

PastureBase Ireland - Capturing Grassland Data on Irish Drystock Farms



Micheál O'Leary

Teagasc Moorepark, Fermoy, Co. Cork

<http://www.agresearch.teagasc.ie/moorepark>

Micheal.OLeary@teagasc.ie

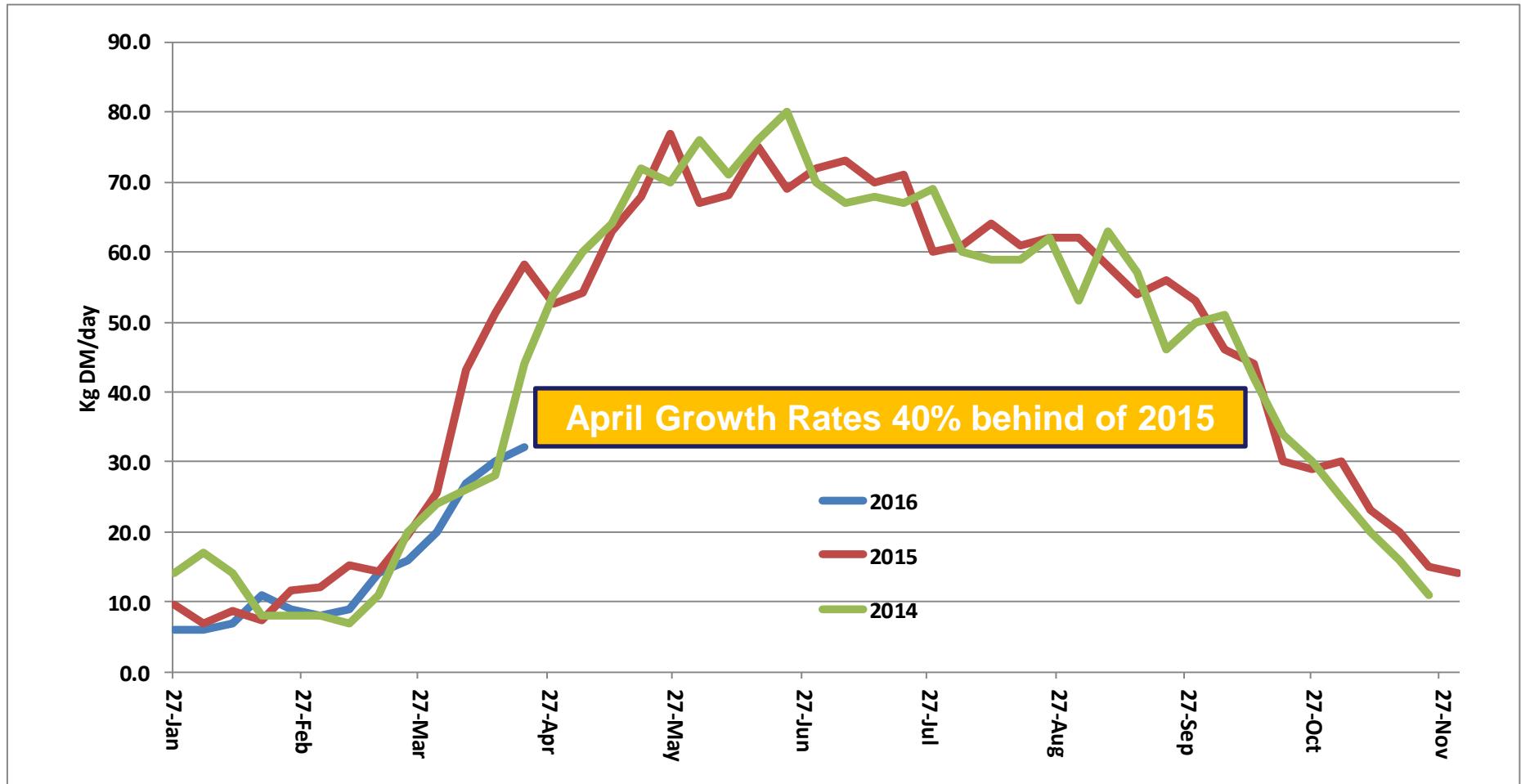
Talk Outline

- **PastureBase Ireland on farm results**
- **Grass DM production on drystock farms**
- **Spring - Autumn management**
- **Current findings**

