From the Hoof to the Hook:

An investigation of beef processor influence on Irish farm policy and politics

1950 - 1986

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Ph. D. by research and thesis

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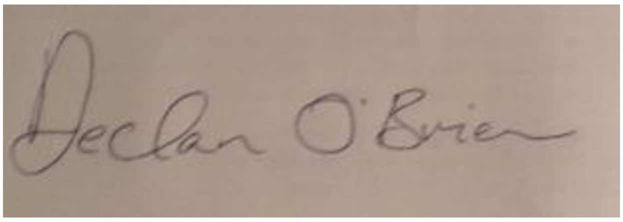
Author’s Declaration

I, Declan O’Brien, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Signed:



In memory of
my mother and father,
Eileen and Micheál O'Brien.
On their shoulders we stand;
ar dheis Dé go raibh siad.

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Abstract

This thesis traces the development of the Irish beef processing industry through its first thirty-six years from 1950 to 1986. It asks how and why meat processing firms became so influential in Irish farming, documenting the industry's emergence during the 1950s, up to its ascendency by the 1980s. It details how beef processors benefitted from the patronage of Agriculture Minister, Charles Haughey, to overtake the live exporting of cattle in the 1960s as the country's premier livestock enterprise; it outlines why the co-operatives were unable to survive in the beef business, even though the sector enjoyed significant EEC supports from 1973; and, finally, it explains how a small coterie of individuals came to dominate red meat processing between 1980 and 1985, and the extent to which this impacted the agricultural sector and the State. The importance of this latter development lies in subsequent government decisions on beef exports to the Middle East which exposed the State to losses of close to Ir£80 million following the near collapse in 1990 and 1991 of Goodman International. This study employs a two-pronged methodology which combines documentary evidence with oral testimonies from contemporary participants. This offers new and original perspectives on events such as the failure of the co-operatives to survive in beef and lamb slaughtering, and how this mirrored the experience of farmer-owned firms in Britain. This study also identifies the extent to which public funding and political patronage have been crucial to the growth of the beef industry since the mid-1960s, and how livestock policy in the 1970s and 1980s was formulated through the prism of beef processor needs, rather than that of the farmer, or the consumer.

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This thesis has been such a big part of my life for the past six years that writing these acknowledgements feels strangely like letting an old friend go. Not that this study was always good company; indeed, being around it was sometimes akin to torture. However, it has also been fascinating and rewarding.

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Glossary

Beef factory or beef plant: A slaughter or meat processing facility that is licensed by the Department of Agriculture.

Beef cow or suckler cow: A cow from a beef breed, such as Charolais, Hereford or Aberdeen Angus, that are kept to rear beef calves.

Bullock or Steer: Castrated male animal.

Common Market: 1970s term for EEC.

Cull: Slaughter or remove animals.

Cull cows: Old, sick or infertile cows that are slaughtered.

Drystock: Term used to denote beef cattle or sheep.

Drystock farmer: Livestock farmer who keeps beef cattle or sheep.

Export plant: The same as a beef factory, a slaughter or meat processing facility that is licensed by the Department of Agriculture.

Fat-stock: Finished or fattened beef animals that are fit for slaughter.

Fore-quarter beef: Meat from the front half of the beef carcass. Includes cheaper cuts which are used as manufacturing beef or mince.

Heifer: Female animal that has not yet had a calf – sometimes referred to as a maiden or bulling heifer if she has not been impregnated.

Hind-quarter beef: Meat from the back half of the animal that includes the high-value steak cuts and roasts.

Live-exporter or live-shipper: Someone involved in the export of live cattle or calves.

Steer: Same as bullock; castrated male animal.

Store animal: One-year-old to two-year-old beef animal that is not ready for slaughter.

Weanling: Nine-month-old bull, bullock or heifer.

Abbreviations

ACC - Agricultural Credit Corporation

ACOT – An Chomhairle Oiliúna Talamhaíochta

AFT – An Foras Talúntais

AI – Artificial Insemination

AIBP – Anglo-Irish Beef Processors

AIFTA – Anglo-Irish Free Trade Area Agreement

ATGWU - Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union

APS – Aid to Private Storage

CAP - Common Agricultural Policy

CBF - Córas Beostoic agus Feola

CE – Cork Examiner

CIE - Córas Iompair Éireann

CII – Confederation of Irish Industry

CTT - Córas Trachtála Teoranta

cwt - Hundred-weight (imperial measure)

DA – Department of Agriculture

DFA – Department of Foreign Affairs

EEC - European Economic Community

EFTA - European Free Trade Association

EIF – European Involvement Fund (IFA levy)

EMS - European Monetary Fund

ERM – Exchange Rate Mechanism

ESB - Electricity Supply Board

ESRI – Economic and Social Research Institute

EU – European Union

FAO - Food and Agriculture Organisation

FEOGA – European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund

FIS - Farm Improvement Scheme

FMC – Fatstock Marketing Corporation

GATT – General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

GVM – Golden Vale Marts

IAOS - Irish Agricultural Organisations Society

ICA – Irish Countrywomen's Association

IDA - Industrial Development Authority

IMF – International Monetary Fund

ICMSA - Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers' Association

IFA - Irish Farmers' Association

IFJ – Irish Farmers' Journal

IFMES - Irish Fresh Meat Exporters' Society

II – Irish Independent

INDC – Department of Industry and Commerce

IMIA - Irish Meat Industries Association

IMP – Irish Meat Packers

IMPA – Irish Meat Packers Association

IP – Irish Press

IRA – Irish Republican Army

IT – Irish Times

ITGWU - Irish Transport and General Workers' Union

MCA - Monetary Compensation Allowances

MAFF – Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Britain) (MAF until 1953)

NAI – National Archives of Ireland

NLI – National Library of Ireland

NCF Co-operative – North Connacht Farmers' Co-operative

NDP - National Development Plan

NESC – National Economic and Social Council

NFA - National Farmers' Association

NFU - National Farmers' Union (Britain)

OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PLC - Public Limited Company

TB – Tuberculosis

TNA – The National Archives (London)

TSCH – Department of An Taoiseach

UA – Unit of Account (EEC)

UCC - University College Cork

UCD - University College Dublin

UFU – Ulster Farmers' Union

VEC - Vocational Education Committee

WTO - World Trade Organisation

INTRODUCTION

CHOICE OF SUBJECT

In 2019 thousands of Irish livestock farmers blockaded the country's beef processing factories, bringing production at the sites to a virtual standstill. The protesters rejected appeals from the main farm organisations to remove the blockades, claiming they were battling to protect the livelihoods of traditional beef farmers, which they contended were being undermined by the low cattle prices paid by the meat factories. The protests were noteworthy from a historical perspective in that the protesters considered meat factories to be a traditional element of the farming landscape. However, as this thesis outlines, the large-scale selling of cattle directly to slaughter is a relatively recent phenomenon in Irish agriculture, despite the keeping of cattle being deeply culturally embedded.

This study is the first to trace the development of the Irish beef processing sector through its first thirty-six years from 1950 to 1986, even though the meat industry is one of Ireland's largest indigenous industries. The time-frame of the thesis covers the period from the start of large-scale carcass beef exports in 1950, to the closure and exit from the industry of co-operative meat processors in 1986. While Ireland had an established export trade in canned or tinned beef from the late 1930s, carcass beef exports only started in 1950 with the opening of markets in the US, Britain and continental Europe. Ireland exported 6,400 tons of carcass beef in 1950, but this grew to over 25,000 tons by 1952.[1] This thesis asks how and why the meat processing sector became so influential, documenting the industry's emergence during the 1950s, up to its ascendency by the 1980s. It details how the beef industry benefitted from the patronage of the Minister for Agriculture, Charles Haughey, to overtake the live exporting of cattle as the country's premier livestock enterprise in the 1960s; it outlines why the co-operatives were unable to survive in the business, even though the sector enjoyed significant EEC supports from 1973; and, finally, it explains how a small coterie of individuals came to dominate red meat processing between 1980 and 1985, and how this impacted on the agricultural sector and the State. The importance of this latter development lies in subsequent government decisions on beef exports to the Middle East which exposed the State to losses of

[1] Terence J. Baker, Robert O'Connor, Rory Dunne, *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries,* Economic and Social Research Institute, No. 72 (Dublin, 1973), p. 78.

close to Ir£100 million following the near collapse in 1990 and 1991 of the Goodman Group.[2] This study is not intended as a reappraisal of the 1994 Beef Tribunal Report, or of Justice Liam Hamilton's findings.[3] It does identify developments in the beef sector during the 1980s – including the expansion of Irish meat exports to the Middle East, and the provision of greater State supports to the meat companies competing for these lucrative contracts – factors that created the conditions which ultimately led to the Inquiry. However, the study is primarily an examination of the factors which influenced the growth and expansion of the Irish beef processing industry in the decades up to 1985. While some reference is made to the expansion of Northern Ireland's beef processing industry – and there was a significant degree of cross-over in terms of factory ownership between the two jurisdictions from the 1970s – this study concentrates on developments in the South since a key consideration of the thesis is how the industry's growth influenced agricultural policy. As the North's farm policy was broadly dictated from London, an examination of developments in this area would have required a more in-depth review of British agricultural policy. This was beyond the scope of this thesis. However, a comparative study of the beef industry North and South certainly merits examination at a later date.

Building on the work undertaken for my MA thesis, tracing the demise of the Dublin Cattle Market during the 1960s and early 1970s, this study employs the same two-pronged methodology by utilising documentary evidence and oral testimonies from contemporary participants. These testimonies offer new and original perspectives on events such as the failure of farmer-owned co-operatives to survive in the beef and lamb slaughtering. The research project examines how the subsequent 'privatisation' of the industry impacted on relations between the meat processors and the farmer representative organisations – the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA) and Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers' Association (ICMSA). In addition, the study explores the fraught and difficult interactions between the live cattle exporters and the meat processing sector. The European context to developments forms a central theme, particularly Ireland's EEC entry in 1973 which resulted in an industry-wide drive to maximise monetary subventions from Brussels. The study also explores the important role played by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), and particularly market

[2] Elaine A. Byrne, *Political Corruption in Ireland, 1922-2010: A Crooked Harp?* (Manchester, 2012), pp 124-125.
[3] *Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the Beef Processing Industry* (Dublin, 1994).

support measures such as the beef intervention scheme, in shaping how the Irish beef processing sector developed during the 1970s and 1980s. Indeed, beef intervention – where large quantities of European beef was centrally purchased by the EEC in times of surplus as a price support measure – became a critically important outlet for Irish beef during this period.

