BEEF PLAN 2018-2025

 (Put together by Beef Farmers for Beef Farmers)

Welcome to every Irish farmer involved in the production of beef, whether you are involved in the sector from birth to finish. Beef farmers are facing an uncertain future given the perilous financial condition that is imposed on their enterprise. Doubt, concern, lack of control are recurring themes among beef farmers. Therefore, consideration of the following is paramount.

Consultation among an active group of beef farmers, with much debate and analysis has led to an extensive range of proposals which can deliver a meaningful future for us all. You are invited to study these proposals with an open mind. It is only through a strong and united effort from the majority of beef producers that the future of the sector can deliver a viable business to the farmers involved. Simply put if you do nothing the business will fail go forward with these proposals and there is great hope for us all.

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 Cattle farmers in Ireland have witnessed the steady decline in profitability and viability in their businesses over a number of years.

This has occurred primarily in the fact that the Corporate sector has over time developed the ability by various means to manage the Irish cattle supply and price paid to farmers. The net result is that beef farmers are working at or below the cost of production to a point where most are questioning the sustainability of their operations going forward.

The profitability due to farmers’ efforts are systematically syphoned out of the farmers system throughout the country. Conservative figures are 300 euro per beef animal or in excess of300 million per annum.

Consequently, beef farmers are unable to plan for a viable business for themselves or their families going into the future.

Successive governments and farm unions have failed to recognize or act in any meaningful way in relation to this problem.

At the moment the Irish beef farmer is on his own and totally at the mercy of a well-organized and highly profitable Corporate sector whose only objective is maximum profits.

Sadly, it can be said that the day is long over when a farmer can sell his beef cattle as a lone agent and maintain a healthy farm business into the future.

Unless, and until beef farmers can unite behind a workable beef plan which guarantees a fair price for their cattle, they and their families will continue to be working slaves for a dominant extremely profitable Corporate sector into the future.

There is nothing wrong with the price of beef and enough in it for everybody.

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We as beef farmers have been brainstorming over the last few weeks to list issues which we feel must be addressed if we are to survive at farming into the future, our margins have been eroded our influence has been eroded and mostly our trust in the institution's that govern our industry.

Beef farming is the lifeblood of rural Ireland, especially in marginal land not suitable for dairying, without beef farming rural Ireland would not survive.

What we are asking is that the primary producer be appreciated for producing a world quality product and that the percentage of the retail price reflect that.

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 Today the beef farmers of Ireland are in a bad place. We find ourselves in a corner. It’s as if over the last 40 years all the other parties involved in our beef sector have been so ruthless at looking after their own interests we now have to question is there anything left in it for us?

 All our suppliers have been continuously increasing their charges. The E.U.s only concern is cheaper and cheaper food for the people of Europe while at the same time persecuting us in ever increasing amounts of red tape. As regards our own government and TDs they are now merely messenger boys for Brussels and as a result of our numbers dwindling over the years we are no longer significant in terms of votes.

Unregulated supermarkets have had a field day. Over the years their percentage of the retail price has increased steadily to such an extent that they now hold onto beef for a few days and pocket 51% for themselves.

We deal with the factories who pocket another 29% of the retail price. They are the ones who we have the biggest beef with. The three biggest factory groups in Ireland have started out by owning single factories they now control 60% of the kill in Ireland and the UK as well as further factories in eastern Europe. They have grown steadily year on year on the backs of us farmers. Yet we are being told that these same factories are not making money. I'm sorry the sums just don't add up.

We farmers on the other hand keep the animal for up to two and a half years and get 21% of the retail price. The harsh reality is that we are lucky if this 21% covers our costs which effectively means that we are actually working as slaves on our own farms.

Back to Ireland these same factories are driving us out of finishing cattle. They are taking over our yards at an alarming rate. They are not prepared to do the hard work of calving cows or rearing calves yet they are now able to collapse the price of these animals when they are ready to be sold.

The division and lack of organisation among us farmers have left it easy for all these groups to take advantage of us. The reality is whether we like to admit it or not is that our farm unions have become badly supported toothless organisations who have become institutionalised and have failed us farmers to such an extent that now our very survival is threatened. The reality also is that us beef farmers have never had a plan for beef. The supermarkets had one, the meat factories had one the government had one but we didn't. Without a plan we were destined to fail.

