



The Irish Times  
The Irish Times Building  
PO Box 74  
24-28 Tara Street  
Dublin 2

October 23 2021

Dear Sir,

When it comes to dairy farming and agriculture, the picture's not quite as clear cut as your coverage of the environmental issues (Irish Times, 23/10/21) would suggest. For example, while agriculture is indeed the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, it accounts for 37% of the total – the majority being from energy, transport, residential, industrial processes and manufacturing.

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 are down.

It is, of course, true to say that Irish dairy farming is the most GHG-emissions efficient in Europe and 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 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.

Your correspondent quotes an academic who says farmers will be the first to be affected by climate change. Imagine how Irish farmers will feel if their livelihoods and their futures have been cut back by Irish legislation yet they are still impacted by climate change driven by other countries filling the dairy gap that's been created.

Yours faithfully

Zoë Kavanagh  
Chief Executive, National Dairy Council

National Dairy Council, The Studio, 55c Maple Avenue, Stillorgan, Dublin, A94 HY83