

Light shines for Dawn producers

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THE weighted average pig price for May 2008 was €1.44, a 7c per kg increase on the previous month. The high achievers of Dawn Pork and Bacon finally reached the magic €1.60 break-even mark.

This was seen only after a 6c per kg increase was passed back to producers on the last day of May. The pork butchers matched or exceeded this payment at the same time with demand said to be at a high in Ireland and across the continent.

The Northern Irish factories however had been closer to this mark a week prior to southern Irish processors with small increases being achieved each week. The bulk of the Rosderra producers however have not seen the end of their losses even with this 6c/kg increase. A positive development that is welcomed by pig producers was the announcement that the Rosderra management plan to rebuild the Edenderry facility.

This will see the company replace the jobs and killing capacity that were lost there last year.

More increases are vital to the sector, €1.60/kg is only breakeven the industry needs to make a margin in profit to survive.

The IFA pigs committee was active on the retail front again last week. Their cam-

paign to reclaim the home market saw more success with Lidl giving Committee Chairman Michael Maguire and Vice Chair Tim Cullinan a commitment that six of their pigmeat products will be Quality Assured in the next six weeks.

FEED PRICES CONTINUE TO CRIPPLE

This arduous struggle to reach break even has seen 10% of producers leave pig production in Ireland. Pig suppliers have seen no easing in their cost of production since last September when the rocketing feed price was not matched with an increasing price for pigmeat. According to the Teagasc feed monitor, in May the price of compound feed showed no drop and remained at 116c per kg dead weight as it was in April.

Feed ingredient prices did ease somewhat in May with an average barley price of €190/tonne, wheat at €210-215 and Maize at €210-220. The biggest problem that pig producers are facing in the next number of months is the rocketing price of proteins. Soya in May was sold at €350-370 per tonne; this price however is no longer available with quotes considerably higher. The EU officials need to move faster in approving novel feedstuffs to prevent further destruction of the industry..

MAY 2008 PIGMEAT PRICE LEAGUE TABLE

Factory	May 08 per kg DW	Apr 08 per kg DW	Mar 08 price as % of Feb 07	Est. share of national kill in each factory %
All prices quoted excl. VAT refund				
Division No. 1 €1.44 and over				
Dawn	1.47	1.39	106%	21%
Stauntons	1.45	1.37	106%	9%
McCarren	1.44	1.36	106%	9%
Division No. 2 under €1.44				
Edenderry	1.42	1.35	105%	15%
Roscrea	1.42	1.35	105%	33%
Weighted average				
	1.44	1.37		
Green Pastures				
Ballon	1.45	1.38	105%	6%
Garbally	1.45	1.39	104%	2%
	1.44	1.37	105%	4%
Northern Prices				
Cookstown	1.49	1.41	106%	
Grants	1.47	1.39	106%	
Cullybackey	1.48	1.40	106%	



Benchmarking pig herd performance

MICHAEL A MARTIN*

PIGSYS is the Pig Herd Recording System operated by Teagasc Pig Development Officers. It enables pig producers, their managers and advisors to closely monitor herd performance both physical and financial. Where performance fails to meet realistic targets this is quickly established when the data is analysed on a regular (ideally, quarterly) basis and once the appropriate corrective action is identified changes to feeding, health

protection and management can be implemented.

BENCH MARKING

In addition to providing participating producers with accurate and reliable independent assessment of herd performance on an ongoing basis the data can be used, without any breach of confidentiality, to monitor overall trends in herd performance and production costs in participating herds. This is most valuable to management in setting realistic production targets for each unit

based on the information obtained on how other herds are performing. In addition groups of herds can be selected on the basis of a particular parameter and this allows producers to compare performance with for example the top 25% of herds selected on the number of pigs produced per sow per year.

There is considerable evidence to show that herds that participate in PigSys generally perform better, in terms of sow productivity at least, than herds not doing so.

Benchmarking herd performance will not, in itself, lead to improved efficiency and reduced production costs. What it does is identify where improvements are possible. The next stage of implementing the appropriate change is the challenge for management and staff.

