

BRUSSELS GIVES GREEN LIGHT TO THE PRINCIPLE OF AN ALL-ISLAND PGI FOR IRISH GRASS FED BEEF

The European Union (EU) has officially advised National Authorities in the UK and the Republic of Ireland that it considers as admissible a reasoned statement of opposition; submitted by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) on behalf of Northern Ireland producers; to have Northern Ireland included within the geographic area recognised within the proposed Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) application for Irish Grass Fed Beef.

“The term opposition is very much a misnomer in the context of the PGI discussion,” confirmed Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) chief executive Ian Stevenson.

“All the relevant organisations involved in Belfast, Dublin and London have accepted the principle of Northern Ireland’s inclusion within the proposed PGI for quite some time. “But in order to make this possible at an official level, there was a requirement on the part of DEFRA to register an ‘opposition’ with Brussels during the recent opposition procedure which was run by the European Commission. “This is very much a technical matter. But essentially, it is the only way in which the European Commission could have given the green light for the original PGI application submitted by Dublin to be amended.” He added: “The good news is that the required official procedures have now been completed in this regard.

“The European Commission has now given a three-month period where it has invited the relevant bodies (the applicant and the opponent) to engage in appropriate consultations and to inform the Commission of the results of these consultations. We envisage that the three-month period will be used constructively to agree an amended product specification and single

document to include Northern Ireland references and practices.”

According to the LMC representative, the attainment of PGI status will add real potential to Northern Ireland’s beef sector. “Farmers and processors should benefit in equal measure,” he said. The current grass-fed beef market globally is valued at US\$11.6 billion. However, a recent report compiled by Future Market Insights indicates that the sector could increase in value by as much as US\$6.3 billion dollars annually over the next decade.



From the outset LMC has played a key role in shaping the campaign regarding Northern Ireland’s inclusion within the Irish Grass Fed Beef PGI. And this work continues apace.

The Commission’s Industry Development Manager Colin Smith has chaired meetings of a specifically established Sustainable Beef Project Steering Group for the past number of months. Comprising representatives from LMC; the Northern Ireland Meat Exporters Association (NIMEA); the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), the Ulster Farmers’ Union (UFU); the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE), and the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute

(AFBI); its job has been to help define the technical and management parameters for Northern Ireland to be included within the new PGI.

“All of this work requires close liaison with Bord Bia and the other relevant agencies in the Republic of Ireland,” Ian Stevenson further explained. “There is detailed work ongoing to finalise the verification measures that will be put in place, ensuring that the PGI specification is being adhered to at all times.”

The members of the LMC management team believe that it will be possible for local beef producers to have their farm’s grass-fed beef credentials verified at the same time as a farm quality assurance inspection is carried.

The APHIS database will also be uniquely valuable in delivering important and accurate traceability information in relation to every bovine animal maintained on Northern Ireland’s farms. This will be critical part of the Grass Fed Beef calculation.

Ian Stevenson is confident that all of the relevant, PGI-related technical issues can be agreed within the three-month time period specified by the European Commission. He concluded: “At a technical level having a PGI status emphasises the relationship between the specific geographic region and the name of the product, where a particular quality, reputation or other characteristic is essentially attributable to its geographic origin. The PGI label is well recognised in domestic and international marketplaces.”

“Having locally produced, farm quality assured grass fed beef recognised in this way will be a

very important milestone for Northern Ireland’s livestock sector as a whole.”

Ireland’s farm minister, Charlie McConalogue TD, has officially responded to the official views expressed by the European Commission, regarding an All-Ireland GI for grass fed beef.

He said: “My department along with An Bord Bia are currently examining the reasoned statement of opposition submitted by the UK. For some time now, my department and An Bord Bia have fully engaged with their counterparts in Northern Ireland to share information and provide advice on the technical aspects of a grass fed standard and related matters associated with the possibility of having an all island PGI for Irish Grass Fed Beef. I welcome the opportunity now for both parties to engage to progress and finalise this work.”

He added: “The PGI application and product specification has been subject to scrutiny by the European Commission, EU Member States and third countries. The European Commission has not been advised of any other opposition.