In essence, this thesis is a vital examination of a transformational period in Ireland's largest indigenous industry. Moreover, it is the first overarching and contemporary interpretation of a fundamental shift in the Irish agricultural sector, as beef processing took over from the live export of cattle. This radical departure totally altered the industry's power structures, with beef factory owners replacing cattle exporters as the rural kingpins. Indeed, the fact that exports of live cattle provided almost thirty per cent of country's total trade revenues in the 1951 highlights the significance of this development.[4] Research at the National Archives in London (TNA) also exposes British unease at the emergence of the Irish beef processing industry and a preference for the continuation of live cattle exports from Ireland.[5] Given that Britain took almost ninety per cent of Irish cattle and beef exports in the 1950s, this transnational perspective is important. Moreover, TNA records provide unique insights into the negotiations around the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement (AIFTA) of 1965-66. This agreement resulted in a trebling of beef exports between 1965 and 1967. Moreover, the number of Irish cattle slaughtered and exported as beef exceeded for the first time the total shipped on the hoof. The degree to which Government policy responded to the beef processors' growing commercial dominance in the livestock sector is a recurring theme of the study, as is highlighted by Government efforts to limit live cattle exports in the 1970s and 1980s; in the continued lobbying by Irish ministers at EEC level to retain preferential access to intervention for the Irish beef factories; and by the flawed and ultimately costly policy of the Irish exchequer acting as guarantor of payment for meat exports to the Middle East between 1981 and 1991.

[4] *Statistical Abstract of Ireland 1949*, compiled by the Central Statistics Office (Dublin 1950), P. 9576, p. 68 and p. 86; *Statistical Abstract of Ireland 1951*, compiled by the Central Statistics Office (Dublin 1952), Pr. 542, p. 74 and p. 113.

[5] These included files from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the Dominions' Office, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the Board of Trade.

EXISTING SCHOLARSHIP IN THIS AREA

No academic works or memoirs deal specifically with the Irish beef processing industry's development and growth. Changes in the dairy sector are central to Mícheál Ó Fathartaigh's work, *Irish Agriculture Nationalised: the Dairy Disposal Company and the making of the modern Irish dairy industry* (2014). Similarly, Ruth Guiny, Dr. Maura Cronin and Jacqui Hayes trace the important contribution of the pig processing sector in *Pigtown: a history of Limerick's bacon industry* (2016). While comparable works on the beef industry have not been published, the growth in beef exports is included as part of the broad canvas in Mary Daly's, *The First Department: A history of the Department of Agriculture* (2002), and *Farm Organisations in Ireland – A Century of Progress* (1996), by Louis Smith and Seán Healy.[6] Both of these publications – along with Raymond Crotty's seminal work on the farm sector, *Irish Agricultural Production: Its Volume and Structure* (1966), and Paul Rouse's examination of Ireland's post-war agricultural policy, *Ireland's own soil: government and agriculture in Ireland, 1945 to 1965* (2000) – provided a firm foundation for this study.[7] However, the extended time-frame of Daly's work, allied to the range of issues covered, mean that the growth of the beef sector is often tied into related subject matter, such as the campaign to eradicate TB and the AIFTA negotiations. The notable exception is Daly's comprehensive examination of the 1952-53 Anglo-Irish negotiations on beef exports.[8] Similarly, the beef sector is tangential to Smith and Healy's publication, which concentrates primarily on the work of the farm organisations, NFA-IFA, Macra na Feirme and ICMSA. However, Smith and Healy provide an excellent assessment of CAP's impact on food companies, particularly the damage caused by the Monetary Compensation Allowance (MCA) regime to secondary meat processors – manufacturers of products such as burgers and meat pies.[9] Surprisingly, the publication makes few references to the collapse of Clover Meats or the closure of Irish Meat Packers (IMP), although it deals extensively with the development of the co-operative mart network and dairy expansion. The

[6] Mary E. Daly, *The First Department, a history of the Department of Agriculture* (Dublin, 2002), pp 276-517; Louis P. F. Smith & Sean Healy, *Farm organisations in Ireland: A century of progress* (Dublin, 1996), pp 36-265.

[7] Paul Rouse, *Ireland's own soil: government and agriculture in Ireland, 1945 to 1965* (Dublin, 2000), pp 36-256; Raymond Crotty, *Irish Agricultural Production, its volume and structure* (Cork, 1966), pp 159-232.

[8] Daly, *First Department*, pp 302-306.

[9] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations in Ireland*, pp 266-69.

challenges faced by Irish beef farmers in the second half of the twentieth century were not unique. Low incomes from beef production was also the experience in Britain, Ireland's largest and most important export market, as is confirmed by the works of B.A. Holderness, *British Agriculture Since 1945* (1985), John Martin, *The Development of Modern Agriculture – British Farming Since 1931* (2000), and Guy Smith, *From Campbell to Kendall: a history of the NFU* (2008). Although the UK remained one of the world's largest beef importers during the 1950s and 1960s, British farmers still required generous government subsidies to bolster incomes despite increased on-farm productivity. As Martin noted, the state acted as 'midwife' to radical changes in British farming by delivering and guaranteeing farm incomes up to mid-1960s. However, a faltering economy and EEC membership restricted the UK's ability to retain these supports into the 1970s.[10] The manner in which the Irish beef sector reacted to the various policy and market developments in Britain is a recurring thread in this study.

The expansion of the beef industry in the 1950s and early 1960s ran counter to trends in the farming sector and the Irish economy generally. Crotty's criticism of the 'stagnant' output performance of Irish agriculture in the 1950s is echoed by Joe Lee in *Ireland 1912-1985.* One target of Lee's criticism is the country's business class, which he claimed lacked an enterprise culture.[11] Anne Dolan argues that this downbeat assessment of the state's economic performance in the 1950s mirrors the historiography of 1920s and 1930s Ireland, with its depiction of a 'conservative', 'narrow' and 'inward-looking' society and economy. In her contribution to the *Cambridge History of Ireland*, Dolan questions the accuracy of such a simplistic representation of 1930s society and asks if people's lives 'were being lived in ways that a historiography convinced of homogeneity and isolation has not really sought to uncover'.[12] Likewise, the rapid growth, dynamism and export orientation of the meat processing industry during the 1950s challenges the dreary interpretation of the

[10] John Martin, *The Development of Modern Agriculture – British Farming Since 1931* (Hampshire, 2000), pp 6-7; B.A. Holderness, *British Agriculture Since 1945* (Manchester, 1985), pp 12-27; Guy Smith, *From Campbell to Kendall: a history of the NFU* (Somerset, 2008), pp 128-129.
[11] J.J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985 politics and society* (Cambridge, 1989), pp 528-32; Crotty, *Irish Agricultural Production*, pp 210-11.
[12] Anne Dolan, 'Politics, economy and society in the Irish Free State, 1922-39' in Thomas Bartlett (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Ireland: Volume 4, 1880 to the present* (Cambridge, 2018), pp 330-334.

decade by historians such as Lee, Diarmaid Ferriter and Brian Girvin.[13] The mass emigration of the 1950s and the period's pervading sense of hopelessness, which are invariably cited, cannot be downplayed. However, positive developments, such as the emergence and expansion of beef processing, are an equally important element in the overall historical narrative. Similarly, the establishment between 1949 and 1951 of the Industrial Development Authority (IDA), Córas Tráchtála Teoranta (CTT) and the Dollar Exports Advisory Committee (DEAC) are crucial events. The formation of these bodies, as Frank Barry's work has shown, point to an early acceptance by sections of the civil service that a radical break with orthodox economic protectionism was urgently required.[14] The sizeable expansion in carcass beef exports beyond the UK during the early 1950s inadvertently put the livestock industry at the heart of this discussion, a fact which is extensively covered by Daly. The broader political and economic considerations are comprehensively examined in Tom Feeney's *Seán MacEntee, a political life* (2009), and Ronan Fanning's The Irish Department of Finance, 1922-58 (1978). Interestingly, while Bielenberg and Ryan's *Economic History of Ireland since Independence* (2013) contends that Ireland's economy has become much more triadic in the last two decades by incorporating influences from Britain, the US and EEC-EU, these three markets proved central to the continued expansion of beef exports up to the country's accession into the Common Market in 1973.[15] Bielenberg and Ryan argue that EEC membership marked a 'decisive turning point' in the development of the Irish economy. This position is shared by Smith and Healy, and by the Matthew Dempsey-edited, *Path to Power – 60 years of the Irish Farmers' Association* (2015), and Paul O'Grady's *Leaders of Courage: the story of the ICMSA* (2000).[16] The mobilisation of the Irish rural constituency from the 1950s

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[13] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78; Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, pp 528-32; Diarmaid Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland, 1900-2000* (London, 2004), pp 549-550; Brian Girvin, *Between Two Worlds*, *politics and economy in independent Ireland* (Dublin, 1989), pp 190-192.

[14] Frank Barry & Mícheál Ó Fathartaigh, 'An Irish industrial revolution: the creation of the Industrial Development Authority (IDA), 1949-59' in *History Ireland*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (May/June 2013), pp 44-46; Frank Barry, 'Diversifying external linkages: the exercise of Irish economic sovereignty in long-term perspective' in Oxford Review of Economic Policy, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Summer 2014), pp 213-214; Frank Barry & Clare O'Mahony, 'Regime change in 1950s Ireland' in *Irish Economic and Social History*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (2017), pp 50-51.

[15] Andy Bielenberg & Raymond Ryan, *An Economic History of Ireland since Independence* (London, 2013), pp 2-3.

