

Minutes of 5th meeting of the Informal Working Group on Halloumi/Hellim
29 September 2023

The 5th meeting of the Informal Working Group (WG) on Halloumi/Hellim (HH) was held on 29 September 2023 in the Home 4 Cooperation in Nicosia. The meeting was chaired by the Commission services, with the presence of 8 out of 10 WG members (see Annex 1; 9 members had confirmed).

The meeting started with a minute of silence to honour the memory of Mr. Vincent Aubin, Co-chair of the WG.

The working group adopted the draft agenda shared in advance of the meeting.

The objective of the meeting was to discuss recent developments and to continue reflections started in the 3rd meeting of the working group on ways to increase milk yields from small ruminants in Cyprus.

In terms of updates, members shared that the Turkish Cypriot community is now redoubling efforts to enable the first PDO compliant Halloumi/Hellim to cross the Green Line by mid-2024, once all preconditions for trading Halloumi/Hellim in the EU market are met. Responding to a specific request, Mr. Luca Cianfoni (DG AGRI) updated the working group regarding the possible extension of the transitional period regarding the percentage of sheep and goat milk in the Halloumi/Hellim PDO recipe. This modification is part of a broader legislative effort to adopt a new EU Regulation on Geographical Indications which is currently under discussion between the Co-legislators. Current indications are that the extension of transitional periods will be included in the final legislation, pending a final decision expected to be taken before the end of 2023.

Experts from Sustainable Food Systems Ireland (SFSI) gave a well-received presentation on the Irish experience for increasing milk yield. The presentation is shared with these minutes (annex 2). A fruitful discussion followed the presentation. Members from both communities raised concrete technical questions and observations in particular on the Irish sheep and goat breeding programme and on the Agricultural Knowledge Innovation System model used. Questions ranged from the breeds and feed utilised, to milk channelling schemes, whey valorisation, and the cost, duration and scope of animal breeding programmes. Similarities and differences in terms of input, output and costs between Irish and Cypriot small ruminants dairy sector were explored. Given the clear potential for bi-communal actions in this area, members were encouraged to share ideas for potential cooperation with the European Commission. SFSI committed to come back to the working group with information on the average milk yields of sheep and goat in Ireland. Their input is found in Annex 3.

Finally, members expressed their interest in knowing more about the support provided by the European Commission to the Turkish Cypriot community in terms of implementation of the Halloumi/Hellim PDO, including the new partnership between the European Commission and the German International Cooperation Agency (GIZ). It was agreed that a presentation will be made to members at a subsequent meeting.

It was announced that the next meeting would be held in late December 2023.

The minutes of the meeting will be posted on the DG REFORM website.

Annex 1: List of members participating in the fifth meeting of the Informal Working Group on Halloumi/Hellim:

Working Group Members:

- Andrea, Christo.
- Andreou, Andreas.
- Erel, Metehan.
- Ergüven, Mustafa.
- Öztürk, Kemal.
- Papademas, Photis.
- Petrou, Georgios.
- Pittas, Yiannos.

Guest speakers:

- Rae, John. Sustainable Food Systems Ireland, International Project Manager.
- Barry, Michael. SFSI Panel Expert, Dairy Value Chain.
- Condon, Cian. Teagasc, National Goat Expert. (participating online)
- McDermott, Kevin. Sheep Ireland, Manager.

From the Commission:

- Björnsson, Kjartan. DG REFORM – Chair of meeting.
- Cianfoni, Luca. DG AGRI – Co-chair. (participating online)
- Simosas, Stefan. DG REFORM.
- Pomoell-Seguroła, Jutta. DG REFORM.
- Castelló Corvillo, Javier. DG REFORM.

