

REGIONAL REVIEW

SLIGO/LEITRIM/DONEGAL REGIONAL ANNUAL REVIEW 2021

 **93,377**
SUCKLER COWS

 **1,113,429**
SHEEP

 **34,032**
DAIRY COWS

 **3,399 CLIENTS**



6 SIGNPOST FARM'S
2 DAIRY 2 SHEEP
2 BEEF

TOTAL FARMS	16,973	OVER	90%	OF FARMERS HAVE A BEEF ENTERPRISE
AVG. FARM SIZE	27Ha		2%	OF FARMERS HAVE A DAIRY ENTERPRISE
AVG. AGE OF FARMERS	57		15%	OF FARMERS ARE FEMALE

Welcome

Welcome to the first edition of the Teagasc Sligo Leitrim Donegal Annual Regional Review. This report summarises the Regional activities in 2021 and outlines the main enterprises in the Region. I would like to acknowledge the hard work of our staff in the Region and thank all our stakeholders for their ongoing support, in particular Aurivo, DAFM, APHA, all the farm organisations and Sligo Leitrim and Donegal County Councils. I would particularly like to thank all our clients and host farmers who give up their own time to host farm walks, skills training for our education students and many more events throughout the region.

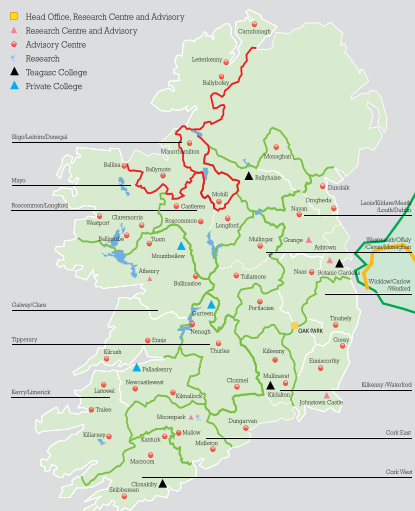


James Keane
Teagasc Regional Manager
Sligo/Leitrim/Donegal



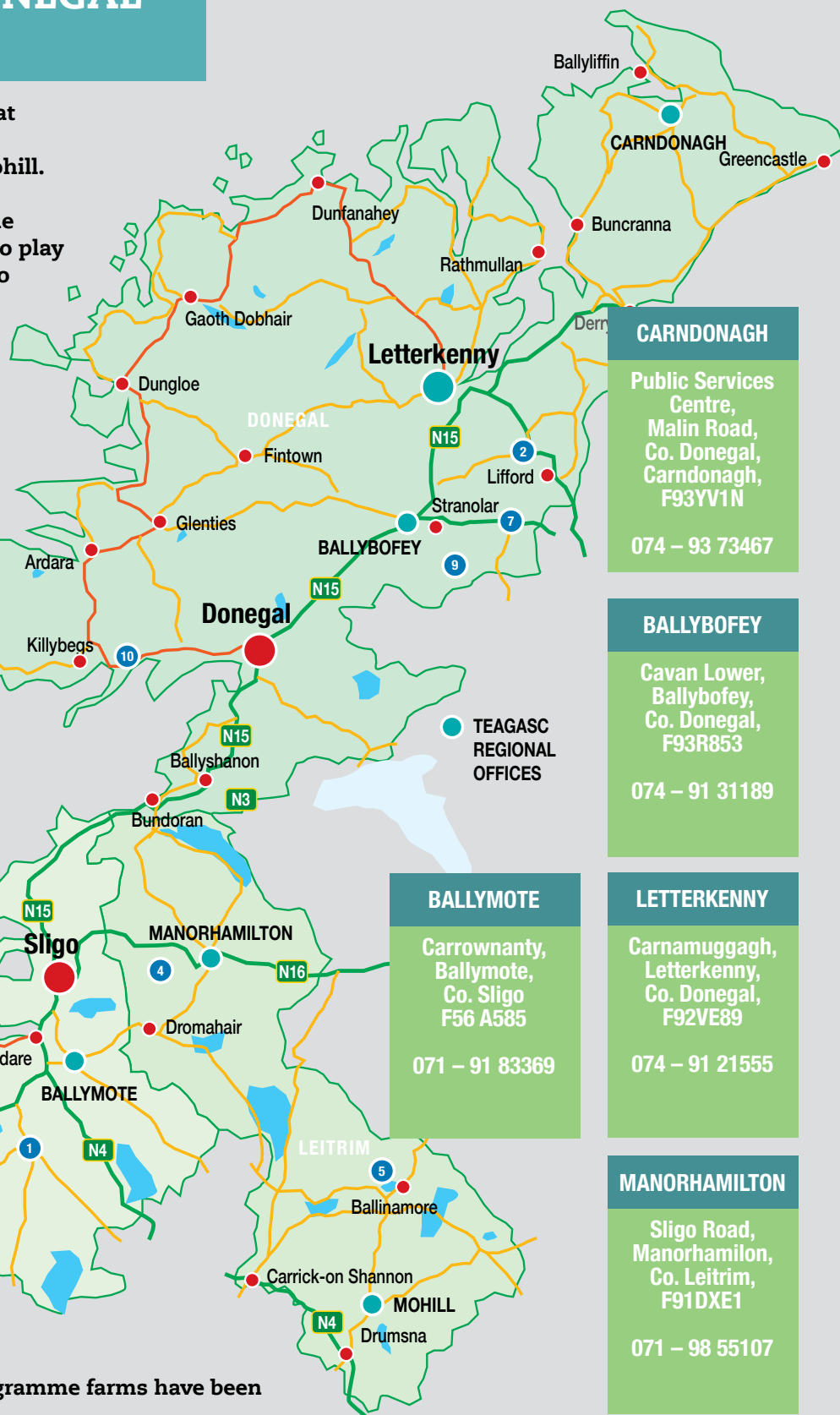
TEAGASC SLIGO/LEITRIM/DONEGAL ADVISORY TEAM

Teagasc advisory offices are based at Ballybofey, Ballymote, Carndonagh, Letterkenny, Manorhamilton & Mohill. There are 6 Signpost and 4 Joint Programme farms in the Region. The Signpost farms have a critical role to play in delivering the climate message to farmers in the Region.



