





## ICBF Weekly Update 20<sup>th</sup> December 2013

*Best Wishes for Christmas and the New Year from all at ICBF & Sheep Ireland*

### 1 Important Dates

 **ICBF Board Meeting** – Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2014, 10:30 to 13:30, Portlaoise.

 **ICBF Sheep Board Meeting** – Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2014, 14:00 to 16:30, Portlaoise

### 2 ICBF - A Review of 2013

As 2013 draws to a close it is a good opportunity to reflect back on the year that was, for ICBF.

2013 began as a very challenging year for farmers in Ireland, with extremely poor weather conditions in the first half of the year. Thankfully, there was a dramatic improvement in weather conditions in the second half of the year. There is a general feeling of optimism for the medium term, especially on the dairy side. However, there are undoubtedly big challenges that we are facing on the suckler side. We continue to be focused on providing a breeding infrastructure that will facilitate the achievement of the ambitious Food Harvest 2020 targets for both dairy and beef.

The headline project at ICBF early in the year was Sexed Semen. Despite a number of very significant challenges (poor weather, late start), the project was successfully executed as a result of a huge effort by all of the project partners. Sexed Semen has the potential to have a major impact on the dairy and beef industries into the future, and can play a key role in meeting the 2020 targets.

Genomics continues to evolve at a significant pace. In 2013 over 50%, up from 48% in 2012, of some 650,000 recorded dairy inseminations were from genomically selected bulls. In 2013 our efforts in genomics have included a number of very significant developments including:

- a) The launch of a custom genomic chip for Ireland (the first commercially available in the World), as part of a joint venture between Teagasc, Illumina, Weatherbys, and ICBF.
- b) The dairy and beef herdbooks coming on board to genotype all their 2013 born pedigree male calves.
- c) A significant increase in the number of dairy male calves being genotyped.
- d) A couple of key additions to the ICBF team in the area of genomics.

Our genetic evaluation activities are at the very heart of ICBF's role in dairy and beef. The extra data collected through the suckler cow welfare scheme, and now the Beef Data Programme and other initiatives coupled with improvements in our evaluation methods has resulted in a substantial improvement in the accuracy of our beef genetic evaluations. The evaluations continue, however, to be at the mercy of good quality data for real progress to be made. We have also seen good uptake of the Eurostars on the terminal side, but there is still significant progress to be made in terms of using the Eurostars to help choose female replacements. DAFM's 2014 Beef Genomics Scheme will play a key role in improving progress here.

The Best Practice in Cattle Breeding campaign was continued this year. This year's campaign featured weekly installments, covering a wide range of useful and practical breeding information on a dedicated page in the Farmers Journal.

The GENÉIRÉLAND® dairy progeny test program continued in 2013. The implementation of a revamped GENÉIRÉLAND® beef programme began in 2013, and the roll-out of this will continue in 2014. Another element of the ICBF infrastructure that has continued to make great strides in 2013 is the Tully Performance Test station. There are some very compelling results coming from the centre in relation to the costs of finishing beef animals, that can benefit all beef farmers in the country.

HerdPlus® membership has exceeded 17,000 dairy and beef herds. These herds have access to a wide range of valuable breeding information which farmers can use to breed more profitable cattle. Despite a very difficult



breeding season, ICBF's service income has held up well. Our Bull Search facility (on [www.icbf.com](http://www.icbf.com)) continues to be the facility on our website that farmers and breeders find most useful with over 1,000,000 searches in the last twelve months.

Significant development work was completed in conjunction with Animal Health Ireland (AHI) in the area of IT infrastructure for management of the compulsory phase of the BVD programme. Significant progress was also made in relation to the CellCheck and Johnes programmes. ICBF's ability to generate genetic evaluations for animals in relation to disease resistance will become an area of increasing importance in the coming years. Initial results are showing significant potential for genetics to assist with national animal health programmes. As such, our relationship with AHI will continue to be extremely important.

Our role in the international community of animal recording and animal breeding continues. In particular, INTERBEEF, which will allow international evaluations for beef animals has made great progress. The integrated nature of our data recording and evaluation systems gives us significant advantages, and we need to continue to exploit those.

