1. Important Dates

- **Dairy Breeding Consultation** –Wednesday 20th January 2010, **10:00 to 13:00** – Horse & Jockey.
- **Dairy & Beef Breeding Consultation Participants – Joint Lunch** –Wednesday 20th January 2010, **13:00 to 14:00** – Horse & Jockey.
- **Beef Breeding Consultation** –Wednesday 20th January 2010, **14:00 to 17:00** – Horse & Jockey.
- **ICBF Board Meeting** – Thursday 21st January 2010, **10:00 to 14:00** – Portlaoise.
- **Sheep Ireland Board Meeting** –Thursday 21st January 2010, **14:00 to 16:30** – Portlaoise.

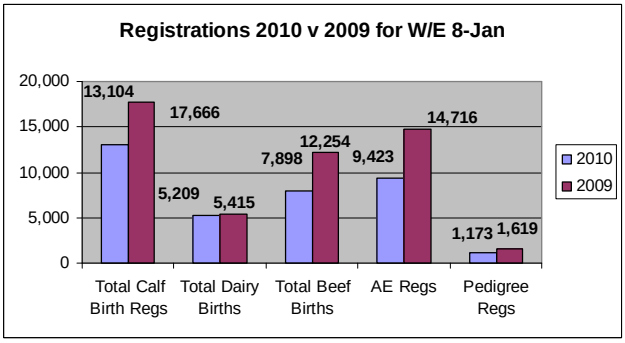
2. Priorities for 2010

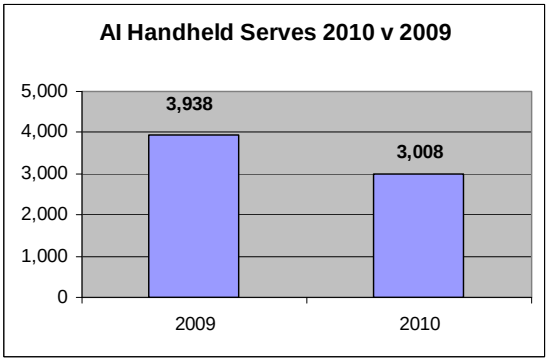
One of the first tasks for 2010 has been to review our priorities in light of indicative DAFF funding. There has been some fine tuning and an additional focus on ensuring good value for every € spent. I believe the priorities for 2010, established during our budgeting process in 2009, will be largely achievable. This is reflected in ICBF's detailed priorities for 2010 which are attached as appendix 1. These include: genomics, making full use of suckler scheme data, increasing HerdPlus® uptake, enhancing our web services, supporting AHI's (Animal Health Ireland) initiatives and making better use of Irish bred cattle to accelerate genetic gains for dairy and beef breeds. Our sheep priorities have moved from system building in 2009 to growing the use of the LambPlus and helping sheep farmers to make better use of the new €uro-Star genetic evaluations for sheep in 2010.

We have a very ambitious program for 2010. It builds on the breeding systems and extensive database built-up over the last few years. The ICBF team has become increasingly capable and is well placed to achieve our goals for 2010. We look forward to working with the breeding industry and Irish farmers and delivering increased value through our services and to overcoming the unexpected challenges that will inevitably arise in 2010.

3. Database

- In the Suckler scheme, the number of 2009 born calves with meal introduced is 564,198 with the number of animals weaned at 445,741.
- The focus for the first few weeks of January is to complete a number of outstanding items in relation to projects that are either live or in the final stages of completion.
- All four milk recording organisations continue to work well on the new Milk Recording system. We are continuing to update the software based on feedback from the organisations, and there will be a significant release of updates within the next week or so.
- The AI Code application is now in test mode, and the final changes are being made to the Sheep application for Sheep Ireland.
- A number of changes to facilitate the migration to the new Beef Linear evaluations are being finalised. These include the new linear score report, the herd-book catalogues, Taurus, and the on-line bull search.
- The graph shows Inseminations recorded on AI Handhelds in 2009 compared with 2008.





4. G€N€ IR€LAND®

Beef

- Sign ups are underway for the 2010 season. Work is continuing on lining up bulls for inclusion on the panel.
- This week the bull WOA became the first Blonde bull to be tested on Gene Ireland. Total straws sent out per bull currently on the panel are in the table below.