• 6 Signpost farms and 4 Joint Programme farms have been identified for this Region

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 1 Sean Colliery, Finlough, Ballinacarrow, Ballymote, Co. Sligo | Signpost (Dairy) |
| 2 Richard Starrett, Killendarragh, Lifford, Co. Donegal | Signpost (Dairy) |
| 3 Trevor Boland, Bunnafedia, Drumard, Co. Sligo | Signpost & Future Beef |
| 4 Oliver O' Hara, Gornaskagh, Leckaun PO, Co. Leitrim | Signpost & Future Beef |
| 5 John O'Connell, Cloverhill, Ballinamore, Co. Leitrim | Signpost & BETTER Sheep |
| 6 Francis Gonley, Ballinorley, Colga, Co. Sligo | Signpost & BETTER Sheep |
| 7 Robin Stevenson, Farm View Daries Ltd, Killygordon, Co Donegal | Aurivo (Joint Programme Dairy) |
| 8 John & Evan Hunt, Tullychusheen, Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo | Aurivo (Joint Programme Dairy) |
| 9 Gareth Porter, Demense, Castlefin, Co Donegal | Aurivo (Joint Programme Dairy) |
| 10 Paul Boyle, Curraghfeighan, Bruckless, Donegal | Better Sheep |



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BALLYBOFEY

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MOHILL

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REGIONAL REVIEW

SLIGO/LEITRIM/DONEGAL REGIONAL ANNUAL REVIEW 2021

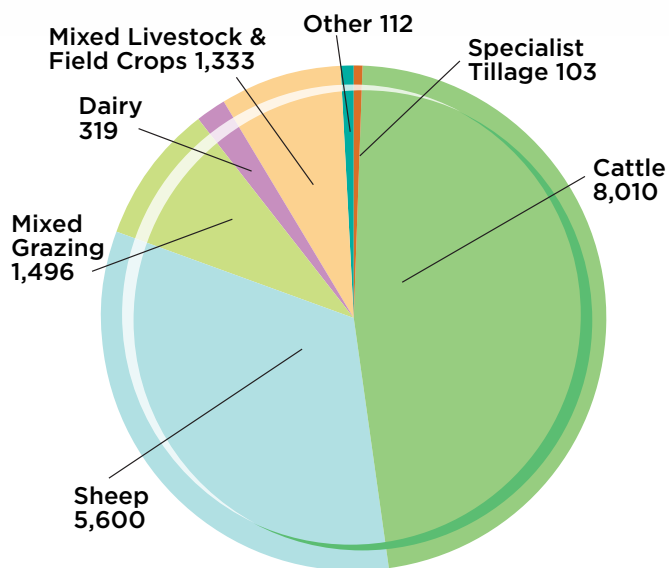
Farming in the Region – Census of Agriculture 2020

