

LMC REFLECTS ON A YEAR OF TREMENDOUS SUCCESS

The Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) has just completed its activities for the 2021/2022 financial year. It's a milestone that has given the organisation's Chief Executive, Ian Stevenson, the opportunity to reflect on a very productive 12 months.

Image 1: LMC Chief Executive Ian Stevenson



The Commission generates an annual turnover of approximately £2.6m. Levies paid on all slaughtered cattle and sheep by both farmers and processors across Northern Ireland represent one of the organisation's two main income streams.

The fees paid by the 12,000 members of the Northern Ireland Beef and Lamb Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (NIBLFQAS) constitute the other main source of funding for LMC. "It has been a very busy 12 months," Ian Stevenson confirmed. "During this period the Commission has managed to successfully develop the range of services that it provides to the farming community and other stakeholder organisations. "Our core aim is to undertake a range of marketing-related and other development activities that deliver real value-for-money to all our levy payers."

The last 12 months have seen very significant political and economic decisions taken that will fundamentally impact on the development of beef and sheep production here in Northern Ireland over the coming years. The passing of bespoke climate change legislation and the formulation of post-Brexit support measures for agriculture are two of the most significant issues that have galvanised opinion both within and outside of agriculture over recent months. And it won't come as a surprise to learn that LMC has played a key role in helping to shape the more than healthy debate that has ensued, where these matters are concerned.

However, Ian Stevenson will always come back to the fundamental marketing and quality assurance related services delivered by LMC when it comes to confirming the key drivers that underpin the organisation.

Ian explained: "The services that we provide are always evolving in ways that reflect changes in consumer choice and the needs of our levy payers. "Communicating clear and unambiguous messages to the entire gamut of consumer and industry groups that LMC interacts with is at the heart of this process." An excellent example of this work is the LMC's interaction with schools.

"This is allowing us to educate the consumers and shoppers of tomorrow regarding the important role that both beef and lamb play in a healthy balanced diet".

The current academic year has seen LMC's team of trained demonstrators complete 375 cookery 'teach-ins' at post-primary schools across Northern Ireland. "This is the maximum number of demonstrations that we can host in an academic year," Ian confirmed. "In fact, we were fully booked-out for the year's programme by the end of last September. The demand for the demonstrations confirms the recognition on the part of teachers that they do play a very valuable role in teaching young children about making balanced dietary choices."

He continued: "The last number of months has seen us launch a trial cookery demonstration programme, directed at children in primary schools. "The results generated by the trial have been extremely positive. It is now our intention to roll out an expanded primary school scheme in 2022/23. "The ongoing success of the Meat4Schools competition has further cemented the relationship that LMC enjoys with teachers and pupils alike."

Direct marketing and promotional activities, including television, radio and other forms of advertising have been another successful means by which the Commission has communicated with consumers. Ian Stevenson again: "The early months of this year were marked by a strategic advertising campaign, profiling the benefits of red meat in the diet. This adds to the momentum created by earlier campaigns. "Increasingly, we are making very effective use of social media to communicate effectively with targeted consumer groups factually important messages about beef and lamb, sustainability, food quality, health and nutrition."

Ian added: "The good news for LMC levy payers is that all of this work is delivering in terms of delivering a very strong and positive message to consumers. Independent analysis has consistently confirmed this to be the case."

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the launch of the Northern Ireland Beef and Lamb Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (NIBLFQAS). In very simple terms, the Scheme is underpinning the access that beef and lamb from Northern Ireland enjoys on the GB market. "Red meat sales from Northern Ireland to the rest of the UK amount to £1 billion on an annual basis," stressed Ian Stevenson

"Our beef and lamb products enjoy total parity of esteem with produce from England, Scotland and Wales. One of the most obvious examples of how NIBLFQAS is working to support local beef and sheep producers is its full recognition by all the UK supermarkets."

He continued: "NIBLFQAS is unique across the UK in being funded by participating farmers and processors. The scheme standards and rules continue to evolve in line with local priorities and agreed quality assurance outcomes with our partner schemes in England, Wales and Scotland. "Moreover, the farm quality assurance criteria continue to evolve with changing industry and consumer expectations.

NIBLFQAS has been reviewed on a regular basis over recent years with a stronger focus on farm safety, improved environmental standards and the need for farmers to place a greater emphasis on improved animal health and welfare." "The farm quality assurance scheme is also helping to secure the strongest possible foothold here in Northern Ireland, a market that is worth £200m to local livestock farmers and processors. "And the same principle holds when it comes to securing new outlets for locally produced beef and lamb outside the UK. "These markets currently generate around £300m of sales on an annual basis. The potential to grow this business is immense. But fundamentally, buyers will primarily want to do business on the back of the independent accreditation delivered by NIBLFQAS."

