



The Editor  
The Irish Independent  
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Dublin D01 X2E1

November 1 2021

Dear Sir,

When it comes to dairy farming's climate impact, the picture's not quite as clear cut as your weekend comment piece (Irish Independent 31/10/21) would suggest. For example, while agriculture is indeed the largest contributor to Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions – because we are an agricultural nation - the majority of our emissions come from energy, transport, residential, industrial processes and manufacturing.

Your correspondent rightly says that 65% of dairy's emissions are methane – he neglects to mention that biogenic methane is a short-lived greenhouse gas, hanging around for a dozen years only in the atmosphere, as opposed to CO<sub>2</sub> from fossil fuels which is there for hundreds.

The national herd has grown over the past decade, but it is still smaller than it was in 1986 – and Irish dairy is producing more with less. Careful breeding programmes ensure more milk from each cow and as a result, emissions per litre of milk are down.

Tellingly, your correspondent omits to say that Irish dairy is the most GHG-emissions efficient in Europe. The implications of that are summed up by three Bs – Buoyant, Better and Best. Globally – like it or not – demand for dairy is buoyant. Ireland is better at producing dairy than most other countries. The best way of meeting demand for dairy, sustainably and with due regard for the environment, is by producing in a country that's better at it.

Curtail Irish dairy production – part of Ireland's heritage, tradition and economic foundations - and the slack will be taken up by other, less efficient producing nations with a subsequent effect on global emissions. Climate change is a global issue and we ignore that fact – and focus solely on Irish targets – at our peril.

Yours faithfully  
Zoë Kavanagh  
Chief Executive, National Dairy Council

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