The census of agriculture 2020 indicates that since the previous census of 2010, the number of farms in the Region has slightly fallen from 17,478 to 16,973. This is a very small decrease of less than 500 farms.

The majority of enterprises are beef and sheep with 8,010 specialist beef producers and 5,600 specialist sheep producers. There are 93,377 suckler cows on 8,485 farms in the region with an average of 11 cows/farm. There are 5,600 specialist sheep producers according to the census and 8,735 sheep flocks with over 1,113,429 sheep in total in the Region. Dairy farm numbers are low at 319 specialist dairy farmers and in total there are closer to 401 farms with dairy cows out of the 16,973 farms.

Average Age 57 Yrs **52%** of farm holdings less than 20Ha
Average Agricultural Area 26 Ha **15%** of farm holders are female

**Farm Type - Total 16,973
Sligo, Leitrim, Donegal**



FARM ENTERPRISE TYPES



34,032
DAIRY COWS
401 FARMS



93,377
SUCKLER COWS
8,485 FARMS



1,113,429
SHEEP
8,738 FARMS

Mission

To provide scientific leadership and support to Irish farmers and food companies in achieving a sustainable food system.

Vision

'For Teagasc to be a globally recognised leader in developing innovative science based solutions for the sustainable transformation of our land resources into products and services for the benefits of society'.

Our Values

'Teagasc seeks to be professional, responsive, efficient, innovative, accountable, independent and scientifically excellent in carrying out its functions.'

TEAGASC SLIGO/LEITRIM/DONEGAL ADVISORY TEAM

Teagasc Regional Network Offices

Teagasc is the national body providing integrated research, advisory and training services to the agriculture and food industry and rural communities. The overall goal of the Teagasc Advisory Programme is to support the on-going development of sustainable family farms in Ireland, through efficient and effective knowledge transfer (KT) activities. The programme currently supports almost 140,000 individual farmers with 42,000 farmers contracted to Teagasc for services annually.

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Dairy Enterprise

There are 319 Specialist dairy farms in this Region according to the Census of Agriculture 2020, but there are around 401 farms with 32,251 Dairy cows in the region.

2021 was a good year for dairying. The average dairy farm income is estimated at €94,000, a 28% increase on the 2020 average. This increase was underpinned by a number of factors including generally good grass growing conditions, increased milk yield per cow and an increase in the price paid for milk. However some increases in production costs were also observed including feed and fertiliser costs which increased by 16% and 10% respectively. Currently the 'typical Irish dairy farm' has a herd size, a stocking rate and an average farm size of 83 cows, 2.05 LU/ha and 60 ha respectively.



Aurivo Teagasc Joint Programme on the Farm of Gareth Poter, Demense, Castlefin, Co Donegal.

Wendy & Richard Startett and family, NDC and Kerrygold Quality Milk Award Winner.

Assuming that normal weather conditions prevail in 2022, forecasts for the dairy sector indicate a decline in average farm income to approximately €80,000 despite an expected milk price of 40.6 c/L for the year. This decline is driven by a 13% increase in production costs. Further price rises of 6% and 120% are forecast for feed and fertiliser. A forecasted decline in the quantity of fertiliser used will be partly balanced for by an increase in the quantity of concentrate fed in the coming year.





