

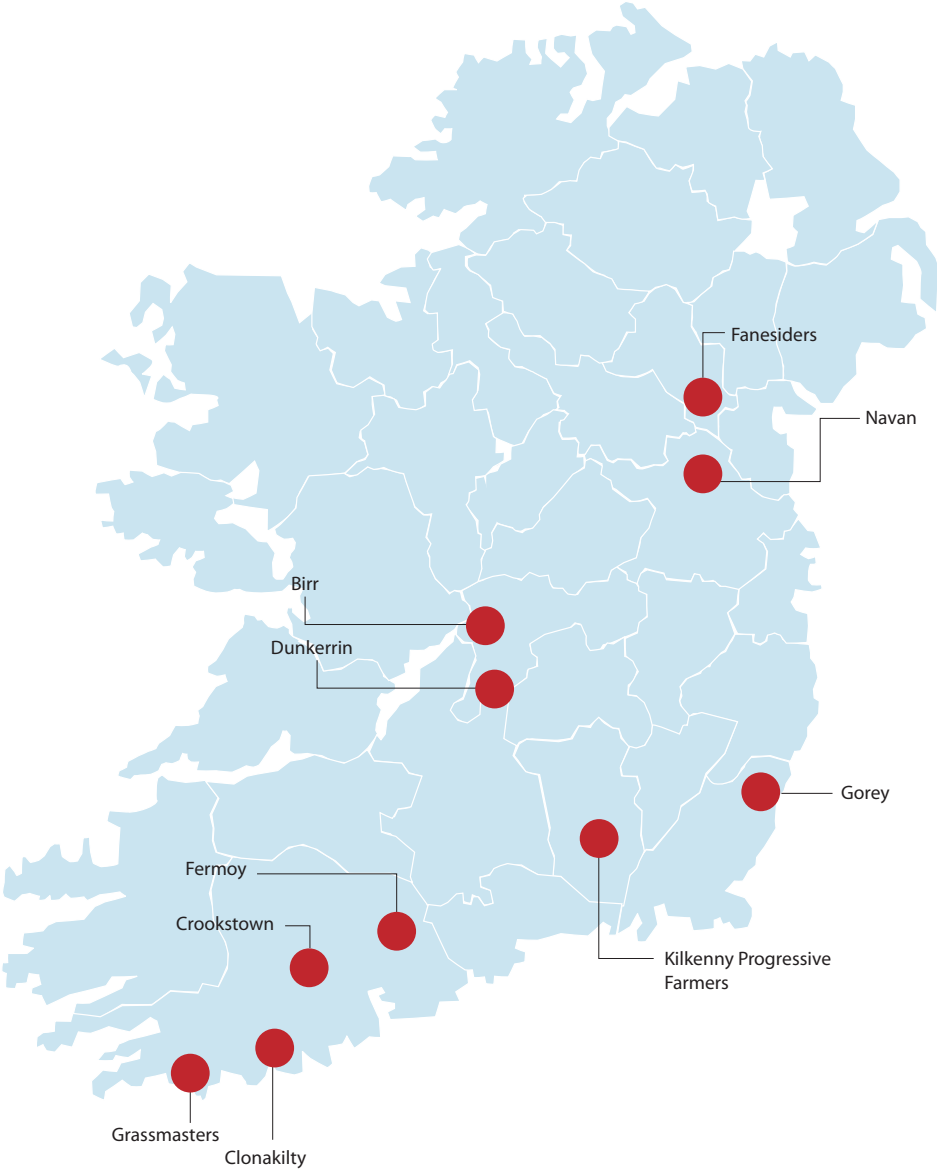
Dairy Discussion Group Innovation Event

Tullamore Court Hotel, Tullamore, Co. Offaly | Tues, 4 December



Discussion Group Name	Project Title
Clonakilty	To benchmark labour usage on members' farm and to identify opportunities for the introduction of labour saving changes
Crookstown	Genomic selection for female fertility
Fanesiders (Carrickmacross)	To improve group members' herd fertility as measured by (1) six-week calving rate; (2) empty rate and (3) calving interval
Forge (Fermoy)	Forge Genetics
Gorey	To increase the awareness of herd health and to develop a herd health template for use by group members
Grassmasters (Skibbereen)	To design a smart phone app which provides real time information on the value of milk solids sold
Kilkenny Progressive Farmers	Farm assessment and progress monitor worksheet
Navan	Managing mental health in our discussion group
South Offaly	Operation Cost Control
West Offaly	Operation Lifesaver

