Teagasc National Farm Survey 2023

Single Suckling
Enterprise Factsheet

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Single Suckling Enterprise 2023
Average performance

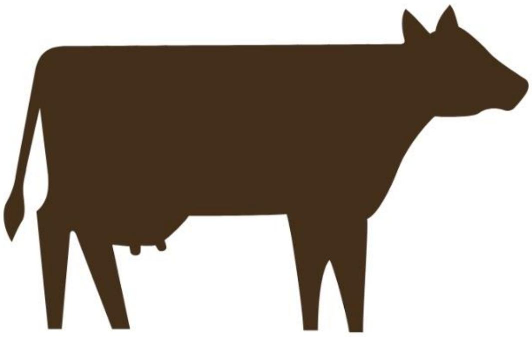
Irish Cattle Slaughter
1.870 million head (down 2.1%)

Stocking Rate (Calf to Weanling)
average of 1.18 lu/ha (up 1.1%)

Live Exports
322,684 head (up 12.7%)

Stocking Rate (Calf to Store)
average of 1.43 lu/ha (up 2.4%)

Irish Suckler Cow Numbers
0.82 million (down 5.0%)



Weanling sales price
average €1,005/head (up 5.6%)

Male Store sales price
average €1,546/head (up 26.3%)

Female Store sales price
average €1,331/head (up 13.6%)

Total Production Costs
(Single Suckling)
average €1,176 per hectare (down 5.4%)

Gross Margin
(Single Suckling)
average €499 per hectare (down 11.0%)

Source: Teagasc National Farm Survey 2023, Central Statistics Office and Dept. of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

Background

The 2023 Teagasc National Farm Survey (NFS) recorded data on 793 farms, 170 of which were single suckling farms. The performance of the single suckling enterprise in 2023 is summarised in this factsheet. This enterprise relates to those farms with herds of greater than 10 cows. The single suckling enterprise is the predominant cattle enterprise in Ireland, operated on over 22,400 farms.

1. Analysis of Financial Performance

Table 1 shows figures in relation to financial performance. The figures exclude all decoupled payments and costs relating to family labour. These figures include coupled direct payments. Table 1 shows that the average gross output in 2023 was €1,171 per hectare and therefore similar to 2022. Average direct costs per hectare increased by 11% in 2023. As a result, the average gross margin decreased by 11% on a per hectare basis. Average energy and fuel costs decreased by 21% year-on-year. Other fixed costs decreased by 21% year-on-year. In 2023, the decrease in costs supported an improvement in the average net margin per hectare to -€5 per hectare.

Table 1: Average gross margin and average net margin per hectare 2022 and 2023

	2022 € per hectare	2023 € per hectare	2023/2022 % change
Gross Output	1,166	1,171	0
Concentrate Costs	173	182	5
Pasture and Forage Costs	309	350	13
Other Direct Costs	124	140	13
Total Direct Costs	605	672	11
Gross Margin	561	499	-11
Energy and Fuel	135	107	-21
Other Fixed Costs	502	397	-21
Total Fixed Costs	638	505	-21
Total Costs	1,243	1,176	-5
Net Margin	-77	-5	n/a

Source: Teagasc National Farm Survey 2023

Table 2 shows results for gross output, total costs and margins on a per cow basis. Table 2 shows that the gross output per cow increased by 3% in 2023. However, the gross margin per cow decreased by 8% in 2023 to an average of €645. This decline in gross margin is due to a 12% increase in total direct costs per cow. Total fixed costs decreased by 20% per cow. Mainly due to the lower fixed cost expenditure, the net margin per cow improved to -€14 per cow in 2023.

Table 2: Average gross margin and average net margin per cow 2022 and 2023

	2022 € per cow	2023 € per cow	2023/2022 % change
Gross Output	1,474	1,511	3
Total Direct Costs	774	867	12
Gross Margin	700	645	-8
Total Fixed Costs	819	659	-20
Net Margin	-120	-14	n/a

Source: Teagasc National Farm Survey 2023

2. Variation in Production System

Table 3 presents data for 2023 relating to three production systems, which are found on Irish single suckling farms (calf to weanling, calf to store and calf to finish). Single suckling to weanling and suckling to store systems are more prevalent than calf to finishing systems. However, the latter is more profitable, as evidenced by the calf to finishing enterprises in 2023, which had the highest gross margin per hectare (see Table 3). A higher stocking rate and superior soil quality are more prevalent on calf to finishing farms.

Table 3: Variation in key indicators by three production systems 2023

	Weanling	Store	Finishing
% of Farms in production system	36	35	19
Stocking rate (Livestock units per hectare)	1.18	1.43	1.59
% of Farms on Very Good Soils	30	36	65
Gross Output (€/hectare)	985	1,143	1,521
Total Direct Costs (€/hectare)	592	655	793
Gross Margin (€/hectare)	393	488	729

Source: Teagasc National Farm Survey 2023

Table 4 shows that the changes in animal sales prices between 2022 and 2023 varied across the categories of cattle sales. Average weanling prices increased by 6% between 2022 and 2023. Male store sales prices increased by an average of 26% between 2022 and 2023. Female store sales prices increased by an average of 14%. Sales prices increased by 1% for male and decreased by 1% for female finished cattle between 2022 and 2023.