Student Discussion group Sligo

 **AVERAGE SIZE**
70 COWS

AVERAGE FARM SIZE 60 HA
401 FARMS; 32,251 COWS

 **2.5 FTE's**

7 DISCUSSION GROUPS 

1 SIGNPOST FARMS

1 DAIRY JOINT PROGRAMMES
1 WITH AURIVO



Sean Conway Contract Rearer

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

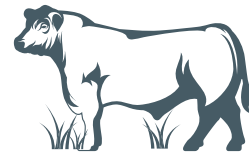
We would like to acknowledge the valuable information provided by and co-operation of:

- Census of Agriculture 2020
CSO Office
- Teagasc National Farm Survey
- DAFM

Beef Enterprise

Suckler and beef enterprises are very important to the region with 10,682 farmers carrying 365,962 cattle in all ages of stock. There are 8485 suckler farms in the region with over 93,377 suckler cows and average farm size is 27ha's. There are 12 drystock adviser in the region covering all aspects of technical and scheme work for clients.

2021 on beef farms was characterised by a year of rising beef and mart prices but also increasing costs. Weanling and store live prices rose by an average of 8% and 9% per Kg respectively with beef carcass prices 12% higher than in 2020. Total costs rose by an average of 8% due especially to increases in feed (+20%), fertiliser (+7%) and energy costs (+16%). Gross Margin per hectare on cattle rearing farms rose by 5% with a very small increase in net margin per hectare. Gross margin per hectare on cattle finishing farms rose by 10% with a modest increase in net margin per ha. (+€72). Total numbers of cattle slaughtered dropped by approximately 90,000 head in 2021 and live exports reduced by over 12,000 head. The number of calves born to the suckler herd dropped by 1% compared to 2020.



93,377

SUCKLER COWS

AVERAGE FARM SIZE 27 Ha

8,485 SUCKLER FARMS

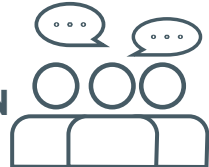


12

ADVISORS

31

**BEEF
DISCUSSION
GROUPS**



**2 SIGNPOST
FARMS**

2 FUTURE BEEF FARMS

It is expected that there will be a further 12% increase in expenditure costs in 2022 on Irish beef farms driven again by increased fertiliser, feed and fuel costs. Beef prices are not expected to change significantly in 2022 due to current high global beef prices, a limit on EU imports due to high shipping costs and an overall drop in beef production within the EU.

Numbers for slaughter in the first half of the year are not expected to exceed 2021 levels but there may be increased cattle slaughtering's in the back end due to an expected higher availability of prime cattle numbers as the year progresses. With rising input costs and no expected increase in annual average beef prices, margins on beef farms are likely to reduce in 2022 compared to 2021.



John O'Connell,
Tom Coll and
Trevor Boland,
Grass 10
Winners.

Beef Farm walk
Donegal





Sheep Enterprise

This is another extremely important enterprise in the Region and while there are 5,600 specialist sheep enterprises according to the Census of Agriculture 2020, there are 8,738 farmers in the Region with sheep on the ground – that's almost 51% of farms with over 563,175 ewes. Donegal has the highest sheep numbers in Ireland with 751,609 sheep and of that there are 375,380 ewes.

Irish lamb prices in 2021 are estimated to have increased in the order of 30% on the previous year, according to National Farm Survey (NFS) data, with record high prices being maintained right throughout the year. However, total costs also increased by around 20% resulting in an estimated 26% average increase in gross margin on mid-season lowland sheep systems. In particular, the cost of concentrate feed for sheep increased by 40% in 2021 due to a combination of an increase in the concentrate price coupled with a significant increase in the volume being fed at farm level.



Hill Sheep Conference 2022, Sligo.

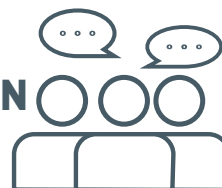
The indications are that lamb prices are set to remain strong, albeit with a modest price decrease of an estimated 5% below the record 2021 levels. However, with much higher production costs in 2022, in particular feed and fertiliser, gross margins are expected to fall by around 15% below 2021. It is likely that with fertiliser prices up by 120% the response will be to reduce the level of fertiliser used in an effort to offset some of the rise in production costs. If reduced fertiliser usage leads to a fall in grass production, this can in turn lead to an increase in the use of concentrate feed.

