



# CERTIFIED IRISH ANGUS SCHOOLS COMPETITION 2023



**KEPAK**

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## INTRODUCTION

Certified Irish Angus, along with our partners, ABP and Kepak, wish to welcome you to the final of the Certified Irish Angus School Competition 2023.

We are honoured and privileged to have had the opportunity to work with these students, along with their schools, teachers and families over the past two years.

We are in awe at the level of enthusiasm and appetite for learning about agriculture and in particular, the production of Certified Irish Angus Beef. The effort that these students have gone to in the rearing of their calves and in the promotion of Certified Irish Angus Beef, along with the in-depth research and reports they have completed is astonishing, particularly in the midst of the Covid 19 pandemic.

This reflects the commitment and effort of their school, teachers and parents to a full and complete education.

To our partners, ABP and Kepak, we wish to thank you most sincerely for your support and help in this project.

We hope this has been a memorable experience for all of the students who have taken part and wish you the very best of luck in the future.







## ABBEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE Boyle, Co. Roscommon

David Duggan, Colin McGrath, Gavin O'Connor and Liam Killoran focused on the topic **"Sustainable Beef Production"**.

Suckler farming is the predominant farming system in the Boyle locality. These forward-thinking young men wanted to communicate the message that the Angus breed could help improve the sustainability of beef production on these farms. By interviewing local farmers, they gained an understanding of attitudes towards the three pillars of sustainability:

- Environmental
- Economic
- Social



and how balancing the economic and environmental concerns could benefit the whole community. Succession planning was the

biggest challenge for over 80% of the farmers interviewed, with lifestyle e.g. workload and social isolation, being their greatest concern.



The students compared the results from their Angus cattle's slaughter with similar cattle finished at an older age in the area. They found that Angus cattle could be finished at a younger age while still achieving a similar return to older cattle. This in turn benefits the environment by needing fewer inputs to achieve a good finishing weight and reducing greenhouse gases. shared with their local farming community.







## ARDSCOIL PHÁDRAIG Granard, Co. Longford

Tara Spollen, Katelyn Farrell and Ryan Reilly had the topic **“Adapting Technologies in Breeding”**.

These eager-to-learn students carried out extensive research on the different breeding technologies that are available to farmers. This ranged from selective breeding to more modern tools like sexed semen and ICBF indices, such as Dairy Beef Index.



They assessed the level of knowledge farmers in the North Longford area had about these technologies and found that there was a high usage of AI with a smaller number using a stock bull for breeding.

The students held an information evening in their local mart where they shared the findings from their research, including the benefits of breeding from superior genetic Angus bulls.

The students were keen to highlight the issue of mental health in the farming community. The isolation caused by the Covid 19 pandemic along with a heavy workload had taken its toll on many in the farming community. With this in mind, the students created a leaflet with useful contact numbers and suggestions for looking after your mental health and began by having a mile walk in their school with their classmates to help de-stress.



**Activities you can do at home to improve your mental health**

- Call a friend
- Go on a socially distant walk with some friends
- Do some hobbies you enjoy
- Maintain regular exercise like going on a walk or a run

1890 130 022- The Mind Our Farm Families is a dedicated farmer mental health phoneline  
0818 111 126 -Pieta house  
[www.pieta.ie](http://www.pieta.ie)







## HOLY ROSARY COLLEGE Mountbellew, Co. Galway

Peter O'Neill, Amy Higgins, Oisín Colleran and Cormac Delaney focused on the topic **"Improving Quality of Beef for Consumers"**.

These enthusiastic students began their research by conducting a survey locally of what consumers look for in quality beef. The results of the survey showed:

- Consumers are prioritising quality over price, with greater attention being given to the provenance of the meat.
- Consumers placed a high emphasis on eco-friendly packaging when purchasing beef.
- The need to create a greater awareness among consumers of the sustainability credentials of beef.



