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Division	Head of Division	Office No	Mobile No
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## ERAD DIVISION

**Head of Division:** Mícheál Ó Raghallaigh, Principal Officer

To develop and manage, in an effective and efficient manner, the policy framework for the Bovine TB eradication and Brucellosis monitoring national disease programmes, which include annual testing of all eligible cattle, valuation and compensation measures and to implement administrative arrangements for the delivery of such policy; to protect consumers of Irish food and the health and welfare of animals by providing for effective regulation of the Irish veterinary medicines market and by checking for the presence of illegal residues in food; to ensure compliance with the Public Service Management Act and to provide a quality service to clients.

### BOVINE TB ERADICATION SCHEME

#### **Progress in Eradicating Bovine TB: Incidence at record low level in 2016**

The Bovine TB eradication scheme, has been in place since the mid 1950's, whilst progress has been slow, in recent years the incidence has declined significantly, largely due to the introduction of the badger control strategy in 2004, with the result that herd incidence has reached a new record low level of 3.27% in 2016.

#### **TB Forum**

In view of the progress made in eradicating TB in recent years, the Department has publicly set a target for eradication of this disease by 2030. The achievement of this objective will require considerable effort and a commitment from all stakeholders to put in place the necessary control measures which are likely to impose additional burdens on farmers in the short-term. In view of this, under Foodwise 2025, the Department committed to establishing a TB Forum, which would be representative of all stakeholders, with a view to providing a strong co-ordinated leadership in support of the DAFM team in achieving the

eradication target. The forum will be developed as part of the overall Farmed Animal Health and Welfare Strategy.

### **Compensation for Herdowners who are affected by Bovine TB**

The Department has a comprehensive compensation regime in place for herdowners who are affected by bovine TB, including compensation both for direct and indirect losses. In 2016 the Department concluded a lengthy consultation process on improvements to the compensation regime. The main changes, which were approved by D/PER and the EU Commission, and implemented on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2016 are as follows: (i) the income supplement for dairy cows was increased from €25 to €55 per cow per month and there are improved eligibility conditions for dairy cows in this scheme and (ii) there are enhanced provisions for dairy cows in the Hardship grant scheme.

### **Background Material on the Bovine TB Eradication programme**

The Bovine TB eradication scheme is designed to eradicate bovine TB from the cattle herd in Ireland. The scheme is necessary because of the relatively high incidence of the disease in the country, the infectivity of the disease, the potential risks to humans, interference with animal productivity and preservation of export markets, particularly live exports. The main elements of the TB Eradication Scheme are as follows:

- Annual testing of the national herd and/or designated categories of animals
- Supplementary testing where appropriate (e.g. contiguous herds, special check tests etc.)
- Primary responsibility for arranging testing and paying for certain tests rests with farmers (in general, farmers pay for about 70% of the tests)
- A comprehensive compensation regime for farmers who suffer a disease outbreak
- The payment by farmers of disease levies to help fund the compensation regime
- A reactor collection service to ensure rapid removal of infected animals in a manner to avoid the spread of the disease
- A comprehensive programme aimed at preventing TB spread by wildlife (removal of badgers).

### **Badger control strategy**

A considerable amount of research which has been conducted over the years has shown that the eradication of Bovine TB is not a practicable proposition in the short to medium-term because of the reservoir of infection in wildlife and, in particular, badgers, which is seeding infection into the cattle population. In view of this research, the Bovine TB eradication programme implemented by the Department contains a comprehensive wildlife strategy in order to limit the spread of TB from badgers to cattle. Under this strategy badgers, where they are implicated in an outbreak of TB, are captured under licence issued by the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. The licences are contingent on the total area under capture being maintained below 30% of the agricultural land in the country.

### **Vaccination of Badgers**

The culling of badgers, whilst demonstrably successful in driving down rates of TB in Ireland, is not sustainable in the long term due to its ultimate impact on badger ecology and Ireland's commitments under the Bern convention. The Department intends to gradually reduce badger culling from the current level of 6000 to 1000 badgers per annum in tandem with a badger vaccination programme.

To this end the Department has been collaborating for some years with the Centre for Veterinary Epidemiology and Risk Analysis (CVERA) in UCD and with DEFRA in the UK on research into a vaccine to control tuberculosis in badgers. A number of vaccination projects, replacing repeated culling in already culled areas, have been undertaken since 2013. A number of badger immunological and ecology studies have also been conducted to gain further knowledge of the species with a view to developing methodologies to achieve the objective of vaccination at a population level without having to individually capture each badger being vaccinated and to reduce interspecies disease transmission.

In early 2017, the results of a trial, the objective of which was primarily to provide information as to the efficacy of an individually delivered oral vaccine in reducing the level of TB infection in the wild badger population, were published. The results showed, for the first time, a significant impact of oral vaccination in reducing the incidence of sero-

conversion (a proxy measure for vaccine protection) in vaccinated badgers compared with non-vaccinated badgers (Gormley et al, 2017. PloS One, 12 (1): e0168851).

On foot of this and on internal discussions on the mechanics of how a more widespread vaccination strategy would work, Departmental officials have recently met with the National Parks and Wildlife service to discuss any licensing implications of a move to more vaccination. The NPWS has engaged constructively with the Department in this regard and the Department is currently considering how best to deploy vaccination as an integral part of our wildlife strategy.

### **Trends in the incidence of TB**

The incidence of bovine TB in Ireland has declined significantly since 2008 when approximately 30,000 animals were removed as reactors to just c. 15,300 in 2015. This is a historically low level. The number of reactors removed in 2016 was 16,914, 1,597 more than in 2015. The increase was due to the increased use of the gamma interferon assay test, the purpose of which is to find infected animals at an earlier stage in the development of the disease and thereby prevent further spread. Herd incidence, which is possibly a more accurate reflection of trends, was at 3.27% in 2016 compared with 5.88% in 2008. Bovine TB is a complex disease and it is not possible to attribute the decline in the incidence of the disease to any single factor. Nevertheless, the main factors involved would appear to be (i) the badger control policy which has been in place for some years now and (ii) improved testing regimes. We are satisfied that the badger control policy is the main factor, not least because the incidence of TB in Northern Ireland, which does not implement a badger culling programme, is almost twice as high as in the South.

### **Likely Future Disease Trends**

In view of the progressive reduction in the incidence of the disease, particularly since 2008, both in cattle and in badgers, we are reasonably optimistic that disease levels are likely to remain at relatively low levels in the coming years and that eradication can be achieved by 2030. Although there was a slight increase in the number of reactors in 2016 compared to the previous year, the herd incidence of the disease continued to fall. Herd incidence is considered a more reliable barometer of disease prevalence.

### **Cost of the Disease Eradication Schemes**

The cost of the TB eradication scheme has been falling progressively in recent years, mainly due to the substantial reduction in the incidence of the disease. In 2016, the cost of the scheme (excluding staff salary costs) amounted to approx. €31m compared with €55m in 2008. Within this figure, the cost of compensation has fallen considerably over the years from €27m in 2008 to €14m in 2016. Taking account of the contribution of the disease levies and the EU funding towards the cost of the eradication scheme (see below), the net exchequer cost of the scheme (excluding staff costs) in 2016 was approximately €14.5m.

### **Farmer Contribution to the Cost of the Eradication Programme**

Farmers contribute about €6m a year towards compensation costs through the disease levies (currently €1.27 per animal slaughtered or exported live and 0.06 cent per litre of milk received for processing). In addition, farmers pay for the majority of testing i.e. in the region of €25m per year).

### **EU Funding**

The EU has co-funded the TB eradication programme since 2008 at a reasonable level (€10.6m in 2016).

### **The On Farm Market Valuation Scheme**

This scheme is designed to compensate herdowners for the loss (capital cost) of animals removed under the eradication programme and is based on the market value of animals (i.e. the equivalent price which might reasonably be obtained for the animal at the time of determination of compensation, from a purchaser in an open market, if the animal were not affected by TB) subject to certain limits. Valuations are carried out by suitably qualified valuers and there is an appeal/arbitration system in place.

### **Depopulation Grant**

A farmer whose herd is depopulated (totally or partially) for TB may qualify for Depopulation Grants. Depopulation Grants are paid for each animal removed in the depopulation measure and for those removed as reactors since the holding was restricted. The objective of this scheme is to compensate farmers for the loss in income (e.g. from milk

sales) during the restriction period. Depopulation Grants are paid in respect of each month of the rest period specified by the RVO.

### **Income Supplement**

Income Supplement is payable in cases where disease breakdown results in the removal of more than 10% of animals in a herd or in respect of Dairy herds where at least 10% of dairy cows are removed and where depopulation is not deemed appropriate. Payment is in respect of each animal removed as a reactor from a herd. The objective of the scheme, which applies when a significant number of cattle are removed as reactor but depopulation does not take place, is the same as the Depopulation grant viz. to compensate for income losses during the restriction period.

### **Hardship Grant**

This Scheme is designed to alleviate the additional costs, in particular feed costs, of some farmers whose holdings are restricted on foot of a herd re-test and where animals are retained and fed during periods of restriction in the Autumn/Winter period. The Hardship Grant eligibility period runs from 1<sup>st</sup> November to 30<sup>th</sup> April each year. The maximum grant is €250.00 per month for a period not exceeding 4 months within the eligibility period.

### **VETERINARY MEDICINES AND NATIONAL RESIDUE CONTROL PLAN**

The incidence of illegal residues in food has been at very low levels for many years. In 2016, some 40 (0.2%) out of 19,250 samples tested positive which shows a continuation of the trend over a number of years of a general absence of residues in Irish food products.

New EU regulations governing veterinary medicines and medicated feedingstuffs are currently under discussion in the Council and the European Parliament but the proposed amendments do not present any major issues for Ireland.

## **Background Material on Veterinary Medicines/National Residue Plan/Veterinary Council**

The main elements of the veterinary medicines and residue testing regimes are laid down at EU level. There are a number of separate EU legal instruments governing these areas, which can be summarised under the following broad categories:

- **Controls on the approval, prescription, commercial distribution and use of veterinary medicines:** Directive 2001/82 is the framework legislation governing national systems for the approval, distribution, prescribing and use of veterinary medicines.
- **Controls on medicated feedingstuffs:** This legislation governs group medication of animals (mainly in the pig and poultry sectors)
- **Controls on Residues in foodstuffs:** these regulations provide for national residue control plans to be implemented in all Member States to protect consumers from inappropriate residues in food of animal origin. These residues relate to banned substances, approved medicines and environmental contaminants.

## **Review of Veterinary Medicines Legislation (Directive 2001/82)**

A proposal to amend Directive 2001/82, which is the primary legislation on veterinary medicines, is currently before the Council and the European Parliament. During the current trio Presidency the Council started the second technical reading of the regulation. After 31 days of Council Working Party meetings under the Netherlands, Slovak and Maltese presidencies, almost all provisions of this proposal have been redrafted at least twice and have been thoroughly examined. DAFM has successfully suggested amendments on a couple of key issues and is generally satisfied with the current draft.

## **Medicated Feedingstuffs (Directive 90/167)**

Directive 90/167 is essentially a control instrument which regulates the downstream prescribing and addition of the medicine (premix) to animal feed. A proposal to replace this Directive is also under discussion in the Council but we have no major concerns about the proposed new regulation.



### **Regulation of Veterinary Practice: The Veterinary Council**

Comprehensive new legislation governing regulation of the profession (the Veterinary Practice Act 2005, which replaced earlier legislation originating from the 1930s), came into force on 1 January 2006. While the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine is the sponsoring Minister for legislation governing regulation of veterinary practice in Ireland, day to day regulation of the profession is a function of the Veterinary Council of Ireland in accordance with the principles laid down in the legislation.

### **National Residue Control Plan**

Ireland carries out a National Residue Control Programme every year in accordance with Council Directive 96/23/EC which provides for the monitoring of certain substances and residues thereof in live animals and animal products. Testing is carried out on an ongoing basis throughout the year at farm and slaughterhouse level with 19,500 tests completed last year. The plan provides for sampling for residues in bovine, ovine, caprine, porcine and equine animals as well as in poultry, wild and farmed game, eggs, milk, honey, aquaculture and in imported products. In 2016, some 40 (0.2%) out of 19,250 samples tested positive which shows a continuation of the trend over a number of years of a general absence of residues in Irish food products (0.2%) detected in 2011-15). These consistently low levels reflect the responsible approach adopted by the vast majority of farmers.

From 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018, new reporting requirements of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) will commence. This will mean a move away from the current system of aggregate reporting of number of tests, number of positive results and follow-up action, to a more granular transaction based system. This will require major business process and ICT changes to current systems. Work has been ongoing for some time on the development of new systems within the Department and liaising with the state and external laboratories on the required changes to their systems.

## **ANIMAL HEALTH & WELFARE DIVISION**

**Head of Division:** Dermot Murphy, Principal Officer

The role of AH&W Division is to promote, achieve and maintain the highest standards of animal health & welfare, to enforce the Animal Health & Welfare Act 2013, to ensure the import/export of appropriately certified animals into/out of Ireland takes place in a manner to minimise the risk of disease and to facilitate and regulate the transport arrangements in respect of live animals. AH&W Division also operate the ex-gratia welfare grant scheme which assists approximately 140 welfare organisations. The Division liaises with local authorities under the Control of Horses Act 1996 and works closely with Animal Health Ireland in its efforts tackling certain production diseases such as Bovine Viral Diarrhoea and Johne's Disease.

### **Animal Health and Welfare Act**

The Animal Health & Welfare Act 2013 was enacted in 2013 and commenced in March 2014 replacing the Diseases of Animals Act 1966. The Act, which up-dated legislation in the animal health and welfare area, imposes an obligation on persons having an animal in his or their possession or control to safeguard its health and welfare. The Act introduces new control and enforcement procedures such as Fixed Payment Notices and Animal Health & Welfare Notices which can issue both in guidance and in dealing with disease threats and animals in welfare compromised situations. The Act also increased penalties with fines now at €5,000 maximum on summary conviction and six months imprisonment. For major cases taken on indictment, the maximum penalty has been raised from €100,000 to €250,000, with a maximum custodial sentence of five years imprisonment. In a novel development under the Act, authorised officer status has been given to a small number of employees of the ISPCA, DSPCA and the Turf Club to carry out duties limited to welfare.

## Protection of Animals during Transport

EU Council Regulation 1 of 2005 on the protection of animals during transport and related operations prescribe strict standards for animal handling, the condition of the vehicle, hygiene arrangements and on long journeys, standards for feeding, watering, resting periods, journey times and stocking densities during transportation. It applies to the transport of live animals including cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, poultry, horses and dogs taking place in connection with an economic activity. The Regulation came into effect on 5 January 2007 and has been given legal effect in Ireland by the European Communities (Animal Transport and Control Post) Regulations 2006 (S.I. No. 675 of 2006). A system of vehicle inspections carried out by DAFM throughout the country encompasses all forms of animal transport. Over the years transporters of calves in particular have invested heavily in their vehicles which together with Roll-On-Roll-Off ferry operators provide good access to the continent.

## Live Exports

The current Irish regulation in relation to the approval of ships for livestock transport is set higher than that which applies in other EU Member States. The requirements for approval of dedicated vessels for the carriage of cattle by sea are contained in SI 356/2016 Carriage of Livestock by Sea Regulations 2016 and SI 455/2016 Carriage of Livestock by Sea (Amendment) Regulations 2016. Detailed inspections are required before approval is given to ships transporting animals. There are currently 3 dedicated vessels approved for the carriage of livestock by sea from Irish ports. Further ships are in the process of being approved. The requirements for approval of Roll-On-Roll-Off ferries for the carriage of cattle by sea are contained in the Diseases of Animals (Animal Transport) (Roll-On-Roll-Off Vessels) Order 2007. There are 4 Roll-On-Roll-Off vessels approved for carriage of livestock. One is operating between Ireland and the UK and two are operating between Ireland and France. One vessel is not operating currently from Irish ports. There has been renewed activity in the area of the approval of dedicated livestock vehicles due to the opening of the Turkish market for Irish cattle.

### Animal Movement System (TRACES)

Consignments of live animals being traded from the State must be accompanied by a veterinary health certificate issued by the Department to confirm freedom from all relevant diseases affecting the species and the movement must be notified via the TRACES system (a European Commission on line system for notification of live animal exports/imports). In addition, in cases where these animals are horses, cattle or dogs, an identity document (passport) must also accompany each such animal.

### Horse Exports

The Division administers the certification of horses for export. All horses being exported from Ireland to Member States of the EU must be microchipped, accompanied by a horse passport and, with the exception of certain categories of horses to the United Kingdom, must also be accompanied by EU Health certification in accordance with Directive 2009/156/EC. The movement must be notified via the TRACES system. Horses being exported to Non-EU countries must be accompanied by a Health Certificate agreed bilaterally with the authorities in the importing countries.

Ireland, France and the United Kingdom operate a tripartite agreement (TPA) on the movement of horses between those countries. The agreement is reviewed on an annual basis and may be amended by mutual agreement at six monthly intervals.

Horses registered with an approved TPA body are eligible to travel between Ireland and France once they are microchipped, accompanied by a horse passport and a DOCOM. DOCOM is a TRACES document specifically developed by the Commission for the movement of TPA eligible horses. These may be administered directly by the TPA body. There are 3 TPA bodies approved in Ireland, the Turf Club, Irish Thoroughbred Breeders Association and Horse Sport Ireland. Horses travelling between Ireland and the UK may travel if microchipped and accompanied by a passport, i.e. a health cert is not necessary.

What will happen to the TPA after Brexit is a cause of concern to the horse industry

### Commercial movement of Dogs (puppy exports)

For over 90 years, Ireland and the UK had operated a free-travel area with regard to cats and dogs including those moving in trade. This concession expired at the end of 2012 and EU Regulation 576/2013 introduced more stringent controls on the movement of cats and dogs. The UK commenced enforcing the requirements for Ireland/UK movement of pets. This means that dogs under 12 weeks cannot be exported to the UK and all dogs destined for the UK need a rabies vaccination. This has resulted in the seizure of some non-compliant Irish dogs by authorised officers of the Department in Dublin Port, and by Trading Standards officers in the UK.

EU Regulation 576/2013 is implemented in Ireland by the Pet Passport (No.2) Regulations 2014. This requires, inter alia, that a dog being moved must be microchipped, be vaccinated against rabies and be accompanied by a pet passport. If the movement is commercial, each consignment must be accompanied by an official EU veterinary health ('Balai') certificate to certify that the dogs come from a holding or business which is registered by the competent authority and is not subject to any ban on animal health grounds (including rabies). The Member State of destination must be notified via the TRACES system at the time of issue of the certificate. A type 2 approved transporter must be used for all commercial movements.

### Control of Horses

The Control of Horses Act, 1996 was introduced to address problems caused by straying/abandoned horses. Under the legislation, the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine may assist local authorities financially and in this regard, an amount of €725,170 was provided in 2016 (€953,000 was provided in 2015) to local authorities. The numbers of straying horses seized by local authorities under the Act has greatly reduced from almost 5,000 in 2013 to 2,125 in 2016. DAFM supports all efforts towards re-homing and greater numbers of equines are now being re-homed to the United Kingdom and Germany. We are currently reviewing this legislation in light of more recent enactments regarding identification of horses, registration of premises where horses are kept and the requirement to notify transfer of ownership. We are also working with local authorities in supporting urban/traveler horse projects in the local authorities respective areas with the aim of

assisting owners in complying with equine related legislation and (for younger horse owners) in managing horses alongside a broader education.

Funding of €782,728 has been provided since the announcement of Minister Coveney's urban/traveler horse project initiative in late 2014).

### **Animal Welfare Ex-gratia Payments**

Since 1995, the Department has made ex-gratia payments to organisations directly involved in the delivery of animal care and welfare services. The funding is intended as a contribution towards the work of the organisation only. Applicants are required to submit details of the nature of the organisation's work, premises, capacity to hold animals, the species cared for, number of years in operation and details of fundraising programmes etc. along with supporting documentation including detailed financial accounts. Applicants may also be subject to an inspection by the Department's Veterinary Inspectorate. In December 2016 funding of €2.46m was provided to 137 organisations throughout the country. The main recipients are ISPCA, DSPCA and the Irish Blue Cross.

### **Animal Health Ireland**

Animal Health Ireland (AHI) was established in 2009 as a private company limited by Guarantee. In 2016, DAFM made provision for funding to AHI up to a maximum amount of €750,000, subject to matching funding from industry stakeholders. The basic governance framework under which AHI operates is set out in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with DAFM and in its Memorandum and Articles of Association. The current MOU covers the period 2016 and 2017. The main role of AHI is to address what are known as "production" or "non-regulated" diseases which impact on farming productivity. AHI concentrates on a number of key programmes relating to Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD), Johne's Disease (JD), Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis (IBR), Beef Health Check and mastitis.