Table 4: Average animal sales prices 2022 and 2023

	2022 € per head	2023 € per head	2023/2022 % change
Weanlings	952	1,005	6
Male Stores	1,223	1,546	26
Female Stores	1,171	1,331	14
Finished Males	1,870	1,891	1
Finished Females	1,601	1,590	-1

Source: Teagasc National Farm Survey 2023

3. Variation in Financial Performance

Table 5 summarises the 2022 Teagasc NFS results for single suckling farms classified on the basis of gross margin per hectare; the best performing one-third of farms (Top), the middle one-third (Middle) and the poorest performing one-third (Bottom).

Table 5: Key financial indicators for top, middle and bottom one-thirds of farms in 2023

	Top	Middle	Bottom
Stocking rate (LU/hectare)	1.73	1.28	1.13
% of Farms on Very Good soils	59	35	25
Gross Output (€/hectare)	1,722	1,070	814
Concentrates (€/hectare)	200	161	180
Pasture and Forage (€/hectare)	323	278	332
Other Direct Costs (€/hectare)	172	95	121
Gross Margin (€/hectare)	1,027	536	181

Source: Teagasc National Farm Survey 2023

Table 5 shows the broad variation in gross output per hectare on Irish single suckling farms across the three groups, with gross output on the Top performing farms being €1,722 per hectare and only €814 per hectare for the Bottom performing group. The gross margin (€ per ha) earned is over 5 times higher on the Top performing group of farms as compared to the average gross margin earned by the Bottom group of farms. The variation in expenditure on concentrate feed across the three groups of farms is less marked than the variation in gross output. It is evident that a higher proportion of the Top performing single suckling farms have a superior soil type.

Table 6 shows the average sale and purchase prices recorded for the various animal types on the Top, Middle and Bottom single suckling farms. Table 6 shows that average weanling and store (male and female) sales prices are higher for the Top and Middle performing groups relative to the Bottom performing group. In terms of finished cattle (male and female), the average sales price is highest for the Bottom performing group and lowest for the Middle performing group.

Table 6: Average sale price for Top, Middle and Bottom one-thirds of farms 2023

	Top	Middle	Bottom
		€ per head	
Weanlings Sales	1,086	959	970
Male Stores Sales	1,614	1,503	1,340
Female Stores Sales	1,404	1,333	1,133
Finished Males Sales	1,851	1,846	2,013
Finished Females Sales	1,545	1,629	1,685

Source: Teagasc National Farm Survey 2023

4. Variation in Technical Performance

The proportion of single suckling farms attaining the Teagasc 2027 Sectoral Road Map Targets in 2022 and 2023 is set out in Table 7. There were slight improvements over the period 2022/2023 in the proportion of farms reaching the gross and net margin targets set out in Teagasc's 2027 Road Map. The proportion of farms earning a gross margin greater than €615 per hectare increased by 1 percentage point year-on-year. The proportion of farms meeting the net margin target also increased by 1 percentage point. This improvement is due to the decreases in fixed cost expenditures as reported in Table 1 and Table 2. There has been an improvement in the proportion of farms meeting the threshold relating to concentrate usage per LU of less than 334 kg per LU. The proportion of farms meeting this target increased by 5 percentage points between 2021 and 2022. There are small changes to report in terms of the environmental targets set out in the Teagasc 2027 Road Map for the beef sector. The percentage of farms applying less than 80kg of fertiliser per hectare decreased from 84% in 2022 to 82% in 2023. The proportion of farms using protected urea increased slightly from 4% in 2022 to 7% in 2023. The proportion of farms applying LESS (Low Emissions Slurry Spreading) increased from 28% in 2022 to 36% in 2023. This adoption rate for LESS remains well below the target of 75%, which was set out in the Teagasc 2027 Road Map for the beef sector.

Table 7: Percentage of farms achieving selected Teagasc Cattle 2027 Road Map Targets

	% of farms 2022	% of farms 2023
Gross Output per hectare > €1,216	40	42
Gross Margin per hectare > €615	38	33
Net Margin per hectare > €159	26	27
Concentrate per Livestock Unit < 334 kg	63	67
Nitrogen Fertiliser per Hectare < 80 kg	84	82
Percentage applying protected urea	4	7
Percentage slurry applied by LESS	28	36

Source: Teagasc National Farm Survey 2023

Table 8 shows a decrease in the share of farms in the higher part of the gross margin distribution in 2023 relative to 2022. In 2023, there was a 7 percentage point decrease in the proportion of single suckling farms with a gross margin per hectare exceeding €500 per hectare.

Table 8: Distribution of gross margin per hectare 2022 and 2023

Gross Margin	% of farms 2022	% of farms 2023
<€0 per hectare	2	5
€0 to €149 per hectare	11	10
€150 to €299 per hectare	13	17
€300 to €499 per hectare	23	25
€500 per hectare and above	51	44

Source: Teagasc National Farm Survey 2023

For further information on this publication or other Teagasc National Farm Survey Publications please contact NFS@teagasc.ie