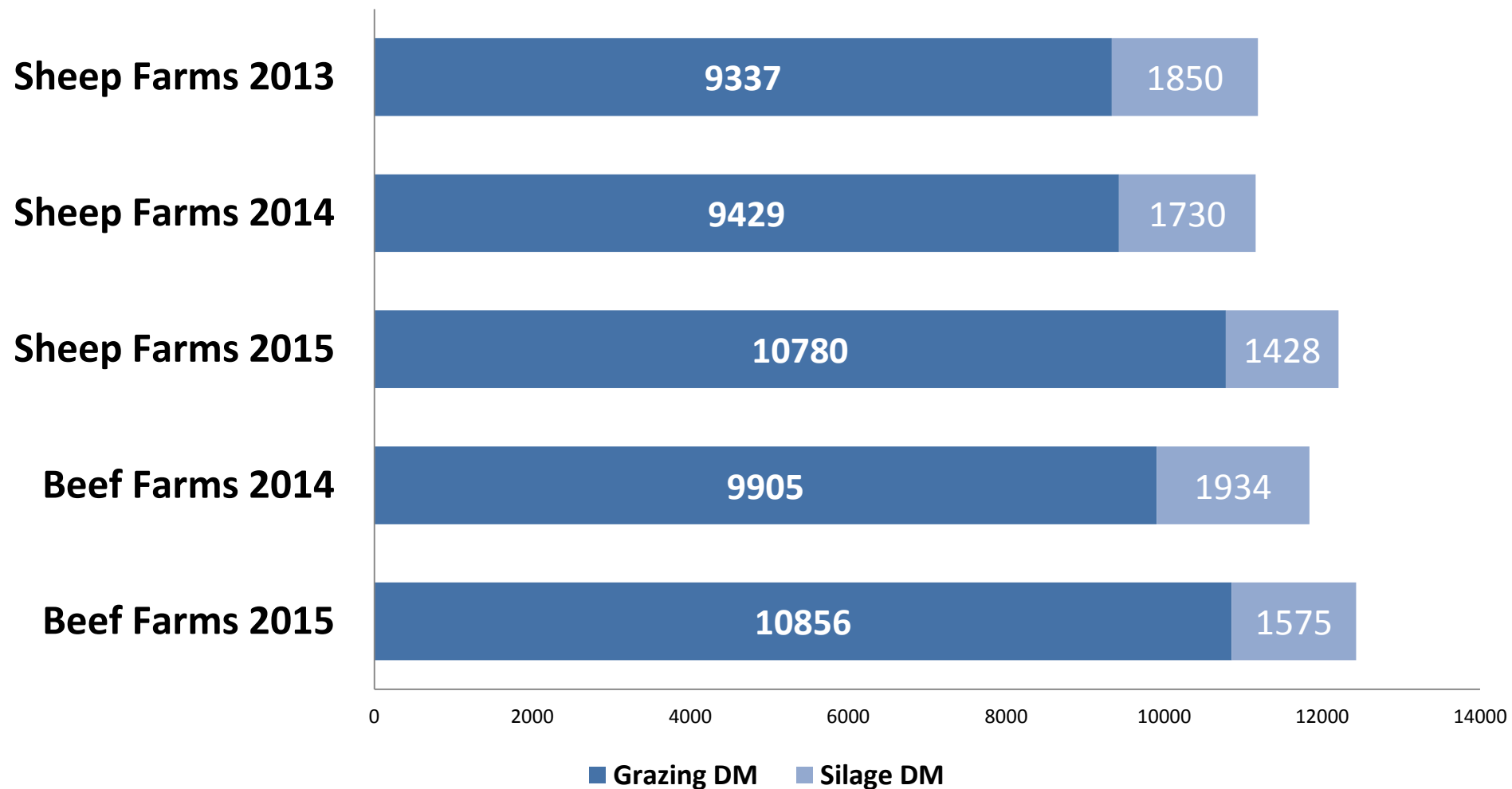
PastureBase Ireland

- **Web based grassland management decision support tool**
 - front end
- **Grassland data base - back end**
- **Primary user - farmer- captures data**
- **Core measurement is pre-grazing herbage mass**