### **BVD Eradication Programme**

The National Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) Eradication Programme is an industry led programme delivered by Animal Health Ireland (AHI). The legislative basis for this is set out

in SI 30 of 2017 which requires that all calves on or after 1 January 2013 must be tested for the presence of the BVD virus. Animals found to be persistently infected (PI) with the virus must be disposed of to a knackery, abattoir or meat plant within agreed timeframes in order to qualify for the financial supports provided by DAFM. DAFM involvement in the eradication programme is largely via the support payment for PIs removed within a certain time-frame and imposing restrictions on herdowners who fail to remove PIs.

Excellent progress has been made on the programme to date with the number of persistently infected (PI) calves falling steadily since 2013, with a further reduction expected again in 2017. Since mid 2015, DAFM has been restricting the small number of herds that retain PI animals beyond the testing timeframes. This action has brought about a substantial reduction in the number of PI animals being retained on farm.

#### **Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis**

A cost benefit analysis study funded by DAFM is currently being undertaken by Teagasc in relation to Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis (IBR). The outcome of the study will be presented by Animal Health Ireland (AHI) to relevant stakeholders who will decide on whether to progress towards a national eradication programme. It should be noted that a number of European Countries/Regions have already moved in this direction **Targeted**

#### **Advisory Service for Animal Health**

The Targeted Advisory Service for Animal Health (TASAH), operates under the Rural Development Programme, whereby advice is provided by trained Private Veterinary Practitioners to livestock owners encountering certain animal health issues arising on Irish farms. The diseases covered by the new arrangement to date include BVD, JD and mastitis (high Somatic cell counts). Separately a pilot Johne's Disease Programme is being operated by AHI in the period 2014-2016. A new Johne's Disease programme is currently being advanced.

#### **Animal Health Computer System (AHCS)**

The Animal Health Computer System (AHCS) is used to manage a number of the Department's animal health programmes, principally the Bovine TB Eradication programme

and the Brucellosis Monitoring programme. It also provides support for the operation of other schemes such as the national BVD and Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy (TSE) testing programmes. AHCS serves as the national register of premises on which farmed animals are kept and contains a database of premises keeping cattle, sheep, pigs, goats, poultry and horses. It is a mission critical system used in each of the Department's District Veterinary Offices, HQ offices, laboratories and meat plants. Private veterinary practitioners in approximately 440 veterinary practices throughout the country also use AHCS on a daily basis as part of the operation of the national Bovine TB Eradication and Brucellosis Monitoring programmes. Almost 100% of testing under these programmes is reported electronically by private veterinary practitioners. AHCS is closely integrated with a number of the Department's other computer systems such as the Animal Identification and Movement (AIM) system; Corporate Customer System (CCS); Agriculture Field and Inspection Testing System (AFIT) and the Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS).

## **Engagement with Industry**

### **Equine Liaison Group**

An equine liaison group chaired by the Department and representing stakeholder groupings- Sport Horse breeding, Sport Horse competition, Thoroughbred Breeding; Thoroughbred Competition; Animal Health services; and other service providers meets at least twice annually. Its terms of reference are to-

- Ensure effective communications links between DAFM and the industry.
- Promote the development and implementation of basic bio security measures for each sector of the industry.
- Assist in the development of animal health strategies appropriate for the industry.

### **Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Council (FAWAC)**

The Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Council (FAWAC) was established in 2002 as an advisory body to the Minister bringing together for the first time in Ireland, representatives of stakeholders from animal welfare organisations, farming bodies, Government Departments



- North and South- and veterinary representative bodies. Its main function is to advise the Minister on specific topics and provide a forum for different interest groups to reach consensus on challenges facing farm animal welfare.

### **The Scientific Advisory Committee on Animal Health**

The Scientific Advisory Committee on Animal Health (SACHAW) was re-established in 2013 under the chairmanship of Dr. Colm Gaymor, former Chief Veterinary Officer. The committee has examined a number of animal health & welfare matters and in the course of 2015 brought forward an opinion on animal husbandry practices. One of the recommendations within this opinion relates to the castration of bull calves. The SACHAW recommend that the upper age limit for castration of a bull using a Burdizzo without the use of local anesthetic be reduced from the current 6 month deadline to as close as possible to 2 months. The opinion is currently the subject of a consultative process involving farmers and other stakeholders

### **North/South Engagement**

The Division coordinates the delivery of the **All-Island Animal Health and Welfare Strategy, which was initiated by the North South Ministerial Council on Agriculture.** Agriculture is one of the six areas of co-operation under the North South Ministerial Council. Animal health and welfare (as well as CAP, plant health policy and research and rural development) are the agricultural areas concerned. An all-island animal health policy has been developed from this framework with the objective of fostering co-operation and a common, unified animal health strategy for the island as a whole. The policy is pursued through dedicated working groups.

There is a history of very good co-operation between the administrations North and South on animal health issues. We have traditionally shared information at local and national levels on disease control and surveillance issues and have worked together to combat illegal movements of animals and animal products.

This work has taken on a new focus in view of the impending Brexit negotiations between the UK government and the European Union.

## ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION AND MOVEMENT DIVISION

**Head of Division:** Martin Farrell, Principal Officer

The Division is responsible for the development and implementation of the identification and tracing systems and ancillary activities for bovines, equines, pigs, sheep and goats in accordance with the requirements of the EU and national legislation applicable to each species.

### Cattle Identification and Traceability System

Regulation (EC) No 1760/2000 sets down the system for the identification and registration of bovine animals. National legislation, with relevant provisions in the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013, underpins the Irish bovine animal identification and tracing system. The Irish cattle identification and tracing system has four component parts:

- tagging - bovine animals must be tagged within 20 days of birth and registered within 7 days of tagging;
- passports;
- on-farm bovine herd register; and
- a computerised database – Animal Identification and Movement database referred to as the AIM system [which is a generic database maintaining the records of cattle, sheep, pigs and horses] - the bovine system consists of a comprehensive web-based database of the origin, identity, movements and life history of all cattle born in or imported into the country.

The Animal Identification and Movement System (AIM) receives movement information from livestock marts, live export points and meat plants ensuring the prompt recording of all movements of cattle to and from these premises. The origin, identity, movements and life history of the animal consigned to marts, slaughter plants and live export assembly centres are checked against the central database before it is permitted to be consigned, to enter the food chain or for export. The arrangements for movement of cattle direct from

one holding to another holding require the source keeper (seller) to seek pre-clearance for the proposed move from the AIM database either online or through a paper application.

### **Approved Bovine Tag Suppliers**

The Department moved to an approval process for the approval of bovine tag suppliers on 1 November 2016. Three companies are approved to supply official cattle tags including Cormac Tagging Ltd - Caisley Tag (German), and Datamars Agri Ltd – Datamars Tag (Swiss) and Mullinahone Co-op – Allflex Tag (French). It is anticipated that other applications may be submitted to the Department.

### **Tag Numbering System**

Regulation No 653/2014/EC provides for the introduction of electronic identification (EID) of bovines whereby Member States are required to have facilities in place to accommodate EID on a voluntary basis by July 2019. The Irish numbering system associated with the issue of new tags prior to 31 October 2016 was not compatible with EID numbering. A new numbering system was introduced on 1 November 2016 which is compatible with an agreed EU wide electronic identification (EID) format. The ISO numeric code for Ireland '372' is now used on the tag instead of the ISO alpha code 'IE'.

Farmers can use existing stocks of tags until 31 December 2017

### **Outsourced Contracts**

Capita Customer Solutions holds a significant contract with an annual value of some €5 million for the registration of bovine births, issuing of bovine passports and processing of notifications in relation to farm-to-farm bovine notifications and on-farm deaths under the Animal Identification and Movement (AIM) system. The contract will expire on 31 August 2018.

### **Cross Compliance Inspections**

EU Regulations require that a total of 3% of bovine holdings are inspected as part of cross-compliance by the Integrated Controls Division. Furthermore an additional 1% of cross-compliance inspections (which includes bovine identification) occur when an applicant has bovines.

### **Sheep and Goat Identification Systems**

The identification of sheep and goats across the EU is governed by Council Regulation (EC) No 21/2004. The EU rules in relation to the identification of sheep are implemented under the European Communities (Sheep Identification) Regulations, 2011 (S.I. No. 309 of 2011) and are set out in the National Sheep Identification System (NSIS). All sheep born and kept on holdings in Ireland must be tagged in accordance with the rules set down in the legislation. The sheep tagging system is complex with a large number of tag suppliers and options on types of tags available for use. Electronic identification (EID) is implemented in Ireland in a minimalistic way, to facilitate a slaughter derogation that exempts lambs, under 12 months going for slaughter, from EID [75% of lambs]. Mandatory electronic tagging is confined to sheep over 12 months of age and all sheep being exported. EID is applied without any exceptions in the UK.

Goats must be tagged in accordance with the rules set down under the National Goat Identification System (NGIS). EID of goats is optional in Ireland [except for live exports] as the goat population is under the 160,000 threshold which triggers a mandatory required for EID in the Member States in the EU. Completion of the Department's sheep and goat census is a requirement of the NSIS and NGIS and Council Regulation (EC) 21/2004.

### **Need to improve Sheep Traceability System**

A number of audits have concluded that the sheep traceability is not satisfactory. The status quo is not providing an adequate level of traceability and this issue needs to be addressed. DAFM established a Working Group in 2015 involving the Department and key stakeholders to identify a solution. The Minister met the opposition Spokespersons on Agriculture in relation to this issue. The Department is currently considering the most effective approach to the extension of EID to all sheep, with one electronic tag sufficing for lambs under 12 months of age moving directly to slaughter from the holding of birth.

### **Pig Identification**

Regulation 2008/71/EC, which governs the identification of pigs in the EU, was transposed into Irish law by S.I. 364 of 2010. Every pig keeper in Ireland must be approved and registered by the Department. Pigs consigned directly from farm of origin to factory require

a slap-mark containing the pig herd number of the holding of birth. All breeding pigs must be tagged with an approved tag displaying the herd registration number and an individual number for the animal. All pig movements into and out of a holding must be recorded. A service for the processing, handling, verifying and recording all such movements is provided by a third party service provider – Capita Customer Solutions - on foot of a competitive tender process. The current contract will expire on 28 February 2018. Pig herd owners are required by legislation to complete an annual pig census from the Department.

### Equine Identification

Commission Implementing Regulation 262/2015 which came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2016 and transposed into national law via S.I. No. 62 2016 governs identification of equidae. The keeper is responsible for ensuring that the animal is identified properly with an equine identification document (passport) within 12 months from the date of the animal's birth. Equines not identified within the prescribed timescale are excluded automatically from the food chain. It is an offence to keep an equine that is not identified. All equines identified with a passport with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2009 must be implanted with a transponder by a veterinary surgeon. This microchip number must be recorded on the animal's passport to ensure an unequivocal link between the identification document and the animal. Specific registration details, including the microchip and the individual unique equine life number (UELN) must be recorded on the database of the issuing Passport Issuing Organisation (PIO) and on the Department's central equine database.

There are 7 PIOs (Passport Issuing Organisations) operating in Ireland which are approved to issue passports in respect of equines eligible for entry into a studbook. Two of the PIOs are approved also to issue identification documents in respect of equines for breeding and production (non-studbook).

Equine identification documents and the data recorded on the central database are used by official veterinarians at the 2 slaughter plants approved by the Department to slaughter equines - to ensure that only those equines that are eligible for slaughter for human consumption are included in the food chain.

## VETERINARY PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY POLICY DIVISION

**Head of Division:** David Nolan, Senior Superintending Veterinary Inspector

To deliver Veterinary Public Health & Food Safety policy and strategies in accordance with best practice, service international trade in products of animal origin, liaise with FSAI, as appropriate, service contingencies relating to the management of food-borne outbreaks, develop and deliver Zoonoses policy in conjunction with other relevant Divisions, develop data capturing systems to service the needs of VPHIS and other relevant stakeholders.

### Policy

Policy in the fields of Veterinary Public Health (VPH) and Food Safety (FS) is devised and amended in accordance with best international practice and in line with National and EU legislation.

Relevant international (EU and non EU) meetings, seminars, workshops are attended and Ireland's concerns are voiced as required.

### Contingency Planning

The Division plays a central role in the planning of a response to food safety incidents. The Division develops and updates contingency plans, as required. It also participation in multidisciplinary evaluating exercises (contingency) as they arise. Additional responsibilities include:

- Participate in working group responsible for the protocol for responding to a Malign CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear) Incident.
- Liaise with the FSAI on simulation exercises. Update the Business Continuity Plan for the Division after consultation with various stakeholders

## **FOOD SAFETY**

### **Campylobacter**

Campylobacter is the commonest cause of bacterial food poisoning in Ireland with over 2,250 laboratory confirmed cases each year since 2013. In this, Ireland is no different from the rest of the EU as the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has highlighted campylobacter as a major problem across the entire EU with over 200,000 reported cases each year. As many people fall ill and do not have a laboratory confirmed diagnosis and are not reported, EFSA estimates the actual number of cases annually in the EU is closer to 9 million. This under-reporting phenomenon is found in every member state to varying degrees and is influenced by the cost of attending GPs, the available of laboratory testing capabilities and the efficiency of national surveillance systems. The true number of cases in Ireland could be in the region of 10-15,000 annually. The report on the Campylobacter Stakeholder Group has been published and launched by the Minister. This Division will be directly involved in the implementation group.

## **ISSUES**

The development of a campylobacter control strategy in broilers will require a specific resource input from this Division over the period of the implementation of the programme.

### **Pig Health**

A recent working group has issued a set of recommendations that deal with the animal health and public health issues around the pig industry in Ireland. The Division is actively participating with stakeholders and the implementation group.

## **ISSUES**

The public health issues arising from this report will require specific resource input from this Division over the period of the implementation of the recommendations of the working group.

## **INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

### **Market Access**

International trade policy as it relates to VPH & FS is set and agreed in relation to new and emerging markets and updated for existing markets, as required. In this context the Division works closely with other Divisions e.g. Meat and Milk Policy Division. Product certificates are agreed, amended and finalised with third countries. The Division attends market access meetings with the trade and ensures VPH and FS policy is communicated to the trade. The Division participates in relevant third country audits and negotiates policy issues to expand market access, as required.

### **ISSUES**

The opening of the US market for beef intended for grinding (BIFG). This is now complete and trade has commenced. Access to this market has involved successful negotiation strategies to gain access for the current trade, and the implementation of a considerable number of additional policy and implementation strategies. FSIS audit planned for September. Access to the Chinese and Korean markets for beef is the next important markets to be opened. Protocol for beef already signed with AQSIQ and certifications and animal health issues are currently under scrutiny. Audits from these two countries will take place in Q2 and Q3.

## **FSAI**

### **FSAI review of Official Controls**

The FSAI has recently issued the draft report on “A review of official controls in Ireland and opportunities for improvement”

### **ISSUES**

Devising policy and strategy to address the recommendations of the Scientific Steering Committee of the FSAI will prove challenging for DAFM.



## **DATA CAPTURE**

### **Ante-mortem and Post –mortem data collection (AMPM) & the Veterinary Inspection Audit Programme (VIAP)**

Two separate systems are under development. The AMPM system (data capture of ante and post mortem results in slaughter plants) and the VIAP (records all checks, inspections and audits carried out by VPHIS staff).

The ante-mortem and welfare modules of the AMPM system have been developed and trialled. A concept PM system is currently undergoing evaluation.

## **ISSUES**

These data capture systems within VPHFS Operations Division must be rolled out speedily if the benefits of such systems are to be realised, and compliance with legislation achieved (AMPM system). Technical issues with the main users of the programme prevent roll out of the AM and welfare modules to all beef slaughter plants. Close co-operation and co-ordination between Personnel, Meat Hygiene Division and VPHFS Operations Division is paramount in the exercise if progress is to be made. The VIAP system is under development after a successful trial of the prototype system in a number of plants. Phase 1 of the development is due for completion in 2017. There will be considerable benefits to the Food Wise 2025 programme when these systems in place, leading to savings to farmers and efficiencies at processing plants and for DAFM.

## **VETERINARY PUBLIC HEALTH INSPECTION & FOOD SAFETY OPERATIONS DIVISION (VPHFS)**

**Head of Division:** Peter Maher, Senior Superintending Veterinary Inspector

To ensure that the highest standards of food safety are achieved for the products for which the Division is responsible, through the implementation of effective inspection systems at the establishments under its control, to ensure that the highest standards of animal welfare are in place at the cattle, sheep, pigs, poultry and equine slaughtering premises regulated by the Division, to ensure the operational delivery of an effective approval system for all establishments, to ensure the operational delivery of effective auditable regulatory controls at establishments, including ante- and post-mortem examinations, auditing of food safety management systems, checks on hygiene, taking of samples, analysing results of own checks and HACCP programmes and providing certification where required.

In relation to food safety, the responsibility for the enforcement of food legislation lies with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) and, to enforce the laws, the Authority enters into service contract agreements with those agencies previously involved in official food controls. DAFM and FSAI signed a service contract for the enforcement of food legislation in Jan 2016.

### **Divisional activities required to achieve VPHFS objectives**

- Operate and oversee an effective food safety auditing, monitoring and inspection control programme, including sampling programmes.
- Plan, prepare and participate in audits with FSAI/IAU/FVO and other relevant third country customers.
- Arrange and participate in meetings with staff with a view to improve oversight of food business operator compliance with food safety and ancillary legislation.
- Deliver on the FSAI service contract requirements.

- Liaise internally with relevant DAFM divisions, and with external organisations such as the Teagasc Food Research Centre, Food Safety Agency Northern Ireland (FSANI), Food Safety Agency UK (FSAUK), Department of Agriculture & Rural Development Northern Ireland (DARDNI), Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) and Irish Dairy Industries Association (IDIA).
- Provide documented procedures to staff on official control activities.
- Developing and maintaining databases for recording the outcomes of audits, evaluations and enforcement actions
- Respond to and investigate food safety incidents/emergencies both within the ROI and from other jurisdictions as necessary
- Provide veterinary certification to the Meat and Dairy Industries.
- Carrying out enforcement action in a proportionate, effective and dissuasive manner.
- Continued professional development of all staff.

## Reporting

DAFM reports on a quarterly basis to the FSAI on the implementation of the agreed service contract. This Division also make a return to the European Commission through the DAFM Multi Annual National Control Plan. (MANCP)

## Audits

This Division undergoes a range of constant audits, namely: -

Third Country Audits. In 2017 we have imminent audits from the following: -

- Korean Audit – continuing the quest by Ireland to open the Korean Market Starts June 12.
- China – CNCA due here in early July for a 2 week Audit with 4 inspectors.
- USDA – Due here in September for a 3 week Audit of our Porcine Bovine and Ovine Slaughter – 2 Inspectors.
- Internal Audit Group of DAFM, who Audit this Division at least once per year – this year so far it's on our documentary procedures – currently ongoing.

- Food Safety Authority of Ireland - Starting an audit of sheep traceability on June 6<sup>th</sup>.

## ISSUES

### Provision of Ante-Mortem and Post-Mortem Inspection - Employment status of Temporary Veterinary Inspectors (TVIs).

TVI claims that they are entitled to employee (as opposed to contractor) status have been through the court system and are currently with the Employment Appeals Tribunal. If the EAT were to decide that TVIs were employees rather than contractors (the Department's position) significant additional costs would arise for the Department. The Department closed off TVI panels to new entrants in December 2011. Now that the TVI panels are closed, there is a more pressing need to consider the procurement of personnel by means that take account of DAFM obligations under procurement rules to ensure maintenance of delivery of service in slaughter establishments into the future.

### Data Capture of Ante-Mortem and Post-Mortem Inspection findings.

Regulation 854/2004 places an obligation on DAFM to ensure that the results of ante-mortem and post-mortem inspections and tests are to be included in relevant databases. Plans are well progressed on a system to deliver on this obligation - the AMPM system (data capture of ante and post mortem results in slaughter plants) This AMPM system have been trialled. It is now necessary to ensure commencement of the roll out of the system.

### Food Alerts.

Under contract to FSAI, the Department is on continuous alert to respond to food safety incidents and emergencies

### Sheep CLP

Ongoing discussion with both MII and IFA on the impossible task of getting agreement on the introduction of CLP. June 1<sup>st</sup> is the implementation date but with no agreement this will have to be deferred.

## **VETERINARY NORTHERN/SOUTHERN AREA MANAGEMENT TEAMS**

**Heads of Division:** Thomas McTague, Senior Superintending Veterinary Inspector (Northern Area) Pat Meskell Senior Superintending Veterinary Inspector (Southern Area)

The mission of these Divisions is to deliver agreed core animal health & welfare, public health and food safety programmes to the standard required under Regulation 882/2004 in support of business objectives under Strategy of Statement 2015-2017 and the national control systems under the National Control Plan 2012 -2016 (MANCP), to facilitate recommendations of Foodwise 2025 and to fully contribute and implement recommendations relevant to the Division as part of the Civil Service Renewal Plan.

