



Market Outlook: Dairy Sector Trends

European Fat Market Remains Firm

Demand for milk fat across Europe continues to be robust, sustaining prices for both cheese and butter. With inventories running low, there is growing concern about potential shortages later in the season. In contrast, despite the global surge in protein consumption, prices for Casein and Skim Milk Powder (SMP) remain relatively subdued.

Global Supply Dynamics

European milk prices remain high when adjusted for component values, while on-farm costs have eased - creating favorable conditions for milk production. Although foot-and-mouth disease appears to be under control, the threat of bluetongue persists and recent hot weather across the continent could pose challenges.

In the **United States**, producer margins are tightening due to the direct linkage between milk prices and commodity markets. Nevertheless, industry sentiment remains positive, with herd sizes increasing and expansion underway.

New Zealand is also poised for growth, with the forecasted milk price for the 2025/26 season reaching high levels. This is expected to incentivise increased production.

Global Demand Trends

Chinese dairy imports continue to show strong momentum, with April volumes up 8.5% year-on-year. While demand from other global markets is comparatively softer, it remains sufficient to support current price levels, even amid rising production.

Future-Proofing Dairy Farming: Education for Sustainable Development

Kerry Dairy Ireland is pleased to announce the upcoming Level 7 Certificate in Sustainable Dairy Development, a 12-week part-time programme designed to empower dairy farmers with the knowledge and tools to implement sustainable farming practices. Running from September to December 2025, the course combines online learning with in-person sessions for maximum flexibility and engagement. Delivered at Level 7 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), the programme covers a comprehensive range of sustainability topics, including:

- Greenhouse gas emissions and climate change policy
- Soil science and water quality
- Biodiversity and renewable energy
- Grassland management and sustainable farm systems
- Participants will complete a 2,500-word portfolio demonstrating the practical application of course content on their farms.

This initiative is co-funded by Kerry Dairy Ireland and IRD Duhallow Skillnet, and is aligned with the Evolve Sustainability strategy. Academic support is provided by University College Cork (UCC), ensuring a high-quality learning experience. The programme is ideal for farmers committed to future-proofing their operations and contributing to a more sustainable dairy sector. This programme is co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union.

To express your interest, please contact Monica Gilmore at monica.gilmore@irdduhallow.com or call IRD Duhallow at 029 60633

Duhallow Skillnet is co-funded by Skillnet Ireland and network companies. Skillnet Ireland is funded from the National Training Fund and the European Union through the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.



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Fox Family Farm Open Day

The Kerry Agribusiness Quality & Sustainability Awards 2024 farm walk took place on Thursday, 15th May, drawing a large group of milk suppliers eager to gain first-hand insights into the Fox family's progressive dairy operation. The Fox farm, located on 87.5 hectares with a 48.6-hectare milking platform, is managed by Ian Fox, alongside his parents Mary and John, and full-time employee Denis McNamara. The family currently milks 173 cows, with a strong focus on sustainability, milk quality and efficient grassland management.

Key Learnings from the Day

Insights from Don Crowley (Teagasc):

- Stressed the importance of regular milk recording to accurately identify cows with high Somatic Cell Counts (SCC) and to inform targeted herd management decisions.
- Highlighted the necessity of maintaining a consistent and effective wash routine to uphold milk hygiene standards and prevent contamination.
- Emphasised the value of early detection and prompt response to milk quality issues.
- Underscored the role of superior cow genetics in achieving higher milk prices.
- Demonstrated that reducing SCC levels from 250,000 to 150,000 cells/ml can result in an annual gain of approximately €15,000 per 100 cows.

Grassland Management

- Cows need high quality grass every day.
- Maintain pre-grazing yield at 1400 – 1600 Kg DM/Ha.
- Match nitrogen application with demand.

