



ICSA Beef Chairman Edmond Phelan, General Secretary Eddie Punch & President Patrick Kent press the Minister on the need for a regulator at the Beef Roundtable discussion in Dublin Castle on April 17th

## ICSA attacks carcass weight specs at beef discussions:

### 380kg limit will be the end for continental sucklers, says Kent.

**Eddie Punch**  
General Secretary

ICSA president Patrick Kent was very blunt in attacking the new focus on carcass weight limits at recent discussions on the beef sector, organised by Minister Coveney. The ICSA president, with the support of beef chairman Edmond Phelan and suckler chairman Dermot Kelleher, has led a sustained attack on greedy processors and retailers in recent months over the destruction being done to cattle farmers' income. The ICSA

campaign has zoned in on the anti-competitive nature of the beef sector, labelling the beef market as a "wild west" where unwarranted changes to spec, age limits and price can be uniformly implemented overnight by the various meat processing groups without consultation.

ICSA has led the way by calling for a regulator for the sector, which was initially rejected by Minister Coveney but now it is clear that the Minister accepts that there is a need for intervention. The setting up of a beef round table forum at Dublin Castle was an

acknowledgement at least that there is a crisis to be dealt with.

ICSA has also been outspoken on the need to ensure that live exports are not blocked or hindered in any way. "Marts have been undermined this year by the loss of Northern Ireland finishers competing for stores because Northern factories have begun to strongly discriminate against cattle born in the Republic and finished in the North. This mirrors a problem with potential exports of store cattle to Britain where supermarkets

seem unwilling to sell beef from cattle born in the Republic and finished in the UK. This is despite the fact that UK customers are perfectly happy to consume both Irish and British beef," said Mr Kent.

The key problem for the suckler herd is that suckler farmers need competition between Irish feeders and live exporters. However, how can Irish finishers be expected to pay a €1,000 or more for a quality continental weanling if restricted to a final carcass weight of 380kg.

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The **Drystock Farmer** is published by The Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers' Association.

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Fairgreen, Portlaoise

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# News Briefs Compiled by Geoff Hamilton

**ICSA CONNAUGHT/  
ULSTER VICE-PRESIDENT  
CALLS FOR NEW  
THINKING ON FLOOD  
BASIN MANAGEMENT**

Connaught/Ulster vice president of the Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers' Association is calling for new thinking on the management of flood basins, particularly in relation to the Shannon and its tributaries.

John Flynn said, "The flooding of large tracts of land in the West and in Limerick city in recent days and weeks has underlined the need to completely reassess river and flood management

with a view to alleviating water shortage concerns in Dublin and the wider east coast area.

There are various techniques and technologies that could be examined. For example, the Environment Agency in the UK is actively looking at dredging as a key tool in alleviating flooding problems in a number of badly-affected areas."

"Flooding costs landowners, homeowners, businesses and the Government huge amounts of money, as we have seen this year already. We must examine the possibilities

in terms of reducing the damage and cost of flooding and revise the management of our flood-prone rivers."

**ICSA LABELS NEW  
REGIONAL VETERINARY  
LAB CHARGES AS  
ANOTHER STEALTH TAX**

ICSA president Patrick Kent has today labelled the new regional veterinary laboratory (RVL) charges as "just another stealth tax on farmers." From March 31st, there will be changes made to the charges for testing of animals at Regional Veterinary Labs.

The Department argues

that it is bringing in these changes to bring the existing charge in line with average knackerly charge. Furthermore, RVL post-mortem fees will now be subject to VAT at 23%. In the case of an adult cow, the new RVL charge to cover post-mortem and disposal will be almost three times that of the existing cost (Before March 31st = €23.35/ After March 31st = €68.72).

Mr Kent said "The new RVL waste disposal charge is effectively another stealth tax on farmers which arises from the Department no longer wanting to absorb the cost of animal disposal. I have serious concerns that some farmers will now be disincentivised from bringing animals to RVLs, which could reduce the important animal health information service that the RVLs provide."

Mr Kent was also critical of Revenue's decision to apply the 23% VAT rate to laboratory testing, saying that the change was "unnecessary and would inevitably eat further into the bottom lines of Irish livestock producers. Farmers have seen an array of increased charges from state agencies over recent years all of which undermine the viability and competitiveness of Irish farming.

**FACTORIES MUST  
RECOGNISE SPRING  
LAMB AS A PREMIUM  
PRODUCT**

ICSA Sheep Chairman Paul Brady has challenged Ireland's sheep processors to

immediately recognise spring lamb as a premium product which demands a higher price.

Tight supplies are helping to keep hogget prices up, but new lamb coming onto the market is not attracting any additional spend by factory buyers.

Mr Brady said "The fact that hoggets and new lambs are being quoted at or near the same price fails to take into account spring lamb as a top-quality premium product which consumers are willing to pay extra for. Once again we are looking at a situation where sheep farmers are clearly not getting a fair price for their produce and ICSA is saying to the factories that this is simply unacceptable".

In addition, the Sheep Chairman also highlighted issues with weight restrictions being imposed by sheep meat processors on spring lamb producers. At present processors are working on a weight limit of up to 24 kg for hogget meat. By contrast, premium spring lamb is being quoted with punitive limits set at 19 or 20kgs.

He continued "I have real concerns that farmers will see no real benefit to their hard work with early lambing and trying to intensively finish lamb early for Easter, at a much higher cost of production. If the factories fail to recognise the added value of spring lamb, then there is a real risk that this system of farming could be lost altogether".



Pictured at a recent Galway ICSA meeting: Accountant Gareth Diskin, Mairead McGuinness MEP, Pat Loughnane, ICSA, Marian Harkin MEP, Agricultural Advisor Joe Carty & Conor Deely, ICSA



The speakers at the Galway ICSA meeting responded to a wide range of questions on CAP, taxation and farming issues from a very engaged audience

# President's Address

Patrick Kent - President, ICOSA

**The whole structure of beef processing in Ireland, with its anti-competitive approach, has left beef farmers with a very unstable outlook. With low quotes and outrageous changes in spec, finishers have been treated with contempt. We in ICOSA have strongly challenged the meat industry on this. At the recent Beef Roundtable meeting in Dublin Castle, I reiterated ICOSA's call for a beef regulator, which I view as critical**

**in delivering oversight to the processing sector which has such control over farmers.**

I have firmly emphasized to the Minister that it is the top quality suckler producer that is most impacted by this. These are the farmers who have invested heavily in breeding growthy, lean continental cattle. These are the suckler farmers who face the challenge of more hard calvings and higher costs. These are the farmers who are barely breaking even at best. It is now clear

that the Food Harvest 2020 targets for beef are complete pie in the sky.