### **Northern Area**

The Division covers 13 counties north of a line between Dublin and Galway. It has 14 locations: 8 Regional offices, Dublin Airport.

### **Southern Area**

The Division covers 13 counties south of a line between Clare and Wicklow. It has 8 Regional Veterinary Offices and Border Inspection Posts and Ports at Shannon, Cork, Rosslare and Waterford which are staffed by Portal Inspectors.

### **Work areas:**

The principle areas of work are: Food Safety, Animal Health and Welfare and Plant health. The Divisions are accountable for the operation, enforcement and delivery of effective animal health/welfare and food safety regimes relating to controls under Reg. 882/2004 and the Multi Annual National Control Plan, to support agri - food trade and ensure consumer safety activity.

## INVESTIGATIONS DIVISION

**Head of Division:** Pat Flanagan, Senior Superintending Veterinary Inspector

To support the Department as a whole by providing the capability to have investigations carried out across the entire Department as requested and to ensure that such investigations are carried out to a standard that will withstand legal scrutiny.

- Investigations Division is a key plank of the Department's enforcement capability. This is necessary because of the potential for serious damage arising from serious and/or persistent non-compliance leading to potential reputational damage to the entire sector with consequent financial loss to the state.
- Difference between inspection and Investigation. **Inspection** is part of routine monitoring whereas **Investigation** is appropriate to establishing the facts of suspected wrongdoing and the possible application of sanctions including prosecution.
- The number of investigations conducted in any one year is only a tiny fraction of the number of inspections carried out across all divisions. (Example: 46 investigations carried out in 2015, 44 investigations in 2016]
- The work carried out by staff in Investigations Division is demanding and difficult. The standard required is that which applies to a court setting and evidence must be gathered and presented to withstand legal challenge.
- Investigations undertaken by Investigations Division represent the serious end of non-compliance. In some cases, serious criminality such as cattle theft, gross abuse of animal medicine requirements, fraudulent interference with animal testing may be involved
- The Official Control Regulation [EC Regulation 882/2004] requires that in the case of non-compliance, sanctions are effective, proportionate and dissuasive. A proportion

of investigations carried out result in prosecution, especially in the case of serious non-compliance, with an approximate 90% success rate.

- Governance: Head of Investigations Division reports regularly to a steering group comprised of the ASG for Corporate affairs (Chairman), the CVO, the ASG for Direct payments and Integrated Controls, The Heads of Division for Human Resources, Legal Services and Internal Audit Divisions, and an AP from Corporate Affairs (secretary). Cases for investigation and progress of investigations are discussed at this forum.

## **Background**

### **Special Investigation Unit (SIU)**

The Special Investigations Unit (SIU) was set up in 1984 in response to the widespread use of illegal growth promoters and Clenbuterol (Angel Dust). This work proved particularly challenging and the unit faced many legal challenges along the way. The main challenges related to the validity of the legislation rather than the integrity of investigations carried out. With the experience gained over time and coupled with careful assessment of evidence before embarking upon a prosecution, the unit has enjoyed a success rate of approximately 90%. As a result of the dedicated and persistent efforts of the staff in the SIU and more recently in Investigations Division, the use of illegal growth promoters and /or Angel Dust has virtually been eliminated from the farming scene. However' despite this reduction, it should be noted that in 2016, an investigation was conducted into the use of angel dust on a farm and it is expected that a prosecution will ensue in that regard in due course.

### **Investigations Division**

In 2014, following a review within the Department, Investigations Division was set up. The activities performed heretofore by the SIU were subsumed into this Division. The function was to carry out investigations across the entire Department (when required) to ensure effective compliance with legislation.

There are currently 10 staff in the Division (including Head of Division). *[Veterinary and Agricultural inspectorate staff =5, Technical staff =2 and Administrative staff=3]*

The staff in this Division work in collaboration with other agencies such as the Garda Síochána, Customs & Excise, FSAI, and investigation bodies in other jurisdictions, especially Northern Ireland. Investigations Division shares expertise with other regulating bodies under my Department's remit such as Turf Club and Bord na gCon and works in collaboration with them when appropriate.

### **Food Fraud**

The recent horsemeat crisis points to the catastrophic consequences of food fraud and the speed with which an industry can be undermined. It is essential that the Department has an effective entity to investigate crime/non-compliance that can threaten the agri-food industry in this way. A combination of vigilance and enforcement is considered essential to maintaining Ireland's reputation as a net exporter of food. An investigation was conducted on 1 farm regarding angel dust abuse in 2016 and a file is in preparation for submission to the CSSO.

### **Topic update since last PAC Appearance**

At the last PAC, the Sec Gen gave an undertaking to have the case of a Waterford pig farmer (TG) reviewed and to determine if compensation could be paid on an ex-gratia and 'without prejudice' basis, in recognition of the hardship suffered because of the unavoidable slaughter of his pig herd. Following a review by the Department, it was considered inappropriate that such payment would be made.

The case of a Cavan farmer (DF), which was also the subject of a recent PQ, is '*sub-judice*' and cannot be further elaborated-on at this time.

### **Recent serious complaint**

Towards the end of 2015, an investigation was conducted into serious non-compliance with animal remedies legislation involving a farmer and a pharmacist. This investigation was delayed due to the making of a complaint against an investigator. This complaint was ultimately dropped and in assessing the



circumstances, the Department is of the view that the complaint was malicious/vexatious. The investigation is completed and files have been sent to the CSSO with the view to prosecution.

#### Staff of Investigations Division at 08/06/17

Grade	Number
SSVI	1
AI	1
VI	3
AS	1
TAO	1
AP	1
EO	1
CO	1

#### Investigations in 2015 classified by type

Investigation Type	Number
Animal Health	2 (BVD)
Animal Bi-Products	1
Animal Welfare	2
Animal Identification, Movement and Registration (including Garda assistance re cattle theft etc)	22 (19 bovine, 3 equine)
Medicines (incl prescribing)	12
Food & Feed Safety	4
Mutual Legal Assistance	2
Assist PSNI (Cattle theft)	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>

### Investigations in 2016 classified by Type

Investigation Type	Number
Animal Health	1
Animal Welfare	3
Animal Identification, Movement and Registration (including Garda assistance re cattle theft etc)	9 (6 bovine, 3 equine)
Medicines (incl prescribing)	19
Food & Feed Safety	11
Mutual Legal Assistance	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>

### Comment

In 2015, of the 46 investigations carried out, 12 (26%) related to animal medicines. In 2016, of the 44 investigations conducted, 19 (43%) related to animal medicines. This level of activity is justified with regard to animal medicines due to the growing problem of antimicrobial resistance (AMR). It is seen as a global problem with negative consequences for the human race which in a worst-case-scenario' could lead to an inability to treat human bacterial infection. Scientifically, it is recognised that the injudicious use of antimicrobials in the past within both human and veterinary medicine has contributed to this problem.

## **ANIMAL WELFARE & LIVE TRADE DIVISION**

**Head of Division: Vacancy, Senior Superintending Veterinary Inspector**

To lead Veterinary Policy in relation to the Animal Welfare (including Transport of Animals) , trade in live animals, pig health & related issues, equine issues in including identification, premises registration & control of horses, animal breeding and trading premises (marts, dealers & Export Assembly Centres).

The division works closely on policy issues with a number of other Divisions, in particular with Animal Health and Welfare Division (Dermot Murphy). In relation to inspections and implementation the division works mainly via staff in the 16 Regional Veterinary Offices.

### **Animal Welfare (Including Transport of Animals):**

This is the largest and most contentious work area for the division. With the Introduction of the Animal Health and Welfare (AHW) Act 2013 DAFM responsibility in relation to animal welfare now covers all species, including companion animals (previously DAFM mainly focussed on welfare of farmed animals).

DAFM Inspectors carry out approximately 2000 welfare related inspections each year. These inspections are largely set out in EU legislation and cover calf, dairy cow, sheep, pig/poultry and transport of animals. Routine inspections in relation to welfare are also carried out in livestock marts and other assembly points. In addition DAFM carry out inspections where welfare complaints are received.

DAFM has entered into Service Agreement with the ISPCA and DSPCA, and a number of their officers have been authorised under the AHW act to carry out welfare duties under the Act, in relation to companion animals and urban horse issues.

## **WELFARE ISSUES:**

### **Circuses:**

The ISPCA has been actively campaigning for a ban on the use of wild animals in circuses. Animals in circuses must be looked after in accordance with the welfare provisions of Part 3 of the Animal Health & Welfare Act 2013. DAFM has been working with stakeholders on a Code of Practice underpinned by unannounced inspections. Some local authorities have passed motions banning use of circuses with (wild) animals from performing on council owned lands.

### **Fur Farming:**

There are currently three licensed mink farm operators in Ireland. Welfare groups are engaged in an ongoing campaign to ban fur farming.

### **Dog Breeding Establishments (DBEs or so called “puppy farms”):**

There are approximately 70 such premises in Ireland, with a total of approximately 3000 breeding bitches. They are licenced by Local authorities under DOE legislation. In 2015, on foot of controversy and concern in relation to welfare conditions in some of these premises DAFM Veterinary Inspectors carried out joint inspections on all such premises. Guidelines in relation to the operation of DBEs are currently being updated by Department of Housing Planning, Community & Local Government, and the division was actively involved in a working group that drafted those guidelines.

## **LIVE TRADE ISSUES:**

### **Calf exports :**

The export of young dairy bull calves, primarily to the Netherlands, and Spain is a strategically important. Trade has been somewhat difficult in recent years, partly due to restrictions (under the welfare heading) imposed by the Dutch authorities on long journey transport of calves. However in 2017 the trade has recovered very strongly, with calf exports (early in May) running at over 80 000, (approximately 44% ahead of 2016). This significant recovery is due to a number of factors (i) an arrangement in relation to calf

transport that has complied with the Dutch requirements (ii) a reduction in the fees payable on calf exports announced by the Minister early in 2016 (iii) strong demand on the continent, partly due to a reduction in dairy cow numbers in some areas (and hence a reduction in dairy bull calf numbers)

### **Live exports to Third Country markets:**

Agreements have been reached in recent years with all key target markets (Egypt, Turkey, Algeria, Morocco, Libya) on health certificates for live cattle exports. There are currently no significant live export markets for which Ireland does not have an agreement in place (in relation to Egypt, agreement is in place in relation to a certificate for slaughter cattle; final agreement on a certificate for fattening cattle is expected in the near future). To date in 2017 significant shipments have taken place to Turkey and Libya, and further shipments to Turkey in particular are planned.

### **Live trade in horses and dogs/pets**

The division is involved in significant volumes of certification of horses to EU and non-EU countries. It is also involved in policy issues in relation to the exports and imports of dogs (commercial and pets) and other pets.

### **Brexit**

While the full extent of any disruption to live trade will not be known until later in the process, live trade between Ireland and GB may not be significantly disrupted (unless a tariff regime applies), as already all live animals and germinal products etc crossing between Ireland and GB have to be inspected and certified by an Official Veterinarian and accompanied by a Health Certificate. While the details may change in some respects, a similar process is likely to apply regardless of the final 'shape' of Brexit.

However in relation to horses, the current arrangement is that free movement of horses between Ireland and GB (and France) is allowed under an arrangement called the tripartite agreement which has a basis in EU legislation. Post Brexit it is not clear if such an arrangement would be continued. The imposition of an inspection and certification regime

for movements of horses (between ROI and GB, including between ROI and N. Irl) would be a significant change for the equine sector.

### **Animal Breeding**

Work in this area involves liaison with Livestock breeding section (Cavan) in relation to import and export of semen and embryos, and coordinating the inspection, licensing and approval (through the regional Veterinary Offices) of animal breeding establishments and distribution companies.

### **Trading premises (Marts, Dealers & Export Assembly Centres)**

The Division is responsible for certain policy issues in relation to Livestock Marts (currently approx. 92 marts operational in Ireland), dealers and export assembly centres.

We are working on updating the existing marts legislation, some of which dates from the 1960's. A consultation process with marts and others has been underway over the last 12 months. The plan is to introduce a new SI under the Animal Health and Welfare Act. This should be finalised during 2017.

## NATIONAL DISEASE CONTROL CENTRE AND BORDER INSPECTION POSTS

**Head of Division:** Sally Gaynor, Senior Superintending Veterinary Inspector

To promote, enhance and deliver the highest level of food safety, consumer protection, animal health and animal welfare.

### National Disease Control Centre

The Division is responsible for maintaining contingency preparedness for, and control of, exotic trans-boundary diseases that have a severe impact on animal health, public health or trade (formerly called the OIE List A diseases). There are 14 diseases for which there is EU legislation covering the control measures to be taken in the event of suspicion or confirmation of disease e.g. foot and mouth disease, avian influenza, swine fever. The Division is responsible for drafting contingency plans for dealing with these diseases.

The Division is also responsible for control measures for other exotic notifiable diseases of horses e.g. equine viral arteritis, equine infectious anaemia, equine piroplasmiasis, and also for rabies.

Contingency planning includes a wide range of activities including: disease surveillance, occupational health measures to protect personnel involved in avian influenza controls, monitoring of vectors of disease, training of specialised teams e.g. killing of pigs and poultry, occupational health and biosecurity.

Some activities relate to the “One Health” strategy for interdisciplinary collaboration on health of humans and animals – specifically in the case of avian influenza and rabies.

The role of the Division includes logistical planning for disease outbreaks e.g. procurement of equipment and personnel.

### **Border Inspection Posts (BIPs)**

All live animals and animal products imported from Third Countries into the EU must be presented at a BIP, and undergo checks for compliance with animal and public health legislation. The process includes documentary, identity and physical checks. Checks are also carried out on re-imports, ships stores, ships chandlers, cruise liners, customs warehouses, Authorised Consignee Premises and channelled goods. Ireland currently has three EU approved BIPs – Dublin Port, Dublin Airport and Shannon Airport.

The Division's role is to enhance operational procedures at BIPs and other ports of entry to ensure that procedures for importing live animals and products of animal origin (including fish) are in accordance with EU and national law.

Roles at ports of entry (includes ports/airports other than Border Inspection Posts) include controls on pets, international catering waste, personal baggage and on ship/aircraft manifests (to detect illegal imports).

The Division is responsible for ensuring that the checks are carried out in a harmonised and effective manner in all locations. This requires regular contact with Revenue Customs, the Sea Fisheries Protection Agency (in relation to fish for human consumption) and the Marine Institute (in relation to live fish).

BIP checks on animal products for human consumption are included in the FSAI contract with DAFM.

### **Dublin Port**

The Division is responsible for the implementation of BIP checks and ancillary procedures mentioned above at Dublin Port, and also for checks on horse exports and spot checks on pet imports/exports.



## ISSUES

### National Disease Control Centre

- Disease threats in Europe have been increasing in recent years – avian influenza, bluetongue, African swine fever and lumpy skin disease are currently present in the EU. Avian influenza cases were detected in wild birds in 2016/2017, and the virus is likely to be introduced again during the 2017/2018 migratory season.
- There continues to be a backlog of contingency plans requiring updating or drafting as a result of insufficient staff during the period 2008 to 2013, and changes in EU and national legislation during that period.
- A new plan for staffing a Local Disease Control Centre in the event of a crisis is necessary following the reduction in administrative staff in most of the Regional Veterinary Offices.

### Border Inspection Posts

- [REDACTED] New BIP facilities are required at all 3 BIP locations (Dublin Port, Dublin Airport and Shannon Airport), [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]
- In addition major planning is required for Brexit (including research on structures and procedures at road BIPs, detailed analysis of statistics and liaison with Customs)

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

## SURVEILLANCE, ABP AND TSE (SAT) DIVISION

**Head of Division:** John Griffin, Senior Superintending Veterinary Inspector

To contribute to high quality and well-coordinated animal health surveillance activities and to protect animal and human health by ensuring proper utilisation and disposal of animal by-products and through the monitoring, diagnosis and control of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies and poultry zoonoses.

SAT Division has responsibility for four broad work areas:

- Coordination of Ireland's animal health surveillance programme: This includes the co-ordination of animal health surveillance activities at national level to ensure effective working relationships exist between DAFM Divisions and external agencies. SAT Division is responsible for the provision of scientific advice on animal health surveillance programmes and for undertaking horizon scanning activities for the detection of new and emerging diseases. SAT Division also participates in the development of animal health surveillance policy on a national and international level.
- Animal By-Products (ABPs): ABPs are animal carcasses, parts of carcasses or products of animal origin that are **not intended for human consumption**. These include catering waste, used cooking oil, former foodstuffs, butcher and slaughterhouse waste, blood, feathers, wool, hides and skins, fallen stock, pet animals, zoo and circus animals, hunt trophies, manure, ova, embryos and semen. SAT Division is responsible for the monitoring, oversight and regulation of the correct usage and disposal of ABPs.
- Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSEs): TSEs are a group of diseases affecting animals and transmitted by prions e.g. Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) in cattle and scrapie in sheep/goats. SAT Division is responsible for the control and eradication of prion diseases in animals.

- Poultry Zoonoses: There are a number of diseases of poultry that are transmissible to humans. The most important zoonoses are Salmonella and Campylobacter. SAT Division is responsible for coordinating the national surveillance programme for Salmonella and for coordinating the response of the Department of Agriculture and the Marine to outbreaks of Salmonella in poultry. It also works with the poultry industry in reducing the level of Campylobacter.

### **Key Targets for SAT Division 2017**

1. Implementation of National Animal Health Surveillance Strategy.
2. Detailed plan forwarded to RVOs for the inspection of approved ABP plants and other TSE and ABP-related activities
3. Standards documents and other accompanying documents for the inspection of ABP plants fully updated.
4. Full engagement in the development of policy and legislation at EU level in relation to TSE and ABPs.
5. Full implementation of annual surveillance and control programme for TSEs in cattle, sheep and goats as set out in EU Regulation 999/2001
6. Full implementation of annual surveillance and control programme for Salmonella in poultry

## VETERINARY INTERNAL AUDIT, MEDICINES, ETHICS AND TRAINING (VIAMET)

**Head of Division:** Hazel Sheridan, Senior Superintending Veterinary Inspector

To contribute to the protection of public and animal health, as well as Ireland's ability to trade animals and animal products internationally, through the regulation of the distribution and use of veterinary medicines, monitoring the effectiveness of the Department's official control system under Regulation 882 /2004, and the implementation of measures to combat antimicrobial resistance.

The work of the Division is divided into three main areas:

1. Regulation of veterinary medicines
2. Implementation of measures to combat antimicrobial resistance
3. Audit of official controls on food safety, animal health and animal welfare

### Regulation of veterinary medicines

The Division is involved in the following activities:

- Devising policy, legislation and the implementation of controls on the supply and use of veterinary medicinal products in Ireland.
- Provision of veterinary professional advice in relation to the supply and use of veterinary medicinal products to both internal and external stakeholders.
- Representing Ireland at EU Council Working Party meetings in relation to a proposal for a Regulation on Veterinary Medicinal Products and a proposal for a Regulation on Medicated Feed.

### Implementation of measures to combat AMR.

- Development and implementation of Ireland's One Health National Action Plan on AMR in conjunction with the Department of Health and other key stakeholders.

- Communication of DAFM policy in relation to AMR.
- Provision of support for the operation of the National Interdepartmental AMR Consultative Committee.

### **Audit of official controls on food safety, animal health and animal welfare**

The Division is involved in the following activities:

- Auditing of official controls in relation to food safety, animal health and animal welfare.
- Contributing to the identification of control weaknesses and risks to DAFM and Ireland's reputation as a food producing island,
- Dissemination of best practice from within the organization as well as from sources outside the organisation (EU Food and Veterinary Office and other Member States).
- Co-ordination of the animal health and welfare, and veterinary public health sections of the annual Multi-annual Control Plan Report (MANCP).
- Contribution to work at EU level in relation the development of MANCP requirements and guidelines in relation to auditing and the overall principles of the Official Controls Regulation (Regulation 882/2004 as amended).

## **ISSUES**

### **EU Regulation Proposals**

The European Commission has tabled proposals for two new regulations at European Council level; one in relation to the manufacture, distribution and use of veterinary medicinal products, and other in relation to the manufacture, distribution and use of medicated feed. The goals of the Commission in introducing these proposals are to:

- increase the availability of veterinary medicinal products;
- reduce administrative burdens;
- stimulate competitiveness and innovation;
- improve the functioning of the internal market; and

- Introduce measures to address the public health risk of AMR.

Progress in relation to the agreement of these texts at Council level is very slow with significant disagreement on certain key issues between those Member States who wish to retain rules as they are, the Commission who had proposed significant changes, and Member States, like Ireland, who wish to see some changes though perhaps not going as far as the Commission had originally proposed in relation to certain issues. It is not expected that agreement on the Presidency's compromise texts will be reached before the end of 2017.

