GRO dairy
Generational Renewal Opportunities

Animal & Grassland Research and Innovation Programme

Generational Renewal Opportunities for Dairy Farm Businesses

PLAN | PROGRESS | PROSPER

Moorepark Dairy Levy Research Update

Series 44

Teagasc
Agriculture and Food Development Authority

Dairy Research Ireland
funded by Irish Dairy Farmers

Why GROdairy?

Irish dairy farming is changing

Many successful dairy farmers are considering how they can transition their role in the farm business, reducing their day-to-day responsibilities while continuing to contribute their experience, knowledge and resources.

At the same time, a new generation of highly skilled farmers are ready to step forward but can face challenges in accessing opportunities to establish and develop their farming careers.

GROdairy has been developed by Teagasc to connect these opportunities; supporting collaborative farming approaches as a practical pathway for farm progression, generational renewal and the future proofing of Irish dairy farming.

The foundation of GROdairy is based on three principles:

1. **SKILLS**
   Developing the skills needed to create and sustain successful collaborative farming arrangements
2. **SUPPORT**
   Providing farmers and stakeholders with the information, guidance and support required to make informed decisions and build successful partnerships
3. **STRUCTURES**
   Helping farmers understand the strengths and limitations of different collaborative farming structures once the necessary skills and supports are in place

Through these foundations, GROdairy supports farmers and stakeholders through four interconnected objectives:

- Collaborative Farming Demonstration Farms
- A National Farm Progression Network
- One-to-One Transition Consultations
- Business Planning, Communication and Financial Training

STEP UP

COLLABORATE

STEP BACK

National Farm Progression Network

BUILD THE KNOWLEDGE, CONFIDENCE AND CONNECTIONS NEEDED TO PROGRESS.

JOIN A COMMUNITY OF PROGRESSING FARMERS BUILDING THEIR FUTURE.

The GROdairy Farm Progression Network is designed for ambitious young people who want to learn from others, build valuable connections and better understand the opportunities available through a career in dairy farming.

Whether your goal is to become an exceptional farm manager or eventually establish your own dairy farming business, the aim of this network is to provide the support, inspiration and practical knowledge to help you make informed decisions.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN THROUGHOUT THE PROGRAMME?

MEMBER STORIES

Follow the journeys of fellow members as they share their opportunities and challenges.

USEFUL RESOURCES

Articles, podcasts, videos and practical tools shared to help build business and technical knowledge.

EXPERT INSIGHTS

Regular contributions from leading farmers, experts, and international speakers who understand career progression farming.

EVENTS AND TRAINING

Training, exploring collaborative farming, leadership, business management and emerging opportunities.

PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING

Ask questions, share experiences and learn from a nationwide network of ambitious people facing many of the same opportunities and challenges.

JOIN THE NETWORK

Build your knowledge. Expand your network. Create your opportunity.
Become part of a nationwide community of ambitious young dairy farmers who are shaping the future of the industry.
Scan the QR code to register your interest.

From Ambition to Opportunity —

EVERY SUCCESSFUL DAIRY FARMER STARTS SOMEWHERE.

Whether you enter farming straight from school, college or later in life, there are many routes to building your own farming business. The key is gaining practical skills, responsibility, learning from trusted mentors and building the capital needed to farm in your own right.

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GROdairy SUPPORTS YOU AT EVERY STEP
Through demonstration farms, the Young Farmer Progression Network and one-to-one advice, GROdairy will support your journey.

The Career Progression Pathway

MULTIPLE ROUTES – MANY OPPORTUNITIES
Your journey is unique. Progress at your own pace and take the opportunities that are right for you.