 It is also true that we are our unions so it is up to us to sort this out. We now have our plan for beef. We a representative group of knowledgeable beef farmers have identified over 80 areas that need to be improved. It is a wonder that we have survived at all. In our plan we have made the first and most important step. We farmers are now facing our final battle, we have to make an important decision. Do we go to battle as divided individuals without a plan or do we unite behind this plan for beef.? Together we can back this plan make it happen and implement it. If we do this we will take the power back and make beef farming profitable again. We owe this to the next generation.

We beef farmers out of complete desperation have put together a plan for beef. We have now come to the realisation that if nothing is done at this point we beef farmers are gone. The factories have worked very closely together for years now at this point in time they are working more closely than they have ever worked. Whenever we farmers go looking for a fair price for our cattle we are told the market is the market. You can’t interfere with the market. Factories have fixed price contracts with their customers for months in advance, so after a heavy day’s rain in October when the factory drops the price this is not the free market working but exploitation of the farmers weak position. The factories are continuously using extreme weather events such as rainfall and droughts as well as political situations such as those that currently exist in Turkey and the UK as an opportunity to drop the price. Yet when these situations are properly examined there is very little justification for the extent of the price drops that occur. This method of setting prices for cattle where one of the factories sets the price and every other factory follows does no longer work for us farmers. It is no longer based on a free market and is nothing other than exploitation of us farmers. We are told that Suckler bred beef is no longer profitable and that we should face up to reality but this is not the case. If every beef farmer in the country started finishing dairy bred cattle in the morning in a short space of time the current factory model of setting the price of cattle would have them in a similar loss-making position. Unfortunately, as long as this factory price fixing model is in place getting a new Suckler premium or maintaining existing cap payments while welcome will not solve our problem as this pricing system will swallow up these benefits. The people representing us are not consulting with us farmers on the ground the way they should. They don't seem to understand what we want. Whether we are a Suckler farmer who sells weanlings or a finisher who sells a Suckler bred or dairy bred animals we all want the same thing a cost of production price plus a margin. We have talked to factories believe it or not they are open to this idea. They have told us in some places this is already happening. We have to forget about the side shows and focus all our attention and go out and look for this. This is what this plan is all about. If we don't our family farms will be owned by big corporations and the work on them done by slave labour similar to what has happened in South America. This move will not be good for our consumers, farmers or country and unfortunately it is now already well underway in this country. Every beef farmer has to wake up to this fact now and work with us to stop this.

 We as farmers have to tell our farm unions that what we want them to do for us now is to go out and look for a cost of production price plus a margin. That is where we want them to focus. If they are not prepared to do this for us we have to put people in their positions who will. We don't have anything against these people we want them to work with us and for us but our survival is at stake this is our only chance.

 Before we start

Before we take any form of action we need to get at least 60% of beef farmers behind this plan. We give it to all the farm unions and do our best to get them to back it and at the same time we also give it to the many beef farmers who are no longer in any farm unions and also get them to back it.

1. "We put a direct means of communication in place to enable us to communicate directly with 60 % of the country's beef farmers.

More than likely it will be in the form of social media such as what's app pages, Facebook and text messages. It could take a while to set this up it could be done by volunteers collecting contact details at all places where beef farmers gather i.e. marts, shows etc. We would then use one what's app page with about 100 people on it who in turn would communicate with farmers on their list through social media and text messages.

Through this means of communication we would get farmers approval and have them ready to act for our different types of actions. " .

2 "Once we have farmers tuned in and have our direct line of communication in place we are then ready to regulate the supply of cattle to the factories.”

The plan is set out in stages. While the intention is to achieve a result in the active phase before we move onto the next Phase, work can be done in any of the other phases as long as it does not slow down or distract from the work in the active phase.

Phase 2 of the plan will be sent to the Animal Health Division of the various farm unions, phase 7 of the plan will be sent to the general secretary or other appropriate section of the farm unions and all other phases will be sent to the livestock section of the farm unions.