Map of Discussion Groups



Foreword

Earlier this year, Teagasc, ICBF, Irish Farmers Journal and ACCBank, came together to launch a new, project-based competition for dairy discussion groups. The objectives of this new competition were two-fold:

1. To stimulate dairy discussion groups and allow for the development of stronger bonds between members.
2. To encourage the development of profit or lifestyle based innovations for widespread farm adoption.

From the initial applications, ten discussion groups were shortlisted. These groups have developed their project proposals through 2012 and will present their final reports at today's event. This booklet presents a brief summary of each of these ten projects.

We believe that this event will be a great way to help other discussion groups generate new ideas for 2013. Many of the projects could be replicated by other discussion groups in the future. What all ten discussion groups have shown is that 'great things' can be achieved by dairy farmers coming together – often using available technologies to deliver new solutions to farm challenges.



Tom O'Dwyer, Head of Dairy KT Teagasc

Clonakilty

Group Chairman:

Tommy O'Riordan,
Clonakilty, Co. Cork

Group Facilitator:

Seamus O'Dowd, Teagasc,
Clonakilty, Co. Cork

Region: Clonakilty area

Number of members: 16

System of Production:

Liquid/winter and spring
milk producers



Project title:

Labour efficiency in our group

Project Objectives:

To benchmark labour usage on members' farms and to identify opportunities for the introduction of labour saving changes.

Project Outline:

Each group member has completed a time-sheet for one day each week since the start of the year. Average hours worked for January to September is 25.8/LU (14.2-40.9/LU) with variations emerging in the time spent at different tasks e.g. milking, calf rearing.

Identifying the most labour efficient farmers within the group and looking at how they do things, will help group members to become more labour efficient.

Project Outcome:

Employing the time saving methods identified through the project will save the average group member 200 hours per annum - equivalent to milking 23 extra cows at a cost of €3,118 per annum or €15.57 per h u . Assuming a net profit of 10 cent/litre or €500 per cow, the extra income generated equates to €11,500 per farm.

Crookstown

Group Chairman:

Jerome Desmond,
Garryhesta, Co. Cork

Group Facilitator:

Seamus Lordan, Teagasc,
Macroom & John Maher,
Teagasc, Moorepark

Region: Crookstown,
Co. Cork

Number of members: 12

System of Production:

Spring milk producers

Project title:

Genomic selection for female fertility

Project Objectives:

To establish the impact of female fertility of farm profitability and to use this information to identify cows/replacements with superior female fertility.

Project Outline:

All replacements have been weighed and genomically tested. The farmers have ranked their replacements (based on existing knowledge). The fertility of the most durable cows in each herd has been examined with a view to identifying highly fertile cow families. Replacement heifers and most durable cows were genomically analysed.

Project Outcome:

Genomic analysis of the most durable cows showed that their fertility sub-index was higher than expected based on parental average. The group has found that genomic testing, rather than farmer opinion, is a superior method for identifying the most profitable animals.



One of the cows from the Crookstown discussion group that was genotyped as part of their genomics for fertility project. The cows EBI increased by €137, up to €306, with the majority of this increase coming from her fertility sub index.

Fanesiders

Group Chairman:

P.J. Boylan, Inniskeen,
Co. Monaghan

Group Facilitator:

Trevor Dunwoody,
Teagasc, Monaghan Town

Region: Monaghan,
North Louth

Number of members: 16

System of Production:

Liquid/winter and spring milk



Project title:

Pairs for Profit

Project Objectives:

To improve group members' herd fertility

Project Outline:

The cost of herd infertility was estimated by each group member for their farm at over €43,000 per farm. Members were divided into eight pairs and visited each others farms on six occasions during 2012 to focus on issues relating to herd fertility – condition scoring, grassland management, examining records. Decisions and actions were agreed as part of each visit.

Project Outcome:

This project shows operating as pairs helped to ensure that better decisions were made and action took place which resulted in improved herd performance. Measures of fertility improved during 2012 including a 9% increase in 21 day submission rate and a 5 day decrease in 2013 calving interval worth an estimated €8,550 per group member.

