

Meeting minutes from Thursday November 13th –Pasture Profit Index (PPI) meeting Horse and Jockey.

Chairman Dr Brian Wickham. 65 industry stakeholders in attendance.

Kick off – Brian Wickham – Issues to discuss

1) Dave Cummins (DAFM) – Presentation – Perennial Ryegrass varieties sown in DAFM trials in 2014

Comments/questions –

Q - Why isn't the proportion of Inter/Late seed sold reflected in the proportion of inter/late cultivars evaluated?

- ✓ In the past DAFM had slightly more Late varieties in trial than Intermediate. For the 2014 sowings there are equal numbers of each group in trial.
- ✓ There are considerable seed sales of both the 'Intermediate' and 'Late' groups of perennial ryegrasses and the relative amounts vary from year to year due to various influences. In selecting new varieties to sow in the trials, DAFM examines the available applications individually and chooses the varieties most likely to give improved performance in Ireland. This method is considered more efficient without the requirement to track the current seed sales of the group.

Why are Intermediate and Lates at different sites?

- ✓ DAFM have limited resources. Currently there are Intermediate and Late varieties at two sites (Backweston & Moorepark). The other three sites have either all Intermediates or all Lates in a particular sowing. All sites currently have a General Purpose and Frequent Cutting protocol on the varieties sown there.
- ✓ DAFM are looking into the possibility of sowing all varieties at all sites.

What are the criteria for getting approving candidate varieties for evaluation?

- ✓ DAFM approve candidate varieties on a merit-based system based on the following traits; Spring Growth, Summer Growth / Silage Yield, Autumn Growth, Ground Cover Score and Quality. Each trait is assigned a weighting based on the importance of the trait.

Q - Why less tetraploid cultivars than diploid evaluated?

Based on applications from breeder, try to choose best varieties to fit each group

Q - Intermediate and late cultivars on different sites, are they comparable?

Noirin Mchugh - Model can account for variability, it is constantly been monitored, No interaction between site and maturity class this year. Ongoing analysis.

Q - There is only a number of hours between some intermediate and late cultivars?

John Claffey - There is an argument for to have FC as a continuous heading date grouping

2) PPI – Test Proof - Michael O'Donovan

Q - Can 2014 data be included in 2015 publication?

It is possible, need the DM production and ground score data, if needed will endeavour to make it happen. Important to use the sowing year 2012 data, in the PPI values for 2015, this data needs to be used, too many blanks on the PPI list.

Q - Use of variety information from PastureBase Ireland?

Critical to get variety information on farm, Information will build up quickly, more measurements are needed especially quality, more traits within index need to be quantified

Q - Site * years interaction with inters and late on different sites?

Model accounting for this, but we should move to commonality across sites, two sites already common, checks are been carried out.

Q - Can all varieties be included quicker?

We need the data, can include if the data is available.

Q – Are there synergies between cultivars in mixture?

Vincent Griffith PHD showed found that mixtures are basically the sum of parts for DM yield, however PBI data can be used to clarify this, especially for long term DM yield

The meeting was then split into 4 working groups and each group were asked to answer four different questions.

Question 1: Using the PPI, Dissemination and Presentation

1. Requirement for a user guide for the index , Explanation notes with PPI initially
2. Using PPI:
 - Have a few key messages that are short and simple
 - Repetition/ repetition/ repetition (often and regular)Use PPI to reinforce the Recommended list
Dissemination: consistency of message, across all mediums
3. Dissemination:
 - Only 10% (if even) of discussion groups involved in study – must target dissemination to rest of discussion groups
 - Use all stakeholders
 - How will we disseminate the information to industry, farmers, etc., Is there a plan?
 - One presentation with “provisional” used where necessaryRank alphabetically:
 - Remove overall PPI value or Put it at the end of the line/ Put on recommended list
 - Restructure list to display all information
 - Promote through discussion groups (dairy and dry stock)
 - How applicable is the PPI to the user?
4. Not enough information fast enough
5. Should be showing mixtures well
6. How will we know how to form a mix from the pasture index?
7. How will a farmer decide how to prepare the mix?
8. How can we simplify the sub-index?
9. Should there be an index for both tetraploid and diploid varieties, or grazing vs silage
10. Have we looked at similar indexes around the world

11. Have a National launch, Joint press release (launch event)
12. Alternatively, have similar to EBI list (farmers are familiar with EBI)
13. Don't leave blanks on recommended list (put in whatever data available e.g. silage data)
14. Update the recommended list when data available
15. All varieties : not included

Question 2 New traits for the index (what traits should be introduced)

