



Growing Grass to Grow Profits

**Ulster Grassland Society
Annual General Meeting
27th January 2015**

Adam Woods

BETTER Farm Programme Manager

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Outline



- Teagasc/Irish Farmers Journal BETTER farm beef programme established in 2009
- Joint Industry programme
- Currently 31 farms participating
- Discussion groups built around these farms
- Intense advisory service
- Dissemination through Irish Farmers Journal
- Target of €1000/GM/Ha as part of programme

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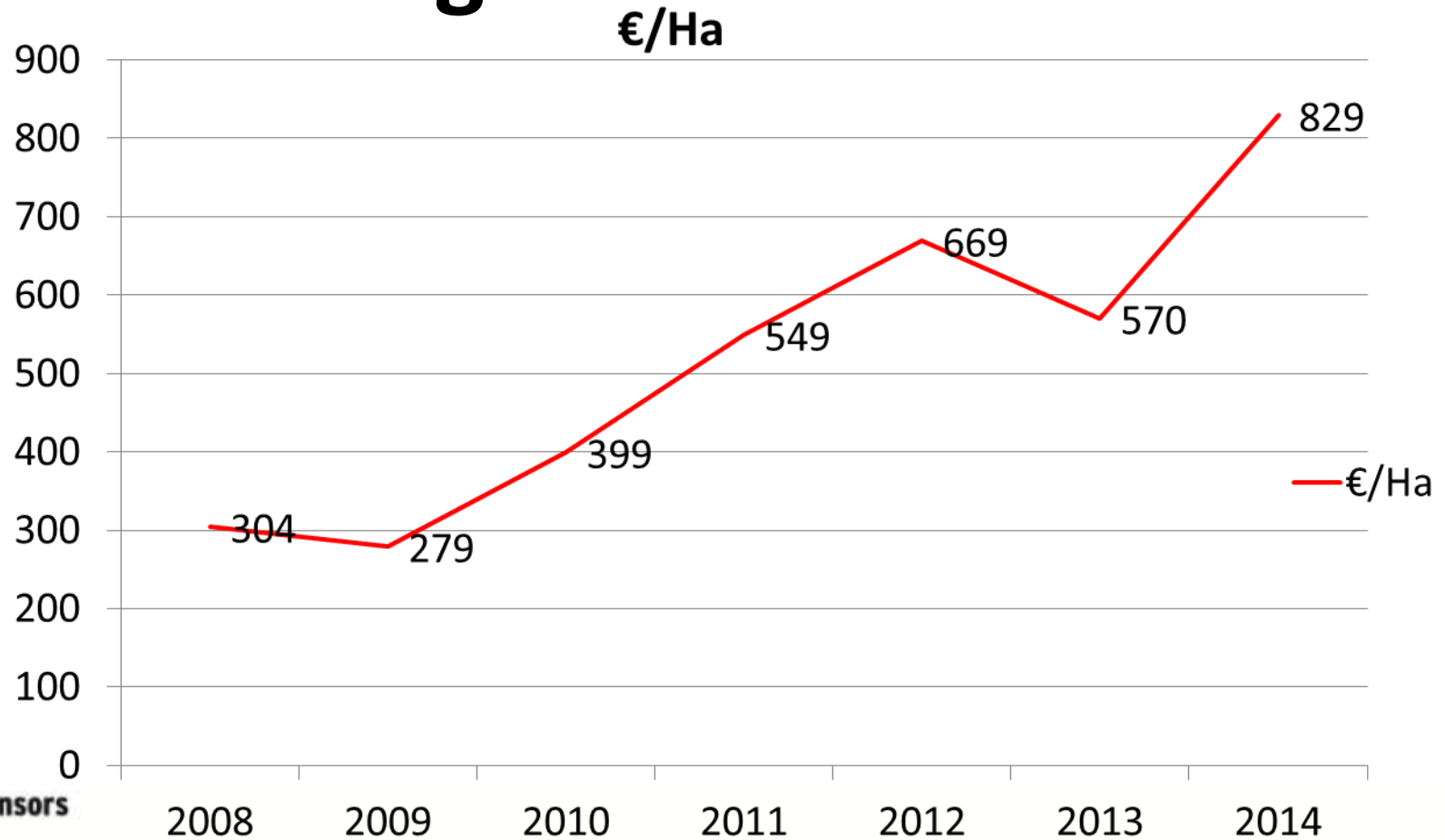