REPRESENTATIVE

But how representative of pig herds generally are the herds participating in PigSys?

Table 1 (right) illustrates how representative the sample is.

Table 1:

Sow Herd Size category	National Herd Teagasc Pig survey January 2007	PigSys 2007
1000+	11	12
500-999	21	30
300-499	17	25
200-299	21	19
100-199	17	10
<100	13	4
Average Herd Size	452	580

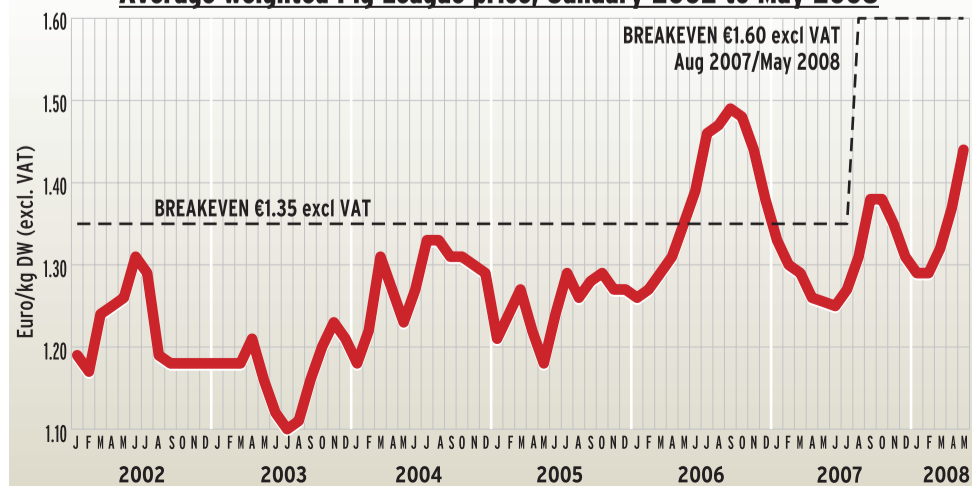
There are a slightly higher proportion of herds over 500 sows in PigSys (67%) than in the national sow herd (49%). This is reflected in the average herd size of 580 sows in the recorded herds. However, larger herds do not perform significantly better than smaller herds.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

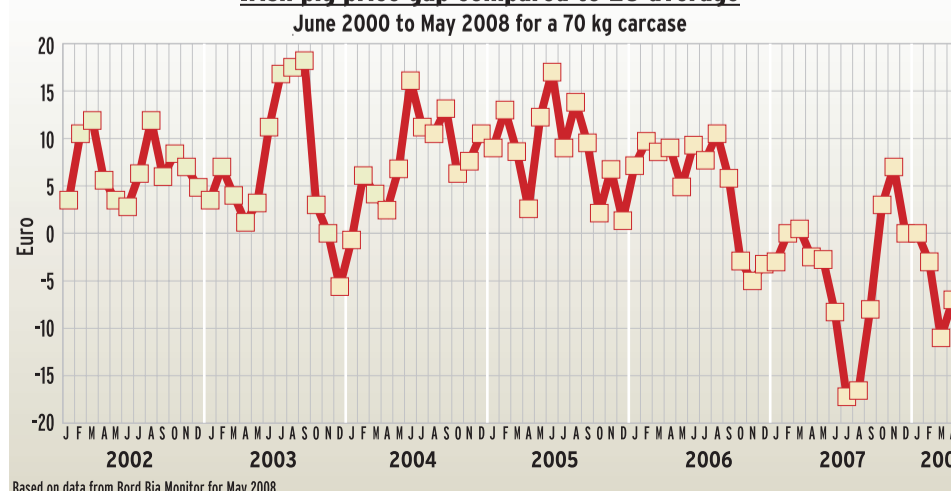
Teagasc Pig Development Officers will facilitate any herd, not doing so at present, but that wishes to participate in PigSys.

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Average weighted Pig League price, January 2002 to May 2008



Irish pig price gap compared to EU average



Based on data from Bord Bia Monitor for May 2008