

INTERNATIONAL BEEF SECTOR IS ACTIVELY RESPONDING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) chief executive Ian Stevenson has confirmed that the international beef sector is responding positively to the challenge of climate change. He points to the conclusions of a recent report, prepared by the economics research team at Wageningen University in the Netherlands, as proof of this assertion. The research was jointly commissioned by the Dairy Working Group and the European Roundtable for Beef Sustainability (ERBS) groupings within the Sustainable Agriculture Initiative (SAI) platform. Ian Stevenson is an ERBS board member.

The Sustainable Agriculture Initiative Platform (SAI Platform) is a not-for-profit organisation working to support transformation of the global food and drink industry to source and produce more sustainably. With over 150 members, from companies and organisations in the global food and drink value chain, SAI Platform is at the forefront in pioneering solutions to common challenges and promoting sustainable agriculture in a pre-competitive environment.

SAI Platform's Dairy Working Group (DWG) represents 30% of the global milk volume. It is a precompetitive platform in which dairy buyers and processors work together to develop sector transformational initiatives. A key priority for the group is that of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the dairy industry. ERBS is a multi-stakeholder platform, hosted by SAI Platform,

focused on European beef sustainability from farm to fork. ERBS unites and coordinates sustainability programmes around a common agenda to deliver positive impact within the beef value chain. One of the key outcome areas the ERBS is focused on is the reduction of GHG emissions as part of improving the environmental footprint of farming systems.

Ian Stevenson commented: "The team at Wageningen reviewed all the current scientific literature, which references carbon footprint mitigations options that can impact positively on dairy and livestock production. "They also surveyed the views of SAI platform members on this critically important matter. Significantly, the majority of businesses and organisations actively contributed to the project."

According to Ian, 28 mitigation measures were referenced in the final Wageningen report, which is available on the SAI Platform website. He further explained: "Of these mitigation measures currently in use the top five are worthy of note. It is significant that the measures deemed to be the most effective at the present time all serve to improve the production efficiency at farm levels. "Of equal significance, is the fact that all of these measures can and are being adopted in the same meaningful way on farms here in Northern Ireland."

Ian continued: "Coming in at number one is the

use of improved animal breeding techniques to improve livestock productivity levels (for example through higher milk yields and number of calves per cow per year). The parallels that can be drawn for Northern Ireland in adopting this approach is obvious.

"The second ranked mitigation measure is that of improving animal efficiency levels. Factors coming into focus here include increases in food conversion rates and reductions in the time required to take animals through from birth to final slaughter." "The third most effective mitigation measure identified by the Wageningen team is that of improving diet composition and ensuring that animals have access to the quality and consistency of feed that they need at all times."

"Improving animal health levels is the fourth ranked mitigation measure," commented the LMC chief executive. "And in this context the greater use of vaccines and introducing effective management systems that maximise all animal health criteria are regarded as being critically important. "Improving forage quality comes in at

number five on the list of mitigation measures (for example through earlier harvesting and improved varieties). And, again, the relevance of this approach for farmers in Northern Ireland is immediately obvious."

The report also looks, in depth, at how improved manure management can be used to drive both efficiency and carbon footprint mitigation on livestock farms. Ian Stevenson again: "One of the most important themes within the report is its confirmation that many of these mitigation measures are being actively applied on livestock farms around the world. "The link between improved efficiency and reduced emission levels is obvious."

He concluded: "The Wageningen report reflects the impact of mitigation interventions that are available now. As the livestock industry looks to the future, the impact of future technologies that aren't in widespread use currently or, indeed those that we do not know about yet, will have to be factored-in down the line."

Image 1: Wageningen University where research was conducted

LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY LEFT IN STATE OF SHOCK

Northern Ireland's beef and sheep industry is in a state of deep shock, according to Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) chief executive Ian Stevenson. This follows the recent vote taken by Stormont MLAs, which could see the introduction of climate change legislation that compels Northern Ireland to reach a carbon net zero position by 2050.

