

Edited by Amy Quinn



Welcome to the June edition of our monthly newsletter.

This month saw the completion of the newest addition to the Teagasc Pig Research Facility (TPRF), a finisher building tailored to conduct low emissions and high welfare research trials. Many of you got the opportunity to view this building, whilst near completion, at our recent Pig Open Day. This building will be stocked in the coming weeks and we will be keeping you informed on the building specifications, its operation and its research output through this newsletter and upcoming videos.

Teagasc in conjunction with the Health and Safety Authority and FBD Insurance were delighted to launch the Pig Staff Induction Module this month. This will be a valuable tool on farms allowing users to interactively learn about pig production best practice and safe farming health & safety protocols. Details on how to access this module can be found in this newsletter.

Moorepark 23, the Teagasc National Dairy Event for 2023, is taking place next Tuesday, the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, at the Teagasc, Animal & Grassland Research and Innovation Centre, Moorepark, Fermoy, Co. Cork. The theme of this year's event is 'Securing a Sustainable Future'. Admission and parking is free. The Teagasc Pig Development Department (PDD) will have a board at the event and we look forward to meeting many of you that will be in attendance. There will be thousands of people there on the day and so we will also take this opportunity to promote the pig industry and everything it has to offer as well as highlighting the resources that the PDD have available. Gates open from 8.30 am.

#### In this issue:

- Teagasc launch 'Pig Staff Induction Module' – an interactive online learning tool
- What's rare is precious – pigmeat supply
- Update on pig production in the US

## Teagasc launch 'Pig Staff Induction Module' – an interactive online learning tool

Amy Quinn & Tomás Ryan



The Teagasc Pig Development Department (PDD) in conjunction with the Health and Safety Authority and FBD Insurance launched their Pig Staff Induction Module on Friday the 9<sup>th</sup> of June 2023.

This is the first time an online training module has been developed for the Irish pig sector that allows new and existing farm staff to undertake learning on their own farm. It allows users to interactively learn about pig production best practice and safe farming health & safety protocols.

Speaking at the launch Ciarán Carroll, Teagasc Head of Pig Advisory, said “we are very excited to respond to a need of the Irish pig sector by launching this online module. It will provide an innovative tool in an interactive format for pig producers and their new staff. We plan to add a suite of further modules to this platform in due course”.

Pat Griffin from the Health & Safety Authority, highlighted that “with so many businesses under time and staff pressures, making occupational

safety & health training easy to follow and accessible is critical. This excellent online training module is simple to follow and allows new and indeed existing staff to view and refresh their training, as and when the need arises.”

Ciarán Roche, Head of Risk FBD Insurance commented that “FBD are delighted to be involved in the development of this eLearning tool. We believe that this training will make a real difference in improving safety practices on pig farms. This eLearning tool will encourage and assist farmers and farm workers to embed best practices and safety standards and in doing so will enhance their safety and the safety of others.”

Philip O’Brien, pig producer in Mitchelstown, County Cork welcomed the launch of this module stating “This e-learning tool is much welcomed by farms to keep our existing staff safe and is a vital resource for inducting new staff”.

The module is freely available for all pig producers on the Teagasc Pig Webpage at the following link: <https://www.teagasc.ie/animals/pigs/education/staff-induction-training/>.

It is hoped that the module will be undertaken by existing staff on the unit, as well as being incorporated into the induction process of new staff on farm as general practice. This module can be accessed on a mobile, tablet or computer and will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. It requires you to interact with the screen to avail of more information and will assess what has been learned through the completion of interactive questions throughout the module. It is hoped that the PDD will add to this to produce a suite of induction material.

If you have any queries please contact Amy Quinn at [amy.quinn@teagasc.ie](mailto:amy.quinn@teagasc.ie) or 087 3779015.

## What’s rare is precious

### Michael McKeon

The supply of pigmeat in Ireland and across mainland Europe is rapidly becoming limited, if not quite yet rare!

This is primarily because of the tough economic conditions over the last two years but also due to pig disease (ASF & PRRS), welfare legislation (Germany) and climate/environmental issues (Netherlands, Denmark). How much has pig supply fallen and what’s in the pipeline for the next few months?

### Sow Herd Decline

The EU herd has seen a massive decline in the last two years with Eurostat estimating the reduction in-excess of 870,000 sows or 8.2% of the total sow herd (Fig.1). This excludes the UK herd decline which is estimated at a further 70,000 sows. The Irish herd is not included in this table but it is estimated to have fallen by 12,000 sows (9%) over the last 12 months. In total, the European sow herd reduction is over 900,000 sows with the majority of the decline (500,000) occurring during 2022.