Sustainability & Innovation

- The Evolve Village featured Kerry Agribusiness and industry experts. Topics included: Cow Nutrition; Energy Efficiency; Breeding Strategy; Grassland Management; Evolve Regendairy initiatives



SKWDF Discussion Group



Pictured on the O'Sullivan family farm in Milltown at a recent farm walk: Jenny Barrett, Geraldine Martin, Laura Brennan, Aoife O'Sullivan, Niamh O'Sullivan, Lisa Barrett, Josephine Twiss, Carmel O'Connor, Irene O'Sullivan, Katherine Horan, Ciara McDonnell, Gillian O'Connor & Kevin Stagg

Discussion on the day included current performance on-farm, update on grassland management, fertiliser use and breeding.

Kerry Dairy Ireland was proud to sponsor the 2025 Stock Judging Event hosted by the Kerry Holstein Friesian Breeders Club, held on the farm of Ronan Sugrue in Dingle.



Pictured are Aidan Behan and Kevin Lyons of Kerry Agribusiness, alongside Muiris Harty, winner of the 18-26 age category.

Spotlight on Graduate Talent

We were thrilled to be joined by Elaine Guiney, Senior HR Business Partner, along with graduates Paddy O'Brien and Aidan Shanahan from our Dairy Ingredients and Nutritional Ingredients divisions at the Fox family farm walk. Their interactive session offered a behind-the-scenes look at their roles and the exciting career paths available through the Kerry Dairy Ireland Graduate Programme. Paddy and Aidan shared their personal journeys, insights into their day-to-day responsibilities and how the programme has helped them grow professionally.

We encourage you to take a moment to read more about Paddy and Aidan's experiences

Their profiles are a great source of inspiration for aspiring graduates or anyone considering a future in the agri-food industry.

1. Tell us a bit about yourself.

My name is Paddy O'Brien and I'm originally from Bohermore, Co. Limerick. Growing up on a farm sparked a lifelong interest in the agri-food sector, which has shaped both my academic and professional journey.



2. How did your education prepare you for your career?

I completed an MSc in Co-operatives, Agri-food, and Sustainable Development in 2023. This program provided me with valuable insights into global food markets, supply chains, and the role of co-operative organisations - knowledge that has proven essential in my current role.

3. Why did you choose Kerry Dairy Ireland for your Graduate Programme?

Kerry Dairy Ireland has a strong reputation in my local community, which initially drew me to the company. During the application process, I had the opportunity to speak with several Kerry Dairy Ireland employees who highlighted the diverse career development opportunities available. This reinforced my decision to join the Graduate Programme.

4. What have been your biggest achievements and challenges so far?

Transitioning into the operations graduate programme without prior hands-on experience was a significant challenge, particularly adapting to the day-to-day operations of the Powder Plant in Charleville. However, I'm proud to have contributed to several continuous improvement and new product development projects, which have been key milestones in my early career.

5. What advice would you give to current students in your field?

I would encourage students to explore a wide range of opportunities within their area of study. The Kerry Dairy Ireland Graduate Programme is an excellent platform for this, offering the flexibility to rotate across different functions and gain a well-rounded experience.

6. What are you most proud of?

I'm especially proud of earning both my BSc and MSc degrees from University College Cork, achievements that have laid a strong foundation for my career in the agri-food industry.

1. Tell us a bit about yourself.

My name is Aidan Shanahan and I'm from Listowel, Co. Kerry. I hold a BSc in Food Marketing and Entrepreneurship from University College Cork and joined the Graduate Programme in September 2022.



2. How did your education prepare you for your career?

My degree at UCC offered valuable real-world exposure through placements and project work. For my Final Year Project, I developed a comprehensive business and marketing plan for a new food product, including a go-to-market strategy. These experiences equipped me with practical skills that are directly applicable in the food industry.

3. Why did you choose Kerry Dairy Ireland for your Graduate Programme?

Kerry Dairy Ireland's strong industry reputation, commitment to innovation, and focus on quality were key factors in my decision. The Graduate Programme offered a unique opportunity to gain hands-on experience while working alongside a talented and supportive team. The company's values and culture aligned closely with my own aspirations.

4. What have been your biggest achievements and challenges so far?

One of the biggest challenges - and learning opportunities - has been gaining a deep understanding of the dairy industry. The fast-paced nature of the sector required a steep learning curve, but the exceptional on-the-job training and support from my colleagues have been instrumental in my development. I'm proud of the progress I've made and the contributions I've been able to make to process improvements.

