

Why Measure Grass?

The potential to achieve high levels of productivity from grazed grass gives Irish farmers a major competitive advantage over many of our European and global counterparts.

Existing research clearly show that farms that grow more grass have lower costs and higher profits.

On average, the cost of producing **1 kg of live weight gain or 1 kg of milk solids** from grazed grass is **80% to 85% less** when compared with an intensive concentrate-based system.

PastureBase Ireland aims to help farmers ensure that they are exploiting the full potential of grazed grass on their farm, irrespective of production system or land type. Land type or location is often seen as a barrier to adopting good grassland management practices.

While Irish farmers use some purchased feed, the majority of weight gain or milk is produced from forage, mainly grazed grass or conserved silage.

However, there are still a number of simple steps that farmers can take to improve grass growth, grass quality and grass utilisation. Getting livestock out to grass early and ensuring an adequate supply of good-quality leafy grass is available throughout the grazing season is key to obtaining high levels of animal performance.

The main benefits from measuring grass...

1. Minimise costs to cope with volatile world markets for dairy, beef and sheep products.
2. Maximise the proportion of grazed grass in the diet.
3. Maximise pasture re-growth rates.
4. Improve pasture quality, feed more grass, and at a higher quality.
5. Graze more grass in the spring and autumn, shorten the winter period.
6. Achieve target average farm covers at key times during the year.

More specific benefits include...

1. Take the guesswork out of managing grass.
2. Identify grass surpluses and deficits quickly.
3. Know when to reduce, or cut out, meal feeding in spring.
4. When in deficit, calculate extra meal or silage needed to feed the herd or flock.
5. Follow a spring rotation planner to deliver high quality swards for summer grazing.
6. Know when to start the 2nd rotation in spring.
7. Know when to end the last grazing rotation in autumn.
8. Build up extra grass cover in late summer for grazing in autumn.
9. Know when and how to react to a constantly changing grass supply on the farm.
10. Decide on the grazing plan for the week and keep all staff informed on decisions.

Extra advantages of PastureBase Ireland...

1. Benchmark your performance against farmers in your discussion group or nationwide.
2. Build a comprehensive grass database for your farm to help you in years to come.
3. Calculate the tonnes of grass grown by each paddock each year.
4. Identify paddocks with low annual tonnage and earmark them for reseeding.
5. Most importantly, help build a national grass database that can be used by researchers to target improvements, either in grass production/utilisation or grass breeding that will be of great benefit to Irish dairy, beef and sheep industries for years to come.

You cannot manage something you do not measure! Measuring grass enables the grassland farmer to make better informed and more effective grassland management and grazing decisions.