Talking Quality Assurance
with Joe Burke of Bord Bia

Why do Irish farmers need Quality Assurance schemes?
Quality Assurance schemes benefit Irish farmers because approximately 90% of our food is exported, valued at almost €11 billion annually. In the past our premium customers would only buy beef and lamb coming from Quality Assured farms, but now it is a standard requirement for the majority of markets. Farmers recognise this benefit because the number of producers participating in Bord Bia’s QA schemes is growing every year.

What is a good QA scheme?
Trade customers make buying decisions on the basis of what a national QA scheme covers and how it is operated. As a result, our QA schemes need to meet the international standard: EN45011, which requires the audit process to be independently certified. The key areas which must be covered include food safety, traceability, animal health and welfare, farm safety and the environment. All Bord Bia QA schemes operate in this way.

Do farmers have a say in Bord Bia’s QA schemes?
Farmers have a strong voice at every level in Bord Bia. IFA & ICMSA participate on the main board, sub-boards and have a key input in the decision making process for all Bord Bia’s programmes. Specifically, as members of the Technical Committee, they are involved in the design and operation of Bord Bia QA schemes.

Here are some of the facts:
- 95% of farmers pass the inspection first time.
- Nobody fails on a minor technicality.
- The auditor discusses any areas for improvement with the farmer at the end of the audit and this is followed up with a written report.
- Where a farmer fails, an early reaudit can be requested.
- It should be noted that the main reasons for farmers failing the audit are aligned to measures that are also legally required from a food safety perspective.
- A very small number of farmers receive spot audits. These usually arise where there is concern that a significant issue from a previous audit has not been properly addressed. Notice of 48 hours is given for a spot audit.

New developments for the Beef and Lamb Quality Assurance Scheme (BLQAS):
- Bord Bia has proposed a revision to the current BLQAS to include a ‘close-out’ or period of grace model. This would provide beef and lamb farmers a period of time, while retaining certification, to provide evidence to show that they have addressed any issues that may have arisen during the audit.
- The new scheme is at an advanced stage, awaiting sign off from the Technical Committee.

Farm Walk & Talk 2016
Dawn Meats were delighted to participate in Agri Aware’s Farm Walk & Talk initiative again this Spring where we met with over 600 secondary school students at Teagasc’s Kildalton and Grange facilities.
In 10 minute sessions with over 20 schools Paul Nolan shared insights on the importance of Ireland’s Agri-food sector to the economy and Dawn Meats track record in the delivery of jobs and careers across a wide range of disciplines year after year. Pictured: Paul Nolan, Dawn Meats explaining consumer requirements to students
An Industry First

A group of 24 participants on Dawn Meats Graduate Trainee Scheme have successfully completed a specially designed and delivered management programme at UCD. The program, which is an industry first, was custom designed and delivered by Agri-Food Advanced Professional Development (Agri-Food APD) a collaboration between UCD, UCC and Teagasc, which has nearly a decade of experience in delivering postgraduate training to the agri-food sector.

This programme builds on Dawn Meat's strong record of investing in graduate management training. Dawn Meats has run in-house young manager training courses for over 15 years, and has also worked closely with the Irish Management Institute to deliver best-in-class training for its next generation of managers.

The 20 day face-to-face training was held over 10 months and covered elements of supply chain management, traceability, sustainability and food safety. Graduates were coached in areas of leadership, management, communication, innovation and lean business principles. The hope is that this is the beginning of collaborative training between academia and the food industry to up skill and develop graduates in this rapidly changing sector.

Dawn Meat's Group HR Manager (Ire) Larry Keena commented: “We place a lot of emphasis on hiring high quality graduates and ensuring they get the best of training when they come to Dawn Meats. Dawn has a long tradition of providing management training to its young managers, and this programme is an excellent collaboration between academia and industry to ensure attendees get a strong grounding in relevant leadership and management skills. It has already proven to be very popular with the participants and the skills they have learned are already becoming evident.”

The Graduate Programme brochure is available for download on www.dawnmeats.com

Inaugural Agri-Food Debate

Over 200 students and representatives of the Irish agri-food industry took to the UCD Garret Fitzgerald Debating Chamber on 10th March in the first annual Great Agri-Food Debate to consider the motion: “Ruminant Livestock Farming will Help Save the Planet.”

The debate saw students from UCD’s School of Agriculture and Food Science vigorously debate issues such as the long-term importance of agri-food production to the Irish economy; livestock-related greenhouse gas emissions; the relative efficiencies of the Irish production system, and what constitutes sustainable levels of meat consumption worldwide into the future.

Moderator for the night was Justin McCarthy, Editor of the Irish Farmers Journal and the three judges were Niall Browne, CEO, Dawn Meats; Adrian Crean, Managing Director, McDonald’s Ireland and Aidan Cotter, CEO Bord Bia. Dawn Meats and McDonald’s Ireland co-sponsored the event in recognition of the importance of sustainable sourcing and sustainable farming.

Commenting Niall Browne said; “The Irish grass-based system is one of the most carbon efficient in the world from an environmental perspective. Therefore we need to be pragmatic about the role that Ireland plays in relation to global food security and be unafraid of broadening the discussion by showcasing the natural advantages of Irish beef production. The debate gave us an opportunity to consider different sides of this contentious issue, and importantly, to provide a forum for the views and vision of the next generation of agri-food leaders. Our activities today will shape the industry that they inherit, and it is important that they are active stakeholders from the very beginning.”

In recognition of their outstanding performance both teams were invited to a study tour of Dawn’s Waterford operations.

