Organic beef farming – the facts

- **Whole farm must convert (minimum 3ha).**
- **Scheme payments during conversion (year one and two): €220/ha (€60/ha beyond 60ha).**
- **On achieving full status: €170/ha (€60/ha beyond 60ha).**
- **Typically 20% higher beef prices – varies with season and demand.**
- **Maximum stocking rate 170kg.**
- **Organic concentrate feeds: €500/t.**
- **100% slatted housing not permitted.**
- **Conventional animal medicines allowed as required (vet permission).**
- **No artificial fertilisers allowed.**
- **Farmyard manure, slurrit, imported dairy sludge and mineral fertilisers used in conjunction with clover swards and crop rotations.**

**Fixed costs:**
- €350/ha
- €550/ha
- €650/ha

**€/hr worked:**
- (as prop of net profit)
- €12.50/ha
- €12.50/ha
- €5/ha

**Cashflow:**
- (cumulative months without sales inc. sheep)
- <5
- <7
- >7

**Sods.** 2UJDQLFEHI DoUWV IRISH FARMERS JOURNAL Saturday 15 July 2017 BETTER FARM BEEF CHALLENGE

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**Sods.**
Growth is good and set to continue

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Our BETTER beef farms have grown an average of 80kg DM/ha daily in the last week. Intermittent bursts of rain and heat are leading to record grass growth rates on some farms for July, with a number reporting three-figure growth rates.

And yet another year when our grass growth curve traditionally begins its descent into the back-end, in the short term there are no signs of a reduction in growth. We are in for a warm weekend, particularly in the south and east of the country. Modest rain forecast on Saturday will be concentrated in coastal areas, particularly to the west.

What does this mean for grazing? Business as usual. While the guidelines for July involve a gradual increase in a farm's grass supply (average farm cover/days ahead), I would not be in any panic to actually end up playing the same amount of grass as a normal year – a compensatory effect.

Looking at the 2017 curve, the pattern at this stage is looking very familiar. That said, we need to hit our autumn targets for grass and should follow N fertiliser guidelines. While second-cut ground coming back into the rotation will boost supply, we should be getting a bag of CAN/acre across a grazing block in late August as a last fertiliser application. July will be a quiet month for fertiliser on most farms. However, those stocked at 3-5 units/ha or above should be splitting 60 units of N in two or three spreads between late-July and late-September.

**In short**
- Grass growth 70kg DM/ha/day.
- Growthy weather to continue.
- Grass demand to continue.
- No rush to increase farm covers at this point.

As a result of the dry spell, growth rates have slowed down due to the lack of moisture in the soil. However, even with the recent poor growth rates, grass is still in plentiful supply due to the fact that I am autumn calving and currently restricting my cow herd. This is to keep them from getting over-fit for calving, which is due to start at the end of the month. Heifers will start a week or so beforehand.

All of the cows were given Allsure boluses and an IBR live booster last week. Autumn stock cows and South Devon bull calves were weighed last week and they have had an average daily gain of 1.27kg/day since turnout.

In the last few weeks, I started to introduce meal to the cow’s diet and they are currently on 2kg/day. The heaviest of these bulls will be housed at the end of the month for finishing at U-16 months. All of the young stock will get a dose this week as some are starting to show signs of worms. This week I plan to power-harrow and reseed 12 acres.

I am conscious that I need to begin building grass after the second cut is in. I hope to get it in by 20 July. It's looking very familiar. I will cut around the back-end, in the short growthy weather we're expecting. I am hope to get the hay ring in by 1 August to begin with the next cutting, which I am aiming to get in by 20 August.

I also plan to plan to take some bales from a field that was reseeded last year. It's going well with growth-wise. I have earmarked it for removal. I will cut around the back-end, in the short growthy weather we're expecting. I am hope to get the hay ring in by 1 August.

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