Two issues of note that have emerged more recently are; (a) the inclusions of specific measures aimed at combating AMR, and (b) the implications of having this legislation finalized before the UK leaves the European Union. As things stand today, the measures aimed at combating AMR that have been added relatively recently, will pose a significant challenge to the sectors involved. At the same time the implementation of Ireland's National Action Plan on AMR is designed to prepare these sectors for compliance with these rules, when they are implemented (not expected to be before 2020).

In relation to agreement on these two proposals, the UK is anxious to see these two proposals are finalized before they leave the EU, as otherwise this legislation will not automatically be added to their national legislation, and it may be difficult to get them added subsequently. Failure to have harmonized rules between the UK and the European Union, could pose problems for trade in veterinary medicines between the UK and the European Union. This could have particular consequences for Ireland because, as things stand, the two markets are highly integrated.

### **Availability of veterinary medicines**

Issues relating to the availability of veterinary medicines on the Irish market are continuing. A number of pharmaceutical companies have advised the Department of their intention to withdraw certain products, with small sales, from the Irish market, and to supply the Irish market from the UK. In addition, we have seen two products, on which the equine industry depend, become unavailable due to manufacturing problems. The manufacturing

companies involved have provided little advance warning of these production problems, and in these two cases alternative solutions were neither easy to find, nor can they be considered to be optimal from a regulatory point of view. That said, progress has been made, with the assistance of the HPRA, in identifying ways to better manage the risks associated with these alternate solutions.

A third issue that has emerged more recently, is the impact of Brexit for the veterinary medicines market in Ireland. Currently, a significant number of veterinary medicines on the Irish market have been authorised in co-operation with the UK (so called mutual recognition and decentralised procedures). There is more work needed to be done with the HPRA to quantify this impact, in particular to identify any actions that may need to be taken to make sure as many products as possible are retained on the Irish market.

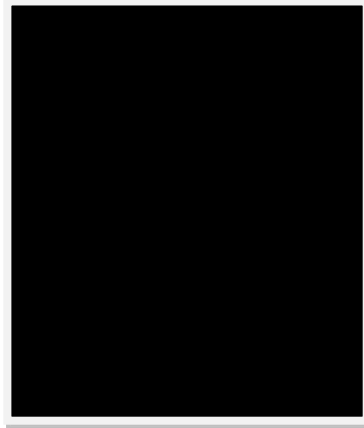
### **Implementation of measures to combat AMR**

Antimicrobial resistance, or the ability of micro-organisms to survive in the presence of an antimicrobial agent that in the past was sufficient to kill the micro-organism, is a global public health concern that threatens the very foundations of modern medicine. The use of antimicrobials in farm production systems has the potential to contribute to the development of antimicrobial resistance in humans, as animals and humans share the same environment, are exposed to the same families of bacteria, and are treated essentially with the same groups of antibiotics. Whilst the extent of this contribution is the subject of on-going debate, it is clear that resistance does develop in bacteria found in animals, and in farm environments. Furthermore, there is evidence that this resistance is increasing and that it can be transmitted to humans through direct contact, through shared environments and through food products. Action is needed now, not just in the human and veterinary medicine sectors, but also from agriculture, finance, environment and education as well as from citizens themselves at global, regional and national level.

For these reasons, a National Interdepartmental AMR Consultative Committee has been established to help co-ordinate actions under a 'One Health' banner and actions are underway to reduce the level of bacterial infections on farms, particularly in intensively reared animals, and to ensure that antimicrobials are used prudently. The Committee has

met a total of five times with meetings generally occurring twice yearly. The Department has also been engaged, with the Department of Health and other key stakeholders, in the development of a One Health National Action Plan on AMR that will cover the period 2017 to 2020. The plan has now been finalised and is shortly to be submitted to government for approval. Work will then begin on implementing the plan. Implementation of the plan at the national '*One Health*' level will be overseen by the Interdepartmental AMR Consultative Committee. Implementation of the plan in the animal health sector will be overseen by a high level steering group made up of representatives from the key stakeholder organisations.





**Donal Sammin, Director of Laboratories**

**Office phone No:** [REDACTED]  
**Mobile No:** [REDACTED]

**Responsible for the following Divisions**

Division	Head of Division	Office No	Mobile No
<b>Head of Agriculture Laboratories</b>	Dr. James Choiseul	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Dairy Sciences Laboratories (DSL)	Eoin O'Brien	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Pesticides, Plant Health, and Seed Testing Laboratories (PPHSTL)	Annmarie Dillon	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
<b>Head of Veterinary Laboratories</b>	Vacancy	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Bacteriology/Parasitology Division	John Egan	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Pathology Division	John Moriarty	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Regional Veterinary Laboratories (RVLS) & Blood Testing Laboratory (BTL)	Mícheál Casey	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Veterinary Public Health Regulatory Laboratory (VPHRL)	Montserrat Gutierrez	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Virology Division	Ronan O'Neill	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Biosecurity Division	Padraig Ross	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND THE MARINE LABORATORIES

**Assistant Secretary (Director of Laboratories):** Dr Dónal Sammin

**Head of Agricultural Laboratories:** Dr James Choiseul

**Head of Veterinary Laboratories:** Vacancy

### Background

The Department has an embedded laboratory service comprising a central laboratory complex at Backweston, Celbridge, Co. Kildare, a network of eight regional laboratories located in Cork (3), Kilkenny, Limerick (2) Athlone and Sligo and an experimental farm facility at Longtown, near Clane, Co. Kildare. The Laboratories are an integral part of the Department, providing scientific support and expertise in the areas of animal health, food and feed safety, plant health, seed testing and environmental monitoring. The Laboratories provide analytical, investigative and advisory support to the DAFM inspectorates and directly to external industry stakeholders. These supports are critical for an expanding, export-dependent industry in order to enhance production efficiency by more effective control of disease, to support trade by satisfying regulatory requirements and providing an evidence base which substantiates marketing claims and to address environmental issues. Approximately 300 people work within the laboratories, the majority (c.180) at the Backweston Campus. The Staffing compliment includes scientific staff with third level qualifications up to and including PhD level as well as expertise across a broad range of scientific disciplines and staff who play various critical supporting roles.

### The Laboratory Service within DAFM Strategy

The Laboratory Service is a component of the DAFMs Food Safety, Animal and Plant Health and Animal Welfare business area, that is responsible for delivering on Objective 2 in the Department's 2016-2019 Statement of Strategy – “To **Promote and safeguard public, animal and plant health and animal welfare for the benefit of consumers, producers and wider society**”. The Laboratories contribute to the delivery of the Strategic Actions listed below.

Strategic Action 1.1 – **“Maintain existing standards and target improvements in animal and plant health, to facilitate increases in farm productivity”**. The performance indicators for this action are:

- Effective provision of analytical, investigative and advisory support for regulatory, diagnostic and surveillance purposes.
- Preparedness (rapid response capability and surge capacity) to meet changing requirements and time-critical situations.
- Scope of Laboratory Accreditation maintained and enhanced.
- National Reference Laboratories functions delivered upon, within bio-secure facilities.

Strategic Action 1.2 – **“Safeguard public health and food safety and authenticity”**. The performance indicators for this action are:

- Completion and implementation of review of Laboratories.
- Number and strategic value of tests accredited under the National Reference Laboratory function.
- Number, quality and strategic value of laboratory analyses undertaken.
- Number of investigations of exotic disease events/number of simulation exercises developing/testing/evaluating our response capability to exotic disease events.

Strategic Action 1.4 – **“Negotiate and agree robust inspection procedures and certification for increased international market access”**. The relevant performance indicator for this action is:

- Certificates issued for export (Product, Live)

### **Structure of the Laboratory Service**

The Laboratory Service is organised into seven discrete Divisions; two of which have been historically categorised as “Agricultural Laboratories” and five as “Veterinary Laboratories”. The Laboratory Service functions in three broad spheres:

- Implementing laboratory aspects of regulatory controls in food and feed safety, animal health and welfare and plant health;

- Diagnostic and investigative work with aggregation and dissemination of data on patterns and frequency of endemic diseases – this includes zoonotic diseases and also facilitates early detection of new/emerging and exotic diseases of both plants and animals;
- Applied research and development to support the functions above.

In addition EU Member States are required to designate National Reference Laboratories (NRLs) to undertake specific functions (Article 33 of Regulation (EC) No. 882/2004 – see Annex 1). Each Division within the Laboratory Service at Backweston hosts one or more NRLs.

The scientific work undertaken by the Laboratory Service (including oversight of private laboratories) is an essential prerequisite for intra-community trade and underpins market access for Irish food in third countries. Consequently, the Laboratory Service at Backweston have become a showcase for visiting trade delegations and regulatory authorities, whereby DAFM can clearly demonstrate how its controls and any additional requirements of third party trading partners are implemented.

Each Division within the Laboratory Service has developed strong working relationships with the DAFM inspectorate and/or administrative divisions responsible for different aspects of the agri-food industry. This is an essential component for implementing the various regulatory controls programmes on which the agri-food industry depends. It also allows for the prioritisation of other testing and advisory services. The Laboratory Service has also formed direct relationships with external stakeholders both nationally and internationally in the provision of scientific services and through engagement in other collaborative activities.

An outline of the roles of each of these Laboratory Divisions is set out below:

#### Agricultural Laboratories

- Dairy Science Laboratories (DSL) - Regulatory controls on Milk and dairy product: Host NRLs for microbiological criteria in dairy products.

- Pesticides, Plant Health and Seed testing Laboratories (PPHSTL) - Regulatory controls on pesticide residues in food/feed, on quality of seed and on a range of diseases of plants; host NRLs for animal protein in feedingstuffs, pesticide residues and bee health

### Veterinary Laboratories

- Bacteriology – National Reference Laboratory (NRL) function and specialist expertise relating to enteric pathogens, mycobacterial diseases (bovine TB and paratuberculosis), antimicrobial resistance, parasitology
- Pathology – specialist expertise in anatomic and clinical chemistry; hosts NRL for TSE
- Regional Veterinary Laboratories (RVLs) & Blood Testing Laboratory (BTL) – post mortem examination; clinical pathology; field investigation of disease outbreaks; mass serology.
- Veterinary Public Health Regulatory Lab (VPHRL) - Regulatory controls on meat and meat products (export meat plants); host NRL for residues of veterinary residues, parasites and vtec.
- Virology – NRL function and emergency preparedness for exotic viral diseases of farmed animals; diagnostic service for endemic viral disease; pre-export and post-import testing

### Current Issues

#### *1. Strategic Review of Laboratories*

DAFM undertook a Strategic Review of Laboratories as actioned in the Integrated Reform Delivery Plan agreed with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. This review considered all of DAFM's laboratories, both at Backweston and regionally. The Review was supported by an extensive internal and external consultative phase.

### *The Terms of Reference of their view were:*

1. To define the laboratory services and expertise that the Department requires at present and in the foreseeable future;
2. To consider how these laboratory services and expertise can best be delivered; and
3. To outline an implementation plan, including timescale, for proposed changes.

### *Timelines*

A Working Group, chaired by Prof Alan Reilly of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland, and composed principally of senior DAFM officers from Divisions which avail of the Laboratories services, undertook the review over a period of 2 years. It presented a report to the management Board of DAFM in December 2016. The Working Group report made recommendations on:

- Oversight and co-ordination of the laboratories activities;
- Re-organisation of Divisions and support functions within the Central Laboratory complex;
- Human resources management within the laboratories - with a focus on grading structures, career development opportunities and workforce planning; and
- Options for the future development of the Regional Laboratories – with a view to improving disease investigative and surveillance capability but with the over-riding imperative of maintaining and enhancing services to farmers.

DAFM management concluded that any decision on the recommendations of the review would be informed by a further round of stakeholder consultations. In particular, the recommendations concerning the Regional Laboratories have attracted considerable agri-food industry and media interest, especially in relation to the five RVLs. Consequently, in the case of the RVLs, DAFM has committed to undertake a cost benefit analysis (CBA) of the various options that have been proposed for their future development, the outcome of which would also inform the final decision.

The Department completed this further round of consultations with all relevant stakeholders, comprising staff, regulatory authorities and key representatives of the agri-

food industry in April 2017. Laboratory Management are currently developing plans for the implementation of key recommendations within the Review which focus primarily at its Backweston complex. It is also actively pursuing the appointment of an independent expert to undertake the CBA. It is anticipated that the CBA will be completed early in 2018.

## ***2. Amelioration works on high containment laboratory – Virology Division, Backweston***

Exotic viral diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), avian influenza and the swine fevers are an ever-present risk to the Irish agri-food industry with serious consequences for export trade. Rapid and reliable laboratory confirmation of suspect cases is an essential prerequisite to the full deployment of the emergency disease control measures that are required in an outbreak situation.

DAFM Laboratories, Backweston has diagnostic capability (recognised expertise and quality-assured test methods) for all of these diseases. However, those test methods which require the handling of live virus can only be performed within high containment laboratories that operate to bio security level (BSL) 3 or BSL 4 in the case of live FMD virus. Currently BSL 4 facilities are not available in Ireland and this type of work is undertaken within a cramped BSL 3 facility at Backweston which can only safely accommodate two persons working at the bench.

If DAFM was faced with an outbreak of one of these diseases at present, our testing capacity would be limited by constraints on bench space within containment and we would be obliged to outsource testing to a high containment facility overseas. This would raise issues regarding confidentiality of test results and of who gets testing priority. It would also be inconsistent with the amount of capital already invested in the Backweston complex.

Therefore the Department and the Office of Public Works have engaged specialist contractors to redevelop a designated space within the Backweston Laboratory Complex which can be operated at the required level of containment (the Australia/New Zealand BSL 4 standard).

To ensure the integrity of the design and to have confidence that the project would deliver this facility to a certified standard a specialist US biosecurity consultancy firm (Smith Carter) was contracted to design, implement and test a “mock-up” of the proposed building solution. The successful outcome of the mock-up enabled Smith Carter to prepare the technical specification for the main building works required to ensure that the resultant laboratory would achieve the BSL 4 standard. OPW managed the tendering process, and the construction company selected on foot of this process was the same company that successfully completed the mock-up.

Ministerial approval was granted to proceed with this building contract in November 2014 at a tendered cost of €4.9M and works commenced on site in mid June 2015 with an expected duration of 18 months allowing for payments to be made over three successive years (2015, 2016 and 2017) from capital allocations. A comprehensive quality, verification and commissioning plan was developed by Smith Carter; they remained continuously involved in oversight and review throughout the process which was also witnessed by the original design team.

Due to unanticipated structural issues with the Laboratory building in which the Cat 4 facility was housed, additional remedial work was necessary in order to ensure the completion of the project to the required standard. This resulted in the project timeline being extended from 18 to 24 months plus an additional budgetary allocation to fix the problem encountered. The final facility will be commissioned by DAFM in June 2017.

The resulting BSL 4 facility will provide our expanding, export-dependent industry with the critical laboratory infrastructure needed to rapidly and efficiently respond to an outbreak of exotic disease.



## DAIRY SCIENCE LABORATORIES (DSL)

**Head of Division:** Eoin O'Brien, Senior Inspector

Laboratory aspects of regulatory controls on milk, dairy and other food products to ensure compliance with EU legislation on food safety microbiological criteria, market supports measures and verify compliance with compositional and labelling for infant and follow-on formula.

**Location(s):** 3 Sites – Backweston, Limerick and Cork.

### Key targets for Division:

- Carry out microbiological analysis of dairy and other food products as requested by Dairy Controls & Certification Division (DCCD) and other Department Divisions to verify compliance with food safety and process hygiene criteria set out in Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005.
- Carry out compositional analysis of dairy products and infant formula to verify compliance with Council Regulation 1308/2013 and Directive 2006 /141 on the composition of Infant Formula/Follow-on-formula.
- Facilitate international trade in dairy products by carrying out testing to certify both the food safety and compositional criteria set by the EU third countries.
- Carry out analysis of dairy products to ensure compliance with market support requirements under Regulations 1308/2013 and 826/2008.

### National Reference Laboratories under Article 33 of Regulation (EC) No. 882/2004:

- *Listeria monocytogenes* (this includes providing an identification and molecular typing service to all official and private laboratories), Coagulase Positive Staphylococci, Somatic Cell Count and Total Bacterial Count in raw milk and phosphatase in milk.

### Capability:

- ***Food science expertise*** – Food/Dairy Science graduates employed in each laboratory, these staff provide the scientific and technical expertise need to provide and enhance/advance the services provided by the DSLs. Liaise and support field staff in DCCD.
- ***Technical/scientific expertise*** – (i) a suite of classical and molecular techniques including whole genome sequencing (WGS) for detection, identification and typing of pathogens in a range of food products and isolates received from official and commercial laboratories (ii) provide a range of chemical analysis techniques including High Pressure Liquid Chromatography, Gas Chromatography/Mass Spectrometry and Atomic Absorption.

## PESTICIDES, PLANT HEALTH AND SEED TESTING LABORATORIES (PPHSTL)

**Head of Division:** Anne Marie Dillon, Senior Inspector

The role of the Pesticides, Plant Health and Seed Testing Laboratories is to provide an expert analytical service in the area of plant health, animal feedingstuffs and seed testing and to negotiate and deliver the analytical phase of the pesticide control programme with the Pesticide Controls Division (PCD), the FSAI, Irish Water and other client Divisions.

### **Pesticides Laboratory**

The primary role of the Pesticides Control Laboratory (PCL) is to provide a comprehensive Laboratory service in support of Pesticides Registration and the Pesticide Control Divisions of the Department. The aim is to ensure that only authorised pesticides are used in accordance with the conditions of authorisation and that food of plant and animal origin does not contain residues of pesticides in excess of the stipulated maximum residue levels. The Pesticides Residues Laboratory (PRL) uses sophisticated modern methods and equipment to test for the presence of pesticide residues and their metabolites in various matrices, including fruit and vegetables, cereals, animal fat, dairy products, honey and water. The PRL is the National Reference Laboratory for Ireland concerning pesticide residues and is accredited for its activities in this area in compliance with the requirements of EU Regulation 882/2004 concerning official controls performed to ensure the verification of compliance with feed and food law. The laboratory is also accredited for the analysis of plant protection products to ensure compliance with EU Regulation 1107/2009.

### **Plant Health Laboratory**

The primary role of The Plant Health Laboratory (PHL) is to provide a comprehensive analytical service and expertise for regulated plant pests and diseases, in support of the plant and forestry inspection services of DAFM. The aim is to prevent the entry and/or establishment of non-indigenous quarantine organisms, to facilitate eradication and/or

control of those quarantine organisms already present, and to monitor crops and forests for the presence of certain pests and diseases as part of periodic surveillance programmes. The PHL undertake research activities in support of its core function, with support from COFORD, EUPHRESKO and in collaboration with national and international partners.

The PHL also comprises the Feedingstuffs Microscopy Laboratory (FML) which tests animal feedingstuffs for contamination by meat and bone meal and other prohibited materials. The FML is the designated National Reference Laboratory (NRL) for the detection of animal protein in feedingstuffs under Article 33 of Regulation 882/2004. The PHL is the main repository of plant health diagnostic expertise within the State. Staff members participate in several international organisations including: European Plant Protection Organisation (EPPO), European Mycological Network (EMN), European Network of GMO Laboratories (ENGL) and International Working Group for Feedingstuffs Microscopy (IAG).

#### **Seed Testing Laboratory:**

The Seed Testing Laboratory provides a seed testing service to other DAFM Divisions, seed merchants, farmers, growers and forest nurseries. It is accredited by the International Seed Testing Association (ISTA) for its activities. Most agricultural and horticultural seeds are required to meet minimum legal standards for germination, analytical purity and other seeds content before they are placed on the market.

The Seed Testing Laboratory also hosts and maintains a comprehensive seed reference collection comprising of approximately 3500 species.

## BACTERIOLOGY & PARASITOLOGY DIVISION

**Head of Division:** John Egan, Superintending Senior Research Officer

To provide the bacteriological / parasitological diagnostic, monitoring, and advisory service to support the Department in the achievement of its strategic objectives with respect to animal health, public health, trade and environment.

The Division hosts National Research Laboratories (NRL) for Salmonella, Campylobacter, Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), Tuberculosis, Parasites and to a limited extent for Brucellosis (culture and molecular). Official testing is undertaken for all national Salmonella control programmes, Tuberculosis programme (and related research support activities), AMR and Echinococcus surveillance. The Division participates in over 20 international ring trials annually to ensure quality control of its work and reference laboratory status.

The Division undertakes limited export testing (serology) where necessary and provides diagnostic supports to RVLs for Leptospira, Mycoplasma, Neospora and general parasitology. The Division provides support as required to the AHI Johne's Disease Programme including an evaluation of diagnostic tests for use in the current programme.

The Division oversees approval of private labs undertaking FBO testing for Salmonella control and USDA exports. The Division provides confirmatory testing for Food Business Operator bacterial isolates where required under Regulation 882/ 2004 and collates results on zoonotic pathogens for National and EU reports. The Division supports investigations of food borne disease outbreaks and provides various microbiological typing (WGS) and strain typing services as required. The Division is also actively involved in a number of national or international (CFIA, USDA and EURL AMR) research projects funded or co-funded by DAFM.