“I believe that the success in getting the application to this stage of the process demonstrates the quality of the product specification that was drafted by Bord Bia in consultation with my officials and which took account of engagement with our farming representative bodies through our national opposition procedure.”

The minister concluded: “I am hopeful that the engagement between both parties can be progressed quickly. I am excited to see the Irish Grass Fed Beef come to fruition for the benefit of our beef farmers on the island.”

BEEF MARKET OVERVIEW 2021-22

The Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) has just completed a beef market overview for the financial year 2021-22. The work highlights just how important the sector is to Northern Ireland's economy as a whole.

For the financial year 2021-22 there were 358,986 prime cattle killed in local beef processing plants, an increase of 18,579 head from the previous financial year. The average carcass weight of prime cattle also recorded an increase of 2.6kg from the previous financial year to 348.4kg during 2021-22.

Cow throughput in Northern Ireland totalled 109,551 head during the year, an increase of 6.2 per cent from the 103,115 cows processed in 2020-21. However, the average carcass weight of cows decreased 2.7kg to 310kg in the 2021-22 period.

Beef production from prime cattle increased by 6.2 per cent to 125,135 tonnes while the volume of cow beef processed increased by just over five per cent to 33,879 tonnes.

The average R3 steer price in Northern Ireland for 2021-22 was 401.3p/kg, a strengthening of 34.6p/kg from 366.7p/kg during the 2020-21 period. Cow prices also improved in 2021-22 with the average O3 cow price up 33.3p/kg from 2020-21 levels to 307.7p/kg.

Imports and exports of cattle for direct slaughter continued to operate at relatively low levels in the 2021-22 financial year. A total of 14,219 prime cattle were imported from the Republic of Ireland for direct slaughter during 2021-22, a four per cent decrease when compared to the 14,810 prime cattle imported the previous year. Imported cattle from the Republic of Ireland accounted for

just four per cent of total prime cattle throughput in Northern Ireland in the 2021-22 financial year. Meanwhile 803 prime cattle and 3,045 cows were exported out of NI to ROI and GB during 2021-22 financial year with 80 per cent exported to ROI for direct slaughter.

During 2021-22 there were 368,535 beef sired calves registered on Northern Ireland farms, an increase of just over 3,900 head from the previous year. Aberdeen Angus calf registrations continue to increase year on year with an increase of 3.4 per cent from 2020-21 levels. This has resulted in more Aberdeen Angus bred cattle on local farms and accounts for a larger proportion of Aberdeen Angus cattle in the NI slaughter mix throughout 2021-22.

Table 1: Cattle throughput in NI plants
Source: DAERA

Cattle processed in NI plants (head)			
	April 2020 to March 2021	April 2021 to March 2022	% Change
Steers	172,828	181,636	+5%
Heifers	134,187	139,279	+4%
Young Bulls	33,392	38,071	+14%
Total Prime Cattle	340,407	358,986	+5%
Calves	5,247	6,240	+19%
Cows	103,115	109,551	+6%
Mature Bulls	5,641	5,514	-2%
Total Cattle	454,410	480,291	+6%

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WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS

CATTLE TRADE

NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 25/04/22	Next Week 02/05/22
Prime		
U-3	392 - 420p	392 - 424p
R-3	386 - 414p	386 - 416p
O+3	380 - 408p	380 - 410p
P+3	324 - 358p	324 - 362p
	Including bonus where applicable	
Cows		
O+3	280 - 348p	280 - 352p

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.

REPORTED NI CATTLE PRICES - P/KG

W/E 16/04/22	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	434.9	437.2	418.9
R3	428.0	429.5	414.9
O+3	420.0	422.2	408.4

*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 23/04/22	Weight Bands			
	<220kg	220-250kg	250-280kg	>280kg
P1	250.8	265.3	279.0	292.2
P2	258.0	285.9	313.7	325.8
P3	269.2	306.2	327.2	335.9
O3	-	323.5	345.8	351.2
O4	-	-	351.1	353.4
R3	-	-	-	370.1

Deadweight Cattle Trade

Base quotes from the major NI processors for in spec U-3 grade prime cattle remained steady this week, ranging from 392-420p/kg. The trade for good quality O+3 cows strengthened mid week by 4p/kg at the upper end with base quotes ending this week ranging from 280-348p/kg. For next week plants are quoting 392-424p/kg for U-3 prime cattle and 280-352p/kg for O+3 cows.

