



Hard work paying off as Westmeath farmer claims Arrabawn Milk Supplier of the Year Award

Maintaining top quality breeding and grassland management programmes as well as parlour cleanliness are among the key ingredients for this year's Arrabawn Milk Supplier of the Year when it comes to ensuring milk quality. Kieran Dunican from Horseleap, Moate, Co. Westmeath won the outright Arrabawn Supplier of the Year award, which was presented to him at the Arrabawn AGM at the Abbey Court Hotel, Nenagh and said that despite the challenges, dairy farming has a positive future.

The 36 year-old fourth generation dairy farmer took over the family farm – his father started supplying the then Snowcream Creamery in Moate in 1959 – in 2005, having graduated in 2002 from college. He farms 200 acres, 100 of which are at the home block, with some leased also nearby, and has grown the farm from 40 cows at the turn of the millennium to 120 now. Five years ago he replaced a six-unit parlour with a new 14 cow unit, which has been one of a number of key moments in the growth of the herd. "Before we had the new unit, we had 90 cows and were standing for hours. A lot of time was wasted but the larger parlour makes a huge difference," he said.

The first Co. Westmeath man to take the top Arrabawn award, Kieran said that a major focus of the past decade or more has been on breeding. "We are always trying to keep the herd as good as we can, trying to have a better quality of cow," said Kieran, a liquid milk supplier.

"We keep Holsteins and haven't gone down the cross breeding route. We always kept pedigree sires but the last couple of years we have been using AI bulls only to breed our replacements from, picking the top sires. We don't buy in stock either and that enables us to keep disease down also so we haven't had any vaccination programmes.

"Another big area for us is grass management. I am in a Teagasc discussion group and have learned a lot, in particular, about managing grass. We are now doing weekly measuring and use a grass wedge to best utilise and allocate grass to the cows. It's a huge help to identify where there will be grass surpluses/deficits well in advance.

"We look six paddocks ahead and sometimes you think you are going to be short but then your growth rates come right. You see the covers are coming to the right height when the cows go into those paddocks. It's great and we should have been at it for years, now that I see the benefit of it".

The other key area to focus on in terms of retaining milk quality, he says, is cleanliness. "Breeding and grass management has a lot to do with it but the attention to quality in the milking parlour is also very important. We keep it clean, wash it down well and follow strict hot and cold wash routines, using the best detergent and descaling products. It's essential in keeping out bacteria," he adds.

Kieran, who joined Arrabawn in 2010, is positive about the prospects for dairy farming, despite the uncertainty and concern generally for farming post Brexit.

"I am positive about what's ahead," he states. "There's been such improvements made in breeding and feeding that I think we are farming very well at the moment. I'm always looking out for ways to improve things and there's plenty of advice on that, whether from Teagasc, Arrabawn or just out there in media.

"We joined Arrabawn in 2010 and we've been happy with the move. Looking at the prices over the last couple of years, we have been there or thereabouts among the best paid on milk price. I wasn't expecting this (award) but I'm delighted. The hard work is paying off."



Arrabawn Milk Supplier of the year Kieran Dunican receiving the trophy from Sean Monahan Chairman Arrabawn Co-op. Also present is Kieran's father Larry Dunican, Margaret McLoughney AIB Sponsors and Conor Ryan CEO.

Congratulating him on the award, Arrabawn Chairman Sean Monahan said: "Kieran operates at a very high level. He's indicative of our dairy farmer today, totally dedicated to quality and looking for new ways to advance operations and enhance milk quality at all times. He's grown the herd steadily but very impressively over the years and is representative of the standards that we are working to across our supplier network."

DEVELOPMENT FARM WALK
PAT AND EDDIE KENNEDY , BALLINGARRY
WED. 28th JUNE 11-1pm



LESSONS FROM EXPANSION

Special guest: Patrick Gowing, Teagasc

Arrabawn milk supplies already reach growth levels anticipated for 2020 – CEO Conor Ryan

Arrabawn Co-op has hit its 2020 milk supply targets three years early and embarked on a capacity review with the likelihood of further investment as a result, CEO Conor Ryan told suppliers at its AGM last week.