## PATHOLOGY DIVISION

**Head of Division:** John Moriarty, Superintending Senior Research Officer

The key objective of the Division is to provide laboratory support and specialist expertise in anatomic and clinical chemistry and toxicology to support investigation of and surveillance for disease in farmed animals

### Key targets for Division:

1. Provide specialist expertise and laboratory diagnostic (testing and advisory) services in anatomic pathology for diseases (endemic, exotic and novel) of farmed animals: (i) undertake laboratory, field investigation and applied research of disease problems with a specific focus on intensive sectors (pig and poultry); (ii) provide expert referral and continuous professional training for RVLs in histopathology; (iii) input into scanning surveillance for endemic, new/emerging and exotic diseases; (iv) provide support for DAFM- and industry-led disease control programmes; (v) engage in applied R&D to improve diagnostic methods and support control programmes in collaboration with other parties.
2. Provide specialist expertise and laboratory diagnostic (testing and advisory) services in clinical chemistry and toxicology for farmed animals: (i) collaborate with RVLs and other agencies (e.g EPA and HSE) on investigations of suspect toxic incidents or occurrences; (ii) engage in applied R&D to improve diagnostic methods and support programmes in collaboration with other parties (iii) develop further testing capabilities for trace elements, heavy metals, etc.
3. Host the National Reference Laboratory for Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSEs) and Contagious Equine Metritis (CEM), liaising with the EURL; monitoring the performance of rapid testing (commercial) laboratories; providing confirmatory testing and advisory support/expertise to DAFM.

Pathology Division hosts the NRL for TSE and CEM and provides a wide range of test methods which are accredited to ISO 17025. It provides the biochemistry and toxicology support and for inter-agency investigations and studies.

## REGIONAL VETERINARY LABORATORIES (RVLS) & BLOOD TESTING LABORATORY (BTL)

**Head of Division:** Mícheál Casey, Superintending Senior Research Officer

To provide laboratory diagnostic services and expertise to the farming community via veterinary practitioners, and thereby generate data on pattern and frequency of endemic diseases in farmed animals and substantiate freedom from specific OIE-listed diseases.

**Location(s):** BTL Cork, and five RVLS at Athlone, Cork, Kilkenny, Limerick and Sligo.

### Key targets for Division:

1. Provide effective scanning surveillance data from an efficient post mortem service and laboratory diagnostic testing and monitor for exotic and emerging animal diseases.
2. Service the Department's disease control programmes requiring mass-screening facilities at Cork BTL for Brucellosis, Johne's Disease, Enzootic Bovine Leucosis, Aujeszky's Disease, Porcine Respiratory & Reproductive Syndrome (PRRS) and other food animal diseases as required to support domestic food production and international trade
3. Maintain & develop staff capacity to respond adequately to animal health emergencies, including exotic disease epidemics, in support of the DAFM contingency plans for these diseases.
4. Communication of results of surveillance to DAFM, private veterinary practitioners, the farming community and other industry stakeholders.



## VETERINARY PUBLIC HEALTH REGULATORY LABORATORY (VPHRL)

**Head of Division:** Montserrat Gutierrez, Superintending Senior Research Officer

The role of the VPHRL is the provision of a high quality analytical laboratory and advisory service to support DAFM in regulatory controls on meat and other food products to ensure compliance with EU legislation in respect of residues of veterinary medicines, banned substances, contaminants and microbiological criteria.

The Veterinary Public Health Regulatory Laboratory (VPHRL) is accredited by INAB to ISO 17025:2005, with more than 30 analytical tests covering residues, contaminants, microbiological and parasitological analysis currently on its scope.

VPHRL is the National Reference Laboratory (NRL) for *E. coli* and *Trichinella* (in conjunction with Bacteriology Division), and for several residues groups including antithyroid agents, beta-agonists, chloramphenicol and dapson, antibiotics and chemical elements in accordance with Commission Regulation 882/2004 and Commission Decision 2011/717. NRL roles include (i) liaison with international EURLs; (ii) participation in proficiency tests, training workshops and simulation exercises; (iii) supervision of official laboratories (organisation of ring trials, audits, etc.) and (iv) provision of training and advisory support to other DAFM divisions

VPHRL provides laboratory support service for veterinary certification in meat and meat products, ensuring compliance with national and international standards of food safety and hygiene. VPHRL carries out the analysis of official samples taken in support of:

1. The National Residues Control Plan (Council Directive 96/23/EC), that requires the analysis of animal and farm samples for the detection of residues of veterinary medicinal products, banned substances such as growth promoters and contaminants, i.e. heavy metals.

2. Microbiological testing of food, water and other samples tested for the presence of enteric pathogens and other specific microbes in support of the Department's responsibilities in relation to Commission Regulation 882/2004 and trade requirements, i.e. verocitotoxigenic *E. coli* (VTEC) testing for US meat trade.
3. *Trichinella* spp. in pig and horse meat as per Commission Implementing Regulation 2015/1375.

**Key targets for Division:**

1. To contribute to develop a long-term strategy for the laboratories through consultation on review.
2. To provide scientific advisory input into the development of the DAFM food safety and authenticity strategy, and the design of programmes on food safety.
3. To effectively implement laboratory aspects of official control programmes (and industry-led initiatives as appropriate), including:
  - a. Host National Reference Laboratories
  - b. Maintain/extend scope of accreditation
  - c. Deliver on agreed testing schedules
  - d. Provide advice and follow-up investigation as required
4. To provide the evidence base to support continued market access for Irish food and livestock.
5. To carry out contingency planning for emergency response to food safety incidents related to the division's expertise.
6. To engage in applied R&D to build on existing capability, knowledge and expertise.

To collaborate and communicate with other state agencies and stakeholders to build confidence in our capability and activities.

## **VIROLOGY DIVISION**

**Head of Division:** Ronan O Neill, Superintending Senior Research Officer

To provide the laboratory elements of emergency preparedness for exotic viral diseases of farmed animals and a diagnostic service for endemic viral diseases; facilitate trade and international movement of farmed animals, germoplasm and equidae (pre-export and post-import testing)

### **Key targets for Division:**

1. Maintain laboratory diagnostic capability and emergency preparedness for OIE-listed viral diseases of farmed animals that are exotic to Ireland, e.g. foot-and-mouth disease: (i) operate DAFM High Containment Laboratory (ii) host National Reference Laboratories (NRLs) and liaise within international Reference Laboratory Networks; (iii) undertake proficiency tests, training workshops and simulation exercises; (iv) develop laboratory contingency plans AND (v) provide training and advisory support to other DAFM divisions
2. Facilitate international trade (of livestock/animal, germoplasm and other product) and international movement (of equidae) by: (i) substantiating freedom from specific diseases AND (ii) providing post-import and pre-export tests for specific diseases
3. Provide specialised laboratory diagnostic (testing and advisory) services in veterinary virology for endemic viral diseases of farmed animals: (i) facilitate certification of specific disease free status of some pig/poultry enterprises and all bovine semen collection centres; (ii) provide support for DAFM- and industry-led disease control programmes; (iii) surveillance for endemic, new/emerging and exotic viral diseases AND (iv) applied R&D to improve diagnostic methods and support control programmes in collaboration with other parties.

Virology Division hosts NRLs for 10 specific diseases of farmed animals (as per national and/or EU legislation) and provides a wide range of test methods, 31 of which are accredited to ISO 17025.

## LONGTOWN RESEARCH FARM FACILITY

**Farm Manager:** Robert Fisk

To provide support to DAFM Veterinary Laboratories by providing animals for the production of positive and negative control tissue and sera for use in their diagnostic procedures at their laboratories in Backweston and by providing animals and facilities for experimentation in veterinary diseases by Research Officers in the Department of Agriculture and other outside Research Agencies.

Longtown Farm is situated just outside Clane, Co. Kildare and comprises 114 adjusted hectares of farmland.

The farm facilities at Longtown are unique in Ireland in providing for bio-containment of animals of minimal disease status and of known infected status including four yards (each of which is managed as a discrete unit) in which cattle are housed and adjoining farmland on which treated effluent and composted waste from these animals can be safely discarded by spreading on pasture. Also unique to Longtown Farm is a building within which large farmed animals can be safely handled and contained when intentionally challenged with endemic infectious disease agents to study the pathogenesis of infectious disease and the host response.

The farm is licensed by the Health Products Regulatory Agency (HPRA) as a premises on which experimental studies can be undertaken on animals and all persons performing experimental procedures on animals are separately licensed by IMB. Procedures to ensure the welfare of animals on the farm have been revised to ensure they are fully in accordance with the requirements of directive 2010/63/EU (on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes). Given the nature of the activity on the farm, the premises must be secured against trespass and farm staff must be available out-of-hours and at weekends to ensure that all animals on site are observed and attended to every day.

### **Support for the bovine TB eradication scheme**

At any one time approximately 50 cattle that have been identified as tuberculin reactors are bought-in and housed within a designated yard at Longtown in support of the bovine tuberculosis eradication scheme. These animals are primarily used to assay the potency of the tuberculin that is supplied to veterinarians across the country for skin testing cattle but on occasion these animals are also used to evaluate other test methods for tuberculosis and other aspects of the disease process in cattle. In addition these reactor cattle are used to provide the practical element of training courses on tuberculin testing for veterinary graduates and practitioners. An adjoining secure enclosure (the “Broc” facility) is used for studies on badger vaccination and subsequent transmission of infection.

### **Control materials for official test methods – support for national reference laboratory functions**

Different species are maintained on the farm and are available for the generation of negative control materials (from animals known to be free of infection and disease) or positive control materials (from animals that are known to be either naturally infected, intentionally challenged or vaccinated against a specific disease causing agent). A reliable source of such reagents is required for many of our reference laboratory functions (e.g. avian influenza, CEM (Contagious equine metritis)); in some cases suitable materials are not commercially available or are prohibitively expensive. A specific pathogen free laying flock is maintained to provide uninfected embryonated eggs for laboratory isolation of viruses, an essential regulatory requirement.

### **BVD, IBR, Johne’s disease – support for industry-led disease control programmes**

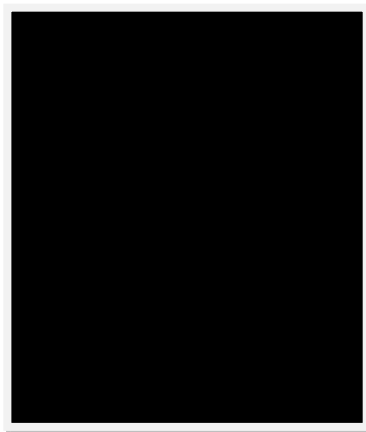
Cattle that are persistently infected with BVD virus and cattle that are latently infected with bovine herpesvirus 1 (IBR virus) are kept in isolation from other cattle on the farm. In addition cattle with *Map* (causative agent of Johne’s disease) will be maintained in separate closed herd. These animals provide valuable materials with which to evaluate the performance of test methods, develop proficiency test panels (as part of the approval process for private testing laboratories) and provide other technical supports that are required to support industry-led disease control initiatives.

### **Applied Research and Development – facilitating collaboration with other agencies**

The availability of animals of minimal disease status and of known infected status and the capacity to experimentally challenge farmed animals with known pathogens in controlled conditions and to safely contain these animals taken together constitutes an invaluable resource for studies of endemic infectious diseases in farmed animals. No other such facility for study of infectious diseases in farmed animals exists within the State. Such studies at Longtown have almost invariably been undertaken in collaboration with third parties (Teagasc, UCD, AFBI and overseas agencies including EU reference laboratories) with the objective of gaining insights into disease processes and improving on our capacity both to detect and control infectious diseases.

### **Miscellaneous other activities undertaken on this secure DAFM farm**

- Case-control studies – support for inter-agency animal health investigations
- Quarantine facility – support for legal or other risk mitigation action taken by DAFM i.e. looking after 27 seized horses and their 10 offspring for DAFM Animal Welfare section.
- Training for DAFM staff - support for contingency planning e.g. DAFM National Disease Control Centre train ERAD staff on the operation of their gassing equipment which is stored and maintained in Longtown.



**Bill Callanan, Chief Inspector**

**Office phone No:** [REDACTED]

**Mobile No:** [REDACTED]

**Responsible for the following Divisions**

Division	Head of Division	Office No	Mobile No
<b>Deputy Chief Inspector</b>	Vacant	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
<b>Livestock Breeding, Production &amp; Trade</b>	Gerry Greally	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
<b>Pesticide Registration &amp; Pesticide Controls</b>	Aidan Moody Tom Medlycott	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
<b>Feed, Fertilisers, Grain and Poultry Division (FFGP)</b>	Louise Byrne	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
<b>Crop Evaluation and Certification Division</b>	Donal Coleman	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
<b>Horticulture and Plant Health Division</b>	Barry Delany	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
<b>Research &amp; Codex Division</b>	Richard Howell	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
<b>Nitrates, Biodiversity and Engineering Division</b>	Jack Nolan	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
<b>Crop Policy, Production &amp; Safety Division</b>	Vacant	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

## LIVESTOCK BREEDING, PRODUCTION AND TRADE DIVISION

**Head of Division:** Gerry Greally, Senior Inspector

To facilitate and support livestock breed improvement and animal health control systems through the implementation of EU and national legislation as part of the development of an international agri-food sector.

### ANIMAL BREEDING:

#### *Animal Breeding Legislation*

- The Department is the competent authority on animal breeding legislation and this Division is responsible for its implementation.
- Satisfactory results in animal production depend to a large extent on the use of animals of high genetic quality. The European Union's zootechnical legislation aims at the promotion of free trade in breeding animals and their genetic material. This is dependent on a legal right to enter a herd-book of the same breed.
- These objectives are reached by having harmonised rules in relation to the following: recognition of Breeding Associations, entering of pure bred animals in herd-books, pedigree certification and acceptance for breeding, performance testing and genetic evaluation.
- New Community legislation, 'Animal Breeding Regulation' which combines the species specific legislation into a single Regulation has been published and will come into force on 1 November 2018. The Division will work with breeding organisations in ensuring systems and procedures are in place prior to this date. This Division approves breed societies and organisations, organisations testing and genetically evaluating animals and companies providing services to breeders with regard to semen, ova and embryos.
- The Division plays a key role in advising on policy matters relating to the Livestock Sector and works closely with other DAFM Division



### *Regulation of Artificial Insemination*

- The Animal Breeding Act, 1947 and associated 1948 AI Regulations provide the legislative framework governing Artificial Insemination in Ireland and in particular give the legal basis for the issuing of Field Service, Semen Distribution, DIY AI and AI technician licences. The Division ensures that AI is carried out in compliance with terms and conditions attached to the respective licenses.
- The Division applies ISO 9000 equivalent procedures in the administration of licensing of the above-mentioned services. Service standards are constantly monitored to ensure that standards are upheld.

### *Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF)*

- ICBF is an industry owned cooperative society, and is the only body officially approved in Ireland to carry out testing and genetic evaluation of animals. The Department maintains a very close relationship with ICBF in the context of the importance of genetic improvement to the national cattle herd.
- The ICBF board represents all sections of the Industry (A.I & Milk recording companies, pedigree herd-books, farmer organisations). DAFM is represented on the Board.
- It is funded from a number of sources including income from services provided, a tag levy on cattle tags, and DAFM funding (an annual grant, and funding from a beef and sheep infrastructure development grant scheme). DAFM's contribution to ICBF for cattle aspects in 2016 was €1.92m. €1.72m has been allocated to cattle breeding for 2017.
- This Division is responsible for monitoring and approving the expenditure of the grants the Department provides
- The Division provides an official to act as Secretary to the Board of ICBF and services the Beef and Dairy Industry consultation meetings organised by ICBF.
- ICBF is heavily involved in a number of DAFM RDP programmes related to breed improvement such as BDGP and the Knowledge Transfer programmes, where a breeding plan is integral part of improving farm profitability. The BDGP recognises

the major part that breed improvement can contribute to more economically and environmentally efficient beef production.

### **Main key issue**

ICBF is a 'farmer led' body receiving its funding from a number of sources including farmers, the breeding industry and with state support. A critical funding source has been the tag levy. However a drop in levy collection has arisen, leading to uncertainty for ICBF. Solutions to the financial issues are being explored by ICBF with industry stakeholders and DAFM and discussions are on-going.

### **Sheep Ireland**

- Sheep Ireland, which was established in 2008, is an industry owned stand-alone company but is very closely connected to ICBF who provide management & technical services to it.
- In consultation with the industry, Sheep Ireland has developed a number of new programmes which are designed to increase genetic gain in sheep which will provide for a profitable sheepmeat sector.
- Department funding for Sheep Ireland for its activities in 2016 amounted to €540,000 which consists of a block grant and a Sheep Infrastructure grant. A total of €545,000 has been allocated to Sheep Ireland for 2017. In the past three years, Sheep Ireland has moved from being almost totally reliant on Department financial support to achieving a significant degree of co-funding through a lamb slaughter levy. The measures to which this funding is applied are assessed and monitored by the Division. The Department is represented on the board of Sheep Ireland and a Department official acts as Secretary to the Board.
- Sheep Ireland had a major contribution to STAP, and the new Sheep KT programme.
- **Main key issues** affecting Sheep Ireland are broadly similar to ICBF; maintaining Independence, and Industry/farmer support, Improving the quality & quantity of data into the database and provision of accurate breeding values that reflect Irish

grass based production conditions, long term funding model, ensuring high quality rams are used throughout the National flock.

## **CARCASE CLASSIFICATION:**

### *Beef Carcase Classification and Price Reporting*

- Currently in Ireland, there are 33 beef plants required to classify beef carcasses while 26 plants are reporting prices to the Department.
- Beef carcasses are classified using the EUROP scale to indicate conformation and a scale of 1 to 5 to indicate fat cover. since the introduction of mechanical classification in 2004, the Department now has a supervisory role with regard to classification matters in beef plants. There are now 23 beef plants using mechanical classification, while in the remaining 10 plants, classification is carried out by licensed factory operatives.
- The introduction of mechanical classification in 2004/2005 facilitated the further breakdown of main classes in to sub-classes for both conformation and fat. Each main class is divided into 3 sub-classes called minus (-), middle (=) and plus (+). In November 2009, the industry adopted the use of sub-classes for payment purposes – “the pricing grid”.
- The Department maintains an extensive database to record details of animals slaughtered at beef plants (e.g. weights, classification results, prices paid, etc) and a number of reports are generated on a regular basis to comply with the regulatory requirements from the EU and to facilitate reporting in the farming press.
- The Department is currently managing the installation of new equations for mechanical classification to reflect the current herd profile.

## **ISSUES**

Carcase Trim has become an issue in the farming press and in meetings with IFA personnel recently. The Minister committed at the Beef Forum to examining how Department controls in this area might be strengthened.

### *Lamb Carcase Classification*

- There are six lamb slaughtering plants in Ireland classifying lamb carcases. This Division monitors those slaughter plants to ensure that the EUROP scale standards are met.
- Following on from the success of the Mechanical Beef Classification, the Sheep Industry Development Strategy Report 2006 recommended that a similar trial be conducted for sheep and that if mechanical grading proved to be a workable alternative, then the sheep processing industry should convert to that system. This trial has been completed successfully, but, to date, no lamb slaughtering plant has installed a mechanical grading machine.

### *Pig Carcase Classification:*

- This Division is responsible for supervising the implementation of EU legislation in relation to mechanical grading of pig carcases using probe devices by factory personnel at the export licensed plants.
- Pig Carcase Classification is being carried out by 3 export approved pig slaughtering plants, which collectively account for about 68% of the National kill.
- Currently, the Department is managing a new pig classification trial using a number of probe devices. Following approval of these devices by the commission, it is envisaged that all slaughterhouses that should be classifying pigs will be doing so.

### **ANIMAL DISEASE ERADICATION SCHEMES (TB, BRUCELLOSIS, BSE & SCRAPIE):**

- This Division is involved in animal valuations (cattle, sheep and pigs) and is responsible for organising valuations, training and issue of guidelines for DAFM staff and independent valuers involved in live valuations. Weekly Summary prices for all categories of cattle are generated and issued to independent valuers as one of the measures to ensure that valuations are carried out at “market value”.
- DAFM’s interests are defended by staff in this Division through written and oral submissions at Arbitration hearings and EU audits. Staffs provide technical advice to ERAD and AHWD Divisions.

### **MINK:**

- There are currently three mink farms operating in Ireland. Mink operators are subject to licence by the Department under the Musk Rat Act, 1933 (Application to Mink) Order, 1965. This Division is responsible for the licensing and inspection of mink farms, which are inspected to ensure adherence to licence conditions and appropriate animal welfare standards

In 2012, the Department undertook a comprehensive review of all aspects of fur farming in Ireland. Arising from the review, enhanced standards, notably in the areas of animal welfare and environmental controls, are being implemented in the sector.

