

Monitor Farm Review 2018



The 2018 farming year can be characterised as a year of extremes. A long winter and difficult spring led to the depletion of fodder reserves on many farms.

The summer drought negatively impacted grass growth in many areas, leading to increased costs for suppliers across the catchment.

The year concluded with an excellent autumn, facilitating grazing to late November, which had a positive impact on winter fodder reserves.

2018 MONITOR FARM PERFORMANCE

MILK SOLIDS PER COW +32KGS

INCREASED HERD EBI + €31

**DOUBLED AREA AT OPTIMUM
SOIL FERTILITY**

PHYSICAL PERFORMANCE



	10 Monitor Farms		5 Heavy Soils	
	2018	2017	2018	2017
Cow numbers	101	94	101	103
Milking block (MB) (ha)	37.9	38.8	37.7	38.3
Stocking Rate (Lu/ha)				
Milking Block	2.66	2.42	2.68	2.71
Whole Farm	2.31	2.15	1.98	1.96
Concentrate /cow (kg)	1273	710	1366	943
6 week calving rate (%)	83	83	85	88



MILK PRODUCTION DATA



	10 Monitor Farms		5 Heavy Soils	
	2018	2017	2018	2017
Total milk solids/cow (kg)	463	431	490	460
Total milk solids/ha on MB (kg)	1232	1044	1311	1243
Milk yield/cow (L)	5725	5416	5981	5694
Milk production per farm (L)	578067	509105	604177	589278
Milk solids/farm (kg)	46763	40482	49490	47706
Protein(%)	3.55	3.55	3.60	3.59
Fat (%)	4.29	4.17	4.35	4.27
SCC ('000)	138	163	217	163
TBC ('000)	22	20	19	21



GRASS PRODUCTION



Grass measurements from the 10 Monitor Farms show that total grass production was 1.2 tonnes Dry Matter per hectare (tDM/ha) less than 2017. A smaller reduction occurred on the Heavy soils farms which grew 11.2 tDM/ha compared to 11.9 tDM/ha in 2017.

	10 Monitor Farms		5 Heavy Soils	
	2018	2017	2018	2017
Grass				
Grown (tDM/ha)	11.2	12.4	11.2	11.9
Kg DM Lost/Cow	519		353	

Continuous monitoring of grass production is vital in establishing an optimum stocking rate for the whole farm.

As a guide: divide total grass grown by 5.5 to establish the stocking rate supported by farm grass growth with minimal supplementation*.

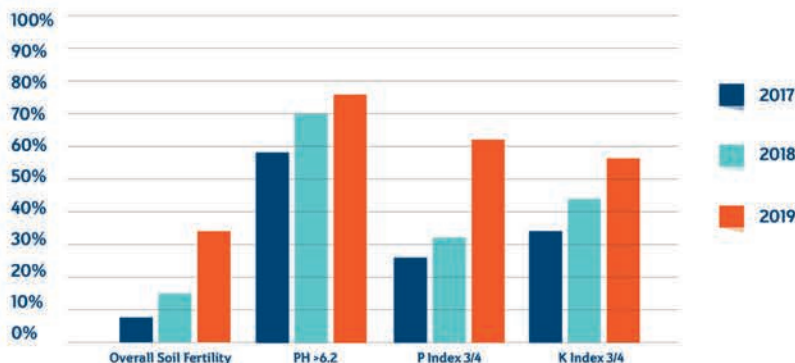
Optimum Stocking Rates Supported by different levels of whole farm grass production		
Tonnes Dry Matter per Hectare	SR supported LU/HA	LU Stock Equivalent on 40 Ha (100 acres)
10	1.8	72
12	2.2	88
14	2.5	100
16	2.9	116

*Supplementation based on 500kgs DM/cow

Maximising Grass Production:

- Soil fertility - all paddocks must be at a pH of 6.2+ and minimum Index 3 for P & K.
- Use of superior grass varieties targeting 10% of farm reseeded in each year.
- Achieving spring grazing targets.
- 30+ grass measurements during the grazing season.
- 10 grazing's/paddock/annum.

SOIL FERTILITY



A strong focus on soil fertility by the Monitor Farmers is resulting in ongoing improvements as shown above.

SOIL FERTILITY KEY MESSAGES



- Apply the Lime requirement as set out in the Nutrient Management Plan.
- Use correct balance of fertilisers based on soil analysis eg. where P & K are both at low Index 1 and 2 then a fertiliser compound such as 18:6:12 is required on the grazing area (subject to Nitrate Regulation Limits).
- Many farms are not achieving optimum fertility due to low K indices.
- Replace crop offtake early in the season. Build-up K levels from July onwards.
- Where surplus grass is harvested - replace the nutrients removed as soon as possible after harvest.

- On Monitor Farms 30% of paddocks are correct for all three fertility criteria v 15% nationally.
- Achieving an extra 2 tonnes DM /ha growth is the equivalent of producing an extra 300 bales from a 30 ha farm.



RULE OF THUMB

1000 gallons of good quality slurry will replace the nutrients removed by four standard silage bales.

