

# BEEF

April 2023

## Suckler Carbon Efficiency Programme

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On Monday March 20, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) launched the new Suckler Carbon Efficiency Programme (SCEP), which succeeds the old Beef Data and Genomics Programme (BDGP). You can apply via Agfood.ie until midnight on May 22, 2023. It is a five-year programme, which will run up to the end of 2027. Payment rates have been revised upwards compared to the old BDGP, but you do have the extra weighing task built into the SCEP. As it is deemed an environmental scheme, payments will be made on a per hectare basis. For example, a herd with a reference number of 30 cows when divided by a stocking rate of 1.5LU/ha will need 20ha. The first 15ha will be paid at €225/ha (€3,375) and the remaining 5ha at €180/ha (€900), so a total of €4,275 minus genotyping costs. The scheme year runs from July 1 to June 30, so

for 2023 the scheme year is July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023. There are five main actions in the Programme as follows.

### Action 1 – Eligible bull/eligible AI

Applicants will be required to maintain a proportion of high genetic merit animals on their holding. In each scheme year, applicants must calve at least 50% beef breed animals of the yearly reference number. In scheme years one and two, 80% of these calves must have been sired from a four- or five-star source, i.e., a genotyped four- or five-star bull on either the terminal or replacement index (on a within or across breed basis) at time of service and/or if using AI, the AI straw used on participating holdings must be from a four- or five-star eligible bull on either the terminal or replacement index (on a within breed or across breed basis).

This increases to 85% in scheme years three and four, and to 90% in year five.

The calves born can be sired from four- or five-star bulls, four- or five-star AI straws, or a mixture of both.

### Action 2 – Female replacement strategy

Applicants are required to ensure that by October 31, 2023 at least 50% of their yearly reference number are eligible females that are genotyped four or five stars on the replacement index (on a within breed or across breed basis). This increases to 65% by October 31, 2025 and 75% by October 31, 2027. Females must be at least 16 months old.

### Action 3 – Genotyping

The number of animals to be genotyped each year will be at least equivalent to 70% of the yearly reference number. Genomic samples will not be accepted after November 30 each year.

### Action 4 – Weighing and submission of weights to the ICBF

Participants must weigh at least 80% of eligible animals born on the holding of the yearly reference number in each scheme year and their dams, and submit weights to the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF) as follows:

- the calf must be a minimum of 50 days old before it is eligible to be weighed;
- weights should be submitted within seven

days of weighing and no later than November 1 annually; and,

- as was the case in the Beef Environment Efficiency Programme (BEEP), the calf must be unweaned at the time of weighing and a registered scales must be used. The cow and calf must be weighed on the same day.

### Action 5 – Calving details and surveys

**Calving details:** In addition to meeting the statutory requirements for tagging and registration, Programme applicants must complete the Calving Ease Survey for each calf.

**Surveys:** Each year, applicants will be required to complete survey forms supplied by the ICBF in respect of all eligible cows, calves and bulls on his/her holding and return these to the ICBF.

### Additional requirements:

- must calve 50% of the yearly reference number each year;
- must be a member of the Bord Bia quality assurance scheme – the Sustainable Beef and Lamb Assurance Scheme (SBLAS) – by October 16, 2023; and,
- must attend the SCEP training course and an animal handling course by November 15, 2024.

Full terms and conditions are available on: [www.gov.ie/en/service/413bc-suckler-carbon-efficiency-programme-scep/](http://www.gov.ie/en/service/413bc-suckler-carbon-efficiency-programme-scep/).

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## Teagasc events

A number of Grass10 clover events are taking place in April. See **Table 1** for details. Teagasc is also hosting 16 suckler breeding

events this month. The following link will show you the event nearest to you: <https://www.teagasc.ie/animals/beef/events/>.