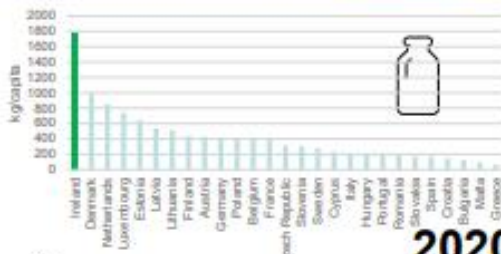
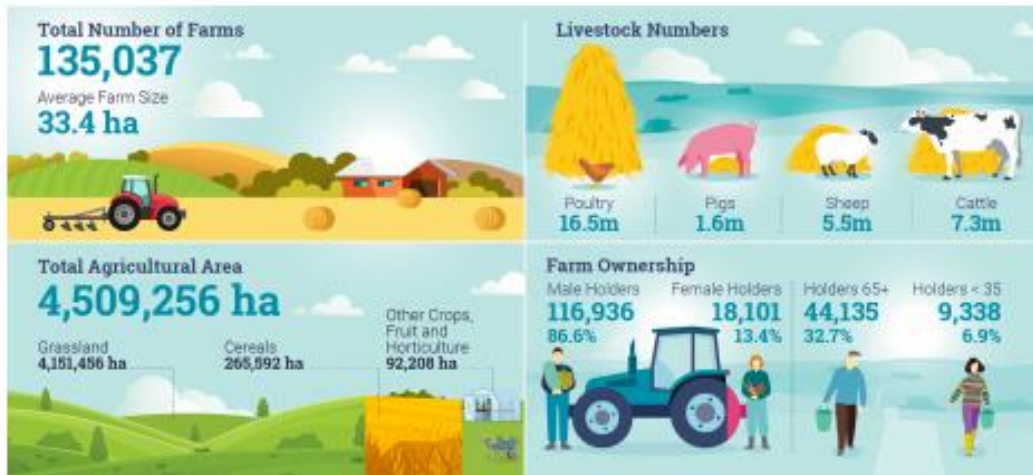
Annex 2: SFSI presentation on “Increasing yield from Small Ruminants in Ireland”



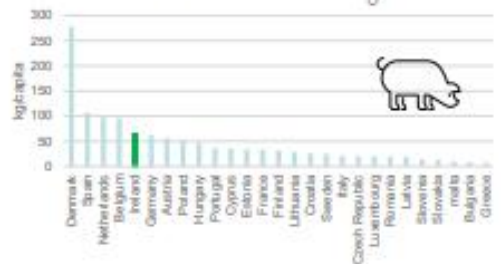
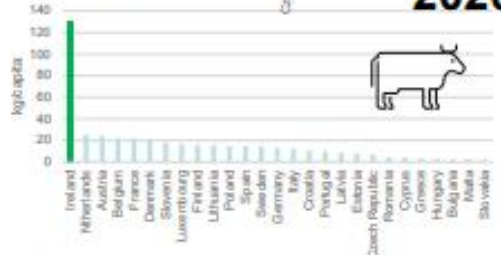
Ireland



	IRELAND
Total Population	5.1 m
Land Area	70,282 sq km / 6.9 m Ha
Agricultural Land	4.23 m Ha
% for Agriculture	62% of total area
% Pastureland	82% of agricultural land
Number of Farms	139,800
Average Farm Size	32 Ha
GDP	US\$ 334 bn US\$ 70,361 per capita (PPP)



2020 EU Production Figures Milk, Beef & Pork kg/capita



Ireland's Food Export Figures for 2022



4 Ways to increase overall yield



- Health
- Feed
- Breed
- Numbers



- In Ireland we support the farmer to make educated and informed decisions - AKIS

Health



- Health
 - Flock Health Status has a major impact on productivity and profitability
 - Important to strive for a High flock health status
 - Prevention is better than cure
 - Strong Animal Identification System key to disease eradication and outbreak control
 - Animals should only leave the system in 1 of 3 ways, death, slaughter or live export

Health

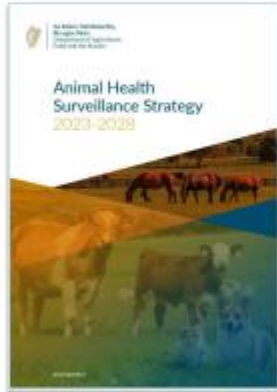


- **Flock Health Management Plan**
 - Prebreeding, Records, Evidence, Culling, Identify, Treat, Physical Check, Colostrum, Parasite Control, Feed Mgt, Work with Vet, Vax Plan
 - Prevent Disease Entry to Farm
 - Biosecurity
 - Indirectly From Visitors
 - Indirectly From Slurry
 - Indirectly From Animal Equipment
 - Indirectly From Wildlife and Other Animals
 - Indirectly From the Environment

Prevent Disease Spread on Farm

- **From Animals**
 - Plan, Test, Treat, Isolate,
- **From the Environment**
 - Cleaning Routine, Stocking Density, Decontaminate, Animal Waste, Water, Machinery, Ventilation
- **From Equipment**
 - Clean, Different for different groups, Needles, Disinfect boots and change gloves between different groups of animals, Raise and shield feed, water troughs and mineral blocks to prevent contamination with manure and urine.

