

PastureBase Ireland — getting Ireland utilising more grass

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Summary

- Dairy farms recording farm cover regularly on PastureBase Ireland (PBI) have grown between 11.1 and 14.4 t DM/ha/year over the past six years.
- Measurement is the first step to managing grass swards better and increasing grass utilisation.
- Farmers should use the PBI offline app when recording grass covers.

Introduction

PastureBase Ireland (PBI) is an internet-based grassland management programme for all grassland farmers. In operation since 2013, it has gained momentum in recent years due to the development work and offers farmers ‘grassland decision support’. It also stores a vast quantity of grassland data from dairy, beef and sheep farmers in a central national database. PastureBase Ireland has an array of tools available in the programme including the grass wedge, spring and autumn rotation planners, feed budget, fertiliser/slurry applications and reseed records. PastureBase Ireland recently launched an offline app which is available for both android and iPhone smart devices. Over the last 12 months the inclusion of the projected wedge, weekly grazing planner, offline app, invitations/group section and connecting with eight milk processors along with improving performance issues have all been completed.

Why are farmers using PBI?

The advantages for farmers in using PBI are:

- **Short term:** after completing a farm cover the programme displays a grass wedge and calculates the average farm cover, cover per livestock unit, growth rate etc. This helps farmers in making day-to-day decisions.
- **Medium term:** when a farmer records 25–30 farm covers during the year, PBI calculates the total quantity of grass grown in each paddock (paddock summary report). This gives the farmer the opportunity to investigate underperforming paddocks and helps initiate appropriate corrective action.
- **Long term:** after a few years using PBI, the farmer will be able to determine how much grass their farm grows in an ‘average’ year and set the stocking rate accordingly.

PastureBase Ireland App

The PBI offline app is available for all smart devices and can be downloaded from the App store and Google play store. The app is free to download, just search for ‘PBI Grass’. The objective of the offline app is to record grass covers, graze dates, fertiliser application, livestock number/intakes as well as milk data quickly while undertaking the task in the paddock whether mobile coverage is poor or not available. The app is very user friendly and quick. Data will synchronise with the website when coverage/Wi-Fi is available.

What does the future hold for PBI?

There have been a lot of new additions during 2018 and more to be introduced in 2019. We have established a PBI steering group consisting of five farmers and three advisors to help us determine the future developments in PBI and we have also received feedback from a number of discussion groups. Our aim is to react fast to new ideas and implement them, if appropriate. In 2019 we hope to generate more reports, for example grass and milk reports while a new annual tonnage report will be developed. In response to the fodder shortage last year a 'fodder budget' tool will be developed. This will help farmers calculate how much winter feed is available on the farm and how much is required over the winter period. Another exciting development is the 'Grass Growth Model' which is being validated on 40 commercial farms where PBI is being used. It is hoped after this validation to make the grass growth model available to all farmers through PBI. The model will predict the grass growth for the following week for the farm, taking into account the grass covers on the farm, the paddocks in the grazing rotation, up to date fertiliser data and predicted local weather forecast. This will be a huge asset to grassland farmers and will help make the management of grass easier.

Why should you use PBI?

The unique selling point of Irish products abroad is Ireland's grassland image and its sustainable food production chain. Food Wise 2025 targets an increase in grass utilisation on all Irish farms of 2 t DM/ha to increase farm sustainability. PastureBase Ireland offers the medium to improve grazing management through grassland measurement and better decision making. Irish dairy farmers have incredible potential to increase annual DM production with a better focus on grazing management, but can only do this through measurement. Using PBI will help farmers to achieve this objective. PastureBase Ireland is available to all grassland farmers. If you wish to sign up or require more information please call out dedicated help centre on 046-9200965 or email support@pbi.ie.

Download the new
**PastureBase
Offline App**

Search for PBI Grass on iPhone & Android

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Enter Data Now - Upload Later!

Latest version on iOS is 1.60.2 and android is 1.59.2