 PHASE 1

3.“We hand in our list of demands to the factories and if we are not happy with their response within a specified time we would then be ready to act.

We would have a number of options as to how we would control and disrupt cattle supply to include the following;

a. Not to send cattle to any factory on a certain day at a few hours’ notice.

b. Not to send cattle to a particular factory at short notice.

c. Not to send cattle below a set price to any factory.

d. Farmers who had loads of cattle booked in instead of turning up with the load of cattle would turn up with one animal in a jeep and trailer.

e. Other suggestions.

f. Escalate any of the above.

 g. IF the other forms of action fail we then bring all the factories to a stop, block the lot, no farm unions just farmers with no name that they cannot take us to court, be prepared to be locked up for a while and see what the public think of it. If we stop Ireland for a few days we will get the price we want.

The beauty of this form of protest is the farmer would not have to leave his farm. It should also bring factories to the negotiation table fairly quickly.

For maximum effect times of peak supply such as October November should be avoided "

4. "Beef Producers need factories to commit to pay a minimum base price which gives a margin over the average cost of production.

This average cost of production of a kg of beef to be established two or more times per year including proper charges for land owned along with capital costs and the cost of the farmer's own labour. Plus, a differential for the different grades. (To be demonstrated in a pie chart.) Farmer representatives agreed by all beef farmers to sign off on these production costs. "

5." That we put continuous pressure on our TD' s and government to put legislation in place stating that we farmers must be paid a minimum of the cost of production plus a margin inflation linked for our produce. If the " free " market moves up then the farmer gets the benefit when it falls the legislation is there to provide a safety net for the drop."

6.“That we keep continuous pressure on all our European Ministers and Phil Hogan not to let them off the hook as regards their commitment to deliver on retailer legislation aimed at legislating that the primary producer gets his fair share of the retail price and to eliminate unfair trading practices. The primary producer's fair share should at a minimum be an index linked average cost of production plus a margin in the country of origin. "

 7. " In conjunction to the factories paying a minimum of the costs of production plus a margin that on all beef a fair-trade sustainable price label or similar be displayed."

 Factory Demands

8."That a Suckler bred bonus be introduced that reflects the extra production costs of the suckler bred animal over the dairy bred animal. (Figures to follow. )"

9. " Guaranteed minimum prices should be made available by the factories to all farmers ahead of high-risk finishing periods such as winter finishing. "

10. " That farmers get paid a fair price for the fifth quarter."

**WEIGHTS**

11. " The maximum weights allowed before price cuts for steers and bulls to take efficiency into account and to be at an acceptable level allowing the farmer to maximise the potential of suckler bred animal. They should not drop below 440kg for u16 month bulls and steers and 450kgs for u24mth bulls."

**QUALITY ASSURANCE**

12. " All cattle produced from QA herds should be paid the QA bonus. "

13. " Steers and heifers under 36 months should be paid the QA bonus as there is no good reason regarding quality as to why they should be excluded. "

14."Bulls u24 months should be paid the QA bonus as there is no good reason regarding quality as to why they should be excluded. "

15."E, U and R grading animals with fat scores 2= and 2 - and 4+ should receive the quality assurance bonus."

16.“Cull Cows should receive the QA bonus as there is no good reason regarding quality as to why they should be excluded”

17." That the number of movements should not be a basis for not giving the QA payment as it is not a requirement of the department or Board Bia and does not impact on the quality of the animal. "

18."That all counties sign up to withdraw from Quality Assurance if all animals leaving a quality assured Farm (i.e. the different fat scores, ages, grades etc., along with the different cattle types) are not included."

**CONFORMATION BONUS**

19. "That the price differential of the confirmation grades reflects the meat yield, the yield of the higher priced cuts and the rounded shape of the cuts. (Figures to follow.)"

20. "E, U and R grading animals with fat scores 2= and 2 - and 4+ should receive the conformation bonus."

21. "The confirmation bonus shouldn't stop at the U grades and should also apply to the E grades for all cattle. "

**AGE**

22."Steers and heifers over 36 months and under 40 months get a grid price no more than 10 cent behind the base price as the quality of this beef does not warrant a greater reduction."