Overall Health



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Breed



- Hybrid vigour
- Genetics increasingly important for productivity, environmental sustainability and animal health
- Predict an animal's potential performance
- More accurate selection of animals with desirable traits, such as high milk or carcass merit, and can lead to faster genetic progress

Breeding - Irelands Approach



- Centralised breeding programme
- Ministry has authorised Sheep Ireland to carry out performance testing or genetic evaluations
- Sheep Ireland manage Ireland sheep breeding programmes nationally





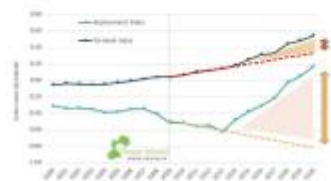
Central Progeny Test Centre

- CPT - [Laparoscopic AI - Tagging](#)
- Identifies the most profitable bloodlines
- Use stock rams of pedigree lamb breeders
- Daughters are maintained and data collected on them
- Ewes are AI'd – parentage known
- Tight lambing reduces labour, mgt and environmental factor throughout the year
- Data captured and collected on Sheep Ireland database
- Contributed to Evaluation of Rams
- Helps farmers decision making for next stock ram

Results of Breeding Programme Sustainable Food Systems Ireland A partnership of 100+ committed experts

- In Ireland we have been able to reverse the negative trends in maternal traits in our flock due to our breeding programme

Value of Sheep Ireland in ROI



Total benefits from 2014 -20
= €27m (term + rep)

Future benefits^{1,2}

• Terminal = €0.3m/year

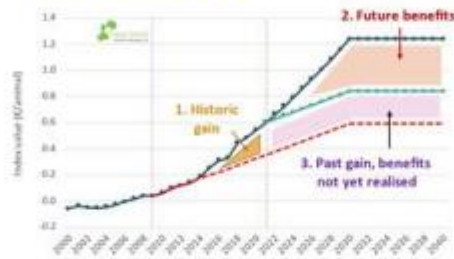
• Maternal = €4.0m/year

¹ Assuming 2% annual increase in rate of genetic improvement, increasing from current rate.

² Assumed to rise from 10 years genetic gain followed by 20 years of net benefits per "index" unit.

Value of Sheep Ireland in ROI

TERMINAL index example: Historic and future benefits



1. Historic benefits = €17m from 2014 -20 (term + rep)

2. Future benefits^{1,2} worth €54m in total over next 20 years (term + rep)

3. Past benefits deliver additional €61m (because past gain is permanent)



DRAFT – PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL 2021

Traits Measured

ID	Lambing	Performance	Health
• Sire ID	• Birth Weight	• Weights	• Lameness
• Dam ID	• Lamb Mortality	• Ultrasound Muscle and Fat scanning	• Mastitis
• DOB	• Abortion	• Days to slaughter	• Prolapse
• Mgt Group	• Barren	• Rearing type	• Dag Score
• Sale Reason	• Lamb Vigour	• Carcass cold weight	
• Death	• Rearing type	• Carcass Confirmation	
	• No of lambs Born	• Carcass Fat score	
	• Lambing Difficulty	• Lamb Quality score	
	• Ewe Milk Supply	• Pregnancy scanning results	
	• Mothering Ability	• Not mated	
	• Embryo Transfer	• BCS	

Ram Search



Please select one or more ram(s). Your results will then appear here.

LambPlus Recording Timeline

Mating

- Mating start date
- Replaced ewes on M
- Replaced ewes
- Ewe BCS
- Ewe mature weight
- Ewe lameness
- Ewe mobility
- Ewe tag score
- Ewe lambs not reared
- Genotype check score

Lambing

- Lambing target & date of lamb
- Lambing to start & end
- Lambing difficulty
- Lambing & ewe deaths
- Birth catch & marking type
- Birth weight, sex & signal
- Mortality during & after lambing
- Ewe BCS & lameness
- Mortality & production
- Mortality & barren ewes

Animal Movements

- Record all deaths
- Record all sales
- Carcass data
- Full carcass

40 Day Weight

- 100 - 150 days of age
- Management group
- Lamb weight
- Lamb lameness & tag score
- Lamb tag score
- Ewe mobility

100 Day Weight

- 100 - 150 days of age
- Management group
- Lamb weight
- Lamb lameness & tag score
- Ewe BCS & lameness
- Ewe lameness & tag score

150 Day Weight

- 100 - 150 days of age
- Management group
- Lamb weight
- Wounds & fat score/moist
- Lamb lameness
- Lamb tag score

Rank	Recording criteria	Description	Rank	Lambing criteria	Description	Ranking events	Possible age range
1	Very poor	Ewe far too old to be in the flock	1	Very poor	Not standing after 60 minutes	Birth weight	< 35 days of age
2	Poor	Ewe unable to get down and/or a strain to get the lamb	2	Poor	Struggling within 45 minutes	40 day weight	35 - 60 days of age
3	Average	Ewe gets down and follows the lamb to the lambing pen	3	Average	Struggling within 30 minutes	100 day weight	60 - 120 days of age
4	Good	Ewe gets down, a protective and follows lamb closely to lambing pen	4	Good	Struggling within 15 minutes	150 day weight	75 - 140 days of age
5	Very good	Very protective, fully lamb immediately, follows lamb very closely and stands by her lamb	5	Very good	Struggling within 5 minutes	Mean weight	100-160 days of age

