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SUCKLER CARBON EFFICIENCY PROGRAMME

Craig Vigors, Christopher Daly.

ICBF, Ballincollig, Republic of Ireland.

The Suckler Carbon Efficiency Programme (SCEP) is a new five year suckler scheme launched by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine in Ireland that aims to build on the gains delivered in recent years through the Beef Data and Genomics Programme (BDGP) and the Beef Environmental Efficiency Programme – Suckler (BEEP-S) by improving the genetic quality of the national herd. The identification of higher genetic merit cows through these schemes has resulted in gains in weaning efficiency, cow fertility and profitability, while reducing the carbon footprint of beef production.

Ireland has committed to a 25% cut in GHG emissions from agriculture by 2030, and this scheme aims to contribute to this emission reduction from suckler cows by 2027 by providing support to beef farmers to improve the environmental sustainability of the national beef herd.

The scheme has a total budget of €260m across five years and is co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Union.

There are four mandatory actions required by the programme which focuses on replacement strategies, weight recording, genotyping and data recording on eligible animals.

The replacement strategy element covers both dams and sires used on the participant's holding. A percentage of their breeding females on the holding must be genotyped and have four or five stars on the replacement index of the Euro-Star system. A percentage of the calves born must be sired to a genotyped 4 or 5 star bull on either the terminal or replacement index of the Euro-Star system. The weight recording element requires eligible calves and their dams to be weighed on the holding and the weights and the scales information to be recorded with ICBF.

The genotyping element involves taking samples from selected animals for genotyping by ICBF. This will help farmers identify genetically superior animals at a much earlier age and improve the rate of genetic gain in the national herd.

The process of recording data involves recording information and traits of eligible calves and their dams. Information on the calf includes the sire, calving survey, birth size and quality of the calf. Information recorded on the dam includes mothering ability, milk ability and udder traits