23. " Bulls over 24 months and under 30 months get a price no more than 10 cent behind the u24 month bull price as the quality of this beef doesn't warrant a greater reduction. "

**ONCE CALVED HEIFER**

24."That the once calved heifer under 40 months receives a price no more than 10 cent behind the heifer base price.”

**LEVIES**

25. " In the case of all levies collected in the factories, farmers must have full transparency and also have a say in how they are spent coupled with the right to withhold the levies in cases of lack of performance. "

**CARCASS TRIM**

26. " There should be uniformity enforced around the hide pulling, trimming of the carcass and lighting of the grading machines so that the grades and fat scores are uniform in all factories. "

27." Farmers to have a representative in every factory fully trained and recognised by factories and the dept of Agriculture whose job it would be to check scales, grades, trim, hide puller, samples been taken for tb detection etc., to be paid out of existing levies. "

28." In this age of technology farmers should be able to get a video and view in real time through an app their animals being trimmed, skinned and graded. It should be made available to the farmer and farmer representative to view. It could be a cost-effective measure as it could allow factories to be monitored remotely. Civil liberties of employees could be covered by blurring."

29."When a farmer sends his cattle to a factory he should be provided with the contact number of the officials who oversee carcase grades, trim, weights etc."

30. "All farmers to have training courses made available to them the purpose of which would be to provide them with the necessary skills to manually grade carcases as regards confirmation and fat scores. "

**Methods of Payment**

31.“To stick with the grid on the condition that it gets an overhaul in line with the changes recommended in this plan”

32.” Farmers to have the option of having their animals graded live on farms and a price agreed before they leave in particular for dairy bred O and P grade type stock”

 Actions

33. " That we farmers have a PR Machine backed up by scientific facts ready to fire out information as required. One element of this would be our own blogger using social media"

34. "That we farmers would have an intelligence wing whose tasks would include;

a. To find out the rates that apply for the removal of offal from all the different factories and establish are all factories small and big treated equally in this regard.

b. To collect the scientific backup to support our different arguments and also as a means of counteracting false and misleading factory propaganda.

c. To find out the obstacles as regards to live shipping.

d. To find out how many factory feedlots there are including when and how many cattle they kill in a year. Also, prices paid for these cattle etc

e. To find out how many, price paid etc of farmers cattle under factory contracts yearly.

f. To research thoroughly the offal business.

g. To research and gather information for us concerning the factories such as cattle numbers, cattle scarcities, retail contracts etc using technology and the like.

h. To research the different parties involved in the beef industry so that

we have the facts to be able to hold them to account.

I. To establish the facts regarding prices paid worldwide, comparing grading standards, cattle types etc

J. To find out where the out of spec cattle are sold and at what price.

k. To supply information to a Farm PR Machine on farm gate prices etc and to have information ready to counteract factory claims.

l. To gather information on unfair trading practices and price fixing etc

m. To find out what the competition authority considers to be unfair trading practices, price fixing etc."

35. " We put pressure on our TD’s so that the 100 km maximum travel limit for offal be discontinued as it is anticompetitive and it makes life more difficult for the smaller abattoirs.”

36. " To consult with Board Bia and have them address the issue that over six million euros of farmers money is being used to benefit the factories and not the farmer."

37. " First of all, we would clarify what is defined as unfair trading practices.

We would then put a list of these unfair trading practices together along with evidence.

After that we would make a submission highlighting the unfair trading practices of the factories and the retailers.

We would follow this with a protest which would take the form of 2 farmers on a rota basis outside the competition authority office.

This would be organised on a rota basis involving farmers nationwide.

The first two to cover from 10am to 1pm and the 2nd 2 to cover from 2 to 5pm.

They would highlight using posters the unfair trading practices.

This would be a farmer friendly protest involving very few hours off farm, it would also not disrupt the public. We could stay there as long as it takes to get a result. We would have a constant stream of media and politicians calling down to them resulting in a lot of public attention for retailers and factories.

This would help persuade the retailers and factories to negotiate with us and would also help the competition authority to do its job. " .

38. "We encourage farmers on a completely voluntary basis to reduce the total birth of all calves in Ireland over the next 3 years by 10 %.