Forge

Group Chairman:

Donald Bateman,
Ballylooby, Co. Tipperary

Group Facilitator:

Brendan Horan, Teagasc,
Moorepark

Region: Munster

Number of members: 17

System of Production:

Mostly spring milk
producers

**Project title:**

Forge Genetics

Project Objectives:

To provide group members and other dairy farmers with a choice of high EBI, high health natural service bulls and to realise the true genetic/economic value of high EBI natural service bulls produced within the group herds.

Project Outline:

A new company called Forge Genetics was established. The group established a herd health protocol for the management of bull calves selected for rearing, identified a contract rearer and selected high EBI bull calves following genomic analysis. The group are now in the process of identifying the best calf rearing system and broadening the genetic base from which bulls can be purchased.

Project Outcome:

The company has reared and sold approximately 60 high genetic merit bull calves in year 2011/2012 sourced from group members' farms.

Gorey

Group Chairman:

Alan Poole, Gorey,
Co. Wexford

Group Facilitator:

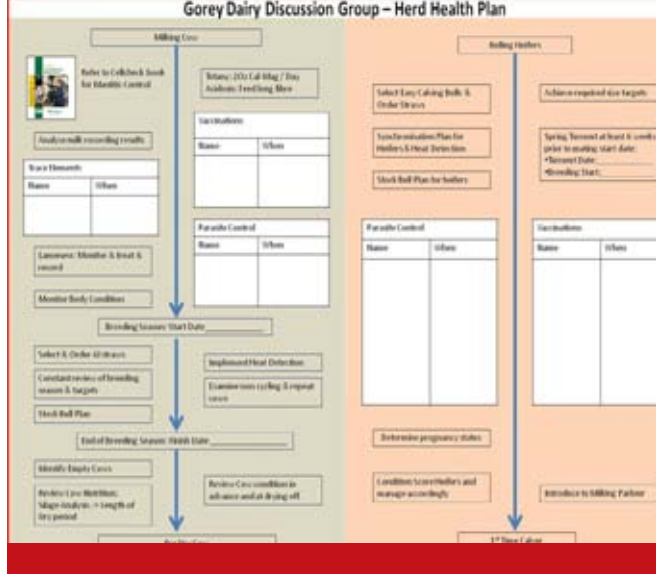
Kay O'Connell, Teagasc,
Gorey

Region: North Wexford

Number of members: 16

System of Production:

Mixture of spring and
winter/liquid milk producers



Project title:

To develop a herd health plan template

Project Objectives:

To increase the awareness of herd health
and to develop a herd health template for
use by group members

Project Outline:

At the outset of the project, only one group member had a written herd health plan even though 81% of group members had been affected by disease. The group developed a draft herd health plan which has been further developed and refined over the year. Guest speakers to group meetings have helped group members to discuss and agree actions on different diseases and animal health issues.

Project Outcome:

The group has developed a wall planner that can be pinned on the parlour wall to keep herd health deadlines and issues to the forefront of the farmer's mind with the minimal amount of data entry required.

Grassmasters

Group Chairman:

Jerome O'Mahony,
Drimoleague, Co. Cork

Group Facilitator:

Anne Malone, Teagasc,
Skibbereen

Region: Skibbereen

Number of members: 18

System of Production:

Mostly spring milk producers



Project title:

To design a smart phone app which provides real time information on the value of milk solids sold.

Project Objectives:

To identify the most useful data available from co-ops/ICBF and to develop a benchmarking tool to allow farmers compare performance.

Project Outline:

The group has identified the value of milk solids sold per cow per day as the benchmark figure they wish to compare. A pilot web based project within the group highlighted a difference of up to €3 per cow per day in the value of milk solids sold, between members. All the data to calculate the value of milk solids sold is available from their Co-op and ICBF but 12 calculations are required by the farmer to arrive at the euro value per cow figure.

Project Outcome:

The group developed software to calculate milk solids yield and euro value. As a result of the groups work the local Co-ops recognised the benefits for all Co-op suppliers and since early November text messages containing milk solids/ euro value information are being sent to all 800 milk suppliers of Drinagh and Lisavaird Co-ops. ICBF and the Co-ops are now in discussions on how to further advance the processing of real time information to farmers.