 **8,738 FLOCKS**

1,113,429 SHEEP

 **12 ADVISORS**

27 DISCUSSION GROUPS



2 SIGNPOST FARMS

**2 SIGNPOST
3 BETTER
SHEEP**

**SHEEP WELFARE
SCHEME WORTH €3,151,631**



Lambing Workshop Donegal.



Cereal Enterprises

Tillage is a very important enterprise in Donegal with 103 specialised tillage farmers growing cereals and potatoes mainly.

Tillage farming in 2021 could be described as ideal. Despite the cold first half of the year there was adequate plant stands, moisture and sunshine to give high yields. Good weather at harvest allowed all crops to be saved in good condition and the excellent prices increased margins of all crops. The average gross margins increased by 90% compared to 2020. This resulted in a predicted net margins increase of €525 per hectare compared to 2020.

There are significant challenges for 2022 with nitrogen fertilizer prices close to three times the costs in 2020. However this cost maybe somewhat offset by the continued buoyant prices for cereals at the moment. There is little scope to reduce nitrogen inputs in 2022, with research showing that savings of between 25-35 kg of nitrogen per hectare will result in a minimal loss of yield and increased margins. In 2022 where yields return to normal and factoring in an increased costs of 35%, average margins for cereals are predicted to fall to €260 per hectare.

What is the Signpost Programme?

The Signpost programme is a multi-annual campaign to lead climate action by all Irish farmers, and achieve early progress in reducing gaseous emissions from Irish agriculture while also improving water quality, maintaining and in some cases improving biodiversity, reducing costs and creating more profitable and sustainable farming enterprises.

It will also act as a test bed for on-farm carbon sequestration measurements so that this can, in time, be taken into account by the EPA in the national Greenhouse Gas inventory. It is a collaborative programme, led by Teagasc and including all relevant industry partners and state bodies such as Bord Bia.

A total of 6 Signpost farms have been identified for the Sligo Leitrim Donegal Region

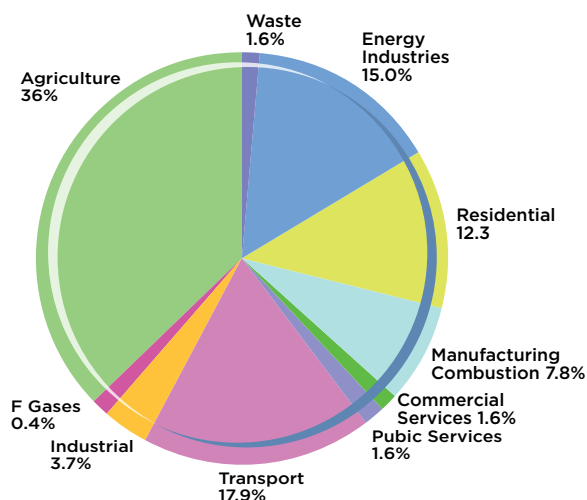
Sean Collery, Ballymote, Co. Sligo,	Signpost (Dairy)
Richard Starrett Lifford, Co. Donegal	Signpost (Dairy)
Trevor Boland, Drumard, Co. Sligo	Signpost & Future Beef
Oliver O' Hara, Leckaun, Co. Leitrim	Signpost & Future Beef
John O'Connell, Ballinamore, Co. Leitrim	Signpost & BETTER Sheep
Francis Gonley Colga, Co. Sligo	Signpost & BETTER Sheep

The programme is well resourced with national specialist advisors to the Signpost Programme along with in this Region, 2 soils and environment advisors, 2 ASSAP advisor and the 6 Signpost farms, each with their own associated advisor.



NET MARGINS INCREASE OF
€525 PER
HECTARE
COMPARED TO 2020

Figure 1: Profile of GHG Emissions 2020



Potato Discussion Group Donegal.

Climate change

Climate change is one of the biggest challenges facing farmers over the next decade. There is a lot of negative commentary about farming in the media as agriculture accounts for 36% of GHG emissions in Ireland. (Fig.1)

Ambitious targets have now been set for Irish Agriculture between now and 2030 to reduce GHG emissions by between 22-30%. Teagasc have designed a roadmap to help achieve this target but it requires immediate buy in from farmers. This is the purpose of the Signpost Programme – to identify and demonstrate to farmers locally, what measures farmers need to adapt now to assist Irish Agriculture reach these targets

No. of SLD Clients in GLAS	1751
No. of SLD clients in REAP	182
Monetary Value of GLAS	24,338,586
Monetary Value of REAP	1,910,541

ASSAP / Water Quality

In addition to the GHG issues, there are also water quality issues and targets to be met. Priority areas for action have been selected for a targeted campaign aimed at improving water quality in certain catchments.

