

grass focus

Two programmes become one for the benefit of the grassland industry

The merger of AgriNet and PastureBase Ireland will bring benefits for all. In this Q and A some potential queries from AgriNet members are addressed by **Micheal O'Leary**, PastureBase Ireland, Teagasc Animal and Grassland Research & Innovation Programme

I am an AgriNet Grass user. What do I need to do to join PBI and what are my log-in details?

You should have received a letter from AgriNet Grass and Teagasc outlining the merging of the two programmes. On the second page, there is some information that we need in order to transfer your information to PBI. This section needs to be filled out and sent back using the pre-paid envelop attached as soon as possible. Once we receive your details, the PBI help centre will make contact with you and explain the transfer process. When transferred, you will be given log in details to PBI.

I have been using AgriNet Grass for four years. Are all my historical records gone?

Of course not. This data is very valuable to you. Every record that you have entered into AgriNet Grass will be transferred to PBI. However, it is important to note that the calculations used to generate the annual tonnage report are slightly different. If you have questions about your data we are more than happy to help.

In AgriNet Grass, I am part of a discussion group where I can see other farmer's details; will I be connected to these farmers in PBI?

This option of creating a link with other farmers will be available in PBI from mid-January. When you join PBI you will have to recreate these links with the farmers you want to share data with. If you want to share data with another farmer you will have to enter their email address or contact number in order to send an invitation. All research and demo farms will be available to all farmers.

Q&A

I like using AgriNet Grass and have found it very useful. What are the advantages of using PBI?

By using PBI we are building the world's first National Grassland Database. From this information researchers in Teagasc will be able to see the level of grass production in any part of Ireland at any time. There is a lot of valuable data in the AgriNet Grass database that is not being analysed effectively from a national or industry point of view that can now be analysed. The centralisation of bovine data in ICBF over the past 20 years has created significant gains for farmers. Centralisation of grass data in PBI will help create similar gains in terms of breeding and evaluation of new grass varieties and the management of grassland.

Is there an app for PBI?

Currently, there is no app available for PBI, but you can open PBI on the browser on your smartphone and all functions are available to you. So if you can make a call on your phone you can use PBI.

Will there be a charge for PBI?

The use of PBI is covered in your annual Teagasc subscription.

Who do I contact if I want more information?

Please contact the PBI help centre by email – support@pbi.ie or by telephone – 046 – 9200365. The help centre is open from 9am to 9pm, Monday to Friday, or contact your local Teagasc office. We are also running information sessions across the country in January where will be advertised in local press.



2017: a good

This year, dairy farms grew 650kg more grass compared to 2016 (14,355 v 13,703kg DM/ha). On the one side, the average grass production was good but it was not without its challenges. Weather conditions in August and September became very difficult, especially on the western seaboard, but in the east of the country drought was not an issue and this led to steady growth throughout the summer and autumn.

Spring growth (1 January to 10 April) was up 30% in 2017 when compared with the same period in 2016. This was largely driven by the mild winter and favourable growing condi-



year for grass growth on dairy farms

tions, especially in March.

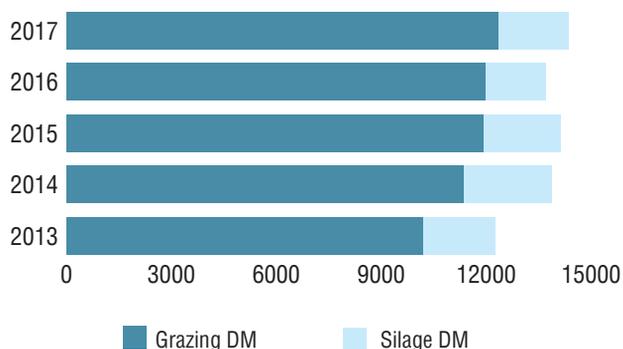
Taking a look at the main grazing season (11 April to 10 August) growth in 2017 was 10% greater than 2016.

Autumn grass production (11 August to 31 December) in 2017 is down 12%, but we cannot forget the excellent autumn we had in 2016.

In 2017, there was an increase in the number of grazings. It is well known that the number of grazings achieved per paddock is a major driver of grass production; every extra grazing is worth 1,385kg DM/ha. In 2016, dairy farms achieved 7.2 grazings per paddock while in 2017 this increased to 7.8 grazings.

Figure 1

The annual dry matter production on PBI dairy farms from 2013 to 2017 in kg DM/ha



This analysis was extracted from PBI dairy farms which recorded 30 measurements on PBI in 2016 and 2017. Also please note that the pool of farmers in 2017 is bigger than 2016 (+35 farms).