Kilkenny Progressive Farmers

Group Chairman:

Joe Treacy, Clifden,
Co. Kilkenny

Group Facilitator:

Pat Moylan, Teagasc,
Kilkenny

Region: Kilkenny City

Number of members: 12

System of Production:

Liquid/winter and spring milk

**Project title:**

Farm assessment and progress monitor worksheet

Project Objectives:

The group set out to design and develop a farm evaluation and recommendation sheet for use on host farms during a discussion group meeting.

Project Outline:

The idea for this project came from the realisation that the host farmer is often left with no written recommendations once the group meeting is finished. The group have used a draft worksheet at each of their group meetings in 2012. Changes and improvements have been incorporated. Sub-groups of three/ four farmers tackle key issues on the assessment sheet e.g. young stock, milk production, infrastructure etc and provide their recommendations for the host farmer.

Project Outcome:

The group has developed a worksheet for use at group meeting to give better feedback to the host farmer on farm performance. This has helped their group meetings by giving an increased focus to the three key areas of grassland, breeding and financial management.

Navan

Group Chairman:
John McGuinness,
Slane, Co. Meath

Group Facilitator:
Matt Ryan, Nenagh,
Co. Tipperary

Region: Meath/Cavan

Number of members: 15

System of Production:
Mostly spring milk producers



Project title: Managing mental health in our discussion group

Project Objectives: To identify the key triggers of stress experienced by dairy farmers and develop a DI stress management blueprint.

Project Outline: Dairy farmers are exposed to constant and many forms of stress during the course of their days work. The group has conducted a week-long survey on three occasions during the year. This is allowing the group to build up a picture of the 'stressors' members are experiencing. Once these are identified, the group (with some outside help) will look to identify preventative measures to reduce the risk of stress.

Project Outcome: In 2012 the main forms of stress affecting the Navan Discussion Group were categorised within grassland management, financial management, time management, personal time. The Group identified the need for it and other Groups to focus on time, administration, personal and health management as well as the technical efficiencies required to run a farm.

South Offaly

Group Chairman:

Eoin Toohey, Moneygall,
Co. Offaly

Group Facilitator:

Jim Moyles, Teagasc, Tullamore

Region: South Offaly

Number of members: 15

System of Production:

Spring milk producers

**Project title:**

Operation Cost Control

Project Objective:

To get a better handle on farm costs and to improve cash flow budgeting and monitoring skills for all group members

Project Outline:

All members completed Profit Monitor analysis for 2011 in early 2012 but felt that it wasn't until the following year that financial matters were focused on again. Training was provided on the use of Cost Control Planner to record all money in and out on a monthly basis. Subgroups were formed – three per group with five of the 'strongest' group members on IT appointed as team leaders. The financial performance of each group member has been reviewed using an up to date group report in July and October.

Project Outcome:

Completing the Cost Control Planner gave members a far better grasp of how they are performing financially. Group members have far more confidence in all their financial dealings though their increased understanding of their cost of production. The benefits to each individual group member are enormous, placing them in a much better position to negotiate with people such as bank managers, agri-suppliers and contractors on issues of credit terms, overdraft facilities, loan requirements etc. Furthermore, the financial skills acquired will be essential for future expansion plans.

West Offaly

Group Chairman:

Brendan McGarry,
Banagher, Co. Offaly

Group Facilitator:

Jim Moyles, Teagasc,
Tullamore

Region: West Offaly

Number of members: 14

System of Production:

Spring milk producers

**Project title:**

Operation Lifesaver

Project Objectives:

To increase awareness of health and safety amongst group members and to encourage members to take action to remedy hazards identified, thereby leading to a safer working environment for all group members.

Project Outline:

At the outset, only three members had completed a Farm Safety statement for their farm. In an effort to address this, health and safety has featured as a part of each group meeting to date in 2012.

Project Outcome:

Each group member has logged onto the HSA website www.farmsafely.com and has completed one of nine sections of the online Risk Assessment tool in advance of nine on farm meetings. The group has also built up a 'case study' using photographs to illustrate farm safety improvements made and best practice on members' farms.

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