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Progress €/Ha Gross Margin



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Areas We Can Control



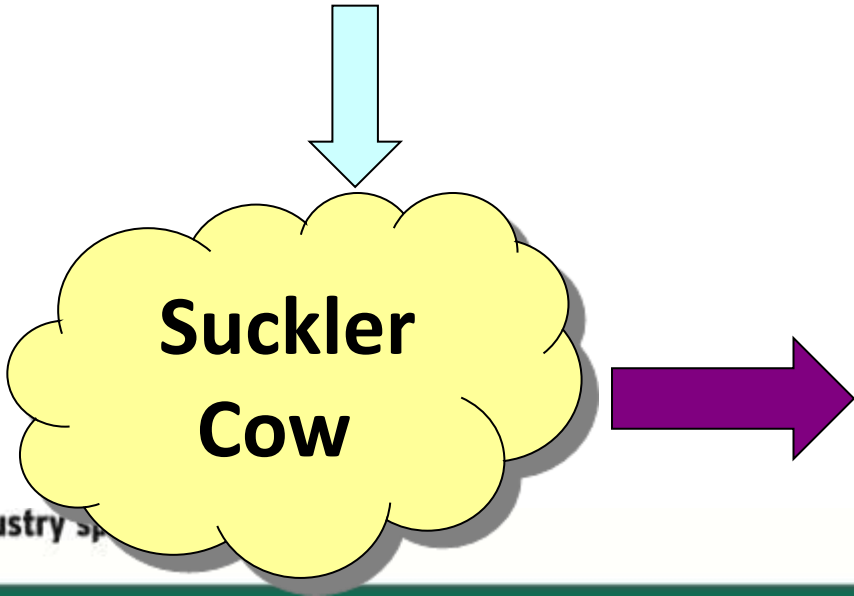
Costs

Winter Cost
Use Of Grass
Veterinary Costs
Replacement Costs

€ €

Not Controllable

- Beef Price
- S. American Imports
- WTO Negotiations
- Price of Fertiliser/Meals
- Land Availability
- Conacre Costs



Output Value

Live Calf
Calf Quality
Kg's Produced
Cull Value

€ €

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What changes have been made?



- Focused on four main areas
 - Farm output and Stocking Rate
 - Grassland Management
 - Breeding, genetics and fertility
 - Animal Health
- Simple farm plans developed
- Track and Monitor progress



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Grass-Our Cheapest Feed



Grassland Management



- Massive potential
- Low level of uptake
- Low level of interest
- Our competitive advantage
- Easier to buy concentrates then manage grass
- Farmers need to reappraise approach
- Have we over complicated it???



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Grass Tip No. 1



- Complete a whole farm soil analysis



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Grass Tip No.2



- Address Ph,P and K issues to increase fertiliser efficiency as soon as possible



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Grass Tip No.3



- Need to get back to basics with paddocks and drinkers



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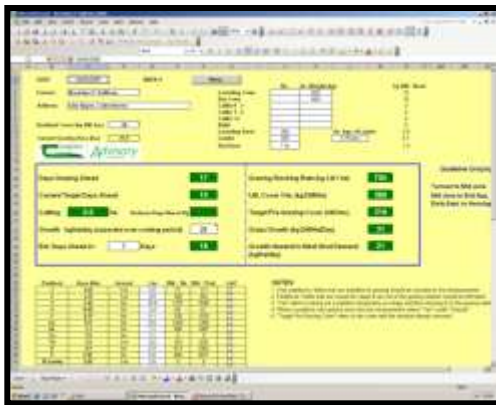
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Grass Tip No.4



- Walk your farm on a weekly basis to measure growth and feed budget



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Grass Tip No.5



- Demo farm target of achieving 240 days+ at grass

1/3 Area

Closed 10th October
Grazed 1st, then slurry



10cm

1/3 Area


Closed 5th November
1st for fertiliser



7cm

1/3 Area

Closed 5th December
1st for slurry



4cm

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Grass Tip No.6



- Spring grassland management starts in the autumn, no exceptions!



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Grass Tip No.7



- Young stock i.e. weanling heifers/bulls are turned out first



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Grass Tip No.8



- Apply slurry early in spring, and on dull damp days



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Grass Tip No.9



- Completely clean out in the first rotation



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Grass Tip No. 10



- Targeted reseeding of poor performing paddocks pays (at high stocking rates)



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Summary



- Programme has demonstrated technology transfer works
- Major focus on Grassland Management
 - Still more improvements needed
- Control what can be controlled
- Need to be focussed
- Keep it simple

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