

Farmer Newsletter

Summer 2026

Sustainable Quality Assurance Scheme members' communication



Emma Flynn
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To mark
**International
Year of the
Woman Farmer,**
Bord Bia is proud
to highlight staff
who are farming
and also work
with farmer
members in their
Bord Bia roles



Rebecca O'Halleran
Origin Green Farm Schemes
Executive, poultry and dairy
farmer, Co. Longford



Niamh Bambrick
Bord Bia Farmer Forum Manager,
beef and dairy farmer,
Co. Kilkenny

Shauna Jager
Bord Bia Pig and Poultry Manager,
and involved in a poultry and dairy
enterprise in Co. Cavan



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Organic farmer, Kay O'Sullivan with Germain Millet, Bord Bia Market Specialist France, Belgium, and Luxembourg.

Chefs visit Cork farms

Bord Bia recently hosted 18 leading chefs from Belgium and France to Cork for a tour of Irish farms and food producers, as part of their membership of the exclusive Chefs' Irish Beef Club.

The trip included visits to standout beef farms, further supporting the chefs work as ambassadors for Irish beef. Hereford Prime beef farmer John Appelbe showcased his pedigree herd and grassland management with a strong emphasis on rotational grazing, reseeding and clover. Organic beef and sheep farmer Kay O'Sullivan spoke about her preference for multi-species swards and her fully grass-based system, finishing angus cattle at 19 months without meal feeding. The visits left a strong impression on the chefs, reinforcing the quality and sustainability of Irish beef.



Ross Crowe

Bord Bia supports annual SunSmart campaign

Bord Bia has again partnered with the HSE and Healthy Ireland to raise awareness among Irish farmers of the importance of protecting their skin from the sun. All summer, Bord Bia auditors will distribute a SunSmart for Farmers leaflets to all beef, dairy, and sheep farmers during their Bord Bia audit. The leaflet was developed especially for Irish farmers by the HSE's National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) and contains advice on staying safe in the sun and how to spot signs of skin cancer.

Ross Crowe (pictured), SunSmart ambassador commented "As farmers, we're exposed to up to three times more UV rays compared with people who work indoors, putting us at greater risk of developing skin cancer. I'm glad to support this campaign and encourage other farmers to protect themselves from the sun every day, whether out in the field, inside the tractor cab, or even on a cloudy day."

Farmer Forum meets this June

The Bord Bia Farmer Forum Assembly is a new initiative, bringing 100 quality assured farmers and growers together for a full-day event aimed at increasing two-way dialogue and engagement. The Assembly has been designed to reflect the diversity of Irish farming, with representation across all enterprise types, regions, gender, age groups, and farm size. A strong emphasis has been placed on including a wide range of perspectives and experiences.

Due to the very high level of interest received, not all farmers and growers could be accommodated for this initial Assembly. However, Bord Bia is committed to ongoing engagement with all Quality Assured farmers and growers who expressed an interest. Bord Bia will ensure that these voices are captured and reflected in discussions and initiatives over the coming months.

Our Food Roots: supporting the story of Irish food and farming

Our Food Roots (Formerly Our Food Connects) has continued to grow its work across Ireland's agri-food sector, helping to reconnect people in Ireland with where their food comes from, how it is produced, and why that matters today.

As fewer people today have a direct connection to farming, there is a growing need to communicate clearly, openly and confidently about the realities of modern food production - including the progress being made, the challenges being faced, and the care, standards and responsibility involved in producing Irish food.

Working alongside farmers, producers and industry stakeholders, Our Food Roots is focused on helping ensure the realities of modern Irish food production are better understood by the public.

Over recent months, the organisation has expanded its engagement across the sector through collaborations, events and communications initiatives. This has included work with organisations such as Certified Irish Angus and Alltech, alongside industry workshops with member organisations focused on helping the sector communicate clearly on increasingly complex issues.

Alongside this work, Our Food Roots continues to develop research and insight resources exploring issues shaping public understanding of food and farming - including food origin, trust in food, water quality and consumer perceptions of the sector. These insights are helping inform clearer public communications and engagement around key issues affecting Irish agriculture and food production.



OUR FOOD ROOTS

At the heart of the work is a simple belief: the Irish agri-food sector has a strong story to tell - and the people within it deserve support in telling it.

