PastureBase Ireland - Capturing Grassland Data on Irish Drystock Farms

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Talk Outline

- PastureBase Ireland on farm results
- Grass DM production on drystock farms
- Spring - Autumn management
- Current findings
PastureBase Ireland

- Web based grassland management decision support tool – front end
- Grassland data base - back end
- Primary user - farmer- captures data
- Core measurement is pre-grazing herbage mass
April Growth Rates 40% behind of 2015
PastureBase Ireland Drystock Farms DM Production

Sheep Farms 2013
- Grazing DM: 9337
- Silage DM: 1850

Sheep Farms 2014
- Grazing DM: 9429
- Silage DM: 1730

Sheep Farms 2015
- Grazing DM: 10780
- Silage DM: 1428

Beef Farms 2014
- Grazing DM: 9905
- Silage DM: 1934

Beef Farms 2015
- Grazing DM: 10856
- Silage DM: 1575
What are high producing farms doing?

- High Soil fertility
  - Index 3, pH > 6.0
- Routine measurement and proactive management
- Low variation between highest and lowest paddocks
- Spring grazing
- More grazings per farm
- Reseeding part of management

Cumulative Paddock Yield to 31/12/2015

Silage Yield
Grazing Yield

The Irish Agriculture and Food Development Authority
DM Production on Drystock Farm 2015 (>25 covers)

12.3 tonne/ha
Spring growth variation is 5% to 15% = \(0.5\text{t DM/ha to 1.7t DM/ha}\)

Spring Production Proportion by Season 2015

- Autumn: 31%
- Summer: 61%
- Spring: 8%

The Irish Agriculture and Food Development Authority
Factors Influencing Spring Grass supply

- Autumn closing date - farmer
- Closing cover - farmer
- Winter grass growth rate - 50% farmer
- Spring nitrogen application - farmer
- Spring grazing management – farmer
- Spring grass growth - 50% farmer
Spring Pasture Accumulation as influenced by previous Autumn closing date

Every Week delay in closing from October 2nd reduces Spring grass supply by 77kg DM/ha
1. 66% of farms had little/no stock out grazing by March 1\textsuperscript{st}
2. March 17\textsuperscript{th} - 20% grazed - well below target of 40%
3. Top producing farms are achieving 50% by March 17\textsuperscript{th}
4. 45% of farms finished the first round by April 25\textsuperscript{th}
5. Farms that finished the first round pre April 10\textsuperscript{th} grew +200kg DM/ha
   more grass spring (1,040 vs 860kg)
6. Farms that finished the first round pre April 10\textsuperscript{th} also grew 1.1t DM/ha
   more annual grass in 2015 (12.2 vs 11.1t DM/ha)
Early Grazing Effects on Sward Characteristics

Early grazed sward:

- Milk Yield
- Liveweight Gain
- Grass Growth
- Grass Quality

Late grazed sward:

- Low Utilisation
- Poor Performance
Spring production and its association with total grazing DM production

\[ y = 5.8342x + 4666.4 \]

\[ R^2 = 0.668 \]
Number of grazing achieved per paddock and its association with total grazing DM production

One extra grazing achieved per paddock is 1,385kg DM/ha of extra grass
Every extra paddock created on a farm will give 5 extra grazings per farm

Number of grazing achieved per farm and its association with total number of paddocks

\[ y = 5.7028x - 7.8446 \]

\[ R^2 = 0.6905 \]
Huge potential exists to grow more grass - improvements in grazing management

Spring grazing management

Mid-season - adhere to rotation length

Adequate number & size of paddocks

Grass is a crucial feed for liveweight gain & milk production

Grass measurement is now part of grassland management
Thank you for your attention

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