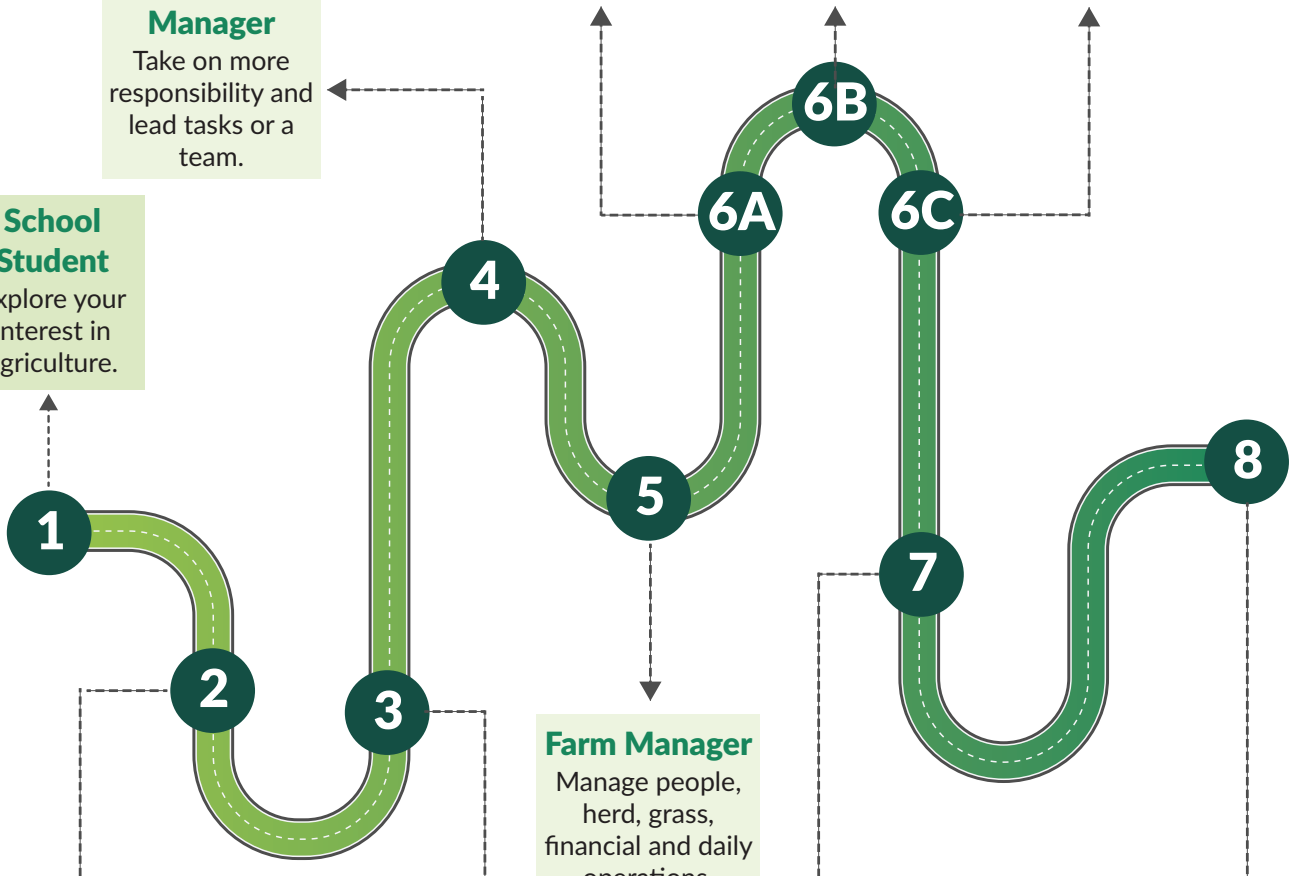
Contract Milker
Milk on a contract basis and build experience.

Share Milker
Collaborate on a share farming agreement.

Farm Business Manager
Oversee the business and drive performance.

Assistant Manager
Take on more responsibility and lead tasks or a team.

School Student
Explore your interest in agriculture.



Farm Manager
Manage people, herd, grass, financial and daily operations.

School Leaver Options
- Further Education (Level 5-8)
- Trainee/Apprentice
- Full-time Farm Employment

Skilled Farm Employee
Build practical skills and industry experience.

Lessee
Lease a farm and continue building.

Independent Dairy Business Owner
Own and operate your own successful dairy business.

