

## ICBF Weekly Update 9<sup>th</sup> March 2012

### 1 Important Dates

- Breeding Consultation Meetings** – Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> March, 10:30 to 17:00, Killeshin Hotel, Portlaoise.
- ICBF Audit & Finance Sub Committee Meeting** - Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> March, 10:30 to 14:00, Horse & Jockey.
- ICBF Board Meeting** - Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> March, 10:30 to 14:00, Portlaoise.
- Sheep Board Meeting** – Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> April, 10:30 to 14:00, Portlaoise.
- ICAR 2012 Conference** [www.icar2012.ie](http://www.icar2012.ie) – Monday 28<sup>th</sup> May to Friday 1<sup>st</sup> June, Cork.
- Sheep 2012** – Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> June, Athenry.

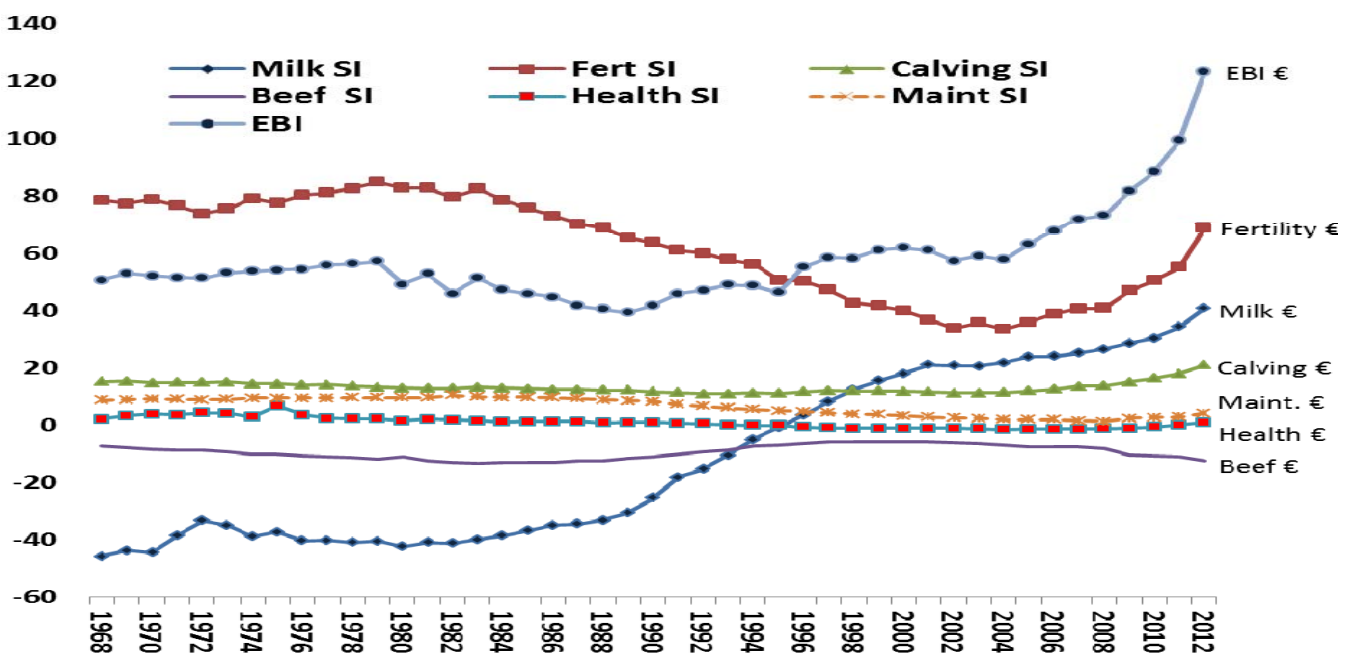
### 2 Genetic Gain – Our Mission

ICBF is, to quote our mission, “*striving to achieve the greatest possible genetic improvement in the national cattle herd for the benefit of Irish farmers, the dairy and beef industries and members*”. Today we are celebrating two major achievements.

#### Genetic Gain in the Dairy Herd

The following graph shows the average EBI and the average of each of the sub-indexes for dairy heifer calves according to their year of birth. Our genetic evaluation system updates these figures for all animals, even those born many years ago, three times per year to incorporate the most recent data. Our evaluations also incorporate the latest international information facilitated through Interbull.