After an unprecedented round of investment that has seen capacity grow over 45% in the past four years, the post quota increase in milk supply has been such that the Co-Op is now recalibrating its capacity plans to cater for greater supplies again.

Addressing the annual general meeting at the Abbey Court Hotel last week, Arrabawn Co-Op CEO Conor Ryan said that milk supply has increased more than was anticipated and that the co-op will have to adjust its capacity plans accordingly.

“We’ve reached our 2020 target capacity in 2017. As we stand at the moment, we have an immediate plan that would give us another 10% headroom but the longer term plan for 2020 needs to be reviewed and we need to ensure we have increased capacity.

“Previously, we had expected supply to increase slightly this year but it’s increasing faster than we had anticipated. We need to come up with a concrete plan over the next few months to deal with this. Our Kilconnell

site has capacity but our Nenagh site is the one that will need capacity adjustment.”

The Arrabawn CEO said that it had been a strong start to 2017, in particular on feed, with fertiliser also strong initially and the outlook on both feed and fertiliser prices positive. “With regard to milk, year to date we are up 6.4% on milk and running now at 7% plus week on week,” he said.

The outlook, he said, was positive. “Overall EU prices have stabilised, though butter is probably driving it on longer than we expected. Overall with milk prices we would be reasonably confident that current price levels are sustainable over the next few months.”

Referencing the Bord Bia Sustainability Scheme, the CEO said that 97.7% of Arrabawn suppliers are participating, up from 53% of our suppliers just one year ago.

“There’s a lot of money involved for the good of the Irish farmer so this scheme is at a critical juncture. The next six months will determine whether it’s a success and it would be a terrible pity for the sake of 1% not being committed or involved that the other 99% would suffer,” he added.

AGM Brexit Report

Guest speaker at the Arrabawn Co-Op AGM in Nenagh, Alison Graham, ICOS European Affairs Executive, told suppliers that prospects under a hard Brexit are not good for the dairy sector, particularly for cheese, and therefore we should strive to achieve a concrete new customs relationship with the UK. The Brussels based expert also said that getting a transitional trade agreement for the period after the UK leaves the EU is critical to enable the agri sector and others prepare for what will follow. A sudden Brexit could, however, be ruinous for many in the sector. “With 50,859t of butter and 114,749t of cheese exported to the UK in 2016, Brexit is the most significant threat to the growth and development the Irish agri-food sector. Without any agreement tariffs could potentially be as high as 60% on dairy and beef products and there would be major implications for the supply chains.

“It is now clear that the UK will leave the single market, however it is still not known what exactly the future EU-UK relationship will look like. She continued: “A transitional agreement is of critical importance for all businesses in order to avoid a “cliff-edge scenario” which would see customs borders introduced overnight and tariffs on Irish exports to the UK. Maintaining customs arrangements that are as close as possible to the status quo under a transitional arrangement would allow industry the time to implement risk mitigation measures, such as adjusting supply chains, and finding new markets.

CellCheck Tip of the Month

Teat disinfection-don’t cut it out!

After a long, busy spring you may be tempted to skip some of the ‘routine’ jobs that take a bit of time. Some people also consider cutting out some of these practices in order to save money. But very often, this cost ‘cutting’ is not cost ‘saving’ in the long run. Post-milking teat disinfection is a perfect example. Good teat disinfection after milking reduces new mastitis infections by 50%. It does this by killing the bacteria that are left behind after milking, and by maintaining the teat skin in good condition. By not teat disinfecting, you will save some money in the short term on product, but very quickly it will lead to an increase in the number of new mastitis infections. Not all of these new infections will be obvious, clinical ones; many will be subclinical infections, which only present as a high SCC, but still have a significant effect on the cow’s production and are a continued source of infection for other cows.

From Animal Health Ireland, CellCheck

Arrabawn Co-op Mastitis Control Programme - Be Part of it!

