GOALS FOR THE BREEDING SEASON

BREEDING GOALS

1

Breed enough high EBI replacement heifers that are suitable for your farming system.

2

Have all replacements born in the first 4 weeks of the calving season to ensure ease of management and to promote retention in the herd.

3

Increase the value of beef calves produced by using high genetic merit dairy beef bulls, delivering high beef value stock while ensuring calving ease and acceptable gestation length.

MAXIMISING GENETIC GAIN IN YOUR HERD.

Cow selection – Select your highest EBI, most productive cows that are trouble free to breed replacements from. Use your milk recording report to select your most productive cows.

Breed replacements from your maiden heifers – Your maiden heifers should be the highest genetic merit animals on your farm. Breeding replacements from them will accelerate genetic gain. It will also facilitate the use of easy calving bulls with high reliability on them which is crucial for their future fertility and survival.

Use a team of high EBI dairy sires – Use high EBI dairy sires that will breed cows to suit your farming system. It is also important to use an adequate size team – see page 5.

Use some sexed semen if appropriate – Using sexed semen will allow you to be more selective with the females to breed which will further accelerate genetic gain – see page14

BREEDING COWS TO SUIT YOUR FARMING SYSTEM.

Below is an example of an Economic Breeding Index (EBI) herd summary report.

Average EBI for all dairy cows with: (i) a known sire (or milk recorded progeny with a known sire) and (ii) are currently on your farm.
* Number of animals that are missing an EBI result

Animal Group	Num of Cows	Milk Kg / Fat % / Prot %		Surv % / CI Days	Milk % Cont	Fertility % Cont	Calv % Cont	Beef % Cont	Maint % Cont	Mgmt % Cont	Health % Cont	EBI €
Cows wtih EBI	**78**	**92**			**€50**	**€87**	**€36**	**€-11**	**€12**	**€2**	**€4**	
Missing EBI*	0	6.9	0.06	2.2	24.7%	43.1%	18.1%	-5.3%	5.9%	0.8%	2%	**€180**
Total Cows	78	7.4	0.07	-4.7								
1st Lactation	**11**	**-23**			**€58**	**€90**	**€41**	**€-13**	**€15**	**€1**	**€5**	
		7.3	0.14	2.4	25.9%	40.2%	18.4%	-5.9%	6.8%	0.4%	2.4%	**€197**
		6.9	0.13	-4.8								
2nd Lactation	**18**	**87**			**€49**	**€83**	**€36**	**€-10**	**€10**	**€2**	**€3**	
		6.8	0.06	2.2	25.4%	43.1%	18.7%	-5.9%	6.8%	0.4%	2.4%	**€172**
		7.3	0.13	-4.8								
3rd Lactation	**13**	**96**			**€57**	**€83**	**€42**	**€-11**	**€9**	**€1**	**€4**	
		6.8	0.05	1.8	27.5%	40.5%	20.3%	-5.3%	4.2%	0.5%	1.7%	**€184**
		8.7	0.09	-4.8								
4th Lactation	**11**	**127**			**€63**	**€73**	**€37**	**€-10**	**€11**	**€2**	**€4**	
		8.8	0.06	2.1	31.2%	36.5%	18.5%	-4.9%	5.6%	1.1%	2.2%	**€181**
		9.5	0.08	-3.7								
5th Lactation (+)	**25**	**128**			**€38**	**€96**	**€32**	**€-10**	**€14**	**€2**	**€5**	
		6.0	0.02	2.4	19.1%	49%	16.1%	-5.2%	6.9%	1.1%	2.6%	**€176**
		9.5	0.08	-3.7								

To breed suitable heifers, first review the cow EBI report and subindex figures and focus on the areas that need improvement before selecting bulls.

The **Milk Subindex** is positively associated with milk solids production. The higher the index the more production achieved once the herd is fully fed.

% Fat and Protein PTA – Both these traits are highly heritable and rapid genetic progress is possible. The milk payment structure in Ireland rewards farmers for producing milk with high percentages. Select bulls to maximise gain here while satisfying other requirements.

The **Milk Kg PTA** figure is the milk volume part of the milk sub index. Using a team of bulls with a higher milk kgs figure than the herd average will increase milk volume output and vice versa. The farm feeding system must be considered when choosing for higher or lower milk kgs PTA as under and overfeeding can result in significant economic, fertility and health consequences for the herd.

Fertility subindex – Herd fertility drives profitability in a seasonal system. Attaining a high 6 week calving rate, a low empty rate and optimum days milking at grass requires fertile cows. The fertility sub index should be high enough to allow the herd to meet its fertility targets. Aim for the fertility subindex to be at least equal to the milk subindex.

The **maintenance** figure guides the mature liveweight of the cow. Using a team of bulls with a higher maintenance figure than the herd average will REDUCE cow size and vice versa. The liveweight of the mature cow influences her nutrition requirement, her walking ability, her survivability, her calf's beef potential, and her impact on ground conditions. The two figures that most dictate the TYPE of cow are the Maintenance subindex and Milk Kgs PTA.

Calving subindex – Cows with a high calving subindex have a shorter gestation length and minimal calving difficulty.

Health subindex – Cows with a positive health subindex are less likely to suffer from mastitis and lameness, critical for cow survivability and reduced antibiotic use.

Management subindex –Cows with a positive management subindex have good temperament and milk out speed.