Prime cattle throughput last week was back by 1,090 head from the previous week to total 6,240 head. This is also back 122 head when compared to the same week in 2021 when 6,362 prime cattle were processed locally. Cow throughput in NI last week totalled 1,746 head, back 175 cows from the previous week. Despite the Easter break this is up 65 head when compared to the 1,681 cows processed in the same week last year.

Imports from ROI for direct slaughter in NI plants last week consisted of 139 prime cattle and 80 cows. This brings total year to date prime cattle imports from ROI to NI for direct slaughter to 2,930 head, back 1,122 head or 28 per cent when compared to the same period last year. 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 three prime cattle and 63 cows while 35 cows made the journey to GB for direct slaughter.

Deadweight cattle prices in NI last week continued to strengthen. The average steer price increased last week by 3p/kg from the previous week to 420.2p/kg while the R3 steer price increased 3.7p/kg to 429.4p/kg. This is the highest recorded R3 steer price ever in NI and an increase of almost 24p/kg from the beginning of 2022. Meanwhile the average heifer price in NI last week was up by 2.2p/kg to 421.6p/kg while the R3 heifer price increased by 2.5p/kg to 430.2p/kg. This is also the highest reported R3 heifer price in NI, with the R3 heifer price recording an increase of almost 25p/kg since January 2022. The average young bull price in NI last week was up just over 5p/kg to 402.3p/kg while the R3 young bull price increased by 4.2p/kg to 415.1p/kg. The average cow price in NI last week recorded an increase of 6.6p/kg to 328.8p/kg with the O3 cow price up 0.8p/kg to 350.5p/kg.

In GB last week the average steer price in GB was up by a penny to 437.9p/kg while the R3 steer price increased by 0.3p/kg to 443.4p/kg. This places the differential in the R3 steer price last week between NI and GB at 14p/kg or £49 on a 350kg carcass. The average heifer price in GB last week was up by 1.3p/kg to 438p/kg while the R3 heifer price increased by 0.3p/kg to 444.2p/kg. This puts the differential in R3 heifer prices last week between NI and GB at 14p/kg or £45 on a 320kg carcass.

In ROI last week deadweight cattle prices reported increases across all grades. The R3 steer price in ROI was the equivalent of 406.5p/kg, up by 2.6p/kg from the previous week, which puts the differential between NI and ROI at 22.9p/kg or £80 on a 350kg carcass. The R3 heifer price increased by 1.6p/kg to 409.2p/kg. This puts the differential between NI and ROI at 21p/kg or £67 on a 320kg carcass.

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

	W/E 23/04/22	Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	434.7	413.7	446.0	448.0	448.2	448.7	447.6
	R3	429.4	406.5	445.7	445.1	441.8	441.6	443.4
	R4	427.3	409.5	444.5	450.3	444.7	442.2	446.0
	O3	417.4	397.3	432.5	431.6	422.8	422.0	426.5
	AVG	420.2	-	441.5	441.4	433.6	433.9	437.9
Heifers	U3	436.5	418.9	452.7	455.2	454.5	452.6	453.7
	R3	430.2	409.2	448.9	444.7	443.6	440.8	444.2
	R4	427.3	411.9	448.7	449.6	443.0	441.6	446.8
	O3	418.4	402.6	429.9	430.2	419.1	418.1	423.6
	AVG	421.6	-	445.8	440.8	432.3	430.7	438.0
Young Bulls	U3	418.1	403.8	440.4	445.0	445.2	449.6	443.7
	R3	415.1	394.7	439.1	439.0	440.4	439.9	439.5
	O3	400.5	378.1	408.7	399.2	416.1	399.3	407.6
	AVG	402.3	-	431.5	430.2	426.5	433.1	429.5
Prime Cattle Price Reported		5,098	-	6,382	6,115	6,272	4,368	23,137
Cows	O3	350.5	347.9	381.4	380.4	375.5	375.5	377.8
	O4	353.3	345.1	384.2	383.2	379.2	374.6	380.0
	P2	308.2	316.0	342.0	333.7	336.1	335.9	336.2
	P3	331.3	335.7	355.0	353.1	352.0	349.0	351.6
	AVG	328.8	-	372.7	363.6	352.2	347.9	355.9

