‘Hereford Beef tastes good’
Irish Agricultural Production is based on a network of 120,000 small farms. These holdings have been passed on over the centuries, from generation to generation, as has the craft and the love of livestock farming. Cattle are cherished in Ireland. They are at the core of Irish farming, with farmers taking great pride in the continual improvement of their stock.

Bord Bia – Irish Beef A proud Tradition
Beef Production systems in Ireland

- Pasture based beef production (Extensive system)
- Dairy calf to beef
- Suckler calf to beef
Beef Production from the Dairy Herd

In Ireland all the animals for slaughter are sourced from two different production systems, Dairy Herd & Suckler Herd

DAIRY HERD (50%)

- Reared and slaughtered at about 24-36 months of age this production system is usually known as dairy calf to beef.
- This system is very popular in Ireland.
- The dairy animal is predominantly of Friesian breeding,Usually made up from male Friesian type calves and crossbred calves from dairy cows.
- Crossbred dairy calves sired by traditional and continental bulls.
- Dairy calves more readily available for the market
- Initially cheaper to buy compared to calves from the suckler herd.
- There is a surplus of dairy animals on the market.
- Earlier finishing when sired by Hereford bulls.
Beef Production From the Suckler Herd

SUCKLER HERD (50%)

- The animals from the suckler herd are made up of continental and traditional breeds to produce animals of high quality carcase conformation.
- Suckler beef animals are of better quality and conformation.
- Crossbreeding results in benefits of conformation, marbling, weight gain and hardiness.
- Crossbreeding also results in an in-built genetic strength known as ‘hybrid vigour’.
- Suckler Cattle have higher growth rates compared to dairy.
- Suckler breeds range from traditional breeds such as the Hereford and Angus to continental breeds such as the Limousin, Charolais and Belgium Blue.
Suckler beef production is the most widespread farm activity in Ireland. 1.1 million suckler cows on 80,000 farms. Suckler farms have a wide geographic distribution in contrast to many other farming enterprises, which are concentrated in specific locations. Suckler farming makes an important contribution to economic activity in diverse regions throughout the country. Approximately 50 per cent of total beef production. Greater percentage of output value derives from suckler beef production.
Beef Production system in Ireland

- The main beef production system used in Ireland is the **Pasture Based production system**.
- Animals spend the majority of the year grazing and are winter housed for three months of the year.
- The pasture based production system is favourable as farmers have easy access to high quality grassland pasture.
- The grazed grass is also the cheapest form of feed available to the animal.
- Grass makes up 80% of the animals diet.
- Ireland’s lush pastures with high protein and mineral contents provide animals with great source of nutrition which gives Irish beef its own identity.
Pasture based beef production

Beef production from the pasture system has many benefits such as:

- Animal welfare
- Health Benefits
- Growth rates
- Meat eating qualities
Health benefits associated with the Pasture Based System

- Scientific studies show that grass is a more natural diet for beef cattle than grain, and grass gives Irish beef a number of specific characteristics.
- Grass-fed beef has a more even distribution of fat (the marbling effect), which makes eating it a more enjoyable sensory experience.
- Grass-based beef also has higher levels of Vitamin A and Carotene, giving Irish beef a rich burgundy colour.
- A higher ratio of omega 3 fatty acids and CLA’s have been linked, by a growing number of scientific studies, to health benefits in humans such as lowering cholesterol and reducing cancer risk.
Tradition of Hereford cattle Rearing
History of Hereford

- The Hereford breed was established over two and a half centuries ago.
- It has become one of the best known cattle breeds across the world. Herefords are the breed of choice in all the major beef production countries north and south of the equator.
- Hereford was first introduced into Ireland in 1775.
- The Hereford was recognised as an animal with the temperament, quality and performance to suit both Irish farming conditions and tastes.
Hereford Quality Beef story

Breed Characteristics & Qualities

Irish Herefords should have a deep rich red body with a white face, crest, underside, socks and brush to tail.

- The cattle are hardy, adaptable and suitable to intensive or extensive farming systems.