While it is positive that the Minister has been energetic in developing new export international export markets, the reality is that farmers are seeing no benefit from that at present.

Our sheep farmers have reasonably pointed out that the entire sheep sector has been effectively ignored by the CAP reform deal. As it stands, there have been no major supports

for lamb proposed as part of the next Rural Development Programme. We need targeted measures to help support and grow the sheep sector. ICOSA are currently working on a comprehensive proposal to the Department of Agriculture on how the next RDP can support and develop the Irish lamb sector in the coming years.

I note with interest a recent report that the number of countries cultivating genetically modified crops are in decline, with Poland and Egypt the latest countries to suspend GM crop production. It also suggests that public



opinion against GM food is on the rise.

The same report reveals that 90% of GM crops are grown in just six countries and by less than 1% of the world farming population. Efforts being made by some quarters to promote GM crop planting in Ireland need to be rejected strongly - Ireland's clean, green, GM crop-free image must be protected and better marketed by Bord Bia and other advertisers.

## ICOSA Green Ribbon Campaign 2014

**Geoff Hamilton**  
ICOSA Policy Officer

**During May, ICOSA will be taking part in the national Green Ribbon campaign, coordinated by See Change. See Change is a network of organisations which aims to promote the discussion of mental health among the farming community and tackle the stigma attached to mental health problems. Looking after your mental health:**

**1 - Get involved:** Try to meet more people, build a network of friends and get involved in activities. Join a club, socialise more often, do a training course or sign up to a farm discussion group.

**2 - Keep active:** Try to incorporate regular exercise into your daily or weekly routine.

**3 - Eat healthily:** A healthy diet will not only help the way you feel, but also the way you think. Good food is essential for your mind and body to work properly.

**4 - Keep in contact:** As we are busy getting on with our lives we may forget to stay in touch with people we know. We don't have to cope on our own all the time, so it's good to keep in touch with friends and neighbours.

**5 - Relax:** Try to make time to relax. Fit things into your day that help you unwind like listening to music, reading, or just watching TV.

**6 - Don't binge drink:** Drinking alcohol to deal with problems will only make things worse. Overdoing it can damage your health, cause depression and won't help deal with the cause of your worries.

**7 - Talk about it:** Anyone can feel isolated and overwhelmed by problems. Even though sometimes we may feel so bad we don't want to bother friends or family, just remember that they care and would want to help.

If you feel unable to talk to those close to you, then talk to your GP, or call a helpline such as the Samaritans on 1850 60 90 90.



### ICOSA congratulates Laois/Offaly TD Charlie Flanagan on his appointment as Minister for Children & Youth Affairs



Laois/Offaly TD and new Minister for Children & Youth Affairs Charlie Flanagan at the official opening of the ICOSA Office in 2011

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At current bull beef price of €3.60/kg that's a maximum finished price of €1,368. A 380 kg limit is really the end for continental sucklers because it means neither suckler farmer nor finisher can make a margin.

ICSA beef chairman Edmond Phelan has slammed the double standard of the new specs which factories say are simply a response to retailer demands in the vital UK market. "The UK retailer Asda has openly advised British farmers that it is a customer for young bulls up to 450kg. How can Irish beef processors be believed when they say that 380kg is a requirement? Suckler chairman Dermot Kelleher explains: "The problem is that suckler farmers have responded to signals over many years that the market

requires lean beef, from good conformation cattle. As a result, breeding in the suckler herd is 80% continental and cattle breeds such as Charolais and Limousin are particularly prominent. Efficient well-bred Charolais are only coming into their own at 450kg. The new factory specs are effectively suggesting that these breeds are now obsolete but it must be remembered that you can't change the breeding history of one million suckler cows overnight nor even over four or five years. "

The setting up of the beef round table discussion at Dublin Castle is seen by many as an acceptance by Minister Coveney that there is a real crisis in the sector at farm level and that sitting idly by is not an option. He has also requested a report on the sector from former secretary-general of the Department, Michael

Dowling who recently met ICSA for its input.

While the association was particularly critical of the 380kg limit, it also pointed to widespread frustration with the quality assurance scheme and bonus payments. According to beef chairman, Edmond Phelan, "we have no idea how many cattle actually qualify for QAS bonus payments.

We were told at the beef forum that the vast majority of cattle slaughtered in beef export plants came from quality-assured farms but that ignores the fact that many of these animals don't actually get a bonus due to being young bulls, wrong conformation, over-age or failing to meet the 70 days residency and maximum 4 movements criteria.

Worse still is the new trend that savage cuts are being applied to animals who marginally

miss these criteria. Mr Phelan outlined a case of an animal in Donegal that was four days short of the residency period and ended up being priced at €3/kg- a loss of €1/kg or approximately €400. "This is no longer a case of rewarding people for meeting specs, it is a full and blatant example of price gouging and it cannot be tolerated. He also pointed out that the QAS is being manipulated by factories to undermine the trade for forward stores and beef cattle at marts. Sixmilebridge mart manager Sean Ryan recently reported that the trade of these heavier cattle had halved in the mart, even though overall throughput in Sixmilebridge is up- concrete evidence of how the QAS system has been abused.

It points again to the need for a regulator to control the specs, pricing policy, use of assurance schemes

and fair play for beef suppliers. "We cannot have a future for cattle farming without ensuring that there is a level of certainty around pricing and that changes to specs and pricing structure should only ever happen on a gradual, negotiated way with signals sent out well in advance.

We must have recognition from both processors and retailers that decisions to fill a shed with cattle or to put cows in calf cannot be reversed over-night and involve a huge investment of time, money and commitment.

