

## Why Measure Grass?

The potential to achieve high levels of productivity from grazed grass gives Irish farmers a major competitive advantage over many of their European and global counterparts.

On average, the cost of producing **1kg of liveweight gain or 1kg of milk solids** from grazed grass is **80% to 85% less** when compared with an intensive concentrate-based system.

**PastureBase Ireland** aims to help farmers ensure that they are exploiting the full potential of grazed grass on their farm, irrespective of production system or land type. Land type is often seen as a barrier to adopting good grassland management practices.

While Irish farmers use some purchased feed, the majority of weight gain or milk is produced from forage mainly grazed grass or conserved silage.

However, there are still a number of simple steps that farmers can take to improve grass growth and utilisation. Getting livestock out to grass early and ensuring an adequate supply of good-quality leafy grass is available throughout the grazing season is key to obtaining high levels of animal performance.

### By measuring grass the farmer can subsequently;

1. Maximise pasture growth rates
2. Extend the grazing period and shorten the winter period
3. Maintain and improve pasture quality
4. Manage seasonal variation
5. Achieve high pasture utilisation
6. Ensure average covers are achieved at critical times
7. Feed stock better quality grass
8. Increase the proportion of grazed grass in the diet
9. Reduce costs in a volatile industry
10. Condition swards for subsequent grazing rotations

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## Other benefits include;

1. Take the guesswork out of managing grass
2. Decide turn out date in spring
3. Know when to start the 2nd rotation
4. Knows when to reduce/cut out meals in spring
5. Identify grass surpluses and deficits
6. Know when to cut surplus grass for silage
7. When to feed some extra buffer feed or meal during the grazing season
8. Know when to start and end the last grazing rotation in autumn
9. When to start autumn grass build up and precisely monitor that build up
10. Know when and how to react to a rapidly changing grass supply on the farm
11. Decide on the grazing plan for the week – useful for new/young staff

## Recording grass covers on PastureBase allows the farmer to;

1. Benchmark performance geographically with farmers in his/her discussion group
2. Build a comprehensive grassland database for their farm
3. Determine the quantity of grass that can be grown on their farm
4. Identify underperforming paddocks and earmark them for reseeded

**You cannot manage something you do not measure!** Measuring grass enables the grassland farmer to make better informed and more effective grassland management and grazing decisions.