BREED	CH	LM	LM	SI	BB	BB	PT	SA	AA	SH	HE
CODE	VHC	FL29	MBP	HSY	EVG	SEU	KCP	BHU	RWB	CZB	AGI
STRAWS	424	419	366	163	294	567	602	304	529	430	193

5. Tully

- Breed societies and AI companies received updates this week, in relation to the parentage, owners and latest indexes of bulls at Tully.
- All 105 bulls have completed their isolation period of 30 days. The fact that all of the bulls that went into isolation passed their weekly testing for IBR, gives great confidence that the screening procedures in place, through on-farm health testing is working very successfully. As a result, bulls in off-farm isolation (n = 23) were brought back into Tully, this week.
- During the isolation period, bulls were built up onto ad-lib concentrates and were reduced to 1 kilo dry matter of hay, per head, per day. Bulls have being trained to feed from their individual feed boxes using electronically controlled Calan Broadbent gates. This involves a device being hung on the neck of each bull and it is designed to only open the corresponding feed box. This then allows for individual feed intake to be recorded accurately on each bull. Bulls are currently housed in groups of no more than four per pen. Therefore, all bulls are now ready to begin their 90 day performance test, which will start with all bulls being weighed on Monday, 11th of January.

6. Genetic Evaluations

Dairy

- A dairy breeding consultation meeting has been scheduled for Wednesday 20th January (see important dates) to review the results of test runs currently being conducted.
- Work on evaluations is ongoing. Testing of the new fertility model continues. Several different evaluations are being run to test the changes. Test proofs will be made available in advance of the dairy industry meeting on Jan 20th. At this point a final decision will be made on what proofs to use. A routine evaluation using the current model is being run should the new model not be implemented.
- At this point a new calving performance evaluation using first and later parities will not be ready in time. The current model with updated information is currently being run. We will look to implement a new calving evaluation later in the year, after the end of the breeding season.
- Domestic Production and Interbull proofs are currently being loaded. We hope to get some provisional proofs for these bulls to the industry next week. AI companies wishing to get information on non-AI coded bulls with International proofs should send the bulls International ID to us and we can extract production, fertility, and health information for these bulls. Beef and calving will be incomplete for these bulls until all the parent averaging has been done.
- Once all evaluations have been completed a new genomic run will be done to reflect the changes and updated evaluations. It is anticipated that this will commence on Monday 25th Jan. Any genotypes should be provided to us by then for inclusion in the run.

- Official release of all proofs is February 1st.

Beef

- A beef breeding consultation meeting will take place on Wednesday 20th January to review the implementation of the new across breed linears and to consider test runs for fertility traits.
- New extracts for factory data, mart data and fertility data have been completed.
- A new extract for linear type traits will be commence on the 15th in line with the new GROW scoring rules. A new beef evaluation will commence on the 16th.

Carcass Data

- The digital carcass images collected by ICBF from the slaughter factories across Ireland are in the process of being converted to give predicted meat yields. So far, 300,000 images collected between July 2007 and August 2008 have been processed.
- Images collected between July 2006 and July 2007 are being processed at present. The process to convert the whole image database is expected to take at least 2 weeks.

7. Milk Recording

National Milk Recording Results by County - 10 day Period 29/12/09 to 08/01/2010

	No. Herds Recorded	*No. Cows Recorded*	*Average Herd Size*	*Average 24hr Milk kg/Cow*	*Average Fat %*	*Average Protein %*	*Average F + P kg*	*Average SCC*
CARLOW	3	94	31	23.9	4.08	3.49	1.81	667
CAVAN	15	534	36	18.6	4.17	3.41	1.41	494
CLARE								
CORK STH	15	1234	82	24.1	3.88	3.61	1.81	430
CORK NTH	13	796	61	23.1	4.38	3.53	1.83	408
DONEGAL	2	132	66	18.8	4.11	3.45	1.42	298
DUBLIN	1	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
GALWAY	6	341	57	23.8	4.19	3.39	1.80	574
KERRY	5	207	41	14.3	4.11	3.41	1.08	360
KILDARE	4	216	54	20.6	3.79	3.37	1.47	425
KILKENNY	3	89	30	15.7	3.88	3.51	1.16	365
LAOIS	2	29	15	12.5	4.45	3.71	1.02	951
LEITRIM	1	60	60	28.6	3.69	3.18	1.96	334
LIMERICK	3	113	38	24.6	4.14	3.57	1.90	383
LONGFORD	2	90	45	16.2	4.01	3.59	1.23	328
LOUTH	11	725	66	26	4.04	3.45	1.95	585
MAYO								
MEATH	20	1752	88	21.3	4.37	3.5	1.68	475
MONAGHAN	20	701	35	19.9	4.21	3.43	1.52	526
OFFALY								
ROSCOMMON								
SLIGO								
TIPPERARY NTH	4	105	26	9.8	4.31	3.74	0.79	603
TIPPERARY STH								
WATERFORD	2	130	65	19.2	4.88	3.9	1.69	505
WESTMEATH								
WEXFORD	4	334	84	14.3	4.35	3.62	1.14	550
WICKLOW E								