 On the one hand this would allow some farmers maintain their production targets which might be vital to their farms survival.

On the other hand, elderly farmers or overworked and overstretched farmers might be glad to reduce numbers at a % rate they were comfortable with.

We mount a very public campaign on this which might help bring the factories and the government to the negotiation table seeing as it would be at odds with their plans of increases in production without any consideration for sustainable prices.

We then could find ourselves in a better position to play cat and mouse with the factories who would have increased slaughtering capacity and less cattle."

39. "That we put a task force in place whose objectives would be to remove the obstacles as regards live shipping and to facilitate the removal of as many dairy calves, store cattle and finished cattle as possible to help create competition."

40. " We have a legal document drawn up that prevents factories access to our data on livestock or any summaries of it that we give to the Department through AIMS."

41. "That Teagasc should be asked to do out a report on a cost of production price for beef plus a margin and if what it says in it is acceptable to farmers it would then be sent in as a support document for our factory demands."

42.” That we consult with Board Bia and have them address the following issues.

 a, why over 6 million euros of farmers money is being used to benefit the factories and not the farmer

b, why the marketing of our high quality, grass fed, quality assured, suckler beef is so poor that so much of it is being sold at a discounted price.

 Producer Groups Stage 1

43. "Expertise from producer groups already operating to be used to encourage and facilitate farmers nationwide to set up producer groups. "

44. "We farmers should address the imbalance in the control of the landscape around beef and should make use of the EU producer group initiative that was introduced for this purpose."

45. " The first step after forming a producer group would be for the farmers to collectively sell their cattle to a processor or processors enabling them to a achieve a price that they could not get on their own."

46. "Administrators of Producer Groups make farmers aware of the different requirements of the processors to enable them to produce for a market that suits their own system."

 47."We aim for a target of 50 % of the country's beef cattle to be sold through producer groups in the next 3 years. "

 PHASE 2

48. " That we send our proposals for change in the TB eradication program to the department and if no satisfactory action is taken that we withdraw from all non-essential TB testing of cattle until we are satisfied. (we allow farmers test cattle to facilitate them selling them live such as through a mart. )"

Animal Health TB

49."The department should live up to its responsibilities as regards it's management of wildlife in relation to TB.

a. In the case of deer, where deer are wandering onto farm land, the department should have a rapid response unit capable of culling these deer and should also be responsible for fencing such deer out of farms in consultation with affected farmers.

b. As regards badgers the efforts that are currently made at testing and culling badgers in areas where there are TB outbreaks should be replicated nationwide to prevent healthy cattle herds picking up TB from infected badgers.

A far greater proportion on the TB spend needs to be spent in this area so the greatest number possible of infected badgers be removed. In other words, less, testing cattle and more testing badgers.

If it's not possible to test and cull 100% of the infected badgers then the highest possible number should be targeted. If this figure is for example 70% in one year. Then over a few years all infected badgers should tested and culled."

50."Farmers should be allowed trade, buy and sell animals live at marts etc. in all cases except where they have had a tb breakdown and have not had 2 clear herd tests. "

51. "If a farmer contiguous to another farmer who has tb, can demonstrate that he has a one metre boundary barrier between him and his neighbour, he should be exempt from this contiguous rule which may force another test on him. Any issue regarding wildlife is the responsibility of the department so they should not be let off the hook in this regard by passing more work onto the farmer."

52. "The definition of a high risk tb breakdown should be based on the percentage of the herd found to have tb and not the number of animals which have tb. "

53. "When a farmer's herd has had 2 clear tests after a high-risk breakdown this should be enough. The 3 subsequent check tests should be scrapped. "

54."The money saved due to the reduced number of bovine retests both after high risk breakdowns and as a result of less contiguous herd testing to be spent testing all wild life and removing infected wildlife. "

55." That every culled badger to be tested for TB. At the moment this is not happening. The information learned from such a move has to be important for any serious TB eradication program. "

56. " Farmers time has a value in the very same way that a department official or a vet's time has a value. In this regard when it comes to preparing for and testing of cattle the farmer's time should be paid for. This should be done as a bare minimum at all times other than the annual herd test where there is an extra burden placed on affected farmers. "

