

BovINE– a project seeking solutions for all European beef farmers



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A European project known as BovINE (Beef Innovation Network Europe) aims to identify the grassroot needs of the 255,000 farmers that make up the EU bovine meat sector. The idea is to then collectively develop practical solutions for these needs that can be implemented on European beef farms.

Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Spain are partners in the project and will each develop their own national knowledge exchange networks by enlisting beef farmers, farming organisations, advisors, researchers and other stakeholders. These will be connected across Europe by the overall project coordinator, Teagasc.

All nine countries have appointed a network manager to coordinate the multiple stakeholders from the beef supply chain within that country, to identify both the challenges their beef farmers are facing and any potential solutions they might have to address the needs of the other eight countries in the project.

BovINE has created a number of working groups which will focus on improving one of four pillars of sustainability; socio-economic resilience, animal health and welfare, production efficiency and meat quality and environmental sustainability.

Each working group will bring together various experts within the European research community to unearth innovations not yet tested on commercial beef farms.

Central Space for sharing solutions

At the core of the BovINE project is a specially developed online digital knowledge repository, known as the BovINE Knowledge Hub (www.hub.bovine_eu.net), where all the innovations, technologies and useful



good practices are stored and shared amongst the European beef farming community.

The knowledge hub is free to all with an interest in beef farming and is open not only to those who wish to search for useful solutions, but also for anyone who wishes to share tips and practices with others.

Challenges and solutions to date

In 2020, the BovINE project identified several challenges surrounding the economic, social and environmental sustainability of beef farms across Europe.

Needs identified included tools to aid beef farmers in risk management and economic planning, innovations and technologies that can reduce mor-

tality at calving time and solutions that reduce the leaching of nutrients into waterbodies. Improving the carbon footprint of the farm as a whole was also key.

This year will also see the roll out of over 50 demonstrations of research innovations not yet tested on European beef farms.

Within Ireland, demonstrations will be undertaken on a novel technique for reviving newborn weak/unresponsive calves, the implementation of forward purchasing and selling contracts, the use of nitrogen fixing crops and the use of automated weighing systems and methods to predict future calving difficulty by measuring pelvic width in beef heifers.



In 2021 the project will be searching for research solutions and good practices utilised by other European beef farmers to address the following topics:

- Initiatives to improve the image of beef and to break the current trend of consumption decline.
- Economically efficient housing systems for beef cattle.
- Simple tools to measure and communicate animal welfare standards on beef farms.

- Management, housing and environmental factors which affect animal welfare in rearing and finishing units.
- Managing animal nutrition and stress to improve meat quality.
- Methods to optimise the number of calves per cow per year in suckler beef herds.
- Environmental sustainability reward schemes for beef farmers.
- Methods to improve carbon sequestration on beef farms.

Research innovations and good practices addressing these topics will be reported back to Irish farmers in a workshop co-organised by Teagasc and the IFA in November/December 2021.

How to get involved

If you are a beef farmer, advisor, veterinarian or any other stakeholder in the Irish beef supply chain, you can get involved by becoming a member of the Irish BovINE network. To join the network, please contact kevin@agspace.ie or richard.lynch@teagasc.ie.

You can also find out more information on BovINE by visiting the projects website at www.bovine_eu.net or by connecting with us on our social media channels. Also keep an eye on our YouTube channel (<https://bit.ly/3sD58vs>) to see the latest videos and presentations on innovative solutions for beef farmers.

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