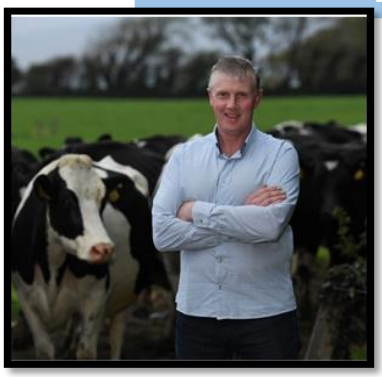
Resilience for Dairy (R4D) has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under grant agreement No 101000770

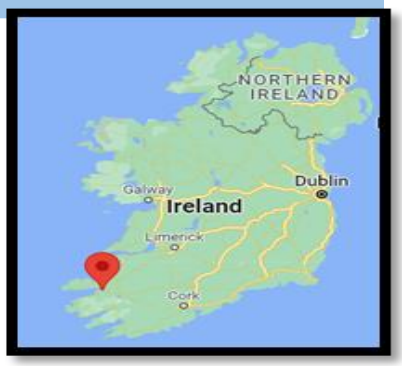
Eoghan McCarthy
Pilot Farm description
Milltown Co Kerry
- 2022

Ireland

Innovations

Environment





Farming milestones

1994
Started Farming

1996-1999
Rented land

2006
Bought milk quotas-increased from 70 to 100 cows.
Built 120 cow cubicle shed

2015
Milk quota removal- increased to 120 cows

2020 & 2021
Bought 60 acre farm & added additional cubicles

The herd

- 160 dairy cows
- Breeds: Holstein Friesian
- Calving period: Compact spring calving
- Age at first calving: 24 months
- All AI

Agricultural Area

92 ha farm

- All in permanent grassland
- Stocking rate: 2.1 LU/ha forage area
- Cows graze from Mid February to Mid November
- Heifers graze from March to November
- Calves have access to paddock from calf shed after 4 weeks age

Workforce

- Farmer & family
- 1 farm employee
- Student

Areas of interest

- Genetics- E.B.I & genotyping
- Grassland management
- Environment

Main buildings and equipment

- Cubicle shed- 187 cubicles, all underground tanks
- Large pens for calving
- 18 unit parlour- ACRs, dumpline, automatic washer
- Slatted shed & mats (outfarm)- young stock & cull cows
- 18 unit parlour – ACRs, dumbline,automatic washer
- Equipment- 2 tractors, dribble bar slurry tank, fertiliser spreader, mower
- Contractor does majority of slurry & fertiliser

Production / Technical results

- 6200 litres of milk produced/cow
- 4.32% fat & 3.68 % protein content
- Milk solids 500 kg per cow
- Feed: 900 kg concentrate per cow
- Milk from forage: 87-90%
- Grass based dairying
- Milk sold to Kerry
- €0.31/litre total dairy cost production

Strengths
- Good land base
- Good healthy, high E.B.I cows

Weaknesses
- High rainfall area – average 1.6m rain every year
- Heavy soils farmed with ½ farm below sea level

Opportunities
- Growing home grown feed- big advantage, only buying in meal
- High environment status

Threats
- Can't control cost outside the farm gate
- Disease risk

Farmer's strategy for a "resilient" system

Continuing to use protected area to improve fertiliser efficiency

Being 'Report Rich' -utilising every report (e.g. milking recording & breeding reports), understanding reports & been involved in discussion groups & with advisors

Aspirations / Needs for the future

To be a good operating farmer, keep making improvements to help the next generation and have a good work life balance.

Improvement project - objectives

- Maintain a labour efficient work load

ECONOMY & LABOUR

- Continuing to incorporate clover
- Focus on sustainability- continue to plant more hedgerow, using protected urea & using soil fertility reports

- Installed the Sensehub health monitoring collars
- Look into using sexed semen
- Continue focussing on producing quality calves

PROJECT

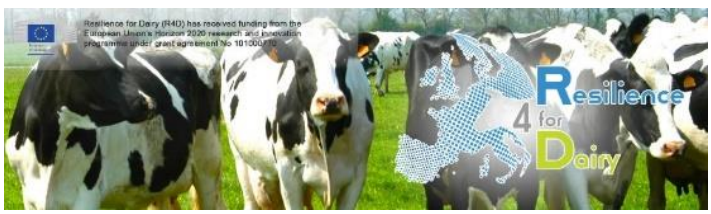
RESSOURCE Efficiency

ENVIRONMENT ANIMAL Wellbeing

Partners

Teagasc
Agriculture and Food Development Authority

"Resilience 4 Dairy" is a European project involving 15 European countries and 18 partners. R4D is a thematic network on innovations and aims to support EU dairy farming in these regions where dairy farming is a main economic activity.



R4D pilot farmers are involved in a National Dairy Akis group where needs, solutions and knowledge are exchanged with other farmers, advisors and scientists on their way to build a resilient system. More information https://resilience4dairy.eu/