National Milk Recording Results by County - 10 day Period 29/12/09 to 08/01/2010								
	No. Herds Recorded	*No. Cows Recorded*	*Average Herd Size*	*Average 24hr Milk kg/Cow*	*Average Fat %*	*Average Protein %*	*Average F + P kg*	*Average SCC*
WICKLOW W	2	39	20	23.6	3.49	3.15	1.57	445
	No. Herds Recorded	*No. Cows Recorded*	*Average Herd Size*	*Average 24hr Milk kg/Cow*	*Average Fat %*	*Average Protein %*	*Average F + P kg*	*Average SCC*
National	**138**	**7,753**	**49**	**19.9**	**4.14**	**3.49**	**1.52**	**488**

National Milk Recording Averages by Province - 10 day Period 29/12/09 to 08/01/2010								
Provincial	*No. Herds Recorded*	*No. Cows Recorded*	*Average Herd Size*	*Average 24hr Milk kg/Cow*	*Average Fat %*	*Average Protein %*	*Average F + P kg*	*Average SCC*
Munster	42	2,585	62	19.2	4.28	3.63	1.52	448
Leinster	52	3,400	65	19.4	4.10	3.48	1.47	532
Connacht	7	401	57	26.2	3.94	3.29	1.89	454
Ulster	37	1,367	37	19.1	4.16	3.43	1.45	439

8. Appendix 1. Detailed Priorities for 2010

1. Genetic evaluations. Ensure ready availability of accurate genetic evaluations for all traits, breeds and animals (national & international) of significance to Irish farmers	
1.1 Common to beef and dairy	• Re-estimate genetic parameters for **calving and birth** traits, participate in Interbull test-run and implement enhancements to incorporate international evaluations available through Interbull. • Implement research findings for fertility evaluations to incorporate insemination data, all lactations and age at first calving as predictor traits. • Examine and evaluate the use of carcass cut data as provided by mechanical grading machines in the genetic evaluation of beef performance. • Extend the genetic evaluation systems to make full use of extra data as it becomes available from Marts and the Suckler Cow Welfare scheme. • Review and update methods of accounting for heterosis and recombination effects in dairy and beef evaluations. • Establish data sources for **disease susceptibility** traits. • Implement research findings from the development of genetic and phenotypic evaluations for male fertility utilizing relevant data (inseminations, pregnancy diagnosis etc). • Review use of data from embryo transfers in genetic evaluations.

1.2 Dairy	• Research & implement enhanced systems for incorporating **genomic data in EBI** for domestic and foreign bulls. • Research use of **test day model** for milk production traits. Collaborate with MTT (Finland) in enhancements to MIX99 to support ICBF's implementation of test day model for milk production traits. • Research the use of a **culling index**. • Research and consider implementation of use of calf price data from Marts for calves from dairy herds as a further element of the beef component in dairy EBI. • Research, develop and implement evaluations for new traits including; **lameness, farmer satisfaction, milking speed and temperament**. • Review the economic values in the EBI. • Consult with industry and **implement enhancements** to EBI.
1.3 Beef	• Participate fully in **Interbeef project** to ensure ready access to data and evaluations on beef cattle from other populations. • Assist in development of international evaluations for relevant traits. • Support implementation of across breed evaluation for **beef linear type** traits. • Support and participate in research by Teagasc and UCD into ways of improving **feed conversion efficiency** and incorporate outcome into beef genetic evaluations. • Research value of index for **stock bull satisfaction**. • Review economic values in beef €uro-Star indexes. • Research the benefits of **genomic data in SBV**. • Consult with industry and **implement enhancements to SBV and €uro-Star indexes**.
1.4 Knowledge & information	• Review and update the **genetic evaluation information** available through the **ICBF website** for use by breeding organizations, farmers and the general public. • Provide **training and support** to Teagasc, advisors, veterinarians and breeding organizations so that they effectively provide genetic evaluation knowledge to cattle farmers. • Hold **EBI competition for discussion groups** and provide full publicity to enhance farmer understanding of the EBI and the benefits for farm profitability. • Develop a **competition that enhances farmer understanding of the €uro-Star indexes** and the benefits for farm profitability.
1.5 Service quality	• Further enhance the ICBF website to provide easier to access and more comprehensive genetic evaluation information. • Publish **annual timetable**, in advance, for genetic evaluations and monitor performance against this timetable. • Three dairy evaluations to coincide with routine Interbull evaluations. • Monthly evaluations for beef linear traits. • Genomic evaluations according to agreed timetable.
1.6 Suckler Scheme	• Establish and implement strategy for ensuring the large majority of participants in the scheme receive sufficient benefits to ensure they **become regular users of HerdPlus®**. • Provide **rapid turnaround** of reports. • Ensure **DAFF requirements** are fully met.
1.7 Dairy Recording Initiative	• Work with industry stakeholders to develop and roll-out an initiative to **address the low level of sire identification** and low availability of high quality health and welfare data.