The graph shows genetic improvement, measured in financial terms, in the national dairy herd replacements and, importantly, the contribution to farm profit from each set of traits. This graph highlights that almost all sets of traits are now moving in a positive direction – milk, fertility, calving, health, maintenance and it is only the beef sub-index that is showing a slight negative trend in recent years. The greatest turnaround is for fertility, where the decline which took place from 1980 to 2000, has now been reversed and is rapidly approaching levels last seen in the late 1970s.



These trends are a consequence of the strategies adopted by ICBF and our members over the last fourteen years including:

- Establishing the EBI with its focus on the traits that contribute to farm profitability.
- Gathering data from all possible sources and using it in an efficient genetic evaluation system.
- Making use of the best available computing and genetic technologies.
- Ensuring our breeding program is, as near as possible, to the optimal design,
- Communicating openly and effectively with all our stakeholders, and
- Continuously improving all aspects of our systems and services.

### 10,000 Herds on HerdPlus®

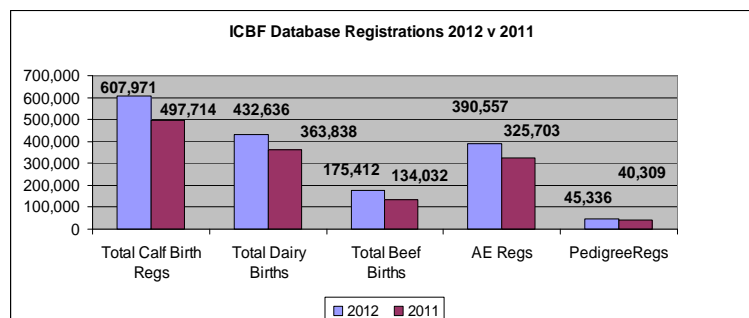
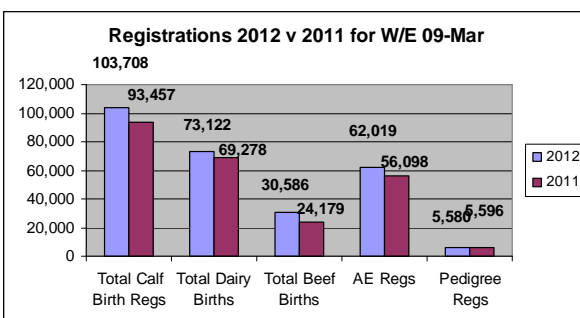
HerdPlus® was launched by ICBF in 2006. At that time we faced a funding crisis which arose due to the growing cost of providing free genetic evaluation information to an ever larger number of herds without matching income. The solution we chose was to establish a “user-pays” service, HerdPlus®, through which herd owners could access genetic evaluations for their animals. For the first year the service was only available for dairy herds and it was then expanded to beef herds.

We now have over 10,000 dairy and beef herds enrolled in the HerdPlus® service with 87% choosing the electronic option. There is a surge in beef herd enrolments currently taking place stimulated by the BTAP (Beef Technology Adoption Program 2012) scheme.

HerdPlus® is a service that is made possible, and inexpensive, by the way ICBF has been able to harness computer technology in combination with arrangements for data sharing with all of our stakeholders and the wider industry. Herds enrolling in HerdPlus® enjoy immediate access to a comprehensive range of genetic evaluation and other information for their animals. It is a unique and remarkable service, which an increasing number of herd owners are discovering the power and benefits of, in their day-to-day breeding and management decisions.

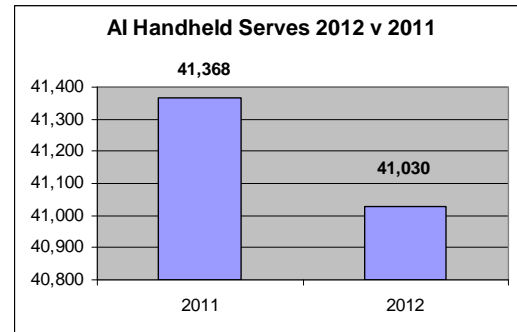
However, there are still many thousands of herd owners who are not benefitting from HerdPlus®. Our challenge, for the next few years, is to help these farmers discover the benefits of better breeding which results from using the information available through HerdPlus®.

