

# PIGS

March 2023

Edited by Amy Quinn



Welcome to the March edition of our monthly newsletter. This month saw a further rise in pig price, with further increases hoped for in the coming weeks. In addition to this, the price of feed ingredients has come back so we look forward to seeing a drop in feed prices shortly.

This month representatives of the Teagasc Pig Stakeholder Group travelled to Lleida in Spain on a study trip to find out first-hand the intricacies of the Spanish pig industry. In the latest episode of The Pig Edge, which is now available, pig farmer Jason McGrath joins me on the podcast to review his trip and to detail his standout observations. Make sure to listen to find out his thoughts.

We are delighted to invite all pig farmers and pig industry stakeholders to the Teagasc Pig Open Day 2023, on Tuesday May 9<sup>th</sup> in Teagasc Moorepark, Fermoy, Co. Cork and Thursday May 11<sup>th</sup> in Ballyhaise Agricultural College, Ballyhaise, Co. Cavan. This is an ideal opportunity to see first-hand the results of the comprehensive research

programme undertaken by Teagasc, and to meet researchers, advisors and postgraduate students. On the day attendees will be brought around different stations which will cover the following topics; managing the pig environment, improving pre- and post-weaning management and nutrition, managing Disease, Grower/finisher management and feeding, and sustainability. This event will include a viewing of the newest addition to the Teagasc Pig Research Facility, a finisher building tailored to conduct low emissions and high welfare research trials. Make sure to register (details at the end of this newsletter) and mark it in your calendar!

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## Will the Irish pig sector produce the first carbon neutral meat?

Michael McKeon

The Irish pig sector, at times, receives negative comments as it addresses a number of its challenges; financial, environmental, welfare etc. However, one of the big positives for the sector is that the carbon footprint of pigs is very low when compared to other livestock sectors. This is principally due to the fact that pigs are monogastric (low methane production) and that the sector's output is built upon a highly efficient base. The carbon footprint of Irish pork has been calculated by the E.U. (JRC, 2010) at 4.8 kg Co2 eq. per kg pork which is significantly lower than the calculation for beef (22kgs Co2 eq.) and lamb (20kgs Co2 eq.).

The Irish pig sector has the opportunity to reduce this low level even further by concentrating on five primary areas.

### Benchmarking

The old adage of 'If it's not measured, it can't be managed' is very apt for this subject. The Teagasc Pig Department is currently rolling out a pilot study in conjunction with the Carbon Trust and BordBia to benchmark Irish pig production, thereby generating a very accurate assessment of the pig sector's carbon footprint.

### Protein substitution

The Irish pig sector, as per all European pig production, is a large importer of Brazilian soyabean. This is currently a necessity in order to obtain a protein source but it has a double negative. One negative is the distance required to

transport the feed ingredient and the other negative is continued Brazilian deforestation required in order to grow ever greater volumes of soyabeans. Recent research by Peadar Lawlor, in conjunction with UCD, has shown that Irish grown beans could be used as a substitute for soyabeans in pig diets if there were sufficient quantities grown. It's estimated the pigmeat carbon footprint could be reduced by 30% if sufficient Irish beans were supplied. This alone could bring the Irish pigmeat carbon footprint down to 3.36 kg Co2 eq.

In the near future the pig's dietary protein content may be partially supplied from grass. Pilot studies have indicated that pigs fed grass extracted protein had similar growth performance results when compared to soyabean fed pigs.

### Net energy generation

The Irish pig sector is rapidly installing solar PV panels in order to meet some of its energy requirement. The DAFM TAMS funding gives grant aid for installations up to 62 KW output. However the average pig farm has an abundance of roof space available for substantially more solar generation. The average size Irish pig unit (600 sow) has potentially sufficient roof space to install 1500 KW of PV panels. Installations of this size would allow pig units to not only meet their own supply requirements but also to become a significant electricity generator to the national grid. This implementation would significantly reduce pigmeat's carbon footprint.

### Feed by-products

The pig (like humans!) has a great ability to eat many food types and forms, in order to meet its daily nutrient allowance. A new Teagasc project on carbon lifecycle analysis called 'Value-Pig', led by Keelin O' Driscoll, is examining how by-product ingredients e.g. dairy / bakery products, could reduce the pig's carbon footprint further.

