

Technical Efficiency



Socio-Economic Resilience



Background

Dairy farmers are now looking after many more cows per labour unit than in previous generations. In addition, farm sizes and the area needing to be harvested etc. has increased resulting in the need for larger machinery which has become much more expensive. This makes the use of contractors for fodder production an attractive option for dairy farmers.

How does the strategy work?

- The farmer generally has a relationship with one main contractor. Many tasks related to fodder production can be undertaken by contractors, such as;
 - Tillage work (e.g. ploughing, making ready and sowing of grass reseed and forage crops);
 - Spreading of organic manures;
 - Application of plant protection products;
 - For grass silage swards mowing, tedding and raking;
 - Harvesting (including transporting the forage to the farmyard and ensiling it.
- Some farmers may choose to do some of these tasks themselves (most often this will be mowing and tedding).
- Contractors can justify and afford much larger and more advanced machinery than the farmer, meaning that these tasks are completed faster and more efficiently than the farmer could with his own machinery.
- Agree rates in advance and whether the contractor will use his own fuel or the farmer's fuel.

It is vital that the farmer and the contractor maintain good and respectful communications!

Equipment involved? Investment?

- The advantage of contracting is that it does not require investment.
- Contractors will tend to have much larger machines so you may need to improve turning space in front of silos.
- Organise your farmyard so that contractors can easily get in and out – consider a one-way system to avoid congestion. Remember, you are paying for their time!
- It is helpful to have a good and clearly labelled farm map to give to contractors.

Positive features

Avoids the farmer having to make significant investment in machinery allowing capital to be used in other areas.

The large equipment of the contractor will do the job more efficiently and quicker than any machinery that the farmer could afford.

Some large silage harvesters come with yield mapping technologies which can facilitate the use of precision agriculture.

Be careful, especially on these points

Pay the contractor promptly, do not let bills mount up – the contractor is not a bank!

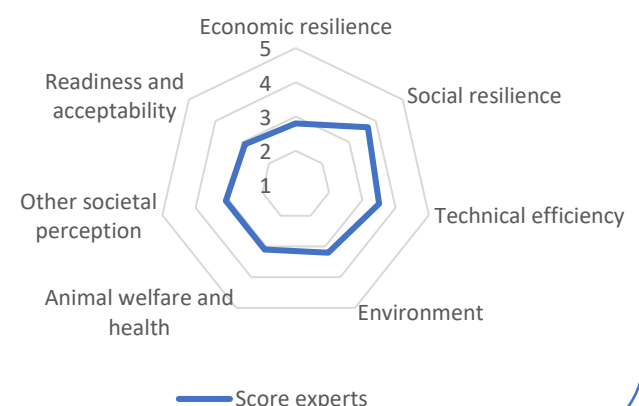
Make sure you brief the contractor well, so they know to avoid any hazards and they comply with environmental regulations.

Specific advice

Maintain a good line of communication with your contractor!

At times, due to adverse weather or busy periods, the contractor may be delayed.

Assessment of method



Quote of the farmer:

“Contracting out of my silage production has meant I can harvest silage in one day rather than over several days”