**Dairy The rain in Spain falls mainly in the winter**

Galicia in northwest Spain is the country’s main dairying region

John Lawlor, Dairy Advisor, Teagasc, Co Louth

During a recent visit to Galicia, a group of Teagasc clients and advisors discovered that Spain’s dairy industry has some similarities and some huge differences compared with our own.

The visit was part of a new InterReg project set up using EU funding called Dairy4Future. It’s an EU project looking at how new technologies can improve the future of dairy farms in regions along the Atlantic Coast.

Galicia is an autonomous region in northwest Spain with its own language in everyday use. It’s best-known city, and capital, is Santiago de Compostella, the final destination for pilgrims on the famous Camino Way.

### Dairy industry in Galicia

The province of Galicia, with a population of 2.1m people, accounts for 40% of total dairy production in Spain. Dairying is a very important part of agriculture here and accounts for 40% of total dairy production in Spain. Dairying is a very important part of agriculture here and accounts for 80% of total agricultural activity. There are 8,000 dairy farms in Galicia, more than half of the total number of Spanish dairy farms. In size, it’s about one fifth bigger than Munster.

Total annual milk production in Spain totals about seven billion litres, which is almost identical to production in Ireland of 7.2bn litres in 2017 (from 16,000 suppliers).

However, the similarities end there when we look at the systems in use, with 90% of milk production in Galicia being from confined indoors systems and only 10% from grazing.

Two metres of rainfall per annum

Who would expect an annual rainfall in this area of almost 2m (80”)? Maybe it’s not too surprising when we consider that the Galician coast is adjacent to the wild Atlantic, with its many weather systems, on two sides. However, this rain is quite seasonal, with little falling for two or three months in high summer and very high winter rainfall.

With mild winters, this leads to almost two growing seasons, consisting of April to June and a second season of lesser growth from October to April when there is nonetheless a considerable amount of growth.

SAT Samperez Farm

An SAT farm is a type of family co-operative farm, not unlike our own. The farming system is outlined in the system and performance, both physical and financial.

The farm was established by Pepe in 2012, with 100 Holstein cows with high solids sourced in Holland and Germany. Milk is said to be the highest standard on the island, with a new building added in the last three years.

The cows are indoors all year, with milk solids of 3.3%, milk fat of 3.6% and milk protein at 2.7%. The farm is run by a family of 10 people, including a farm manager, farm worker, farm assistant, and four children.

### Challenges in Galicia

Like Ireland, there is a very large problem with the structure of holdings and small grazing platforms are one of the reasons for the very low percentage of grass-based farming. There is huge competition for land and productivity is negatively affected.

### Milking and milking parlours

The Irish Dairy 4 Future group on one of the farms with group leader Eddie Burgess, Teagasc, Galicia, with access to an outdoor area with timber byproduct. In addition to rearing the heifers, the co-op farm makes all the slage centrally for the eight farms in the co-op. The slage is made from land owned by the farmers and every load is weighed and signed.

After the maize is harvested in September, a catch crop consisting of 75% v. 3% and 4% DM, all for hay. Maize typically yields 360/ha DM and the forage mixes yield approximately 25% and 4% DM (ha) DM for mixed dry and forage. Protein is typically about 19% for the catch crop. A total of 100% of maize and catch crops is conserved, with a further 100% of permanent grass silage (four cuts) made on the co-op farm.

### From milk to milk solids

A group of growing replacement heifers on the sat farm, putting on weight and ready for weaning at 15 days of age. The animals are being studied with the assistance of the Centre in Mabegondo Ag Research Centre in Mabegondo Ag Research Centre, outlined the farm system and performance, both physical and financial.

Today’s farm