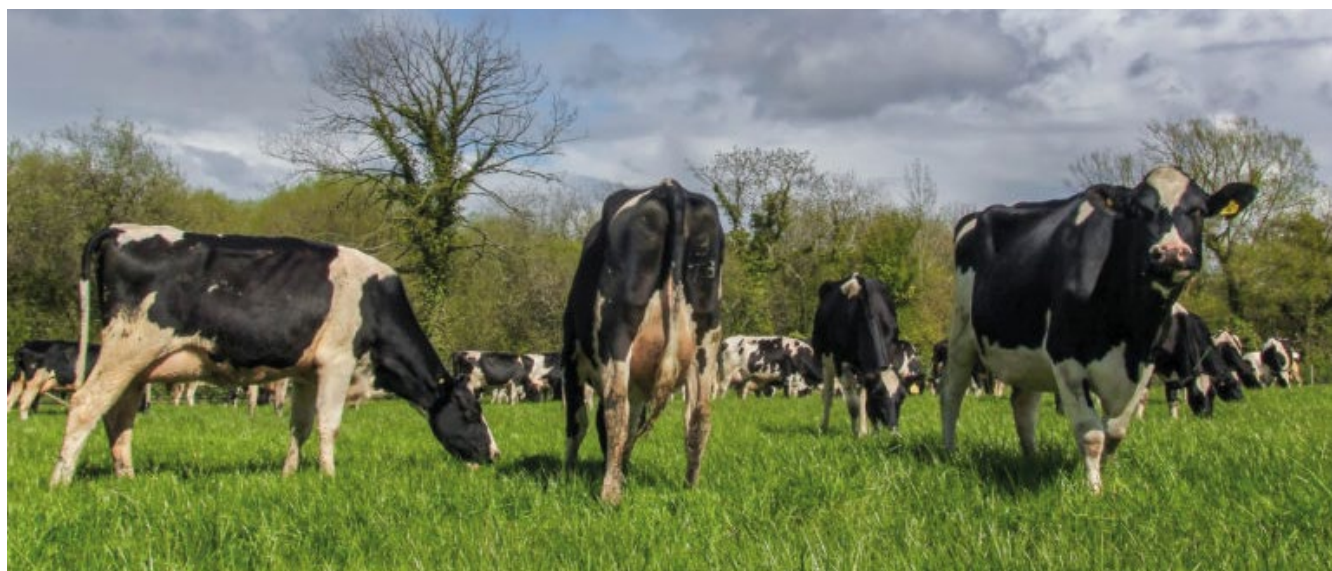


# Business Development Groups

Developing knowledge and skills  
by working together



## Making the most of summer

Welcome to the summer 2022 issue of BDG Chat and the first in this 2022/23 training year. This year has brought new and very obvious challenges. What has not changed is the need to keep up to date with farm economics and technology. Also unchanged, is the need to keep in touch with one another and we hope that BDG training events continue to help you meet these needs.

While the weather may not be as dry as we would like at this time of year, making the most of the longer days nevertheless continues for us all. In this issue of the e-zine, you can catch up on the **results of our latest survey amongst our BDG scheme members**, find out more about the recently launched **Soil Nutrient Health Scheme**, discover how to apply for the **Level 2 Agricultural Business Operations qualification**, and avail of our advice on how to **assess your silage stocks**. We also have reports on **farm walks** held on Technology Demonstration Farms (TDFs) earlier this month and the good news of **LEAF reaccreditation for the CAFRE farms**.

### HAVE YOUR SAY?

**Email**

[kt.admin@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:kt.admin@daera-ni.gov.uk)

**Website**

[www.cafre.ac.uk](http://www.cafre.ac.uk)



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## CAFRE FARMS BENEFIT FROM LEAF MARQUE ACCREDITATION

The CAFRE Farms have just passed the milestone of being LEAF accredited for 15 years. LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming) is a farm assurance scheme that shows food has been grown sustainably with care for the environment. This is strongly aligned with CAFRE's commitment to sustainability.

The CAFRE LEAF audit co-ordinator Ruth Ruddell said, "CAFRE is delighted to have received LEAF Marque status for the fifteenth year. This demonstrates CAFRE's commitment to the principles of Integrated Farm Management (IFM) throughout our farming practices. Sustainability is a key aspect of our farming practice and the LEAF Marque status continually drives us to improve each of the nine IFM elements across the CAFRE farms. These elements are Organisation and Planning, Soil Management and Fertility, Crop Health and Protection, Pollution Control and By-Product Management, Animal Husbandry, Energy Efficiency, Water Management, Landscape and Nature Conservation, and Community Engagement."



