

## Moorepark focus

## Taking a people-first

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**T**here will be a wide variety of people-focused topics featured at the Moorepark Open Day.

Key questions addressed will include:

- How can I make my farm more labour efficient and have a better work/life balance while still running a profitable farm business?
- How many cows can one person manage?
- How can I become a better employer, attracting and retaining good people?
- What is the best way to bring the next generation into the business?
- How do collaborative farming models work, and what are the benefits?
- Is it worth converting my farm to dairying?
- What kinds of career opportunities exist in Irish dairying for people without farms?

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These topics will be dealt with in a variety of ways. The main board, which all visitors encounter, will feature aspects of the recently launched “People in Dairy” project report, which outlines the need for 6,000 people to enter Irish dairy farming by 2025.

#### Future expansion

The People in Dairy report outlines a framework for future expansion focused on making dairy farming an attractive career which can compete with other sectors.

A key aspect of this is making farms enjoyable places to work by improving labour efficiency and work practices. Ensuring that every person working on Irish dairy farms including owner-operators are taking on sustainable workloads is crucial for the sector and has become a big challenge with the recent surge in cow numbers across the country.



# approach to dairying

## Attractions at the People Village

### FORUM ONE: New entrants/ dairy conversions

The New Entrant Forum is bound to be of interest to anyone not currently in dairy farming. This is where you can hear first-hand from new entrant dairy farmers. They will describe and discuss the lessons they've learned from their own conversion experience.

Some of these farmers have been dairy farming for a number of years; some started in the last two years; others have just bought heifers and plan to start milking in 2018. Converting to dairying can require substantial investment and a new range of skills. During the forum, which will be run twice during the day, attendees can hear first-hand how these new entrants managed this process. They will discuss both what they got right and what they got wrong!

These farmers will be available to meet on a one-to-one basis in the private dairy conversion marquee throughout the day. Dr Roberta McDonald from Aurivo will chair both forums.

### FORUM TWO: Labour management/ training the employer

Justine Deming, a PhD student in Moorepark, will outline her recent findings from a labour study on some of Ireland's most labour-efficient farmers. Dr Nollaig Heffernan who works as a consultant with businesses all over the world, including dairy farmers, about how to manage people will share her insights.

Many farmers have questions about how to recruit, manage and retain good people. Nollaig will outline the key aspects of successfully employing someone in your business. Both Nollaig and Justine will discuss potential solutions to managing the spring workload from a labour efficiency and people management point of view.

This forum will also run twice during the day and will be chaired by John McNamara, a Teagasc dairy advisor in west

Cork. John is coordinating the Shinaugh Dairy Farm Project in Bandon, Co Cork. The times of the forums will be announced on the day.

### The big labour wall

One of the major challenges farmers have encountered in recent years with expansion is managing the workload associated with larger herds. With half the cows in Ireland now milked in herds of more than 100 cows, labour efficiency is central to a successful farm business.

As part of the village, Teagasc dairy specialist Pat Clarke will answer questions about labour efficiency. Pat will outline a number of practical labour saving ideas which will be displayed on a 'labour-saving ideas wall'. This promises to be a lot of fun with a number of ideas for how time can be better spent, both inside and outside the farm gate.

### Other key boards

Teagasc collaborative farming specialist Tom Curran will be in the village to discuss opportunities such as partnerships, share farming, leasing and contract-rearing. Researcher Dr Tomas Russell and specialist James McDonnell will also be on hand to discuss succession management within a farming business.

Teagasc beef advisor Tom Coll, who has a special discussion group of farmers who are contract-rearing heifers, will be there with one of the members to provide more insight on this topic. These three stands will be of interest to anyone considering collaborative farming models to grow their business. Alternatively, someone might be looking to "take a step back" by working with a farmer in a calf-rearing arrangement.

Dr Marion Beecher, who is coordinating the professional farm managers' course in Moorepark, will be present to discuss career options in dairying

and training opportunities for the next-generation farmer.

Dr Niall O'Leary who recently joined Moorepark to work on the dairy precision project, will discuss his recent studies which have shown that farmer attributes and behaviour can predict farm profitability.

### People focus in other villages

Farmers interested in learning more about strategic planning should make sure to visit Tom O'Dwyer and New Zealand consultant Lynaire Ryan in the profitable farm systems village. They will be running an interactive session on the importance of strategic planning and giving practical tips on how to start planning strategically in your own business.

The infrastructure village will include a number of different boards on how farms can be set up to maximise labour efficiency. All of these ideas have been summarised in a booklet on efficient farm infrastructure, which will be available on the day. This booklet covers many aspects of how to improve labour efficiency with a particular focus on all aspects of the milking routine and paddock infrastructure.

As dairy herds grow in size, many farmers are becoming employers for the first time.



Justine Deming says farmers should aim to finish earlier in the evenings.