KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE: A FARMERS PERSPECTIVE

Drew McConnell
Dairy farmer, Northern Ireland
Carrigans Farm

- 160 cow dairy herd
- Sheep and beef enterprises
- 350 acres grassland (SDA & DA land)
Carrigans Farm

Dairy enterprise aims:
1. Drive profit through maximising technical efficiency
2. Maximising lifetime production by optimising animal health and welfare
3. Maintain a labour efficient working environment
Why is research important to me?

I can’t control milk price – this is controlled off-farm

But I can control what happens inside the farm gates

I need research to help make my farm more efficient
AFBI- AgriSearch co-researcher

Colostrum studies

Dry cow feeding trial

Research Organisation (AFBI)

AgriSearch co-researcher

Improving milk proteins

Dealing with soil compaction

 Farmers

2 year old calving

Slow build-up concentrate feeding
# Heifer Rearing Trial

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N.I. Average</th>
<th>My farm</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age a first calving (months)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifetime productivity (litres/head)</td>
<td>25 000</td>
<td>49 500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rearing cost (£/head)</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>1478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replacement cost (ppl)</td>
<td>5.98</td>
<td>1.9</td>
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Slow build-up feeding trial

- Fresh cow trial
- Changed to low protein ration (14.5%)

Benefits

- Better fertility
- Improved body condition
- No loss in performance
- Reduced feed costs = £50/cow
The true success of agricultural research is when it's adopted on-farm.

To be adopted on farm, research needs to be:

- Relevant
- Delivering a benefit to the farmer: financial or otherwise
- Easy to understand
On-farm research

Farmer Benefits

- Improved technical efficiency
- Financial improvements
- Challenged my mindset - be more progressive
- Access to research expertise
# On-farm research

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- Financial improvements
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**Researcher Benefits**
- Larger studies
- Diverse range of sites and management systems
- Practical challenges with implementing research
- Aids data interpretation/new findings
On-farm research

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Best learning environment for a farmer is another farm
Knowledge Exchange

Scientists and farmers working together in KE add credibility to a range of audiences
Where next?

• Making the most of technology is key to the business

• New research and guidance on:
  • Precision technologies
  • Robotic milking
Summary

• Research is essential to allow farms to compete on a global market but it **MUST** be communicated effectively!

• KE is 2-way: scientists and farmers need to work together to maximise the impact of research

• True success of agricultural research is when it is adopted on farm
THANK YOU