

Devenish presentation to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine

17th November 2021

Introduction

Chairman I would like to thank you and the Committee for the opportunity to address the Committee this evening to discuss carbon sequestration and storage in agriculture.

At Devenish, we have a track record of R&D in this area and have carried out research in the forensic measurement of carbon stocks, both above ground and below ground, at our ruminant research farm in Dowth, County Meath since 2013.

Forestry and agriculture are the only two industries that have the ability to remove carbon from the atmosphere biologically. Our ongoing research since 2013 has shown that there are many options within the farming enterprise to not only increase carbon but increase the rate and consistency of carbon sequestration in soil. The very first step in this process is to measure what carbon exists in our farms.

An Introduction to Devenish

Devenish is a Research, Development & Innovation company. Our nutritionists develop and deploy solutions which ensure the most effective and efficient utilization of nutrients in the production of food.

We take a collaborative approach, working in partnership with researchers, institutions and government bodies, our customers and suppliers, throughout the food supply chain. We utilise practical research and development, making it commercially applicable in real time, to deliver sustainable food solutions in response to consumer demand for safe and nutritious food.

We believe in a science-based approach to developing sustainable solutions for the agriculture and food industries. Through our **“One Health: From Soil to Society”** strategy, we are looking at how we can positively influence human health and the environment through the provision of high quality, nutritious solutions.

Established in 1952, and acquired by the current management team in 1997, we have grown the business from £5 million annual turnover and 23 employees in 1997, to an international company with over 500 direct employees and £228 million turnover.

A Proactive Approach to Human Health and Sustainability

We are particularly focused on how we can improve human health throughout the food chain and have achieved this through collaborative R&D delivering innovative solutions.

This is evidenced by our omega-3 work, delivered in collaboration with the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, which has proven that the regular consumption of naturally-enriched omega-3 chicken and eggs can lower blood pressure and reduce the risk of heart attack, stroke, dementia and depression.

Devenish also places sustainability at the heart of our business and is focused on creating products and services which help reduce the agriculture sector's impact on the environment.

Through collaboration, research and development we can deliver proactive, positive solutions.

Research and Development: A Collective Effort Required

Supplementing our manufacturing facilities across the UK, US, Turkey, Mexico and Uganda, we have invested in a range of Performance Houses, where trials are conducted to scientifically publishable standards.

Every year, we make a significant investment in R&D to develop solutions to the challenges faced by the industry today and tomorrow. A team of over 40 PhD's and experts in developing products regularly collaborate with universities and external centres of excellence including Queen's University Belfast, University College Dublin, Harper Adams, Wageningen, AFBI and Teagasc.

In 2013, we established our Global Innovation Centre and ruminant research farm at the Devenish Lands at Dowth in County Meath.

It is now an internationally recognised research farm dedicated to developing sustainable agriculture solutions and promoting human health through nutrition. It acts as a platform for public engagement and has been designated as an [International Lighthouse Farm](#) that is leading the way in sustainable food production by Wageningen University in the Netherlands.

Our research farm at Dowth has been a platform for unique collaborations with partners such as Teagasc; the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine; academic partners such as Wageningen, University College Dublin, Queen's University Belfast and AFBI. We have used it to showcase the research we are doing around climate smart farming, biodiversity, economics, and human health to farmers and industry groups.

We have formed wider collaborations to explore solutions to climate change including partnering with Gas Networks Ireland and KPMG on [Project Clover](#). We also recently signed a unique collaborative research initiative on climate action with the team at Teagasc, led by Professor Frank O'Mara.

We have also used the platform to engage with government and recently hosted a [joint Ministerial visit](#) with DAFM Minister Charlie McConalogue and DAERA Minister Edwin Poots, alongside the Ulster Farmers Union and the Irish Farmers Association.

Our R&D focus areas and on-farm innovations include:

- Carbon neutrality and annual whole farm carbon balance sheets
- Managed soil improvement
- Water quality
- Silvopasture trials
- The benefits of multi-species grazing swards such as increased biodiversity, soil health, water retention, animal performance, carbon sequestration, and reduced fertilizer, parasitic burden, and veterinary interventions

The growing environmental challenges facing food producers requires a collective effort. We need to work together in new and unique collaborative networks involving public, private and research

organisations, taking a research-led approach to assist farmers in making the necessary changes required to meet the climate challenge head on.

Carbon sequestration and storage in agriculture has the potential to give Ireland's food and farming sector a significant competitive advantage in the global market place.