

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE: A FARMERS PERSPECTIVE

Drew McConnell

Dairy farmer, Northern Ireland

Carrigans Farm

- 160 cow dairy herd
- Sheep and beef enterprises
- 350 acres grassland (SDA & DA land)



Carrigans Farm

Dairy enterprise aims:

1. Drive profit through maximising technical efficiency
2. Maximising lifetime production by optimising animal health and welfare
3. Maintain a labour efficient working environment



Why is research important to me?

I can't control milk price –
this is controlled off-farm

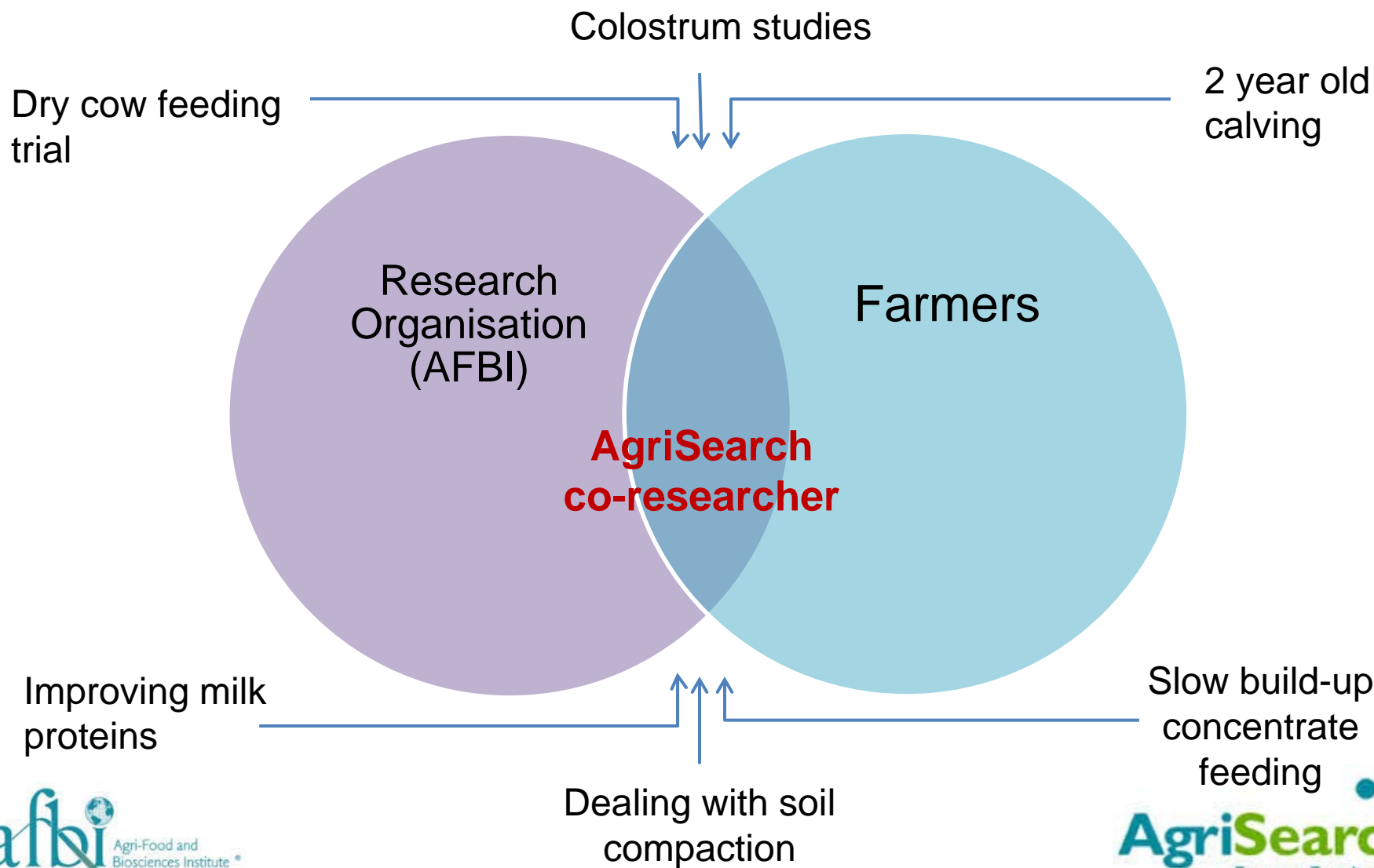


But I can control what
happens inside the farm
gates



I need research to help make my farm more efficient

AFBI- AgriSearch co-researcher



Heifer Rearing Trial

	N.I. Average	My farm
Age a first calving (months)	29	24.6
Lifetime productivity (litres/head)	25 000	49 500
Rearing cost (£/head)	1957	1478
Replacement cost (ppl)	5.98	1.9



Slow build-up feeding trial

- Fresh cow trial
- Changed to low protein ration (14.5%)



Benefits

- Better fertility
- Improved body condition
- No loss in performance
- Reduced feed costs = £50/cow

The true success of agricultural research is when its adopted on-farm



- To be adopted on farm, research needs to be:
 - Relevant
 - Delivering a benefit to the farmer: financial or otherwise
 - Easy to understand

On-farm research

Farmer Benefits

- Improved technical efficiency
- Financial improvements
- Challenged my mindset – be more progressive
- Access to research expertise

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Researcher Benefits

- Larger studies
- Diverse range of sites and management systems
- Practical challenges with implementing research
- Aids data interpretation/new findings

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Knowledge Exchange

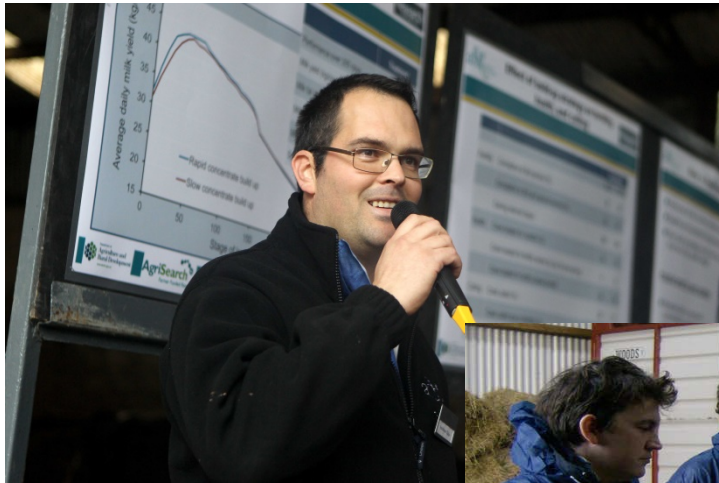
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Sharing the Experience



Best learning environment for a farmer is another farm

Knowledge Exchange



Scientists and farmers working together in KE add credibility to a range of audiences

Where next?

- Making the most of technology is key to the business
- New research and guidance on:
 - Precision technologies
 - Robotic milking



Summary

- Research is essential to allow farms to compete on a global market but it **MUST** be communicated effectively!
- KE is 2-way: scientists and farmers need to work together to maximise the impact of research
- True success of agricultural research is when it is adopted on farm

THANK YOU

www.agrisearch.org.uk