



## UPDATE – FOR WEEK 16<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY TO 20<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2004.

### 1. Board Meeting – Wednesday

- The un-audited financial results for 2003 are close to budget
- The Board confirmed its support for the establishment of a national stud and urged the Chairman to do all he could to bring about the final resolution of outstanding issues preventing its formation.
- Plans for an extensive educational campaign associated with the implementation of the EBI changes were supported. It was agreed that planned farmer meetings in addition to covering the EBI would also cover the national stud and the proposed targeted progeny test scheme.
- It was confirmed that current trials with the electronic milk meter would be reported to a milk recording conference on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> June. This conference will also hear about experiences in other countries and review a model for the use of electronic meters in Ireland.

### 2. Genetic Evaluations

#### a) Latest EBI proofs

- Latest EBI, milk production, CIS and linear type proofs for AI sires were forwarded to the AI industry this week. These files included proofs for both domestic sires (i.e., sires with AI codes in Ireland) and foreign bulls.
- All sires were ranked on the basis of the new EBI formula. The correlation between proofs from the latest national evaluation (Feb '04) and the previous evaluation (Nov '03) were 0.87 for EBI (reflecting the change in EBI weightings), 0.99 for protein Kg, 0.92 for SURV% and 0.91 for CI Days (please see attached document).
- Proofs for cows are due to be loaded this weekend. This will enable new proofs to be calculated for all young-stock, including young bulls for potential progeny test.
- Bull proofs are due to become official on the ICBF website on Monday 23rd February. Cow proofs will be released on an unofficial basis to the AI industry next week before becoming official on the ICBF website on Monday 1st March. Bull and cow proofs will become official on the ICBF database on Monday 23rd February.

#### b) Single Active Bull List for AI sires

- Agreement has been reached with the AI industry and Teagasc regarding the publication one "Active Bull List - February 2004". This list will contain only sires that are; (i) proven for widespread use, (ii) free of major genes (e.g., CVM), (iii) deemed active (i.e., minimum of 2,000 doses available) and (iv) with a minimum EBI reliability  $\geq 50\%$ . There will be no-subdivision of the list on the basis of any traits. This is a major step forward for the Irish dairy industry in establishing a consolidated approach to cattle breeding advice.

#### c) EBI Education and Information Plan (Spring 2004).

- In light of developments in the EBI (and the active bull list), ICBF has decided to embark on a major education drive to promote the concept of the EBI. These will include;
  - **Direct mailing to farmers** - EBI article and Active Bull List mailed to some 15,000 herd-owners.
  - **EBI seminars** - 2 seminars (North - 11<sup>th</sup> March & South - 10<sup>th</sup> March) focused on Teagasc Advisors, AI industry staff, IHFA field staff, monitor farmers and private farm advisors.
  - **Open Farm Walks** - 8 farm walks in specific locations around the country. Objectives of the walks will be to focus on "high EBI cows" vs. "low EBI cows" and their impact on profit. Milk recording herd-owners from each of these specific areas will be invited to these walks.
  - **ICBF website** - All press articles, technical bulletins and bull lists will be placed on the ICBF website.



- **Press** - A series of ads and popular articles will be placed in the various farming publications.

#### **d) Latest Calving Performance Evaluations.**

- Latest test evaluations for calving performance traits were forwarded to beef herdbooks and the AI industry this week. The test proof contained a subset of data (about 250 K records) from the historical AI system and the new Animal Events system. Heritability of the new proofs has increased considerably compared to the old system (due to better recording through Animal Events), resulting in much larger variation in proofs within and between breeds (see attached document).
- A further test evaluation is currently being carried out, including all records from Animal Events (400 K records), all records from the historical AI system (about 400 K records) and data collected through pedigree registrations (about 170 K records). The results of this test evaluation are due to be distributed to the AI industry and beef herdbooks next week (before the beef technical meeting on 26th February).

#### **e) Beef Index Developments.**

- A draft report has been received from Peter Amer re: new Beef Index Developments (following the series of industry consultation meetings on 8/9 December). A response to this document has been formulated and forwarded to Peter for his comments (and further development). We expect to have a copy of this report available to the wider beef industry in the coming weeks.
- Beef slaughter records have been received from DAF for all slaughtering in ICBF herds after 1st Jan 2004. Further files have been received from AIBP (for all slaughter records in 2003) and Slaney (again all slaughter records in 2003). Files are expected from a number of other beef companies in the coming weeks.
- Mart records have been received on a pilot basis from Athenry Mart (some 75,000 weight records for 2002 and 2003). Further records will be received from other marts in the future.
- Access to these data (from marts and factories) will be invaluable in developing more meaningful beef performance indexes for Irish farmers in the future.

