



An Comhchoiste um Thalmhaíocht, Bia agus Muir

Tuarascáil Taistil

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Feirm Thaispeána ABP

Eanáir 2023

Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine

Travel Report

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ABP Demonstration Farm

January 2023

Membership

The following Deputies and Senators are members of the Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine of the 33rd Dáil Éireann and the 26th Seanad Éireann.



Sen. Victor Boyhan
Independent



Sen. Lynn Boylan
Sinn Féin



Martin Browne T.D.
Sinn Féin



Jackie Cahill T.D.
Fianna Fáil
[Cathaoirleach]



Matt Carthy T.D.
Sinn Féin



Michael Collins T.D.
Independent



Sen. Paul Daly
Fianna Fáil



Michael Fitzmaurice
T.D. Independent



Joe Flaherty T.D.
Fianna Fáil



Paul Kehoe T.D.
Fine Gael



Brian Leddin T.D.
Green Party



Sen. Tim Lombard
Fine Gael *[Leas-
Chathaoirleach]*



Sen. Denis O'Donovan
Fianna Fáil



Michael Ring T.D.
Fine Gael

Table of Contents

Membership	1
Introduction	3
Committee Delegation.....	3
Briefing.....	3
Tour of the Demonstration Farm.....	5
Conclusion.....	6
Appendix 1: Terms of Reference	7
Powers of Select Committees (DSO 96 and SSO 72)	7

Introduction

In June 2022 ABP wrote to joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine ('the Committee') to extend an invitation to the Members of the Committee to visit its Demonstration Farm to view the research currently being undertaken on the efficient production of Irish beef.

On 24 October 2022, a delegation of the Committee visited ABP Demonstration Farm in Clonegal, Co. Carlow to gain insight into the workings and trials being undertaken on the farm. The Committee wished to observe its research into reducing the carbon footprint of Irish beef through better genetics, feed efficiency and reduction in finishing age.

Committee Delegation

The visit to the Demonstration Farm was attended by the following members of the Committee:

- Jackie Cahill T.D., *Cathaoirleach*
- Michael Fitzmaurice T.D.
- Matt Carthy T.D.

The delegation was accompanied by the Clerk to the Committee, Mr. Christy Haughton.

Briefing

The Committee met with the representatives from the following organisations:

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| <i>ABP</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kevin Cahill, Managing Director • Stephen Connolly, Agri Sustainability Manager • Seamus Banim, Communications Director |
| <i>Teagasc</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pdraig French, Head of Livestock Systems & Dairy Enterprises |

*Irish Cattle Breeding
Federation (ICBF)*

- Sean Coughlan, CEO
- Niall Kilrane, Manager of the Gene Ireland Dairy Beef Programme

The visit commenced with a briefing off-site, which consisted of a number of presentations and discussions, which provided an insight into the workings and outcomes of the various research programmes. The representatives discussed their research and outcomes in the identification of better genetics to improve environmental sustainability of beef production, while also emphasizing the improved returns for farmers. Research has also been undertaken into feed intake, grass types and herd health and will expand to include animal grazing, land management and biodiversity. The representatives stated that they will continue to investigate methods to drive efficiencies and make the beef sector sustainable.

There were detailed discussions around the quality of beef bull calves from the dairy herd and their reduced carcass performance. The Committee was informed that research had focused on improving the breed traits through the use of higher genetic merit A1 sires of the dairy herd. The result of using better beef breed bulls in the dairy herd will result in ease of calving and carcass quality resulting in dairy farmers benefiting in a guaranteed outlet for their calves. It was also stated that if animals convert their feed more efficiently they would reach their finishing weight at a younger age therefore reducing the emissions they would produce.

The representatives disclosed that research over a six-year period has resulted in a 46 kg increase in carcass weight within breed resulting in an improved return for the farmer of approx. €200 and resulted in the average age of finishing has been reduced to 19 months for heifers and 21 months for steers. The representatives outlined how the learnings of the research on the farm has resulted in the development of the Advantage Beef Programme, which delivers real returns for farmers, and an effective business model.

Tour of the Demonstration Farm

Following the presentations and discussions that took place off site, the Committee was then brought on a tour of the ABP Demonstration Farm which consists of 280 acres.

The Committee and representatives went to the farmyard where various calves were displayed in the crusher. The representatives highlighted the physical differences between the calves arising from the best and worst performing sires. Discussions continued in the farmyard on the use of genetics to improve the progeny of the heifers and the potential impact on the productivity of the national herd of the roll out of the knowledge gained from the research. The representatives stated that the findings of their research are applicable across different beef production systems.



ABP's demonstration farm in Clonegal. Left to right: Michael Fitzmaurice T.D., Stephen Connolly ABP, Jackie Cahill T.D., Matt Carthy T.D.

The Committee and representatives then proceeded to view the herd in the fields. Discussions continued on viewing the herd, and type of grass and swarth was also examined. The field also also contained equipment used to monitor green house gas

emissions from the cattle and a demonstration on the operation of the equipment was given.



Equipment on ABP's demonstration farm in Clonegal.

Conclusion

The Committee wishes to thank ABP for the invitation to the Demonstration Farm and thank the staff of ABP, Teagasc and ICBF for the informative presentations and engaging discussions throughout the visit. The Committee will continue to explore the research and its outcomes with the various stakeholder to ensure that Irish beef continues to be produced sustainably and provide an income to Irish farmers.

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference

Powers of Select Committees (DSO 96 and SSO 72)

DSO 96

Unless the Dáil shall otherwise order, a Committee appointed pursuant to these Standing Orders shall have the following powers:

10. power to—

- (a) engage the services of persons with specialist or technical knowledge, to assist it or any of its sub-Committees in considering particular matters; and
- (b) undertake travel;

Provided that the powers under this paragraph are subject to such recommendations as may be made by the Working Group of Committee Chairmen under Standing Order 120(4)(a).

SSO 72

Unless the Seanad shall otherwise order, a Committee appointed pursuant to these Standing Orders shall have the following powers:

10. power to –

- (a) engage the services of persons with specialist or technical knowledge, to assist it or any of its sub-Committees in considering particular matters; and
- (b) undertake travel;

Provided that the powers under this paragraph are subject to such recommendations as may be made by the Working Group of Committee Chairmen under Standing Order 107(4)(a).