There are currently 12 Priority Areas for Action (PAA) in Co. Donegal and 15 PAA's in Sligo/Leitrim. The pressures within PAA's are varied and include for example; sedimentation and elevated phosphate levels of waterbodies. However, there are also issues in relation to agrichemicals, specifically in relation to MCPA, and there is a significant issue with sheep dipping active ingredients been suspected and detected in watercourses within the county. Farmers are engaging well with our 2 ASSAP advisers in the programme and awareness and preventative advice continues to be disseminated.



1,751 CLIENTS
IN GLAS (50% OF TEAGASC
CLIENTS)

182 CLIENTS IN REAP
(Results Based Environment
Agri Pilot Project)





Education

Education is very important in our region as we have 3 Regional Education Centres based in Ballymote, Manorhamilton and Letterkenny.

There are 10 educational courses ongoing throughout the year and we started 8 education classes last year during Covid. Teagasc Sligo Leitrim Donegal provide agricultural education in our region to part-time students who would attend an education centre once a week. We also complete distance education course for students who would attend a centre once every 3 weeks to complete their course work.

We owe a huge amount of gratitude to all our host farms in the region who allow students to carry out beef and sheep skills on their farms. Host farmers also transfer key skills and knowledge to students through benchmark discussion group visits.

143

PART TIME STUDENTS



151

DISTANCE LEARNING STUDENTS

No. of Staff FTE'S coordinating the courses

9



Talking Timber Conference, Drumshanbo.



Teagasc Graduation Donegal.

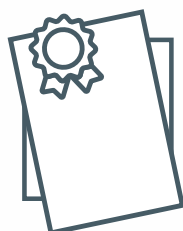
Farm Management

The Farm Management Department provide a range of supports to advisors, specialists and clients when completing specific tasks for their clients. The work is not enterprise specific, but the work is primarily focused on key areas, which include:

- Financial Efficiency of the farm business using the Teagasc Profit Monitor analysis.
- Farm Planning
- Certification of Business Plans for Government Tax reliefs.
- Basic Payment Application
- Collaborative Farming support and promotion on collaborative farming methods
- Farm Succession
- Targeted Agricultural Modernization Scheme (TAMS)



1500 ATTENDEES
AT SUCCESSION EVENTS



851
BUSINESS
PLANS
COMPLETED

In 2021 a major upgrade of the Teagasc Profit Monitor analysis software was completed. Last year advisors completed some 43,000 Basic Payment Scheme applications. Farm Succession is a challenge with the age profile of Irish farmers, and supporting families to make important decisions on this topic while keeping farms viable will continue to be prioritised in 2022.

VALUED SCHEMES IN SLD Region

BPS	Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) Programme	€103,339,543
BDGP	Beef Data and Genomics Programme	€2,914,660
BEEPS	Beef Environmental Efficiency Programme	€4,063,415
TAMS	Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme	€1,532,010

Forestry

The evolving Irish forest sector is highly important to rural economies and at a national level. There are now 390,000 hectares of private forests. Since 1980, almost 19,000 farmers have received support to establish new forests.



**DONEGAL - 11.4% FORESTRY COVER
PLANTED IN 2020 = 40 ha**

**LEITRIM - 18.9% FORESTRY COVER
PLANTED IN 2020 = 160 ha**

**SLIGO - 11.4% FORESTRY COVER
PLANTED IN 2020 = 106 ha**

Many private forests are approaching maturity and the forecasted net realisable timber volume is 1.74 million cubic metres (m3) for 2022, up from 1.46 million m3 in 2021. The mobilisation of this important resource represents both a challenge and an excellent opportunity.