To learn more about Our Food Roots, visit www.ourfoodroots.ie or follow Our Food Roots on LinkedIn and Instagram.

Coming Soon: The Disconnected Consumer Campaign

Launching later this summer, Our Food Roots will begin a new public-facing campaign focused on younger audiences who feel increasingly disconnected from farming and food production.

The campaign is intended to support the sector by reaching audiences that traditional farming communications often do not. Using accessible and relatable content, it aims to build greater understanding of Irish food and farming over time - helping future consumers feel more connected to the people, standards and care behind Irish food production.

Getting ready for your Bord Bia audit

Advice and tips on preparing for your Bord Bia audit, including what to expect and the most common non-compliances found.

Set the date

A key step in preparing for your renewal audit is to schedule a date and time with the auditor as soon as you are contacted. This ensures that certification remains active while the renewal process is ongoing. Check when you are due a renewal audit by calling the Bord Bia Helpdesk on **01 5240410** or online at qas.bordbia.ie/livestock/Verify

What to expect on the day?

When the auditor arrives, they will first explain the process during the opening meeting and answer any questions you may have.

They will then walk around the farm with you, looking at stock, housing, equipment and the farmyard. Most aspects of the audit are completed through observation of good farm practices and conversations with you about your typical farm practices.

Following the farm walk, the auditor will carry out some paperwork and record checks to confirm that the information gathered during the walk matches the records on file.

During the audit, the auditor will discuss any findings with you as they arise and will go through everything again with you before leaving the farm (the closing meeting).

The audit lasts, on average, 90 minutes, but the better prepared you are, the shorter the audit will be.

What happens after the audit?

At the end of the audit, the auditor will explain if any issues are identified as non-conformances. You will not fail the audit on the day if any issues arise. Instead, you will be given up to 28 days to address the issue (or issues) and provide evidence that corrective action has been taken. For example, if an auditor identifies that a lagoon is unsafe, they may request a photo within 28 days showing that the lagoon has been made safe.

Evidence can be sent by text message to the Bord Bia Helpdesk or if preferred by email or post. You can also upload evidence by logging onto farm.bordbia.ie. You can nominate an individual, such as a relative or neighbour, to do this on your behalf.

This 'close-out' process does not apply if no issues are found during the audit.

Key areas to watch out for

Most non-compliances identified during audits relate to record keeping, particularly the recording of animal remedies, including both usage and purchases.

For **animal remedy** usage, you must record the following:

- Date of administration.
- Name of medicine.
- Quantity given.
- Identification of animal.
- Name of person giving the medicine/remedy or the name of the prescribing vet.
- Date of the end of the withdrawal period. A common mistake is to insert the number of withdrawal days instead of date-of-end of withdrawal period.

Where an individual animal is treated, the identity of the animal must be clearly documented, for example using the tag number or freeze brand. Where the remedy is administered to a group of animals, it must be possible to clearly identify each animal in the group (e.g. all calves born 1st January to 31st March only).

Animal remedy purchase

records can be kept in a variety of ways, e.g using computer-based records, by using a manual such the Bord Bia Farm Book, or by retaining vet's prescriptions back to the date of last audit.

The following details must be included:

- Date of purchase.
- Medicine name.
- Quantity purchased.
- Name and address of the supplier.

How to keep records

Farmers can keep records in the way that suits them best. This may include keeping invoices or statements, using farm software, or any other system that captures the required information. Records only need to be kept in one location.

Note: keeping accurate and up-to-date animal medicine usage and purchase records is a legal requirement under Conditionality (previously known as cross-compliance).

TOP TIP:
Before your audit, ensure that you have a full and complete record of all medicines purchased and all medicines administered at least back to the last audit date.

Did you know?
Over 87% of farmers successfully pass their Bord Bia audit on the day and go forward for certification.

TOP TIP:
most veterinary practices can print an account statement that will show all medicine purchases over any given time period.