Ian explained: "In essence, many of our local politicians have turned their backs on all of the independent scientific advice that was made available to them prior to the vote being taken. "Members of the UK's Committee on Climate Change had previously pointed out that it was not feasible for Northern Ireland to set a net zero carbon position for the region. Nor was such a stance required in the context of a climate change net zero target that had already been set for the UK as a whole. He continued: "Those MLAs who supported the net zero position were also fully aware of the dramatic impact such a policy would inflict on Northern Ireland's livestock sectors and rural areas prior to them voting. "And it is this fact, more than any other, that has deeply dismayed farmers and processors."We are also seeing a ripple effect, which is impacting on all those other stakeholder groups that interface with cattle and sheep production."

The LMC chief executive confirmed that last week's Stormont decision will have an almost

immediate effect on investment decisions taken within the beef and sheep sector. He said:"If this legislation is passed processors will be left with no option but to factor in how livestock numbers and raw material supply will be affected during the years ahead. "Their businesses are totally dependent on animal throughputs, when it comes to determining their viability and future sustainability."Livestock farmers, too, will be sitting down right now to work out their futures within the industry. "And the key question they will be asking is: can cattle and sheep production deliver a sustainable future for the next generation?"

Image 2: LMC Chief Executive Ian Stevenson



Ian continued: "Farmers involved in livestock production are working within small enough margins at the best of times."If they come to the conclusion that climate change legislation that offers no protection to the future of the agri-food

sector in Northern Ireland, many may well say that enough is enough. "They will stop investing in their farms. And we may well see evidence of this happening, sooner rather than later." The LMC representative is also deeply concerned about the mental health of farmers in the wake of the climate change vote at Stormont. He explained: "Many famers and their family members are already under great strain, given the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. "I am deeply concerned that the climate change vote will add to the stress levels they are already coping with. "Organisations like Rural Support are confirming the immense levels of stress-related illnesses that are pressing down on farming communities across Northern Ireland right now. "The Stormont climate change vote will, undoubtedly, add to this pressure."

According to Ian Stevenson, young children are particularly impacted when stress of any kind impacts on family groups for a sustained period of time. He commented: "Covid-19 has been a major factor in this regard. We now know that young people find it particularly difficult to cope with issues which they perceive to put the stability of their families at risk."The impact of the climate change vote is now being openly talked about in farm houses the length and breadth of Northern Ireland. "And, no doubt, children are getting a sense of just how serious these discussions are. "It's hard not to conclude that an environment of

this kind is not healthy for any young child."

Ian Stevenson believes that local politicians have acted to place a very large cloud over the entire future of livestock production and agri-food in Northern Ireland. "All of this is creating tremendous uncertainty at farm level," he added. "In fact, it's actually more serious than this. Farmers are now enduring a form of mental torture at the hands of our politicians. "Farming, by its very nature, can be a very lonely and isolating profession. This can represent a large enough mental health challenge in its own right. "Adding to this over recent years has been the unending demands of the animal welfare and vegan movements. "Cattle and sheep farmers know full well that they will always act to put the needs of their animals and the environment first."

He concluded: "Covid-19 added considerably to farmers' stress levels. And now we have the climate change vote at Stormont. "What's really sticking in the craw of farmers is the fact that they have little or no control over many of the challenges they face."However, they regard the Stormont climate change vote, very much, as a self-inflicted wound by local representatives who had neither need nor evidence to support this vote! "Let's hope some common sense prevails as the climate change legislation makes its way through the next stage of consideration at the Northern Ireland Assembly."

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WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS



CATTLE TRADE

NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 07/02/22	Next Week 14/02/22
Prime		
U-3	390 - 398p	392 - 398p
R-3	384 - 392p	386 - 392p
O+3	378 - 386p	380 - 386p
P+3	322 - 336p	324 - 336p
	Including bonus where applicable	
Cows		
O+3	280 - 300p	280 - 300p

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

Base quotes for in spec U-3 prime cattle strengthened this week ranging from 390-398p/kg with quotes ranging from 392-398p/kg expected for Monday. The cow trade also strengthened this week with quotes for good quality O+3 grading cows ranging from 280-300p/kg with similar quotes expected for early next week.