Ian is also quick to link the development work undertaken through NIBLFQAS with the marketing work undertaken by the Commission. "It is more than significant that 80% plus of local consumers recognise the farm quality assured logo and identify it strongly with the highest standards of farming practices that are employed here in Northern Ireland. "Of equal importance is the fact that food retailers also view NIBLFQAS accreditation in a similar context through forming part of their supply specifications and many choosing to display the logo on packs."

Driving improved sustainability within Northern Ireland's beef and sheep sectors remains a key priority for LMC. And it is in this context that Ian Stevenson sees an evolving role for NIBLFQAS. For example, the Commission is centrally involved in the work to have Northern Ireland included in the campaign to have the European Union officially recognise a protected geographical indication (PGI) for Irish grass fed beef. Ian explained: "This is very much a technical and legal process".

LMC has worked with local stakeholders to gather evidence that has enabled DEFRA to register an official, but constructive, opposition notice to the initial PGI application submitted by the Irish government. "Taking this approach allows Brussels to officially consider the case for Northern Ireland to be included within the geographic parameters recognised by the proposed PGI. "Once Brussels considers the opposition it will hopefully be a relatively straightforward process to develop an all-island specification, given that all the relevant parties are in agreement on this matter."

He added: "But beyond this, Northern Ireland must demonstrate that the beef sector here can fully confirm that our production processes comply fully with the technical details laid down within the PGI specification. "And it is in this context that NIBLFQAS will play a critically important role as an information gathering tool. "This can be achieved by including a number of additional questions that can be addressed as part of an NIBLFQAS inspection process."

The LMC representative went on to confirm that information gathering of this nature will also be critically important in determining the beef and sheep sector's response to climate change and the evolution of new farm support measures. "The acquiring of accurate data will help drive decision making across a number of important policy areas into the future," he said.

"The good news is that NIBLFQAS procedures can be quite easily amended to make this a reality." The last 12 months have been marked by the development of an ever-closer working relationship between LMC and other industry stakeholder bodies. "And we are going to see more of this in the future," Ian Stevenson declared. "The last year has seen us join forces with the Ulster Farmers' Union, the Northern Ireland Meat Exporters' Association and the Dairy Council for Northern Ireland to fund the KPMG economic impact analysis on climate change. "I feel this piece of work was central in educating our politicians on such an important matter and delivering a much more sustainable final outcome for the farming and food sectors."

He added: "Another example of how collaboration has worked well was the Commission's joining forces with Ulster Farmers' Union and the Northern Ireland Meat Exporters' Association, this time to commission the Andersons Centre report into future beef and lamb policy support options. "The upshot of this was a very close alignment between numerous proposals contained within the Andersons Centre report and the future package of agricultural policy support measures recently espoused by DAERA."

Cattle deadweight price reporting is another fundamental service delivered by LMC on behalf of the Northern Ireland region. Ian Stevenson concluded; "In addition to the weekly LMC Bulletin and other Market Information publications well over 220 bespoke press articles across the UK and Ireland have featured content from LMC's price reporting and accompanying analysis as well as other important information from LMC on red meat issues and activities provided by the LMC's team of professional staff. "I think that's a figure that speaks for itself."

FQAS Helpline

If you have had a recent inspection and need help and advice to rectify any non-conformances.
Contact the FQAS helpline: 028 9263 3024

Answerphone Service

Factory base quotes & mart results
Updated 5pm Daily
Tel: 028 9263 3011

Text Service

Free weekly base quotes sent to your mobile phone
Email: bulletin@lmcni.com
Tel: 028 9263 3000

WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS

CATTLE TRADE

NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 11/04/22	Next Week 18/04/22
Prime		
U-3	392 - 420p	392 - 420p
R-3	386 - 414p	386 - 414p
O+3	380 - 408p	380 - 408p
P+3	324 - 358p	324 - 358p
	Including bonus where applicable	
Cows		
O+3	280 - 344p	280 - 344p

Cow quotes vary depending on weight and grade.
Pricing policies vary from plant to plant. Producers are advised to check pricing policies before presenting cattle for slaughter.