The aim of this Programme is to prevent or reduce the number of incidents of mastitis on the farm each year - this in turn will lead to lower S.C.C. and lower usage of antibiotic treatments. This will help maximise milk supplied per cow to the co-op and give a better financial return to the farmer. S.C.C. is a measure of white blood cells in the milk. These increase in the milk from cows that are fighting mastitis. Over the next few months, Animal Health Ireland, through its Cell Check programme will be organising a number of events to highlight Somatic Cell Count (SCC) around the country - if you would like to be involved in this programme or if you need any information, on a one to one basis, in relation to Somatic Cell Count or Mastitis Control, please contact your local branch of Arrabawn Co-op or Tom Starr, Arrabawn (087 669 7010).



Present at the AGM Sean Fahy, Killimor, Michael Frawley Dan O'Connor Feeds and Martin Callanan, Athenry.

**For any further information or advice
on any subjects or products
mentioned in this newsletter
please ring 087 6697010**

**Email: farmsupport@arrabawn.ie
Check out our Website: www.arrabawn.ie**

Fertilizer for Summer Grass -2017

June is a difficult month for many reasons. Often the challenge is to get the after-grass going, especially if the weather is very dry and warm. As a result farmers are wondering just what to do to get grass growing. It will take more than straight Nitrogen in many cases.

So, which is the best fertilizer for this time of year?

Although many fields and paddock did receive P and K fertilizer (some in the form of slurry) earlier in the year, this P and K will have been used for plant growth or has been leached from the soil. Either way, the amount of P and K fertilizer available is way short of what the plant needs. In order for Nitrogen fertilizer to perform it must have a supply of Phosphate(P) and Potash(K) fertilizer. A shortage of P and K fertilizer will be seen as pale green areas in the field.

Selenium fertiliser programme – over the past few years, Arrabawn has been monitoring the Selenium status in grass and silage across its catchment area. The results have been very positive, with farmers who use regular applications of selenium containing fertiliser having improved levels of selenium in their forage and improved fertility in their cows – less repeats and improved calving performance! However, it is critical that farmers complete their Selenium programme by ensuring that they use 4 bags per acre on grazing paddocks.

Regarding silage crops, it is vital that second cuts also receive selenium. There isn't much point in having a pit of silage with two thirds having received selenium and one third with no selenium as the 'non-selenium silage' will cause blood levels in cows to drop. The options for second cut silage are in the table below:

Products for Second Cut Silage	
Traditional product	Selenium option
24 2.5 10	Selenigrow
CAN	Selenigrass
CAN +	S Selenigrass + S

Fertilizer options include:

N	P	K
27	2.5 5	Pasture sward
24	2.5	10 Cutsward
18	6	12

All these have a significant level of nitrogen to boost grass growth together with some P and K to complement the Nitrogen.

Another option, where P and K levels are adequate, would be **Sweetgrass Granules**. This is a 23% Nitrogen product with **sulphur, magnesium and sodium** (salt). The salt is added as a plant nutrient, an aid to the animal's digestion and it will also make the grass more palatable, especially after a slurry application. This product is very competitively priced in comparison to other high nitrogen compounds.

For further information contact your local Arrabawn Co-op branch, your Arrabawn / Dan O'Connor Feeds Rep or Tom Starr (087 669 7010).




Grassland Farmer of the Year

With 2017 designated the Year of Sustainable Grassland, and a proven link between increased grass utilisation and increased profitability (every extra tonne utilised is worth an extra €181/ha on dairy farms; €105/ha on drystock farms), the Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine, in collaboration with numerous industry stakeholders, have recently launched a competition as part of the Grass10 initiative to find the Grassland Farmer of the Year. The Grass10 campaign aims to increase the quantity of grass utilised on livestock farms (dairy, beef and sheep), with the objective of achieving: 10 tons grass DM/ha/year utilised, with 10 grazings/paddock/year.