### **3. Database Project**

#### **a) Newly Live Herdbooks**

- 380 new pedigree registrations received during the past week.
- 52 new Beef herds added to the database and Animal Events materials have been issued.
- BLUP files received for Limousin and Charolais. These are now live in the database. Reports have been distributed to Limousin Breeders.
- Work on speeding up the intranet query on Animal Name will be done next week.
- Training of the Montbeliarde Herdbook Administrator took place this week.
- Testing of the Jersey Cattle society herd book details took place this week and a meeting will be held next Tuesday with the Jersey Society to discuss the next steps.
- Some fine-tuning of the Sales Catalogue functionality is continuing.
- The issuing of a back-up database to each of the breed societies will be done next week

#### **b) Other database activities**

- The latest EBI figures have been loaded to the database and will be live on all farmer reports/certificates next week
- A full scale test of the SORD handheld application has taken place at Tully this week as part of the Beef Linear Scoring meeting and a report of the outcome will be issued next week.



- Further database work has taken place to support the issuing of Annual Milk Recording Reports.

#### **4. Tully Report**

- Plans for the Tully Sale 6<sup>th</sup> March 2004 are progressing well.
- Final figures for bulls will be available on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb and will then be placed on ICBF website.
- Judging of prize winners will take place on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> Feb.
- The sale catalogue will be available from Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> Feb.

#### **5. Beef Progress**

##### **a) Development of sales cataloguing system**

Much progress has been made in the development of a new intranet based sales catalogue generation system, coincidental with the loading to the database for the first time of beef animal evaluation data. A catalogue for the Limousin sale in Kilkenny on 26<sup>th</sup>. February has been successfully produced. A few minor enhancements are still being undertaken and familiarization will be carried out with all the beef breed users.

##### **b) Scoring harmonisation session and equipment review**

- On Thursday 19<sup>th</sup>, the first Linear Scorer harmonisation / monitoring session of the year was held at Tully. Eleven bulls were scored in the morning, directly into the PDA units and the same scored again in the afternoon. Analysis of the data is on going, and will reveal each scorer's competence with the equipment and also his / her ability regarding adherence to the mean, repeatability and also use of scale.
- An idea exchange workshop was also conducted with the scorers. The results of this session will be discussed at the Scoring Standards meeting scheduled for the afternoon of 26<sup>th</sup>.February.
- The session also provided the opportunity to analyse the performance of the equipment and software systems being used and the results of this will be shortly be reviewed.

##### **c) Commercial data from Factories and Marts**

- This last week has seen the arrival of a considerable body of historical slaughter data from the Dawn Group and Slaney Meats and more is expected shortly from AIBP and Kepak.
- Work has also started this week with Infoscience Ltd of Galway, in the development of an extract tool for mart data, initially a weanling file from Athenry Mart, showing sale date, animal id., weight and price. Given the fact that 80% of the marts use the Infoscience technology, this it is hoped will lead to the near automated retrieval of a very large number of such records on an on-going basis. Once back with ICBF, this data will be analysed for valid contemporary group data and suitability for incorporation into the new animal evaluation system.

#### **6. Milk Recording**

- No. Herdowners Milk Recorded in IRIS = 3,671

Dairygold	1,607
Progressive	1,284
SWS	420
Nenagh	124
Connacht Gold	120
Kerry	116

- No. Herd tests processed in IRIS = 13,230

Dairygold	6,930
Progressive	4,865
SWS	628



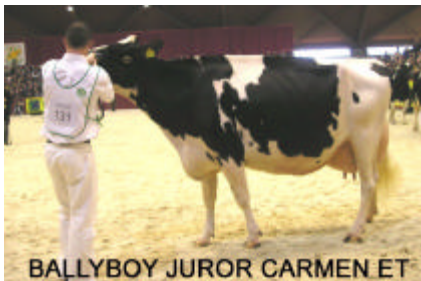
Connacht Gold	366
Nenagh	295
Kerry	146

- Weekly Update - No. herd tests processed in last 7 days = 389

Progressive	142
Dairygold	120
SWS	63
Kerry	37
Connacht Gold	19
Nenagh	8

Tipperary Co-op - held Recorder Meetings on 19/02 (Cahir & Thurles). IRIS Input sheets were issued to all recorders. From now all future herd recordings will be in new database. Keying to IDRC system has ceased.

## 7. Congratulations to IHFA – Pleasing the “Judges”



The highest EBI cow (+€53 on the new EBI placing her in the top 5% of milk recorded cows) that traveled to Brussels.

Last weekend IHFA took a team of cattle to Brussels to compete in a pan European cattle show. They were very successful and all animals were awarded prizes with both the overall champion and team competition being won by Ireland. All involved are to be congratulated.