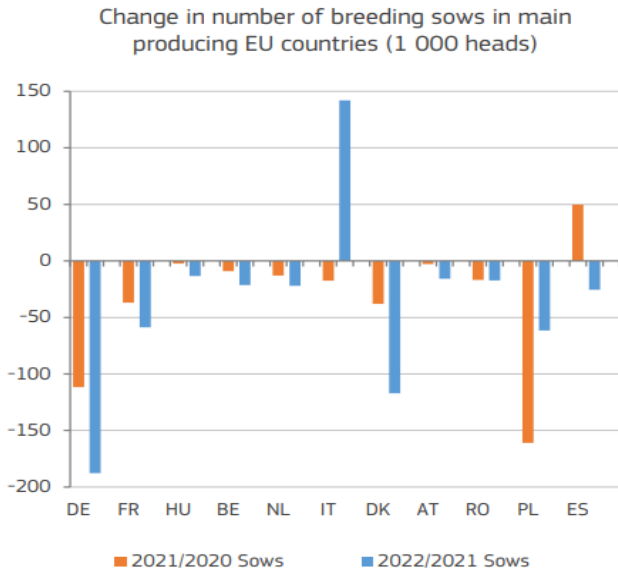


Fig 1. EU sow herd change

When will we see a recovery in the sow herd? It's difficult to see any significant sow herd recovery in the next two years as African Swine Fever continues to depress eastern European expansion, German producers are attempting to respond to imminent welfare requirements and the UK outdoor production is struggling to get a premium price for their product during a 'cost of living crisis'. Spain has the largest sow herd and was the fastest growing herd in recent years but their new PRRS disease outbreak, allied to the zinc oxide ban, new environmental controls and the high regional concentration of sow units, indicates that their future herd expansion will be much more limited. When all of these limitations across Europe are considered, in the short term, it's difficult to see the sow herd regaining much of the 900,000 lost sows. Unusually it's not just Europe that's seeing a sow herd decline. China and the U.S. are also seeing sow numbers in their respective herds falling due to ASF (China) and high feed costs (US). The European, US & Chinese

sow herds comprise 70% of the total global pig output so on this basis it indicates a much tighter global supply of pigmeat in the coming months/year.

**Pig Supply Decline**

The sow reduction has obviously resulted in a decline in pig slaughter volumes over the last 18 months. The Teagasc PDD forecast in April 2022 was that the ROI weekly slaughter volume would reduce by 6,000 pigs / week in Q1 2023. The actual reduction was marginally higher than the forecast at 6,670 pigs /week. It is expected that this volume will decline further to reach a low of -12% in Q2 2023, when compared to 2022, before stabilising (Fig.2). If proven correct then the last time ROI pig slaughterings were this low was back in 2015! While a small reduction may have given a much needed and welcome slaughter capacity buffer, a sustained drop of 12% would begin to erode the operational efficiency of our slaughter industry.

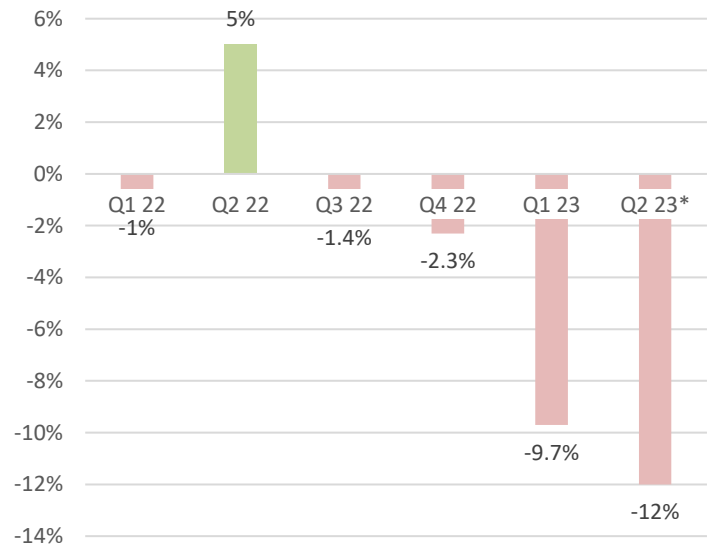


Fig 2: ROI Slaughter Plant Volume (versus previous year). \*Estimated

Across the E.U., the slaughter volume trend is similar with aggregate volume down 8%. However within this average some countries are down much lower; Denmark (-16%), Germany (-9%), Spain (-9%).

### Outlook

The tight pig supply should dictate upward pressure on the pig price or at a minimum price

remaining steady. This is a necessity for pig producers in order for them to restructure and recoup their losses (average -€522,000) from the previous two year. A reduction in the current margins, in the short term, may lead to a further reduction in pig supply in the medium term as some producers may view declining margins as an opportune time to exit the industry.