“Everyone’s a Winner”, Pictured l-r: Aidan Cotter, CEO, Bord Bia, Adrian Crean, MD, McDonald’s Ireland, Paul Murphy, Leanne McNamara (winner of Best Speaker), Peter Fagan, Clodagh Ryan, Rachel Morris and Joseph Ryan, Niall Browne CEO, Dawn Meats
Five reasons you cannot afford to miss Newford Farm’s open day.

Attention remains firmly focused on calving in Newford Farm. However, there is also one eye on putting plans in place for the farm’s inaugural open day. The event, open to all interested farmers, takes place on Wednesday 25th May in Teagasc, Athenry, Co Galway.

The new suckler-to-beef herd with 95 cows calving down in 2016 has numerous exciting attractions on the day. We picked out five to give a glimpse of what’s in store on the day.

1) **Hitting €1,000 gross margin from a steer and heifer production system.** The farm when up and running aims to achieve a gross margin in excess of €1,000/ha from a 20 to 24 month steer and heifer production system.

2) **Managing smaller suckler cows with a high milk yield.** Cows in the herd are first cross Angus and Hereford bred from the dairy herd. Milk yield is excellent but precise management is required to ensure their higher nutritional demands are met and breeding performance is not compromised.

3) **Pushing grazing to the max.** The farm will be stocked at close to 3LU/ha in 2016. The main pressure point is the Gortnahown out-farm block where an average grass growth rate of 60kg DM/ha will be required over the main grazing season to support yearling steers and heifers. Demand is also high on the main block where cows and calves are grazing. A new paddock and water system has been installed to maximise grass growth and utilisation and ensure grass quality is maintained at a high level throughout the grazing season.

4) **Ambitious weight targets.** For the system to hit its targets of slaughtering the majority of heifers (310kg carcass weight) and steers (330kg carcass weight) off grass at 18 to 20 months of age, high levels of daily liveweight gain are required at all stages with no room for a store period. Steers weighed an average of 382kg at the start of February, having gained 0.56kg over the winter (ADG of 1.06kg since birth), while heifers weighed 362kg, achieving an average daily gain of 0.48kg/day over winter.

5) **Care free calving.** The farm is set up to try and facilitate management with one labour unit, the farm’s manager Matthew Murphy. Cows calving without any difficulty is central to achieving this goal. A breakdown of the farm’s sire selection policy includes sires with less than 6% calving difficulty but still possessing good carcass and growth.

**Agri Careers Fair**

Dawn Meats attended the inaugural Agri Careers Fair in the RDS on the 3rd of March. The event which was the brainchild of both the Irish Farmers Journal and open eir was officially launched by Simon Coveney TD (Minister for Agriculture, Food, the Marine & Defence). The event was a fantastic opportunity for Dawn Meats to showcase to job seekers and those looking to advance their careers, students and parents alike that a career in the agri industry can deliver a bright future.
World Wetland Day

To mark World Wetland Day on Tuesday 2nd February, Dawn Meats and Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) announced the start of a study on the health and progress of the integrated constructed wetland at its Carroll’s Cross facility in Co. Waterford.

Four students from WIT will carry out this assessment in the coming months, and the results will be available in the autumn.

World Wetland Day aims to highlight the importance of wetlands, and the role they play in providing natural sponges against flooding, hosting a huge variety of life, and storing carbon dioxide to regulate climate change.

3 years ago Dawn Meats installed a 7 acre integrated wetland and Eco-park at the facility. This not only reduced carbon emissions by avoiding the need to mechanically treat wastewater but provided an opportunity to enhance biodiversity at the site. Dawn and WIT carried out an initial survey of the wetland in March 2014 and they are now commencing a study to assess how the health of the ecosystem has progressed over the last two years. Richard Clinton Group Commercial Director from Dawn Meats added: “We are delighted to once again be working with WIT. Dawn Meats is committed to working together with the local community in supporting the environment and this cooperation continues to grow in effectiveness and importance.”

March Hares… not so mad

Congratulations to a great TY team at Waterford’s Newtown School for their ‘Hares on the March Waterford’ in aid of the Jack and Jill Children’s Foundation.

Dawn Meats were very impressed with the project which saw the students having 10 giant hares painted and placed over a 5km route throughout Waterford city encouraging people to take exercise by covering the route and donating to the hares. To date over €4,500 has been raised. Well done girls we were delighted to support your project.

Premium Butcher teams up with Rozanne Stephens

Rozanne’s cookery classes which will be held in Dublin throughout the year will use meat from The Premium Butcher in her dishes. For convenience The Premium Butcher will promote the meat products that Rozanne is using with specially designed bundles which will be available to buy through our shops and online.

To be in with a chance to win tickets for Rozanne’s classes (valued at €80 each), please keep an eye on our social media!

@premiumbutcher
@thepremiumbutcher
www.thepremiumbutcher.com

The Premium Butcher have teamed up with Celebrity Chef and award winning cook book author, Rozanne Stephens in an exciting project to promote MakeAheadMeals, a concept to help busy families create nutritious and exciting home cooked dishes ahead of time.

As we wrap up our inaugural series of L2D workshops with our national agriculture colleges we would like to thank Ballyhaise, Clonakilty, Gurteen, Kildalton, Mountbellew and Pallaskenry for their assistance in bringing this initiative to a successful outcome. Over the past 4 months Dawn Meats has welcomed more than 400 young farmer students to its 4 processing plants in Ballyhaunis, Charleville, Grannagh and Rathdowney as well as students from Tralee IT and Macra’s western VEC schemes.

L2D Completes its course