New planting in 2021 will be about 2,000 ha, down from 2,434 ha in 2020. The challenge is to sustainably increase planting levels to approach national targets set at 8,000 ha. The Climate Action Plan 2021 describes afforestation as the 'single largest land-based climate change mitigation measure available to Ireland'. Forest creation, well planned and executed, can also enhance biodiversity, improve water quality, provide shade and shelter for farm animals and amenity opportunities. DAFM's Afforestation Grant and Premium scheme supports planting through afforestation grants and annual premium support. Annual premiums are paid for 15 years and typically range €510 to €680/ha. New forests may also be eligible for Basic Payment.

In 2020, exports of forest and wood based products (1.39 million tonnes, 78% to the UK) were valued at €446 million. Record high timber prices, linked to buoyant global demand and limited domestic supply, were achieved during 2021.



Ross Buchanan, Co Donegal receiving his RDS Teagasc Farm Forestry Award from Steven Meyen, Forestry Development Officer, Teagasc

Pigs

There are 14 commercial pig producers in the Sligo Leitrim Donegal region with an average herd size of 325 sows. Due to the current financial crisis in the pig sector there may be a reduction in the sow numbers during the coming year

The Irish pig sector is the third most important agricultural enterprise in Ireland after milk and beef, accounting for 8% of GAO and employing 8,500 people. There are 280 commercial pig farms comprising 200 sow breeding/integrated farms with an average herd size of 700 sows and 80 specialized finisher farms, with a national output of 3.9 million pigs. The sector enjoyed a buoyant period of profitability in 2019 and 2020, with export value reaching almost €1 billion in 2020. Unfortunately higher feed ingredient prices and a lower international pig meat demand reduced the sector's profitability in 2021.

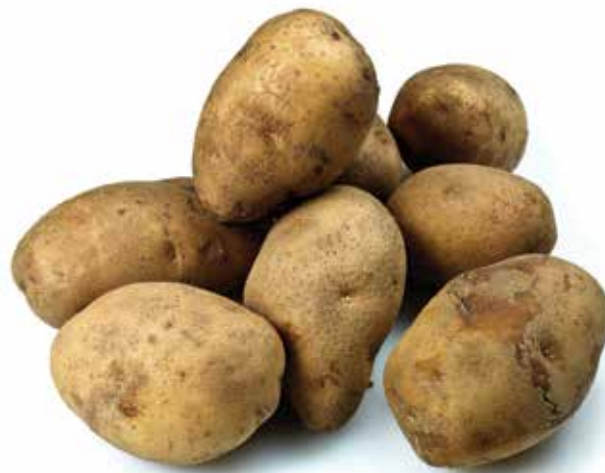


**14 COMMERCIAL
PIG PRODUCERS**
325 AVERAGE HERD SIZE



AVERAGE FEED COST
2021 118C PER KG DEAD WEIGHT
/5 YEAR AVERAGE IS 109C
PER KG DEAD WEIGHT
/2021 MARGIN OVER FEED
WAS 41C PER KG DEAD WEIGHT

The annual average feed cost in 2021 was 118 cent per kg dead weight. That is 9 percent higher than the 2020 and 5 year average of 109 cent per kg dead weight. At 159 cent per kg dead weight, the 2021 Irish pig price was significantly lower than the 174 cent per kg average for 2020. This price of 159 cent per kg dead weight is marginally lower than the five year average (2017- 2021) of 161 cent per kg dead weight. The 2021 'Margin over Feed' (MOF) per kg was 41 cent/kg dead weight. During 2021 the monthly MOF reached a peak at 53c/kg in May and then gradually decreased to 19c/kg dead weight in December



Horticulture

There are very few horticultural enterprises in the Sligo Leitrim Donegal Region. There are just a small number of mushroom/strawberry growers remaining. There are no commercial ornamental producers in the Region.

Rural Enterprise

Options

Every year Options courses are offered in the Region. Expert speakers are invited in over 4-6 nights to inform interested farmers of opportunities to further develop their farm.

This can include adding value to existing production or diversifying into something new. The 2021 Farm Business Options webinars provided an innovative channel to communicate farm business messages to farm families. The Teagasc and Local enterprise Office (Roscommon) Farm Business pilot in March 2022 will provide a template to run similar collaborative events throughout the Teagasc regions. These six night courses will focus on Business planning, taxation, marketing and new product development.