If we are to have an industry in the longer term, these realities must be respected. While it would be ideal if retailers and processors would show a willingness to work with farmers on this, the hard experience suggests that only a regulator with real teeth will suffice."



ICSA President Patrick Kent is interviewed by RTE's George Lee outside Dublin Castle on the way into the Beef Roundtable discussion

## Beef Roundtable Follow-up: 28/04/14

ICSA representatives met with Michael Dowling of the Beef Activation Group where they strongly emphasised that the new specs for bull beef are totally unworkable and spelled disaster for the suckler herd. It was revealed that only 1/6th of total beef exports (about 88,000 tons) ended up with the UK multiple retailers who apparently are calling for these specs. There is no reason why bull beef couldn't be used for other outlets both in the UK and on the continent.

ICSA also insisted that live exports were critical and that there would have to be political intervention to facilitate live exports of stores to NI and GB. ICSA was quizzed about what the Regulator would do and how it would work. ICSA referred to the anti-competitive practices in the beef sector and also suggested that there would have to be openness and transparency about forward contracts and that similar contracts would have to be made available for all producers including smaller operators.

# Beef price saga rumbles on

## ASDA HAPPY TO TAKE BULLS UP TO 450KG SAYS ICSA

ICSA beef chairman Edmond Phelan has slammed the double standard of the proposed 380kg weight specs in factories, claiming instead that Asda - a key customer for Irish beef in the UK - is happy to take bulls up to 450kg from British farmers. "The UK retailer Asda has openly advised British farmers that it is a customer for young bulls up to 450kg. How can Irish beef processors be believed when they say that 380kg is a requirement?" Mr Phelan was referring to comments made

by Mr Pearce Hughes, Asda agriculture manager last week who said that Asda accept bulls up to 450kg. "This will add to farmer suspicions that the weight limits are simply a device to cut prices paid for significant numbers of bulls. Throughout the spring, ICSA has been inundated with calls from members who have lost 15c or more for young bulls over 420kg, even though some of these bulls have graded U3 or better."

"This amounts to a loss of €60 upwards on prime cattle that meet all the other grade requirements, and usually come from quality assured farms. The

meat industry is now warning that the 420kg limit is to be reduced to 380kg, which will increase the cuts to farmers. Now that we can see that the meat industry here has been exaggerating the requirements of British retailers, it is even clearer that this industry needs closer scrutiny and monitoring. We have to have oversight and the ability to independently verify claims made by the processors to justify price cuts.

Unilateral changes to spec, without consultation or lead-in time cannot be permitted. This is why ICSA has been correct to call for a regulator with real power of investigation, particularly when

we see that the meat processors cannot be trusted on what the retailers really need."



## ICSA OUTLINES BEEF PRICE TRANSPARENCY REQUIREMENTS

ICSA beef chairman Edmond Phelan has outlined key requirements for the new and improved beef price reporting proposed by Minister Coveney as part of an effort to ensure that there is greater price transparency for farmers. According to Mr Phelan, the current figures

available are averages for each grade and category of animal. "However, this does not supply enough information about what is really going on. We need to know the full range of prices paid by factories each week including the special deals available to very big feedlot operators."

Mr Phelan said that there was also an urgent need to see the proportion of cattle actually receiving a quality assurance bonus as well as the cuts applied to non-quality assured cattle. "While we know that a large majority of cattle being supplied are coming from quality assured farms,

it is likely that only a minority of the total cattle kill each week is actually getting a bonus. This is due to factors such as bulls and cows not being eligible, overage cattle not being eligible, lower conformation grades not being eligible and cattle being ruled out because they have been bought

in a mart within the previous 70 days."

"Farmers are outraged that the quality assurance scheme has been manipulated and while the 12c bonus sounds good, we need to see how many cattle are really getting it," he concluded.

## ICSA CRITICISES NEW MEAT INDUSTRY IRELAND SPECS

Meat Industry Ireland recently publicised their carcass specification guidelines which they claim are driven by the key target markets for Irish beef. MII claim that these guidelines take into account feedback from all major processors based on the requirements of their customers. MII's guidelines are shown in the table below; these have been openly criticised by ICSA as having no demonstrated reasoning behind them.

	Steer	Heifer	Young Bull
Age	Under 30 months	Under 30 months	Under 16 months
Weight	280-380kg	270-380kg	280-380kg
QA Required?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fat Score	2+ to 4=	2+ to 4=	2+ to 4=
Conformation	0= or better	0= or better	0= or better
Farm residences	4 maximum	4 maximum	4 maximum
Days on last QA farm	70 days+	70 days+	70 days+



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# ICSA calls for special GLAS payment for Suckler and Sheep Farmers

ICSA president Patrick Kent has called for a special GLAS payment of an additional €1,600 for suckler and sheep farmers participating in the new agri-environment scheme, which would be linked with co-operating with Carbon Footprint measuring and improvement. ICSA also called for restoration of the original levels of Disadvantaged Area payment on up to 45 ha.

The payment would be made at a rate of €50/ha on up to 32 ha and would involve suckler and sheep farmers working with Bord Bia's Origin Green strategy. The idea is that farmers who are in the quality assurance scheme and who thereby undergo a sustainability assessment in terms of Carbon Footprint would respond to the recommendations

on how to reduce that footprint.

Examples include extending the grazing season, improving weight gain and better fertility. All of these measures are beneficial to the bottom line for farmers but importantly also improve the carbon footprint of each kg of meat produced.

ICSA envisages that suckler and sheep farmers would have the option of an additional measure in their GLAS plan which would set out how they are implementing the recommendations on reducing the footprint. This is a key objective of the EU CAP reform and so should be readily welcomed by the EU Commission.

In terms of funding, ICSA estimates that an extra €50 million per annum for five years

would be required (2016-2020 inclusive) or a total €250 million. "There is some leeway in the Department's initial proposals on how to utilise the total RDP budget and we believe that this money should be put to use to support active suckler and sheep farmers, who maintain breeding stock. We would suggest that the scheme would require a minimum of one suckler cow per eligible ha or equivalent number of breeding ewes."

