

people farming

Farm incomes down 30 percent

New farm income figures published this week show that average family farm income in 2009 was €11,968, down 30 percent on 2008.

The Teagasc National Farm Survey states that this decline comes on top of a 13.7 percent drop in incomes in 2008, bringing the overall decline in family farm income to 40 percent since 2007.

The poor income situation on farms last year was due entirely to a drop of 14 percent in the value of farm gross output. Despite farmers reducing their input costs by seven percent, the fall in market prices for farm produce led to a significant drop in incomes.

Speaking at the launch of the report in Dublin, Head of the National Farm Survey, Liam Connolly said: "Output per farm de-

clined across nearly all farming systems, with the largest decline on specialist dairy farms and on the mainly tillage farms, where milk and cereal prices fell in 2009 due to poor market returns. Milk prices dropped by 30 percent last year resulting in a 48 percent decline in income on specialist dairy farms. The last two years have been disastrous for tillage farmers who have seen their average family farm income drop by 62 percent from 2007 levels."

Direct subsidy payments continue to be extremely important to farm businesses. The average direct payment in 2009 to Irish farmers was €17,109 per farm, accounting for 36 percent of gross output and 143 percent of family farm income.

The poor market returns last year had the largest impact on

full-time farms. On the more commercial full-time farms the average family farm income was €24,214, down from €37,590 in 2008. That's a drop of 35 percent and this group of farmers have seen their farm incomes halve since 2007. By comparison the average family farm income for part-time farms was €6,611, a 13 percent decline in the year.

Income varied across the farming systems. The average family farm income ranged from €23,684 on specialist dairy farms, to €6,563 on cattle rearing farms. On tillage farms, average farm income was €15,247 while on sheep farms, the figure was €9,688. Sheep farmers were the only farming group that showed a small increase of one percent in family farm income last year.

Head of the Teagasc Rural

Economy Research centre Dr Cathal O'Donoghue said that off-farm income continues to be extremely important on over half of all farms in Ireland. On 52.6 percent of all farms, the farmer and/or spouse had an off-farm job. But the decline in employment opportunities in the wider economy is also showing up in the NFS data. 2009 was the second year in succession, where off farm employment by farmers declined, down by 3.7 percent. On 79 percent of farms, there was some source of off-farm income, be it from employment, pension or social assistance."

Investment in new facilities on-farm has returned to more traditional levels after two years of higher levels of investment. In 2009, €662 million was invested on farms.



Pictured at an IFA meeting on Flood Management held in Ballinasloe recently were (left to right): Michael Silke, Chairman, IFA Flood and Waterway Management Committee, Paddy Halligan, Drum, Bernard Donohue, IFA Flood and Waterway Management Committee and John O'Beirne, Chairman, Roscommon IFA County Executive.

mart round-up

Castlerea

700 cattle on offer this week with a good trade for all classes of stock on offer. The weanling trade in particular was lively with demand for the top quality lots resulting in some fancy prices paid. The bullock, heifer and cow trade also remains firm resulting in a very good clearance. Heifers: Lim 410 kgs €765; AA 430 kgs €845; Lim 495 kgs €955; Sim 745 kgs €1,082; AA 555 kgs €965; B Blue 520 kgs €1,000. Bulls: Ch 440 kgs €905; AA 450 kgs €855; Lim 430 kgs €790; B Blue 540 kgs €1,050; Ch 500 kgs €890; AA 590 kgs €1,035. Dry cows: Ch 615 kgs €870; B Lim 560 kgs €785; R Lim 725 kgs €1,045; AA 585 kgs €800; Ch 630 kgs €730; Sim 630 kgs €870. Cows with calves at foot made from €750 to €1,550 per head. Breeding bulls made from €1,050 to €1,310 per head. Calves: AA bull €170; Fr bull €172; Ch heifer €400; AA bull €190; Ch bull €290; Sim bull €340; Ch heifer €200. Weanling bulls: Ch 285 kgs €712; Lim 230 kgs €685; Ch 390 kgs €850; AA 250 kgs €485; B blue 390 kgs €900; AA 300 kgs €560. Weanling heifers: Lim 290 kgs €600; Sim 270 kgs €580; Lim 335 kgs €725; Lim 275 kgs €535; AA 280 kgs €535; Sim 260 kgs €510.

Mountbellew

Smaller number on offer than previous week. There was a good selection of cows with calf at

foot on offer making up to €1,030. Plainer stock were easier. Bulls made up to €390 with their weight. Heifers made up to €405 with their weight. Bulls: Lim X 360 kgs €730; Ch X 370 kgs €750; Lim X 380 kgs €750; heifers Lim X 570 kgs €905; Ch X 280 kgs €620. Weanling sale: Strong demand for quality lots with plainer lots easier. Nice quality lots in demand. Two nice Charolais heifers weighing 362kg made €715 while three Limousin heifers weighing 260kg made €540 and one Charolais heifer weighing 295kg made €580. Weanling bulls made up to €300 with their weight.

Sheep: Smaller number of sheep on offer to previous week. Lambs slightly easier trade. Increased demand for stag ewes especially for heavier lots and for ewes with lambs at foot. Spring lambs: 17 lambs at 44 kgs €98; 11 lambs at 49 kgs €108; 15 lambs at 42 kgs €92; 16 lambs at 43.5 kgs €95; one lamb at 51 kgs €110; twelve lambs at 48.5 kgs €105; three lambs at 38.5 kgs €85; four lambs at 40 kgs €92.50. Hoggets: Four ewe hoggets Suffolk cross €121; one ewe hogget Texel cross €105. Stag ewes: Increased demand especially for heavier lots. Prices ranged from €60 to €145. 70 percent of ewes on offer made over €100. Ewes with lambs at foot: One first crop ewe with single lamb at foot €170; one second crop ewe with single lamb at foot €158; one third crop ewe with single lamb at foot €140.

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IFA reject Gormley's turf cutting solution

The interim solution put forward by Environment Minister John Gormley must be significantly strengthened if it is going to be accepted by turf cutters, according to the IFA.

IFA SAC Project Team Chairman, Padraic Divilly from Kilkerrin said that the announcement by the Minister for the Environment John Gormley fails to recognise the value of turf cutting to the 4,000 bog owners on 31 SAC raised bogs.

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