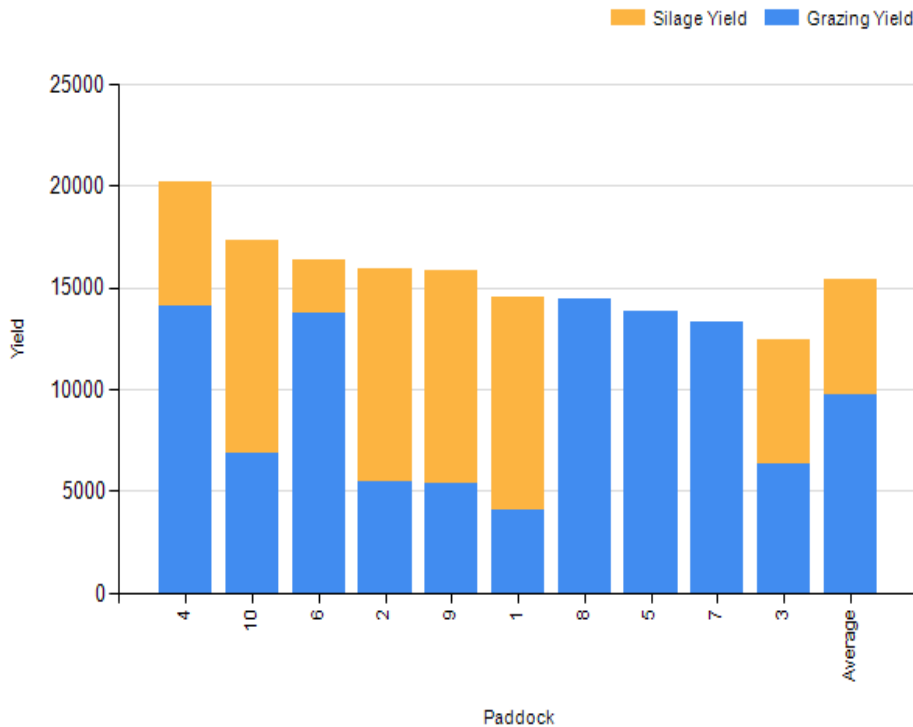


PastureBase Ireland Drystock Farms DM Production

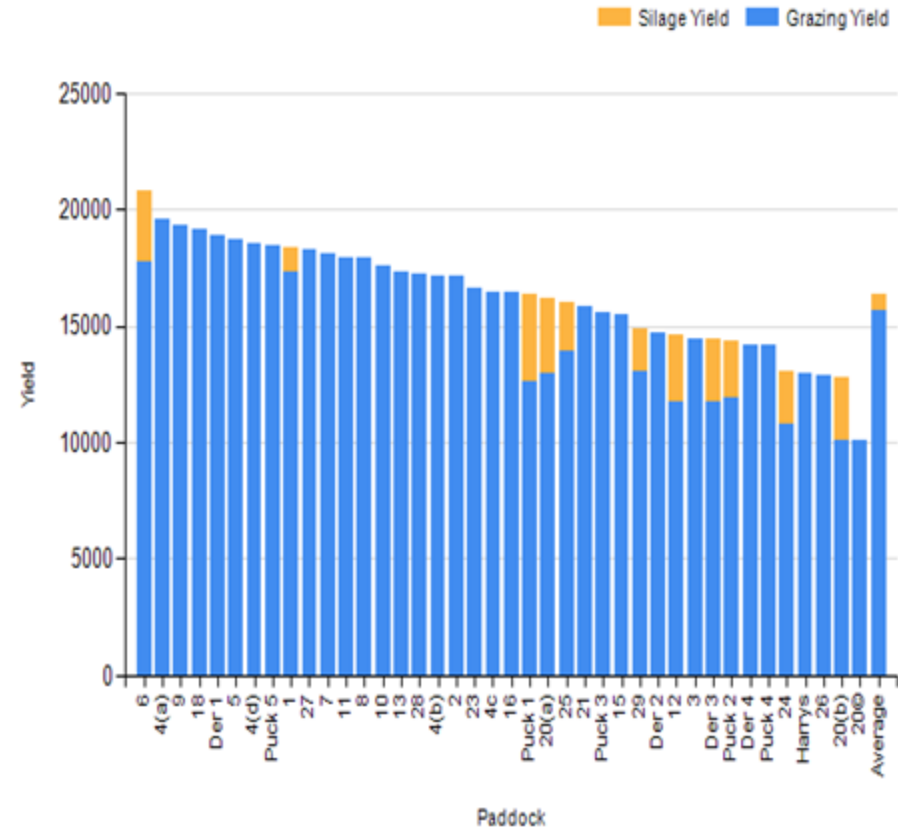


What are high producing farms doing ?