Organics

At present in Ireland, there is approximately 90,000 hectares under organic production, which represents 2% of the agricultural area. The current Programme for Government has a target to align Ireland's organic land area with that of the current EU average of 7.5% approx.

There are currently 1823 organic farmers participating in the DAFM Organic Farming Scheme (OFS) of which 200 are in Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal which is approximately 10.9% of all Organic producers. Funding for the 2022 Organic Farming Scheme (OFS) is up €21 million from the €16 million 2021 allocation, allowing for the opening of the OFS for new entrants in 2022. Teagasc KT Activities in 2022 will include Regional webinars on the Organic Farming Scheme, Delivery of 25 hour Organic Farming Principles courses, Teagasc/DAFM national organic demonstration farm walks, and a Series of webinars on organic topics.



Minister McConalogue & Oliver O'Hara Future Beef Participant, Leitrim



Goats

There is a clear and continuing shortage of goat's milk, particularly for cheese production. In spite of efforts to the contrary, some markets were substantially undersupplied towards the end of the year.

The establishment of the Inishowen Goat Products Company (facilitated by Teagasc involvement) begins production later in 2022 and will be a major breakthrough in the sector.

Equine Enterprise

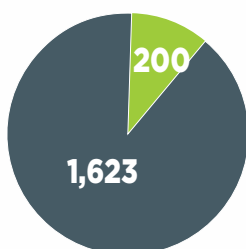
2021 was an excellent year with a record number of five figure sales returns at public auctions, improvements in online marketing was reflected in prices received.

However rising input and production costs emphasise the need to produce quality animals as sustainably as possible. The equine advisory team provides support across breeding/production, husbandry, sustainability and income generation, all of which were covered in the *Let's Talk Equine Webinar Series* on the first Tuesday of the month. New initiatives in 2021 included the re-establishment of equine newsletters, a photo competition highlighting equines and biodiversity will be sustained in 2022, along with an Equine Health Campaign and sustainability topics relevant to equine. The specialist team is also now supported by 12 equine contact advisors across the country to provide local equine support.

ORGANIC FARMING

IRELAND AGRICULTURAL
ORGANIC AREA 2%
ORGANICS WORTH
€526,436
TO SLD REGION

200 (10.9%)
ORGANIC FARMS
IN SLD REGION



1,823 ORGANIC
FARMERS NATIONALLY



Media and Social Media...

The Sligo Leitrim Donegal Region has an excellent profile on all media platforms.

There are almost weekly articles on our social media platforms on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, and most advisors manage their own WhatsApp groups for their clients. During Covid 19, Zoom and LYNC have been used to deliver discussion group meetings and our Teagasc SLD Webinar Series have become a very useful platform in replacing former public events.



We run 16 webinars per annum from Oct – Dec and Feb – April. These have proved very popular among farmers and is a very convenient way of delivering a message to farmers, without them having to leave their home. We also produce 20 videos in the year and have learned that short videos of approximately 30 seconds have greatest impact and get most views

Communication Content

Articles	1/Month
Videos	1 /month
Radio Interviews	1/Month
Webinars	16/year
Social Media Posts	Daily

Communication Media

Regional Webpage	Updated Weekly
Social Media.....	FB/ Twitter/ You Tube
Puca	1-2 Texts per Week
Whatsapp	



2872
NO. OF REGIONAL
FACEBOOK
FOLLOWERS

The benefits of being a Teagasc client

Clients have access to Teagasc advisors by phone, arranged on-farm visits, discussion groups etc. Teagasc regional offices are also in regular contact with clients via text and other media about deadlines and other urgent messages.

Teagasc clients receive technical newsletters, tailored to their enterprise mix, ten times per year through the post. In addition the Teagasc magazine **Today's Farm** is also delivered to clients six times per year.



The advice provided by Teagasc regional staff is underpinned by four research programmes

- Crops, Environment and Land Use
- Food
- Rural Economy and Development
- Animal and Grassland Research and Innovation

The Teagasc annual research portfolio comprises some 300 research projects, carried out by 500 scientific and technical staff in our research centres throughout Ireland. In addition to the education officers in each region Teagasc education offers a wide range of agricultural, horticultural, equine and other courses at four Teagasc colleges and works closely with three private colleges.

How do you become a Teagasc client?

Contact your local Teagasc office