57. " As a farm safety incentive that all departments should reduce the workload on farmers by reducing unnecessary herd tests, inspections, form filling and cut red tape so as to lower stress and to allow farmers farm. "

58."The failure of the current TB eradication scheme has imposed serious consequences on the rights of farmers. Countless heavy-handed demands on farmers time and threats of stopping single farm payments are not leaving farmers in a good place. A complete revision of the scheme is needed. "

59.“Where tissue samples are been taken on the factory floor to be sent to a lab to be tested for T.B. the farmer representative (as per proposal 26) supervises the taking of a b sample and sends it to an independent lab on the farmers behalf.”

PHASE 3

 Purchasing Groups

60." Expertise from purchasing groups already operating to be used to encourage and facilitate farmers nationwide to roll out purchasing groups."

61. " That we apply pressure to have obstacles removed to allow farm purchasing groups purchase directly from the manufacturers and importers to allow farmers have access to inputs at wholesale prices."

PHASE 4

62."With regard to the other government Schemes that we are seeking change in such as the BDGP and the KT schemes etc. We send the relevant body in a list of the areas that we are seeking change in. If we don't get a satisfactory response within a specified time. We withdraw cooperation with that scheme (go on strike) until we are happy."

Department of Agriculture

63."All farms involved in the BDGP scheme buy 2 tissue tags for the required number of female calves and bull calves intended for breeding. They then tag them within 21 days of birth. Farmers not involved in the BDGP buy one tissue test as before. This will then satisfy the B.V.D. testing and the BDGP scheme."

64. "As regards the BDGP scheme the following changes could be made which would save time for the farmer and at the same time add to the accuracy and usefulness of the data.

a; One continuous screen with columns prepopulated with the calf's number, dob, dam, sire, and the other columns for the data required, as loading a different screen for every calf is very time consuming.

b; Cows milking ability;(could be prepopulated from the previous year and then edited if it had changed as in the case of the majority of cows it will stay the same),

c; Cows docility ;(could be prepopulated from the previous year again for the majority of cows it will be the same year to year),

d; Sires feet and leg traits; (when a farmer submits the feet and leg traits once that year for a particular bull in all cases that year where the same bull has been used that one input of data should fill in automatically to all other calves that year with the same sire.)

e; Scour; if a calf's dam has been vaccinated for scour this box serves no purpose and could be omitted under those circumstances.

f; Pneumonia; If the calf has been vaccinated for pneumonia this box serves no purpose and could be omitted under those circumstances. "

65. "If the profit monitors are to be used as part of the KT scheme they should include a charge for land owned, Capital expenditure costs and a charge for farmers own labour. "

66. " In the KT scheme a farmer should be able to write up his own Health Plan. "

67." Where a farmer's only use of Teagasc is for the KT scheme, the €500 per farmer that Teagasc get from the EU should be enough without Teagasc getting an additional figure from the farmers concerned. "

68."We must stress upon the government that the protection of the national suckler herd must be a priority for government and Farm bodies. Any policy to undermine suckler numbers for dairy expansion to conform with emission and environmental targets cannot be accepted. If Ireland is to be a quality beef producer it cannot do so as a by-product of the dairy sector. As it currently exists there will be a reduction in the numbers of sucklers due to the age profile of farmers and the lack of profitability to encourage young farmers."

PHASE 5

Farm Safety

69. "Any solution addressing the issue of farmer safety must address profitability at Farm level as lack of profitability at Farm level means farmers are forced to work unacceptable long hours even when tired which leads to poor decision making which is a major cause of farm accidents. "

70. " An attractive retirement scheme to be introduced as a means of tackling Farm safety as there are many elderly farmers working on farms who could be persuaded to retire with the right scheme. "

71. " As a farm safety incentive that all departments should reduce the workload on farmers by reducing unnecessary herd tests, inspections, form filling and cut red tape so as to lower stress and to allow farmers farm. "

72."As a farm safety measure the Department of Agriculture must take into consideration the less docile nature of our suckler herds and also the increasing age profile of suckler farmers, so as to engage with farmers who have fragmented holdings, to conduct TB testing in an agreeable period and location, safe and manageable for all."

