

Meeting of the Grass Seed Industry with Teagasc and DAFM in Teagasc Moorepark on
Tuesday 5th of November at Moorepark

Chaired By Dr. Brian Wickham

Introduction – Brian Wickham

Each 1% in grass utilisation is worth €27 million per year to Irish farmers.

Desired outcome is lots of discussion from the day, part of an overall consultation process.

Have had discussions with Teagasc, DAFM and this morning the seed industry.

Two Groups left; Teagasc advisors and farmers. Will meet these groups in the next period of time.

Dermot Grogan (DG) – DAFM (Presentation attached)

Summary of presentation

There is re-ranking of cultivars across grazing and conservation protocols.

The number of cultivars tested was dropped with the introduction of the frequent cutting protocols but more plots are sampled as there is both grazing and conservation protocols now.

Quality is only measured at one site over the April to September period, this will probably change to April to July.

Ground score changes at different rates across years.

Sheep grazing was used in Athenry this year and the plan is for Rathphoe next year.

Questions

What temperature are the grass samples dried at for WSC? – DG 80 degrees.

The number of varieties tested are dropping. Can we increase the number tested? Can we get rid of varieties that are of no value from the testing process?

DG –reluctant to increase the numbers, due to numbers on the recommended lists.

What is the linkage with Northern Ireland?

DG- System different, 1 site with silage and grazing interlinking from one year to the next. This is something that can be looked at in the future. Research has shown that simulating grazing and silage cutting gives robust results.

The last cutting is the 15th of October. Is there a risk of losing good data by doing this?

DG- Not all sites grow all year round. There is a requirement to pick up Spring growth and this may be difficult if the last cutting was later than mid to late October.

What is the relationship between sward persistency and ground score?

DG -Three years data is the most we can hope to have with Ground score. The Ground Score change is more important than Ground score.

Soil types where the evaluations are carried out can be classified as good. Is this a problem?

DG- DAFM evaluations are carried out across five sites with a measure of consistency across sites computed. People that reseed are generally on good quality ground.

Mary McEvoy (MM) – Teagasc (presentation attached)

Total Merit Index

Technical Questions

Total merit index – would there be one list for heading date and ploidy?

MM- There potentially would be one list that would go across heading date and ploidy.

Later varieties come lower down the list. Why?

MM -Not all varieties that are on the Recommended list were shown. The list may not have all early and intermediates when complete.

Have we enough information on quality for the 4 months?

MM- In the original index paper there was 6 months of quality. It has been reviewed since and it was decided that quality was not required for August and September. An index with quality for 4 months and 6 months was compared and there was a rank correlation of over 95%.

Should there be a trait for palatability included in the index?

MM -Digestibility is included in the index. At present there is no palatability included. This will be evaluated in the future and could be included depending on results.

Silage quality needs to be looked at.

MM -Silage quality could be looked at but the silage economic values are so small that the benefit would be low.

Persistency and its relationship to ground score change. How robust is this?

MM -Persistency is calculated by relating ground score change to yield change from a study that was carried out over a seven-year period. There is a strong robust basis for this methodology which has been submitted to the Journal of Dairy Science. This paper is currently with reviewers. The more time used for persistency calculations the better.

Will reliability information be provided?

MM -Confidence scores will be provided for the cultivars.

Was calving date change included?

MM -Calving date change was not tested in sensitivity. However it is anticipated that this would not change the economic values dramatically. This can be tested in the future.

Application questions

Two years data is a bit of an issue, do we need more information?

DG -There is significant consistency in the two years data that is available.

Is there a risk of releasing a list with only a portion of the recommended lists varieties?

MM -Farmers can use the sub indices. If there is information available that can help farmers this should be made available for farmers.

How do we stop farmers from all wanting the top variety?

MM -Farmers will have to be educated on how to use the index and that using a team will help from a reliability point of view.

Should farmers be using monocultures or mixtures?

Index shows lots of tetraploids and intermediates. Is there a concern about this or if this is correct is there a concern about the varieties that have been recommended in the past?

MM -Not all recommended list varieties are on the lists shown. We are talking in a vacuum. Evaluate once the index is published.

DG -More potential genetically with the intermediates.

When will all varieties be available?

DG- 50% available in 2014 with 80 to 90% within 2 to 3 years

BW - Prototype information being provided in early 2014 and then there should be further consultation. It is extremely important that this is explained properly to farmers.

Michael O Donovan (MOD) – Teagasc (presentation attached)

PastureBase Ireland

Comments and Questions

Fantastic piece of work with more mixture information needed.

What indicator is there of when a paddock needs to be reseeded?

MOD- Low yielding and that are grazed little. On farm paddocks that are productive are carrying unproductive paddocks. The unproductive paddocks need to be increased. The top third of paddocks carry the farm.

PBI fine but is there an APP?

MOD -Not yet but it will come in time. We are working on an electronic platometer. Pasturebase is a management tool with the database very much in the background. There is potential to link to the seed merchant if this was required by individual groups.

Is this been taught in Agricultural Colleges?

MOD -Not yet but it can be.

Brian Wickham Summary

- All group are positive and believed that we are going in the right direction. This is a process that will take time. Plan could be to have prototype list out in early Spring with names on. Followed by another whole industry meeting in the mid Spring to

early Summer. Plan would be to release this prototype list to the public after the industry consultation process.

- Desire and appreciation for greater transparency in the overall process – technical information, timing, changes and research plans. All presentations and publications to be put up on a dedicated website.
- Consultation process required. In particular after the prototype is developed and released for comment and feedback.
- Science needs to be strong:
 - Papers there and further papers coming
 - More information needed on mixtures versus monocultures
- PastureBase Ireland is a great start, which is needed with more information faster. Requirement for a further systems study similar to the Curtins study over the period of 2000 to 2007 to test and demonstrate how the outputs from the index work on the ground.

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