### **CONSERVATION OF GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD & AGRICULTURE:**

- This Division provides technical support to the Advisory Committee for Genetic resources in Food and Agriculture. Annual funding is awarded to eligible projects which assist in the conservation and development of Ireland's native and rare farm animal breeds.
- The Division also has a technical input into the design of rare breed conservation options under the GLAS and AEOS schemes. Staff are involved in servicing the Department's EU and FAO commitments and in organisations such as the European Association of Animal Production and European Regional Focal Point for Animal Genetic Resources. The Division acts as National Co-ordinator on animal genetic resources which is relevant in the context of meeting our national & international obligations in this area and particularly in relation to monitoring the status of rare breeds in Ireland.

### **HORSE SPORT IRELAND (HSI):**

- Horse Sport Ireland (HSI) is the national governing body for equestrian sport in Ireland. It is recognised by the Federation Equestre Internationale (FEI), the Irish Sports Council, the Olympic Council of Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland. It was

established in 2007 when the Equestrian Federation of Ireland and the Irish Horse Board were amalgamated, bringing together the breeding and competition sectors. It receives funds from DAFM and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, (through Sport Ireland).

- It is responsible for devising and implementing strategies for the development and promotion of an internationally competitive Irish sport horse industry (breeding, sport and leisure aspects). HSI is approved by DAFM to maintain the Irish Sport Horse, Irish Draught Horse, Irish Sport Pony and Irish Cob Studbooks and it operates a comprehensive breed improvement programme and undertakes promotional and marketing initiatives.
- Education and training are a key focus of HSI and is the lead organisation operating the Equestrian Skillnet training programmes and is a provider of FETAC programmes. HSI's coaching programme is recognised internationally.
- HSI receives an annual grant ( €2.0m in 2017 from the Department in recognition of its work in promoting and developing the Irish sport horse sector and also receives funding from a share of an Equine Infrastructure grant scheme ( €0.543m in 2016, with outline approval for €502,000 in 2017) operated by the Department. The Scheme is aimed at fostering breeding, marketing, educational and disease prevention research within the horse sector This Division is responsible for the assessment and monitoring of this expenditure.
- The amount of grant assistance to HSI from the Department of Transport Tourism and Sport via Sport Ireland in 2016 was €1.535m. Revenue from commercial activities conducted by HSI (€2.119m) brought its total income in 2016 up to approximately €6.067m.
- A review of the structures of HSI has been conducted by Indecon International Consultants and its report with recommendations is due to be published shortly

### Issues

- Horse Sport Ireland is facing the implications of a recent report on the future of the sport horse industry and an imminent publication of a review of the organisation's own structures commissioned by the Department.

- In 2015, a strategy report on the future of the sport horse industry, entitled “Reaching New Heights: Report of Irish Sport Horse Industry Strategy Committee” was published. It was the product of the work of a committee drawn from experts in Horse Sport Ireland, Teagasc and the Royal Dublin Society. The group consulted widely in the course of its deliberations and contains 35 key recommendations. The Minister established a high-level committee to oversee implementation of the recommendations which is ongoing.
- Last year, HSI reviewed its inspection regime for stallions and mares of the Irish Sport Horse and Irish Draught Horse Studbooks. Following the review, the Breeding Sub Board of Horse Sport Ireland decided to implement changes to the procedures in future years.
- The proposed new stallion system sets a higher standard to achieve Approved/Class 1 status in both the Irish Sport Horse and Irish Draught Horse Studbooks. Approved/Class 1 status will not now be awarded based solely on inspection and stallions will have to demonstrate their worth through performance/and or progeny. HSI has sought comments from stakeholders on the proposed new system.

#### **EQUINE TECHNICAL SUPPORT:**

In addition to administering funding for the organisations referred to above (ICBF, HSI), this Division approves and administers grant aid aimed at supporting improvements in quality equine breeding and also in the infrastructure within which the thoroughbred and non-thoroughbred horse sectors operate. Aid focuses on: data collection in the genetics and equine breeding area, DNA sampling, initiatives in the area of equine education and research into equine diseases and breeding, promotion and marketing.

## PESTICIDE REGISTRATION AND CONTROLS DIVISIONS

**Heads of Division:** Aidan Moody (Pesticide Registration) Senior Inspector  
Tom Medlycott, (Pesticide Controls) Senior Inspector

The Pesticide Registration Division (PRD) & Pesticide Controls Division (PCD) are responsible for implementation of the regulatory system for plant protection and biocidal products in Ireland. The regulatory system is designed to ensure a very high level of protection for humans, animals and the environment.

The regulatory system for plant protection and biocidal products has been extensively revised and updated in recent years. A more precautionary approach now prevails in relation to pesticide approvals as a result of the introduction of hazard-based cut-off criteria in the legislation. This will have significant implications regarding the long term availability of various products, particularly in regard to fungicides used on arable crops and fungicides for late blight control in potatoes.

There is a monitoring programme to ensure that excessive pesticide residue levels in food do not occur.

The enforcement programme for plant protection and biocidal products is designed to ensure that only approved products are placed on the market and that they are used responsibly. The introduction of the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive has resulted in new requirements in the areas of advice, sale, supply, storage and use of plant protection products.

### Plant Protection and Biocidal Products

Plant protection products are pesticide products used to protect crops and plants from harm caused by diseases, insect pests and weeds and other harmful organisms. Biocidal



products are pesticide products that are not used in agricultural production. They are used widely in the food industry to disinfect surfaces and machinery and to preserve materials.

## Organisation

The Pesticide Registration Division (PRD) & Pesticide Controls Division (PCD) are responsible for the implementation of the regulatory system for plant protection and biocidal products.

PRD & PCD are responsible for:

- the regulatory (licensing) system for plant protection products;
- the regulatory (licensing) system for biocidal products;
- the enforcement programme for plant protection and biocidal products to ensure compliance by distributors and end-users;
- the national monitoring and violation investigation programme for pesticide residues in food; and
- the implementation of the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive.

## *Brief Description of the Regulatory System*

Pesticide active substances contained in plant protection and biocidal products are approved centrally at EU level on the basis of detailed assessments prepared by Member State regulatory authorities. These assessments are managed as a work share arrangement where the work is assigned by the Commission to Member States on a proportional basis.

Plant protection and biocidal products are authorised nationally by the relevant Competent Authorities (in Ireland's case the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine), in accordance with evaluation and decision-making criteria agreed at EU level. National authorisations issued take account of local conditions – *e.g.* soils, climate, agricultural practices, disease pressures and pest infestation levels. The products concerned may only be used for the purposes and in the manner for which they have been approved.

## Enforcement Programmes

There is a control programme in place to ensure:

- pesticide residues on food do not pose a danger to consumers; and

- that only approved products are placed on the market and that they are used correctly.

The programme is developed annually by DAFM, in consultation with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) and the EU Commission. The programme is implemented by DAFM staff under a Service Contract with the FSAI, where the FSAI has an 'oversight' role and the responsibility to ensure that food on the Irish market is safe for consumers. The programme involves the analysis of some 1,200 samples of agricultural produce of plant and animal origin for up to 460 pesticides and breakdown products. Where excessive residues are found, targeted sampling is undertaken followed, where appropriate, with the issuing of a Food Alert and the destruction of the sampled consignment.

The enforcement programme to control the marketing and use of plant protection and biocidal products mainly involves inspections and checks at wholesale and retail distribution points. Checks are also made at the premises of farmers, local authorities, golf clubs and other end-users to ensure safe use. The programme of inspections for 2016 included approximately 1,500 inspections. During the course of these inspections, and in accordance with a pre-determined programme, samples of products are taken for analysis to ensure compliance with their approved specifications.

### **Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive**

The Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive (SUD) establishes a framework for European Community action to achieve the sustainable use of pesticides by setting minimum rules to reduce risks to human health and the environment from the use of pesticides. It promotes the use of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) which includes alternative approaches and techniques to chemical use. It puts in place new requirements in the areas of advice, sale, supply, storage and use of plant protection products. The SUD was enacted into Irish Law by Statutory Instrument No. 155 of 2012.

The legislation impacts on a number of categories of individuals involved in the whole area of pesticide use (advisors, distributors, professional users and inspectors of application equipment). Individuals within each category are required to register with DAFM and have

an appropriate level of training for the type of activity in which they are engaged. All advisors and inspectors of application equipment were required to be registered by November 2013. From November 2015, only a registered professional user can apply pesticides authorised for professional use and a registered distributor must be available at all times at the point of sale to ensure that adequate information is provided to customers as regards pesticide use and health and environmental risk and safety. In addition there are requirements to test pesticide application equipment since November 2016. The interval between inspections must not exceed 5 years until 2020 and must not exceed 3 years thereafter. New standards regarding pesticide storage design, construction and operation have also been developed and, from November 2015, all distribution stores must comply with these standards and be registered with DAFM. From 1 January 2014, all professional users must apply the general principles of Integrated Pest Management and maintain records to demonstrate the application of these principles.

## ISSUES

A final decision on renewing the approval of glyphosate under the Plant Protection Products Regulation (Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009) is due to be taken by the end of 2017.

The European Commission extended the approval of glyphosate for a limited interim period in June 2016 to allow for the completion of an assessment by the Committee for Risk Assessment (RAC) of the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA). The extension followed a comprehensive review by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). This review, which included detailed consideration of a report produced by the International Agency for Research on Cancer of the World Health Organisation, concluded that glyphosate is unlikely to pose a carcinogenic hazard to humans and can be used safely without putting consumers or users at risk.

The RAC delivered its opinion in March 2017 and concluded that glyphosate does not warrant classification as carcinogenic, mutagenic or toxic for reproduction. This will mean that legally glyphosate does not meet any of the substance non-approval criteria specified in Regulation 1107/2009. The RAC agreed to maintain the existing harmonised classification of glyphosate as a substance causing serious eye damage and being toxic to aquatic life with

long-lasting effects. The implication of this classification is that appropriate precautionary measures should be put in place for use of glyphosate. The RAC opinion was adopted by consensus with the full support of all members.

Once the draft RAC Opinion goes through an editorial check, ECHA will formally submit the dossier to the Commission (expected to be in June 2017), which takes the final decision on the glyphosate classification. The adopted RAC Opinion will provide the Commission with a scientific basis to make a final proposal about the renewal of glyphosate under Regulation 1107/2009. The proposal will be voted on by Member State technical experts in a standing committee meeting. If, when the process concludes, any further changes to glyphosate authorisations in Ireland are necessary the Department will take the required action.

Decisions on scientific criteria to identify endocrine disrupting substances under the Plant Protection Products Regulation (Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009) and the Biocidal Products Regulation (Regulation (EU) No 528/2012) are likely to be taken before the end of 2017.

Endocrine disruptors are substances that can cause adverse effects by disrupting the functions and operation of the endocrine system in humans, animals and plants. The Commission presented draft legislative proposals in June 2016 for scientific criteria to identify endocrine disruptors under Regulation 1107/2009 and Regulation 528/2012. Draft texts have been discussed in a number of rounds of EU technical committee meetings held from June 2016 to May 2017.

The criteria are contentious and have been subject to criticism from a number of different perspectives. They could have a significant impact on a range of plant protection products used in Irish agriculture, in particular fungicides used on arable crops and fungicides for late blight control in potatoes.

The most recent meeting on the criteria for plant protection substances was held on 30 May 2017. A vote was not held as it was apparent that there would not be qualified majority support from the Member State representatives. Another meeting on the same text may be scheduled during July 2017. The Commission reiterated at the 30 May meeting its

commitment to resume discussions on a derogation element once the criteria are adopted, providing for possible approval of plant protection substances in exceptional limited circumstances of negligible risk to humans and the environment.

The most recent meeting on the criteria for biocidal substances was held on 7 April 2017. Discussion focused on arrangements for biocidal substances intended to control harmful non-vertebrate organisms via an endocrine mode of action.

The Department is supportive of the proposed criteria for plant protection and biocidal substances on the basis that they offer a robust science-based approach for reliable identification of endocrine disrupting substances.

## **FEED, FERTILISER, GRAIN AND POULTRY (FFGP) DIVISION**

**Head of Division:** Louise Byrne, Senior Inspector

The Division is responsible for negotiating and implementing EU legislation on the marketing and safety of feedingstuffs, fertilisers, grain, poultry and eggs. The aim is to ensure that these commodities do not present a risk to the food chain and that the required product information (labelling) is given to customers. The Division also participates in the implementation of a range of EU Schemes applicable to cereals and in the development of policy that supports the sustainable development of the feed, fertiliser, grain and poultry industries.

### **ANIMAL FEEDINGSTUFFS, REGULATION AND CONTROL**

DAFM is the competent authority for animal feed safety standards and controls. FFGP Division and Crops Policy, Production and Safety Division jointly act as the Control Authority for the transposition and enforcement of legislation in the feedingstuffs area.

A pre-requisite for safe food is safe animal feed. Consequently the animal feed sector is heavily regulated and controlled within the EU. Past crises such as BSE and dioxins in feed have shown the widespread negative impact that a feed contamination incident can have on food safety and consumer confidence. The focus of the legislation is to ensure that feedingstuffs do not endanger food safety, do not pose a risk to animal health or the environment, meet the minimum standards prescribed, are accurately labelled, and are fully traceable.

Feedingstuffs controls are implemented through inspections and sampling at all stages of the feed chain, including importation, storage, manufacture, transport and use at farm level. In 2016, 1,124 inspections were carried out and circa 9,000 individual tests were carried out on 1,357 samples for various compositional and contaminant analysis, for example, protein and ash content, undesirable substances, etc. The 2016 feedingstuffs inspection and sampling programme did not identify any significant issues or results that would be deemed

serious from a feed and food safety perspective. Strong linkages with the UK and Northern Ireland Authorities have also been developed.

### **The feed industry in Ireland**

Animal feed for ruminants comes principally from dry matter intake based on grass, hay or silage, complemented where appropriate, by compound feeds. In the case of pigs and poultry, all their nutrition is derived from compound feeds. Approximately 4.5 million tonnes of compound feed are manufactured annually in Ireland. Home-grown cereals constitute about 1.2 million tonnes of that used for the manufacture of compound feed and a further 700,000 tonnes of home grown cereals are used on-farm. Approximately 3 million tonnes of feed materials are imported from EU and third country sources. The main commodities imported are maize and maize by-products, soyabean meal and rapeseed meal. As more than 60% of our feed is imported, Ireland is more heavily dependent on feed imports compared to our main EU competitors, who typically import about 30% of their requirements. Irish farmers are therefore more susceptible to fluctuations in world commodity prices and availability.

There are 90 mills approved to manufacture compound feed in Ireland and these are regularly inspected by DAFM officers to ensure manufacturing standards for quality, hygiene and traceability are in line with EU and national regulations. DAFM places major emphasis on ensuring the safety of animal feed – and thus the food chain – given our dependence on food exports.

### **ISSUES**

Ireland is a deficit market for feed materials and is greatly affected by world prices and supplies. This is especially true for the protein segment of animal feed, with the EU only 35% self-sufficient in protein requirements. As such Ireland is heavily dependent on imports of soybean and maize by-products from the USA, Argentina, Brazil and Canada. Following the introduction of the EU Protein Aid Scheme in 2015, there has been a 300% increase in the domestic production of peas, beans and lupins.

## **FERTILISERS AND LIMESTONE**

The sale of fertiliser and Lime in Ireland is regulated by both EU and Irish legislation. EU Regulation (EC) No 2003/2003 (SI 384 of 2005) regulates the manufacture and sale of inorganic fertilisers, while organic and low nutrient fertilisers and ground limestone are governed under national legislation in Ireland, namely, S.I. No 248 of 1978. This legislation ensures that products are labelled accurately and meet minimum nutrient requirements.

As part of the fertiliser and lime inspection programme, 230 samples were taken at manufacturer's premises in 2016. A total 614 individual analyses were carried out for fertilisers and 256 individual analyses carried out for lime. Compliance with the legislation is monitored by DAFM officers and infringements are notified to the relevant company. All details of the fertiliser and lime inspection programme are published in the Department's annual report.

### **Fertiliser Usage**

There are no fertilisers manufactured in Ireland. Imported 'straights' or raw materials are formulated into compound fertilisers at a number of blending plants. Approximately 1.4 million tonnes of fertilisers are sold annually at prices ranging from €300 to €450 per tonne depending on nutrient type and content. Usage in 2016 has increased by 1.1% on 2015 figures. The price of fertiliser decreased during 2016 by 14.9% resulting an overall fertiliser cost of €503.2 million

### **Ground Limestone**

Current sales of ground limestone average about 967,281 tonnes per annum. This is an increase of 8% on the previous year. Overall usage of lime is low on Irish farms and has halved since the early 1980's. Soil tests indicate that many soils are sub-optimal for pH status. Fertiliser and lime constitute the second highest farm input (after animal feed) and is in the region of 20% of total farm inputs.



## **ISSUES FERTILISER**

Fertiliser price remains an issue even though there has been price reductions in 2016. One of the larger farming organisations have continued with a campaign on the removal of fertiliser import tariffs and levies which are currently adding to the overall fertiliser cost to industry. Import tariffs and levies are the competence of the EU Commission and the Minister has engaged in discussions on this issue at European Council.

Addressing the low nutrient and pH in soils is an issue in the context of the targets set out in Foodwise 2025. Based on Teagasc soil analysis results, only 11% of our soils are at an optimal level.

Agriculture accounts for 30% of our Green House gas emissions and nitrogen fertiliser has been shown to contribute to ammonia and Nitrous oxide emissions. Reducing these emissions will require significant changes in fertiliser formulation and use.

Revision of the EU fertiliser regulation EC (No) 2003/2003 is on-going and will include a range of new fertiliser products including organic fertiliser and bio-stimulants. This regulation will require a new conformity assessment procedure for the industry and will require the establishment of a conformity assessment body.

## **GRAIN**

FFGP Division implements national and EU legislation in relation to market support schemes for grain, starch, sugar, malt and dehydrated fodder. In addition, the Division collects and collates statistics on prices and outputs from the grain industry – data requested by CSO and EU.

## **POULTRY AND EGGS LEGISLATION AND CONTROL**

The Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) is the Competent Authority and DAFM is the Official Agency for enforcement of legislation regarding poultrymeat and eggs. The Poultry and Egg Control Group of FFGP Division has an important role in ensuring that eggs and unprocessed poultrymeat entering the food chain meet the highest standards of food safety

and authenticity i.e. does not pose a risk to human health, meets the minimum marketing standards prescribed, is fully traceable and is accurately labelled.

The role of the Poultry and Egg Control Group within FFGP is to monitor compliance with the Food Hygiene and Marketing Standards Legislation and Poultrymeat Marketing Standards Legislation. Past crises such as the outbreak of salmonella in eggs in the UK have led to such legislative controls.

The Poultry and Egg Control Group of FFGP Division is responsible for implementing the marketing standards legislation for eggs and poultrymeat, and the relevant aspects of the hygiene legislation at the following premises.

- *laying hen units and egg packing centres;*
- *egg and poultrymeat wholesale, distribution and retail establishments;*
- *“special term” (free range and corn-fed) poultrymeat production units;*
- *poultrymeat slaughter plants.*

In 2016, approximately 2,700 inspections were carried out and in excess of 770 samples were sent for various analyses. Linkages with Inspection Bodies in Northern Ireland and British Authorities have also been developed.

The Poultry and Egg Control Group contributes to the development of poultry and egg policy and trade matters in cooperation with colleagues across the Department and in particular Meat Policy Division (MPD).

#### **Egg Production:**

- Table Egg Production in Ireland is in the region of 770 million eggs produced from approximately 240 producer farms.
- Marketing Standards for Eggs: Registered laying hen units are inspected based on risk assessment and at a minimum once per annum. Egg Packing Centres, Wholesale and Retail Establishments must comply with egg marketing standards legislation that requires all eggs to be stamped with a distinguishing code, encompassing a code for

the producer and the method of farming. Inspections are carried out at these premises on the basis of risk assessment.

- **Salmonella Monitoring Programme:** Under this programme, faecal samples for salmonella analysis are collected in all registered egg production units containing more than a thousand hens, once per annum.
- **National Residue Control Plan:** Under this programme eggs are sampled at producer and egg packing centre units and sent to various laboratories for residue analysis.

### **Poultrymeat Production:**

- The predominant outlet for Irish chicken is the Irish Retail Market for fresh raw product. The processing and catering sectors are supplied almost entirely by imported product.
- **Marketing Standards for Poultrymeat:** Labelling requirements for poultrymeat are laid down in marketing standards legislation. Inspections are carried out based on risk assessment at processor, wholesale and retail levels. Inspections are also conducted at producer level (free range and corn-fed) to ensure compliance with the prescribed standards.
- **Antimicrobial Resistance Sampling:** Under this programme, meat is sampled by Poultry and Egg Control Group officers on behalf of Veterinary Medicines Division at retail level and sent to the Veterinary Public Health Regulatory Laboratory (VPHRL) in Backweston Laboratory Complex for analysis.