[16] Matthew Dempsey (ed.), *Path to Power – 60 years of the Irish Farmers' Association* (Dublin, 2015), pp 75-77; Paul O'Grady (ed.), *Leaders of Courage: the story of the ICMSA* (Dublin, 2000), p. 33; Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations in Ireland*, pp 266-69; Bielenberg & Ryan, *An Economic History of Ireland*, p. 190.

and 1960s, and the development of farm organisations into hugely effective lobby groups meant that farmers were among the primary beneficiaries of EEC membership, as reflected in the average farm income exceeding that of industrial workers by 1978. However, Brian Girvin's work, *Between Two Worlds* (1989), makes a more nuanced assessment of the benefits of EEC membership, claiming that the generous CAP transfers to Ireland fostered a dependency culture.[17] In contrast, Ó Gráda asserts in *A Rocky Road – The Irish Economy since the 1920s* (1997) that farmers reacted to 'drastic shifts in policy' in the years following EEC membership to maximise their incomes. John O'Hagan points out that the EEC farm payments made an important contribution to the increase in agricultural incomes in the 1970s, with farmers receiving two-thirds of these funds.[18] CAP transfers to Ireland totalled Ir£630 million in 1986, accounting for 4.6 per cent of GNP.[19] However, what Ó Gráda terms the 'gravy train' of supports was derailed to some extent in Ireland by the Beef Tribunal.[20] While the events that led directly to the Inquiry are outside the remit of this study, *The Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the Beef Processing Industry* (1994), as well as Fintan O'Toole's *Meanwhile Back on the Ranch* (1995), and Elaine Byrne's work *Political Corruption in Ireland 1922-2010 – A Crooked Harp?* (2012), shines a light on the close connections that existed between the owners of Ireland's leading meat companies and Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael.[21]

Memoirs have served a dual function for this study by providing an informal source of social history, while some sections of the more informed and analytical works are in themselves useful historical records. Written by, or on behalf of, participants in the farm or associated sectors, memoirs have been employed in this thesis to offer a fresh perspective on important events, and add depth to the overall narrative by offering insights and anecdotes on the individuals who shaped the industry. Indeed, they could be classed as 'considered' or 'polished' oral histories; lacking the spontaneity of the spoken word but still providing a unique personal perspective. One excellent such text is Maurice Colbert's *Recollections of the Co-op*

[17] Girvin, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 207.
[18] John O'Hagan, 'The Irish economy, 1973-2016' in Thomas Bartlett (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Ireland: Volume 4, 1880 to the present* (Cambridge, 2018), p. 502.
[19] Andy Conway, 'Agricultural Policy' in Patrick Keatinge (ed.) *Ireland and EEC Membership Evaluated,* (London, 1991), p. 57.
[20] Cormac Ó Gráda, *A Rocky Road – The Irish Economy since the 1920s* (Manchester, 1997), p. 164.
[21] Byrne, *Political Corruption in Ireland, 1922-2010*, pp 120-124; *Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the Beef Processing Industry*, pp 27-29, 348-350, 567-568; Fintan O'Toole, *Meanwhile Back on the Ranch* (London, 1995), pp 152-155.

Years (2007). A former executive with the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society (IAOS), the co-operative movement's umbrella body, his account of Clover Meats collapse and IMP's eventual failure in a fifteen-month period of 1984-85 offers a cogent and reasoned analysis of the events.[22] Con Hurley's insightful work, *The life and times of Noel Murphy* (2012), is another extremely useful publication, as is Raymond Keogh's *Cattleman* (2012). Hurley's book illustrates the extent to which the live export trade was based entirely on personal relationships; from dealing with farmers at fairs in north Cork or west Limerick for livestock, to the selling to cattle finishers and beef factories in Yorkshire or England's southwest.[23] Keogh's book gives a useful insight into how cattle exporters became involved in beef processing.[24] However, the inherent weakness of the memoir as a historical record is illustrated in both works, where events and issues of contention are clearly informed and coloured by personal experience. The same observation holds true for Bill Hayes's book *Drunk and Disorderly* (2001). While the record of Hayes's time working in the Irish meat industry of the early 1970s is extremely entertaining – the book reads more like a feature-length script for the British soap-opera Emmerdale than a meat industry memoir – its value as an accurate and reliable source is limited. However, the work provides insights into the backgrounds of the people who controlled the industry during the period, such as the enigmatic Hugh Tunney.[25]

PRIMARY SOURCES

The research followed a two-pronged approach which involved a qualitative and quantitative analysis of documentary evidence, combined with an exploration through oral history of the personal memories of relevant individuals. Identifying new and original documentary sources for this study was always a priority. Among the records which provided valuable material were the archives of the co-operative meat processor, Clover Meats, held by Kilkenny County Library. This unique archive includes previously unpublished material from board meetings, as well as consultant reports on the business's processing operations in Clonmel and Waterford. These sources illustrate the difficulties the firm had to confront, such as inefficient work

[22] Maurice Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years: a personal account* (Naas, 2007), pp 127-130.
[23] Con Hurley, *The Life and times of Noel Murphy* (Skibbereen, 2012), pp 120-126.
[24] Raymond Keogh, *Cattleman* (Bantry, 2012), pp 82-89.
[25] Bill Hayes, *Drunk and Disorderly* (Sydney, 2001), pp 75-101.

practices in its slaughter plants, and farmer board members who lobbied management for higher cattle prices to be paid to suppliers.[26] Moreover, access to the Irish Farmers' Association's Livestock Committee minutes from the 1950s to the 1980s provides a fresh insight into the industry. The committee's role was to inform IFA livestock policy, and communicate decisions back down to grassroots' members. The records of the committee's discussions, therefore, illustrate farmers' opinions on a range of issues during the period of study. Similarly, combing the minutes of Irish Cattle Traders' and Stockowners' Association meetings and their exchanges with successive Ministers of Agriculture illustrates livestock exporters' increasing unease at the processing sector's growing influence. These records provided a balance to other state-centred sources. Six industry-related reports which outline the origins of the beef industry, its development, and interactions with live cattle exports and the dairy sector have proven invaluable to the documentary arm of the research. These are the *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group,* (Dublin, 1968); *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, (Dublin, 1963); *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries,* Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), (Dublin, 1973); the *Development Study of the Irish Beef Packing and Processing Industries*, produced by Cooper and Lybrand for the IDA (Dublin, 1977); and the *Report of the Review on Beef Intervention and the Cattle Slaughter Premium System* (1976). Other primary sources at the core of the primary research include the Department of Agriculture Annual Reports, Central Statistics Office (CSO) data, and agriculture-related correspondence and reports of the Departments of the Taoiseach, Finance, Foreign Affairs and Industry and Commerce. The relevant files were identified during an initial assessment of the NAI catalogue, with all potentially useful material noted for a later and more in-depth examination. The Department of Agriculture and CSO records provide a statistical base for the work, from which it is possible to track trends in annual cattle export numbers, cattle prices, beef export tonnages, and changes in the national herd size. The National Farm Surveys, undertaken by the CSO in the 1950s and later by An Foras Talúntais (AFT), provide an interesting breakdown of farmer incomes across the different farm enterprises, such as beef production, dairying and tillage.

[26] Minutes of meeting of the Steering Committee of Clover Meats, 13 Oct. 1975, in Clover Meats' records, held by Kilkenny County Library; Studies carried out by management consultants Cruess Callaghan and Associates, dated Nov. 1978 and 17 Jan. 1979, in Clover Meats' records, reference CL/784 held by Kilkenny County Library.

Understanding the official British perspective on the emerging Irish beef industry is an important element of this work, and is provided by records of the Board of Trade, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food held by TNA. These sources confirm British unease at the shift in Irish exports from exclusively live cattle to a mix of beef and live cattle in the 1950s. Moreover, the sources establish that up to the early 1970s the UK's preference was for live cattle imports from Ireland. A further source of British attitudes to Irish beef exports was provided by the UK industrial publication, the *Meat Traders' Journal* – back issues of which are held by the British Library, London – as well as by British regional and national newspapers. Similarly, Irish newspapers were an important record of developments in the industry. The *Irish Farmers' Journal* was essential source and guide for this work; particularly the newspaper's coverage of the business affairs of the sector – for example, sales and purchases of specific factories, and trading results of the various participants. In addition, national and regional newspapers provided an important counterweight to the views of the *Irish Farmers' Journal*, and gave a very useful non-farmer perspective on developments in the beef industry.

Oral interviews supplemented the documentary research. The decision to employ oral history in the methodology was influenced by a desire to construct a more complete picture of the early beef industry, in particular, as told through personal experience. The use of oral interviews enables unique, new and previously unheard testimonies to be included in the historical narrative – a process described by Passerini as an attempt to 'widen the horizons of historical research'.[27] The interviews generally add colour and texture to the overall research, as well as some sharp insights. Nineteen individuals were interviewed for this specific work, with a further five recordings from my MA study into the Dublin Cattle Market also contributing to the research material. The interviewees chosen came from different branches of the agricultural sector. They included meat factory owners, managers, and workers; a trade union representative; farmers; livestock exporters; cattle traders; butchers; agricultural-journalists; staff with the Department of Agriculture and the research

[27] Luisa Passerini, 'Work Ideology and Consensus Under Italian Fascism' in *History Workshop Journal*, no. 8 (1979), p. 53.

body, An Foras Talúntais (AFT); as well as farmer representatives.[28] Most of the interviewees were well known in the agriculture and food processing sectors. They were initially asked if they would agree to be interviewed for the study. The topics to be addressed were outlined, and a transcription of discussion was made available to the participants following the interview.

The value of oral testimonies is set out by Kevin Kearns in his book on Stoneybatter in Dublin's north inner-city. Kearns cites four advantages of oral history:

> First, there can be no question as to the correct source. Second, oral histories possess a unique directness and spontaneity. Third, oral interviews typically reveal personal details of life not commonly recorded in written form. Fourth, and perhaps most important, oral history captures and preserves the life experiences of the individuals who lack the time or the literary capability to record their own memories.[29]

In essence, Kearns is describing oral history as a history of ordinary people, a sentiment echoed by Perks' and Thomson's aim – 'to include within the historical record the experiences and perspectives of groups of people who might otherwise have been 'hidden from history.'[30] Despite the obvious bias of individual memory – no less a problem in contemporary documentary sources – oral testimony remains an excellent method of ascertaining how events affected individuals' lives and provides perspectives challenging our view of the past. Utilizing semi-structured interviews focused on the core research questions outlined later in this introduction, the interviews allowed the subject to speak without interruption in order to identify emergent rather than pre-determined themes.[31] For example, Clover Meats' union representative, John Treacy, countered the farmer and management narrative that unsatisfactory employee performance and inflexible work practices were the main reasons for the collapse of the co-operative meat businesses.[32] Similarly, Meath beef

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[28] The interviews were carried out in accordance with the Mary Immaculate College Research Ethics Committee (MIREC). In line with accepted practice, the participants set their own conditions as to the future accessibility and use of their recorded/transcribed memories. In addition, transcripts of the interviews, or the actual recordings, were forwarded to the participants for approval before being used. Finally, interviewees could withdraw from the project at any time.