Prime cattle throughput last week increased by 326 head from the previous week to total 7,800 head. This is up 835 head from the 6,965 head processed in the same week last year. Cow throughput in NI last week consisted of 2,246 head, back 75 head from the previous week. In the corresponding week last year 1,645 cows were processed in local plants.

Imports of prime cattle from ROI for direct slaughter in NI plants last week consisted of 188 head with 172 cows also imported. Meanwhile there continues to be no cattle imports from GB for direct slaughter in NI. Cattle exports from NI for direct slaughter in ROI decreased last week with three prime cattle and 35 cows exported and there continue to be no cattle exported from NI to GB.

The deadweight cattle trade in NI firmed last week with the average steer price up 1.2p/kg to 397.7p/kg and the R3 steer price up 2.8p/kg to 407.6p/kg. In the same week last year the R3 steer price was 385.9p/kg, 21.7p/kg behind current levels. The average heifer price in NI last week increased by 0.3p/kg to 398.1p/kg with the R3 heifer price up by 1.2p/kg to 406.8p/kg. In the same week in 2020 the R3 heifer price was 384.9p/kg, 21.9p/kg behind current levels. The average young bull price in NI last week was back by almost a penny to 375.9p/kg while the R3 young bull price was up 1.1p/kg to 389.3p/kg. The cow trade in NI last week remained firm with the average cow price up 0.1p/kg to 277.2p/kg and the O3 cow price up 0.3p/kg to 303.9p/kg.

The deadweight trade for prime cattle in GB came under pressure last week with the majority of grades reporting declines from the previous week. The average steer price in GB last week decreased by 0.9p/kg to 406.1p/kg while the R3 steer price decreased by 1.4p/kg to 412.6p/kg. The R3 steer price in GB reported decreases across most of the GB regions last week with the strongest decline reported in Southern England of 2.3p/kg to 410.6p/kg. The average heifer price in GB was back 0.6p/kg to 405.3p/kg with the R3 heifer price back 1.7p/kg to 412.6p/kg. This brings the differential between the GB and NI R3 heifer price to 5.8p/kg. The cow trade in GB last week remained firm with the average cow price up 3.5p/kg to 278.2p/kg and the O3 cow price up 3.7p/kg to 297.4p/kg.

In ROI last week the R3 steer price was up 1.8p/kg to the equivalent of 365.4p/kg with the R3 heifer price up 1.9p/kg to the equivalent of 368.9p/kg. Meanwhile the cow trade in NI also remained firm with the O3 cow price up 2.5p/kg to the equivalent of 303.7p/kg.

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

	W/E 05/02/22	Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	411.1	371.4	408.2	413.4	420.1	415.3	413.7
	R3	407.6	365.4	409.9	416.6	413.3	410.6	412.6
	R4	404.3	367.4	409.9	418.1	411.7	412.4	413.1
	O3	394.2	355.7	398.7	401.9	394.4	389.6	395.7
	AVG	397.7	-	406.5	410.7	405.1	400.8	406.1
Heifers	U3	410.8	378.4	416.0	419.0	426.0	419.9	420.1
	R3	406.8	368.9	410.3	412.6	414.1	412.3	412.6
	R4	403.6	370.7	411.5	415.7	413.6	412.4	413.3
	O3	396.3	363.1	389.3	397.9	393.6	387.4	392.6
	AVG	398.1	-	408.0	407.0	404.6	400.2	405.3
Young Bulls	U3	389.8	356.3	400.4	413.4	404.1	408.0	405.7
	R3	389.3	348.6	395.4	407.1	404.9	403.4	403.8
	O3	376.1	338.0	374.6	372.4	381.2	359.9	376.0
	AVG	375.9	-	388.1	393.1	390.3	378.4	388.9
Prime Cattle Price Reported	6,433	-	6,621	6,321	7,259	4,848	25,049	
Cows	O3	303.9	303.7	295.5	297.8	297.8	297.6	297.4
	O4	305.5	303.5	299.0	299.2	298.7	298.1	298.8
	P2	263.5	277.3	253.1	253.1	257.4	254.7	255.9
	P3	283.3	291.3	277.2	275.1	275.7	275.4	275.6
	AVG	277.2	-	295.4	286.0	274.3	266.5	278.2

