

Publication

Genotyping Programme

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Apply for Genotyping

This programme is administered by ICBF and full details are available at <https://www.icbf.com/national-genotyping-programme/> (<https://www.icbf.com/national-genotyping-programme/>).

Genotyping Programme

On 31 May 2023 Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine Charlie McConalogue T.D., announced funding for a major and world-first genotyping programme for Irish cattle. This programme, which is being run through a strategic public-private partnership

model, will enhance the environmental sustainability, health and productivity of Irish beef and dairy herds. [gov.ie - Minister McConologue announces world first cattle genotyping programme \(www.gov.ie\)](https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/42d04-minister-mcconologue-announces-world-first-cattle-genotyping-programme/) (<https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/42d04-minister-mcconologue-announces-world-first-cattle-genotyping-programme/>).

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How Genotyping Works

Genotyping involves taking a tissue sample from breeding females and males and building a DNA bank of that data. When new calves are born, they are matched to their sire and dam. If carried out at national scale, genotyping would give the Irish cattle industry 100% traceability at the DNA level. The genetic data collected will be analysed to identify specific traits or characteristics that are important to farmers such as disease resistance, milk or meat production, or fertility. In addition, the information gathered will be used to develop breeding strategies aimed at improving the overall genetic merit of the herd. This voluntary genotyping programme over five years represents a significant step towards genotyping of the national bovine herd.

Funding Model

ICBF will manage this five year programme on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM). The total funding allocation for year 1 (2023) is €23 million; this is fully exchequer funded through the Brexit Adjustment Reserve. Funding over years two to five will be based on a cost sharing model between DAFM, Industry and participating farmers, in line with state aid requirements. Participating farmers must

commit to the full five years of the programme and will contribute to the programme in years two to five with the costs shared one-third each between farmers, industry and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Background - Food Vision Group Recommendations

In late 2022, the Food Vision Dairy and Beef Groups reported to Minister McConalogue on how emissions from both sectors could be reduced, either through direct or enabling measures. Driving down emissions through targeted breeding strategies featured as a direct impact measure in both reports. The key building block for the breeding strategies referenced in the Reports is a national genotyping strategy.

The accurate information available from genotyping will also contribute to enhanced integration between the dairy and beef sectors, and to improving animal health and welfare.

Research undertaken by Teagasc, and the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF) has highlighted the significant benefits that can accrue to Irish farmers and related industries with higher genetic merit herds being more profitable and with a lower carbon footprint. In addition to improving economic and environmental sustainability, genotyping the national herd will have a number of co-benefits, including:

- providing a unique selling point in terms of traceability, which is important for marketing our quality produce, particularly for international trade.
- providing greater certainty about the quality of dairy beef calves, with benefits both for the farmers rearing those calves and for calf health and welfare.

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