

Report demonstrates year round excellent quality of NI lamb

A report produced by the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) has provided some welcome news for the Northern Ireland lamb industry according to the Livestock and Meat Commission's (LMC) Industry Development Manager, Colin Smith.

The report entitled 'Benchmarking Northern Ireland Lamb,' was part-funded by LMC and investigated the eating quality and acceptability of Northern Irish lamb in comparison to lamb produced in New Zealand.

The findings of the study revealed that the quality of Northern Irish lamb is excellent and that the industry is in a great position to compete alongside other global competitors- something Mr Smith says is very positive and should be fully embraced going forward.

Commenting on the report's results, Mr Smith said: "The report backs up what producers and processors here have known for a long time that the quality of Northern Irish lamb is exceptional and compares favourably with lamb from around the globe.

"The report shows that lambs at nine to 12 months-of-age, which are often mistakenly considered as being less acceptable to consumers' tastes, performed very well in independent eating quality and likeness trials, demonstrating that the eating quality and consumer acceptability of lamb produced all year round in Northern Ireland is as good as lamb produced in New Zealand."

Furthermore, the results found that there was no significant difference in terms of consumer liking and eating quality between male or female lambs processed at nine to 12 months-of-age and younger New Zealand lambs at four to six months-of-age. Northern Ireland lambs were selected from commercial production between January and April 2017.

In light of these findings, Mr Smith claims that: "Subject to availability, there is no reason for retailers and food service outlets not to stock Northern Irish lamb all year round. LMC's mystery shopper data indicates that in December 2017, some retailers sourced as much as 40 per cent of their lamb products from New Zealand.

"Retailers and restaurateurs should be encouraged by these results and consumers should have confidence in their enjoyment of locally produced Farm Quality Assured lamb all year round."

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For more information contact LMC on: 028 9263 3000
To view the report click [here](#)

Media contacts

Nicola Mulligan, LMC Communications Officer

Colin Smith, LMC Industry Development Manager

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