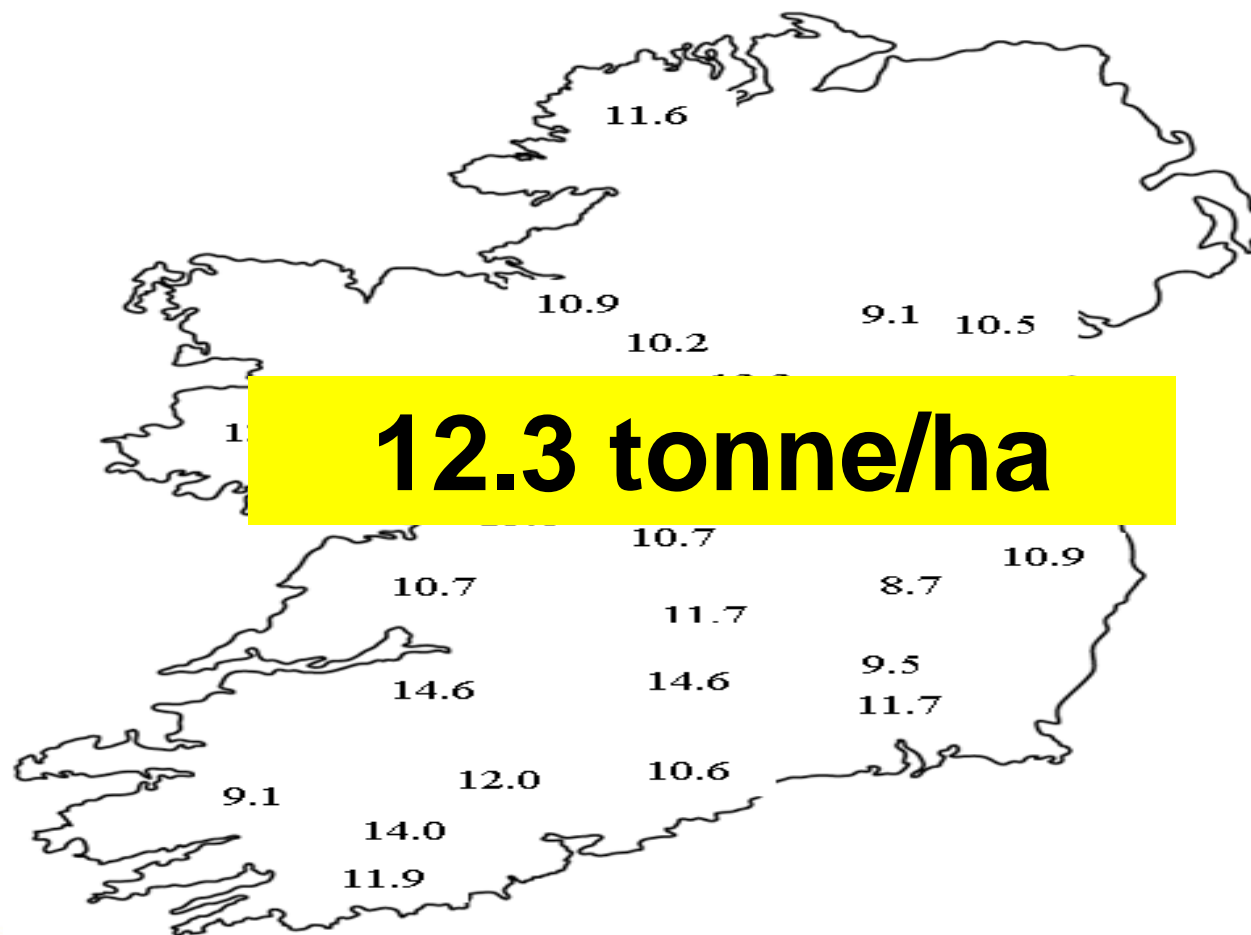
Cumulative Paddock Yield to 31/12/2015



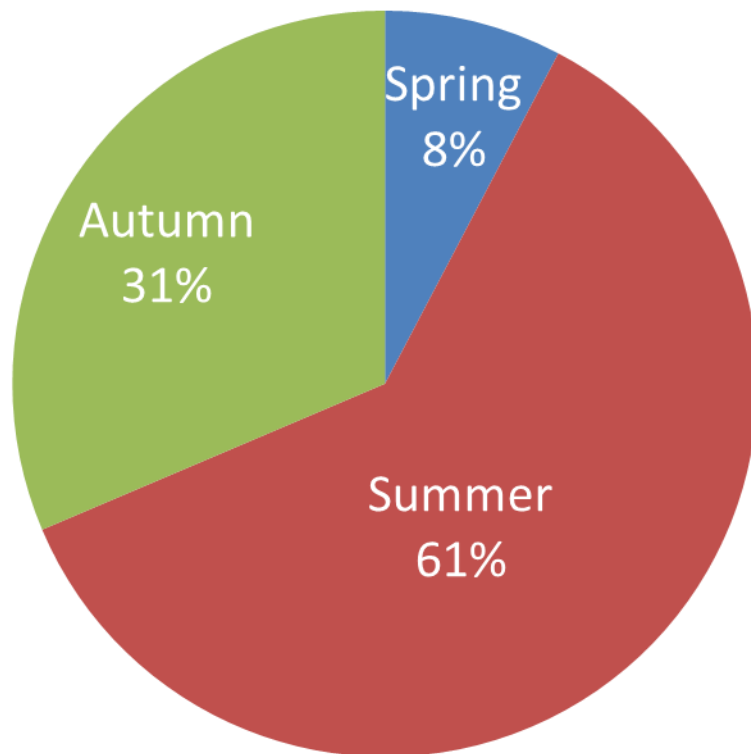
Cumulative Paddock Yield to 31/12/2015



DM Production on Drystock Farm 2015 (>25 covers)