[29] Kevin C. Kearns, *Stoneybatter: Dublin's inner urban village* (Dublin, 1989), p. 66.

[30] Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader* (2nd ed., New York, 2006), p. ix.

[31] Hugo Slim, Paul Thompson, Olivia Bennett and Nigel Cross, 'Ways of Listening' in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds), *The Oral History Reader* (2nd ed., New York, 2006), p. 145.

[32] John Treacy, former worker and union representative at Clover Meats in Christendom, Ferrybank, Waterford (interviewed by Declan O'Brien on 17 July 2019).

farmer, Jimmy Cosgrave, provided a cattle producer's perspective of the factory owners, and on changes in the beef industry from the 1960s to the 1980s.[33] Meanwhile, interviews with meat factory managers, such as Gus Fitzpatrick and John Lyons brought an immediacy and spontaneity to the practicalities of working in beef factories during the period under examination.[34] As in Maura Cronin's experience of researching the creameries, the vast majority of those invited to interview for this thesis reacted positively.[35] However, two did not respond to enquiries, while another declined due to ill health.

There were, of course, challenges involved in the process. Some participants expressed unease that the direct transcription of their interview might cast them in a poor light since the flow of their answers was not as succinct, coherent and polished as a written reply, though most were satisfied to have their answers paraphrased. However, one decided to provide written answers to agreed questions after expressing dissatisfaction with the direct transcript of his interview. A further participant was omitted from the study after stating that he wished to read a complete section of the thesis before committing to being involved and allowing his interview to be used – something not deemed acceptable by the author. The Covid-19 pandemic and ill-health precluded visits and return visits to a small number of participants. These interviews were curtailed as a consequence, with any informal contributions listed in the footnotes as 'in conversation with the author'. The use of oral testimony in this study is not an attempt to challenge what Portelli has described as 'the holiness of writing', since documentary sources are a critical component of the work, but the interviews help build a more nuanced picture of the beef industry and its participants.[36]

[33] Interview with Jimmy Cosgrave, farmer from Enfield, Co Meath (17 Feb. 2014).
[34] Interview with Gus Fitzpatrick, the former general manager of Sallins-based Premier Meats Packers (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017); Interview with John Lyons of Longford-based meat processors M.J. Lyons and Sons (15 Aug. 2018).
[35] Maura Cronin, 'Remembering the Creameries' in Mark McCarthy (ed.), *Ireland's Heritages; Critical Essays on Memory and Identity* (Aldershot, 2005), pp 169-188, referenced here from the Mary Immaculate College institutional repository and digital archive, pp 4-5.
[36] Alessandro Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History Different' in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds), *The Oral History Reader* (2nd ed., New York, 2006), p. 38.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study was guided by five central research questions, which have informed my examination of the beef processing industry's expansion and growing influence on agricultural policy between 1950 and 1985. These research questions are:

- Why was Irish agricultural policy increasingly influenced by demands from the beef processing sector between 1950 and 1985?
- To what extent was agricultural policy dominated by the interests of beef processors, particularly from 1966 to 1986?
- What were the political and economic ramifications of the shift from live exports to that of processed beef for the Irish State, the economy and Ireland's 150,000 farmers?
- Why were famer-owned co-operatives unable to survive in beef and lamb slaughtering during the 1970s and 1980s, and how did Ireland's experience compare with that of other countries?
- How did ownership changes in the beef industry affect farmer representative bodies' relations with the privately-owned beef factories?
- Why was the meat processing industry facilitated in securing increased Government guarantees for beef exports to the Middle East during the 1980s, which ultimately proved corrosive to the State and damaging to the reputation of the beef industry?

OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

This study is broadly laid out in a chronological manner, with the various chapters generally relating to key periods of development in the beef processing industry. Profound changes to the political and trading environments, such as the signing of the AIFTA and EEC membership, also act as natural division between the chapters. Where themes and trends in the beef industry extend beyond the period of a given chapter, then particular aspects are addressed in specific sections. For example, Chapter Three explores the factors which motivated co-operatives to invest in meat processing; with how and why farmer-owned firms failed as a business model in the meat sector being outlined in Chapter Five. Similarly, the main Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) support measures are detailed in Chapter Four, with the impact of these subsidies detailed in both Chapters Four and Five.

The genesis of the beef processing industry between 1950 and 1954 is outlined in Chapter One, along with the sector's subsequent downturn and later recovery in the subsequent six years to 1960. This section of the study discusses how increased demand for beef in the US and Britain was central to the significant growth in the 1950s of the dead meat industry. In addition, it explores how Ireland was ideally placed to take advantage of expanding beef markets in Europe and Israel, and the role played by Government and the Department of Agriculture in initially encouraging the dead meat trade, before later attempting to curb its impact on overall livestock-related exports. This chapter details the location and ownership of the main meat factories in the 1950s, and how the individuals and companies became involved in the beef business. The nature of the beef processing undertaken in Ireland is also examined. For example, frozen and boxed cow-beef was shipped to the US, while Britain required chilled sides of beef. In addition, Chapter One examines how live cattle exporters initially reacted to the growth of beef processing, as well as exploring the financial and other associated business challenges encountered by the early beef factories.

The manner in which the beef industry consolidated its position within the livestock sector in the early 1960s is outlined in Chapter Two, along with the significant shift in national policy which the AIFTA represented. Frank Quinn's critical contribution to shaping the future of the Irish beef sector is outlined in this chapter. This Leitrim native emerged as the country's leading processor following his take-over of the International Meats' factory in Dublin's Grand Canal Street. He went on to build Ireland's most progressive and successful meat business, Irish Meat Packers (IMP). Moreover, this chapter analyses the fundamental change in national policy which resulted from the decision of Agriculture Minister, Charles Haughey, to support the interests of meat processors over those of the live exporters – traditionally the primary influencers of livestock policy. Haughey's actions during the AIFTA talks of 1965 extended British subsidies to Irish carcass beef exports to the UK for the first time. The tonnage of Irish beef exports trebled as result between 1965 and 1967.

Two associated developments are examined and explored in Chapter Three: the failure of the AIFTA to deliver higher cattle prices for farmers; and Cork Co-operative Marts' 1968 purchase of Frank Quinn's company, IMP. Cork Marts' purchase of IMP – which was supported and encouraged by the NFA, the *Irish Farmers' Journal*, and the co-operative movement – was a landmark event in the development of the beef processing industry, as it meant that two of Ireland's largest meat companies were now farmer-owned. The other co-operative meat processor was

Clover Meats. This chapter considers the extent to which the failure of the AIFTA to deliver increased cattle prices, allied to the poor marketing of Irish beef in Britain and the impact of the Farmers' Rights Campaign, contributed to Cork Marts' decision to enter beef processing. Similarly, it explores the significance of the broad-based support within the farm sector for EEC membership, and details why the Department of Agriculture had to introduce a rescue package for the beef industry in 1972.

The impact of CAP support schemes, such as intervention and Monetary Compensation Allowances (MCAs), on the development of the beef processing sector is examined in Chapter Four. While the period from 1973 to 1980 saw the total number of cattle slaughtered double to almost 1.4 million head, and beef exports more than treble to 470,000 tonnes, it was also a period when the volume of secondary processing declined markedly as intervention took close to a quarter of Ireland's total beef output. This chapter also details the growing influence of the beef processor lobby on Government policy. The efforts made by Agriculture Minister, Jim Gibbons, to restrict live cattle exports to the Middle East and calf shipments to Italy in 1978-79 illustrates the effectiveness of the factory lobby. Moreover, the mounting financial pressure on the co-operative meat processors is outlined, as intense competition from privately-owned beef factories and live cattle exporters resulted in reduced operating margins.

The final chapter examines why Clover Meats and IMP finally closed in 1984-85, and the implications of the co-operatives' failure for the beef industry, farmers, and the farm organisations. In addition, Chapter Five assesses whether the Irish co-operative experience mirrored that of other countries. It also outlines how the co-operative exit contributed to a more belligerent relationship between the remaining meat processors and the farm organisations. Moreover, this chapter details how the closure of IMP and Clover Meats resulted in the concentration of slaughtering capacity in the hands of a small number of beef processors, including Larry Goodman's AIBP, and Seamus Purcell of Purcell Meat Exports. Furthermore, it examines the extent to which the expansion of both AIBP and Purcell's beef operation was linked to increased exports to the Middle East, and how this trade was dependent on EEC export refunds and Irish exchequer guarantees in the form of export credit insurance (ECI). The allocation of increased levels of State guarantees on beef exports to Iraq, and the questionable manner in which they were allocated to beef processors, ultimately resulted in the Beef Tribunal.

This dissertation offers an overall assessment of the beef processing industry's establishment and growth from the 1950s to the 1980s, and the impact of this development on agricultural policy and the farm representative bodies in the subsequent decades. The study outlines the profound implications of the industry's expansion for Irish farming and the wider economy, since the financial fortunes of the State were closely linked to those of agriculture – particularly during the 1950s and 1960s. The growth in beef exports undermined the dominant position of live cattle shippers, primarily to Britain, in the 1950s and 1960s. This forced successive Irish governments to re-evaluate and renegotiate Ireland's trading relationship with the UK. The significance of this remarkable expansion, which prompted unease among senior British officials, goes beyond economic considerations as it challenges the historical depiction of 1950's Ireland as an economic and developmental wasteland. The emergence and consolidation of beef processing in the 1950s, allied to the establishment of the marts, belies the contention of economic stagnation during the decade. Despite its early success, however, the absence of an overarching national policy for the livestock sector, the State's largest indigenous exports generator, resulted in the beef industry developing in an ad-hoc and reactionary manner. The lack of such a strategic vision was reflected in the poor marketing of Irish beef, which consigned output to the commodity end of the market. This had serious consequences for the sector. It delayed the development of a secondary processing industry which could add value to Irish beef exports; it reduced the price paid to farmers for their cattle; while the high investment and low margins from processing exposed the weakness of the co-operative business model and eventually led to the privatisation of the industry. Crucially, this commodity-output model resulted in a quarter of Ireland's total beef output being purchased by the EEC-funded intervention support scheme in the 1970s and 1980s. This outlet effectively underpinned cattle prices and processors' profits. That this dependence culture was allowed to take hold in the industry illustrates the extent of beef processor influence on agricultural policy. It also exposes the inability of successive governments and of the Department of Agriculture to control a privately-owned Irish meat industry that had expanded beyond the State to include some of Europe's largest beef processors.