## 3 Database



- ✚ The stats above are compiled with the assistance of DAFF AIM systems.
- ✚ In the Suckler scheme, the number of 2011 born calves with meal introduced is 591,904 with the number of animals weaned at 509,842.
- ✚ Distribution of the 5 Year Trend report has continued this week to all Suckler Scheme participants along with a Suckler Cow ‘Milk and Docility’ survey. Farmers will also receive their annual supply of freepost Animal Events envelopes.

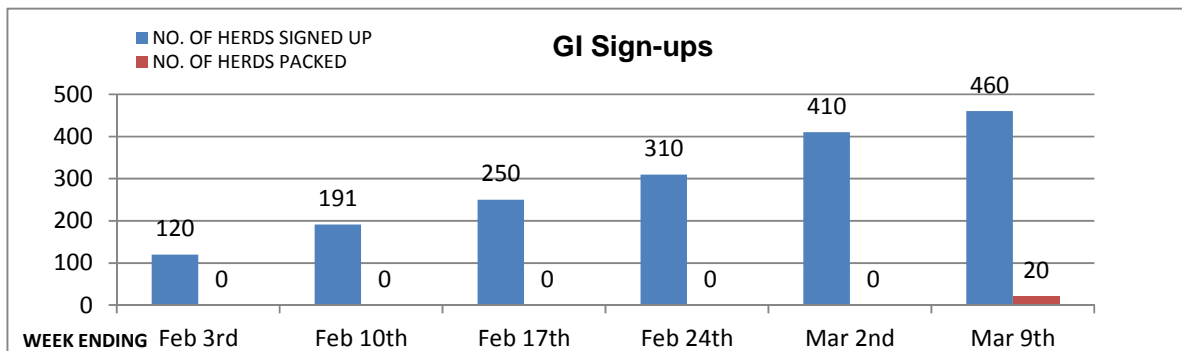
- ✚ BVD test results continue to be received at ICBF and are being processed accordingly. Around 514,000 tissue tags for BVD testing have been purchased at this stage. Around 150,000 samples have been returned at this stage, with a 0.59% BVD Virus Positive rate.
- ✚ Pilot testing will be completed next week on the new 'Bull-Tracker' report for pedigree herds.
- ✚ A weight recording report is under development at the moment, which will be distributed to farmers involved in weight recording after each submission of weights.
- ✚ Some further developments to further enhance the loading of genotype information to the database is continuing.
- ✚ The graph shows Inseminations recorded on AI Handhelds in 2012 compared with 2011.



#### 4 GENÉIRELAND®

##### Dairy

- ✚ Herds continue to be signed up by phone and post.
- ✚ Dispatch of straws commenced this week.
- ✚ Potential bull lists and catalogues are available in the GENÉIRELAND section of the ICBF website.



#### 5 Sheep Ireland

- ✚ Lambing is now in full swing on all our CPT flocks. As all these ewes were artificially inseminated over a period of an intensive period of seven days, the lambing period is extremely short. All lambed ewes are moved to individual pens after birth and remain in these pens until such time as the pen is required for the next cycle of freshly lambed ewes. All lambs are double tagged at birth with permanent EID tags, with all lambing difficulties, fostering information etc. recorded through the Sheep Ireland handheld and saved on our database. Luckily, the mild weather conditions are facilitating the prompt release of ewes & lambs to grass, which is plentiful thus far on all the farms.
- ✚ Last Friday evening we met with the Beltex Sheep Society to explain how the Euro-Stars can potentially help promote and develop the breed in Ireland. Those present at the meeting were in agreement that there is certainly huge potential within our industry in the area of genetic improvement and they were adamant that the Beltex society should try to benefit from this potential. 2012 will mark the first year that Euro-Star evaluations will be available for Beltex rams, and Sheep Ireland will do as much as we can to help the society expose this information to Irish farmers.

- Breeder sign-ups continue to come in as breeders look ahead to the 2012 ram sale season. This year having Euro-Stars evaluation for rams is certainly being viewed as a major asset when promoting breeding stock; we will continue to work hard to reinforce this opinion throughout the year.

## 6 Genetic Evaluations

- A new genomic run was completed this week with 650 dairy animals receiving a genomic EBI.
- Extracts are now complete and genetic evaluations for the next routine run have commenced.
- Work continues on weight predictions: birth weight data are coming into the database (n = 385 birth weights to date) to help predict birth weight from linear measurements taken on the new born calf; live weight at slaughter prediction equations have been updated to include earlier in life recorded live weight; prediction of live weight to a given date is still under development.