"The reality is that suckler and sheep farmers are the backbone of our meat exports but they are also the sectors whose future is very much in doubt.

ICSA sheep chairman Paul Brady said: "We have seen sheep numbers fall over a long number of years and while the numbers

have stabilised in the past two years, there is no room for complacency."

ICSA suckler chairman Dermot Kelleher said: "It is very clear that the suckler sector is very unstable at the moment and is badly in need of an income boost."

Patrick Kent concluded by saying, "it is also vital to recall that these two sectors have suffered the most from the loss of REPS and ICSA insists that more must be done to protect breeding sectors. ICSA also reiterates that it is totally opposed to farmers with organic nitrates output greater than 140kg/ha being prioritised under GLAS- instead we need to ensure that low income suckler and sheep producers are prioritised."

**Mairead McGuinness MEP**  
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  - Tackling marketing manipulation in the beef industry to ensure a better deal for farmers and consumers
  - Successfully fighting against the re-introduction of milk quotas "through the back door"
  - Guaranteeing a bright future for young farmers

# European elections loom large

**A**s Drystock is going to print, the Local and European Election candidates are working hard to secure votes in the upcoming elections on May 23rd. This leads many of us to enquire, who makes up the European Parliament, and what does it do? In this special feature, ICOSA presents a summary of the makeup, role and powers of the Parliament and how it is elected. ICOSA hopes that this will allow members to be better informed when the time comes to vote this month.

## WHAT IS THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT?

The European Parliament is the only directly elected EU body. It represents the citizens of the EU, in contrast to the Council of Ministers, which represents the governments. Elections have been held every five years since 1979 - before that, members were drawn from national parliaments. The European Parliament's powers have steadily increased with each change of the EU treaties. Many laws in member states now stem from the need to implement European legislation. The parliament has two chambers - one in Brussels, the other in Strasbourg - and a secretariat in Luxembourg. For three weeks of the month the parliament operates in Brussels, where most committee and political group meetings take place, then for one week it decamps to Strasbourg.

## WHO MAKES UP THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT?

There are seven main groups in the EU parliament, each of which is linked to a pan-European political party. Candidates still run under national political colours, however. The groups are then

formally agreed when MEPs convene in Strasbourg in July. The groups are meant to unite like-minded politicians. But parliament rules mean bigger groups get more money and more committee chairmanships, as well as more sway in deciding legislation, meaning that people with differing views still flock together.

A minimum of 25 MEPs from at least seven EU countries are needed to form a group. The two largest ones are likely to remain the same: The European People's Party (EPP) brings together the bloc's moderate conservatives and Christian democrats. Fine Gael are affiliated with the EPP. Europe's political centre ground is represented by the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (Alde). Fianna Fail has been affiliated with Alde since 2009. Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) represents Europe's centre-left. Labour is currently affiliated with S&D. Other political affiliations include the European Conservative and Reformists group (ECR), the European Greens, the UKIP/Lega Nord-led Europe for Freedom and Democracy group and the United European Left/Nordic Green Left.

## WHAT POWERS DOES THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT HAVE?

The parliament amends, approves or rejects EU laws, together with the Council of Ministers. The process of "co-decision", by which a law is only passed when approved by both bodies, applies in areas including consumer protection, the single market, workers' rights, asylum and immigration, agriculture, the environment and animal welfare, but not foreign policy. The parliament also shares authority over the EU budget with the Council of Ministers and supervises other EU institutions, including



the Commission. It vets new commissioners, and can sack the commission en masse. Under the Lisbon Treaty the parliament's co-decision powers were enhanced, to give it a bigger say over agriculture and the budget - last year's CAP deal was the first to be hammered out under this co-decision framework.

## HOW DO THE PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS AFFECT THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION?

As a result of provisions in the Lisbon treaty, the outcome of the EU vote has a greater bearing on the next President of the commission. The EU's 28 government leaders will be tasked with proposing the new head of the EU executive, but must take account of the results of the European Parliament elections. Many MEPs want this to mean that the commission president candidate of the most popular political party should automatically get the post.

## HOW IS IRELAND REPRESENTED IN THE PARLIAMENT?

Ireland is allocated 11 of the 751 total European Parliament seats. Due to the accession of Croatia to the European Union, the Constituency Commission proposed changes to the constituencies of Ireland so as to reduce the total number of MEPs from 12. As a result, Ireland East has been done away with and a new 4-seat constituency called Midlands-North-West has been created. It comprises all the area of the previous North-West constituency, with the exception of County Clare which is being moved to the South constituency; as well as the part of the old Leinster East.

The South constituency has increased in size by the addition of counties Carlow, Clare, Kilkenny, Wexford and Wicklow, and the number of seats have increased from 3 to 4. There are no changes to the Dublin constituency.

# ICSA asked the European candidates

## “Why should farm families vote for you?”

Here are the responses we received:



**Mairead McGuinness, Fine Gael, Ireland Midlands-North-West:** Because of my ability, energy and tenacity to drive policy through listening, initiating, influencing and negotiating change. Farmers can look to my track record of achievement in the CAP reform negotiations, including protecting the budget. In the Environment committee I fight for fair and balanced regulation. My work delivered compensation from the British government for thousands of Irish Equitable Life policyholders and I forced through important changes to the structural funds to ensure people with disabilities can live in community settings rather than in institutions.



**Sean Kelly, Fine Gael, Ireland South:** Two main reasons, as a farmer myself, living in rural Ireland I am keenly aware of the issues facing farming and rural communities, farmers need people in the European Parliament, who understand their issues, can articulate, and have the influence to make a difference. Secondly, my record over the last five years in speaking for, and getting results for our farming and rural communities is second to none. The most important issue is that the Irish family farm model is made viable and profitable, I will strongly fight for this in cooperation with the farm bodies to ensure that the proposed trade deals do not disadvantage Irish farming.