## Update on pig production in the US

### Gerard McCutcheon

Gerard McCutcheon had the privilege of attending the Interpig meeting in Iowa in early June. InterPig consists of representatives of a group of countries (currently 15) that compare pig production costs on an annual basis using an agreed method. The data generated allows comparisons to be made in the cost of production in the participant countries. Whilst attending this meeting Gerard gained an insight into US pig production.

Iowa is the No. 1 pork producing state in the US. Nearly one third of the US hogs are raised in Iowa. There are over 5400 pig farms in Iowa. There are close to 75 million pigs in the US pork sector which is more than 50% the size of the EU pig population. The sow herd in the US is approximately 4.8 million sows. 2021 and 2022 were good years in terms of profitability. Now in 2023 the US farmers are losing \$41 per pig. The cost of production has gone up \$14 (\$8 non feed variable costs and \$6 to fixed costs) as a result of the rise in inflation.

The price of pigs dropped from \$106 to \$86 in mid March 2023 and has remained low since. This was in response to a drop in the Futures market –and the price has remained low since then. In the US

the general population was paid COVID payments, but these payments ended late in 2022 and so the effect of inflation was not felt so much by consumers until the payments ceased. The effects of inflation appear to have caused consumers to reduce their meat consumption.

Prop 12 is the big news there at the moment based on a decision in the California Supreme Court which requires all pork to be supplied in California to come from pigs reared in loose gestation places. This is supposed to take effect on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2023. There may be some allowance not to implement this until the end of the year. The sector hopes for a reasonable transition period – but it is not sure and this is also creating uncertainty in the pork market. At present California produces less than 1% of the pig meat but consumes 13% of all US pork. The implications are serious and could influence how Interstate trade is conducted in the future.

All in all the pig producers in the US are worried about how they will survive the next 12 months unless pig prices rise and production costs start to reduce.

## Well worth a listen!

In 2016 Teagasc opened the Teagasc Pig Research Facility (TPRF) in Moorepark Co. Cork, a facility which many of you are familiar with. On the latest episode of the Pig Edge, Amy Quinn is joined by Tomás Ryan & Aisling Holmes who are in charge of the day to day running of the unit. They reflect on some of the changes they have made in the unit over the past number of years and their motivations as to why. For this episode and more from the Pig Edge podcast go to: <https://www.teagasc.ie/animals/pigs/the-pig-edge-podcast/>.

## Balmoral show 2023

Ophelie Menant from the PDD attended the 154<sup>th</sup> Balmoral Agricultural show in Lisburn, Northern Ireland. The 4 day show included animal showing competitions which includes pigs, particularly rare breeds such as Middle white, British saddleback, Gloucester old spot and Oxford sandy and black. Ophelie attended this four day event to promote the DAFM funded OneWelPig project and to attract more participants to the online survey which aims to characterise systems of outdoor pig production in the Republic and Northern Ireland (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Z2925JS>).

Ophelie presented a poster with preliminary results from an online survey that was completed by 88 outdoor farmers from 23 counties at the Queen's University Belfast (QUB) stand, as they are collaborators in the project. This poster also explained the work being done to characterise the welfare of the pigs, and the environment during farm visits conducted during spring 2023. The second round of farm visits will start this summer to capture seasonal effects, and to assess the quality of life of the farmers. With QUB, we are



also assessing the quality of life of farmers that raise pigs indoors to gain an understanding of differences and similarities across the sectors. If interested this survey can be accessed here; [https://qubpsych.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_9M5jwA5NjigWCoK](https://qubpsych.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9M5jwA5NjigWCoK) and will take 5 minutes to complete.



## Congratulations Shilpi

The Pig Development Department would like to congratulate Dr. Shilpi Misra on successfully defending her PhD thesis on 'Reducing freshwater use in pork production the case of Ireland' from Wageningen University. Shilpi's work comprised of an on farm water usage survey obtaining detailed measurements of direct water consumption, diet composition and farm production on 12 commercial farms to determine the direct on-farm and off-farm green and blue water use (results summarised in the May 2023 newsletter). In addition to this Shilpi assessed the effect of using alternative pig diets based on local feed ingredients, or by-products on the freshwater use of pork production. Shilpi conducted two trials in the TPRF to determine the effect of environmental enrichment and group size on water use and waste in grower-finisher pigs and on the effect of different cleaning procedures on water use and bacterial levels in weaner pig pens. We wish Shilpi every success in her future career!

### For more information:

Please visit our webpage at:  
<https://www.teagasc.ie/animals/pigs/>

For any further information on newsletter content please contact the editor, Amy Quinn at: [amy.quinn@teagasc.ie](mailto:amy.quinn@teagasc.ie) or +353 87 3779015