5. What advice would you give to current students in your field?

Take advantage of placements and summer opportunities to explore different areas within your field. These experiences will help you discover what you enjoy and guide your career decisions after graduation. Stay curious and open to learning - especially in an industry as dynamic as food and dairy.

6. What are you most proud of?

I'm proud of my ability to adapt and thrive in a dynamic work environment. I take great satisfaction in contributing to meaningful improvements and achieving positive outcomes for the business. I'm also proud of the strong professional relationships I've built, which have supported both my personal and career growth.

Managing Thermoduric Bacteria in Milk Production

Thermoduric bacteria are heat-resistant microorganisms that can survive pasteurisation, posing a significant risk to the quality and shelf life of dairy products. Because these bacteria are extremely difficult and costly to eliminate at the processing stage, effective control must begin on the farm.

Understanding the Source

Thermoduric contamination is primarily caused by:

- Milk residues and biofilm buildup in milking equipment and bulk tanks.
- Environmental exposure to soil, dust, bedding, and manure.

A clean milking environment and proper udder hygiene are essential. Cows should be presented with clean udders at every milking to minimise bacterial transfer.

Routine Prevention Measures

To reduce the risk of thermoduric contamination:

- Implement a consistent and thorough wash routine:
- Descale the milking parlour three times per week.
- Ensure hot wash water reaches >75°C.
- Use peracetic acid in the final rinse.
- Maintain clean milking equipment and tanks to prevent biofilm formation.
- Monitor udder cleanliness and milking hygiene practices regularly.

Monitoring and Action Thresholds

Regular testing of thermoduric levels is essential. Use the following thresholds to guide your response:

Thermoduric Count (CFU/ mL)	Action Required
< 500	Target performance – maintain current practices.
500 - 1000	Some contamination present – investigate potential sources.
> 1000	High contamination – immediate troubleshooting required.

Troubleshooting High Results

If thermoduric levels rise: Act quickly – early intervention is key.

Collect milk samples from:

- The milking parlour
- Before the bulk tank
- After the bulk tank
- Label and submit samples to your local branch for analysis.
- Identify the source of contamination and adjust cleaning protocols accordingly.

Need Support?

For further guidance, contact your Milk Quality Manager. You can also scan the QR code provided to access the Thermoduric Information Booklet.



Planning for Second-Cut Silage & Optimising Fertiliser Use

With first-cut silage now completed, it's time to focus on preparing for the second cut - ensuring that nutrients removed during harvest are effectively replenished to maintain productivity.

Nutrient Replacement Strategy

Apply 2,000–2,500 gallons of diluted slurry per acre on silage ground to replace phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) removed during the first cut. On average, each tonne of dry matter (DM) per hectare removes 4 kg of P and 25 kg of K. This equates to approximately 1,000 gallons of slurry per four bales of silage.

Follow slurry application with Eco 38 (38-0-0 + 7.6) approximately 10 days later. Aim to apply 65–70 units of nitrogen (N) per acre for the second cut. A typical fertiliser plan might include:

- 2,000–2,500 gallons of slurry per acre
- 1.5 bags per acre of Eco 38

Where slurry is not available, consider a chemical NPK alternative such as Pro 24 (24-2.5-10-2.5). Always consult recent soil test results and your nutrient management plan to determine P allowances and ensure compliance with Nitrates Regulations. If no P allowance is available, opt for a P-free product like Eco 29-0-14 + S.

Grazing Ground Management

By 1st June, grazing ground should have received approximately 100 units of N per acre, assuming a stocking rate of 170 kg N/ha/year. Continue nitrogen applications in 18–20 unit per acre rounds, for example: 0.5 bag per acre of Eco 38 = 19 units N/acre.

Incorporate sulphur every second round to enhance nitrogen use efficiency and support protein synthesis in grass.

Targeted Nutrient Application

Use soil analysis to identify fields low in P and K. Apply nutrients where needed and permitted. A summer application of phosphorus can help reduce PICA in livestock, while potassium supports water regulation within the plant, especially under dry conditions.

