

07.09.2018

Irish dairy farmers feel financial squeeze from drought

September on Irish dairy farms would normally be a time when we would be enjoying the fruits of our Summer and preparing for the Autumn and Winter ahead. Bills incurred during the Spring would be paid and farmers would look with pride and reassurance on high rows of bales and full silage pits.

The long winter of 2017/18 meant that cows were in sheds longer than expected with some inside three months longer than usual. This meant that extra silage was used with all surpluses consumed. We had practically no spring and then went straight into the hottest summer that Ireland has known since the record-breaking 1976. The accompanying drought meant grass growth stopped in most parts of the country (but most especially in the high dairy production areas of South, East and Midlands). Even after the (by Irish standards) intense heat ceased, grass growth and suitable rain has been patchy and intermittent. Many Irish dairy farmers are looking at fodder deficits of up to 50% for the upcoming winter as well as having run up significant bills after paying for the extra fodder that the long winter necessitated.

Cashflow is extremely tight at present and though the grass-growing conditions are recovering slowly, Irish dairy farmers will require optimum weather this Autumn so that more fodder can be harvested, and cows left out for as long as possible. Milk price is currently around 32 cents per litre, unfortunately costs have risen substantially due to the drought meaning that many farmers are under pressure and will continue to be in an unprecedented financial squeeze well into spring 2019.

Paul Smyth, Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association (ICMSA)

[<<< back](#)