

Teagasc Notes for week ending Friday 14th February 2020

Dairy

Early season grassland management

- Teagasc data indicates that average farm covers are behind target (at 750kg DM/ha, PastureBase data), despite normal growth rates over the winter period.
- Despite the weather challenges that appear at this time of year, every farmer must try to get cows out grazing, simply because it is good for cows, good for the farmer and good for the grass plant. Every day cows are at grass will increase profit, reduce costs and enable the farm to grow more grass.
- Ideally a spring grass budget should be completed, but another handy tool is the spring rotation planner (both on PastureBase).
- The planner is designed to take the guess work out of grazing management, and it relies on the principle of grazing a set area each day.

Chlorine-free washing routines

Food safety concerns around chlorine residues, such as trichloromethane (TCM) and chlorate, mean that it has become increasingly difficult to hit the required dairy product specifications when chlorine-based products are used to wash milking equipment at farm level and at milk processing sites.

Consequently, Ornuá has an objective that all chlorine-based detergents be removed from both farms and milk processing sites by the end of 2020. To begin, it is suggested that people change to chlorine-free washing routines on their bulk tanks.

Switching to chlorine free requires more than just changing the product being used. Teagasc recommends the following four steps when switching to a chlorine-free washing routine for your bulk tank:

1. Ensure an adequate supply of hot water is available. You may need to refer to your bulk tank service engineer to establish the correct quantity of hot water required.
2. Get the bulk tank service technician to calibrate the washer and flush out the intake pipes before switching products.
3. If using a manual washing system for your bulk tank, make sure to use the correct amount as directed by the product manufacturer guidelines. Dedicated measuring equipment for this purpose should ensure that the correct volumes are used – do not use more than directed.
4. If you decide to change the product you are using for washing, make sure to adjust the settings if required to ensure the correct concentration is being used. This is important as milk quality may suffer if you are not using enough, and your pocket may suffer if you are using too much!

TILLAGE

Spring beans

While the advantages of including spring beans in the rotation have been well documented (e.g., yield benefits in the following crops, disease break, workload, fertiliser savings) some growers are finding that beans can actually compete in terms of net margin with spring cereal crops.

Based on a price of €200/t, the 2020 Teagasc Crops Costs and Returns margins show that a 5.0t/ha crop of beans will leave a similar margin as a 7.5t/ha crop of spring barley (Table 1).

This includes the protein payment of €250/ha. If that protein payment increases to the 2019 figure of €365/ha, then it will take almost 8.5t/ha of spring barley to compete with it. Therefore, spring beans should be seriously considered in the cropping programme for 2020. However, growers who intend to sow spring beans this year need to be aware that seed supply is reported to be low, so get your orders in as soon as possible. Information from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) Spring Bean Recommended List 2020 is shown in Table 2.

Table 1: Net margin of spring barley v spring beans

Tonnes per ha	Spring Barley @ €140/t	Spring beans (€200/t) plus €250 protein payment	Spring beans (€200/t) plus €365 protein payment
	€/ha	€/ha	€/ha
5.0		299	414
6.0	74	499	614
7.5	284		
8.0	354		
8.5	424		

Note: Figures based on 2020 Teagasc Crop Costs & Returns

Table 2. DAFM Spring Bean Recommended List

	Recommended		Provisionally Recommended
	Boxer	Fanfare	Lynx
Treated yield (t/ha at 15% moisture)	97	101	105
Percentage crude protein	99	100	99
Resistance:	125	131	127
Chocolate spot	(5)	(6)	(7)
Downy mildew	(6)	(7)	(7)
Year of first recommendation	2016	2016	2019

Aim to sow 35-40 seeds/m². Be sure to ask your merchant for the thousand grain weight (TGW). This is always essential as the TGW of seed changes from year to year. If you use the same settings on the drill as last year, you may find that you have the incorrect seed rate, which will result in a crop that is either too thick or too thin. Try to drill beans at 4" to 5" to prevent crows digging them up. Prioritise weed control (Table 3) the day you drill, even if it means hiring in someone to spray for you. Prioritise pre-emergence weed control as Basagran, which has a limited weed spectrum, is the only post emergence broad leaf weed control option.

Take care not to apply pre-emergence herbicides if heavy rain is forecast and also try to avoid overlaps, as bleaching of the crop can often occur, which can hold the crop back. Trial work has shown no yield benefit from applying nitrogen (N) to beans at sowing. Beans that get N may appear green early on but it reduces their ability to produce their own N during the main part of the growing season, thus giving no benefit.

Table 3.

Product	Rate (l/ha)	Comment
Nirvana	4.0-4.5	Good all round weed control but needs higher rate when used alone
Nirvana plus Defy	2.5 + 4.0	Added activity on meadow grass, cleavers and black nightshade.
Stallion	3.0	Good weed spectrum, especially where groundsel is a problem.

Basagran	1.65	Post emergence use with limited weed spectrum.
Pendimethalin plus Centium	800g+ ai/ha And 0.25l/ha	Similar to Stallion.

