

Teagasc Signpost Programme Newsletter

Issue 14 - October 2022

In this month's newsletter we get an update on soil analysis results for 2021 with advice from leading experts on the data. We have farmer profiles for Eamon & Donnchadh McCarthy, suckler beef farmers from Co Waterford and Raymond Goggin, dairy farmer from Co. Cork. We have our usual climate actions and a new self assessment tool to help farmers set a baseline for where they are at in terms of reducing emissions and also to put a plan in place. We have a research update from Jonathan Herron on selecting cows using the economic breeding index and the impact it can have on methane output. Congratulations to Teagasc Tírlan Future Farm Signpost Farmer David Fennelly who has been awarded a Nuffield Scholarship for 2023. We launched the Signpost Sustainability Week at the Ploughing as well as a photo competition for Autumn Climate Actions, a competition that will be repeated across the seasons through 2023.

Teagasc Crop & Nutrient Management Specialist, Mark Plunkett, joins Deirdre & Cathal on the Environment Edge to discuss how farmers can be ready for the change in the Nitrates Action Programme.



National Soil Fertility Trends 2021

These trends could indicate early signs of declining soil fertility levels nationally. Farmers should put plans in place to protect the productivity and long term sustainability of their farming business.

[Read Article in Full Here](#)



Eamon & Donnchadh McCarthy

Eamon and his son Donnchadh are farming in Carrigeen, Glendine, Youghal, Co. Waterford. Both work part-time on the farm. In addition, Eamonn works as a relief milker and Donnchadh has a full-time off farm job. They farm 45.47ha in 3 blocks including 4.6ha in barley and 11.7ha in Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Eamon is stocked at 110kgs N/HA. Eamon and Donnchadh are running a suckling to beef enterprise



Raymond Goggin

Raymond Goggin is farming at Templemartin, Bandon Co Cork with his wife Delia. Raymond farms 59 hectares with a milking block of 40ha and one outside block that is used for silage and rearing heifers. He is currently milking 124 cows and has always had a strong focus on EBI with his black and white herd having an EBI of €189 which puts them in the top 5% of herds ranked on EBI in Ireland. Last spring, Raymond calved

split into Spring (70%) and Autumn (30%) calving consisting of 46 suckler cows. They are measuring grass and using PBI for the last number of years. Temporary fencing and regularly taking soil samples to measure soil fertility is key to the McCarthy grassland management technique.

78% of his herd in 6 weeks using a replacement rate of 18%. He sold 530kg milk solids per cow to Dairygold co-op in 2021 or 64,700kg in total. The average Dairygold supplier last year had a herd EBI of €129 and sold 437kg milk solids per cow.

[Read more here](#)

[Read more here](#)

Climate Actions for October

Each month, we present climate actions that farmers can take to reduce gaseous emissions. These actions will be practical and timely. See below climate actions for the month of October.

Start taking soil samples for your farm. Don't delay until Christmas

Apply lime to low pH soils

Check your soil maps from NMP & apply K to low index soils

Do a self assessment of your farm's environmental sustainability

Check out your Bord Bia feedback report for your carbon footprint figure

Allow topped hedges to grow at least 1.5m above bank to allow thorn sapling in each hedge to grow to a thorn tree

[Read the full Climate Actions for October here](#)

Self Assessment Worksheet

Signpost Sustainability Self-Assessment: What Changes Will You Make?

Use the Signpost Sustainability Self-Assessment Worksheet to help you make changes to your farm practices within the next 12 months

[Open self-assessment here](#)

Selecting Cows Using EBI

Impact of selecting cows using EBI on methane output

A major challenge facing the agricultural industry



is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25% by 2030. The contribution of genetics should be considered when quantifying environmental impacts as breeding is cumulative and permanent.

[Read article in full here](#)

Congratulations to David Fennelly, Signpost Dairy Farmer, (Teagasc Tírlan Future Farm Programme), on receiving a Nuffield Ireland Farming Scholarship



David Fennelly

David Fennelly is a 2023 Nuffield Scholar from Emo in County Laois. His study topic is '*Diversity in Irish Grazing Swards & Systems - Solutions to our challenges may be under foot ?*'

This study aims to explore alternative swards, inputs and grazing strategies, which provide solutions at the root cause of challenges facing pasture-based dairy cows.

He is a full-time dairy farmer in partnership with his parents. The farm has a strong focus on reducing environmental impact, while maintaining a resilient, and robust farm business that is an attractive place to work.

The farm is also a demonstration farm for the Signpost programme, which aims to showcase science-based technologies to reduce Irish agricultural emissions. David is a 2020 graduate of University College Dublin with a Bachelor of Agricultural Science in Dairy Business. As a member of a discussion group, David also has an active role in local Macra na Feirme and GAA clubs.

Signpost Sustainability Week

Signpost Sustainability Week was launched at the National Ploughing Championships.

The theme of Sustainability Week 2022 is 'Farming for a Better Future'. Sustainability Week 2022 will consist of a series of public, in person and virtual events.

Sustainability Week will take place from Friday the 14th of October to Friday the 21st of October 2022.



Sustainability Week 2022, will see the start of our quarterly photo competitions where we will be inviting photo entries from the public relating to the quarterly climate actions. The first competition will focus on Autumn climate actions and there is €250 up for grabs.



Click on the link below to enter your competition photo for Sustainability Week

[Click here to enter](#)



[View 'Sustainability Week' events here](#)

The Environment Edge Podcast (Part One)

With major changes to Ireland's Nitrates Action Programme, in relation to soil sampling and the introduction of a fertiliser register for farmers, coming into effect from January 1st 2023, Teagasc Crop and Nutrient Management Specialist, Mark Plunkett, joins Deirdre and Cathal to discuss how farmers can be ready for the change.

[Listen to podcast here](#)

The Environment Edge Podcast (Part Two)



With ever increasing pressure on dairy farmers to meet the challenges of sustainability and with greenhouse gas emissions currently to the fore, what work is being carried out to support dairy production systems?

[Listen to podcast here](#)

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