CHAPTER ONE: FROM BOOM TO BUST AND BACK AGAIN; THE GENESIS OF THE BEEF INDUSTRY (1950-60)

The genesis of the modern Irish beef export industry can be traced to the early 1950s when increased global meat demand prompted an unprecedented expansion in the country's processing capacity. This was a period of sustained growth for the sector, with the number of cattle slaughtered in beef export plants increasing ten-fold from 25,000 to 260,000 head between 1950 and 1954.[1] Exports of carcass and chilled beef expanded rapidly as a consequence, from a base of 6,400 tonnes at the opening of the decade to 44,000 tonnes just four years later.[2] The emergence of beef processing marked a fundamental shift in the structure of the Irish livestock industry, with the dominance of the cattle export trade challenged for the first time in more than a century. The critical importance of live cattle exports to the national economy added to the significance of this development. Indeed, the foreign trade in live cattle and calves was worth £14 million in 1948, or twenty-eight per cent of the state's total export earnings of £49 million, and by 1951 live exports accounted for thirty-one per cent of exports.[3] While around 450,000 cattle were shipped live each year between 1948 and 1950, just eleven thousand animals were slaughtered and exported as carcass beef.[4] Such was the state's dependence on cattle exports at the time that it was likened to a 'bullock republic'.[5] However, the 1950s was a decade of profound change, and while processed beef made up just two per cent of cattle exports between 1948 and 1950, it accounted for close to forty per cent of all foreign trade in cattle by 1960.[6]

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[1] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1950-51* (Dublin, 1951), pp 16-24; *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group,* Prl. 297 (Dublin, 1968), p. 36; Central Statistics Office, cattle and beef exports available at http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Database/eirestat/External%20Trade/External%20Trade_statbank.asp?SP=External%20Trade&Planguage=0 (Accessed on 21 Feb. 2018).

[2] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78.

[3] *Statistical Abstract of Ireland 1949*, compiled by the Central Statistics Office (Dublin 1950), P. 9576, p. 68 and p. 86; *Statistical Abstract of Ireland 1951*, compiled by the Central Statistics Office (Dublin 1952), Pr. 542, p. 74 and p. 113.

[4] Central Statistics Office, cattle and beef exports available at http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Database/eirestat/External%20Trade/External%20Trade_statbank.asp?SP=External%20Trade&Planguage=0 (Accessed on 21 Feb. 2018).

[5] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations in Ireland*, p. 40.

[6] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 36.

The sharp growth in processed beef exports was driven by guaranteed access to the British market for Irish cattle and beef under the 1948 trade agreement between the two countries, a thirty per cent devaluation of sterling in 1949 which made beef exports to non-sterling area countries more competitive, and the opening of the US market for Irish beef as demand surged due to the boom which followed the start of the Korean War in 1950.[7] Increased demand for beef in continental states such as Sweden and Germany – a consequence of the Marshall Plan-financed recovery in Western Europe's economies – gave further impetus to the sector's expansion.[8] Meanwhile, the ending in 1951 of price controls on cattle hides and of associated restrictions on their export also gave a major boost to processors as it enabled the cattle buyers employed by them to pay more for stock and compete with live exporters.[9] Additional slaughtering plants were commissioned to supply the additional quantities of beef required for the burgeoning export trade, with the Department of Agriculture registering ten additional factories between 1951 and 1953. The overall number of companies approved for beef exports exceeded thirty by the end of the decade.[10] Among the factories registered was Clonmel Foods which secured an export license in 1949, while Collins Brothers in Waterford and Kosher Meats Products in Dublin were registered by the Department of Agriculture in 1951. Five slaughter plants were approved the following year: W.P. English in Cobh, Co. Cork; the Frigorifico Ireland Ltd plant in Grand Canal Street, Dublin; Irish Meat Packers in Leixlip, Co Kildare; Premier Meat Packers in Sallins, Co Kildare; and Kildare Chilling in Kildare town. The Department issued a slaughter license to Dublin Meat Packers in 1953, as well as M. J. Lyons and Company in Longford, and Shannon

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[7] Ronan Fanning, *The Irish Department of Finance, 1922-58* (Dublin, 1978), pp 442, 464; *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Export Trade in Dressed Meat to the Dollar Area*, paragraphs 1 to 12, 23 Nov. 1951 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2); John Martin, *The Development of Modern Agriculture – British Farming since 1931* (Hampshire, 2000), p. 75; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 77; *IP*, 20 Sept. 1949; *II*, 20 Sept. 1949; Daly, *First Department*, p. 299.

[8] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1950-51* (Dublin, 1951), p. 17; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, 1951-52 (Dublin, 1952), pp 18-19; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 77; Daly, *First Department*, pp 299-302.

[9] Memorandum on proposals for the establishment of new fresh meat premises, 14 Mar. 1952 (NAI, DA/ 10/25/2/2); *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, 1951-52, (Dublin, 1952), p. 18.

[10] Confidential draft report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industry (1962), appendix p. 2 (NAI, DA/2005/82/1625).

Meats in Rathkeale, Co Limerick. The final factory of note to open during this period was that of M. J. Webb in Ballyhaunis, Co Mayo in 1957.[11]

BEGINNINGS

This unprecedented growth in Irish beef output in the early 1950s was powered mainly by the emerging export opportunities in the US and Britain. Indeed, between 1951 and 1953 eighty-five per cent of all beef sales went to North America and the UK.[12] Ireland was the only European country apart from Iceland that was free of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), and this was crucial to the growth in beef exports to the US during the 1950s and 1960s.[13] The country's disease-free status for FMD was due to a combination of strict Department of Agriculture controls on the import of livestock, and the geographic good fortune of Ireland being an island. The potential to exploit this unique position was first explored in the summer of 1950 by a joint trade mission to the US involving Department of Agriculture staff and officials from the Irish Fresh Meat Exporters' Society (IFMES), the beef processor representative body.[14] Sterling's devaluation in September 1949 was crucial to the emerging US trade as margins on beef exports to the dollar area increase by forty per cent as a consequence.[15] Targeting the US market was a deliberate move, as the trade had the potential to deliver a much-needed export boost to an Irish economy with a growing trade deficit and a severe shortage of dollars with which to purchase imports.[16] Indeed, the proportion of dollar imports doubled between 1938 and 1947, rising from eleven to twenty-two per cent.[17] The British Treasury expressed unease in 1948 that Ireland could put pressure on the sterling-area's dollar reserves unless the country

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[11] Confidential draft report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industry (1962), appendix p. 2 (NAI, DA/2005/82/1625).
[12] Based on an analysis of export data in *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 77.
[13] Interview with a retied Department of Agriculture official who did not wish to be named, will be referred to henceforth as Interview B (24 Sept. 2015); Agreed text of interview with Paddy Moore, former chief executive of Coras Beostoic agus Feola (CBF) (24 October 2017); *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Export Trade in Dressed Meat to the Dollar Area*, paragraph 27, 23 Nov. 1951 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2).
[14] *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Export Trade in Dressed Meat to the Dollar Area*, paragraph 4, 23 Nov. 1951 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2).
[15] *Irish Press*, 20 September 1949; *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Export Trade in Dressed Meat to the Dollar Area*, paragraphs 4 and 5, 23 Nov. 1951 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2).
[16] Cormac Ó Gráda, *A rocky road: The Irish economy since the 1920s* (Manchester, 1997), p. 23; Bielenberg & Ryan, *An Economic History of Ireland*, p. 128.
[17] Barry & O'Mahony, 'Regime change in 1950s Ireland' in *Irish Economic and Social History*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (2017), p. 50.

received significant support from the Marshall Plan.[18] The urgency to improve Irish export earnings led to the formation of the Industrial Development Authority (IDA) in 1949, the Dollar Exports Advisory Committee (DEAC) in 1950 and the establishment of Córas Tráchtála (CTT) in 1952. CTT was tasked with providing marketing advice to businesses, especially those trading in North America.[19] The early Irish experiences of the US beef market were positive: a one-hundred ton trial shipment in September 1950 met importer specifications and by the summer of 1951 North American meat traders had purchased more than 2,300 tons valued at over two million dollars.[20]

The employment offered by the beef business was a rare chink of light in the gloomy economic landscape which characterised 1950s Ireland. Brian Girvin has aptly described the decade as being one of crisis; and he was not alone in this assessment, with Ferriter portraying the time as 'bleak'.[21] The period was marked by growing trade deficits and consequent balance of payments crises, increased unemployment, spiralling emigration and austerity budgets. The balance of payments difficulties of the 1940s intensified in the early 1950s, with Ronan Fanning noting that the country's trade deficit for the first eight months of 1951 reached £90 million, exceeding the total for the previous year, while the balance of payments deficits for the first two years of the decade grew from £35 million to £61 million.[22] The difficulties were not confined to Ireland. The sterling area lost ten per cent of its gold and dollar reserves or the equivalent of $900 million in the first half of 1951.[23] The reaction of Fianna Fáil's conservative Minister for Finance, Seán MacEntee, to the challenges facing the new government was to opt for austerity.[24] The deflationary budget of 1952, which went as far as cutting food subsidies, signalled the start of several years of income stagnation, as McEntee's conservative policies were continued by his successor Gerard Sweetman, the Fine Gael Minister for Finance in the Inter-Party Government of 1954-57.[25] Industrial employment contracted by almost

[18] Briefing note by Edward Rowe-Dutton (Treasury) following discussions with Irish delegation to trade negotiations, 21 June 1948 (TNA, DO 35/4000).
[19] Bielenberg & Ryan, *An Economic History of Ireland*, p. 128; Barry & Ó Fathartaigh, 'An Irish industrial revolution: the creation of the Industrial Development Authority (IDA), 1949-59', p. 44.
[20] *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Export Trade in Dressed Meat to the Dollar Area*, summary paragraph 1, 23 Nov. 1951 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2.
[21] Girvin, *Between Two Worlds*, p.196; Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*, p. 466.
[22] Fanning, *The Irish Department of Finance*, p. 472; Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, p. 322.
[23] Tom Feeney, *Sean MacEntee: a political life* (Dublin, 2009), p. 182.
[24] Fanning, *The Irish Department of Finance*, p. 482.
[25] Feeney, *Sean MacEntee*, pp 181, 201; Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*, p. 466.