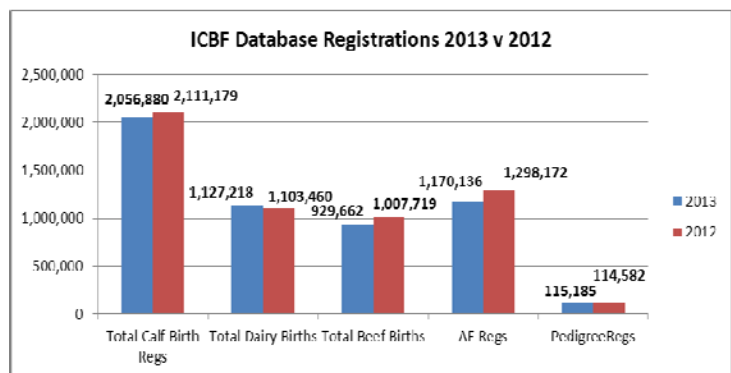
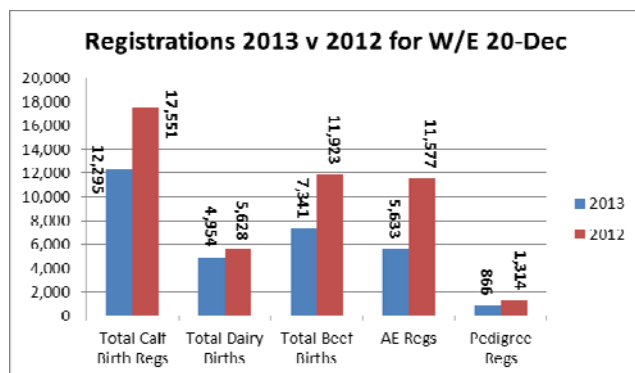
2013 saw the OptiMIR partnership ([www.optimir.eu](http://www.optimir.eu)) involving ICBF, Teagasc and 15 other partners in UK, France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg continue. The project is focusing on making good use of the extra data (the MIR spectra) that can be collected from milk sample testing. This project is an example of European collaboration with a focus on delivering benefits for dairy farmers and the wider industry.

Irish farming benefits greatly from the unique partnership that exists between Government and the industry. The ability of ICBF to put DAFM funding to good use is widely acknowledged and in 2013 was particularly evident again through the progress being made in Dairy and Beef evaluations, and adoption by farmers. Without DAFM support it would be much more difficult for ICBF to deliver so much benefit to the industry and wider community.

## Summary

2013 has been a year where ICBF has continued to exploit the new cattle breeding technologies for the benefit of Irish farmers. We have been able to achieve growth in most of our activities. We have been able to achieve this extra output with minimal increases in resources and ICBF's financial situation is in line with budgets. The key to ICBF's success remains the same as ever - the application of good science, a focus on the needs of farmers, working closely with our stakeholders and a 100% commitment to delivering by a talented and dedicated team. We are most fortunate to operate in an environment where ICBF's vision is shared by our Board, our members, DAFM, our sponsors, Teagasc, and, most importantly, Irish Farmers.

## 3 Database

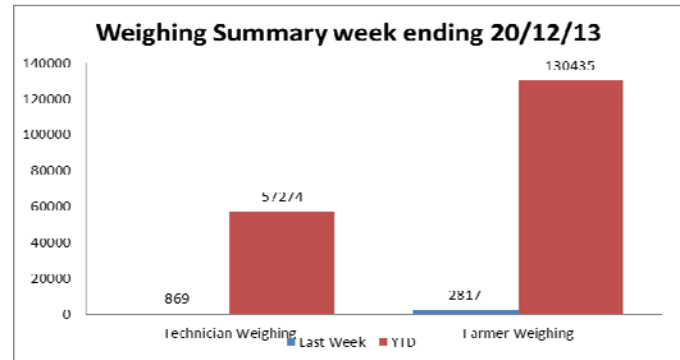
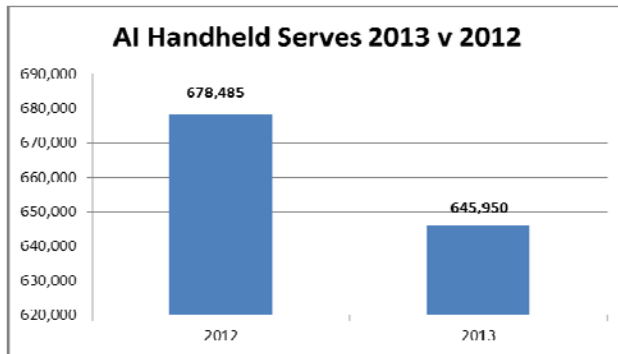