Examples of the implementation of IFM at CAFRE include measuring soil health and soil carbon levels, carbon footprinting, pollinator margins, monitoring water usage, rainwater harvesting, recycling farm plastics and engaging with partners in the monitoring of habitats and species such as breeding waders at the CAFRE Hill Farm.

Wildflower margin at one of our CAFRE farms



## PARTICIPANT SURVEY – YOU SPOKE, WE LISTENED

A few months ago, we sent you an online survey to seek your feedback on BDG scheme delivery.

Thanks to those of you who submitted responses. We are encouraged that 89% of participants felt that participation in BDGs has already helped in developing their business and 96% were satisfied with the service. Participants appreciated learning from others, meeting others, access to an adviser and the opportunity to benchmark. We welcome your feedback as we continually try to make improvements to the scheme.

<b>You prefer</b> on-farm training events but also enjoy the benefits in online training.	<b>We will</b> continue with the blended approach with mostly on-farm events but online events as an option, for example in mid-winter.
<b>You would like</b> more detailed input on some topics.	<b>We will</b> aim to make more use of technologists, guest speakers and Technology Demonstration Farms when running BDG events.

Once again thank you for your feedback and your ideas and, looking forward, we wish you another successful and enjoyable training year with BDGs.

## ASSESS YOUR SILAGE STOCKS NOW

Nigel Gould, CAFRE Beef and Sheep Adviser, has good advice for everyone in relation to the impact of wet weather this year on silage harvest dates, including practical tools to use to calculate silage volume and your farm's feed requirements.

See the full article on the CAFRE website's news section, or [click here](#).



## SOIL NUTRIENT HEALTH SCHEME OPEN FOR APPLICATIONS

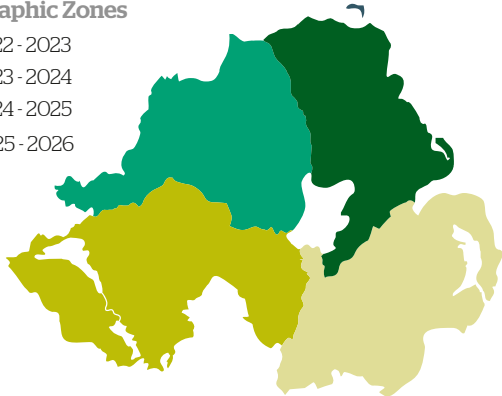
Ciaran McKay, Sustainable Land Management Branch, CAFRE, provides an update on a new scheme, which is open to all farm businesses across Northern Ireland.

The £45 million Soil Nutrient Health Scheme (SNHS) is one of the most comprehensive regional soil nutrient sampling schemes to be undertaken anywhere in the world. The scheme, administered by the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI), will be available to all Northern Ireland (NI) farmers over the next four years. The SNHS is now open for registration to all farm businesses in zone 1 (see figure 1 below). Eligible farmers should register now using the Soil Nutrient Health Scheme button on the [DAERA online services website](https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/services/daera-online-services).

Figure 1. SNHS zonal map

### SNHS Geographic Zones

- ZONE 1: 2022 - 2023
- ZONE 2: 2023 - 2024
- ZONE 3: 2024 - 2025
- ZONE 4: 2025 - 2026



The SNHS is a new initiative aimed at improving soil nutrient health and estimating farm carbon stocks, right across NI. Farmers who register for the scheme will have all their fields soil sampled by a contractor, completely free of charge. They will then receive:

1. Detailed information on the nutrient status of their soils including pH, Phosphorus (P), Potassium (K), Magnesium (Mg), Sulphur (S) and organic matter for each field.



2. Runoff risk maps identifying potential pathways for nutrient losses to waterbodies for each field sampled.
3. Estimates of carbon stocks stored in their soils and as above-ground biomass (hedge rows and trees) for each farm.

The SNHS will have direct benefits for participating farms. It will allow farmers to optimise the application of crop nutrients such as organic manures and inorganic fertilisers, thereby increasing farm profitability and reducing environmental damage. CAFRE will provide training to give participating farmers an understanding of soil health and fertility and promote better management of nutrients on farm. The SNHS aims to improve the sustainability of NI farms by providing a baseline assessment of farm carbon stocks in soils and hedgerows. This will be very important information to farmers in NI as they move towards Net Zero farming. Participating in the SNHS may also be a requirement for farmers accessing some future agricultural support schemes.