40,000, or fourteen per cent, in the stagnant economic climate between 1951 and 1959.[26] Thirty years after independence, the country was still struggling to develop a vibrant indigenous industrial base, and with poor job prospects at home, the boat to Britain, North America or Australia was the option of choice for tens of thousands of young Irish men and women. As the decade progressed the emigration crisis worsened – it averaged 42,000 per year between 1956 and 1961 – prompting uncomfortable questions about the economic cost of political independence.[27] Indeed, such was the level of Irish migration in the late 1950s to regional centres in the north of England such as Liverpool, Birmingham, Manchester and Huddersfield that Deputy Noel Browne called for the establishment of 'consulates or an advisory care and assistance bureaux' in the cities by the Department of External Affairs. However, the Minister for External Affairs, Frank Aiken, said the needs of the emigrants 'can best be met by the establishment of clubs by the Irish themselves'.[28]

Even though the opening of the US and Canadian markets to Irish companies represented a major breakthrough for the beef sector, Britain was the primary outlet for carcass beef exports during the early 1950s. This was due to a combination of reduced UK cattle supplies and increased beef demand as the post-war economic recovery gathered pace. Indeed, the basic weekly minimum wage increased from £4 to £7 between 1947 and 1957, while carcass meat consumption reached 18.23 ounces per person by 1955 – a level from which it has been declining ever since.[29] Processed beef sales to Britain grew from three thousand tons in 1950 to more than 37,000 tons in 1954, when buyers in England, Scotland and Wales took almost eighty-five per cent of Irish exports.[30] Access to the British market for Irish agricultural goods was formalised under the 1938 trade agreement, and these links were consolidated in 1948 when the UK agreed to tariff-free access for Irish commodities such as beef and butter, while Irish producers had the added bonus of indirectly benefitting from British farm subsidies.[31] These agricultural supports were a legacy of British wartime production incentives which were revamped in 1947 in the wake of a severe balance

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[26] Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*, p. 466.
[27] Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, p. 359; Adrian Redmond (ed.), *That was then, this is now – change in Ireland 1949-1999* (Dublin, 2000), p. 14.
[28] Dáil debates Vol. 162, No. 1, 29 May 1957.
[29] Holderness, *British Agriculture Since 1945*, p. 175.
[30] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78.
[31] Daly, *First Department*, pp 296-7.

of payments crisis in the UK.[32] To counter the cost of the increased food imports from North America, and a shortage of dollars with which to pay for these supplies, the British Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Tom Williams, introduced the 1947 Agriculture Act which aimed to grow farm output by twenty per cent over four years.[33] A key element of the new policy was guaranteed prices for the main food commodities such as fat cattle, milk, eggs, cereals and potatoes, thereby providing a measure of income stability for farmers.[34] For beef farmers this meant that the price of fat cattle was set at the start of the year, with an annual review of returns built into the process.[35] Irish stock qualified for the guaranteed British cattle prices under the 1948 trade agreement, once the imported livestock were retained on UK farms for up to three months. A 5s. per cwt differential was levied on Irish cattle to cover what were termed marketing costs.[36] These guaranteed prices encouraged the export of Irish cattle for finishing and slaughter in Britain, and between a quarter and one-third of 1.5 million head finished each year by UK farmers in the early 1950s were imported from Ireland.[37]

This live trade was founded on close personal and business relationships which dated back decades. Jack Keogh, for example, who was a stand holder in Dublin's cattle market and was an established livestock trader, had supplied 150 fat cattle each week to the Boothman and Kaplan slaughterhouse in Birkenhead, England, through the 1930s.[38] The family of the Cork cattle exporter Noel Murphy had developed a similar relationship with the North family from Doncaster in Yorkshire over three generations. Stock bought by the Murphys in Munster were railed and shipped to the south Yorkshire town where they were sold on to a network of local farmers.[39] However, the early 1950s witnessed a significant increase in Irish beef exports to England and Scotland. The significant expansion in Irish beef shipments to

[32] Peter Self & Herbert J. Storing, *The state and the farmer* (London, 1962), p. 65.
[33] B. A. Holderness, *British agriculture since 1945* (Manchester, 1985), pp 12-13; Self & Storing, S*tate and the farmer*, p. 65.
[34] Speech by British Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Tom Williams, to be delivered in the House of Commons on 15 November 1946 (TNA, MAF 194/24).
[35] Martin, *Development of Modern Agriculture*, p. 71.
[36] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1948-49* (Dublin, 1949), pp 16-20; Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, p. 66.
[37] Martin, *The Development of Modern Agriculture*, p. 115; H.G. Foster, 'Irish trade with Britain' in I.F. Baillie and S.J. Sheehy (eds.), *Irish Agriculture in a Changing World* (Edinburgh, 1971), p. 74.
[38] Raymond Keogh, *Cattleman* (Bantry, 2012), p. 52.
[39] Con Hurley, *The Life and Times of Noel Murphy* (Skibbereen, 2012), p. 13 and p. 126.

Britain was influenced by a combination of factors, including reduced UK supplies as a result of lower than anticipated growth in home production. Greater access to the UK market for Irish meat processors, secured under the 1948 trade agreement, also contributed to the increased level of imports from Ireland. Moreover, stronger global demand for food commodities as a result of the Korean War added to the volume of trade.[40] Changes to the British support payments also encouraged Irish beef exports. Faced with reduced meat supplies in 1950, the British Ministry of Food, the sole authority for UK food imports and pricing up to 1954, reduced the price differential paid on fat cattle as compared to those paid on beef.[41] Traditionally the British authorities had paid a premium for fat cattle, equivalent to 1.5 pence per pound over the price paid for processed beef. This meant that a beef animal sold live could make around £3.15s. per head more than if that same animal was slaughtered, butchered and its beef sold. The belief was that the value of the animal's hide and offal would compensate the processor for the difference between the 'live' and 'dead' price.[42] In 1950, however, the British premium on fat cattle was cut by 1.5 pence per pound to a farthing (one-quarter of a penny) per pound due to a shortage of beef.[43] This effectively reduced the price differential between live cattle and carcass beef from £3.15s. per animal to around 15s. per animal. Put another way, it gave Irish beef processors an additional £3 on every animal slaughtered, which was a major boost when fat cattle generally sold for £44 to £48 per head in Dublin Cattle Market that year.[44] The beef factory operators received a further boost in May 1951 when the Department of Industry and Commerce decided to lift restrictions on the export of cattle hides, and to match the price paid for hides to that available in Britain (2s.6d. per lb).[45] Up to this point Irish cattle hide prices were fixed at artificially low levels to

[40] Holderness, British agriculture since 1945, pp 16-17; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, pp 42-43; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1948-49*, p. 20; Daly, *First Department,* p. 299.
[41] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations,* p. 70; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1950-51*, (Dublin, 1951), p. 20.
[42] This calculation is based on a kill-out average of around sixty pounds of beef per cwt live-weight, which Robert Roe described as the standard for the time. Cattle averaged ten cwt at slaughter which gives an average meat yield of around 600lbs. (Interview with Robert Roe on the 1 Nov. 2016).
[43] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1950-51* (Dublin, 1951), p. 20; Department of Agriculture memorandum on the beef processing industry dated 14 Mar. 1952 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2).
[44] The reduced differential between the live-weight and beef price gave processors an extra one-and-a-quarter pence per pound or seventy five pence per cwt live-weight. Given that cattle averaged ten cwt at slaughter this equates to 750d per animal or around £3 per head (£1 = 240d.). (Interview with Robert Roe on the 1 Nov. 2016); *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1950-51*, p. 6.
[45] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1951-52* (Dublin, 1952), p. 18.

support the leather and tannery sectors by ensuring cheaper raw materials.[46] The increase in cattle hide prices, which ranged from £3 to £5 per animal, was credited by the Department of Agriculture with removing a serious impediment to the sector's development and helping to substantially increase beef exports to Britain, as well as to continental European markets.[47] Efforts to halt the smuggling of cattle hides from the Republic to Northern Ireland may also have informed the policy change. The illicit trade, which was worth £5 per hide, was described as the 'most profitable smuggling business on the border' during the spring of 1951.[48]

MEAT COMPANIES

Those active in the beef processing business of the early 1950s generally fell into three groups. There were existing operators in the meat export sector who diversified into beef processing when the export opportunities first arose between 1950 and 1952. This group included companies like Clover Meats and Castlebar Bacon Company, primarily involved in the pork and bacon business, or Roscrea Meats, involved in the canned meat sector.[49] Second were smaller food companies, such as that owned by Frank Quinn, based in New Street in Dublin's south inner city, a firm that traditionally supplied the Irish home market with beef, lamb, bacon and pork products but expanded into the export trade when the opportunity arose from 1950.[50] The third group consisted of new entrants to the dead meat business, people who usually had a background in the live cattle trade but had little or no experience in animal slaughtering and processing. This group included men such as Jack Keogh (referenced above) who was central to the establishment of Irish Meat Packers in Leixlip, Co Kildare, one of the leading Irish beef processors from the 1950s to the 1980s.[51] Gerard

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[46] Department of Agriculture memorandum on the beef processing industry dated 14 March 1952 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2).

[47] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1951-52*, p. 18; Department of Agriculture memorandum on the beef processing industry dated 14 March 1952 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2); *Irish Press*, 23 May 1951; *II*, 24 May 1951.

[48] *Monaghan Argus*, 21 April 1951; *Anglo-Celt*, 21 April 1951.

[49] Confidential draft report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industry (1962), appendix p. 2 (NAI, DA/2005/82/1625); Application by Clover Meats to extend freezing and holding capacity for beef lines, 19 Feb. 1951 (NAI, DA/10/23/1); *Connaught Telegraph*, 12 Jan. 1952.

[50] Application by Frank Quinn and Company to extend Dublin premises for export of beef products, 11 Nov. 1951 (NAI, DA/10/7/145/1).

