Fodder Census
July 2018 Results

Teagasc
Agriculture and Food Development Authority

Results

No. of respondents	1193
Organisation	80% Teagasc 20% other
Enterprise mix	50% dairy, 28% suckler, 22% mixed or sheep
Did you include a reserve (Y/N)?	79% Yes
How much of a reserve?	4 weeks

Results – Fodder Budget

Average Demand tonnes fresh	740 tonnes
Average supply	606 tonnes
Deficit	134 tonnes
% deficit	18%
Range in Deficit	1-55%

Teagasc Region	Average % Deficit
Cork West	30
Wicklow/ Carlow/ Wexford	23
Galway/ Clare	20
Laois/ Kildare/ Meath/ Dublin/ Louth	19
Mayo	19
Waterford/ Kilkenny	18
Cork East	17
Westmeath/ Offaly/ Cavan/ Monaghan	15
Kerry/ Limerick	13
Tipperary	13
Roscommon/ Longford	12
Sligo/ Leitrim/ Donegal	12

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Enterprise & Herd Size

Deficit

Dairy	16%
Drystock	18%

Dairy

Less than 100 cows	16%
100-200 cows	17%

Fodder Budget –

Revised – Late July

Assumes half of 2nd cut conserved nationally nationally

Average Demand tonnes fresh	740 tonnes
Average supply	533 tonnes
Deficit	207 tonnes
% deficit	28%

What Next?

Repeat Census 2nd week of September

Step 1. Take action now

1. Experience has taught us that taking early action offers a greater selection of options to bridge the gap between supply & demand.

2. As the year progresses, the options become more limited.

3. It needs to be addressed from both sides – supply and demand - what stock numbers will be carried next winter and what additional feed can be sourced ?

Step 2. Establish the deficit

on the assumption that forage will be fed for the next 4 weeks.

1. Is the deficit 20% or 50%?
2. A deficit of 20% is relatively easily managed over a whole winter by feeding additional meals, albeit at considerable cost.
3. If the deficit is 50%, very restricted forage and meals is an options but is more difficult to manage over an entire winter. Therefore, if your deficit is 40-50%, forage should be sourced and / or demand reduced.

Step 3. Examine demand on the farm

1. Scan cows and sell empty cows, cull cows or late calving cows,
2. Consider putting heavy cattle on ad lib meals and finish them before the winter.

Forage saved per cow for different culling dates

Culling Date	Grass	Silage	Total	Net Saving Winter Feed*
Mid Aug	1820	1421	3360	2968
Mid Sept	1344	1421	2884	2563
Mid Oct	910	1421	2450	2195
Mid Nov	490	1281	1890	1698
Mid Dec	490	861	1470	1278

*Based on 85% of grass being conserved as silage

Step 4.

- If the deficit is big, i.e. 40-50%, it is important to bank some forage immediately. Options are limited but:
  - » There is a window for whole crop cereal silage now and this is an opportunity for many farmers in cereal areas to build stocks.
  - » While stocks are limited there is some hay / straw to be purchased.
  - » Consider forage crops which can be sown after what is likely to be an early harvest, or fields earmarked for reseeding, or sacrifice paddocks, that have been used for feeding silage.

Step 5. Fertiliser

- It is important to have fertiliser in the yard ready to spread when the rain comes. Previous droughts have shown us that high grass growth rates follow a drought period.
- If grass growth recovers through August some farms may be able to take a silage cut in early September. Make sure to capitalise on this by spreading adequate fertiliser.

Growth Potential in the Autumn

Higher input				
	August	Sept	Oct	Nov
Days	31	30	31	30
Grass growth	30	56	38	19
Total growth	930	1680	1178	570
Cow allowance	10	10	10	10
Stocking rate	2	2	2	2
Total demand	620	600	620	600
Surplus	310	1080	558	-30
Potential total surplus / ha				1668
	75% utilisation = 200 tonnes fresh silage			

Assumptions:
SR = 2 LU / ha, grass demand = 10 kg DM, feeding 5 kg ration, GR as per Pasturebase, maximising fertiliser use, Building covers to 650 in Nov., 40 ha farm

Step 6. Organise your finances

1. To free up money to buy fertiliser for maximising Autumn grass growth and to buy feed for the winter.

The Teagasc helpline number for farmers seeking assistance is 087 - 7971377.