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An Comhchoiste um Thalmhaíocht, Bia agus Muir

Tuarascáil Taistil

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Feirm Liamhna UCD

Bealtaine 2023

Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine

Travel Report

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UCD Lyons Farm

May 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



Jackie Cahill T.D.
Fianna Fáil
[Cathaoirleach]



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



Claire Kerrane T.D.
Sinn Féin



Brian Leddin T.D.
Green Party



Sen. Tim Lombard
Fine Gael [Leas-
Chathaoirleach]



Johnny Mythen T.D.
Sinn Féin



Sen. Denis O'Donovan
Fianna Fáil



Michael Ring T.D.
Fine Gael

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Introduction

The Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine ("the Committee") work programme includes the topics 'Climate change & Challenges facing the Agriculture Sector' and 'Technology & Innovation in Farming'. As part of its examination of these topics the Committee agreed to visit UCD Lyons Farm in Lyons Estate, Celbridge, Co. Kildare.

On Tuesday, 25 April 2023, a delegation of the Committee visited UCD Lyons Farm to gain insight into the workings and trials in relation to methane and the environmental sustainability of livestock production being undertaken on the farm. The Committee wished to observe in particular its research into sustainable dairy production and pasture-based production.

Committee Delegation

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

- Jackie Cahill T.D., *Cathaoirleach*
- Senator Tim Lombard
- Senator Paul Daly

The delegation was accompanied by the Policy Advisor to the Committee, Ms. Rebecca Coyle

Briefing

The Committee met with the following representatives of UCD:

- Professor Tommy Boland
- Professor Alex Evans
- Professor Frank Monahan
- Professor Karina Pierce
- Professor Helen Sheridan

The visit commenced with a number of presentations and discussions on the structure and research of UCD and UCD Lyons Farm, which provided an insight into

the workings of the various research programmes. The representatives answered questions from the Committee on their structure, research and outcomes. Following these discussions, the Committee was brought on a tour of the farm.

Tour of the Farm

First the Committee were given a tour of the milking parlour and collecting yard where Professor Pierce answered questions on their dairy production and discussed their research into a grass-based spring milk production system.



Milking parlour in UCD Lyons Farm

According to their research the development of a high output grass-based spring milk production system can be sustainable when built on a foundation of good grassland management and meeting both milk and fertility targets.

Following this the Committee was then brought out to the grazing areas where they were shown several paddocks to see the difference between perennial ryegrass (PRG), PRG and white clover and multispecies swards consisting of PRG, Timothy, white clover, red clover, chicory and ribwort plantain.



Sample of multispecies sward paddock in UCD Lyons Farm

Professor Sheridan and Professor Boland answered questions on the impact of the different paddocks on the production on lamb and beef in particular weight and slaughter age. The Committee were shown two herds of the same age. One was grazing in a paddock with PRG and white clover and the other was grazing in a paddock with a multispecies sward. The difference in the size between the two herds was evident to the Committee with the latter looking larger.



Herd grazing in the multispecies sward paddock in UCD Lyons Farm

The Committee examined the different swards and the positive impact that using multispecies swards was discussed in terms of sustainability and financially. The Committee wishes to thank the staff of UCD Lyons Farm for their informative presentations and engaging discussions throughout the visit.

Conclusion

The Committee welcomes this key research that UCD is conducting and the impact it will have on the environmental sustainability of livestock farming and dairy production in Ireland. This visit gave the Committee a valuable insight into innovative farming practices which, if brought in nationwide, would have a positive impact in helping Ireland achieve its climate emission targets while also supporting a financially viable farm.



Left to right: Sen. Paul Daly, Sen. Tim Lombard, Prof. Alex Evans, Prof. Tommy Boland, Jackie Cahill T.D., Professor Helen Sheridan & Prof. Frank Monahan

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).