Deadweight Cattle Trade

The deadweight cattle trade strengthened this week with base quotes from the major NI processors for in spec U-3 grade prime cattle ranging from 392-420p/kg. With the majority of plants quoting at the upper end of the scale producers should use these quotes as a starting point for negotiation. The trade for good quality O+3 cows also strengthened with base quotes ending this week ranging from 280-344p/kg. Similar quotes, are expected for all types of cattle early next week but LMC recommends confirming prices with your meat plant cattle buyer after the Easter break.

The plants have reported steady supplies of cattle coming forward for slaughter with prime cattle throughput last week totalling 8,029 head. This is an increase of 117 head compared to the previous week and 37 percent increase on the same week in 2021. Meanwhile cow throughput in NI last week totalled 2,284 head, a similar throughput to the previous week, and up 838 head when compared to the 1,446 cows slaughtered in the same week last year.

Imports from ROI for direct slaughter in NI plants last week consisted of 330 prime cattle and 85 cows, compared to 316 prime cattle and 74 cows during the corresponding week in 2021. There were no imports from GB to NI for direct slaughter last week. Exports from NI to ROI for direct slaughter last week consisted of two prime cattle and 42 cows while two prime cattle and 33 cows were exported to GB for direct slaughter.

Deadweight cattle prices in NI last week strengthened across the majority of grades. The average steer price last week was up by 2.2p/kg to 413p/kg from the previous week while the R3 steer price increased by 2.5p/kg to 422.5p/kg. Meanwhile the average heifer price in NI last week was up by 2.8p/kg to 414.8p/kg while the R3 heifer price increased by 2.5p/kg to 423.9p/kg. The average young bull price in NI last week was back marginally to 392.4p/kg while the R3 young bull price increased by 2.3p/kg to 411.2p/kg. The average cow price in NI last week recorded an increase of 6.4p/kg to 319.5p/kg while the O3 cow price was up 7.6p/kg to 345.8p/kg.

In GB last week the deadweight trade for prime cattle improved across the grades, with the average steer price up 5.1p/kg to 432.8p/kg while the R3 steer price increased by 5.6p/kg to 439.2p/kg. The differential in R3 steer prices last week between NI and GB was 16.7p/kg or £58 on a 350kg carcass. The average heifer price in GB last week was up by 6.3p/kg to 432.4p/kg while the R3 heifer price increased by 7.4p/kg to 440.4p/kg. This puts the differential in R3 heifer prices last week between NI and GB at 16.5p/kg or £53 on a 320kg carcass.

Last week the deadweight trade in ROI increased in euro terms however a weakening in the euro against sterling resulted in declines across the majority of grades from the previous week. The R3 steer price in ROI was the equivalent of 401.2p/kg, back 2.2p/kg, which widens the differential between NI and ROI to 21.3p/kg or £75 on a 350kg carcass. The R3 heifer price was back by 1.1p/kg to the equivalent of 405p/kg. This puts the differential between NI and ROI at 18.9p/kg or £60 on a 320kg carcass.

LAST WEEK'S DEADWEIGHT CATTLE PRICES (UK / ROI)

W/E 09/04/22	Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB	
Steers	U3	428.2	410.0	440.7	441.8	442.5	446.8	442.5
	R3	422.5	401.2	443.8	439.7	436.9	438.4	439.2
	R4	419.2	404.9	443.4	439.2	435.1	436.7	439.8
	O3	409.7	392.5	431.9	421.0	418.6	417.2	420.3
AVG	413.0	-	440.1	431.8	430.1	428.8	432.8	
Heifers	U3	429.1	416.2	452.2	446.4	449.6	448.3	449.3
	R3	423.9	405.0	448.0	440.0	439.2	436.9	440.4
	R4	419.9	407.7	445.7	438.9	437.1	435.9	440.5
	O3	410.8	397.6	425.1	421.4	414.3	415.0	417.4
AVG	414.8	-	443.3	432.1	428.5	425.0	432.4	
Young Bulls	U3	413.1	399.2	440.0	443.8	432.3	443.3	441.0
	R3	411.2	389.9	434.7	434.1	435.4	425.9	434.2
	O3	391.1	372.3	415.2	411.0	413.6	411.7	412.4
AVG	392.4	-	434.3	424.5	418.4	425.5	424.0	
Prime Cattle Price Reported	6,649	-	6,428	7,052	7,559	5,046	26,085	
Cows	O3	345.8	342.7	376.3	372.3	372.1	373.5	372.8
	O4	344.9	340.6	378.1	376.7	376.5	372.0	375.7
	P2	303.5	312.8	338.5	338.5	331.3	333.4	333.4
	P3	325.1	332.1	347.4	350.8	352.2	353.4	352.2
AVG	319.5	-	369.5	360.5	347.6	344.6	351.6	