The competition has an impressive overall prize fund of €30,000 up for grabs, with young farmer, regional and enterprise awards on offer, as per below:

- **Grassland Farmer of the Year** – Overall Competition Winner
- **Regional Award Winners** for Leinster, Munster and Connaught/Ulster
- **Enterprise Award Winners** in Dairy Beef and Sheep
- **Development Award Winner** (Young Farmer under 30 years)

Each category winners will receive a prize of €4,000, and the overall winner (who will be selected from one of the 7 categories) will receive an additional €2,000 in prize money.

Application forms can be downloaded from www.teagasc.ie/crops/grassland/grass10/ or can be requested from Niamh.allen@teagasc.ie or by phoning 025-42457.

Completed application forms should be submitted on or before **Wednesday July 5th 2017** to Grassland Farmer of the Year Competition c/o Niamh Allen, Teagasc, Moorepark, Fermoy, Co. Cork.



BreederMax – the Nut for Summer Grazing



- Dan O'Connor has introduced the Breedermax Dairy to boost cow performance at grass.
- Milk price is good and you need to keep milk quality and volume up to capitalise on the higher price in mid and late lactation.

Dan O'Connor Breedermax Fertility/ Grazing Nut-Key Benefits

- BreederMax Fertility /Grazing Nut is a high energy 16% Protein nut specifically formulated to complement good quality grazed grass.
- Includes high levels of Barley as a quality starch source.
- Includes high levels Sugar Beet Pulp as a digestible fibre source.
- Includes Protected minerals to help keep the mineral balance right in cows at grass.
- Includes De-odorase to tie up surplus nitrogen and protein, which could seriously affect fertility, due to increased levels of Blood Urea.
- Now includes Iodex, as protected iodine to get past the problem of iodine inaction with feed.
- Cal Mag included at 2oz to 2kg feed.

Summer feeding

Dairy Feeding --- while farmers are relieved to be finished with the long spring(winter!) feeding period, some cows still require feeding to meet certain requirements :-

- Magnesium for grass tetany
- Energy for body condition / fertility
- Energy for milk protein
- Minerals for fertility

For the right feed at the right price contact our local Sales Rep or local Arrabawn Branch

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Save the date!
August 31st 2017
“Farming Smarter
– Not Harder”
Gurteen Agricultural College
More details next month

Golden rules for summer grazing

1. Walk the milking platform 1-2 times a week.
2. Do not let cows graze covers more than 1400kgDM/ha.
3. Take out paddocks with covers greater than 1400kgDM/ha as bales within 1-2 days of its due grazing date. Expect a light crop but realise that this excellent quality feed will be given to cows in Spring when cows require quality feed. Surplus bales cost 13-14c/kg DM to produce, meal costs 27-30c/kg DM.
4. Graze paddocks to 3.5cm-4.0cm (see picture below).
5. Milk yield should drop at a rate of 2.5% week on week after peak (or 10% per month). In most cases a milk drop more than this indicates poor grassland management i.e. feeding stemmy grass (>1400kgDM/ha) or inadequate grass allocations leading to underfeeding.

Fertiliser

In June, 28 units of N should be spread on the grazing platform. A lot of the main Arrabawn catchment areas have soils that are susceptible to sulphur deficiency. Twenty units/acre should be spread on grazing ground before the end of June. Silage ground requires 20 units sulphur/acre per cut. If going back into

the grazing rotation silage ground needs 20-30 units/acre of N, if the ground is low on P and K, two bags of 18:6:12 would be recommended. However if the silage ground is being closed for another cut it needs 80 units/acre and slurry.

Breeding

We are now entering the 8/9th week of breeding on most farms. Any cows that haven't been served need to be examined if not already done so. The sooner these problem cows are identified and rectified the better chance of survival in the herd. As more cows are served heat detection gets more difficult as there is less activity across the herd. Options include using a vasectomised bull, putting scratch cards on cows and observing cows more often especially during late evening. Using short gestation bulls from now on is recommended to ensure that the majority of cows calve down in February and March. If introducing a bull into the herd make sure he is fertile and not overwhelmed. A young bull should only have to serve 15 breeding females while a mature bull should only have to serve 20-25 breeding females. Lastly pick a mating end date and stick to it. Bulling cows into the first week of August means that there will be cows calving the following May even when short gestation bulls are used.