DM Production Proportion by Season 2015



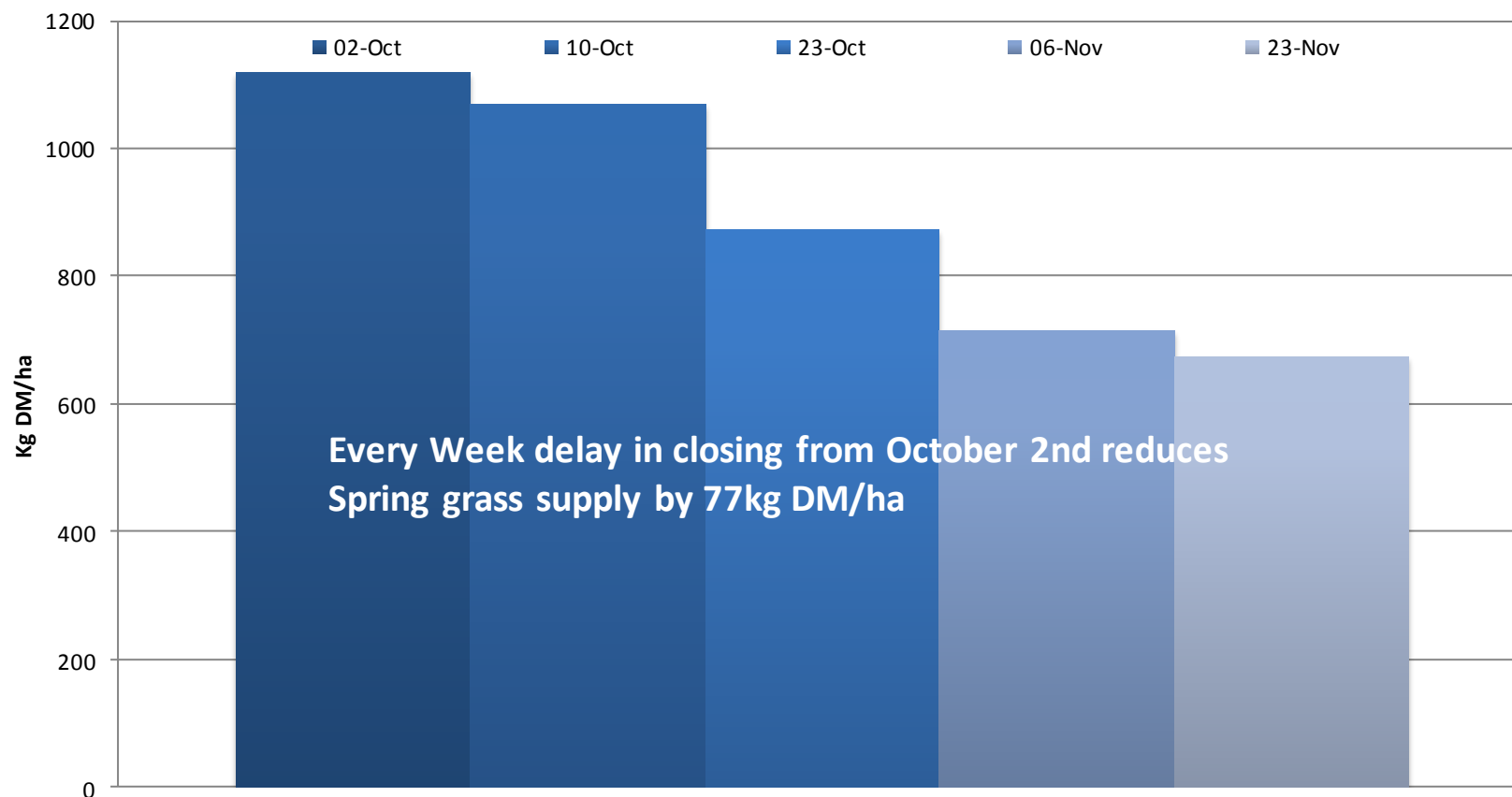
Spring growth variation is 5% to 15% = 0.5t DM/ha to 1.7t DM/ha

