



Milk Markets Overview

Dairy markets are highly volatile at the moment with weekly swings of up to €300 per week in butter pricing alone. There was a level of surprise around the 4.2% increase at the most recent GDT. Analysts believe it was driven by concerns around securing supply out of Europe due to the logistics issues in the Suez. Product from Europe is taking much longer and is more expensive to get to Asia. New Zealand has a big advantage here with New Zealand origin product now selling at a premium over US and EU product.

Global Supply

Costs at farm level are still an issue. Everybody talks about declining farm and farmer numbers across the main exporting regions but supply does not decline. The

remaining farmers are more efficient with higher yielding herds. When you adjust for solids in milk, there is more solids available to produce commodities.

EU	Nov	- 1.5 %
US	Dec	+0.6 %
New Zealand	Dec	+2.6 %
Aus	Dec	+2.3 %

Global Demand

There is still an overall lack of dairy demand. Buyers outside of China are buying at current prices but China remains subdued. The economic conditions are poor and they are also producing more milk domestically.

Spring Farm Health & Safety

Spring is an extremely busy time on farm with fatigue being a significant safety factor as it will impair good judgement, and good standard operating procedures. Monitor your tiredness levels, eat well and drink plenty of water to keep hydrated and alert. If the calving period is particularly difficult, consider bringing in some extra help to ease the workload.

Livestock

Ensure that handling facilities are easily accessible and in good order. Always keep a strong gate between you and the freshly calved cow. Never turn your back on the cow when handling the new-born calf. Calving cameras are a useful aid to reduce risks around calving as you can monitor from a distance and ease the workload involved in calving supervision.

Beware when letting out livestock for the first time as the excitement of going to grass can make animals more boisterous.

Farm Machinery

Practise the SAFE STOP procedure, reverse park, handbrake on, controls in neutral, lower attachments, engine off and remove keys. Guards and safety devices must be in place and functioning correctly. Always turn off the PTO and the tractor before attempting to free

a blockage or adjust a machine. All machinery drivers should be competent.

The new Quad Bike (ATV) regulations require that all operators complete a Quad Bike Training Course provided by a registered training provider to a QQI Standard or equivalent, and all operators must wear appropriate head protection while operating a quad bike.

Slurry

Slurry presents two problems - drowning and gas poisoning, with drowning being the most common cause of death involving slurry. Remember if agitating slurry that one lung-full of slurry gas can kill.

Children

Children should not be allowed unsupervised access to the farmyard. Keep children away from dangerous areas e.g., slurry pits, silage pits, chemical stores, working machinery and high areas.



Spring Fertiliser 2024

“Know your Number”

The new fertiliser register makes it non-negotiable not to understand your farms Nitrogen (N) and Phosphorus (P) allowances. The register which was enacted in September 2023 now means that farmers could face significant fines by breaching N and P allowances. To calculate your farms N and P allowance you will need soil samples (take a minimum of one sample for every 5ha every 4 years). You will also need your previous year stocking rate and meal fed. This can be used to develop a Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) which will give you confidence when purchasing nutrients. Previously farmers were assumed to be index 3 but going forward **without a soil sample all farms are assumed index 4 with zero P allowance.**

Aside from legislation, it is vitally important to develop an accurate NMP for your farm. The NMP will be

responsible for the production of approximately 90% of the farms feed supply. Soil fertility is the single best investment on farm with a return on investment within a year from increased pasture production.

The limiting nutrients in Spring are N, P and S. Nitrogen should be considered as the fuel, P as the ignition and S as the turbo.

Slurry is an excellent Spring fertiliser but 85% of the fertiliser value is in the form of P and K. Therefore, applying slurry to your low fertility fields and silage ground is the best strategy. The N source of choice in Spring should be protected urea. Applying P as a straight can bring great flexibility and simplicity to addressing deficiencies. Remember there is no bad day to spread lime! Also, grazing will kick start the grass plant out of dormancy and into action.

For further information please contact your local Sales/Branch Manager.



ACTIONS TO REDUCE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

PROTECTED UREA ON DAIRY FARMS