To help engage with and involve their classmates in their calf rearing project, the students invited two speakers to their Agricultural Science class:

- Henry Walsh – a local dairy farmer
- Keith Fahy – Member of Galway Grasslands Association



From the research and learning undertaking over the course of the project, the group believe that beef farming as a profession needs to take the concerns of the consumers on board and not simply focus on final weights and prices. To ensure the profitability of the sector and the confidence of the consumer, proper care and attention must be paid to every detail from animal welfare to the marketing of beef, guaranteeing the consistent quality of Irish beef.







## ST. LOUIS HIGH SCHOOL Rathmines, Dublin 6

Mya Gray McCluskey, Niamh Dunne and Ella Gannon worked on the topic **"Reassuring Consumers on Animal Welfare"**.

These young city dwellers ventured well outside their comfort zone by entering this competition. Their interest was piqued by negative advertising campaigns on animal welfare and they were keen to get to the truth behind livestock production on Irish farms.



The girls found that their fellow students were ill-informed on the entire agri food industry and there was a lack of understanding among consumers about the reality of food production. With this in mind, they set about creating an educational programme to raise awareness of the real story of Irish agriculture.



On each of their visits to their calves, they brought a different family member or friend along. They called the initiative "Flats to Farm" and each visitor got involved with raising the cattle and witnessing the high animal welfare standards in place. All of their farm activities were recorded on the school notice board and online blog.

Their activities brought them to the attention of RTÉ's Countrywide where they were interviewed on their experience in the competition. From interviews conducted with fellow city residents, the girls found a huge appetite for learning about agriculture and food production while the agri food industry could in turn benefit from engaging more with city dwellers.







## ST. BRIGID'S SECONDARY SCHOOL Killarney, Co Kerry

Kate Donoghue, Abbie Daly and Alanna Brady researched the theme **"Improving Farm Outcomes Through Education"**.

Coming from a non-farming background with limited knowledge of the agri sector, these young ladies were surprised and impressed at how willing industry experts were to engage with them and the educational resources already available to farmers. However, local farmers were often unsure how to apply their knowledge to their own farm so the girls set about researching what would help.



The students found that the answers lay with the farmers themselves. By sharing their knowledge and experience with each other at local discussion groups, they could see how a new technology or



practice worked for a peer and get an honest assessment on how a change could be beneficial. The discussion groups also offered an opportunity for the whole community, young and old, to come together, reduce social isolation and discuss best practice. The girls believe these groups were a vital tool in operating a successful and environmentally-friendly focused beef farm.



As part of their research, the girls identified soil health as a key area where farmers could benefit from better knowledge and support. While most farmers could identify nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium as the three key elements for grass growth, there was a lack of understanding around the correct pH of the soil. Farmers often found the results of soil tests difficult to understand and would benefit from a more user-friendly way to interpret results.







## URSULINE SECONDARY SCHOOL Thurles, Co Tipperary

Gráinne O'Donnell, Karen Campion, Louise Creagh and Louise Hickey researched the theme **"The Health Benefits of Eating Angus Beef"**.

These inquisitive young ladies focused their research on the nutritional value of beef in the diet and the general awareness among the public of its health benefits.

The girls found there was a lack of knowledge among their fellow students of the health benefits of red meat in teenage girls' diet. Teenage girls can be susceptible to anaemia, leading to loss of energy and decreasing athletic performance. With its high iron content, red meat is nutritionally beneficial to this age group.



To raise awareness of their findings, the girls set up an information stall at the Tipperary Camogie County Final and distributed leaflets outlining the benefits of beef in the female diet. Certified Irish Angus beef burgers were on sale from the food vendor at the match to spectators, stewards and of course, the players.

On the animal production side, the girls also found that the diet of the animal is critically important when it comes to efficient healthy beef production. They made contact with Mary McEvoy from Germinal to discuss the benefits of grazing animals on multi species swards both in terms of animal performance and environmental benefits.



Mary demonstrated the results of a sheep trial (see graph) that had been conducted and suggested that the findings would be similar in cattle grazed on the same seed mixes. This clearly demonstrated the performance potential that can be achieved from a natural grass based diet that is ideally suited to the production of Angus cattle removing the need for supplemented concentrate feeding. All in all, making a more sustainable production system.

**Effect of sward type on Lamb ADG Birth to 6 weeks**