Farm Walk at Charlie Whiskey's



James O'Loughlin discussing drainage options on Charlie Whiskey's farm

Over 100 farmers visited Charlie Whiskey's farm on Friday 19th May. Charlie is a development farmer on Arrabawn's Milk for Profit programme. Topics discussed on the day were land drainage, grassland management, breeding and farm yard development. Charlie milks 100 cows on a 52ha milking platform.

Soils are heavy, which require additional management compared to some of the drier soils in Galway. Currently, 19ha of the platform is currently closed for first cut silage. In 2016 the milking platform grew on average 10.5 tonnes/ha and there is potential to grow a lot more on the farm. Though the pH on the farm is adequate almost all of the land falls in Index 1 and 2 for P and K. James O'Loughlin from Teagasc Moorepark highlighted that this is a common feature among all the farms on the Heavy Soils Programme and that addressing soil fertility is the first step to developing land. He emphasized that compound fertilisers with low

percentages of P and K provide far too little of the key nutrients no matter how often they are spread. Charlie has already begun to address his poor soil fertility and spread 2 bags of 0:7:30 on the entire platform in April.

A test pit was dug on part of the farm (7ha) that was bought 14 years ago. This land has never been developed and falls well below the average grass growth for the farm. Given the significant cost associated with drainage, James highlighted the importance of digging test pits to plan an appropriate and effective draining strategy. In this case James recommended that the land should be subsoiled as it is compacted and that deep drains should be dug on the targeted wet areas. Twenty to thirty metres between each drain is usually sufficient.

Last year was the first year that grass growth was formally measured on the farm by doing weekly grass walks and making appropriate decisions from the wedge that was subsequently generated. Due to the timely removal of paddocks with surplus grass as bales the cows were consistently offered grass at the appropriate cover of 1400kgDM/ha right through the summer season and this positively impacted milk production. Cows peaked higher than previous years

at 1.84kgDM/ha and across the year produced an extra 27kg of milk solids compared to 2015. While this figure may sound small it amounted to €7,650 in additional income for Charlie last year.

In the midst of breeding this year Charlie so far has bred 96% of his heifers (a synchronisation programme was followed) and 42% of his cows within 14 days, a significant improvement on last year (25%-cows; 48%-heifers). Last year the decision was made to stop bulling cows a month earlier to shorten the calving season which had spread from January to July. This time last year there were nine cows left to calve on the farm while now there is only one. In addition, a batch of heifers were synchronised last year. As a result, the six week calving rate has jumped from 59 to 69%. Charlie also remarked that because cows calved sooner this spring they had more time to recover between calving and breeding which has reflected in greater submission rates.

While significant improvements have been made in grassland and breeding management, priority must now be given to develop adequate milking facilities for an expanding herd. Currently the cows are milked in a seven unit herringbone. With over 6 hours each day spent milking Charlie has little time to do anything else. Currently Charlie is planning to build a new milking parlour and options were discussed by John Fitzpatrick of Earls engineering and Pat Clarke of Teagasc on whether to expand the parlour in its current position or move it out to a greenfield site. Either way John emphasised the importance for farmers in the same position to spend considerable time researching and visiting other parlours to make the best decisions. John also advised farmers to set aside 24 months from start to finish for any substantial farm yard development. He advised that many farmers underestimate the amount of time needed to get planning permission, loan approvals and grant approvals.

Targets for the farm going forward are to improve soil fertility and grow more grass (13t) to reduce the amount of meal used (from 1.1t to <1t), aim for a six week calving rate of more than 80% within two years and to have a distinct calving and breeding season and finally to have new milking facilities by the end of 2018. For more information see our handout available on the Arrabawn website. Special thanks to our speakers on the day James O'Loughlin, Tom Murphy, Pat Clarke and John Fitzpatrick and to Charlie and his family for participating in the programme.



Pat Clarke outlining possible locations for a milking parlour on Charlie Whiskey's farm