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For immediate use



Sustainability remains high on European beef farmers' agenda

Fairer prices, alternative feedstuffs, animal health checks prior to purchase, training for handlers to reduce stress and improve meat quality plus biodiversity are under the spotlight for 2022

Beef farmers across Europe continue to engage with the BovINE network via national and international meetings, and exchanges with the project's national Network Managers (NMs) to express and share their needs for information, tools, and practical guidance to help secure sustainable improvements in their practice and business operations.

The result of that engagement is the selection of eight new Priority Topics for BovINE to concentrate on during 2022, two topics for each of the project's four thematic areas:

- Socio-economic Resilience
- Animal Health & Welfare
- Production Efficiency & Meat Quality
- Environmental Sustainability.

BovINE's four Technical Working Groups (TWGs) one for each thematic area, led by researchers from agricultural research institutions supported by experts and NMs from Farmer Associations, will identify existing literature, policy recommendations and on-farm good practices to produce solutions for these grass roots needs expressed by farmers.

"Here in Ireland, we had a very good National Network meeting hosted by the Irish Farmers Association and Teagasc," says Kevin Kinsella, the Bovine Irish Network Manager. "Our beef farmers welcomed the opportunity to share their views and highlight their needs for information, guidance and good practices to support their journey towards sustainability."

BovINE's 2022 Priority Topics range from securing a fairer distribution of the price paid along the beef supply chain, to the use of alternative feedstuffs in order to reduce the high costs of raw materials; from 'on farm' health checks of young stock prior to purchase or sale, to training in animal welfare for operators and farmers to reduce stress; from identifying and validating tools for calculating and improving environmental sustainability and biodiversity on beef cattle farms, to tools and strategies to improve meat quality.

"The TWGs will work to identify existing evidence and guidance on the new priority topics," says Richard Lynch of Teagasc, the Bovine Project Manager, "and where possible arrange practical demonstrations on local beef farms to create 'farm ready' good practices."

The BovINE network in Ireland will be hearing further from farmers and sharing good practices and new information with them at their National Network meeting to be held in person/hybrid/on line in autumn 2022. To receive up to date information on the national meeting, contact Kevin Kinsella via kevin@agspace.ie



"All beef farmers, their advisors, business and veterinary services are able to access the wide range and growing number of good practices and information already collated by the BovINE network via the BovINE Knowledge Hub (BKH) accessed here <https://hub.bovine-eu.net>," adds Kevin Kinsella.



BovINE continues the work of exchanging knowledge and experience with the European beef farming community and value chain with its whole project Transnational Meeting to be held late 2022. To stay up to date with project news, access the BovINE website (www.bovine-eu.net) where you can also sign up for the project's newsletter.

Ends/Notes follow

Notes to Editors:

1. 2022 Priority Topics for each of the four BovINE Themes

BovINE Theme	Priority Topic Titles	Brief Descriptions
 Socio-economic Resilience	Methods to ensure a fairer distribution of the final price along the supply/food chain	For decades a debate has continued about a fairer distribution of 'value added' between the actors of food supply chains. BovINE will analyse and compare influencing factors, policy initiatives at EU and national government levels and direct sales strategies to provide insights for beef farmers and farmer organisations.
	The use of alternative feedstuffs to reduce the high costs of raw material for feeding	Alternative feedstuffs can be found on the market, and can be attractive due to the high and/or fluctuating price of 'traditional' feeds. Energy and protein content need to be compatible with growth requirements of beef cattle, and should not compromise final meat quality.
 Animal Health & Welfare	On farm health check of young stock prior to sale/purchase including vaccination status	Introduced disease is a major problem when buying calves from outside the farm which can have consequences for calf/herd health and welfare. The topic focuses on possible tools to prevent introducing disease into the farms including vaccination programs.
	Training in animal welfare for operators/farmers (handlers, transporters and slaughterhouses) and stress-free drive systems during weighing and transport in beef cattle	Countries have different regulations regarding animal welfare and the training of those who are involved as animal keepers, handlers and transporters. This topic does not focus on the multiple regulations in each country but on general principles in beef cattle handling with the aim of reducing stress particularly during weighing and transport. The role of an experienced handler together with the use of specifically designed equipment are key to minimizing that stress.
	Tools for calculating and improving environmental	Existing tools to calculate the environmental sustainability of beef cattle farms will be