**Marian Harkin, Independent, Ireland Midlands-North-West:** I consistently worked to obtain the best deal from the CAP including the maximum possible budget. I have represented agricultural interests on issues ranging from Cross Border cattle trade, to international trade deals, from on-farm inspections to maintaining adequate income supports in Pillar 2. I represent farm families through my support for the LEADER Programme and my pursuit of balanced Regional Development. Farm families should vote for me, because I will represent their interest with no party political constraints with the dedication necessary and willingness to put in the hours that even farmers don't have to.



**Jim Higgins, Fine Gael, Ireland Midlands-North-West:** I've fought in Europe to protect the family farm income and farming as a way of life. In the past five years, I've secured an end to milk quotas, a 25% top-up payment for young farmers and Ireland's re-entry to the sugar market. While, successfully, defending our CAP budget. I continue to challenge the bullying tactics of certain department inspectors, the lack of competition in our beef sector and the failure of multinational supermarkets to give our farmers a fair price for their produce. I'm experienced, honest and committed – I'm your strong voice in Europe please give me your vote on May 23 so I can continue working for you.



**Pat The Cope Gallagher, Fianna Fail, Ireland Midlands-North-West:** I believe that my experience, dedication and commitment which is proven and tested over many years are the attributes Irish farmers, their families and the food sector needs at the negotiating table in the European Parliament. The 140,000 family farms in Ireland are the backbone of rural Ireland. I understand the hard work that these families put in on a daily basis and their commitment to sustainable farming and quality food production. My goal, if re-elected, will be to continue to represent and stand up for Irish farmers and to influence and positively change legislation to their benefit.



**Thomas Byrne, Fianna Fail, Ireland Midlands-North-West:** I will be a strong and energetic representative fighting for farmers and agri-food businesses in the European Parliament. Just because Minister Coveney agreed a CAP reform package does not mean we can forget about farming at European level for the next six years. If I am elected to the European Parliament, I will monitor and question every aspect of the rolling out of the CAP changes over the coming years. The CAP changes neglect family farms and penalise farmers on low entitlements. I want a fairer CAP deal for farmers and that is what I will fight for in Europe.



**Deirdre Clune, Fine Gael, Ireland South:** I have the political experience at both national and European level to understand how to negotiate for the best outcomes for Irish farmers. I believe that you need someone in Europe who understands how it works. I do. You need someone in Brussels who actively engages with our partners in Europe, not someone who shouts from the side-lines. CAP will play a critical role in keeping rural Ireland alive. I will be a member of the EPP, if elected, and will be able to form important alliances that will deliver for Irish farmers and make sure that our voice is heard.



**Matt Carthy, Sinn Fein, Ireland Midlands-North-West / Liadh Ní Riada, Sinn Fein, Ireland South:** Sinn Féin policy on rural Ireland is formed by the real people who live and work there. Sinn Féin MEPs will stand up for rural Ireland, instead of coming back from Brussels with the instructions. Sinn Fein knows how government policies of austerity have hit rural communities hardest. Our pledge is to prioritise the protection of the family farm and to stem the tide of emigration. We will stand against more cuts and taxes and have proposed fully costed measures to create jobs. Irish people need a strong voice in the EU. We cannot take any more and Sinn Féin is ready and able to say that Ireland will not be walked on again.



**Luke Ming Flanagan, Independent, Ireland Midlands-North-West:** What is happening with CAP payments is nothing more than socialism for the rich. The richest 20% receive 80% of the payments. I heard Eddie Downey talk about how a €200,000 payment isn't much when you divide between 4 sons. Is he serious? In the areas I represent they would be lucky to get €5000 and all the sons would have already emigrated. The EU was meant to provide us with a common Market yet we cannot engage in live exports to Great Britain. This is devastating farmers with prices per head of cattle hit by over €200. If the EU is serious about open trade then it needs to be addressed. I am the person to address these needs.

# ICSA Submission on Agri-taxation

**Geoff Hamilton**  
ICSA Policy Officer

In March, ICSA made its submission to the Department of Finance in response to the consultation call aimed at informing Finance's upcoming Agri-taxation Review.

ICSA's submission highlighted that the taxation system with reference to farming should: incentivise hard work and entrepreneurial spirit; assist those who have invested in developing and expanding their farms; support efficient farm transfer between the generations without punitive capital taxes; feature VAT / excise duty / carbon tax that makes Irish agriculture more competitive and; encourage long term land leasing, farm partnerships, land consolidation and installation of young farmers.

The document set out which agri-taxation measures were identified

by ICSA as currently working effectively. These included stamp duty levels, young trained farmer stamp duty relief, income tax relief for long-term land leasing, capital acquisitions tax agricultural relief and relief for farm restructuring. By contrast, the following measures were highlighted as not working effectively and in need of improvement: Overall capital acquisitions tax levels, capital gains tax retirement relief, income averaging and employee tax credit.

A considerable section of the submission related to improving land mobility via changes to taxation models. ICSA called for extensions to Stamp Duty Consanguinity Relief and Farm Restructuring Relief, which are to be abolished at the end of 2014 and 2015 respectively. It was also proposed that capital allowances should be available for the purchase of land, which would reflect the typical repayment periods for land of 10-15 years.

Promoting longer-term land leasing was also addressed. Regarding income tax relief for long-term land leasing, a once-off three-year window was proposed whereby those who enter into 5-year leases would be allowed the full level of income tax relief (€20,000). This could encourage a move away of the conacre system and facilitate better land management and planning.