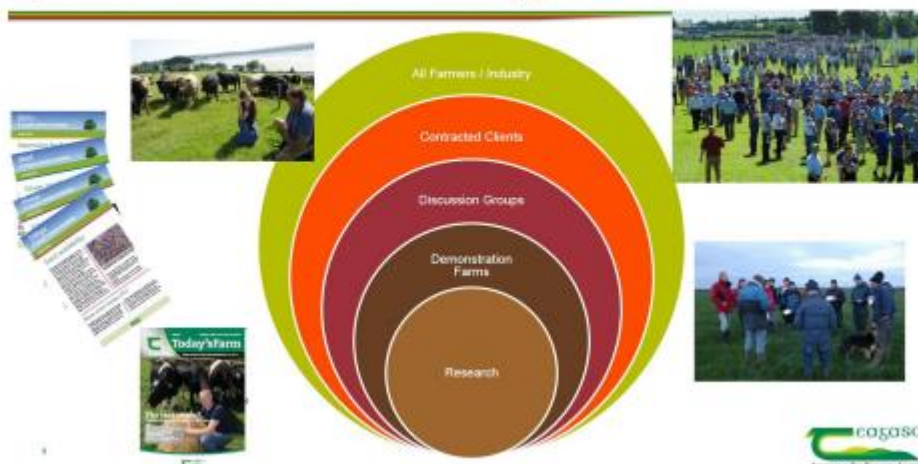
Rank	Lambing criteria	Description	Rank	Tag Score Scale
1	Excellent	Ewe normal down easily unassisted	1	Optimal protection and strong, no fat cover and no muscle cover
2	Very good	Assisted by carers, 1 or 2 short or 3 or 4 short	2	Optimal protection, few sheep, little fat and muscle cover
3	Good	No adverse impact on the ewe or lamb, but the better the sheep the more the research time or processing time for large flocks etc.	3	Optimal protection, moderate fat and muscle cover
4	Average	Assisted by carers, 2 or 3 short or 4 or 5 short	4	Optimal protection, moderate fat and muscle cover
5	Poor	Assisted by carers, 4 or 5 short or 6 or 7 short	5	Full cover & obese, muscle very full and optimum protection are not observed

AKIS- What? & Why?

- The most important element in increasing yield in sheep and goat sector is the farmer.
- Informed farmers:
 - Make better decisions
 - Higher Income
 - More Efficient
 - Technology Adopters
- This is where the AKIS comes in: Agriculture Knowledge Innovation System
- AKIS consists of all the stakeholders involved in making improvements in farming
- A robust AKIS includes Ag Colleges, Ag Researchers, Knowledge Transfer, Farm Advisory Service, and Farmer Support Schemes
- Need to consider how can you help farmers improve
- Requires investment in research and knowledge transfer
 - Fodder & Animal Research required
 - How do you get this knowledge and innovation out to the sector?
- We know farmers learn best from other farmers
- Consider peer-to-peer learning through knowledge transfer groups

Ireland's AKIS

Operational Model for Knowledge Transfer



SFSI: combines the expertise and experience of Ireland's largest Government agri-food organisations





Annex 3: Figures for dairy goats and sheep milk yields in Ireland

Dairy Goats

- Average 750 litres, per animal, per annum.
- 300-day lactation.
- Zero-grazed or silage system supported with concentrates fed in the parlour.
- Top-quality herds produce in excess of 1,000 litres per lactation.
- Typical prices received for milk are 65c- 75c per litre.
- A net margin of €100 per milking goat is achievable.
- Year-round production is usually required to meet processor demands.
- Most milk produced in the north midlands is supplied to one processor Glenisk, with milk in the rest of the country usually supplied to cheese makers.

Dairy Sheep

- Average 300-350 litres, per animal, per annum.
- 220 -240 day lactation.
- Primarily from grazed grass.
- Average milk yield is 1.5L per day peaking at 2.4L.
- Milk price can reach €1 per litre.
- Fat 6.5 to 7.5%, Protein 5.5 to 6%.

Note on figures:

It's important to note that Irish dairy production is grass-based, to suit Irish climatic conditions and ready supply of plentiful grass. **This means a lower input and lower output system.** It is different to Cyprus which is primarily a TMR (total mixed ration) system which is a concentrate driven system, **which is high input and high output but also high cost.**

The driving factors on Irish farms are **sustainability and profitability**. Dairy farms in Ireland could switch to high input to push yield but the higher costs will reduce profitability. Therefore the vast majority use the lower input system.

For further information on the Irish dairy sheep and goat sector, please consult the following [article from a Teagasc farming magazine](#).