

CAFRE, LacPatrick and UFU Launch Exciting New Project – Dairy-4-Future

Ten N. Ireland dairy farmers have the opportunity to become involved in this important project looking at how new technologies can improve their long term future. Dairy-4-Future is an exciting new €3.8 million EU Interreg funded project with a consortium of eleven partners from the Atlantic region of western Europe. Project partners are from eight countries including Northern Ireland, Scotland, England, Wales, Ireland, France, Spain and Portugal (local organisations involved include CAFRE, SRUC, AHDB and Teagasc). The project partners have been supported by 21 associate partners across the five countries. The N. Ireland component of the project is lead by CAFRE with support from LacPatrick and the Ulster Farmers Union (UFU). The project will run for four years from 2018 until the end of 2021.

Critical to the success of the project is the involvement of the 10 pilot dairy farms from each region. An initial budget of €2,000 per farm has been allocated for pilot farmer travel over the lifetime of the project.

Dairy production is an important economic activity in the Atlantic Area. Dairy expansion is ongoing in the Atlantic Area, facing the challenges of market volatility and climatic hazards and the need for more efficient use of natural resources to improve competitiveness. From Scotland to the Azores, the Dairy-4-Future project aims to increase the competitiveness, sustainability and resilience of dairy farms through the development of innovative and efficient dairy systems and increased cooperation between research and development stakeholder groups.

Pilot farms

An integral aspect of the project is the analysis of sustainability on 100 pilot dairy farms across the eight countries involved. It is essential these pilot farms are family farms typical of the region, i.e. above-average dairy farms in terms of technical and economic performance, while at the same time being relevant to other farmers in the region in terms of farm size and cow numbers. The average number of cows per farm range between 31 in the Azores to 182 in Scotland, with a mean of 82 cows per farm in the Atlantic Area.

Key selection criteria for the pilot farms are:

- Top 10% for economic performance
- Good technical and environmental performances (N balance, Carbon Footprint)
- Motivated individuals, prepared to travel to pilot farm visits in other regions
- Prepared to host farm visits both locally and from other project regions
- Innovative dairy farms, that are testing novel dairy systems or working in close collaboration with research and development

If you would like to be a pilot farmer in the Dairy-4-Future project, please contact Martin Mulholland at Greenmount Campus, CAFRE on 028 9442 6750 or by email to martin.mulholland@daera-ni.gov.uk

Photo caption: Martin McKendry, Ian McCluggage and Martin Mulholland, CAFRE celebrating the launch of the new €3.8 million Dairy-4-Future sustainability project with Gabriel Darcy and Dr Paul Crossan of LacPatrick and Aileen Lawson from the UFU.