

INFORMATION PACK FOR PROSPECTIVE NORTHERN IRELAND EURODAIRY PILOT FARMERS

Background

EuroDairy is a network being initiated to increase the economic, social and environmental sustainability of dairy farming in Europe, at a time of unprecedented challenge for the sector.

Funded by the EU Horizon 2020 programme, EuroDairy will foster the development and dissemination of practice-based innovation in dairy farming, targeting key sustainability issues following the abolition of milk quotas: socio economic resilience, resource efficiency, animal care, and the integration of milk production with biodiversity objectives.

EuroDairy spans 14 countries, from Ireland to Poland, and from Sweden to Italy, encompassing 40% of dairy farmers, 45% of cows and 60% of European milk output. The project adopts the interactive model of the European Innovation Partnership, putting farmers at the centre of practice-based innovation, adapting and developing new and existing scientific knowledge to produce implementable solutions, which can then be shared across the network.

The overall objective of EuroDairy is to establish a Thematic Network to increase the economic, environmental and social sustainability of European dairy farming. It will 'unlock' knowledge to increase the uptake of innovation and best practice.

Specific objectives are to:

1. Accelerate the uptake of best practice by exchanging knowledge on four priority themes (resource efficiency, biodiversity, animal care and socio-economic resilience).
2. Capture and/or stimulate further innovative practice in order to provide solutions, or overcome barriers to implementation.
3. Synthesise the scientific and practice-based knowledge created, into user-friendly formats and training materials.
4. Disseminate this information widely to European dairy farmers.
5. Collate ideas from end-users for further innovation-driven research, and communicate these back to the EIP-AGRI network.

EuroDairy aims to strengthen the connection of science and practice, ensuring two-way flow of information and ideas within and across 14 EU Member States.

In the EU regions, farmer-driven 'Operational Groups' will come together to target specific problems or opportunities for the dairy sector. At national level, EuroDairy partners will stimulate the establishment of these 'multi-actor' groups consisting of farmers, advisors, vets, researchers etc. and the EuroDairy network will link these existing and new groups cross-border, so that innovations identified in one country or region, can be shared with another. In addition, the project will establish

120 innovating dairy farmers across Europe to demonstrate best practice, and push boundaries in the application of new knowledge.

RECRUITMENT OF NORTHERN IRELAND PILOT FARMS

As the EuroDairy project partner for Northern Ireland, AgriSearch is now looking to recruit a small number of dairy farmers to form part of this pan-European network of pilot farms. Farms should be undertaking further development or implementing innovations in one or more of the following areas:

- Resource efficiency
- Animal Care
- Biodiversity
- Socio-economic resilience

There are a wide variety of potential innovations that would be relevant to EuroDairy, such as:

- Innovative feeding systems / feed rationing / feed efficiency
- Innovative systems / management tools to maximise utilisation of grazed grass and / or silage.
- Innovations around nutrient management planning, manure application etc.
- Innovative practices relating the energy efficiency
- Innovations in cattle housing, bedding etc.
- Innovations in welfare assessment, health planning etc.
- Innovations to improve the environmental impact of dairy farming
- Innovations relating to financial planning and the social aspects of farming (work/life balance), succession planning etc.

Note that this is not intended to be a prescriptive or exhaustive list and other innovations or developments relating to any of the four key themes of EuroDairy are welcome.

We will be looking to recruit farmers that reflect a range of farming systems.

Other Requirements

Pilot farmers should have:

- Good physical and financial performance, and be willing to share these with wider groups of farmers
- Good communication skills
- Good record keeping
- Be willing to host farm visits from both local and international farmers
- Be willing to participate in local meetings (including operational groups)
- Be willing to go on an exchange to visit other farmers in Europe

Pilot farmers will be financially benchmarked for two years using the European Dairy Farmers financial comparison system. For this reason, we would particularly welcome applications from farmers who are already participating in the EDF financial comparison programme.

Additional information will be collected (which will depend on the type of innovations they are implementing on their farms).

Being linked to the EuroDairy network will create additional opportunities to exchange knowledge with like-minded farmers, as well as acquire a deeper understanding of the performance of your farm. The intention is that exchange visits will be organised between NI pilot farmers and pilot farmers from other parts of Europe. Prospective pilot farmers should therefore be willing to go on such a trip and host European farmers in return.

If you are interested in applying, then download and complete the application form from the AgriSearch website and return by email or post no later than 8th August 2016.

If you have any queries on this project or the application process, please contact Jason Rankin Tel: 028 92681613 or email jason@agrisearch.org