Documents and records required

- ✓ Herd register (either online on Ag food or in the blue book).
- ✓ Animal remedy purchase and usage records.
- ✓ Animal movement records.
- ✓ Passports / Blue cards.
- ✓ Knackery receipts (if applicable).
- ✓ Animal health plan.
- ✓ A record of any animal mortality and significant health issues.
- ✓ Feed purchase records and feed delivery docketts.
- ✓ Pesticide usage (if used on the farm).
- ✓ Farm Safety Risk Assessment.
- ✓ Waste plastic collection receipts (if any).
- ✓ Sustainability Survey.
- ✓ Farmyard sketch of bait points (if bait points used).
- ✓ Name of veterinary services providers, veterinary product suppliers, hauliers and any persons applying pesticides. Note: these will be visible on records/receipts retained from these suppliers.

Sustainability Survey

A Sustainability Survey also needs to be completed before the audit. The questions cover topics including housing dates and concentrates fed and takes approximately 30 minutes to complete. All data provided must be from the previous calendar year, for example if your audit takes place in July 2026, you report from the previous January to December 2025.

The survey can be done online at farm.bordbia.ie. Alternatively, farmers can contact the Helpdesk on **01 524 0410** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 8pm) to complete over the phone.

Bord Bia Helpdesk

The Helpdesk can help you to prepare for the audit and answer any queries about the process.

01 5240410 Monday to Friday, 9am to 8pm.



Protecting Ireland's reputation in global markets

In a competitive global market, Bord Bia Quality Assurance, under the Origin Green programme, plays a vital role in protecting Ireland's reputation for high-quality, sustainably produced meat and dairy. Your participation in Bord Bia audits is the cornerstone of this reputation.

Audit satisfaction

A recent survey conducted with farmers after their audit found:

91%

considered the audit process to be straightforward.

97%

believed that the audit took a reasonable amount of time.

99%

found the auditors themselves to be professional.

80%

found uploading information easy to do.

Cattle supplies tighten

Total cattle throughput for the year to date 584,589 head. This is a decline of just under 13%, or 85,349 head when compared to the strong numbers recorded in the same period in 2025. All categories of cattle have recorded a decline in throughput, with the strongest decline in cows processed - down 19%. These tighter supplies have helped give some stability to the Irish price. Meanwhile after several months of relative stability, cattle prices are back in both Great Britain and Northern Ireland. This has contributed to a narrowing in the price differential between the Irish and UK prices. As of the week ending 9th May, the average UK R3 steer price was €0.46/kg ahead of the Irish R3 steer price.

Demand for beef in key export markets has come under increasing pressure in recent weeks. Inflation continues to affect consumer spending, while greater availability of non-European beef in some export markets has intensified competition. At the same time, more competitively priced pork and poultry products is impacting demand for beef across some key export markets.



Calf trade continues to drive live exports

The live cattle trade has picked up in recent weeks with almost 13,000 cattle leaving the country in the week ending 10th May. Improved weather conditions and a steady demand for cattle in key export markets have supported exports. The short-term outlook remains firm with exporters still very active in the market sourcing a range of suitable cattle to fulfil export contracts. For the year-to-date, 189,879 cattle have been traded. While this is 16% lower than the exceptionally high levels recorded in early 2025, it remains broadly in line with the corresponding period in both 2023 and 2024.

Calves continue to dominate the live trade, as is typical for the time of the year. The Netherlands, Spain and Italy continue to be the key destinations for Irish calves although there are some growing opportunities emerging in some other markets.

The latest forecasts point to tighter cattle supplies across mainland Europe, as the long-term decline in the European cattle herd is expected to continue. This reduced availability is likely to support steady demand for Irish cattle in the short to medium term.

Northern Irish sheep imports back significantly

Total sheep throughput to date is 714,540 head, down 7% or 52,000 head on the same period last year. Contributing to this fall in numbers, is a significant reduction in the number of lambs and hoggets being imported from Northern Ireland for direct slaughter. Northern Ireland imports were back by 37,319 head (37%) during the early months of 2026. The challenging production conditions this spring have also had an impact with spring lambs slower to appear in any significant numbers, with throughput back 3,000 head/20% on 2025 numbers.

While Irish sheep prices have fallen in recent weeks the trade remains ahead of the corresponding period in 2025 when prices were in the region of €8.70/kg. The downward pressure on the trade is in line with normal seasonal trends, with reports indicating the high price points is impacting demand for lamb in our key export markets.



Meet Bord Bia

Shauna Jager, Bord Bia Pig and Poultry Manager

What does a typical day promoting pig meat and poultry involve?

