



Large crowds in attendance at a previous Moorepark open day forum.

Moorepark open day forum 2017

The Moorepark open day forum will take place at 2pm in the open day marquee

This year, the Moorepark open day forum will be chaired by Sharon Ní Bheoláin from RTÉ and will include two separate panel discussions on key issues facing the Irish dairy industry.

Panel one: Brexit and Irish dairying

• **Panellists:** Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Michael Creed TD, Prof Colm McCarthy (UCD), Prof Gerry Boyle (Teagasc) and Kevin Lane (Ornua).

The UK is Ireland's largest market for food and drink, accounting for 41% of Irish food and drink exports, valued at €4.4bn in 2015 and has been a strong growth market in recent years. Between 2010 and 2015, Irish exports to the UK increased by €1bn largely driven by increased meat exports.

The UK accounts for around 54% of total Irish meat and livestock exports, 30% of dairy, 70% of prepared consumer foods and 30% of beverage exports. Irish dairy is the fastest-growing agri-food industry in the EU, delivering jobs and wealth to rural Ireland, growing by almost a quarter since the end of EU quotas in 2015.

Up to 65% of Ireland's cheddar cheese exports go to the UK, while large shipments of butter and infant formula are also exported to the

market. Already, Brexit and the related significant sterling depreciation have resulted in a fall of 12% in UK cheddar imports. Industry experts have forecast a rise in regulatory and administrative costs in the event of a Brexit, while potential WTO tariffs may cost in excess of €130m per year.

The effect of Brexit on trade is likely to be substantial with the combination of potentially high-tariff barriers on food exports, resulting in a 40% reduction in dairy exports to the UK. In addition, increased complexity of trading and restrictions in transit through the UK would add to costs for Irish exporters.

The panel will provide views of what they believe to be the immediate and longer-term effects of Brexit for the Irish dairy sector and what the industry (Government/food processors/ farmers) can do to prepare for any adverse effects.

Panel two: how attractive is a career in dairy farming?

• **Panellists:** Pdraig Walshe (dairy farmer and former IFA president), Billy Curtin (dairy farmer), Ann Moore (dairy farmer), Gillian O'Sullivan (dairy farmer) and David Kerr (dairy farmer).

Food Wise 2025 highlights the importance of people and career development on farms to build management capacity and attract, retain and develop more people to the industry in the future.

Despite its importance, anecdotal evidence suggests that many dairy farmers lack the people management skills to make this transition effectively and consequently, staffing on

dairy farms can be problematic.

An estimated 6,000 people are needed to enter the Irish dairy industry at farm level over the next eight years to replace retiring farmers and meet the additional workload arising from expansion of the national herd. National cow numbers have already increased by over 300,000 cows since 2010 and are expected to grow by a further 250,000 to 1.6m by 2025.

Almost 50% of Ireland's dairy cows are now milked in herds of 100 cows or greater and will require hired help in addition to family labour. Dairy expansion and this requirement for people means there are now exciting career opportunities in Irish dairying. With improving national economic conditions, the dairy industry will have to work particularly hard to attract the next generation of young people into dairying.

Young people today have different work expectations to previous generations. To attract people to these careers, they must be rewarding and enjoyable and remunerate those employed to levels consistent with other trades within a recovering economy. To that end, ensuring that dairy farms are enjoyable places to work (e.g. via work rosters, efficient work practices and labour-efficient facilities, etc) must become just as important as technical efficiency.

The panel will discuss the challenges of achieving a satisfactory work-life balance as dairy farmers and what steps they have taken to streamline workload. The panel will also discuss the steps farmers can take to make dairy farming a more attractive career for young people.