2. Uptake & cost of services. Increase participation and substantially reduce unit cost of cattle breeding services to farmers.	
2.1 Data Collection	• Provide a high **quality animal events recording service** to cattle herds engaged in cattle breeding and herd health activities. • **Grow the uptake of electronic animal events** recording through collaboration with software providers and provision of web services. • Maintain **interfaces with DAFF systems for calf registration and animal movements** ensuring accurate animal location information. • Develop and maintain **interfaces with Mart, Meat Factory and Milk Processors** to facilitate access to data relevant to cattle breeding, herd health and farm management. • Operate a **high quality database and web access** service for all users.
2.2 Milk Recording Services	• Maintain a high quality **milk recording information processing service** to MR service providers. • Maintain a high quality service to **support the EDIY milk recording** system.
2.3 AI Services	• Revise the Handheld software to add value to the technician service AI Companies provide to farmers. • Implement revised **web-based information services** for AI companies (active bulls, AI codes, G€N€ IR€LAND®).
2.4 Herd Book Services	• Support and enhance **web based herd book** processing service. • Ensure **services to herd books** are maintained in accordance with established service levels.
2.5 HerdPlus® Service	• **Review marketing** of HerdPlus® services to farmers and implement findings. • **Expand usage** of HerdPlus® services to 9,000 herds (dairy & beef). • **Enhance service** features to ensure customers are highly satisfied with service value and the service is very attractive to new customers. • Enhance **sire advice service to cover beef breeds**. • **Review GROW® service** in light of developments in genomics and data recording and implement findings.
2.6 Farm Advisor service	• Review marketing of **services to advisors** and implement findings. • **Target markets** for service to include Teagasc dairy and beef advisors, private consultants, Veterinarians, Dairy and Meat factory field service providers. • Enhance **services to Discussion Groups** by extending range and relevance of group reports and other features.

2.7 Health and disease service	• **Support the AHI initiative** to establish whole herd health scheme(s) in Ireland. • **Support Teagasc research** initiatives for dairy and beef herd health by providing database services, access to data and investigating services for the future. • **Lead with AHI in the development and provision** of herd health information services for beef and dairy breeders. • **Develop and implement pilot incidence based** data collection system for health events on farms. • **Develop and implement pilot integrated health testing information system** to support sample collection, laboratory testing and result analysis service for use by herd owners and specialists (Veterinarians, Technicians, Consultants…) working with herd owners. • **Develop and implement pilot integrated web based herd health monitoring and diagnostic reporting system** for use by herd owners and their advisors (Veterinarians, Teagasc, service providers, …). • **Develop and implement pilot information service for farm advisors** (Veterinarians, Teagasc, service providers) to service herds participating in herd health programs.
2.8 Promotion of best practice in cattle breeding	• Implement a "**Profit through Breeding**" promotion campaign to: • Ensure farmers understand and make good use of genomic information on breeding stock.
2.9 Promotion of ICBF information services	• Provide **education of key stakeholder staff** who deal with farmers of ICBF developments to help them do their jobs more effectively and efficiently. • **Develop and provide ICBF website demonstration and learning system** that covers all key electronic services available to farmers and services users.
3. Breeding Schemes. Ensure cattle breeding industry delivers optimal economic returns for Irish cattle farmers from genetic improvement.	
3.1 G€N€ IR€LAND® Breed Development Service	• Adherence to four key principles: o Identification of foundation bulls o Identification of committed breeders (good data, performance recording, use evaluations in breeding decisions, high health status) o Identification of current elite females in herds of committed breeders. o Optimal size progeny test. • Provide support structures – procurement, matings, progeny test, funding, information.
3.2 G€N€ IR€LAND® Procurement Service	• Develop and implement **web based** information service for Breed Associations and AI Companies participating in **G€N€ IR€LAND® procurement**. • **Expand G€N€ IR€LAND® web based procurement** service to meet needs of AI Companies and Breed Associations with active breed improvement programs. • **Implement prototype** herd health service for breeders supplying bulls to Tully, breeders supplying bulls for use in AI and breeders providing stock bulls.
3.3 G€N€ IR€LAND® Progeny Test Service	• Launch and operate **modified G€N€ IR€LAND® progeny test in 2010** according to agreed design, operating procedures and funding. • **Operate ongoing phases** of 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009 G€N€ IR€LAND® beef and dairy progeny test schemes.
3.4 Funding of G€N€ IR€LAND®	• Complete **review of G€N€ IR€LAND® funding** in light of available funding from NDP and outcome of breeding scheme design study. • Given the long term nature of the benefits of the breeding scheme ensure all appropriate