### **ISSUES – POULTRY AND EGGS**

There were two incidences of Salmonella in duck eggs flocks in 2016. The Poultry and Egg Control Group worked with Surveillance, Animal By-Products and TSE (SAT) Division, the Regional Veterinary Office, VPHRL, MPD, Food Safety Liaison Unit (FSLU), Legal Services Division and the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) in the management of these incidences.

A RASFF reported through FSAI/FSLU outlined a Salmonella enteritidis outbreak in Polish Hen Egg Flocks which caused widespread illness throughout Europe including the death of a

five year old child. The Poultry and Egg Control Group and the Health Services Executive were involved in investigating and tracing of these Polish eggs on sale in Ireland.

### **Control of Salmonella in Ducks:**

The Poultry and Egg Control Group of the FFGP Division assists DAFM's Animal Health & Welfare Division and the FSAI in monitoring for outbreaks of specific types of *Salmonella* (*Typhimurium* and *Enteritidis*) in egg laying ducks flocks as these types of salmonella can cause serious illness and in extreme cases death in humans (elderly, young and immune-suppressed individuals). Investigations of humans who have this type of salmonella strongly suggest a link with the consumption of, or contact with duck eggs. Hen's eggs are not normally implicated in these particular types of salmonella outbreaks.

Ducks appear to pick up Salmonella infection very easily as usually they roam outside and are attracted to dirty pools of water which vermin also have access to. There are hygiene issues associated with small backyard flocks producing eggs.

### **Avian Influenza**

The persistent threat of Avian Influenza from migratory birds caused great unease within the industry in 2017. The restriction of birds from being permitted to roam outside their houses for greater than 12 weeks prevented free-range eggs and poultrymeat being marketed as such. Overall the restrictions had little impact on sales, however, one company was seriously affected as it competes in the same market as UK suppliers who had a less onerous regime to comply to.

### **Export of Eggs to the Middle East:**

The export of eggs to the Middle East (e.g. Dubai UAE) commenced in June 2013 and this market has grown exponentially where now in excess of [REDACTED] per week are being exported by Air Freight from Dublin. The importance of biosecurity on poultry units needs to be re-emphasised as an outbreak of Avian Influenza from migrating wildlife could result in the loss of this valuable market. The Poultry and Egg Control Group play an important role by issuing Health Certificates, often at just 24 hours notice, to facilitate the export of an average five consignments per week.

### **Country of Origin Labelling (COOL) of Poultrymeat:**

The correct COOL for Turkey Meat is a concern as many turkeys are imported into Ireland as day-olds and therefore their meat cannot be labelled "Origin Ireland" The HSE is the Competent Authority for implementing legislation in this area.

### **"Cage Free Egg Production"**

Some large Supermarket Chains in France and the UK are making commitments to stock only eggs coming from "Cage Free" production. If the same trend follows through to Ireland, it will result in significant problems for some producers, who in order to comply with EU welfare legislation on hens, invested heavily in more welfare friendly enriched colony systems in 2010 – 2012.

### **Poultry and Egg Knowledge Transfer Scheme:**

This scheme commenced in July 2016. Despite the Poultry and Egg Industry being made up of so many different small sectors and the scarce and specialised nature of expertise, there are many applicants and facilitators participating in the scheme.

## CROP EVALUATION AND CERTIFICATION DIVISION

**Head of Division:** Donal Coleman, Senior Inspector

To implement the statutory agronomic evaluation of new agricultural crop varieties submitted for marketing in Ireland and to carry out the certification of agricultural seed to ensure the highest standards of purity and freedom from disease are met by all agricultural seed marketed in this country.

### Crop Variety Evaluation Programme

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine is obliged by EU legislation to provide crop breeders with a national system of plant variety evaluation and registration. The Crop Variety Evaluation Programme is underpinned by Council Directive 2002/53/EC and Commission Directive 2003/90/EC and by national Statutory Instruments including S.I. 525 of 2002 on the National Catalogue of Agricultural Plant Varieties. Only varieties entered in the National Catalogue, or in the EU Common Catalogue, can be certified and marketed in Ireland.

Variety evaluation trials are conducted at the DAFM centres at Backweston, Co. Kildare and The Tops, Raphoe, at Teagasc centres at Athenry, Kildalton and Moorepark, and with a selection of suitable farmer growers around the country. This range of locations is essential in order to cater for varying disease pressures, soil types and climatic conditions encountered by farmers.

Each year more than 400 agricultural crop varieties of grasses, clovers, cereals, maize, oilseed rape, field beans and potatoes are evaluated in Department field trials. Each year the best performing new crop varieties are listed in the National/Recommended Lists of varieties to provide guidance to farmers on the best available varieties.

### **Seed Certification Scheme - Potatoes**

Certification ensures the quality of seed potatoes in terms of varietal purity and freedom from important disease. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine is the certifying authority for seed potatoes in Ireland. Seed potatoes are certified to EU standards and only certified potatoes may be placed on the market. Both the growing crop and tubers must pass inspections by Department officers before seed is certified. Disease testing and production of basic seed for the industry is carried out at the Tops potato centre, Raphoe.

### **Seed Certification Scheme – Combinable crops**

The purpose of combinable certification is to provide growers and industry with high quality seed in terms of varietal purity, identity and freedom from certain diseases. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine is the certifying authority for Ireland. The main crops certified include cereals, grasses, beans and oilseed rape.

### **Conservation of Plant Genetic Resources**

The Division services European and International programmes and initiatives on genetic resources. Such initiatives and programmes are mostly driven by the FAO, EU Commission or European Cooperative Programme for Crop Genetic Resources (ECP/GR). To fulfil obligations under international agreements the Division implements a national programme on Conservation of Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, under which national funding is provided for priority projects aimed at conserving threatened native plants and animals. The national genebank of plant genetic resources is maintained at Backweston Crops Centre and at Tops Potato Centre, Raphoe.

### **Cultivation of Genetically Modified (GM) Seeds**

No GM crops are grown in Ireland at present although EU legislation in this sphere has recently been revised. So far, there is only one GM crop (maize) approved for cultivation in the EU. Interest among EU member states in the cultivation of GM crops waned markedly in recent years and the topic remains very politically sensitive in most Member States

EU Directive No. 412/2015/EC was adopted in 2015 allowing Member States decide at national level whether to grow approved GM crops or not on their own territory. The

Department of Environment, Community and Local Government has legislative responsibility concerning cultivation of GMOs.

## Plant Variety Rights

The system of Plant Breeders' Rights, or Plant Variety Rights, is a form of intellectual property rights, which guarantees a return on investment to the breeder of a new plant variety. The system allows the breeder of new varieties of agricultural, horticultural and ornamental plants to legally register the Right to control the propagation and marketing of those varieties. The breeder may subsequently authorise other agents to propagate and market seed or vegetative propagating material of the variety under the terms of a license.

The Division implements the mandatory national system of plant variety rights. The main legal instrument underpinning the system in Ireland is the Plant Varieties (Proprietary Rights) Act, 1980, as amended in 1998.



## **HORTICULTURE AND PLANT HEALTH DIVISION**

**Head of Division:** Barry Delany, Senior Inspector

To achieve the highest possible standards of plant health and food safety and to promote the development of an efficient primary horticultural sector

### **Function**

#### **Fulfil the Duties of the Official National Plant Protection Organisation**

The Division implements an annual plant health programme. This involves a survey for a range of quarantine diseases and pests on horticultural nurseries, garden centres, public parks and private properties. HPHD endeavour to eradicate all new non-indigenous quarantine pest introductions. We also carry out checks on plant producers to ensure they meet the requirements of EU legislation. Under the NSMC we have very close collaboration with Northern Ireland in implementing an agreed work programme.

HPHD carry out inspections on third country imports that come directly into Ireland and which are subject to plant health controls.

Similarly HPHD carry out all necessary plant health inspections leading to the issuing of phytosanitary certificates for plants and plant products such as peat, grain, animal feed etc. that are being exported to third countries. We also engage with third countries regarding import conditions.

Representatives of HPHD attend and contribute to all appropriate EU and International meetings such as the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organisation (EPPO).

A new Plant Health Regulation will come into operation on 14th of December 2019. The new Regulation focuses on reducing the risk of introducing quarantine pests to the EU by the implementation of a stricter Plant Health Imports Control regime. It will place increased

burdens on National Plant Protection Organisations through increasing the list of plant producers to be registered and inspected and also plant products that will be subjected to controls at EU borders.

### **Promote and develop the horticultural sector**

The Division is responsible for implementing the Horticultural Grant Scheme. In 2016 €4.3 million will be awarded to approximately 150 applicants under the Scheme. The Scheme provides grant assistance towards investment in specialised equipment and facilities for horticultural producers.

In conjunction with Crop Policy, Production and Safety Division we are responsible for implementing the Producer Organisation Scheme for the fruit and vegetable sector. This is an EU funded measure where approximately €3.5M is paid to 2 Irish POs on an annual basis. Staff from the Division are actively involved in contributing to EU discussions on a review of the regulations covering PO's

The Division is also actively involved in preparing sectoral data e.g. compiling horticultural statistics, inputting to reports such as Food Wise 2025 and providing advice on development measures.

### **Enforce food safety and food hygiene legislation at primary production level and verify compliance of horticultural produce with quality standards**

The Division implements a risk-based system of official controls of primary producers of food of non-animal origin to ensure compliance with EU food safety and food hygiene legislation. This includes performing inspections, audits, sampling, labelling and traceability checks and other official controls as necessary. The major issue of concern is microbiological contamination, which usually arises from poor hygiene practices, contaminated water and misuse of organic fertilisers. The control programme was subjected to a FSAI audit in 2014, which identified a shortfall in resources in this area, and an EU audit from DG Health and Food Safety in March 2016, which identified further deficiencies. The Division plays a key role in dealing with food safety incidents involving Irish horticultural produce.

The Division is responsible for carrying out inspections at wholesale and retail level to ensure that potatoes, fresh fruit and vegetables comply with national and/or EU marketing standards. Over 2,000 inspections are carried out annually and the major issues identified relate to labelling of country of origin and substitution of potato varieties with cheaper varieties.

### Bees and honey

The Division in conjunction with veterinary colleagues is responsible for bee health in Ireland. This involves work to increase the availability of authorised veterinary medicines for bees as well as dealing with outbreaks of notifiable diseases affecting bees.

The Division implements a control programme for honey at primary production level. This is to ensure that honey placed on the market is free of contaminants such as heavy metals, antibiotics, pesticides etc. The Division also participated in an EU wide survey regarding honey quality in 2015 and certain issues are being followed up.

The Division also implements the National Apiculture Programme under council Regulation 1308/2013. The current programme runs from 2016-2019 with the aim of developing strategies to protect the health and promote the development of bees.

### ISSUES

- The Producer Organisation Scheme has been very problematic over the past number of years. In 2011 the EU carried out an audit of our implementation of the Scheme. This eventually resulted in a disallowance of over €1million which was paid in 2015. Court proceedings were lodged by CMP against the Department but have now been withdrawn. A review of National Strategy currently underway to establish the priorities through which improving the competitiveness of the fruit and vegetable sectors and increasing sustainability of production can be achieved. In particular, the mushroom industry is vulnerable to movement in Sterling due to its dependence on that market.
- As part of the process of trying to control the establishment and development of plant disease in Ireland the Department may take action including destruction of infected

plants and or restrictions in the movement of plants or plant products. Currently no compensation is paid to growers affected. Such action was taken in relation to the disease Ash Dieback. Growers are claiming they have lost very significant amounts of money arising from DAFM's actions.

- Arising from the recent adverse weather, including flooding, a number of growers have lost crops and have sought compensation but were not considered eligible under the Department's Scheme.
- Under Food Hygiene Legislation, the Division may have to close a business or part of the business or to seize or destroy food where there is an immediate risk to human health. Three closure notices were issued in 2016 and 3 to date in 2017.

## RESEARCH AND CODEX DIVISION

**Head of Division:** Richard Howell, Senior Inspector

Research and Codex Division contributes to the development of Research & Innovation Policy relating to Agri-Food, Forestry and the Bioeconomy; operates Department's competitive research funding programmes (FIRM, RSF & CoFoRD) including the appropriate policy, scientific, technical and financial management; supports Irish participation in relevant parts of the EU research programme including co-fund activities; and co-ordinates overall Irish involvement in the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

### Division's Policy/Strategy Activities

The Division's policy/strategy activities involves engagement with other Divisions (FIDD, EPD, etc.) and other Departments (D/JEI, D/oH, DCCAE, D/oT) and agencies (Teagasc, Marine Institute, EPA, SFI, EI, Bord Bia, FSAI) through forums such as the D/JEI Innovation 2020 Implementation Committee, D/JEI, SFI & EI Horizon 2020 coordination committees, EI industry research committees, etc. to formulate national research policies and strategies. At present this includes, in particular, supporting DAFM's input into the D/JEI-led 're-fresh' of National Research Prioritisation and D/Taoiseach-led IDG that is developing the Government's Policy Statement on the Bioeconomy. The Division also operates the broad stakeholder based National Agri-Food Research & Innovation (NAFRI) Advisory Group.

At EU level the Division engages with DG Research and Innovation and DG Agriculture & Rural Development – mainly through the Standing Committee for Agricultural Research (SCAR) and the Programme Committee for Societal Challenge 2 of H2020 - to promote Irish interests in the development of the EU research strategy as regards agriculture, food, forestry and marine activities, rural economy, the bioeconomy and other cross cutting areas such as ICT and circular bioeconomy.

**Food Wise 2025** has highlighted the need for an increased focus on consumer demands and insights, competitiveness, innovation and the development of human skills. Research Division is leading 12 of its actions which, together with the other activities set out below, help to underpin many of the FW2025 deliverables.

In 2014/15 the Division led the multi-funder Working Group that developed the Strategic Research Innovation Agenda “**Sustainable Healthy Agri-Food Research Plan (SHARP)**” for the two food related priority areas identified in the National Research Prioritisation Exercise (NRPE). Similarly, ‘**Forest Research Ireland (FORI)**’, the strategic agenda for forest research, developed by a Working Group of the COFORD Council, was published in July 2014. Both SHARP and FORI now serve to guide the research investment for competitive agri-food and forest research funding programmes operated by DAFM and other Irish research funders.

### **Operating DAFM’s Competitive Research Funding Programmes**

DAFM’s three competitive research funding programmes – FIRM (food), Stimulus (agriculture) and CoFoRD (forest) - support the development of human capital, skills and innovation in relation to sectoral agri-food supply chain, forestry and marine activities as well as cross cutting issues such as ICT, the Bioeconomy and the Rural Economy. They also provide evidence to guide policy formation and deliver solutions for practical challenges from farm to fork. Additionally, research and innovation activities funded through these programmes contribute to the achievement of many FoodWise 2025 actions by providing the scientific basis to underpin sustainable primary production, food product development and process innovation, and a sustainable, competitive, market orientated forest industry.

Grant awards are made for projects undertaken collaboratively by Teagasc, MI, ICBF, Birdwatch Ireland, the Universities and the Institutes of technology following robust evaluation of applications received on foot of Calls for Proposals launched periodically (usually annually). The grant awards range from €200,000 to €5 million and the projects are usually undertaken over a four year timeframe. Grants are paid out through a combination of an initial advance followed by further stage payments in line with the progress achieved which the Division actively monitors. At present we have an outstanding commitment

liability of €64 million in respect of some 230 active projects with the majority in the second half or approaching the end of their 4 year life cycle.

### *Recent Call for Research Proposals*

A combined FIRM/Stimulus/CoFoRD Call for research proposals launched in October 2015 resulted in total grant awards of some €29 million in respect of 44 collaborative inter-institutional projects in late 2016. The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), Northern Ireland, collaborated with DAFM on the Call and has awarded funding to AFBI, QUB and UU partners in 8 of the successful projects to a total value of €2.2 million.

As part of the Call, DAFM also invited applications under its Industry Co-Funded 'Platform' Funding Instrument in the Agri-Food (Data, ICT & Sensors) and Biorefining fields. This is a relatively new funding instrument by DAFM which aims to strengthen the linkages between the research community and industry especially as regards pilot scale demonstration and testing of emerging technologies in these fledgling areas that have the potential to drive innovation in novel parts of the agri-food and bioeconomy sector. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

### *Trans-national research funding*

Research Division also uses DAFM competitive programme allocations to manage, promote and selectively fund initiatives in conjunction with other EU MS and the EU Commission (ERA-NETS and Joint Programming Initiative Joint Actions). These are all transnational research cooperation opportunities that help leverage expertise and data and develop skills and networks. The overall aim is to get the research community operating at a higher level

so as to render them more suitable in terms of skills, expertise and knowledge to join consortia that are well placed to draw down non-Exchequer funding under Horizon 2020 competitive calls. Recently, Research Division, together with Teagasc, managed a Call totalling €12.6 million under the ERA-NET Cofund for Monitoring & Mitigation of GHG's from Agri- and Silvi-culture (ERA-GAS) and DAFM will soon commit [REDACTED] in grant awards to Irish researchers in Teagasc, UCC, UCD, NUIG and ICBF. Likewise, DAFM will soon commit [REDACTED] new funding in grant awards to Irish researchers in Teagasc, UCD, ICBF and UL arising from a Call on sustainable animal production by the SusAN ERA-NET.

In April 2016 the Division began to facilitate funding opportunities for research in agriculture under the Belfast Agreement-derived US-Ireland R&D Partnership, on a pilot basis, in three agricultural research topic areas. One tri-jurisdictional project relating to animal health and disease has been approved for funding under this programme. DAFM is positively disposed to extending the pilot and to widening the scope of US-Ireland research to other agri-food thematic areas and has been in contact with its US counterparts to progress this.

### **Promoting active Irish participation in the EU Horizon 2020 RDI funding programme**

Research & Codex Division supports Irish involvement in the EU's Horizon 2020 research funding programme by providing a National Delegate (ND) and the National Contact Point (NCP). On the policy front, the ND & NCP provide inputs into the development of the bi-annual Work Programmes that comprise the Call topics for the agri-food & bioeconomy area known as Societal Challenge 2 and its related Biobased Industries Joint Undertaking (BBI JU) by representing Irish interests at the relevant Programme Committee and States Representatives Group. On the ground, the NCP provides specialist advice and guidance to prospective applicants in relation to SC-2, the BBI JU and other cross cutting parts of the Horizon 2020 Programme.

Division staff also participate in inter-departmental/agency forums to achieve the Government set national drawdown target of €1.25 billion from Horizon 2020 over the seven year period 2014 – 2020 - particularly as regards achieving the agreed drawdown target of €77 million for the dedicated agri-food/forestry/marine pillar known as Societal Challenge 2 (SC2). Targets have also been set for Teagasc (€19 million) and the Marine



Institute (€11 million).

### Joint Programming Initiatives (JPIs)

Research Division is also responsible for leading Ireland's engagement in the two agri-food related EU-derived JPIs namely 'Agriculture, Food Security and Climate Change (FACCE)' & 'A Healthy Diet for a Healthy Life (HDHL)'. This involves, in the main, attending about 3 meetings per year of their respective Governing Boards and contributing to the development of their strategic direction and operational activities.

### Standing Committee on Agricultural Research

The Department alongside Teagasc provides officials to service all levels of the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research including the plenary (Chief Inspector), steering group, and working groups on a range of areas including food systems, bioeconomy, forestry, animal health and welfare etc. This representative group is responsible alongside the Programme Committee for engaging with the EU Commission to develop the EU research and innovation policy agenda including in relation to food and nutrition security and the bioeconomy policy development.

### Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases (GRA)

The GRA was launched in the margins of the COP Climate Change Copenhagen Summit in December 2009. Ireland is a founding member of the Alliance which is a New Zealand-derived initiative that aims to co-ordinate research efforts to develop agricultural greenhouse gas emissions mitigation technologies for practical application at farm level. DAFM represents Ireland on the Governing Council of the Initiative while Teagasc and the EPA attend meetings on 4 of its 5 Research Groups dealing with crops, livestock, inventory and cross cutting issues. Several DAFM funded research projects provide the basis for Ireland's engagement in the GRA.

### **Codex Alimentarius**

The Codex Alimentarius Commission is an inter-governmental body with 174 Members which develops science-based food standards, guidelines and related texts under the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme. It has two principal objectives - consumer health protection and facilitating fair practices in the food trade. These Codex standards act as reference points under the WTO SPS Agreement. Research Division coordinates Irish engagement in Codex by acting as the National Contact Point, operating the Irish Codex Advisory Committee that informs the Irish position on all Codex issues, and arranging for appropriate Irish representation at all relevant Codex Committee and Commission sessions. The Division also represents Ireland directly at sessions of the General Principles Committee and the Codex Commission.