The stats above are compiled with the assistance of DAFM AIM systems.

In the Suckler scheme, the number of 2012 born calves with meal introduced is 669,604 with the number of animals weaned at 630,885.



- ✚ BVD test results continue to be received at ICBF and are being processed accordingly. There have been 2,161,000 results received since January 1<sup>st</sup>, of which 14,500 have come in the last 7 days. Since the beginning of the voluntary phase in 2012, 2.65 million results have now been received.
- ✚ The graph below shows Inseminations recorded on AI Handhelds in 2013 compared with 2012.
- ✚ This week there were 869 weights received through the technician service and 2817 weights recorded by farmers.
- ✚ The graph below shows the week and year to date totals.



#### 4 GROW<sup>®</sup>

- ✚ 682 Pedigree animals were scored in November.
- ✚ This is down by 94 animals from November 2012.
- ✚ 1067 Pedigrees were weighed in November.
- ✚ This is up by 302 animals from November 2012.
- ✚ These totals do not include animals scored as part of the Gene Ireland Bull Breeding Program.

#### 5 Herd Plus<sup>®</sup>

- ✚ 6,000 pocket notebooks have been posted to HerdPlus Dairy farmers. The remaining pocket notebooks will be posted in early January.
- ✚ Euro-Star and EBI profiles have been updated and are available to view online. EBI, Euro-Star and Dairy Cow Reports will be posted in early January.
- ✚ This week, we have reached 17,500 HerdPlus members across dairy and beef.
- ✚ We would like to wish the farming community a very happy Christmas and a prosperous new year. We look forward to your continued support in 2014.

#### 6 Genetic Evaluations

- ✚ Complete results from the December evaluation run are available now (bull search, profiles,...). Please contact us if there are any issues.
- ✚ Research is on-going on re-working of calving evaluation (dairy/beef split).
- ✚ Work continues on collaboration with international colleagues to include cross-bred animals in Interbeef (weaning weight) evaluation.



## 7 Milk Recording

National Milk Recording Statistics - Herds, Cows & EDIY 20/12/13						
Milk Recording Organisation	Total Herds Recorded YTD 20/12/13	No. EDIY Herds YTD 20/12/13	% Herds EDIY	Total No. Cows Recorded YTD 20/12/13	No. EDIY Cows YTD 20/12/13	% Cows EDIY
Munster	3,685	1,068	29%	314,487	98,547	31%
Progressive	2,460	1,013	41%	240,414	100,221	42%
Tipperary	114	41	36%	10,176	3,883	38%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,259</b>	<b>2,122</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>565,077</b>	<b>202,651</b>	<b>36%</b>

Recorded Cows by Milk Recording Organisation - Year on Year Comparison			
Milk Recording Organisation	YTD 2012 Cows Recorded 01/01/12 - 20/12/12	YTD 2013 Cows Recorded 01/01/13 - 20/12/13	2013 vs. 2012 Year on Year Difference (%)
Munster	309,639	314,487	1.5%
Progressive	232,530	240,414	3.3%
Tipperary	10,330	10,176	-1.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>552,499</b>	<b>565,077</b>	<b>2.2%</b>

Please see milk recording stats attached.

## 8 Sheep Ireland - A Review of 2013

2013 has been a very challenging year for Sheep Ireland farmers in Ireland, with extremely poor weather conditions in the first half of the year, and weak farm gate prices. There are undoubtedly big challenges that we are facing on the sheep side, and at Sheep Ireland, we continue to be focused on providing a breeding infrastructure that will facilitate improved profitability through better sheep genetics.

