



UPDATE – for period 2nd - 5th January 2007

1 Important Dates

- ❑ **Thursday 25th January.** 10:30 to 13:00. Board Meeting. Comfort Inn, Portlaoise.
- ❑ **Thursday 1st February.** 10:30 to 13:00. Board Meeting. Comfort Inn, Portlaoise.
- ❑ **Saturday 3rd March.** Tully beef bull sale. Show 11.00 am Sale 12.00 pm.

2 Plans for 2007 – Brian Wickham

With a new year now underway it is a good time to look forward and discuss our plans and ambitions for 2007. Our budget for 2007 is based on delivering on ICBF's strategic plan. Some of the challenges we are looking forward to are outlined here.

Improving our Partnership. The report from Deloitte's identified the need for ICBF to take steps to strengthen its partnership with its stakeholders. On 25th January the Board will be dedicating a full meeting to this and other recommendations from the report. The Board made a commitment at its December 2006 meeting to keep stakeholders fully involved in this process so you can expect to hear more and to be involved directly in this process in the near future.

Growing Milk Recording. With eight more cells coming on stream in 2007, bringing the total to 20, there is an excellent opportunity to further increase the use of milk recording. Our focus will be on ensuring every cell is fully utilised and that farmers receive a high quality service.

Achieving an Increase in AI. Last years campaign is being reviewed and forms the basis for an extended campaign under the banner of the **Profit with AI Partnership**. Mart events will be earlier – late February and early March, and the campaign will extend to cover the whole year. Our goal is to achieve a five percent increase in AI.

Growing HerdPlus. We plan to increase the uptake of HerdPlus by convincing more dairy farmers of the benefits, and by expanding it to beef herds. Our focus will be on delivering a high quality service providing information that cattle farmers find very valuable. HerdPlus provides an ideal means for farmers not using a pedigree, AI, or performance recording (dairy or beef) service from our members, to get involved with recording at minimal cost.

Implementing the new Beef Evaluations. One of the biggest challenges in 2007 will be to help beef breeders and suckler herd owners to understand the new beef evaluations. Andrew Cromie and his working group will be reporting back with their recommendations early next month on how this can best be done.

Growing Beef Performance Recording. In addition to the calving and mortality data collected through animal events on-farm weight recording and linear scoring are the next most important source of performance data for beef breeders. That our current services are less than optimal has been clearly identified by our genetic evaluation research team. The first challenge for the early part of 2007 will be to review these services and to implement improvements. The challenge for the later part of 2007 will be to convince breeders of the merits of the improved service and thus to substantially improve the accuracy of the new beef evaluations especially for the maternal traits.

Growing GENE IRELAND®. Growth in this service will have enormous longer-term benefits to Irish cattle farmers by dramatically improving the quality of beef and dairy bulls available through AI. Our focus in 2007 is to move the dairy program up to 100 bulls as quickly as possible and to start the beef scheme with the identification of elite cows, entry of elite bull calves to Tully, and inseminations from a limited number of beef bulls for progeny testing.

In addition to these challenges we are pursuing a number of new opportunities including the DAF Suckler Scheme, and Sire Advice. During the year we expect also to conduct research on longer term opportunities including the provision of DNA based information services, sheep breeding services and the provision of information to help farmers achieve higher returns from the sale of stock. As these ideas develop the Board



will consider them and you can expect the Board to keep you informed and to seek your views before taking final decisions.

3 Database Update

- 175,640 inseminations have now been recorded on the AI handhelds.
- Dry-off sheets are still coming in at a good rate and are currently being keyed. The second batch of the Milk Recording Annual Reports will be issued next week.
- The final fertility reports continue to be issued based on insemination data and pregnancy diagnosis information in the database. These continue to be run on a weekly basis incorporating the latest data available on the database.
- Production of the personalised Animal Events notebook for farmers has begun this week and the first notebooks will be issued to farmers new week.
- Work on the output from the Sire Advice workshop held before Christmas is continuing. The first release will be available before the end of January.
- The new Teagasc Discussion Group application is in progress, and it is expected this will be released within two weeks.

4 Genetic Evaluations (Dairy)

Preparations continue for the next routine dairy evaluation. Extracts are currently being run, and it is expected that there will be updated information for all traits in the dairy EBI for the Spring.

5 Genetic Evaluations (Beef)

Work continues on various aspects of the beef evaluation system before official release. New data will be incorporated into next evaluation in the coming weeks.

6 International Beef Genetic Evaluations

Construction of multiple regression conversion equations for muscle and skeletal for Charolais has been completed. These conversion factors make use of multiple French traits to convert to Irish Muscle and Skeletal figures. Work continues on developing these equations for other traits and breeds.

7 Tully

- The October intake of bulls were tested for TB yesterday and will be sold at Tully on the 3rd March '07.
- The next weighing of the October intake will take place on the 9-1-07.
- Bloods from the December intake were taken by UCD on the 4-1-06.
- A group of beef farmers from England will visit Tully on the 9-1-07.