 Environmental Sustainability	sustainability on beef cattle farms	evaluated, compared and classified according to the indicators they evaluate.
	Methods to enhance biodiversity on beef cattle farms without the need for large investment	Innovations and good practices will be identified that can help farmers in different European regions and farming on diverse terrains to take biodiversity measures, at plot level, at farm level but also at a regional level. We will not only focus on measures for crops and grassland management but also on measures that improve soil biodiversity and water quality. Effective evaluation measures will also be collated.
 Production Efficiency & Meat Quality	Tools to evaluate the carcass and meat quality prior to and in the slaughterhouse	Instruments or methods that can be used in the farm or in the slaughter line to measure or predict carcass quality (conformation and fattening, carcass composition, retail yield, etc.) and meat quality (colour, pH, ribeye area, marbling, fat thickness, tenderness, safety, etc.) of beef cattle will be reviewed..
	On-farm strategies to increase or improve marbling/ tenderness/colour in beef meat	Genetic, nutritional and management factors applied in beef cattle farms that contribute to increase or improve meat quality attributes such as marbling, tenderness and colour will be reviewed.

Further detail about the Priority Topics is available on the BovINE website www.bovine-eu.net and on the Bovine Knowledge Hub (BKH) – <https://hub.bovine-eu.net> – where Good Practices (GPs) and Research Innovations (RIs) are available and accessible by all.

2. For further information for media purposes in Ireland contact Sean Hennessy of the Irish Farmers Association at seanhennessy@ifa.ie or 01- 4500266. For wider media information, contact Rhonda Smith or Marie Saville in the UK at bovine@minervacomms.net +44 (0) 1264 326427 / +44(0)7887-714957.
3. BovINE has a Network Manager (NM) based in each of the 9 project member states (Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal & Spain) building networks across their beef farming communities. Contact information for each NM can be found on the BovINE website: <http://www.bovine-eu.net/network-managers/>
4. This project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 rural renaissance programme. Project No: 862590 under call H2020-RUR-2019-15. Further information is available at <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/862590>
5. BovINE Project Partners

No. *	Participant organisation name	Country	Partner type
1	Teagasc - Agriculture and Food Development Authority Project Coordinator – Prof. Maeve Henchion maeve.henchion@teagasc.ie ; Project Manager – Richard Lynch: richard.lynch@teagasc.ie	Ireland	Applied research/ extension
2	Feirmeoiri Aontuithe na h-Eireann Iontaobhathe Teoranta LBG	Ireland	Farmers association

3	Centro Ricerche Produzioni Animali - C.R.P.A. s.p.a.	Italy	Applied research
4	Unicarve - Associazione Produttori Carni Bovine	Italy	Farmers association
5	Institut de l'Elevage	France	Applied research/advisory
6	Fédération Nationale Bovine	France	Beef farmers association.
7	Universidad de Zaragoza	Spain	Research
8	Instituto Navarro de Tecnologías e Infraestructuras Agroalimentarias SA	Spain	Applied research/advisory
9	Szkola Główna Gospodarstwa Wiejskiego	Poland	Research
10	Polish Beef Association	Poland	Beef farmers association
11	Faculdade de Medicina Veterinaria	Portugal	Research
12	ACBM- Associação de Criadores de Bovinos Mertolengos	Portugal	Beef breeders' association
13	Eigen Vermogen van het Instituut voor Landbouw- en Visserijonderzoek	Belgium	Applied research
14	Boerenbond	Belgium	Farmers association
15	Friedrich Loeffler Institut - Bundesforschungsinstitut für Tiergesundheit	Germany	Research
16	Bundesverband Rind und Schwein e.V	Germany	Farmers association
17	Minerva HCC Ltd	UK	SME – communications
18	NPO Liivimaa Lihaveis	Estonia	Non-Profit Organisation