

LMC launches Northern Ireland Beef & Lamb Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (NIBL FQAS) 25th anniversary celebration

The Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) is hosting a series of initiatives to celebrate the 25th anniversary of its Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (FQAS). The launch of what promises to be an exciting year ahead was hosted by Downpatrick suckler beef and sheep producer and FQAS member for 25 years Edward Carson.

Speaking at the event LMC chairman Gerard McGivern said that FQAS is universally recognised as a measure that has brought great benefit to the beef and sheep sectors in Northern Ireland.

“Fundamentally, it has succeeded in giving consumers total confidence in the quality, traceability and heritage of the beef and lamb they are buying.

“And it continues to resonate at farm level. The number of producers participating in the scheme continues to grow.”

McGivern said that FQAS is the quality benchmark that must be fully recognised as the norm in the context of trade deals entered into by the UK (United Kingdom), once Brexit becomes a reality.

“This is a core message which must be communicated in the clearest political terms to our political leaders, who will be at the coal face when these deals are negotiated,” he added.

The Commission’s chief executive Ian Stevenson said that FQAS certification is delivering added value to producers of between £100 and £150 per accredited beef animal, adding:

“At an industry level the biggest benefit delivered by FQAS has been its role in allowing local redmeat processors to present a positive and verifiable offering to secure new export markets and supply the critically important retail and food service market in the UK. And this continues to be the case.

“Following its official launch in 1992, FQAS was a key driver in delivering market access throughout Europe for Northern Irish beef and lamb. This was particularly highlighted by the success of local processors in securing high value supply contracts with Dutch supermarkets.”

Stevenson believes that FQAS will play an equally important role moving forward.

“Today, it represents a pivotal assurance scheme for buyers in those export markets within which we are currently active. Finding additional export markets for Northern Ireland’s beef and lamb output will be a fundamental requirement post-Brexit. And, again, FQAS will be a key factor in making this happen.”

Host Edward Carson runs an extensive suckler beef and sheep operation. All male calves are finished as bulls at 16 months with heifers taken through to 22 months. His 300 strong flock of ewes lamb in February with all stock finished off grass during the months of June and July. Pig and grain enterprises also feature within the farm business.

“As a family, we have been FQAS certified from the very outset of the scheme,” he said.

“Fundamentally, it allows us to supply the GB supermarkets. This is one of the most lucrative beef markets in the EU.

“The continuing operation of the scheme encourages me to implement the highest possible management standards for the farm business as a whole.”

LMC will be hosting a number of specific FQAS 25th anniversary events over the coming months.

“These will culminate in a celebration dinner at the end of September,” said Gerard McGivern.

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