Your Dairy Career Pathway

KEY MILESTONES

- First full-time job
- Managing a herd
- First budget
- Leading a team
- First livestock purchase
- First collaborative agreement
- First leased farm
- Business growth

SKILLS YOU'LL BUILD ALONG THE WAY

TECHNICAL SKILLS

- Animal Husbandry
- Milking & Herd Management
- Grassland Management
- Animal Breeding
- Farm Safety

BUSINESS SKILLS

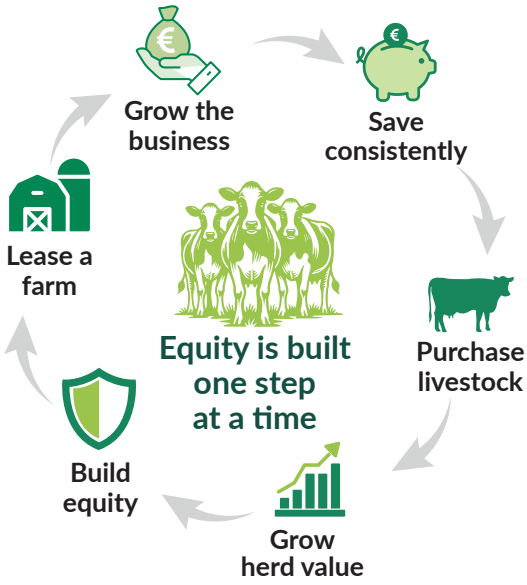
- Budgeting & Record Keeping
- Financial Management
- Business Planning
- People Management
- Time Management

LEADERSHIP AND GROWTH

- Communication
- Decision Making
- Risk Management
- Strategic Planning
- Innovation & Improvement

BUILDING EQUITY

HOW SUCCESSFUL CAREERS ARE BUILT



YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK GROWS WITH YOU

EARLY CAREER
(Student/Trainee)

- Parents
- Lecturer
- Agriculture Teacher
- Career Guidance
- Mentor

DEVELOPING CAREER
(Employee/Ass. Manager)

- Employer
- Advisor
- Mentor
- Discussion Group

FARM MANAGEMENT

- Discussion Group
- Vet
- AI Technician
- Milk Processor
- Advisor
- Professional Network

ADVANCING CAREER
(Owner/Lessee)

- Accountant
- Financial Advisor
- Solicitor
- Bank Manager
- Advisor
- Professional Network