	sources of funding are utilized. • Ensure **funding mechanism is fair and equitable** to all participants and that the program covers all costs in accordance with ICBF policy.
3.5 Genomic Selection	• Provide **active leadership** to the cattle industry in the harnessing of DNA technologies for the benefit of farmers and the breeding industry. • Establish research and operational collaborations with other countries to ensure Ireland is able to implement efficient genomic selection programs. • Establish DNA testing and integrated genetic evaluation systems required to enable the Irish breeding industry and Irish farmers to benefit from the application of genomic technologies. • Secure **DNA samples** (or 500K chip results) for use in genomic research from all beef bulls with accurate genetic evaluations in Ireland. • Secure a facility for **DNA storage, extraction and genotyping** on a long term basis to underpin both research and the provision of DNA based services. • Maintain the ability of the **ICBF database** to support research into genomic selection and the provision of DNA technology based services to the breeding industry. • Periodically review the **optimal breeding scheme** for beef and dairy for utilizing DNA technologies and use the results as the basis for decisions on the 2010 and subsequent G€N€ IR€LAND® schemes.
4. Service development and other services. Develop and market a range of information services that make effective use of the cattle breeding database, compliment the services provided by members and spread the overhead cost of maintaining and operating the ICBF database and genetic evaluation systems.	
4.1 Cattle trading information services	• Extend HerdPlus® to facilitate sales of high genetic merit animals, nationally and internationally, through licensed service providers. • Develop and implement genetic evaluation information service for animals being sold through Marts.
4.2 Research and technical services	• Promote facilities that ICBF can provide to support research and education. • Provide support, facilities and research material to researchers (including but not limited to Teagasc & Universities), including research on; o Genetic variation in disease resistance. o Genetic aspects of feed intake & efficiency in beef cattle. o Genetic aspects of reproduction in dairy and beef cattle. o Potential role of genomic technology for the Irish dairy & beef industries. • Contribute expertise and support to **EU funded FP6 & FP7 projects**. • Maintain **mechanism for industry good and national good benefits** of database and genetic evaluation system to be funded in longer term. • With a University partner **develop an education and diagnostic research interface** with HerdPlus® for use in education of tertiary students. • Support **genetic conservation** programs.
4.3 Key performance indicators	• Extend information service for provision of performance indicators to more dairy Co-ops. • Research potential of KPI services to beef herds.
4.4 Information	• **Review website** design to facilitate access to information. • Implement search function. • Implement system of metrics to provide useful information on website usage.

4.5 ICBF Performance	• Develop and implement balanced score card to measure and report ICBF performance against its strategic plan.
4.6 Member business growth service	• Encourage members to actively engage in enhancing information services and reports available to Irish farmers. • Facilitate member services to herds by providing access to relevant HerdPlus® reports. • Provide screens and reports that facilitate customer relationships between service providers and farmers.
4.7 Sheep	• Implement the 20 recommendations adopted by the Interim Sheep Board in late 2008.

Brian Wickham (PhD) Chief Executive, ICBF & Sheep Ireland , Highfield House, Shinagh, Bandon Co. Cork., Phone: +353 238 820 222, Mobile: +353 86 826 9911, Email bwickham@icbf.com,

Registered Office: Irish Cattle Breeding Federation Society Ltd trading as "ICBF", Highfield House, Shinagh, Bandon,Co Cork. Registered Dublin, Ireland. Registration Number 4914R, Industrial and Provident Societies Acts, 1893 to 1978. Web: www.icbf.com.

Registered Office: Sheep Database Ltd trading as "Sheep Ireland". Highfield House, Shinagh, Bandon, Co Cork. Registered Dublin, Ireland. RegistrationNumber 465004, Companies Acts 1963 to 2006. Web: www.sheep.ie.