### Production efficiency

The Irish pig sector has made very substantial improvements in feed efficiency over the last 23 years. In 2000 the average wean-sale growth rate was 584g/day, now it is 750 g/day which is the equivalent of 39 less days to reach a standardised

live sale weight of 110kgs. Continued genetic & nutritional advancements will allow further reductions in 'days to slaughter' with a beneficial carbon footprint reduction.

In conclusion, if any of the five primary areas highlighted above are implemented individually they will further reduce the carbon footprint of Irish pigmeat. However, if all five areas are addressed simultaneously then the prospect of Irish pigmeat achieving carbon neutral status is a real possibility. The implementation of these five areas will take considerable financial investment by pig producers and therefore will not be undertaken unless the market can deliver a real and sustainable return on investment.

## Are you adequately insured?

**Gerard McCutcheon**

### Insurance cover

Insurance cover is very important to protect your business if an accident or tragedy occurs on the farm. It is important to understand what your insurance covers when you pay your annual premium.

### Areas of insurance cover for pig farms

There are three main areas that should be covered when you insure your pig farm:

- Stock value,
- Building replacement value,
- Loss of profits or consequential loss.

Also you should have cover for public liability and employer's liability, personal accident and also wages/salary cover. Each area should be

discussed with your insurance company annually as you renew your policy to ensure that your cover is suitable for your business.

### Insuring stock values

When insuring the stock on a pig farm their value must be estimated. This will vary depending on the pig sale value and the feed cost on your farm, remembering to adjust for the fact that pig prices have risen in the last 12 months.

The value of piglets, weaners and finishers will vary with the pig sale price, feed performance and feed costs (€/tonne). Assuming a sale weight of 118kg LW and a 76.5 % kill-out allows a valuation for these pigs as shown in the table below. This values the pigs at a sale value minus the feed cost

with some allowance for the other variable costs to bring the pig to sale weight.

**Table 1.** Value of a Piglet, Weaner and Finisher based on two sale prices:

	Sale Price in c/kg DW	
	160c/kg	220c/kg
Piglet value	€18	€69
Weaner value	€32	€87
Finisher value	€86	€140

*Assumes a finisher FCE of 2.7 and a weaner FCE of 1.8. Transfer to finisher at 38kg LW. Creep/starter diet @ €1180/t, Link @ €800/t, Weaner €514/t, Finisher €450/t.*

The average sale price for pigs in 2021 was c.160 c/kg DW. The average price in 2023 may be 220 c/kg DW. If we take the 220 c per kg sale price we get a €2,100 stock value per sow plus progeny (with sows valued at €500 each). This figure is €1,350 per sow plus progeny if the finisher sale price is 160 cent per kg DW.

For insurance cover of stock you need to decide what other risks are you to insure against. Cover should also be sought to cover the value of pigs being transported from the farm (pigs in transit) if you transport your own pigs for sale. This should be discussed with your insurance company as you renew your policy.

### Insuring farm buildings

When you insure a farm building you are really insuring the replacement cost of the farm building should it be damaged or destroyed. For example, if you have a pig finisher house with 1000 places and it was built ten years ago, it's book value is probably only €100,000 today. The current cost of new finisher accommodation is at least €350 (excluding VAT) per finisher place – so the replacement cost of the building is 1000 by €350 –

so the building should be insured for a value of €350,000. This valuation should be done for all your buildings on the pig farm (including feed mill if one is present).

If you only insure the building for its current value you will get less than 30% of the cost of replacing it (i.e. €100,000/€350,000 multiplied by 100). This will not replace the building if the building was destroyed. The figure is probably in the region of €5,300 per sow plus progeny (based upon €900/dry sow place, €3,500 per farrowing place, €250 for first and second stage weaner place and €350 per finisher place).

Check the risk cover that you require insurance for, e.g. fire, storm damage, lightning, explosion, suffocation etc. You should also discuss cover for removal of dead stock or building debris in the event of a fire or other tragedy on the farm.

### Loss of profits or consequential loss

The cost of profit loss or consequential loss is usually defined as the gross profit that is lost as a consequence of some tragic event that may be insured. Read your policy or ask your insurance company for an explanation of how the cover is defined and what that means. As pig prices and feed prices fluctuate the gross profit will vary from year to year.

The next decision is what length of cover you may require. If you have a fire on your farm and need to depopulate the herd, the time that you are out of production could well be a year, but if you run into planning issues or other problems this could even be longer. It is important to know when the consequential loss is triggered. It is usually the date of the incident. The period of cover needs to

be considered – a year may suffice but if there is a fire it could take a lot longer than a year to be fully operational again.