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=83.57p 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 05/02/22	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	410.9	411.7	391.3
R3	405.5	406.1	391.0
O+3	395.9	395.9	384.1

*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 05/02/22	Weight Bands			
	<220kg	220-250kg	250-280kg	>280kg
P1	199.6	214.9	226.6	237.2
P2	212.5	240.9	259.3	277.7
P3	232.1	253.5	279.1	286.7
O3	-	276.0	284.6	305.2
O4	254.0	264.0	291.9	306.3
R3	-	-	-	322.7

LATEST LIVEWEIGHT CATTLE MART PRICES NI

	W/E 05/02/22	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
		From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
Finished Cattle (p/kg)							
Steers		237	259	242	200	236	215
Friesians		184	196	187	166	183	174
Heifers		228	254	234	185	227	206
Beef Cows		185	225	193	140	184	162
Dairy Cows		132	175	136	100	131	115
Store Cattle (p/kg)							
Bullocks up to 400kg		260	319	290	220	259	235
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg		245	293	255	210	244	225
Bullocks over 500kg		227	253	235	190	226	205
Heifers up to 450kg		240	286	255	190	239	215
Heifers over 450kg		225	260	240	175	224	200
Dropped Calves (£/head)							
Continental Bulls up to 2 months		430	680	480	330	425	380
Continental Heifers up to 2 months		385	540	425	240	380	300
Friesian Bulls		150	260	180	50	145	90
Holstein Bulls		125	240	155	11	120	75

SHEEP TRADE

NI SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 07/02/22	Next Week 14/02/22
R3 Hoggets up to 22kg	555 - 560p/kg	545 - 550p/kg

REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 22/01/22	W/E 29/01/22	W/E 05/02/22
NI L/W Hoggets	496.5	505.4	512.6
NI D/W Hoggets	535.2	529.5	541.3
GB D/W Hoggets	585.5	577.6	587.4
ROI D/W	559.9	545.2	563.6

Deadweight Sheep Trade

Base quotes from the major processors ended this week ranging from 545-550p/kg for R3 grade hoggets up to 22kg. Throughput of hoggets in NI plants last week totalled of 6,901 head, back 309 head from the previous week. This is also back 481 head when compared to the 7,382 hoggets that were processed in local plants in the corresponding week in 2021. Exports of hoggets to ROI last week for direct slaughter totalled 5,211 head, up 458 head from the previous week. The average deadweight hogget price in NI last week increased by 11.8p/kg to 541.3p/kg.

Liveweight Sheep Trade

This week increasing numbers of hoggets passed through the sale rings. On Saturday in Omagh 615 hoggets sold from 493-541p/kg compared to 392 hoggets sold from 496-535p/kg last week. In Kilrea on Monday 750 hoggets sold from 510-536p/kg compared to 400 hoggets sold from 520-566p/kg the previous week. This week in Saintfield 688 hoggets sold from 445-541p/kg compared to 390 hoggets sold from 500-555p/kg. On Wednesday in Enniskillen 583 hoggets sold from 490-540p/kg compared to 502 hoggets sold from 500-547p/kg last week. Top reported prices cull ewes continued to remain strong with prices ranging from £120-£228 across the marts this week.

LATEST SHEEP MARTS (P/KG LW)

From: 05/02/22		Hoggets			
To: 10/02/22		No	From	To	Avg
Saturday	Omagh	615	493	541	-
	Swatragh	768	498	521	-
Monday	Kilrea	750	510	536	-
	Massereene	506	496	533	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	688	445	541	-
	Rathfriland	400	495	541	523
Wednesday	Ballymena	1560	470	576	495
	Enniskillen	583	490	540	-
	Armoyn	384	485	515	-
	Markethill	950	500	537	-

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