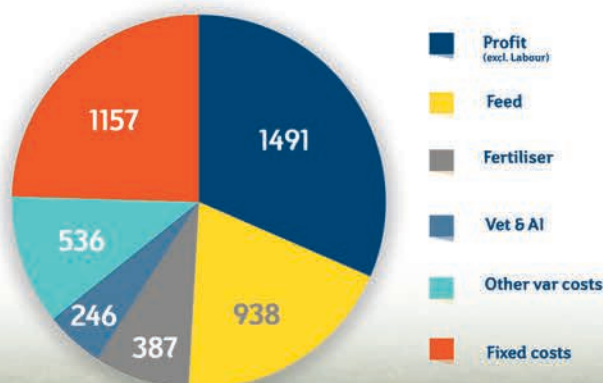
FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE



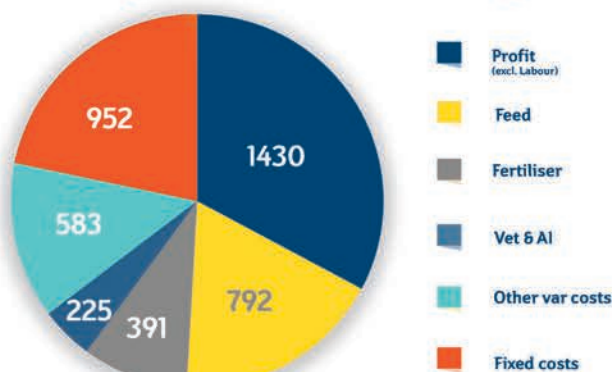
Cash flow management was difficult in 2018, largely due to the weather extremes of a difficult spring and poor grass growth during the summer months.

- Overall feed costs (incl purchased forage) for the 10 Monitor Farms was €938/dairy hectare v €408/dairy hectare in 2017.
- Despite a difficult spring the Heavy Soils Farms fared better on feed costs at €792/ha but still €348/ha higher than 2017.

Monitor Farms €/Dairy ha



Heavy Soils Farms €/Dairy ha



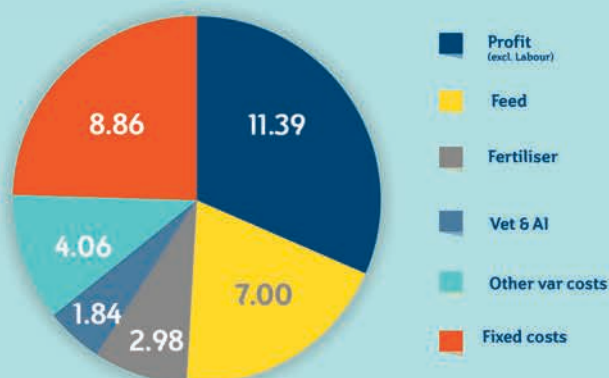
- Total fixed costs were higher for both groups linked to continuing farm development and extra costs associated with a prolonged period of feed supplementation.
- Net Profit (excl own labour cost) reduced on the 10 Monitor Farms and the 5 Heavy Soils Farms by 23% and 25% respectively compared to 2017.
- The reduction in net profit occurred despite milk solids per cow increasing by 32kgs. Approximately 70% of this reduction was a result of increased feed costs.

COSTS & PROFIT PER LITRE 2018

(excl own labour & direct payments)

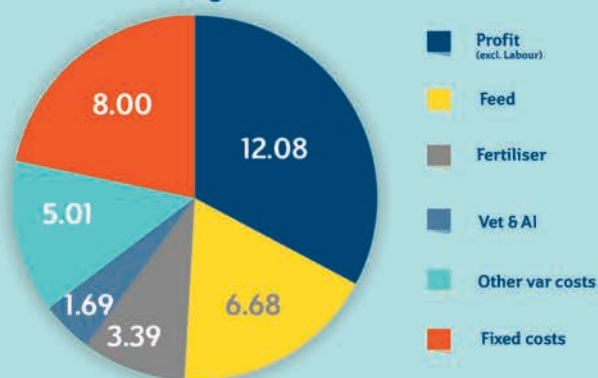


10 Monitor Farms c/l



Based on Gross Output of 36.1 c/l

5 Heavy Soils Farms c/l



Based on Gross Output of 36.8 c/l

- Total costs in 2018 (excl own labour) were 24.73c/l for the 10 Monitor Farms with a range in costs from 19.11 c/l to 29.21 c/l.
- Feeds costs ranged from 5.03 - 10.05c/l (incl imported forage).
- On the Heavy Soils Farms total costs were similar at 24.77c/l with feed costs slightly lower at 6.68c/l.

A renewed emphasis on cost control in the 2019 budgets has been the key first step taken to reduce total costs in 2019.

HERD GENETICS & FERTILITY



Breeding Data (Source: ICBF, Dec 2018)

Breeding	Monitor Farm	Heavy Soils
Herd EBI (€)	130	132
Milk sub-index (€)	39	42
Fertility sub-index (€)	54	50

Monitor Farmers continue to focus on herd improvement through better genetics and breeding management.

All farms have a breeding plan in place outlining:

- Number of dairy/beef AI straws required.
- Sires required to improve weaknesses in herd genetics.
- Length of AI and breeding season.

Tip: Using enough Dairy AI Straws to generate sufficient AI bred replacements of high genetic merit is central to a herd improvement programme.

Monitor Farm performance compared to overall Kerry Agribusiness supplier performance for selected 2018 metrics are shown below.

	Monitor Farms 10 farms	Kerry Agri Average	Kerry Agri Top 10%
Fat & Protein (Kg MS/Cow Delivered)	448	377	486
Butterfat (%)	4.29	4.06	4.31
Protein (%)	3.55	3.44	3.58
Spring 6 week calving (%)	83	68	87
Herd EBI (€)	130	91	131

Note: Dairy Herd Performance Report circulated to all milk suppliers annually.

This data highlights the positive impact of high 6 week calving rate and EBI on milk solids production.

Higher milk composition is achieved by focusing on the use of Dairy AI sires with high genetic merit for butterfat and protein %.

Kerry Agribusiness & Teagasc

wish to thank all of the programme participants for their co-operation and goodwill throughout the year and also all those who open up their farms for events.