Factors Influencing Spring Grass supply

- Autumn closing date - **farmer**
- Closing cover - **farmer**
- Winter grass growth rate - **50% farmer**
- Spring nitrogen application- **farmer**
- Spring grazing management – **farmer**
- Spring grass growth - **50% farmer**



Spring Pasture Accumulation as influenced by previous Autumn closing date



Spring Grazing Management - Spring 2015

1. 66% of farms had little/no stock out grazing by March 1st
2. March 17th - 20% grazed - well below target of 40%
3. Top producing farms are achieving 50% by March 17th
4. 45% of farms finished the first round by April 25th
5. Farms that finished the first round pre April 10th grew **+200kg DM/ha more grass spring(1,040 vs 860kg)**
6. Farms that finished the first round pre April 10th also grew **1.1t DM/ha more annual grass in 2015 (12.2 vs 11.1t DM/ha)**

Early Grazing Effects on Sward Characteristics

Early grazed sward



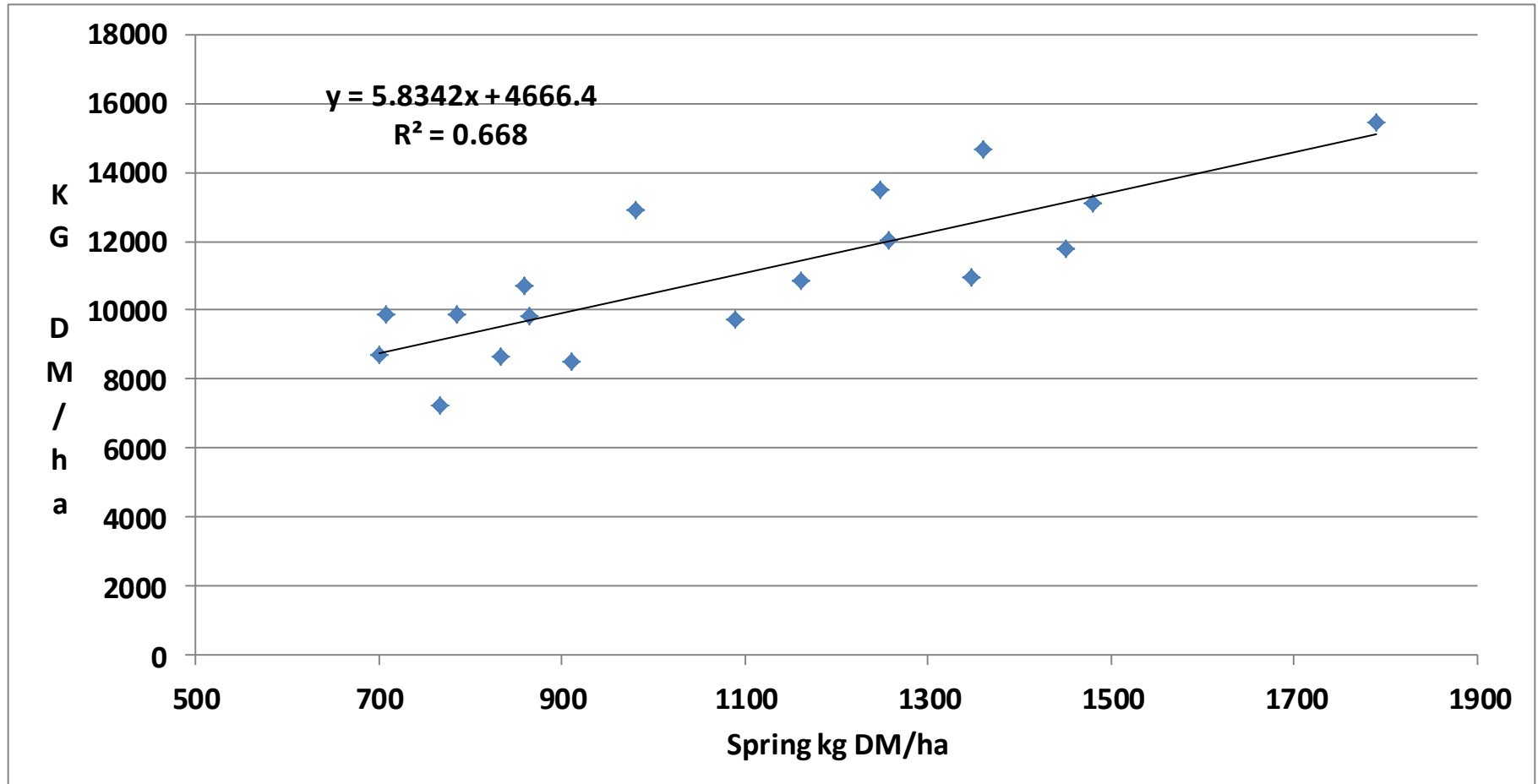
- + Milk Yield**
- + Liveweight Gain**
- + Grass Growth**
- + Grass Quality**

