAP programme where advice and actions are targeted at maintaining and improving water quality.
2. *Water quality* - Bridges installed where cows cross watercourses. Steams are fenced to exclude livestock. Huge investment in sheds, cubicles and slurry storage to be able to store animal slurries throughout the winter period to be able to spread slurry in Spring during the grass growing season.
3. *Air quality* - Animal slurry is spread with Low Emissions Slurry Spreading technology by contractor which enhances the nutrients from the slurry and reduces gases to the air. Protected urea is spread during the grazing season to reduce greenhouse gases.
4. *Soil quality* - regular soil sampling to establish soil requirements. Annual nutrient management plan to target nutrients to soils that have greatest requirements.
5. *Energy use* - Plate cooler water used to cool milk and recycled for washing collecting yard. LED lights to reduce electricity use in sheds.

To learn more about farm and what has made it an award winning farm, register for the webinar on Tuesday the 30th June at 11am by logging onto the Teagasc website. There will also be a substantial social media takeover where you will get further details on the farm. This is a first for us here in the region, so we would welcome you to participate in the webinar and keep an eye on the local and national social media on the 30th June.