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=83.34p 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

LATEST LIVELWEIGHT CATTLE MART PRICES NI

	W/E 23/04/22	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
		From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
Finished Cattle (p/kg)							
Steers		260	278	268	210	259	230
Friesians		199	226	208	183	198	190
Heifers		256	277	265	210	255	225
Beef Cows		210	270	225	160	209	180
Dairy Cows		155	177	165	110	154	132
Store Cattle (p/kg)							
Bullocks up to 400kg		240	313	270	200	239	220
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg		230	279	255	180	229	210
Bullocks over 500kg		225	261	240	175	224	205
Heifers up to 450kg		250	303	270	200	249	220
Heifers over 450kg		210	231	220	165	209	190
Dropped Calves (£/head)							
Continental Bulls		300	500	350	200	295	250
Continental Heifers		280	515	320	150	275	205
Friesian Bulls		100	150	125	50	95	75
Holstein Bulls		80	150	115	2	75	40

SHEEP TRADE

NI SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 25/04/22	Next Week 02/05/22
R3 Hoggets up to 22kg	570-585p	570-585p
R3 Spring Lambs up to 21kg	600-625p	610-625p

REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 09/04/22	W/E 16/04/22	W/E 23/04/22
NI L/W Hoggets	517.9	520.3	497.8
NI L/W Spring Lambs	569.0	590.4	566.5
NI D/W Hoggets	570.8	573.3	563.6
NI D/W Spring Lambs	607.0	606.1	591.8
GB D/W Hoggets	592.9	595.4	597.9
GB D/W Spring Lambs	-	643.4	648.2
ROI D/W Hoggets	609.2	608.1	611.2

Deadweight Sheep Trade

Quotes from the NI plants for R3 grade hoggets ended this week in the region of 570-585p/kg up to 22kg while quotes for spring lambs came back to 600-625p/kg up to 21kg, next week processors are quoting 610-625p/kg for spring lambs. The processors have reported fewer numbers of hoggets/lambs coming forward for slaughter with throughput last week totalling 4,542 head. This was back 1,463 head from the 6,005 hoggets/lambs processed in local plants the previous week. Exports of lambs/hoggets from NI to ROI for direct slaughter last week totalled 3,297 head back 1,078 head from the 4,375 head exported the previous week. The average deadweight hogget price in NI last week was back by 9.7p/kg to 563.6p/kg while the average deadweight spring lamb price in NI last week was back by 14.3p/kg to 591.8p/kg. Last week the ROI deadweight lamb/hogget price was up 3.1p/kg to 611.2p/kg.

Liveweight Sheep Trade

The number of hoggets passing through the sale rings has continued to decline in line with normal seasonal trends while the number of spring lambs on offer has started to increase across many of the marts. In Omagh last Saturday 255 hoggets sold from 483-509p/kg with 78 spring lambs selling from 512-614p/kg. In Rathfriland this week 361 spring lambs sold from 545-602p/kg (avg 575p/kg). Across the marts top reported prices for cull ewes generally ranged from £180-£260 with a top price of £286 reported in Swatragh last Saturday.

LATEST SHEEP MARTS (P/KG LW)

From: 23/04/22		Hoggets				Spring Lambs			
To: 27/04/22		No	From	To	Avg	No	From	To	Avg
Saturday	Swatragh	510	467	608	-	-	-	-	-
	Omagh	255	483	509	-	78	512	614	-
Monday	Kilrea	450	524	641	-	-	-	-	-
	Massereene	565	488	522	-	109	590	609	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	368	505	614	-	-	-	-	-
	Rathfriland	-	-	-	-	361	545	602	575
Wednesday	Ballymena	445	460	552	505	260	560	611	590
	Enniskillen	390	500	570	-	150	540	610	-
	Armoy	270	480	555	-	-	-	-	-
	Markethill	450	510	581	-	310	560	600	-

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