There is no such thing as a typical day, that is what makes the job so interesting. One day might involve working with farmers, another engaging with processors, retailers, or international customers. A good amount of time is spent analysing data and preparing briefings and presentations, translating market insights, trends and performance data into clear updates that help inform decision making across the sector. At the heart of my role is ensuring the work we do delivers value for everyone involved in the pig and poultry Quality Assurance schemes.

Where does pigmeat and poultry fit into the Irish agri-food industry?

Pigmeat is a really important part of the Irish agri-food sector and is one of our largest indigenous livestock sectors. Pig production in Ireland is highly efficient, technology driven and focused on both domestic and export markets. There are just under 400 commercial pig producers in the Republic of Ireland and these support several thousand jobs, along the supply chain in processing and support services, by providing the raw material.

Poultry is also a more concentrated sector and is very focused on the domestic market, particularly as Ireland is not self-sufficient. Exports are largely limited to offal and by products - about 800 producers in domestic poultry production, including egg producers, rearers and poultry meat growers. Poultry, and pigmeat to some extent, are also key in growing meat protein consumption, particularly across the EU, largely due to their value for money, availability and versatility.

What does Bord Bia do to promote pigmeat?

Bord Bia works right across the supply chain. This includes supporting Ireland's reputation through the Bord Bia Quality Mark, providing market insight to help processors make informed commercial decisions, and running promotional campaigns in the Irish market, as well as in key export markets. We also place a strong focus on engaging directly with customers and communicating Ireland's sustainability, animal welfare and traceability strengths.

Where are the main export markets for pigmeat and poultry?

The domestic market is the largest and most valuable outlet for Irish pigmeat and, as a result, remains a key area of focus for the sector. Beyond this, Irish pigmeat has been exported to over 60 markets worldwide, with the UK representing our largest export

market. Total exports were valued €462 million last year. Lower-value parts of the carcass are primarily exported to Asian markets, particularly China. Interestingly, pigmeat is also the only meat product exported from Ireland to Australia. The majority of Irish poultry exports go to the UK (€104 million from a total of €159 million), with EU markets accounting for just under €34 million last year. Africa is an important market for other parts of the carcass such as chicken feet, chicken backs, and offal.

What makes the sector stand out?

Irish pigmeat stands out because of its full traceability and strong sustainability credentials, which are leveraged through Bord Bia Quality Assurance. This gives customers confidence right back to farm level and supports how we communicate Ireland's overall food story in international markets.



Protecting Irish grass fed dairy

Today's consumers want proof that the dairy they consume is both nutritious and responsibly produced with care for the environment and animal welfare. Grass-fed dairy gives them that reassurance and is a crucial part of Irish dairy's competitive edge, particularly in premium markets where customers have high expectations around naturalness, nutrition, animal welfare, and food safety.

Market demand

Grass fed dairy satisfies market demand across four main areas:

Health benefits

Grass-fed dairy has higher levels of beneficial nutrients compared to indoor based dairy, supporting healthy lifestyles.

Improved animal welfare

Irish dairy cows can lead more 'natural' lives out on pasture.

Improved environmental sustainability

Ireland has one of the lowest dairy carbon footprints in the EU, largely due to our pasture-based production systems, which typically have lower carbon footprints than mixed or indoor systems.

Consumers will pay a premium for grass fed dairy

Half of consumers globally said that grass-fed would influence their choice of dairy. Over 60% of consumers in key markets claim that they would pay more for grass fed.

The most recent audit data shows that SDAS dairy herds achieved an average of 250 grazing days per year, while cows were fed a diet of almost 95% grass on a fresh-weight basis.



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Promoting grass-fed Irish dairy.

Bord Bia Grass Fed Standard

To support Irish dairy's grass-fed claims, Bord Bia developed the grass-fed standard six years ago. Milk processors that wish to use the grass-fed logo are audited against the standard every 12 months and must comply with these requirements:

- Sourced from farms that are members of the Bord Bia Sustainable Dairy Assurance Scheme (SDAS).
- The combined milk pool must achieve a weighted average of at least 94.5% grass-fed.
- Cows must graze outdoors for at least the national average grazing days, with allowances made for challenging grass growth conditions.
- Each individual herd must achieve at least 90% grass-fed diet over a three-year period.