SURROUND YOURSELF WITH THE RIGHT PEOPLE – THEY WILL HELP YOU GROW

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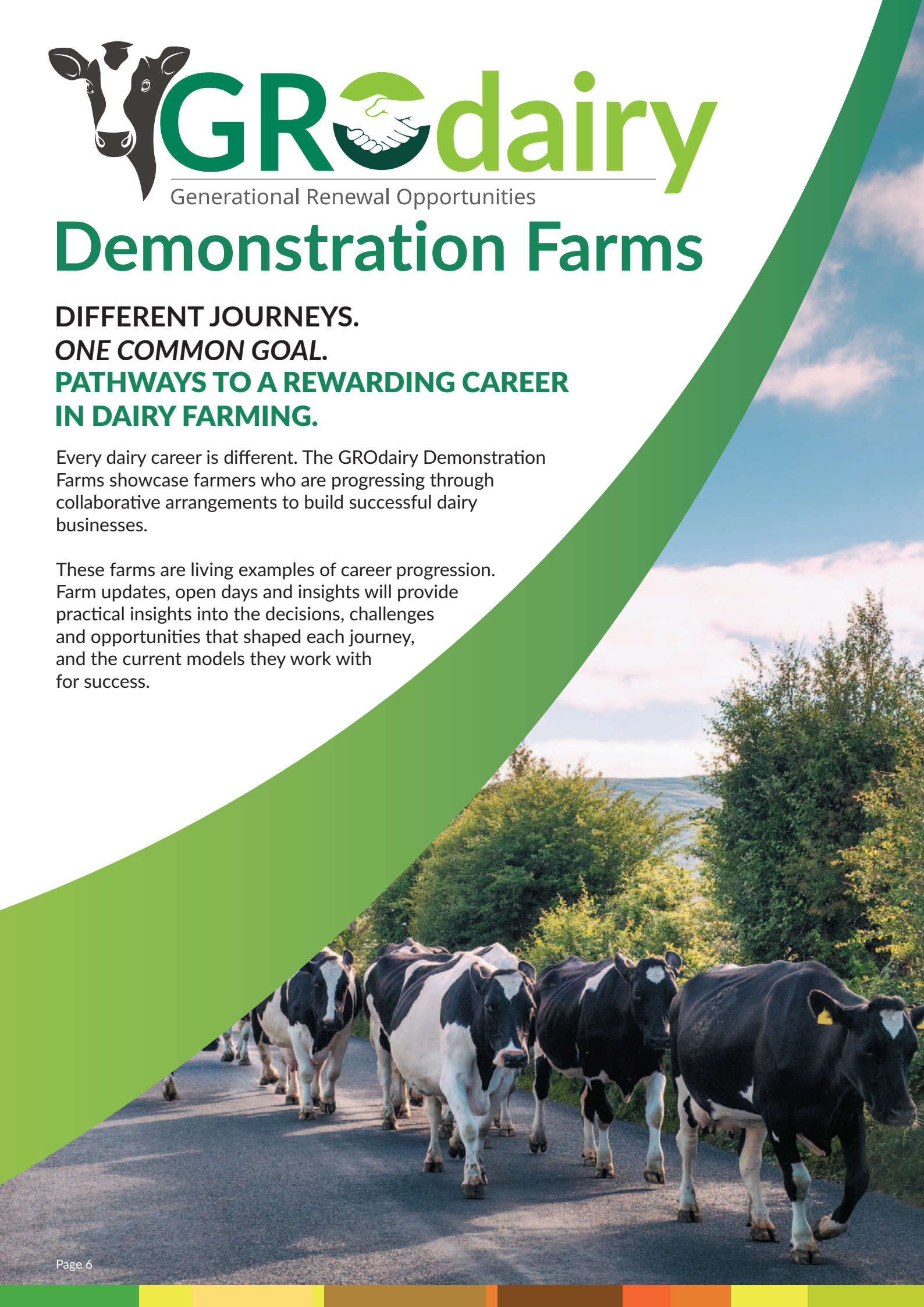
Demonstration Farms

DIFFERENT JOURNEYS.
ONE COMMON GOAL.
PATHWAYS TO A REWARDING CAREER IN DAIRY FARMING.

Every dairy career is different. The GROdairy Demonstration Farms showcase farmers who are progressing through collaborative arrangements to build successful dairy businesses.

These farms are living examples of career progression. Farm updates, open days and insights will provide practical insights into the decisions, challenges and opportunities that shaped each journey, and the current models they work with for success.



GRO dairy Demonstration Farms

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Cian Jobe

Ballymore,
Co. Westmeath

Originally from Longford

The pathway:

Ballyhaise Ag College ⇒ Diploma in Dairy Farm Management ⇒ Farm manager ⇒ Leased farm.

Since commencing his first lease on the Maxwell family farm in 2025, Cian has expanded the business to include a second leased dairy farm on the O'Rourke family farm and begin milking there in 2027.

Farm snapshot:

- 220 cows
- 80 ha milking platform
- First lease established in 2025, 7-year lease

Key learning:

"Keep it simple, if it's simple it is easy to replicate. It can be difficult when expanding and dealing with staff, not everyone will do it the way you do, so just accept 90% and life becomes less stressful."

Gearoid Slattery

Ballina,
Co. Tipperary

The pathway:

Pallaskenry Ag College ⇒ Diploma in Dairy Farm Management ⇒ New Zealand experience ⇒ Farm manager ⇒ Sydney ⇒ Leased farm

Gearoid went to NZ and spent two years managing a farm in Tipperary after finishing the PDDFM. He then went to Australia to work outside of agriculture before returning home to lease the dairy farm from the Larkin family.

Farm snapshot:

- 135 cows
- 44 ha milking platform
- 10-year lease established in 2024

Key learning:

"Grazed grass is key to farm profit. Having worked on various farms and different systems it is clear to see grass is key to cow performance and profit."