**Table 1: Grass10 clover events. All start at 11.00am.**

Date	Location	Date	Location
April 3	Tom O'Connell, Inniscarra, Co. Cork P31 KX93	April 12	Peter Robinson, Multyfarnham, Co. Westmeath N91 X279
April 4	Teagasc Clonakilty Agricultural College, Co. Cork P85 AX52	April 12	Grange Suckler System, Teagasc Grange, Co. Meath C15 PW93
April 4	Mark Lonergan, Cashel, Co. Tipperary E25 NC42	April 13	O'Dea Farm, Kiltteely, Co. Limerick V94 KX77
April 5	Calf-to-Beef System, Teagasc Johnstown Castle, Co. Wexford Y35 HK54	April 13	Oisín Gallen, Ramelton, Co. Donegal F92 DE48
April 5	Michael Ahern, Ballyduff, Co. Waterford P51 X965	April 14	Killian Brennan, Kilcogy, Co. Cavan N39 YY81
April 6	Joe Carroll, Ballyheigue, Co. Kerry V92 XN67	April 18	Sheep Unit, Teagasc Athenry, Co. Galway H65 R718
April 6	Thomas and David Fennelly, Portarlinton, Co. Laois R32 YA21		

## RESEARCH UPDATE

### Decreasing age at slaughter



AIDAN MOLONEY, EDWARD O'RIORDAN, MARK MCGEE and PAUL GROSSON of the Animal & Grassland Research and Innovation Centre, Teagasc Grange report on decreasing the age at slaughter of early maturing suckler heifers.

Slaughtering animals at a younger age is one strategy suggested to decrease methane emissions from beef cattle. There is also a view that younger animals have superior meat eating quality. This study examined the effect of decreasing the slaughter age of early maturing breed-sired suckler heifers on carcass fatness, feed conversion efficiency and meat quality, when slaughtered at the same carcass weight from a similar ration. Yearling heifers were finished either on *ad libitum* concentrates and 5kg grass silage for 174 days and slaughtered at 17.7 months of age, or a restricted amount of the same ratio of concentrates and silage such that they were 19.7 months of age at slaughter. As planned, the younger slaughter group grew faster (0.97 v 0.79kg/day), had a similar carcass weight (259kg) but had a poorer feed conversion

efficiency (9.1 v 7.9kg dry matter/kg bodyweight gain) compared to the older slaughter group. The carcasses of the younger slaughter group were fatter (average fat score =10.8 v 9.4 on 1-15 scale) and 77% of the carcasses graded 4= or higher, which would be considered too fat for some markets. In contrast, only 14% of the carcasses of the older slaughter group graded 4= or higher. When assessed by trained tasters, there was no difference in meat tenderness, texture and overall liking between the two slaughter age groups. It is concluded that for early maturing suckler heifers, achieving a commercially acceptable fat score in younger animals will result in a lower carcass weight. The economic implications of this finding for the producer and the processor are under investigation.

# 12 STEPS TO REDUCING EMISSIONS

Over 12 months, the Teagasc advisory newsletters will outline actions farmers can take to reduce their emissions.



## Step 5: Reducing chemical nitrogen use

### How does this reduce emissions?

Chemical nitrogen (N) applied on land will release nitrous oxide. Nitrous oxide is a potent greenhouse gas (GHG) and one of the main gases that we need to reduce to meet our emissions targets. For actions such as liming, better use of slurry, and incorporating clover to work to reduce GHGs, N fertiliser application must be decreased by the amount of N that each measure saves, otherwise there is little or no GHG saving.

### Is there a gain for me?

The gain for you is a reduction in fertiliser costs, while at the same time maintaining the productivity of the farm. However, there is no cost saving from applying lime, making better use of slurry or incorporating clover unless you reduce your chemical N usage in line with the amount of N that each of these measures saves.

### What action do I take?

Use your soil analysis results to make decisions on fertiliser application. Apply lime to improve soil pH. Make better use of slurry by getting it analysed and applying it in spring using low-emission slurry spreading (LESS). Incorporate clover into grassland swards. Reduce your chemical N use.