### Conclusion

Good farm insurance can take a lot of pressure off if an unfortunate event occurs on your farm. Unfortunately a lot of people say that “it will never happen to them” and perhaps do not give this the

time and attention that it deserves. It’s also important to remember that with higher feed costs and building costs you should review the values of stock and buildings that you have cover for.

***It could happen to you, and you need good farm insurance cover if your business is to survive.***

## IPHS Symposium 2023

**Amy Quinn**

The 2023 Irish Pig Health Society (IPHS) Symposium will take place on Tuesday the 18<sup>th</sup> of April at the Midlands Park Hotel, Portlaoise, Co. Laois. The theme of this year’s event is ‘Quality over quantity by maximising health & efficiency’.

There will be a host of speakers, industry leaders and exhibitors in attendance. This event always proves to be a valuable information source for pig producers and the wider industry and an excellent industry networking opportunity.

There are three key speakers presenting on the day. Research Scientist in sow lactation biology at the Sherbrooke Research and Development Centre of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Dr. Chantal Farmer, will address increasing sow milk yield. Mr. Stephen Hall, International Pig Data Analyst, will disseminate information on maximising sow longevity and gilt retention. Mr. Barry Caslin, Teagasc Energy & Rural Development Specialist will bring some viable energy options for pig producers into focus.

This year’s panel discussion session will hear from progressive Irish pig producers on their practical experiences in maximising health and efficiency on farm. This session will be chaired by the Pig Development Departments, Ciarán Carroll, and he will be joined by County Limerick pig producer John Hanrahan and County Clare pig farmer, Colm Ryan, as well as the three speakers on the day.

The Symposium will commence at midday, with its well-known and much loved hog roast lunch, giving you an opportunity to peruse the exhibitor stands after which there will be a welcome address from IFA President, Tim Cullinan followed by the presentations from the speakers and the panel discussion and access to the exhibition hall.

Admission charge to the Symposium is €30 per person or €50 to include a sit-down evening meal. Any further enquiries for the event can be made to the event organisers, Green Acre Marketing on +353 (0) 51 371 817 or by emailing [events@greenacremarketig.ie](mailto:events@greenacremarketig.ie).



## Teagasc Pig Open Day 2023

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Please register for this event in advance by contacting Niamh Allen at 025 42457 or [niamh.allen@teagasc.ie](mailto:niamh.allen@teagasc.ie)

## Teagasc Pig Welfare Workshops 2023

The Teagasc Pig Development Department recently held two certified pig welfare workshops, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of March in the Horse and Jockey Hotel, Co. Tipperary and the Kilmore Hotel, Co. Cavan respectively. This workshop is regularly carried by the PDD team and gives a thorough overview of pig welfare regulations, considerations and best practice and has been developed in collaboration with the Pig Development Department Advisory, Research and Education team. This workshop fulfils the welfare training requirement of the BordBia Pig Quality Assurance Scheme, whereby each farm is required to have at least one member of staff pig welfare certified. If you or a member of staff from your farm wish to be put on a waiting list for the next

welfare workshop please contact your Specialist Pig Advisor.

## Congratulations James



The 2023 British Society of Animal Science (BSAS) Conference took place from March 28<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> with many Teagasc PDD personnel presenting their research findings at the event. The PDD would like to congratulate PhD student

James Cullen on winning the BSAS Animal Science 2023 Industry prize for his project on "Optimising liquid feeding system hygiene to improve the microbiological quality of liquid feed for grow-finisher pigs".

## The Pig Edge

The Spanish pig sector has sparked a lot of interest over the past number of years, for a number of reasons; it's shown impressively fast growth to become the largest pork producer in Europe, it's demonstrated remarkable resilience during the recent financial crisis, with only a slight reduction in herd size, the scale of its vertically integrated systems as well its continually strong pig prices. With this in mind representatives of the Teagasc pig stakeholder group recently travelled to Spain on a study trip to find out first-hand what we need to know about the industry. On the latest episode of The Pig Edge, Host, Amy Quinn, is joined by Jason McGrath, a pig farmer from Waterford who travelled as part of the group to discuss his business and the trip. To listen to this episode visit <https://pod.fo/e/170799>.



**For more information:**

Please visit our webpage at:  
<https://www.teagasc.ie/animals/pigs/>

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