[51] Keogh, *Cattleman*, pp 82-89; Application by Irish Meat Packers for a cattle slaughtering licence, 10 July 1952 (NAI, DA/10/7/62/4).

and Gordon Counihan from Donabate, Co Dublin also became involved in beef processing. The brothers, who were well-known cattle traders, were significant shareholders and backers of Frigorifico in Ireland, the company which developed the largest beef processing facility in the country during the 1950s at Dublin's Grand Canal Street.[52]

Switching into beef processing made obvious business sense in the early 1950s for companies that were already active in the meat sector. The rewards on offer were enticing, particularly from the lucrative North American market. It was estimated by the Department of Agriculture that a gross profit of £1,387 or £41 per head was made on a consignment of thirty-four cattle supplied as manufacturing or boneless beef to the International Packers' Commercial Company of Chicago in August 1951. Since the cattle were bought for £2,215 and sold for £3,602, the gross margin on the transaction was almost sixty-three per cent.[53] While the Department pointed out that these 'profits' did not take account of expensive overheads such as the cost of premises, power and equipment, the returns were nonetheless extremely attractive in an industry that generally worked off margins of between one and four per cent.[54] Among those businesses that moved into the beef trade was the Castlebar Bacon Company, which had diversified into cattle processing by 1952 and was killing between one hundred and 120 cattle per day, primarily cows.[55] Meanwhile, the *Cork Examiner* reported in April 1952 that the Lunham Brothers' pig slaughtering factory in Cork city, which had been closed for the previous twelve months, was to be commissioned once again. Management set an ambitious target of processing up to two thousand cattle per week.[56] Companies that were traditionally involved in the canning of meat also diversified in the carcass beef processing. The most long-standing operator that specialised in canned beef was Roscrea Meat Products. Originally called the Roscrea Meat Company, it was established in 1935 as a canning

[52] 'Frigorifico of Ireland Limited, sale of by Irish Assurance Company Limited 1954' (NAI, TSCH/3/S15762).
[53] Appendix 2 to the *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Export Trade in Dressed Meat to the Dollar Area* (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2).
[54] Gus Fitzpatrick interview (18 Oct. 2016); Agreed text of interview with Paddy Moore (24 Oct. 2017); Appendix 2 to the *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Export Trade in Dressed Meat to the Dollar Area* (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2).
[55] Confidential draft report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industry (1962), appendix p. 2 (NAI, DA/2005/82/1625); *Connaught Telegraph*, 12 Jan. 1952.
[56] *CE*, 11 April 1952.

plant for old and injured cows and cattle by George Fasenfeld, a German national, along with Con and Gerry Crowley from north Cork.[57] Interestingly, given that the factory was operating under a state contract, the Fianna Fáil TD Robert Briscoe was also a shareholder in the Roscrea development. This caused serious embarrassment for the Fianna Fáil government when the issue was raised in the Dáil in 1938 by James Dillon and other Cumann na nGaedheal TDs.[58] The tie up between the Crowleys and Fasenfeld, like many later associations in the beef industry, was a partnership of cattle buyers and business interests. The Crowleys were established cattle traders from Castletownroche, Co Cork, while Fasenfeld brought the necessary technical and engineering acumen to the venture.[59] The slaughter plant was developed to provide an outlet for 'cull cows', i.e. old cows that were no longer in milk and were not suitable for the beef trade. In addition, the factory took injured or diseased animals that similarly could not be fattened for beef or were not fit for human consumption.[60] A base price of fifty shillings per head was paid by the Department of Agriculture for cull animals delivered at any railhead. These were then transported to Roscrea.[61] Dr James Ryan, the Fianna Fáil Minister for Agriculture in 1936, estimated that between fifty thousand and 100,000 cows were culled from the dairy and beef herds each year, with the Roscrea factory providing an outlet which had not previously existed for many of these animals.[62] Cow meat fit for human consumption was processed into canned meat products, such as stewed steak, for the home and export market, while condemned animals went for meat and bone meal or meat meal, products which were used as constituents in animal feed and in fertiliser.[63] The Roscrea plant's start-up costs were heavily subsidised by the Fianna Fáil government, with the state financing seventy-five per cent of its £16,000 development costs.[64] This investment is noteworthy given Fianna Fáil's preferred but failed policy of encouraging tillage at this time and the damage inflicted on the cattle trade by the Economic War. The Roscrea factory quickly developed outlets for its products at home, in Britain and on the continent. Indeed, within four months of the factory opening George Fasenfeld

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[57] *IP*, 21 Feb. 1936; *Nenagh Guardian*, 17 Aug. 1935; *Leinster Express*, 10 Aug. 1935; *Southern Star*, 24 Sept. 1938.
[58] Dáil debates Vol. 70, No. 7, 23 Mar. 1938.
[59] *Southern Star*, 24 Sept. 1938; *Leinster Express*, 10 Aug. 1935; Keogh, *Cattleman*, pp 50-51.
[60] Dáil debates Vol. 70, No. 7, 23 Mar. 1938; Keogh, *Cattleman*, pp 50-51; *CE*, 15 May 1936.
[61] *CE*, 15 May 1936; Hurley, *Noel Murphy*, p. 48; Daly, *First Department*, pp 173-174.
[62] *Nenagh Guardian*, 17 Aug. 1935; Keogh, *Cattleman*, pp 50-51.
[63] *CE*, 15 May 1936; Dáil debates Vol. 70, No. 7, 23 Mar. 1938.
[64] Daly, *First Department*, pp 173-174; Nenagh Guardian, 12 Oct. 1985.

sought the assistance of the Department of External Affairs to explore potential markets in Spain, and by 1936 the company was selling product to Belgium.[65] However, Britain was its main export outlet, and Roscrea was a key player in building Ireland's presence in the canned meats section of the UK market. As Con Hurley and Raymond Keogh observe the company capitalised on the absence of tariffs on processed beef in order to sidestep the Economic War's trade barriers between Britain and Ireland, and by 1944 the plant was slaughtering up to two hundred cattle a day and employed three hundred staff.[66] Clover Meats was another significant player in the canned meat business that diversified into carcass beef. Traditionally involved in cattle and pig slaughtering, Clover Meats was one the few farmer-owned co-operatives active in the meat sector and had slaughter plants in Waterford, Limerick and Wexford.[67] The co-operative had processed cattle for canned meats at its Christendom site outside Waterford city since 1938, but by 1951 the firm was applying to the Department of Agriculture for a licence to increase the factory's cold store and freezer capacity as its carcass beef operations expanded.[68]

DOMESTICS

Further slaughtering capacity for the export trade was delivered by wholesale meat companies that had primarily supplied the home meat market even before the 1950s export boom. While Irish beef consumption in the 1950s was low by international standards – 33lb per person per year in 1956-58, compared to 60-74lb in Britain, and 95lb per person in the US – close to 220,000 cattle were killed and processed each year to meet local requirements.[69] The crossover between suppliers of the domestic meat market and the export trade is highlighted by the fact that in 1952 a total of nineteen different food companies that were licensed to export beef to the US were using as their registered processing centre the Dublin Corporation Abattoir located on the North Circular Road which was originally commissioned to provide slaughtering

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[65] George Fasenfeld to the Department of External Affairs, 20 Dec. 1935, (NAI, DFA/3/132/13); Letter from J.A. Belton of the Irish Legation in Paris (NAI, DFA/2/32/660).
[66] Hurley, *Noel Murphy*, p. 48; Keogh, *Cattleman*, pp 50-51; *CE*, 23 Nov. 1944.
[67] Application from Clover Meats for a cattle slaughter licence for its Christendom factory, Waterford (NAI, DA/10/7/23/1); Letter from Clover Meats seeking clearance to extend its freeze rooms and cold store facilities, 19 Feb. 1951 (NAI, DA/10/7/23/1).
[68] Ibid.
[69] Holderness, British agriculture since 1945, p. 175; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 41 and p. 80; IBEC Technical Services Corporation, *An appraisal of Ireland's Industrial Potentials* (The Stacy May Report), (Dublin and New York, 1952), p. 70.

facilities for the city's butchers.[70] While the processors using the Dublin Corporation Abattoir included some export-oriented concerns such as Roscrea Meat Products, others were significant suppliers to the Irish meat trade. These included the aforementioned Frank Quinn of New Street, as well as Paddy Heron and Dessie Farrelly who were Dublin-based wholesale butchers and meats traders.[71] For these Dublin-based companies the jump from servicing the home trade to taking on beef export contracts was facilitated by their use of the corporation abattoir, as they side-stepped the requirement for expensive infrastructural investment by using its slaughtering halls, cold rooms and freezer capacity. This prompted complaints to the Department of Agriculture from firms that had taken on such overheads and invested in expensive refrigeration and freezing facilities for the US trade, but companies availing of the Dublin Corporation Abattoir continued to supply the North American market up to the early 1960s.[72]

The growth in international beef demand meant that by 1952 the total number of cows and cattle killed for export markets, for both processed beef and canning outlets, exceeded the number processed for home consumption (254,000 head versus 220,000 head) for the first time.[73] Processors servicing the domestic trade were ideally placed to tender for a share of the new overseas contracts, and some grasped the opportunities to establish themselves as major players in the industry. Dessie Farrell, who had a butchery business in Dublin, was part of a consortium that bought Premier Meat Packers at Sallins, Co Kildare in 1959, while Paddy Heron went on to become a shareholder and director of Shannon Meats in Limerick.[74] Meanwhile, Frank Quinn extended his New Street plant and was slaughtering four hundred cattle a week – killed primarily at the Dublin Corporation Abattoir – by the end of 1951.[75] Quinn's

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[70] List of registered premises for the export of meat to the US, included in a Department of Agriculture memorandum, 14 Mar. 1952 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2).

[71] Interviews with Gus Fitzpatrick, (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017); Letter from International Meat Company stating the company will continue to supply local contracts from it Grand Canal Street facility even though it has an export licence, 6 Jan. 1958 (NAI, DA/10/7/51/1); List of registered premises for the export of meat to the US, included in a Department of Agriculture memorandum, 14 Mar. 1952 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2).

[72] Department of Agriculture memorandum (10/4/100) on the beef processing industry, 14 Mar. 1952, (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2); Confidential draft report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industry (1962), appendix p. 2 (NAI, DA/2005/82/1625).

[73] Stacy May Report, p. 70; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 81.

[74] Interviews with Gus Fitzpatrick (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017); *Limerick Leader*, 14 Feb. 1953; *IP*, 9 Feb. 1953.