Late grazed sward

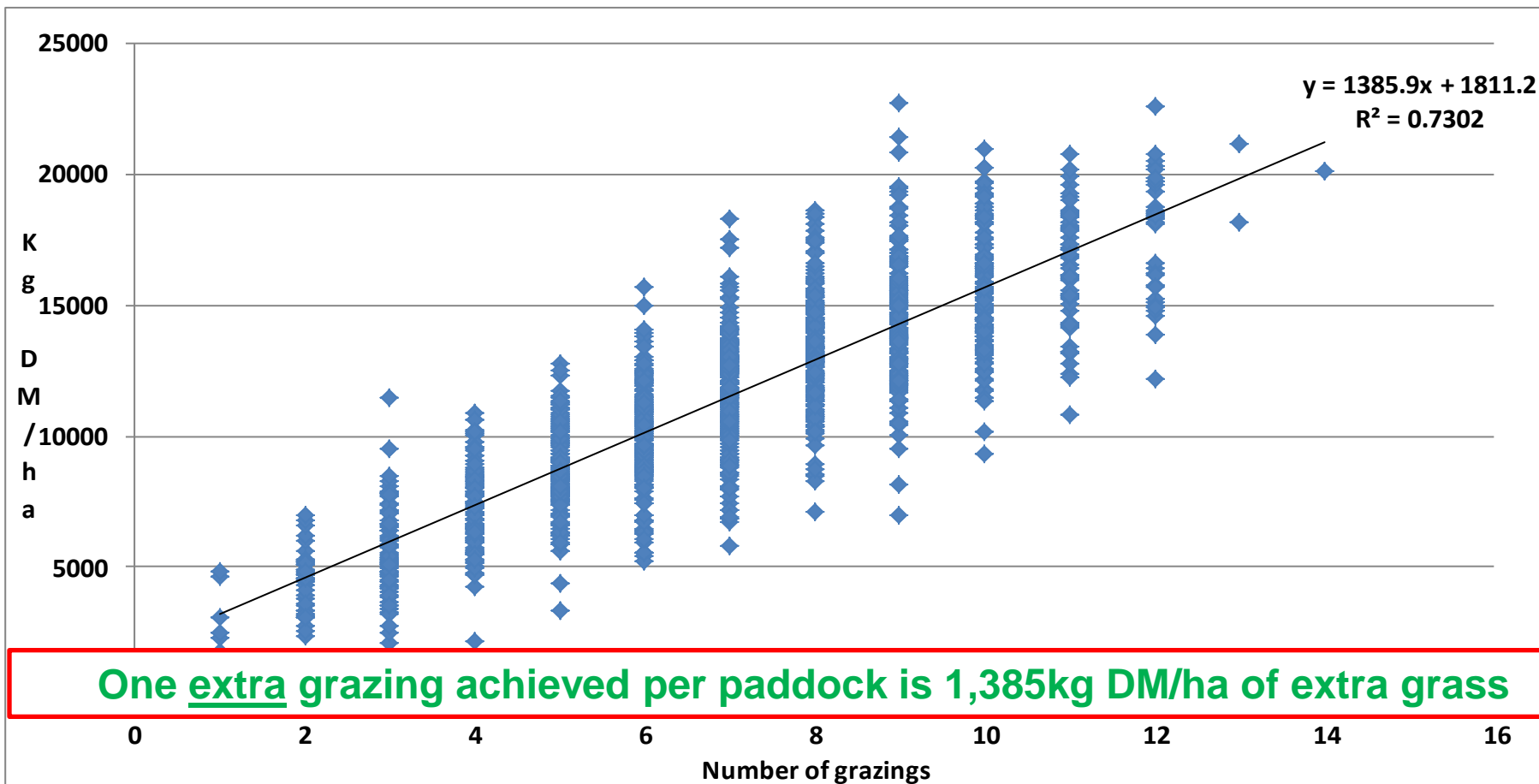


- Low Utilisation**
- Poor Performance**

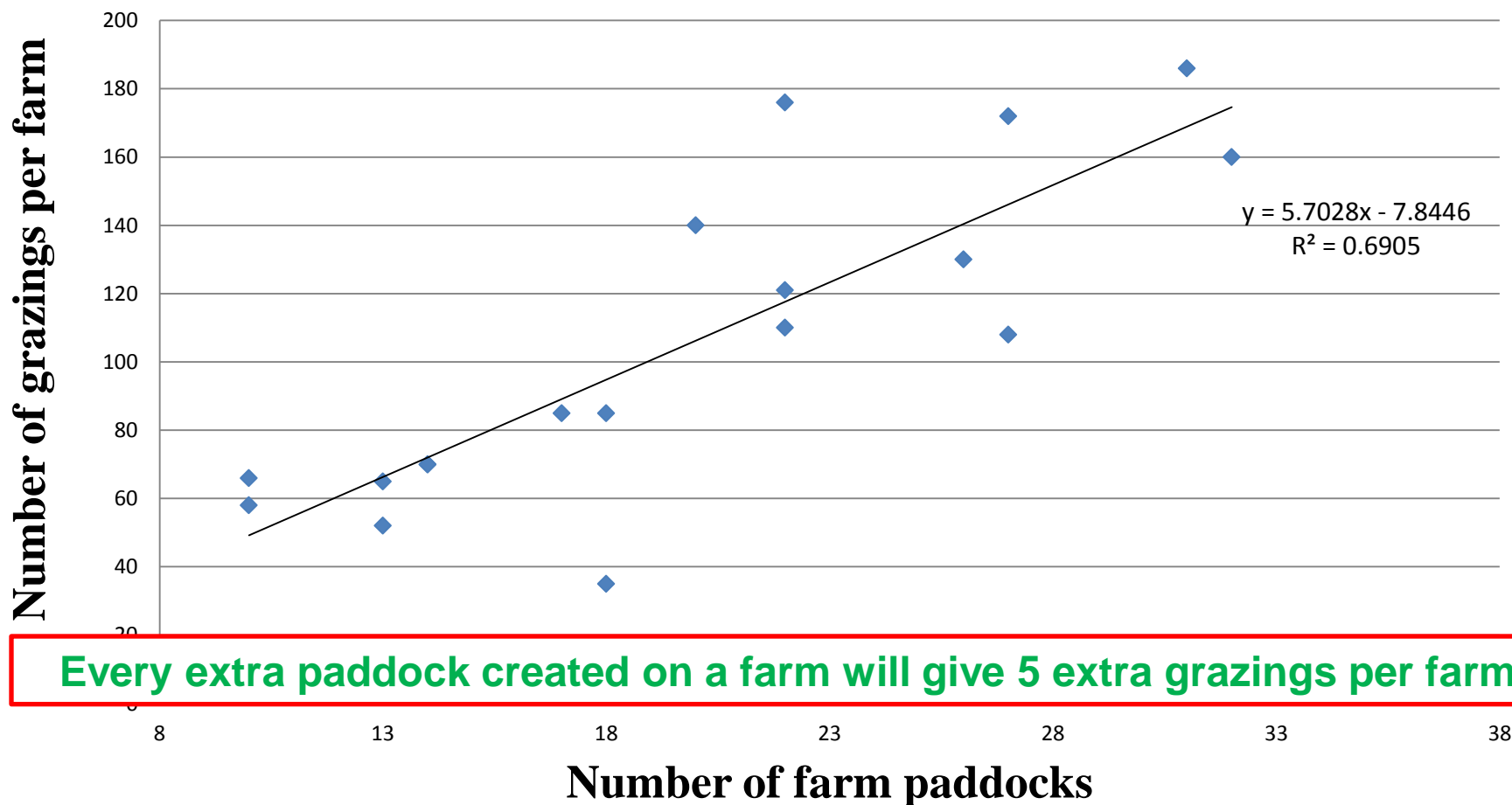
Spring production and its association with total grazing DM production



Number of grazing achieved per paddock and its association with total grazing DM production




Number of grazings achieved per farm and its association with total number of paddocks



Every extra paddock created on a farm will give 5 extra grazings per farm

Take home messages

- ✓ Huge potential exists to grow more grass - improvements in grazing management
- ✓ Spring grazing management
- ✓ Mid-season - adhere to rotation length
- ✓ Adequate number & size of paddocks
- ✓ Grass is a crucial feed for liveweight gain & milk production
- ✓ Grass measurement is now part of grassland management

A group of brown cows of various sizes are grazing in a lush green field. The cows are the central focus, with some in the foreground and others in the background. The background shows a dense line of green trees under a clear sky. The overall scene is peaceful and rural.

Thank you for your attention

micheal.oleary@teagasc.ie

087-9309936