

IGFA Sustainability Action Plan

June 2021-June 2022



INTRODUCTION

International, EU and Irish targets have been set to drive sustainability, mitigate climate change and improve environmental protection. Action is expected across all sectors as political and legal commitments have been made. The EU and Ireland have agreed a target to become climate neutral by 2050 and ensuring sustainable food production systems is vital to help achieve this goal. EU and national policies and plans have been developed to drive agricultural businesses in this direction and to steer a route to overcome the challenges.

The feed industry has taken steps to improve its environmental performance and help reach the climate change goals and targets set by the EU and the Irish government. Our members have worked hard within their businesses to improve energy efficiency, reduce waste and help customers develop feed strategies to improve animal health.

However, every agricultural business can do more and IGFA aims to support members to make further progress. We believe that this will not only help our industry deal with the challenges of the future but also prepare them for change and build business resilience.

The long-term targets are clear and will not be achieved overnight. IGFA members therefore agreed to take a step-by-step approach focusing on a 12-month plan with five specific themes that are important for the feed sector. The aim will be to deliver on firm commitments under each theme over that 12-month period. These commitments will not only ensure that we make progress on a range of issues throughout the course of the year, but when completed will form the building blocks for our next sustainability plan and help us down the path to continuous improvement.



1. Crude Protein

IGFA COMMITMENTS

- IGFA members are committed to continuing to work in partnership with DAFM to gather accurate information on crude protein levels in manufactured feed. Using the same template as the survey conducted in 2020, we will collect data on weighted crude protein levels in feed in 2021.
- IGFA will work with other stakeholders on reducing nutrient leakage and optimising nutrient balance in animal diets.
- IGFA members will explore the most effective ways to ensure that our farming customers are adequately informed about the environmental impact of excess crude protein in animal diets.

Crude protein is a vital component of animal diets and necessary to ensure balanced nutrition that supports maintenance and growth.

Crude protein depends on the nitrogen (N) content of feed and if fed in excess, can be associated with increased Greenhouse Gas (GHG) and ammonia emissions. Altering crude protein levels in animal diets can therefore play a role in lowering these emissions and reducing the environmental impact.

As an industry, we aim to promote feeding regimes that optimise animal health and improve performance while at the same time ensuring that environmental concerns are considered. In some situations, higher protein levels are needed but Irish feed manufacturers and their nutritionists continue to encourage customers to reduce protein levels in their livestock rations where feasible.

In 2020, IGFA worked in partnership with government on a survey that was sent to animal feed companies throughout the country. This survey collected information on crude protein levels in feed rations for all sectors and showed a downward trend since 2015. It is imperative that accurate information and data are available to direct successful policy development in this area. Reliable data is also of critical importance in the development of emission reduction strategies.

The EU Methane Strategy highlights that methane is a powerful GHG, second only to carbon dioxide in its overall contribution to climate change.

Methane emissions are associated with a number of sectors including energy and waste but emissions from livestock farming have received most attention in recent times. Methane emissions from livestock originate mainly from ruminant species as a result of enteric fermentation. This is the natural digestive process whereby feed is broken down by the rumen microbiota, with methane produced as a by-product.

Enteric methane production can be influenced by the composition of the animals' diet and policy makers, nutritionists and industry are assessing nutritional approaches to reducing methane production. Research is ongoing and a number of ingredients and additives that could be added to animal feed are being assessed based on their methane-reducing potential. Officially authorising feed additives for this purpose is also being encouraged.



2. Methane Reducing Additives

IGFA COMMITMENTS

- IGFA will undertake a scoping exercise that aims to gather published information on the products and additives currently being assessed and their effectiveness to reduce methane emissions. We will consult with national partners and EU colleagues. We will also aim to better understand European Commission plans in this area and the approval process for these types of additives.
- IGFA and its members will push for robust scientific evidence to support claims of reduction in methane levels, and work with Irish research institutions to identify current research facilities that will enable the latest additive technologies to be assessed in an Irish context.



3. Sustainable Soy

IGFA COMMITMENTS

- IGFA will gather information on the sustainability status of the soy used in Ireland.
- IGFA will conduct a survey of members with the aim of finding out whether the needs of the market and Irish customers are changing in relation to soy sourcing.
- IGFA and IGFA members commit to continuing to engage with other stakeholders on this topic, observe the progress and activities of the UK Sustainable Soy Roundtable and host further information workshops for members on sustainable soy.

Sustainable soy is at the forefront of discussions amongst feed industry stakeholders across Europe.

The industry has responded to political and societal pressure to look at the impacts of European soy sourcing policies and to act responsibly to tackle environmental and other concerns. IGFA has been involved in these discussions and with the work done by our European colleagues to develop the FEFAC Soy Sourcing Guidelines.

The market for sustainable soy in Europe is evolving and many customers are seeking to improve the environmental credentials of their products. Soy is a key ingredient for the Irish feed market and our suppliers have consistently supplied that market for decades. As customer requirements and needs develop and change, soy with the necessary environmental assurances can be supplied. Global networks and investment have ensured that Irish suppliers are in an excellent position to respond to demands, environmental or otherwise, placed on them by the Irish market.

FEFAC, our European Feed Manufacturers' Federation, has been thoroughly involved in helping to develop reliable measurement and calculation tools for the environmental footprinting of animal feed.

FEFAC has invested in the establishment of the GFLI (Global Feed LCA Institute) Feed Life Cycle Analysis database which will provide primary and secondary life cycle data on the environmental performance of key feed ingredients. The aim is to ensure that feed manufacturers make full use of this data for all major feed materials and additives to measure the environmental performance of the large range of compound feed formulations.

Formulating 'low emission' feed could significantly help with the goal to become climate neutral. However, environmental footprinting is a complex process and FEFAC acknowledges that it is a steep learning curve for people inside and outside of the feed industry. Adequately understanding the data and tools requires ongoing work and the investment of significant time and effort.



4. Environmental Footprinting

IGFA COMMITMENTS

- IGFA will work to increase member awareness and knowledge of environmental footprinting tools in the feed industry through member briefings, training and workshops with experts.
- In light of lessons learned as a result of Covid 19 and the need for resilience, IGFA members will review possible weaknesses in our supply chain and systems. This could include evaluating the current situation in relation to dependence on imports, new protein sources, standards and supply and labour bottlenecks.



5. Expanding our Expertise

IGFA COMMITMENTS

- Alongside the membership, IGFA will assess the training options available to advisers within the feed industry.
- IGFA will aim to develop a route to more consistent and extensive continuing professional development within the Irish feed industry.

The animal feed sector is an essential partner in the Irish rural economy. Those working in our sector are highly qualified and provide a professional, dependable service to farmers and other customers.

Many of our members already engage in continuing professional development to ensure that they are informed and equipped to deal with new issues and latest policy developments. However, there could be advantages to having a more consistent programme in place especially on feed-related environmental matters where the science, targets and policy are developing at pace.



TIMELINE

This plan was approved by the IGFA Feed Committee in June 2021 and it was agreed that the commitments should be achieved by June 2022. Progress will be assessed throughout the year and a report completed at the end of June 2022. During this time, we hope to learn more about how government intends to deliver on the actions outlined in the Ag Climatise Roadmap.

This clarity will enable us to identify where we can work collaboratively on many of the issues outlined in this plan and will help direct future IGFA work on sustainability issues.

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● Commitments should be achieved by June 2022.

● Report completed at the end of June 2022