Kieran Kennedy

Silvermines, Nenagh,
Co. Tipperary

The pathway:

Pallaskenry Ag College ⇒ working on local dairy farms ⇒ Leased first farm 2023.

Leased an existing dairy farm from the Walsh family in 2023, before taking on a second dairy farm from the Slattery family in a collaborative arrangement in 2026 in partnership with his brother Shane who farms on their home farm of 20 ha and 50 ha leased.

Farm snapshot:

- 450 cows
- Three 70-80 ha milking platforms
- First leased established in 2023, 15-year lease

Key learning:

"I aspire to build a thriving dairy business chasing technical excellent performance with a good work life balance being able to travel on lengthy breaks and spending time with my young family both on and off the farm."

GRO dairy Demonstration Farms

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Linda O'Neill

Old Parish,
Co. Waterford

Originally from Cork

The pathway:

Clonakilty Ag College ⇒ New Zealand Experience ⇒Farm manager ⇒ LIC Ireland ⇒ Leased farms

Linda spent 7 years in different roles for LIC Ireland across consultancy and management. She then moved into dairy farming through a 50/50 partnership and lease in Dungarvan, later expanding her dairy business through an additional leased milking platform and support block.

Farm snapshot:

320 cows

125 ha across two milking platforms and 21 ha support block

Two collaborative arrangements

Key learning:

"Having a passion for what you do is infectious to those who surround you. Farm for profit but most importantly enjoy it."

Padraig Cunnane

Dunmanway,
Co. Cork

Originally from Mayo

The pathway:

Mountbellew Ag College ⇒ Farm Mgt. Employment on dairy farms ⇒ Farm manager ⇒ Shinagh Estates (Gurteen) Share milking ⇒ Leased farm

After securing the lease on the Murphy family farm in 2024, Padraig has steadily focused on improving technical efficiencies on farm and firmly sees his future in West Cork.

Farm snapshot:

126 cows

52 ha milking platform

7-year lease established in 2024

Key learning:

"Tomorrow is a new day no matter what way things are, you start again new the next day."

Kerry Desmond

Shinagh Estates,
Bandon, Co. Cork

The pathway:

Clonakilty Ag College ⇒ Employment on dairy farms ⇒ Farm manager ⇒ Shinagh Estates (Gurteen) Share milking

Kerry built his career working on and managing dairy farms before progressing to a share-milking arrangement, allowing him to build equity and prepare for future opportunities.

Farm snapshot:

96 cows

37 ha milking platform

7-year share farming agreement with Shinagh Estates established 2024

Key learning:

"Having the time to do whatever it is you want outside of farming. I achieve this by keeping things simple and efficient on farm and most importantly have a passion for what you do everyday."

GROdairy Demonstration Farms

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Gary Shaw

Carney,
Co. Sligo

The pathway:

Gurteen Ag College ⇒ Farm manager ⇒ Share milking
Aghmore, Co. Mayo ⇒ Leased farm

After returning from his travels, Gary spent several years managing a dairy farm before building equity through share milking, creating a strong track record that helped him to secure a lease on the O'Connor family farm close to his home.

Farm snapshot:

166 cows

47 ha milking platforms

15-year lease agreement beginning in 2024

Key learning:

"People are key to your farm and your career; always ensure you get on well with the farm owner before entering any arrangements."

Timmy Walsh

Castlegregory,
Co. Kerry

The pathway:

Animal & Crop Production – UCD ⇒ Assistant farm manager ⇒ Farm manager in Cork ⇒ Began working for Andrew Fitzgerald ⇒ Entered collaborative arrangement with Andrew

Timmy is at the beginning of his dairy career in a collaborative arrangement, having built his experience working on dairy farms and contract rearing heifers on his own farm. He is now ready to take the next step in collaboration with Andrew.

Farm snapshot:

140 cows

45 ha milking platform

Collaborative farming arrangement

Key learning:

"I always wanted to farm close to home here in Kerry, this opportunity has given me the chance to do just that."

