For many of the participants in the Beef Data and Genomics Programme, some of the elements of the programme, such as Euro-Star Indexes and genomics, are relatively new concepts. It is with this in mind that a training course has been included as a key requirement for all BDGP participants.

The purpose of this training is to ensure that farmers understand the various elements of the programme and will subsequently be best placed to meet the requirements. It will also help to deal with any individual queries which farmers may have. The training course is compulsory for all BDGP participants.

Training course outline

The training courses commenced on 30 March and are being delivered nationwide by Teagasc. Each course will last approximately four hours, commencing at 9.45am, breaking for lunch from 12.30pm to 1.30pm and concluding at 3pm. Courses will be delivered in a classroom-type environment at various Teagasc centres as well as other designated locations.

The course is broken into two sections, morning and afternoon. The morning section (2.5 hours) will cover:

- BDGP terms and conditions
- Data recording requirements
- Euro-Star indexes
- Genomics

The afternoon section (1.5 hours) will cover:

- Male and female requirements
- Bull selection and interpreting a bull’s Euro-Star Index

Training material

The course will be delivered by trained tutors aided by PowerPoint slides, a training information booklet and a series of video clips. The video clips outline the data requirements of the BDGP, the Euro-Star Index system and genomics, as well as profiling four BDGP participant farmers, their current situation in terms of 4- and 5-star replacements and what they plan to do to meet the 2018 and 2020 requirements. These video clips are available to be viewed on the Teagasc website www.teagasc.ie. Each farmer will also be provided with their own BDGP Euro-Star report for the purpose of completing some exercises during the day. Farmers are not specifically required to bring any material with them, but a pen and paper may be useful to write down some information from the training.

Attending a course

All participating herds will be offered a course between now and 31 October 2016. Applicants will receive a written invitation by post, 14 days in advance of the course date. The applicant is then expected to confirm their attendance by phone or email as soon as possible after receiving the letter. Contact details will be included on the invitation letter. A reminder text message will be sent to all applicants who have confirmed their attendance on the day before the course. Applicants will not be permitted to attend courses which they were not invited to.

A payment of €166 will be issued to each applicant on the completion of the training course.

Initial feedback

Feedback sheets are given out at the end of each course and initial farmer feedback has been positive, according to Vivian Silke, Teagasc BDGP Training Co-ordinator. Vivian stresses the importance of responding promptly to the invitation letter and applicants only attending courses which they have been invited to attend.

Vivian also said that applicants who are unable to attend the first training course offered to them will be invited to a course at a later date. Applicants may, however, have to travel a greater distance to these later catch-up courses so it is important to try to attend the first course offered.

Q: How do I arrange to attend one of the BDGP training courses? As long as you have been confirmed as a participant in the BDGP by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine (DAFM), you will receive an invitation to a training course before the end of October 2016. You are not required to do anything prior to receiving the invitation letter. If you are unsure as to whether your herd is still in the BDGP, then you need to contact DAFM on 076-106 4423 or email beefschemes@agriculture.gov.ie.

Q: My neighbour has been invited to a course next week. Can I go along to the course with him? No. You will not be permitted to attend a course that you have not been invited to. It is very important that all applicants strictly adhere to this. The relevant material will not be available for your herd for the purposes of training and you will not be credited with having completed a training course.

Q: Can a nominee attend the course on my behalf? Yes a nominee can attend. They must be a family member or partner.