

Full steam ahead for Sheep 2023 major sheep event

Sheep 2023, the major sheep industry event taking place on Saturday, 17 June in Gurteen Agricultural College, Ballingarry, Roscrea, Co Tipperary, was launched this week.

Sheep 2023 is being organised by five industry stakeholders, namely Bord Bia; Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine; The *Irish Farmers Journal*, Sheep Ireland and Teagasc. Ireland's largest sheep processor, Irish Country Meats, is the main sponsor of the event with major sponsorship also provided from Cormac Sheep Equipment, Elanco, FBD and MSD Animal Health.

Extensive offering

Anticipation is building for the dedicated sheep event, with a five year COVID-19 related absence whetting the appetite of industry enthusiasts keen to repeat the successful events of Sheep 2018, Sheep 2015 etc. The multi-faceted event has something to cater for all interests, including being an enjoyable family day out.

Upwards of 10 technical areas are planned, each with their own extensive programme incorporating workshops / practical demonstrations / short presentations, an opportunity for one-to-one dialogue and visual displays. Technical topics featured include; breeding and genetics, environment, flock health, forestry, grassland, health and safety, hill sheep, nutrition and organic farming.

The meat markets arena will combine technical information and broader consumer appeal. Butchery and carcass demonstrations will be intertwined with important market insight, while cooking demonstrations delivered by celebrity chef Neven Maguire are sure to be a firm favourite among attendees.

A wool village will bring the many wonderful attributes of wool to life, along with providing an opportunity for shearers to sharpen their skills. The sector has faced significant challenges in recent years but the launch of the Irish Grown Wool Council is inserting some much needed optimism into the sector.

Young farmers will be put through their paces in a Young Shepherd Competition, while fledgling and established sheepdog enthusiasts can hone their skills in a sheepdog training demonstration.

The event will offer trade exhibitors an excellent opportunity to meet existing and new customers with thousands of farmers expected to pass through the gates, making it Ireland's largest dedicated sheep event in the calendar for 2023.

Stakeholder commitment

Commenting on the event Kathryn Roche, Irish Country Meats said; "Irish Country Meats is delighted to renew our partnership and support Irish sheep farmers through Sheep 2023. As Europe's leading sheep processor we are keen to continue to work constructively with all industry stakeholders to ensure a sustainable sheep sector for all segments of the supply chain, and look forward to meeting with customers on the day".

Bord Bia sheep and livestock sector manager, Seamus McMenamin said; "High levels of food inflation are continuing to impact demand for lamb in domestic and key export markets with consumers increasingly considering lower cost proteins as an alternative to lamb. Bord Bia's participation in this event provides the ideal occasion for us to demonstrate the quality and versatility of Irish lamb to domestic and export customers through cookery and butchery demonstrations, as well as providing an overview of our ongoing and planned promotional activities for Irish lamb on the domestic and export markets".

Teagasc Head of Sheep Programme, Michael Gottstein said; "Teagasc are delighted to be involved in what promises to be a super event. It has unfortunately been too long since our last event, and Sheep 2023 will provide a great opportunity for farmers to update themselves on the latest technical information and research undertaken in recent years. The planned technical areas will incorporate practical workshops and opportunities for farmers to interact with advisory and research staff on all aspects of sheep production".

Sharon Walshe, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, highlighted "The Social Capital element of this event is very important acting as a focal point to bring people together, while providing a platform for knowledge transfer to the sheep farmers of Ireland. There have been numerous developments in recent years that may provide opportunities for farmers including for example a budget of €256 million secured for the organic sector. With payments 54% higher than the previous CAP we would encourage farmers to visit Sheep 2023 to find out the facts for yourself".

Kevin McDermott, Sheep Ireland Manager said; "Over the last decade, significant gains have been made in the genetics of the national lowland flock. This has resulted from cutting-edge research and implementation into the national breeding programme. The Hill sector is now getting involved as well as a result of the Sheep Improvement Scheme. Current breeding research will be presented with the leading researchers in the area available for conversations in their area. These include breeding for resistance to worms, reduced methane emissions and increasing the output of the national flock. The event will also act as a show window to present the best of Irish genetics to domestic and overseas visitors".

Acknowledging that sheep farmers have had a difficult year to 18 months, Darren Carty, Irish Farmer Journal said; "Optimism in the sheep sector has been dented by the escalation in input costs and erosion in margins over the last couple of years. Sheep2023 is coming at a critical time when costs are hopefully starting to abate and is an excellent opportunity to generate renewed confidence in the sector. The event truly caters to all interests and a Saturday date should hopefully lend itself to allowing all interested parties to attend".

Ends.