

Challenge of feeding the world

The Lismullin farming seminar looked at the sustainability of food production. **Odile Evans reports**

"The biggest challenge I see in the next five to 20 years is how we are going to sustainably feed the world's population," said Tony Doyle from Country Crest, a farm and food service business, in north Co Dublin, which grows and pre-pecks vegetables for the retail sector. "We will have to feed 34% more people than we have in the world today by 2050 with

less good land," Doyle said. Speaking at the Lismullin farming seminar on Thursday, 21 January, Doyle said that water and energy are the main limiting factors for world food production. The agricultural economic model in Europe focuses on "producing commodities at the lowest possible price, emanating from World War II," he said.



John Byrne, farmer, north Dublin; organiser Mary Delaney, head of equine with Glanbia Agribusiness; Matt Dempsey, chair of the Agricultural Trust; and Andy Doyle, *Irish Farmers Journal* tillage editor.

"The world has to face the reality that we have to be able to afford to feed the world sustainably," said Doyle. "The producers at the bottom of the chain are constantly trying to squeeze more and more out of 100 acres."

A brand that consumers can relate to is all it takes to secure extra value on what is currently a commodity product, according to sales and marketing consultant Dorene Mallon.

"Ultimately, the consumer and retailer want to pay less, while the farmer and factory

is price-orientated." Mallon made the point that while the quality of Irish beef can secure a sale, it does not necessarily mean that the deal will continue to roll over. It "all boils down to price. I can get a phonecall in the morning asking me to drop the price by another €0.30/kg and if I can't make that, then it could be €2m, €3m or €5m gone."

Mallon advocates that an all-encompassing brand for Irish beef is the only way to achieve maximum value. The Bord Bia initiative, Origin Green, is unique to Ireland at the moment, but Mallon adds that while "we are pioneering the way, maybe other countries can do it in time."



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