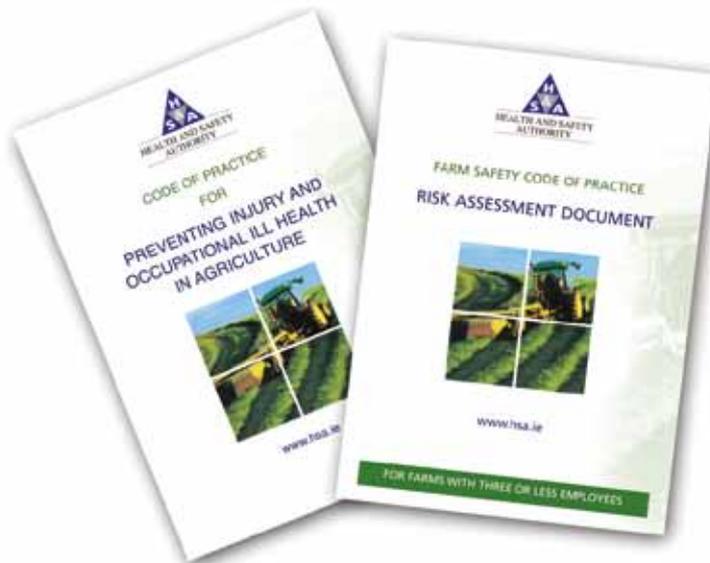
Other changes to the implementation of income averaging, capital acquisitions tax relief, capital gains tax, stock relief and carbon & excise duties were proposed, all of which can contribute to the development of the farming sector over the coming years. The full submission document is available to download on [www.icsaireland.ie](http://www.icsaireland.ie)

## ICSA member wins trip to New York



ICSA member Ger Dineen receives his prize of a trip for two to New York from Sparrow Insurances Directors Eilish and Michael Sparrow. The prize was jointly sponsored by Sparrow Insurances and Zurich Insurance plc.

# Farm Safety - Use the Code



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# Exclusive Farm Insurance deal for ICSA members

**ICSA has teamed up with Sparrow Insurances and Zurich to deliver an exclusive €75 voucher off all farm insurance packages for current ICSA members.**

All paid up ICSA members will be getting the voucher sent to them with their renewal letters, but if your insurance is due before your ICSA renewal, simply contact the ICSA office on 057-8662120 in order to get the voucher.

**Sparrow Insurances** is a 100% wholly owned Irish Insurance Broker with offices based in the midlands, including Portlaoise, Thurles, Nenagh and Roscrea. They are committed to servicing farmers throughout the country on all their insurance needs and are happy to talk through your specific insurance requirements and how Zurich's Farm Insurance product can work for you. They are committed to delivering excellent customer service and to dealing with all insurance queries promptly and efficiently.

**Zurich** is one of Ireland's leading General Insurance companies and employs over 400 people in Ireland across its locations in Dublin and Wexford.

Zurich provides a complete and comprehensive farm insurance solution including cover for Property, Livestock, Business Interruption, Liability, Agricultural Vehicles, Personal Accident and Farm Home.

## Testimonials from ICSA members:



*"Sparrow Insurances in association with ICSA and Zurich have introduced vigorous and welcome competition to the farm insurance sector. I personally have benefited from this joint initiative and would encourage other farmers to explore the Sparrow alternative"*

**Frank Kehoe, Wexford**



*"Very competitive rates, quick to respond and I found them easy to deal with. I made huge savings with my policy which was specifically tailored to meet my needs"*

**Gabriel Gilmartin, Sligo**



*"When I came to renew my insurance I compared prices and Sparrow Insurances were best by a long shot. It was an added bonus that Zurich Insurance were known to me for many years as a reputable company"*

**Malcolm Thompson, Donegal**



*"We found Sparrow Insurances very helpful and efficient and provide a very personal service. Best of all they were very competitive and gave us an excellent price"*

**Dermot Kelleher, Cork**



*"I found the service provided by Sparrow Insurances very fast and efficient. I was also pleasantly surprised how competitive the price was and saved a considerable sum"*

**John Heney, Tipperary**



*"Very easy to deal with, upfront and honest with the price and no hassle to change over"*

**Billy Gray, Kildare**



# BVD Eradication Programme update

**G**ood progress has been made by the end of the first year of the compulsory phase of the BVD eradication programme. With the impending start of the breeding season for many herds around May 1st, it is vital that as few PIs as possible remain on farm at that date to prevent a further cycle of transmission that will result in the birth of another round of PI calves in 2015.

## SUMMARY RESULTS FROM 2013

The level of compliance by farmers with the requirement to tag and test all calves born after the 1st Jan 2013 was very high. At the end of January 2014, just 14,800 of the approximately 2.1 million calves registered in 2013 remained untested. When calf deaths are taken into account, only 6,600 (0.3%) 2013-born calves are alive and untested. The overall test results for tissue tag samples in 2013 indicated that 0.8% of calves had a positive or inconclusive result. This figure fell to 0.67% when the results of negative confirmatory testing were taken

into account. Overall some 11.25% of herds tested in 2013 had one or more positive results with some 14,000 PIs identified. In February 2014, approximately 10,250 of these were recorded as dead, while 3,750 were still alive in some 2,500 herds (3% of breeding herds).

## PRELIMINARY RESULTS FROM 2014

In 2014 to date tissue samples from some 373,000 calves have been tested. Relative to 2013 the numbers testing positive or inconclusive on initial test has reduced from 0.8% to 0.44%. The level of empty tags is also lower this year (0.87% compared to 1.16%), reflecting greater familiarity with the use of tissue tags. When data are analysed on a week by week basis (% PI calves born) rather than on an annual basis, it is evident that the highest incidence of PI births (1.21%) occurred at the end of July 2013. Since then the overall trend has been progressively downward, the lowest value of 0.38% having been recorded in the last week January 2014, with the incidence remaining

relatively steady since then.

## KEY BIOSECURITY MEASURES FOR 2014

It continues to be the strong recommendation of the BVD Implementation Group (IG) that PI animals are removed as quickly as possible after identification. While a minority of these may survive to salvage weight, their retention on-farm creates an enormous risk of infection spreading from these animals to susceptible pregnant animals in the farmer's own or neighbouring herds, resulting in the birth of further PI animals in the following season.

## CHANGES TO LEGISLATION

The BVD Order (2012) will very shortly be replaced by the BVD Regulations (2014). The two principal changes from the existing legislation are the introduction of a specific prohibition on untested calves born after 1st January 2013 from being moved to slaughter, and the establishment of the Veterinary Laboratory Services of DAFM as the National Reference Laboratory for BVD.