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=83.53p Stg
(ii) Shading indicates a lower price than the previous week.
(iii) AVG is the average of all grades in the category, not just those listed

REPORTED NI CATTLE PRICES - P/KG

W/E 09/04/22	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	427.3	428.8	413.5
R3	421.5	422.8	411.9
O+3	413.2	414.5	400.6

*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 09/04/22	Weight Bands			
	<220kg	220-250kg	250-280kg	>280kg
P1	240.6	256.4	270.0	272.6
P2	260.0	279.4	304.4	320.4
P3	274.6	301.9	321.7	327.5
O3	-	334.4	341.9	346.3
O4	-	316.0	341.4	345.2
R3	-	-	360.0	365.4

LATEST LIVELWEIGHT CATTLE MART PRICES NI

W/E 09/04/22	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
Finished Cattle (p/kg)						
Steers	260	278	268	215	259	232
Friesians	184	206	190	178	183	180
Heifers	250	288	260	210	249	225
Beef Cows	190	249	202	140	189	168
Dairy Cows	160	183	167	115	159	132
Store Cattle (p/kg)						
Bullocks up to 400kg	260	336	280	200	259	230
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	240	302	260	195	239	215
Bullocks over 500kg	230	268	245	185	229	212
Heifers up to 450kg	225	258	240	180	224	208
Heifers over 450kg	220	265	235	180	219	200
Dropped Calves (£/head)						
Continental Bulls	280	405	330	180	275	225
Continental Heifers	270	400	315	150	265	200
Friesian Bulls	105	160	125	50	100	75
Holstein Bulls	95	140	100	5	90	45

SHEEP TRADE

NI SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 11/04/22	Next Week 18/04/22
R3 Hoggets up to 22kg	585-590p	590p
R3 Spring Lambs up to 21kg	630-635p	630-635p

REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 26/03/22	W/E 02/04/22	W/E 09/04/22
NI L/W Hoggets	521.9	516.8	517.9
NI D/W Hoggets	555.6	568.3	570.8
GB D/W Hoggets	566.0	576.1	592.9
ROI D/W	588.1	606.7	609.2

Deadweight Sheep Trade

Base quotes from the major NI processors this week for R3 grade hoggets were in the region of 585-590p/kg with plants paying up to 22kg. Small numbers of springs lambs are starting to become available with quotes this week ranging from 630-635p/kg up to 21kg for R3 grading lambs. A total of 7,121 hoggets/lambs were killed in local plants last week, up 430 head from the 6,691 head killed locally the previous week. Exports of lambs/hoggets to ROI for direct slaughter totalled 5,716 head a decrease of 667 head when compared to the previous week. The average deadweight hogget price in NI last week was 570.8p/kg, up 2.5p/kg from the previous week. In ROI last week the average deadweight hogget price was up by the equivalent of 2.5p/kg to 609.2p/kg.

Liveweight Sheep Trade

A strong trade was reported across the marts this week with similar numbers of hoggets passing through when compared to last week. In Omagh last Saturday 581 hoggets sold from 477-547p/kg compared to 465 hoggets selling from 466-575p/kg the previous week. In Kilrea on Monday 550 hoggets sold from 546-645p/kg compared to last week when 500 hoggets sold from 540-609p/kg. In Massareene this week 375 hoggets sold from 510-545p/kg compared to 513 hoggets last week selling from 504-576p/kg. Increasing numbers of spring lambs passed through the marts this week with prices ranging from 509-651p/kg. The cull ewe trade remained firm this week with top reported prices ranging from £180-238 across the marts.

LATEST SHEEP MARTS (P/KG LW)

From: 09/04/22		Hoggets				Spring Lambs			
To: 14/04/22		No	From	To	Avg	No	From	To	Avg
Saturday	Swatragh	420	480	630	-	34	600	645	-
	Omagh	581	477	547	-	57	509	581	-
Monday	Kilrea	550	546	645	-	-	-	-	-
	Massareene	375	510	545	-	-	-	-	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	415	510	575	-	-	-	-	-
	Rathfriland	356	510	570	535	153	536	600	580
Wednesday	Ballymena	1102	490	585	515	125	570	651	585
	Enniskillen	585	512	560	-	-	-	-	-
	Armoyn	344	495	565	-	-	-	-	-
	Markethill	580	530	590	-	125	550	607	-

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