If you would like any further information please contact the SNHS helpline (028 90 255212) or email: [snhs@afbini.gov.uk](mailto:snhs@afbini.gov.uk). Frequently Asked Questions are available on the [DAERA website](https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/services/daera-online-services).

## DAIRY FARM WALKS

**CAFRE hosted a series of four farm walks for dairy farmers this month addressing challenges and opportunities currently facing the local dairy industry.**

This is a challenging year for dairy farmers. Escalating costs are causing concern among the farming community. It is essential that farmers maximise the use of grass and silage and try to reduce the reliance on purchased feeds. The recent farm walks offered the opportunity to see at first-hand how local farmers are coping in this difficult year.

One of the host farmers was David Hunter who farms at Droit, Newtownstewart, Co Tyrone. David is a first generation dairy farmer, farming midway between Newtownstewart and Gortin, close to the scenic Sperrins. Milk production commenced during the spring of 2013 on what was previously a family beef, sheep and cereal farm.

Over the intervening years, David and his father John have developed both the herd and farm infrastructure to its current level. The 50 hectare farm with a 25 hectare grazing platform, now supports 110 crossbred dairy cows with 30 replacements reared each year by a contract-rearer.

For the 2021 benchmarked year, the spring calving herd yielded 6420 litres at 4.69% Butterfat and 3.69% Protein, at a feed rate of 0.28kg concentrate per litre of milk produced. Maize silage has been grown in the past two years and this year David is growing hybrid rye for whole-crop. David measures grass growth every week and uses Agrinet to plan grazing for the herd. He is part of GrassCheck with grass growth monitored weekly.



David is also a newly appointed Feed Efficiency Technology Demonstration Farm (TDF). TDFs provide a network of local farms, which allow other farmers the opportunity to see new technology and innovations that they could adopt on their own farms.

A large number of Tyrone farmers who attended the farm walk at Hunter's observed the herd grazing and management of grassland. After the event David said, "I enjoyed the farm walk with informative discussions with CAFRE Advisers and with local farmers. I was able to share my experience of grazing this spring and early summer and focus on maximising grass growth and utilisation. I have direct drilled a new multi species sward and grow whole-crop rye, which offers something different to the cow diet. I enjoy trying out new ideas and look forward to sharing my experience with other dairy farmers through the TDF".

Details of all the TDFs and how to book a visit are available [here](#). At the moment, CAFRE is taking group bookings only by emailing: [kt.admin@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:kt.admin@daera-ni.gov.uk).

## YOUR CHANCE TO STUDY PART-TIME FOR THE LEVEL 2 AGRICULTURAL OPERATIONS QUALIFICATION

**Paula Gilroy from Derrygonnelly encourages anyone interested to apply now for CAFRE's Level 2 Agricultural Business Operations Course which is open for 2022/23 applications until 31 July 2022.**

Course Manager, Kenneth Johnston, explains that the training will be delivered over 20 weeks from the end of September 2022 to the end of February 2023, and will be delivered at three CAFRE Campus locations with classes in beef, sheep and dairying on offer. A range of evenings, Monday to Wednesday will be available, however, choices will become more limited as classes fill up. Therefore, it is important that you book early to ensure you get the training event which best suits your needs. The cost of the course is £150.00.

Paula, who is pictured with her horse Bell, completed the beef production course at Enniskillen Campus earlier in the year. She said, "I really enjoyed the course and learned a lot from it. The course suited me as it was held in the evenings and was close to home. I have always had a keen interest in beef and sheep production having grown up on the home farm where we have 100 suckler cows and 60 ewes. It was great to meet up with other likeminded people and we had a large class of over 20 people all with different backgrounds and reasons to be there. Whilst I enjoyed the whole course, I especially enjoyed the Livestock Production module. I have no hesitation in recommending the course to anyone interested in agriculture and hoping to achieve a worthwhile qualification".



You can book a place on a course by visiting the [\*\*CAFRE website\*\*](https://www.cafre.ie).

The Level 2 Agricultural Business Operations qualification meets the agricultural training eligibility requirements for the Young Farmers' Payment/Regional Reserve Scheme. If you require any assistance when booking, call CAFRE Industry Training Administration on 028 9442 6880 or email: [\*\*IndustryTrainingAdmin@daera-ni.gov.uk\*\*](mailto:IndustryTrainingAdmin@daera-ni.gov.uk).

## MISSED OUR PREVIOUS ISSUE? **CATCH UP HERE**

[Issue 15](#)