1. Soil type, Recovery after events e.g. wet conditions
 2. Ground cover / traffic ability (use plots), Independent measure of poaching, ground score...
Farm data need to be included into PPI, get persistency data into index ASAP, record persistency more accurately, Ground score – include index (need animal trait), Actual ground score
 3. Palatability, Animal intake
 4. Should include utilisable energy (UME)/ha into PPI, Energy value – convert to protein – milk etc ,NDF figure
 5. Clover interaction with varieties
 6. Measures of sward health (rust etc.), Role of department in measuring sward health (scoring system)
 7. Animal performance / factors
 8. Inclusion of winter hardiness
 9. Improved recording on farm, Include Agrinet data and others into data for use in PPI, Who will do measurements on farm? Technician? Standardised? Structure to collect more traits within Pasturebase Ireland
 10. Cultivars nitrogen efficiency – some more efficient than others with lower levels of NPK
 11. Introduce genomics to grass breeding – prediction
 12. Suitability to adverse conditions: low P and K
 13. Other species (hybrid, clover, Timothy)
 14. Mixture synergy
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Question 3 ; Re Breeder/ merchants objectives aligned to that of the PPI

Industry Alignment

Up to farmers to drive it, not breeder, not merchant?

Breeder and merchants are providers –they should be reacting

Message has to be clear to breeders, Need to convince the breeders

Breeders say they are in the dark, they don't know what to breed for, confusing for them with two indexes.

Alignment of index farmers/ Breeders alignment :are aligned

- Grassed merchants : will be aligned in time (get information sooner so PPI table can be completed quicker
- Farmer alignment : yes and as a customer will drive industry alignment

Merchants playing “catch up” – information too late going to them – they must forward buy for 3 years ahead

Crazy time frame between:

- Farmers: - now + 7 years
 - list / wants economic figure
- Merchant: 3 years ahead
- Breeder: 15 years ahead

Mixtures

Mixtures, Give a PPI for mixtures?

- Is the mix the sum of parts for all situations?
 - Use Pasturebase to prove this
- Team of varieties. For example: some varieties suit dry farmers, heavy farms...

Seed availability

Time lag

- seed availability two years after PPI
- Risk of unused seed
- Issues with late diploids seed (production)
- Flag varieties which are being outclassed on the index
- How are merchants going to sell cultivars?
- Long time for a large volume of seed to be available – could come on the list but will take years to get seed availability and it could be number one on list
- Will the index reduce the number of cultivars available to farmers if suppliers not encouraged to produce seed if ranked unfavourably on index
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Evaluation system

Would like all sites to sow Diploids and Tetraploids

Intermediate and lates on all sites

Provisional list for varieties with incomplete data (2015 in particular) – address this

How is a variety going to be included on the national list?

2 separate protocols:

- 2 separates systems
- Needs to change

Intermediate and late varieties sown same dates and same location – breeders have huge issue with this

Service DOA are providing is free service to breeders to use their data

What cultivars get evaluated? Criteria?

Need to link pasture base Ireland to index sooner rather than later – DOA willing to link in

Question 4 Structure of this group for the future (formalise or keep informal)

1. Need to formalise this group and create an official report regarding the index etc. and action as result, the above report should identify when to put everything into action – sooner rather than later, Group is unique as involves all members of industry, Large groups bring more information to the table, Independence of people at top important, Informal (continue with current format at a minimum) VS formal (possibility – some concerns – cost)
 2. Small group drove EBI (met frequently) steering group for PPI could do same – large group meets as now or when necessary (min-biannually), Smaller groups should meet often and feed back to large group, Keep this large group meeting once or twice per year
 3. Online forum – everyone can contribute
 4. Informal aid's the dissemination of information related to PPI
 5. Set out terms of reference for the next meeting, set the agenda for the next meeting
 6. Involvement of the IGA
 7. Funding for this group from RDP to push this index e.g. promotion – technician – (European Innovation Programme)
 8. Aim to
 - Good information fast, rather than accurate information slow, as it is evolving process
 - NI and south : streamline trials
 9. Formal grass renewal trust – farmers, lime, P and K breeders, merchants, teagasc, everybody: paid by industry (everybody benefits)
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Summary and Actions

- 1) If possible to try and get the Sowing year 2012 into the PPI publication for 2015 – (Teagasc and DAFM to discuss)
 - 2) Compile the feedback from working groups into summary format and redistribute.
 - 3) Proposed to survey the participants of the group before the next meeting
 - 4) Next meeting scdeduled for Mid May 2015- agreement for this group to meet twice annually (May and November
 - 5) Seek funding from RDP in Europe to formalise the group structure
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