- The Hereford sire within the beef herd is an ideal cross on continental type dams providing ease of calving and early maturity together with top class eating quality.
Hereford quality Beef story

Breed Characteristics & Qualities

- Irish Hereford producers have a keen eye on improving the breed, in particular, growth rates, feed conversion efficiency, length of carcase, conformation, milk production and meat quality.

- Irish Herefords are considered to be of optimum size.

- The Society and breeders actively participate in breed improvement programmes as part of ICBF.
Hereford quality Beef story

Breed Characteristics & Qualities

- The move towards more environmentally friendly farming has already resulted in a noticeable upturn in demand for Herefords for their early maturity and their ability to finish more economically at lower weights.

- Herein lies an opportunity for Herefords to play their part in increasing margins for Irish and European farmers by replacing quantity with quality.

- Herefords can provide the consumer with an excellent product of high eating quality produced through systems that respect the animal and the environment, which we share together.
What makes Hereford a good beef breed?

- Early maturity and high performance on grass based diets
- Excellent temperament
- Easy calving ability
- Good fertility
- Longevity
- Carcase weights of 250-400kgs
- Excellent meat eating quality, known for their tenderness and marbling characteristics.
WHY THE HEREFORD BREED?

The objective was to fix in one strain of animal the desirable traits of hardiness, early maturity, fertility and the swift, efficient conversion of grass into red meat so firmly that the transmission of these qualities to the next generation could always be relied upon. Their success was spectacular and the Hereford became the cornerstone of the beef economy in all the cattle raising countries in the world.

ADAPTABILITY

One of the most important factors in the Hereford breeds popularity has been its ability to adapt easily to a variety of management systems and environmental conditions throughout Ireland, from Connemara to Meath and from Donegal to Kerry.
FEED EFFICIENCY

Figures produced by Ireland's Research and Advisory Service Teagasc at Grange, Co, Meath in relation to the production of two-year-old beef show that to finish 50 head of continental crosses steers to their recommended carcase weight of 380Kgs. would require 550 tons of silage and 50 tons of concentrate. These same Teagasc figures also show that a similar amount of feed will finish 78 Hereford cross steers to their recommended carcase weight of 290Kgs. Thirteen weeks sooner allowing a surplus of 11 tons of concentrate unused. Add to this the reduction in capital investment in housing, finance and bank interest for an additional 13 weeks and it is clear why Herefords are the clear choice. In addition, due to its eating quality the Hereford beef will make a premium price and will most likely be sold to a premium retail outlet here at home or in continental Europe. It is equally likely to sell to a high-class restaurant through its countrywide distributors in Ireland or again through its distributors in mainland Europe.
DAIRY FARMERS
The black Hereford Friesian calf has been a market leader without parallel for decades. At any stage in his growth a Hereford cross Friesian animal is saleable at a premium price. No other breed can compete as a crossing sire on Friesians with the Hereford.

COW FERTILITY
Fertility and reproduction affects the profit potential of a cowherd more than any other trait. It is five times more important than the growth traits and ten times as important as carcase traits. Hereford popularity and widespread usage has come about because the females have the ability to wean a calf every year, rebreed quickly and do it adapting to the available feed supply.

BULL FERTILITY
A bull’s task during mating is to get cows in calf. The bull must serve each cow in heat. The number of services a bull achieves in a mating period is a good measure of a bull’s libido and is related to his ability to settle cows. In this field the Hereford bull excels.
Hereford numbers story in Ireland

**IRISH HEREFORD**

- The first Hereford was the first Foreign breed to be imported.
- Up until then only native breeds were available.
- The Hereford Society currently has 640 members who register approximately 3,390 Pure Bred calf births annually.
- The total registered cowherd is 3,400.
- The Hereford breed has the 4th highest proportion of pedigree beef calves born in Ireland.
Hereford numbers story in Ireland

IRISH HEREFORD

- 2,000 Hereford bulls are sold into Irish cowherds annually for natural service.
- The majority of these bulls are sold into dairy herds.
- Hereford X calf registration numbers 2012 - 134,998 Head.
- Hereford X Dairy calf registration numbers 2012 – 93,434 Head
- In the future a vast quantity of Hereford sired beef will be available from the dairy herd.
- Dairy expansion due 2015