



Teagasc in uniforms

By Joe Rea
Irish Farmers Journal



THE Roche regulations are one of Ireland's greatest own goals in agriculture especially for pig farmers. Pig producers are angry and confused as to how this same Roche Regulation Man could take part in an IFA celebration in Limerick after the Sunday signing of the pig industry death warrant.

Irish pig producers are locked into one of the most Draconian environmental regulations in the EU. The effect for the totality of the pig industry are frightening and the consequences for the grain sector could be disastrous.

Why did it happen? Why are there so many nice people in key positions in the agri sector ready to roll over? What's going on? Where does the buck stop?

Surely agriculture as a Social Partner must impact on government policy and planning in the environmental context. Whether one agrees or not, look at how trade unions have used Social Partnership to protect their interests. Why not a similar approach from farmers, especially with their newly elected intelligent and articulate IFA president.

Already the coordination of this intelligence and articulation by Padraic Walshe is having a major impact on National radio and television. It was great to hear him polishing off the nonsense of the Teagasc Director in Pat Kenny's radio show last Thursday. The Teagasc emperor emerged with no clothes and tried to drop the Teagasc Chairman in the mire.

Social partnership

Social Partnership is not about being in or out of the process. It is all about having the ability to use the process to effect. When IFA entered Social Partnership in 1987 I was President of the Association. The concept at the time was that Social Partnership would be a clearing house for policy and development between the farming industry and government.

The Taoiseach of the day one Charles Haughey was very personally committed and involved in the project. He had some unfortunate career damaging experiences in the 1960s of a non partnership approach to farmers. The then Taoiseach knew there was a better way of

doing business in agriculture.

Teagasc

Teagasc's role in this sickening sequence of environmental events is especially heartbreaking for those of us who saw scientific endeavour as independent of politicians and expediency. I was a member of the governing body of the Agriculture Institute in the 1960s (the forerunner of Teagasc).

Virtually at every board meeting there was the equivalent of hand to hand combat with civil servants present at the meeting who wanted to control the Agriculture Institute with the dead hand of the Department of Agriculture. We won that game - the Institute prospered and farmers gained.

During my own chairmanship of Teagasc there was never even a hint of government interference on any aspect of Teagasc. How sad that we have now come to the point that the Teagasc Director sees the organisation which he heads as "an arm of government".

Perhaps he should consider putting Teagasc staff in uniform like the other arms of government such as the Gardaí and the Army.

Come to think of it wouldn't Jim Flanagan have made a fine Field Marshall? Certainly a more suitable field for him.

Bord Bia's future

THE Dutch Meat Board closed down on the 31st December 2005. From the 1st January 2006 the information and promotional work of the Board will be undertaken by the meat processors in the Netherlands.

The Danes have also reorganised their Meat Board. There is debate in the UK on levy supported boards. Indeed there are question marks over the future of their MLC. Where does Bord Bia with farmer levy funding stand in the world of intensive competition. There is no doubt but over the years Bord Bia have undertaken excellent promotional work.

However the real question is how many cents per Kg have been added to the price of beef, pork and lambs because of Bord Bia's work?

No change in Dec – January cut

DECEMBER prices remained unchanged compared to November.

This means that Dawn are the clear League leaders. A fine performance, this is a fifth consecutive month that Dawn have topped the League. The weighted average for December is still €1.27, the same as November. This compares to the EU average for December of €1.33.

This gap is among the lowest recorded. Here

is good or bad news. It has always happened – as soon as Irish prices close the gap on EU prices there is an Irish Price cut. Yes, Irish prices have run true to form.

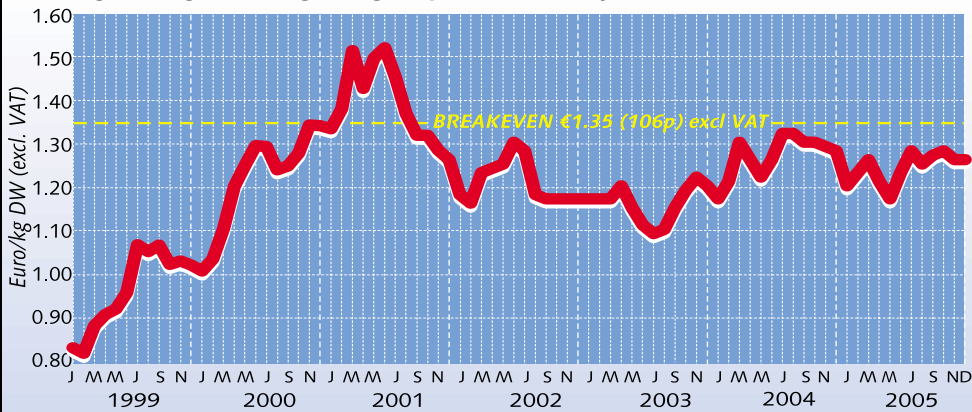
They have been cut by 4c per Kg in the second week in January.

This could take the January weighted average to €1.24 or lower depending on how the remainder of January works out.

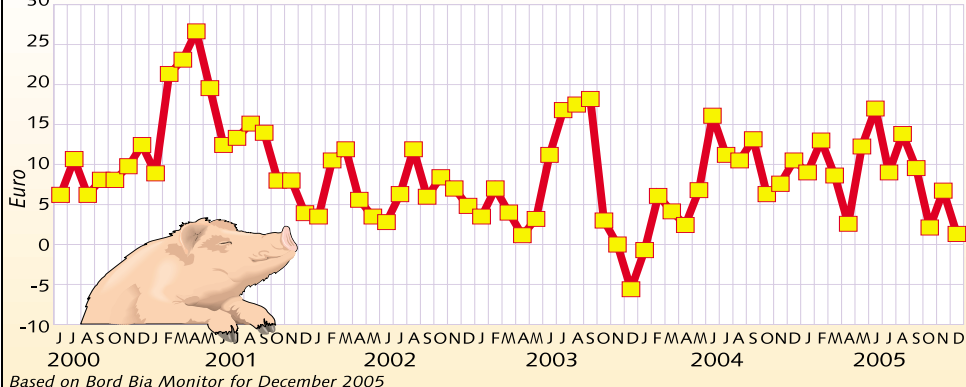
December 2005 Pigmeat Price League Table

Factory	Dec 05 per kg/DN	Nov 05 per kg/DN	Jan '98 per kg/DN	Dec 05 price as % of Jan 98 price	Est. share of national kill in each factory
Division No.1 €1.30 and over					
Dawn	1.31	1.31	1.17	112%	16%
Division No.2 under €1.30					
Edenderry	1.27	1.27	1.13	112%	15%
Roscrea	1.26	1.26	1.13	112%	30%
McCarren	1.25	1.25			8%
Weighted Ave	1.27	1.27			
Northern price					
Cookstown	1.31	1.29			
Grants	1.31	1.29			
Cullybackey	1.27	1.27			
Pork prices					
Coyle	1.30	1.28			
Salter	1.30	1.29			
Corbally	1.28	1.28			

Average weighted Pig League price, January 1999 to December 2005



Irish pig price gap compared to EU average June 2000 to December 2005 for a 70 kg carcass



Based on Bord Bia Monitor for December 2005