Sheep Ireland ([www.sheep.ie](http://www.sheep.ie)) continued to make very good progress in 2013 under its new permanent board structure, and with strong leadership from its chairman, James Murphy. It has also successfully implemented an industry funding model (20% farmer, 80% DAFM), putting it on a much more sustainable footing.

The commercial farms that make up the CPT and MALP programmes have again put in a huge amount of work this year, and data coming from these farms is hugely valuable in generating accurate genetic evaluations for Sheep.

LambPlus has expanded significantly in 2013, and numbers are continuing to rise. This means that around 20% of all rams (and 50% of pedigree rams) sold this year would have EuroStar figures available. We expect this number to rise again in 2014, and current indications are that this is very achievable.

STAP has had a major impact in terms of raising the awareness of Eurostars on Sheep, especially rams, and the fact the Eurostar concept is similar to that in cattle also helps in this regard. It is critical for the success of Sheep Ireland that (a) farmers use the indexes in their purchasing decisions and (b) that the performance of the sheep correlate with the indexes – i.e. high index sheep perform more profitably than low index sheep.

The Eurostar indexes are currently undergoing a major revamp, which will split them into a 'Replacement Index' and a 'Terminal Index', similar to what has happened in cattle. This has evolved out of extensive industry consultation, and very good levels of engagement have been achieved.



The Team at Sheep Ireland has been significantly enhanced this year, with Eamon Wall and his team now supported by Michael McHugh (part-time) and Kevin McDermott. This will help us to continue to accelerate the progress in 2014, and continue to become more relevant to ordinary commercial sheep farmers.

Irish Sheep farming is benefitting from the unique partnership that exists between Government and the sheep industry. The ability of Sheep Ireland to put DAFM funding to good use is widely acknowledged and in 2013 was particularly evident again through the LambPlus and STAP programmes. Without DAFM support it would be impossible for Sheep Ireland to deliver to the industry and wider community. We are most fortunate to operate in an environment where Sheep Ireland vision is shared by our Board, DAFM, Teagasc, and, most importantly, Irish Farmers.

## 9 Sheep Ireland

- ✚ This week Sheep Ireland has been in preparation for the busy lambing season ahead. Every LambPlus breeder has received a LambPlus Lambing Notebook and a LambPlus Guide by post this week. The lambing notebook is essential for keeping lambing records up to date which is vital to recording accurate and reliable information. The notebook also has a section for recording live weights, animal remedies and paddock management pages. The LambPlus Guide is a brief and simple explanation of everything that is involved in becoming a LambPlus performance recording flock as well as the benefits of being a member of LambPlus. We will also be putting a copy of this guide on our website before the Christmas holidays.
- ✚ Finally, as we enter into another lambing season everyone here at Sheep Ireland would like to wish all our breeders, breed societies, collaborators and everyone we were involved with throughout the year a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and we look forward to working with you again in the new year.

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**Registered Office:** Irish Cattle Breeding Federation Society Ltd trading as "ICBF", Highfield House, Shinagh, Bandon, Co Cork. Registered Dublin, Ireland. Registration Number 4914R, Industrial and Provident Societies Acts, 1893 to 1978. Web: [www.icbf.com](http://www.icbf.com).

**Registered Office:** Sheep Database Ltd trading as "Sheep Ireland". Highfield House, Shinagh, Bandon, Co Cork. Registered Dublin, Ireland. Registration Number 465004, Companies Acts 1963 to 2006. Web: [www.sheep.ie](http://www.sheep.ie).