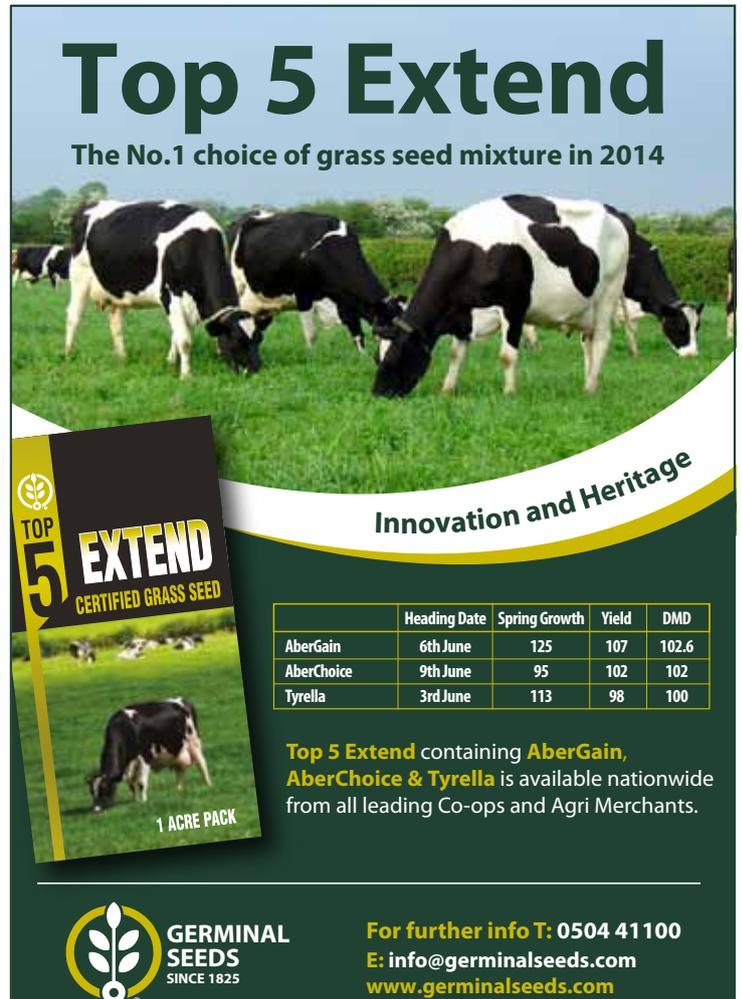


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# Top 5 Extend

The No.1 choice of grass seed mixture in 2014

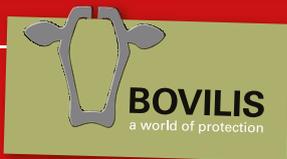
Innovation and Heritage

	Heading Date	Spring Growth	Yield	DMD
AberGain	6th June	125	107	102.6
AberChoice	9th June	95	102	102
Tyrella	3rd June	113	98	100

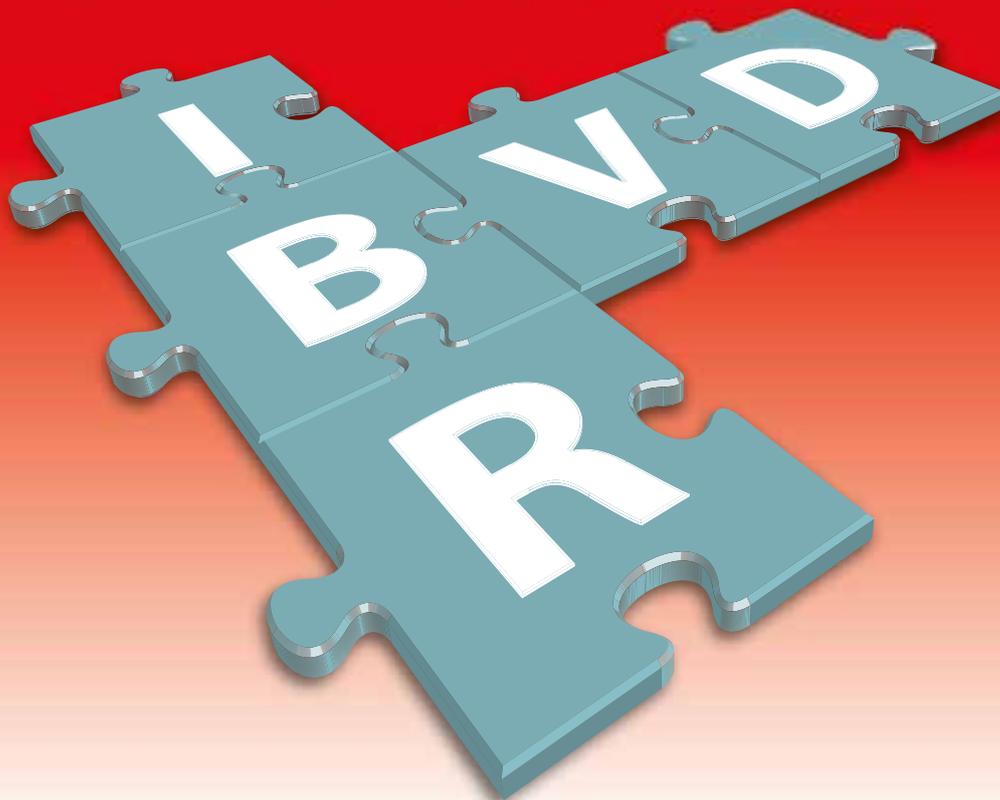
Top 5 Extend containing **AberGain**, **AberChoice** & **Tyrella** is available nationwide from all leading Co-ops and Agri Merchants.

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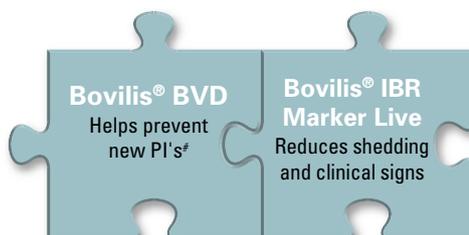
# Two diseases, one shot!\*



**Bovilis® BVD** can now be mixed with **Bovilis® IBR Marker Live** and given in one syringe\*



**Bovilis® BVD**



**Bovilis® IBR Marker Live**

Further information about mixing is available from your vet or: [www.msd-animal-health.ie](http://www.msd-animal-health.ie)

\*Use as a booster dose in cattle from 15 months of age previously vaccinated separately with Bovilis IBR Marker Live or Bovilis BVD.