By focusing on the requirements of the judges at the Brussels show IHFA were able to do a better job of satisfying them than any other country in Europe. We now need to apply this lesson to providing dairy cattle that will satisfy the "judges" on Irish farms. While the criteria are different, the lesson applies. We need to determine what the "judges" require and work together to make them very happy.

In the work leading to establishing the national stud one fact has become very clear. According to the criteria of Irish farmers (**profitability as measured by the EBI**) the best young black & white bulls in the world are in the herds of IHFA members. All we need to do is to make sure enough of them go into an efficient progeny test to guarantee rates of genetic gain greater than any other country in the world. ICBF looks forward to working with IHFA to ensure this happens.

## 8. Name of Building where ICBF Head Office is Located

Please keep those suggestions rolling – so far we have:

- Technology House,
- Cattle Breeding House and
- ICBF House.

Surely somebody can do better!

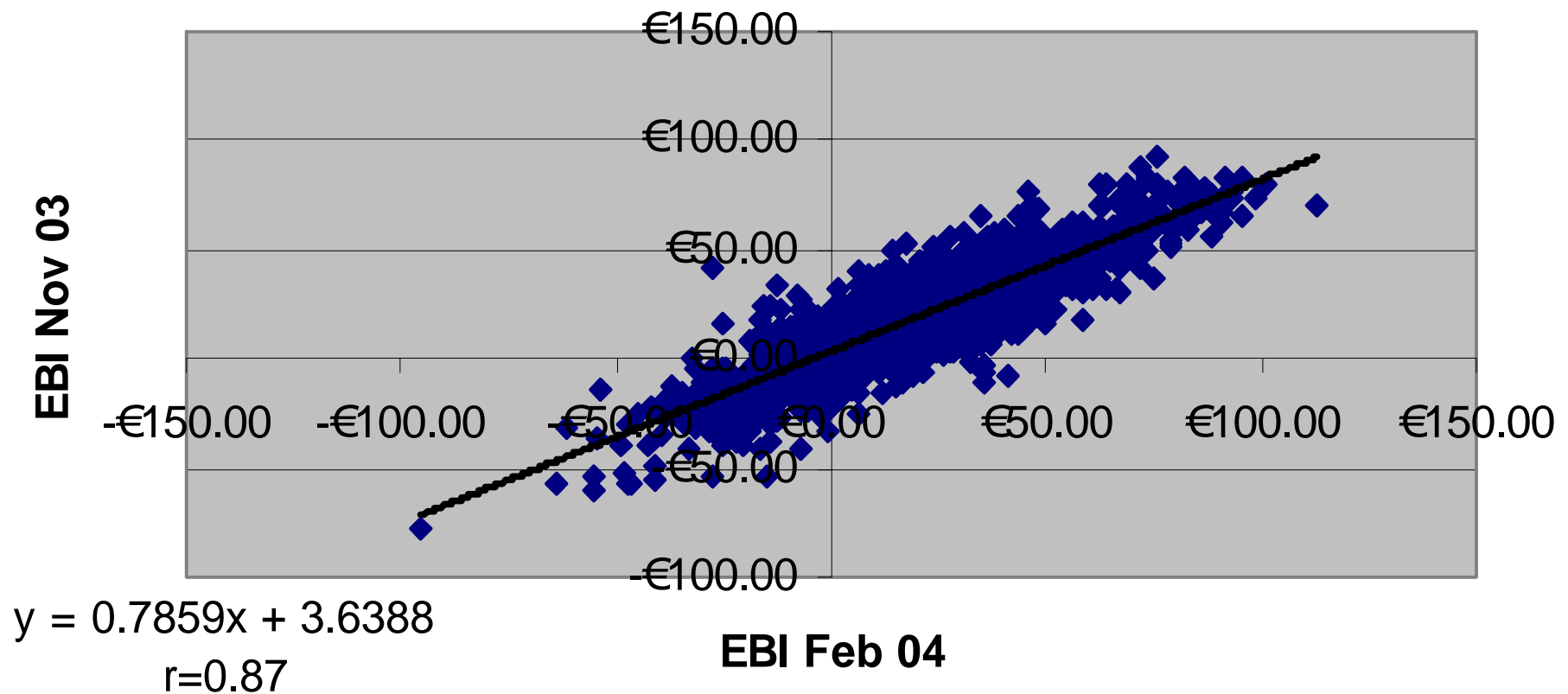
Brian

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# *EBI Old vs. EBI New (r=0.87)*

**Comparison of EBI proofs (Feb 04 vs Nov 03)**



# *Breed Averages – Increased Variation*

## Comparison of Breed Averages