*We would like to thank everybody for their contribution during the year and we look forward to another very productive year in 2014.*

*We will close for Christmas on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> and return on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2014.*

*Wishing you all the Best  
for Christmas and the coming Year*

## National Milk Recording Results for the 10 day period, 11-DEC-2013 To 20-DEC-2013

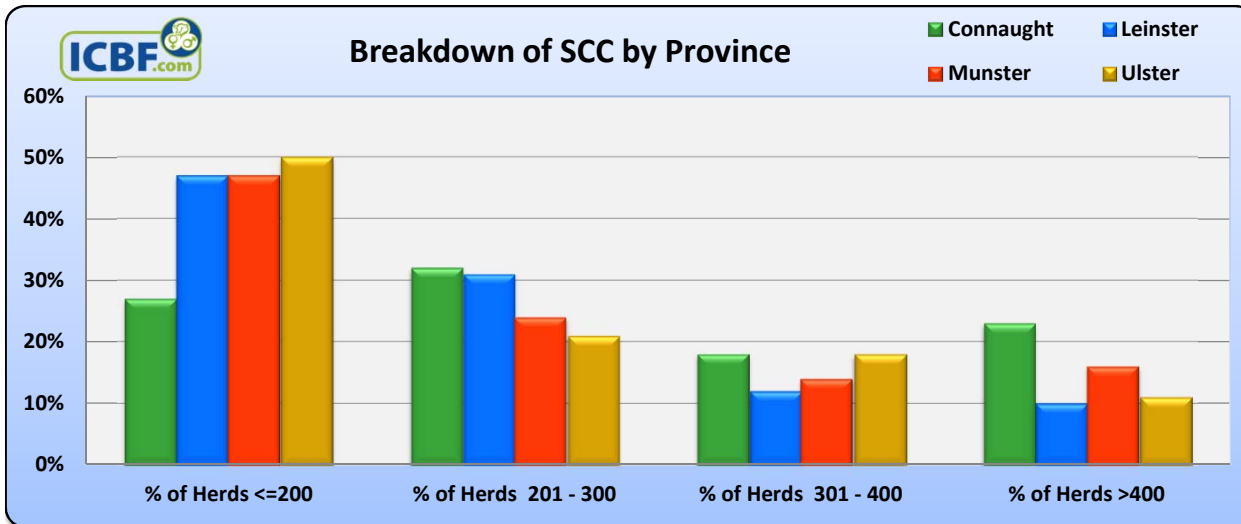
ICBF.com	No. Herds Recorded	No. Cows Recorded	Avg Herd Size	Avg Milk kg/Cow	Average Fat %	Average Protein %	Average F+P kg	Average SCC*
Connaught	22	941	43	20.9	4.11	3.33	1.55	285
Leinster	121	8,654	72	19.6	4.13	3.47	1.48	200
Munster	199	12,001	60	18.3	4.28	3.56	1.42	224
Ulster	28	1,237	44	21.4	3.86	3.38	1.53	205
<b>National Statistics</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>22,833</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>19.1</b>	<b>4.19</b>	<b>3.50</b>	<b>1.45</b>	<b>218</b>

\* Geometric Mean Herd SCC

## SCC Distribution for the 10 day period, 11-DEC-2013 To 20-DEC-2013

ICBF.com	No. Herds Recorded	No. Cows Recorded	Avg Herd Size	% of Herds <=200	% of Herds 201 - 300	% of Herds 301 - 400	% of Herds >400	Average SCC*
Connaught	22	941	43	27%	32%	18%	23%	285
Leinster	121	8,654	72	47%	31%	12%	10%	200
Munster	199	12,001	60	47%	24%	14%	16%	224
Ulster	28	1,237	44	50%	21%	18%	11%	205
<b>National Statistics</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>22,833</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>218</b>

\* Geometric Mean Herd SCC



## % Herd Breakdown for the 10 day period, 11-DEC-2013 To 20-DEC-2013

ICBF.com	No. Herds Recorded	No. Cows Recorded	Avg Herd Size	Best 20% SCC	Best 40% SCC	Average SCC**	Worst 40% SCC	Worst 20% SCC
Connaught	22	941	43	180	231	266	310	431
Leinster	121	8,654	72	125	180	214	239	302
Munster	199	12,001	60	144	190	208	249	358
Ulster	28	1,237	44	152	174	200	249	324
<b>National Statistics</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>22,833</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>350</b>

\*\* Percentile Herd SCC Rank (Median SCC)