## 7 Milk Recording

National Milk Recording Statistics - Herds, Cows & EDIY 09/03/12						
Milk Recording Organisation	Total Herds Recorded YTD 09/03/12	No. EDIY Herds YTD 09/03/12	% Herds EDIY	Total No. Cows Recorded YTD 09/03/12	No. EDIY Cows YTD 09/03/12	% Cows EDIY
Munster	1,301	92	7%	66,653	6,154	9%
Progressive	1,225	270	22%	75,738	16,460	22%
Tipperary	17	0	0%	776	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,543</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>143,167</b>	<b>22,614</b>	<b>16%</b>

Recorded Cows by Milk Recording Organisation - Year on Year Comparison			
Milk Recording Organisation	YTD 2011 Cows Recorded 01/01/11 - 09/03/11	YTD 2012 Cows Recorded 01/01/12 - 09/03/12	2012 vs. 2011 Year on Year Difference (%)
Munster	60,759	66,653	8.8%
Progressive	78,385	75,738	-3.5%
Tipperary	937	776	-20.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>140,081</b>	<b>143,167</b>	<b>2.2%</b>

**National Milk Recording Averages by Province - 10 day Period 28/02/12 to 09/03/12**

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	654	32,358	49	25.7	4.16	3.29	1.91	289
Leinster	224	14,848	66	24.9	4.16	3.30	1.86	301
Connacht	28	1,206	43	25.1	3.87	3.24	1.79	278
Ulster	51	2,046	40	25.4	3.74	3.19	1.76	250

**National Milk Recording Results by County - 10 day Period 28//02/12 to 09/03/12**

	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	8	491	61	28.2	4.42	3.34	2.19	414
CAVAN	25	964	39	21.7	3.88	3.21	1.54	307
CLARE	6	262	44	28.5	3.98	3.24	2.06	368
CORK STH	221	10,879	49	25.5	4.18	3.29	1.90	275
CORK NTH	202	10,616	53	25.2	4.33	3.35	1.94	263
DONEGAL	5	329	66	28.0	3.87	3.20	1.98	201
DUBLIN	3	166	55	28.4	4.32	3.26	2.15	261
GALWAY	13	596	46	25.3	4.13	3.31	1.88	240
KERRY	96	4,190	44	27.2	4.00	3.14	1.94	313
KILDARE	21	1,442	69	26.7	4.18	3.26	1.99	347
KILKENNY	32	2,248	70	22.7	4.30	3.31	1.73	225
LAOIS	14	601	43	24.4	4.07	3.29	1.80	260
LEITRIM	8	311	39	25.4	3.77	3.22	1.78	231
LIMERICK	75	3,461	46	26.8	4.16	3.32	2.00	248
LONGFORD	8	387	48	20.6	4.21	3.22	1.53	318
LOUTH	17	1,408	83	25.7	3.67	3.35	1.80	321
MAYO	2	124	62	20.0	3.86	3.56	1.48	267
MEATH	42	3,218	77	25.3	4.16	3.30	1.89	327
MONAGHAN	21	753	36	26.5	3.48	3.16	1.76	241
OFFALY	7	639	91	24.1	4.82	3.28	1.95	381
ROSCOMMON	1	23	23	28.4	3.16	2.96	1.74	375
SLIGO	4	152	38	26.4	4.45	3.15	2.01	276
TIPPERARY NTH	10	323	32	22.5	4.05	3.36	1.67	430
TIPPERARY STH	10	530	53	23.8	4.25	3.30	1.80	365
WATERFORD	36	2,097	58	25.1	4.28	3.30	1.90	218
WESTMEATH	8	448	56	23.3	4.12	3.36	1.74	265

<b>WEXFORD</b>	33	1,732	52	25.8	4.07	3.34	1.91	246
<b>WICKLOW E</b>	22	1,449	66	25.1	4.18	3.30	1.88	275
<b>WICKLOW W</b>	9	619	69	23.9	4.25	3.32	1.81	279
	<b>No. Herds Recorded</b>	<b>No. Cows Recorded</b>	<b>Average Herd Size</b>	<b>Average 24hr Milk kg/Cow</b>	<b>Average Fat %</b>	<b>Average Protein %</b>	<b>Average F + P kg</b>	<b>Average SCC</b>
<b>National</b>	<b>959</b>	<b>50,458</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>25.2</b>	<b>4.09</b>	<b>3.28</b>	<b>1.86</b>	<b>294</b>

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