Paul Kingston

Kildorrery,
Co. Cork

The pathway:

Dairy Business – UCD ⇒ New Zealand experience ⇒ Farm manager ⇒ Collaborative arrangement

Paul is currently in a partnership with Joe Deane leasing a farm for 10 years in Kildorrery, Co. Cork. Pauls goals are to continue to grow his equity while focusing on improving technical efficiencies.

Farm snapshot:

130 cows

40 ha milking platform

Collaborative farming arrangement

Key learning:

"There is a lot of work and risk involved in establishing your own business especially in a collaborative situation, cash flow management has been the biggest learning to date".

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YOUR FARM. YOUR FUTURE. YOUR NEXT CHAPTER.

Planning today creates more options for tomorrow

Every farm is different. Whether you are planning retirement, reducing your workload, or preparing for the next generation, planning early gives you more choices and greater piece of mind.

WHICH OPTION IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

Your decision depends on:

- Your retirement goals
- Family circumstances
- Business objectives
- Future financial needs
- Lifestyle preferences
- Availability of a successor

Together, we can support you to find the right pathway for you, your family and your farm.

- Reduced day-to-day pressure
- Secure income
- Farm remains productive
- Business continuity
- Opportunity for the next generation
- Enjoy farming on your own terms

WHY PLAN EARLY?

More time to consider options	Better financial outcomes	Reduced stress and greater flexibility
Smoother family discussions	Make the farm more attractive for the next generation	Improved succession outcomes

YOUR CONSULTATION JOURNEY

1

THINKING ABOUT YOUR FUTURE

Take time to consider your goals, lifestyle and what matters most for you, your family and your farm.

2

FAMILY CONVERSATION

Discuss you future plans with family members and identify the options available.

3

INDEPENDENT ONE-TO-ONE CONSULTATION

Meet with your Teagasc Joint Programme Advisor for a confidential consultation.

During your consultation you will:

- Review your current farming business
- Assess future opportunities
- Explore family and/or collaborative arrangements
- Discuss retirement planning
- Identify practical next steps

4

DEVELOP YOUR ACTION PLAN

Every participant receives a practical action plan tailored to their farm, outlining:

- Priority actions
- Future objectives
- Recommended professional supports
- A roadmap for the next stage of the business

An optional Five-Year Business Plan is also available to help project future profitability and strengthen long-term business security.

5

PUT YOUR PLAN INTO ACTION

With the right advice and professional support, you can confidently implement your chosen pathway.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO MAKE THESE DECISIONS ALONE

Your professional team may include:

- Family
- Teagasc Advisor
- Accountant
- Solicitor
- Bank Manager
- Tax Advisor
- Collaborative Farming Partner

> ***Planning today creates opportunities for tomorrow.***

YOUR FARM.
YOUR LEGACY.
YOUR FUTURE.

LET'S PLAN YOUR NEXT CHAPTER

Talk to your local Teagasc advisor today or visit:

www.teagasc.ie/grodairy

YOUR OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

There is no single solution for every farm. GROdairy helps you identify the option that best suits your family, your business and your future.

1 REGISTERED FARM PARTNERSHIP (RFP)

Work together under a formal written agreement – most likely option if a family successor is present

Potential benefits include:

- Share responsibilities
- Transfer knowledge and experience
- Profit-sharing arrangement
- Clear legal structure
- Supports succession planning

SCAN FOR MORE INFO

2 SHARE FARMING

Remain actively involved while reducing day-to-day responsibility.

Potential benefits include:

- Continue farming while stepping back
- Younger farmer has opportunity to build equity
- Two independent businesses
- Gradual transition

SCAN FOR MORE INFO

3 LONG-TERM LAND LEASING

Generate a reliable income while reducing daily workload.

Potential benefits include:

- Secure long-term income
- Less day-to-day management
- Opportunity to remain involved where agreed
- Flexible arrangements depending on the lease

SCAN FOR MORE INFO

4 CONTRACT REARING

Continue farming without milking, while generating income from your land, facilities and expertise.

Potential benefits include:

- Use your livestock experience
- Consistent annual income
- Remain farming
- Stay in control of your own business
- Reduced physical workload

SCAN FOR MORE INFO