† As part of a BVD control programme.

#### Use Medicines Responsibly

Always read the complete package leaflet or SPC before use.

Bovilis BVD Suspension for injection for cattle contains per 2 ml dose: inactivated antigen of cytopathogenic BVD virus strain C-86: 50 ELISA Units, inducing  $\geq 4.6 \log_2$  VN units.

Bovilis IBR Marker live contains per 2 ml reconstituted dose: live BHV-1, strain GK/D (gE<sup>-</sup>)  $10^{5.7} - 10^{7.3}$  TCID<sub>50</sub>

Withdrawal periods: zero days. Legal categories: ROI **POM(E)** NI **POM-V**

# Farming community misgivings on GAA Sky Move

**T**he Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers' Association has said that there is a high level of misgivings and complaints from its members regarding the decision of the GAA to sell exclusive rights for 14 championship games to Sky.

ICSA National Executive member Frank Kehoe said that farmers and rural people in general were concerned that this was the thin end of the wedge and that the GAA needs to be more aware that many people who cannot attend matches, especially in Dublin are still passionately interested in viewing them.

"The GAA's efforts to bring the games to the diaspora are to be commended, but this could have been done without penalising the most vulnerable of its members.

"Farmers are generally very interested in GAA but their work schedule with looking after animals, harvesting silage, hay and crops and milking cows means that it's not always possible to travel to championship matches. They can't abandon the farm, get cleaned up and go to the pub so easily either. So the switch to Sky will, in many cases, mean that they don't see the match.

"We are also aware of many farmers who have few interests outside of the farm but who look forward to following the GAA season throughout the year. We are talking here about people who look forward to watching counties outside of their own."

"We have also had complaints from farm families where children are very young and where a trip to a championship match for the

entire family just isn't practical. In these cases, the ability to see the match at home is important."

"It's important to note too that many of the people we are referring to would be regular patrons at their local club and county GAA grounds. Some would also be involved in voluntary activities for the local club or training juveniles."

"It's also worth noting that there are some pockets where Sky reception is not possible in rural regions. Only 20% of households nationally currently have Sky. In rural Ireland, that percentage would be considerably less than the national figure.

ICSA is concerned that all of these issues need further consideration by GAA headquarters. Mr Kehoe concluded by emphasising that

ICSA and its farmer members are huge supporters of the GAA.

"ICSA believes that the GAA is a superb organisation that does excellent work in every parish in the country and we recognise that decisions taken by headquarters are always done with the best possible motives.

Unfortunately, this deal with Sky will have a negative impact on the quality of life for many in rural Ireland.

We are concerned that Sky makes its decisions on commercial and financial grounds which may not afford sufficient consideration to the grassroots views and which may not be in tune with the huge voluntary ethos that has made the GAA such a great part of Irish society."



# Ó Cuiv supports ICOSA call for beef regulator



Deputy Ó Cuiv pictured with Leinster VP Joe O'Toole, Connacht-Ulster VP John Flynn and President Patrick Kent



**F**ianna Fail Spokesperson on Agriculture Éamon Ó Cuiv addressed the ICOSA National Executive meeting in Portlaoise on Wednesday, March 12th.

During the meeting, Deputy

Ó Cuiv agreed with the ICOSA's call for a regulator for the beef sector. This was welcomed by ICOSA president Patrick Kent, who said "a regulator would go a long way in redressing the imbalance which currently exists in the anti-competitive beef sector, which

continues to be strongly weighted in favour of processors at the expense of producers".

At the meeting, Deputy Ó Cuiv presented his proposal for an alternative distribution of Irish CAP funds, which prompted

healthy debate from the floor. There was general agreement that cattle and sheep farmers must be prioritised with regards to Pillar 2 funding allocation which will be distributed as part of the next Rural Development Programme.



**Photos from a recent Donegal ICOSA meeting:** Top - Malcolm Thompson, ICOSA, Pat The Cope Gallagher MEP, Claudia Kennedy, Fianna Fail Local Candidate, Ivor Kilpatrick, ICOSA & Patrick McGowan, Fianna Fail Local Candidate. Bottom - Claudia Kennedy, Fianna Fail Local Candidate & Bert Galbraith, Fine Gael Local Candidate & local ICOSA members.

## ICOSA AT THE WORLD SHEEP SHEARING & WOOL HANDLING CHAMPIONSHIPS

**ICOSA will be in attendance on all 4 days of the event. Visit our stand & discuss the future of sheep farming!**

**The 16th Golden Shears World Sheep Shearing & Wool Handling Championshipstake place in Gorey, County Wexford, Ireland from 22nd May to 25th May 2014.**

Shearers from up to 30 countries including New Zealand, South Africa, Australia, China, U.S.A., Norway, Sweden, Germany and the U.K. will be competing for the coveted Golden Shears title. Donegal's Ivan Scott, seven times All Ireland Winner and current World Record holder, will be in contention for a top spot.

**GOLDEN SHEARS**  
World Sheep Shearing & Wool Handling Championships  
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# BEEF 2014

## ‘The Business of Cattle’

Grange, Co. Meath | Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> June

**10.30am - 4pm**

A major open day for beef farmers and the industry will take place on 18<sup>th</sup> June in Teagasc Grange, Co. Meath, focused on the applications of technologies to help beef farmers increase the profitability of their farming business.

### ***See stands on:***

- Suckler beef systems
- Calf to beef options
- High performance from pasture
- Exploiting genetics
- Achieving compact calving
- Herd health planning

### ***Visit villages on:***

- New technologies
- Grassland
- Herd health
- Teagasc/Irish Farmers Journal  
BETTER Farm Beef Programme
- Sustainable Farm Environment
- Producing & marketing quality beef
- Indoor feeding options

Meet industry partners - DAFM, Bord Bia, ICBE, AHI, UCD, Irish Farmers Journal, along with meat industry personnel and cattle breed representatives.

### ***Other Highlights :***

- Forum – ‘My Future in Beef’
- Business management incl. CAP
- Advisory and education services



BTAP approved event

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