### **Scientific and Specialised Training**

Research Division has responsibility for the delivery and/or provision of scientific and specialised training for Agricultural Inspectors, the Forest Service Inspectors, Marine Engineers and Laboratory staff. Research Division also participates in the Teagasc Education and Training Forum and contributes to other educational committees and educational review processes, particularly in relation to agriculture and science, as required.

## **NITRATES, BIODIVERSITY AND ENGINEERING DIVISION (NBE)**

**Head of Division:** Jack Nolan, Senior Inspector

This Division has responsibility for environmental issues relating to Water, Biodiversity, Soils Policy, Environmental Impact Assessment regulations (EIA), Engineering Services and Farm Safety. The Division works closely with other Divisions internally and also with other Government Departments, namely Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government and Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs. The Division also provides expertise as required on over-arching policy issues such as CAP Reform, Rural Development Programmes and Food Wise 2025.

### **WATER POLICY**

#### **Water Framework Directive**

The overarching policy driver in the area of water quality across the EU is the Water Framework Directive (WFD), the objectives of which encompass the multi-sectoral achievement of good ecological status in all EU waters by certain deadlines. The WFD was introduced in 2000 and comprises 11 key EU Directives which are considered important in protecting water quality across all sectors. Implementation is facilitated through the development of River Basin Management Plans (RBMP) and the first cycle of implementation in Ireland ran from 2010 to 2015. The second cycle (2016-2021) is underway and the EPA has drafted a new River Basin Management Plan for Ireland, which was launched in February 2017 and contains multi-sectoral Programmes of Measures, including agricultural measures, to implement the 2nd cycle of the Water Framework Directive.

This second cycle draft river Basin Management Plan represents a new approach to river basin management planning. Ireland is now taking a single river basin district approach with a much improved evidence base to underpin decision making at both national and local

level. The approach to public consultation and engagement has also been greatly strengthened.

Water Policy Regulations (S.I. 350 of 2014) made by the Minister for Environment established a tiered governance structure to assist implementation of the 2nd cycle of WFD in Ireland. Tier 1 is concerned with national management and oversight, led by DHPCLG, and the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine is represented at governance level. Tier 2 comprises national technical implementation and reporting and is led by the EPA, which is responsible for the development of RBMPs. The Local Authorities support the EPA and DHPCLG at the Tier 3 governance level. NBE Division is collaborating with DHPCLG, the EPA and the LAs at all three tiers of this governance structure.

### **Nitrates Directive**

The Nitrates Directive is one of the 11 key Directives encompassed by the WFD and is the main agricultural measure included in RBMPs. The Nitrates Directive requires every Member State to review their National Action Programme (NAP) at least every four years.

Ireland (Department of Housing, Planning, , Community and Local Government - DHPCLG) operates the EU Nitrates Directive on a whole territory basis through the implementation of the Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) or Nitrates Regulations (Statutory Instrument No. 31 of 2014). The GAP Regulations provide a considerable environmental baseline which all Irish farmers must achieve and by doing this, Irish farmers are contributing to the sector's WFD obligations regarding the protection of water quality. GAP Regulations' inspections are carried out by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) as part of the cross-compliance process.

### **Ireland's Fourth National Action Programme (NAP)**

Ireland's NAP was reviewed for a second time during 2013. A number of significant changes were introduced following agreement with the Commission including increased phosphorus allowances, changes to the definition of soiled water etc. Legislation giving effect to these changes was introduced in 2014 by way of regulation S.I. 31 of 2014.

The current Nitrates Action programme concludes at the end of this year (2017), hence the third Nitrates Action Programme review is currently underway. Consultations with the EU Commission are on-going with a view to securing a new Nitrates Action programme for 2018 – 2021. Legislation giving effect to this programme is expected to be enacted early in 2018.

### **Nitrates Derogation**

In 2007, the EU Commission approved a derogation for Ireland (2007/697/EC) which allows individual farms (upon application to DAFM) to operate above the statutory livestock manure limit (170 kg Nitrogen per hectare per year), up to a maximum limit of 250 kg Nitrogen per hectare per year, subject to strict conditions.

The derogation is available to grassland farms on an individual basis. In 2016, 6,800 farmers (including intensive dairy farmers) availed of the derogation. This figure rose to 7,000 in 2017, the increase in part due to the removal of milk quotas. The current derogation concludes at the end of 2017, and discussions are on-going with the EU Commission to secure a new derogation for the next 4 years beginning in 2018.

### **Agricultural Catchments Programme**

EU Member States are required to monitor the effectiveness of their Nitrates Regulations, under Article 5 (6) of the EU Nitrates Directive. Under the GAP Regulations, DAFM has been monitoring the effectiveness of Ireland's measures since 2008 through its significant funding of the Teagasc operated Agricultural Catchments Programme (ACP) Phase 3 is now underway and will be funded by the DAFM at a cost of €1.56 million per annum.

Following almost nine years of intensive monitoring across six relatively intensively farmed agricultural catchments, results indicate a positive response to the Nitrates Regulations, i.e. reduced nutrient inputs, increased nutrient management and some evidence of reduced nutrient losses from farmland to water. As a result, water quality trends are showing signs of recovery, although there are time lags between the implementation of measures and realising measurable improvements in water quality.

Scientific knowledge generated by the ACP helps fulfil Ireland's monitoring and reporting requirements under the Nitrates Directive, including the Nitrates Derogation, and the Water Framework Directive (WFD), and provides the basis for technology transfer to stakeholders.

### **Water Quality Information**

Nationally, the Environmental Protection Agency has acknowledged the important role the GAP Regulations play in the protection of water quality. The most recent EPA publication available, which is yet to be published as the "Water Quality Report 2013-2015", indicates an overall sense of a stalling in the improvement of water quality situation. Waterbodies classified at good or high WFD quality status include:

- 69% of river channel length
- 46% of lake area
- 37% of transitional waters
- 76% of coastal waters
- 99% of groundwaters

Furthermore, the EPA has reported that the levels of Nitrogen and Phosphorus in Irish rivers, groundwaters, transitional and coastal waters, have been mostly decreasing since 2007; the GAP Regulations came into force in 2006.

### **Departmental Initiatives to Protect and Improve Water Quality**

Of the remaining waters that are not reaching good WFD quality status, diffuse pollution from agriculture, along with municipal sources of pollution, is believed to be the cause. In addition, it is acknowledged that implementation of the GAP Regulations baseline alone may not be enough to protect High Status and other vulnerable water areas.

In order to address these issues, DAFM, in conjunction with DHPCLG, carries out a comprehensive statutory review of the GAP Regulations on a regular basis; the next Nitrates Review is currently underway in 2017. Findings from the ACP will contribute to informing the Nitrates Review and to further enhancing the accuracy and effectiveness of the GAP Regulations.

In addition, and following wide consultation by DAFM, the new Rural Development Programme (RDP) has included supplementary measures which build on the progress made by farmers under the GAP Regulations in protecting and improving water quality. Optional measures for the protection of water include

- the Green Low Carbon Agri-Environment Scheme (GLAS) which is a targeted agri-environment scheme with a budget of €1.3 billion, and with 50,000 participants. Farmers in high status water areas and other vulnerable water areas received priority access into GLAS. 45% of GLAS actions are targeted at the protection and enhancement of water quality, including compulsory nutrient management planning.
- The Knowledge Transfer (KT) Programme is aimed at over 20,000 farms with the objective of improving understanding of environmental and economic efficiencies and the adoption of best practice including the good agricultural practice for the protection of water.
- Outputs-based Agri-Environmental Schemes including the Freshwater Pearl Mussel Scheme and Locally-Led Agri-Environmental Schemes are also available for optional farmer uptake.
- Under the Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme (TAMS) there are specific schemes available relevant to the protection and enhancement of water including the Low Emission Slurry Spreading Equipment Scheme (LESS) and Animal Welfare, Safety and Nutrient Storage Scheme.
- The Beef Data Genomics Programme (BDGP) is targeted at the climate emissions from beef farms, with consequential benefits of reducing losses of nutrients to water.
- Outputs-based locally led schemes such as the Burren Farming for Conservation Programme and the RDP commitment to establish a Freshwater Pearl Mussel scheme.

## **BIODIVERSITY POLICY**

As a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Ireland undertook to promote conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. The principles enshrined in this

convention are also embodied in EU legislation such as the Birds and Habitat Directives and National provisions including the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 and the Wildlife Act, 1976, under the lead responsibility of the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs. To ensure that Ireland fulfils its obligation under the Convention, and related legislation, a National Biodiversity Plan for Ireland was developed and published in 2002, and later revised. The revised Plan, published in 2011, and covering the period up to 2016, was prepared against this background of increasing biodiversity pressures and losses at both European and national level. It contains 102 actions that aim to better understand and protect biodiversity.

Some key actions for the agriculture sector include:

- development of measures in future rural development programmes for the protection and enhancement of ecosystem services and biodiversity including targeted prescriptions that will contribute to achieving favourable conservation status in designated farmland;
- effective implementation of cross-compliance and statutory management requirements to ensure conservation of biodiversity;
- systematic evaluation process for any agri-environmental schemes delivered;
- strengthening of measures to ensure conservation and availability for use, of genetic diversity of crop varieties, livestock breeds and races.

The Plan recognises the need for the integration of sustainable use of biological diversity into all relevant sectors and sets out a range of actions which will assist Ireland's contribution towards the over-arching EU 2020 biodiversity strategy. The third iteration of the National Biodiversity Plan, developed during 2016 is currently being finalised.

Notwithstanding the fact that Irish farmers are operating to high environmental standards under both National and EU provisions, there are a range of habitats and species associated with farmland appearing on the Red list of conservation concern. For example, birds are a very good indicator of the general health of ecosystems and the 'Action Plan for Lowland Farmland Birds in Ireland 2011-2020' highlights that 11 species of lowland farmland birds are on the Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland's Red List while a further 21 species are



on the Amber List. The 2013 report on the “Status of EU protected Habitats and Species in Ireland” showed that while 52% of the 61 species examined achieved “favourable” status, only 9% of the habitats examined reached “favourable” status.

The CAP Pillar 1 cross-compliance standards along with the greening measures will provide a baseline protection for biodiversity, however, the recently introduced targeted actions for biodiversity conservation under Agri-environmental schemes under the RDP will play a pivotal role in mitigating specific biodiversity threats in a more targeted manner. NBE Division has a key role in identifying the main priorities and development of measures to optimise their effectiveness.

This Division also acts as a key contact point on biodiversity issues with the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs and other related stakeholders. There is on-going interaction between the two Departments with regard to implementation of the biodiversity strategy and any other emerging issues of common interest, such as assisting with EU infringement cases e.g. Birds case- corncrake, and mitigating the development of other infringement cases e.g. freshwater pearl mussel (FWPM) and breeding waders such as the curlew.

## **SOIL POLICY**

Soil is under increasing environmental pressure across the EU Community. In its 2002 Communication "Towards a Thematic Strategy on Soil Protection" (COM (2002) 179), the Commission identified eight main threats with which soils in the EU are confronted. These are erosion, organic matter decline, contamination, salinisation, compaction, soil biodiversity loss, sealing, landslides and flooding.

After several years of difficult negotiations a proposed Soils Framework Directive was officially withdrawn, but plans for alternative provisions are still under consideration at EU levels. Since 2015 renewed discussions are taking place with an initial focus on a “Gap analysis” to determine which policy areas are particularly weak and identify scope for improvements. (The DHPCLG is the lead contact point for Ireland on this issue).

From an agricultural perspective several measures which aid the protection of soil are already contained within the CAP provisions:

- Pillar 1: Retention of permanent grassland and protection of carbon rich soils under Greening, indirect benefits to soil biodiversity and structure from crop diversification and EFA.
- GAEC Provisions to protect soil and carbon stocks therein: GAEC 4 (and Nitrates provisions) lays down requirements for minimum soil cover, to prevent erosion and leaching of nutrients. GAEC 5 sets minimum land management conditions to prevent soil erosion, while GAEC 6 aims to maintain soil organic matter by placing a ban on burning stubbles.
- Pillar 2. GLAS contains actions beneficial for soil protection i.e minimum tillage, green cover, environmental management of fallow land, arable grass margins and commonage management plans should also lead to reduced overgrazing/erosion pressures on blanket peats.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) REGULATIONS**

The EIA (Agriculture) Regulations were introduced on 8 September 2011. Land activities covered by these regulations include:

- The restructuring of rural land holdings (which includes the combining of fields, the removal of hedgerows and stone wall or the re-contouring of land e.g. by infill)
- The use of uncultivated land or semi-natural areas for intensive agriculture
- Water management projects for agriculture, including irrigation and land drainage

Under these regulations DAFM provides a free screening service to examine if any such activities may have significant negative environmental impacts. Where it is deemed that activities may have a significant negative effect on the environment, a full EIA will be required.

## **FARM HEALTH AND SAFETY**

While the Health and Safety Authority (HSA), under the remit of the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, has primary responsibility for health and safety in the workplace, this Department has taken an active role in the promotion of farm safety, in particular the inclusion of farm safety in the Knowledge Transfer schemes and also the inclusion of safety elements and mandatory farm safety training in the Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Schemes (TAMS). The Irish farm is one of the most dangerous workplaces in Ireland and it is a requirement of all groups involved in agriculture to continually highlight the issue of farm safety. In an attempt to reduce the number of farm accidents the Farm Safety Partnership Advisory Committee (FSPAC) was established. This is an advisory committee to the Board of the HSA and is made up of representatives across the agricultural spectrum. The Division represents DAFM on the FSPAC. The HSA have indicated that the inclusion of farm safety in the Knowledge Transfer scheme and TAMS II scheme is a significant step. It is important that this step is built on and farm safety training is built into all future schemes. It would be beneficial to also explore the opportunity to include safety training as a requirement of the Basic Payment Scheme.

The FSPAC supports the HSA in the promotion of farm safety and health through the Farm Safety Action Plan (2016-2018). The Farm Safety Action Plan lists the commitments of each of the member organisations to promoting farm safety and health.

## **ENGINEERING SERVICES**

Under the Nitrates regulations it is a requirement that “Storage facilities being provided on a holding...” comply with such construction specifications for those facilities as may be approved from time to time by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine”. As such the Engineering Services Unit maintains specifications for storage facilities so that farmers can ensure compliance with their obligations in relation to the storage of organic manures, soiled water and effluent (e.g: mass concrete tanks, silage pits, geo-membrane lined stores).

The Engineering Unit of the Division provides a range of specifications and reference costs for the AES Division for the operation of the Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Schemes (TAMS) and Organic Schemes. These specifications need to be updated from time to time to

ensure that they reflect the latest animal welfare and best practice in construction techniques. In addition the Unit also provides support in relation to planning permission. All the information is to ensure that the Department grant-aids good value for money, good quality structures that will perform in a rigorous environment.

The Engineering Unit also audits a sample of grant-aided forest roads for the Forest Service to ensure that the required construction standards are being achieved, and that the forest roads represent value for money. Further to this the Unit also provides engineering support to the forest service in relation to general queries regarding the construction standards of forest roads and is currently engaged in updating the Forest Roads manual – the guidance for industry on how to construct forest roads.

The unit provides Engineering Services to other divisions within the Department as needed, such as supporting the Animal Health and Welfare Division in relation to the upgrading of pig housing for compliance with pig welfare requirements.

## **CROP POLICY, PRODUCTION AND SAFETY DIVISION**

**Head of Division:** Vacant, Principal Officer

To contribute to the development of competitive arable crop production, horticulture and bee keeping sectors and the attainment of the highest food and feed safety and phytosanitary standards through the formulation and implementation of appropriate arable crop production (including sugar), GMO policy, horticulture and bee keeping policies. The administration of schemes, services and measures in the arable crops, horticulture, honey, potatoes, seeds, plants, feedingstuffs, pesticides and fertilisers areas; and the provision of administrative support to the relevant Inspectorate Divisions.

Crop Policy Section advises on the Department's Policy formation for the Cereal and Sugar sectors and represents DAFM at Arable crop/management committee meetings in Brussels. This section meets with key stakeholders in the Cereals sector i.e. the IFA Cereal Sector Committee, representatives from the Irish Grain and Feed Association; also we keep in regular contact with interested parties who are looking at business proposals to re-establish a bio-ethanol sugar producing industry.

### **CEREALS SECTOR**

#### **Cereal Area, Yield & Production in Ireland**

The 2016 Cereals harvest is estimated at 2.28 million tonnes a 13% decrease on the 2015 harvest with the national cereal area falling by 5%. Lower yields combined with a reduced area and some significant crop losses on individual farms in western counties have contributed to the overall reduction in grain produced in 2016. With the exception of winter oats there was a decrease in the production of the main cereals in Ireland with winter barley down 10% (84,000 tonnes) on 2015, winter wheat production fell 5% (29,000 tonnes) while spring wheat production fell 32% year on year from 87,000 tonnes down to

59,000 tonnes with winter oats bucking the trend with a 4% increase in production up to 109,000 tonnes.

Total production of wheat was 638,000 tonnes, an 8% decrease on 2015 while overall barley production was 1,453 million tonnes a 16% decrease on 2015. Nationally cereal yields were down for the main crops in 2016, cereal yields falling nearly 10% on average. The decrease is attributed to poor conditions over the winter months and poor weather at flowering for winter wheat and spring barley. Harvesting difficulties in certain parts of some counties, particularly in the west, resulted in significant losses on individual farms. The total cereal area harvested in 2016 was 277,000 hectares a fall of 14,300 hectares compared to the 2015 harvested area.

### **General Market Situation 2016/17**

Total area sown to cereals within the EU28 member states decreased by slightly less than 1% to 56.9 million hectares with the main decrease in sowings attributed to maize. In Ireland the area sown fell 5% to 277,000 hectares with a big shift from spring crops to winter crops. The overall EU cereal usable production for 2016/17 is currently forecast at 295 million tonnes, down 5% on last year. Common wheat accounts for 134 million tonnes (45% of all cereals), Barley 59 million tonnes and Maize 60 million tonnes. Main cereal prices in the EU continued increased slightly in 2016 despite stiff competition in the market. It is projected that cereal stocks will be in the region of 39 million tonnes at the end of June 2017.

On the world market, the International Grains Council (IGC) forecasts 2016/17 global grain production in the region of 2,094 million tonnes, 85 million tonnes or 4% above the 2015/16 figure, this includes wheat of 752 million tonnes and maize 1045 million tonnes. Consumption is forecast to reach to 2,062 million tonnes mainly due to the rise in feed demand, cereal stocks are expected to rise to 507 million tonnes up nearly 50% on the low of 2012/13.

## Prices

Ireland is a deficit market for cereals and as such is greatly affected by world prices and supplies. For the fourth year in succession, the world produced a bumper grain crop, adding further to world grain stocks resulting in downward pressure on crop prices. The CSO advance estimate of output value of cereals in 2016 is €233m, a decrease of 11% on 2015 due to the continued decline in cereal prices. In particular 2016 has been a difficult year for the Tillage Sector and according to the latest Teagasc Farm Survey Report for 2016 average income for this Sector is down by 9% along with the bad weather at harvest time experienced by some Tillage growers which impacted on their income also.

## Irish Cereal Plantings 2015, 2016 & 2017

Planting area is estimated at 3.5% or 10,000 ha below 2016. Spring barley area is holding up well, with the reduction holding at approx 1,000 ha. The reduction in area is due to continued weak prices and increased competition for rented land, mainly from dairy sector.

## SUGAR SECTOR

### Background EU Sugar Reform

As part of the reform of the EU sugar regime in 2006, a temporary restructuring scheme was introduced with the aim of reducing EU sugar production in order to comply with WTO and other international obligations. The scheme provided an incentive for sugar processors to renounce sugar quota and dismantle the associated sugar processing plant and it provided compensation for affected stakeholders. Greencore plc, the sole Irish sugar processor and holder of the entire Irish quota allocation, decided to avail of the restructuring scheme. In 2006 the company renounced the quota and dismantled the last remaining Irish sugar factory at Mallow in compliance with the conditions of the scheme. This brought the Irish sugar industry to an end.

### Revival of the Sugar Industry

In 2011, a number of meetings took place with two groups who individually carried out feasibility studies into the revival of a sugar/bio ethanol facility in Ireland. [REDACTED]


### CAP Reform 2013 to Current Position

At the last meeting of the Council of Agriculture Ministers in June 2013, which was chaired by Ireland's Agriculture Minister under Ireland's EU Presidency, the Minister secured agreement as part of the overall CAP reform package, to abolish all sugar quotas by 30 September 2017. This agreement removes, with effect from 1 October 2017, the current quota barrier for operators in Ireland or other Member States, wishing to re-establish a sugar industry. The current *Programme for a Partnership Government* states that "State enterprise bodies will be asked to examine any substantial business plans related to rebuilding the industry with a view to considering appropriate State supports" It is now available to those interested parties to move the project forward and to garner sufficient commercial and financial support to turn their plans into a viable reality.