73.” A farm safety workshop to be set up for farm children and other young helpers who are present or help out on farms. These people are in a high-risk category and more should be done to make them aware of the dangers. It should be free of charge so there are no barriers to discourage them from attending.”

74.“Many farmers are now stretched to their limit on top of this we have the uncertainty around farm prices and the extra pressure caused by extreme weather events all these can play on the mental health of farmers. This is an important aspect of this plan of ours to give these farmers some stability and hope.”

PHASE 6

 Producer Groups Stage 2

**MARKETING PRODUCER GROUPS CATTLE**

75. "Identify factories who would be willing and who have sufficient capacity to kill our farmers cattle under contract locally."

76. "A working group to be set up to include the following bodies; producer groups, Board Bia, Department of Agriculture and small abattoirs. The idea would be that these bodies would work with groups of farmers to do everything they could to Simplify, fast track and remove obstacles with the following objectives

a. To enable the producer group to contract out the killing of its cattle to smaller abattoirs with excess capacity.

b. To set up farm shops and online selling.

c. To establish brands.

d. To establish overseas markets and contracts and to facilitate transport to these. "

77. " To get a large group of farmers together with a year-round supply of cattle between them. To approach a large supermarket chain and see are they interested in working with farmers and the factory would be just paid a fee to slaughter and bone the meat by the supermarket. "

78. "To set up Irish Farm shops in other countries."

PHASE 7

 Farm Unions

79. "Our farm unions should engage, consult and get consensus on all matters from their members."

80." We should make a huge effort to get every farmer to become a member of a farm union and to regularly attend meetings, or give feedback and get involved through what's app groups or other social media set up for this purpose and to nominate leaders who are fearless and proactive in working for us farmers. "

81. "If there are people in our unions who are not performing or who are counterproductive we need to have a system in place which will easily allow these people to be replaced with productive ones. To be fair to all farmers in this struggling industry the farmers interest has to be number 1."

82. "That all our key farm union representatives should have their performances reviewed by an appointed panel of people with expertise in the area of assessment of productive employment. Where our key farm union representatives are deemed to have underperformed by this appointed panel these key farm union representatives are then replaced.

Some examples of criteria to measure performance level could include;

a. Farmer survey of satisfaction with performance, rate 1-10

b. Progress in implementation of a plan for that sector.

c. Percentage increase or decrease in the commodity price since taking office.

d. The track record in communicating with farmers and keeping them informed in what is going on.

e. Their ability to listen to and take farmers views on board.

f. Their record in getting things done.

g. Their track record in making good decisions. "

83." That in all cases where our farm unions have been lobbied by third parties that a full record be kept and this information to be made available to all members on request."

84. "That farmer representatives for a particular commodity must be active farmers in that sector for a minimum of 5 years before and after appointment. If their role in the organisation is so onerous that they have to opt out of active work on their own farm then they must employ someone who continues to work with the same commodity on their behalf."

85." That it be pointed out to factories, the department of Agriculture and all other stakeholders in the beef industry that any farm organisation that no longer has the support of a significant number of farmers in a particular commodity then that organisation should no longer be exclusively involved in any negotiations involving that sector."

PHASE 8

 **Abattoir**

86. " A working group be put together as part of a longer-term plan (taking account of the progress of producer groups in contracting cattle kill) with the objective of leasing or buying an existing abattoir which would be run by a farmer cooperative. With the attractive grants that are available this working group should also look at the possibility of building an abattoir. "

 IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS PLAN

The scale of the task of implementing this plan will require a serious policy change within our farm organisations and will require strong and brave leadership. It would be utterly unfair to expect one man to implement a redress plan of this nature due to the seriousness and scale of the task.

An implementation committee to be put together from the different farm organisations and representatives from the individual farmers not involved in any organisations. They would all help out, pool resources and work together in a positive manner to make it happen. Their task would be to implement this plan in the phases as outlined above.

 **To conclude**

We accept that this plan is not perfect and do not claim it to be, we are however of the opinion that a slightly imperfect plan is better than no plan. We see this plan as a rolling document that can be adjusted and added to as circumstances change and as new expertise and resources get behind it.