[75] Application by Frank Quinn and Company to extend premises at New Street, Dublin, 11 Nov. 1951 (NAI, DA/10/7/145/1).

beef exports were not limited to the US. He was involved in the sale of frozen beef to Sweden in 1953, while new tripe packing facilities were commissioned at his New Street facility with a view to securing more 'remunerative markets' for offal on the Continent. Although the overall Continental market was small relative to Britain, these outlets still accounted for around five per cent of Irish beef exports between 1951 and 1954.[76] In 1956, another of Quinn's firms, Meatpack, won a contract to supply beef to the US Airforce.[77] However, it was Quinn's takeover of the Frigorifico in Ireland plant at Dublin's Grand Canal Street in October 1957 – which will be dealt with in more detail later – that confirmed his standing as a major player in the Irish beef industry by the close of the 1950s.[78]

NEW ENTRANTS

Livestock traders and exporters were important investors in many of the new slaughtering facilities developed during the industry's first expansion phase in the early 1950s.[79] Cattle traders were involved in the opening of new factories in Kildare, Mayo, Limerick and south Tipperary between 1949 and 1956 as the growth in meat processing moved the industry's footprint beyond its traditional confines of the country's port towns.[80] Mickey Webb who secured an export licence for a slaughter plant in Ballyhaunis in 1957 was a good example of a cattle trader turned processor. His family were well-known livestock traders in the west for over three generations who bought cattle at fairs across Mayo, Galway and Roscommon.[81] They were also involved in the meat trade and owned a butchery business in Ballyhaunis.[82] Cattle trader interests were also heavily involved in the development of Premier Meat Packers at Sallins, Co Kildare. Originally a slaughter plant for horses, it was

[76] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78.
[77] Report on sale of frozen beef to Sweden 1951-1953 (NAI, DFA/2005/82/410); Application by Frank Quinn and Company to extend premises at New Street, Dublin, 11 Nov. 1951 (NAI, DA/10/7/145/1); Letter from US Airforce to Meatpack, 8 Aug. 1956 (NAI, DA/10/7/145/1).
[78] Correspondence between the International Meat Company and the Department of Agriculture from 9 Oct. 1957 to 31 Nov. 1957 confirming the takeover of the Grand Canal Street factory by International Meat Company (NAI, DA/10/7/51/1).
[79] Gus Fitzpatrick interview (18 Oct. 2016); Confidential draft report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industry (1962), appendix p. 2 (NAI, DA/2005/82/1625).
[80] Confidential draft report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industry (1962), appendix p. 2 (NAI, DA/2005/82/1625).
[81] *Connaught Telegraph*, 5 January 1957; *Connacht Tribune*, 6 July 1957.
[82] Declan O'Brien in conversation with a former livestock dealer (7 Oct. 2016).

processing cattle by the time it was bought in 1959 by John Murray, Jack Kenny and Dessie Farrell.[83] The trio covered all the bases in the cattle and meat business. Murray was a cattle dealer from Drogheda, Farrelly was a Dublin wholesale butcher, while Kenny, a Clonmel native, was a meat trader in London's renowned Smithfield Market.[84] This mix of backgrounds ensured the partnership had expertise in sourcing and buying the stock, slaughtering and processing the animals, and, crucially, in selling the meat. Kenny's contacts in Smithfield were arguably the most valuable asset the business possessed, given that close to sixty per cent of Irish beef and lamb exports to Britain were destined for London.[85] Another noted cattle exporter, Omar Van Landeghem, was involved in the establishment in 1953 of Shannon Meats at Rathkeale, Co Limerick. Van Landeghem was a Belgian national living in Ballyboughal in north Co Dublin, who started out exporting horses to France and Belgium after the Second World War and went on to become a key figure in the importation of Charolais cattle in the 1960s and the promotion of this beef breed in Ireland.[86] He headed up a consortium which included the Sheahan and Keating families from the Rathkeale area and over two hundred small shareholders, mainly livestock farmers from Limerick and north Cork who traded with the factory.[87] Also involved as a shareholder and investor was the Dublin meat trader Paddy Heron.[88] Close to £100,000 was invested in developing the beef processing plant at the old workhouse site in the town during 1952 and 1953.[89] Shannon Meats traded primarily in Britain through the Smithfield Market, as well as exporting boxed boneless beef to the US, and chilled beef to Germany and Spain.[90] Among the most significant beef factory developments by cattle traders during this period, however, were the Irish Meat Packers business in Leixlip, Co Kildare promoted by Jack Keogh, and the Frigorifico of Ireland plant in Grand Canal Street, Dublin by Gerard and Gordon Counihan. Keogh was a cattle trader in the Dublin Cattle Market, who had a network

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[83] Interview with Gus Fitzpatrick (18 October 2016).
[84] *IFJ*, 24 Oct. 1964 and 30 Aug. 1969; Interview with Gus Fitzpatrick (18 Oct. 2016).
[85] Confidential draft report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industry (1962), appendix p. 10 (NAI, DA/2005/82/1625).
[86] Interview B (24 Sept. 2015); *IFJ*, 27 Jan. 1962, 20 Mar. 1965, 18 July 1965, 11 Jan. 1975.
[87] ICMSA briefing note on the association's investment in Shannon Meats, received 25 Oct. 2016; Application by Shannon Meats for a Trade Loan Guarantee from Shannon Meats, 10 Nov. 1954 (NAI, INDC/IND/5/44).
[88] *IP*, 9 Feb. 1953; *Limerick Leader*, 14 Feb. 1953.
[89] *Limerick Leader*, 14 Feb. 1953; *IP*, 9 Feb. 1953; *CE*, 14 April 1952.
[90] Application by Shannon Meats for a Trade Loan Guarantee from Shannon Meats, 10 Nov. 1954 (NAI, INDC/IND/5/44).

of buyers acting for him throughout the country and established export markets.[91] Similarly, the Counihans were noted cattle finishers in north county Dublin, and also active traders and exporters.[92] Over £330,000 was invested by shareholders in the Frigorifico of Ireland venture, with the total outlay on plant and equipment at the facility, which opened in the spring of 1952, exceeding £765,000.[93] Investment of this scale by such prominent cattle exporters was a clear vote of confidence in beef processing, and confirmation that the sector was very quickly securing its position in the wider livestock industry.

FACTORY LOCATIONS

Dublin and its hinterland had a high concentration of beef exporting companies in the early 1950s, with Waterford and Cork being the other major centres.[94] As already noted, eighteen Dublin-based firms, as well as Roscrea Meats, used the Dublin Corporation Abattoir as a processing centre.[95] However, a number of proposals in 1951 and in early 1952 to develop beef and lamb plants in Dublin city and county sparked fears of an over-concentration of the country's meat processing capacity in the capital.[96] An inter-departmental report on the industry pointed out that eleven new slaughter plants were planned for Dublin city and county by the end of 1951, with a further six planned for Kildare.[97] Since this clustering of industry ran counter to the government's industrial policy at the time, the Fianna Fáil Minister for Agriculture, Tom Walsh, outlined his preference for a more dispersed expansion in the sector's capacity, but he stopped short of threatening to refuse slaughter plant licences to achieve this objective. Walsh claimed that such a move 'might be construed as

[91] Keogh, *Cattleman*, pp 9-91.

[92] A briefing note on Gordon Counihan, 11 Oct. 1954 (NAI, TSCH/3/S15762); Keogh, *Cattleman*, pp 82-84.

[93] *IP*, 9 Oct. 1954; *II*, 16 Nov. 1951.

[94] *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the export trade in dressed meat to the dollar area*, paragraph 16, 23 Nov. 1951 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2); List of registered premises for the export of meat to the US, included in a Department of Agriculture memorandum, 14 Mar. 1952 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2).

[95] List of registered premises for the export of meat to the US, included in a Department of Agriculture memorandum, 14 Mar. 1952 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2).

[96] Letter from the government secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Tom Walsh, 22 Mar. 1952 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2); Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the export trade in dressed meat to the dollar area, paragraph 16, 23 Nov. 1951 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2).

[97] *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the export trade in dressed meat to the dollar area*, 23 Nov. 1951 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2).

hindering the development of carcass meat exports.'[98] The presence of a reliable transport and export infrastructure and the availability of skilled workers attracted beef slaughtering businesses to the country's main port cities. The slaughter plants needed access to the rail network for moving both cattle and beef, they required port services to export product, and the cities had existing meat processing concerns which ensured a ready supply of skilled butchers to work on factory slaughter lines.[99]

Established shipping routes to the beef sector's primary markets in Britain, Europe and North America had an obvious appeal for meat processors who located in the country's leading ports. Dublin had existing ferry services which linked the city to Birkenhead and Hollyhead, in addition to a regular cattle boat service to Glasgow. The *Munster*, *Leinster, Kilkenny, Kerry, Kildare* and *Meath* were the vessels on the Birkenhead route; while the *Slieve Bawn, Slieve League, Slieve More, Slieve Bloom* and *Slieve Donard* sailed between Dublin and Hollyhead. The Glasgow route was serviced by the *Lairdsglen, Lairdsburn*, *Lairdshill, Lairdsloch, Lairdsdale* and *Lairdsmoor*.[100] Cork and Waterford also had established routes to market: as already stated, beef shipments from Cork and Waterford to the German port of Bremerhaven were a feature of the US forces' contract from the early 1950s, while both ports had established routes to Britain through their involvement with the live cattle trade. The *Innisfallen* sailed from Cork to Fishguard three days a week, the *Kenmare*, and later the *Glengarrif,* serviced the Cork to Birkenhead route each Saturday, while the *Rathlin* ran between Cork and Glasgow on the same day. Meanwhile, the *Great Western* sailed from Waterford to Fishguard three days a week, with the *Rockabill* on the Waterford to Birkenhead route each Tuesday.[101]

However, despite the advantage offered by Dublin, Cork and Waterford, a 1962 survey of beef and lamb export plants showed that just seven of the thirty

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[98] Daly, *First Department*, p. 301; Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the export trade in dressed meat to the dollar area, paragraph 16, 23 Nov. 1951 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2).

[99] Memorandum to government on the beef industry (10/4/100), 14 Mar. 1952 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2). The diary of cattle agent Peter Roe from Knock, near Roscrea, 10 Apr. 1953 and 3 Dec. 1953. This diary was loaned to me for the purposes of my research by Peter's son Robert; Interview with Joe Barry (2 Nov. 2013).

[100] Interview with livestock exporter Paddy Gernon (14 Jan. 2016); Miles Cowsil & Justin Merrigan, *Irish Ferries: An Ambitious Voyage* (Ramsey, 2013), pp 39-41; Particulars of vessels engaged in the transport of livestock from Ireland to Great Britain, 22 Jan. 1955 (NAI, DA/10/B/2/6).

[101] Cowsil & Merrigan, *Irish Ferries*, pp 39-41; Particulars of vessels engaged in the transport of livestock from Ireland to Great Britain, 22 Jan. 1955 (NAI, DA/10/B/2/6); *IP*, 25 Oct. 1951; Interview with livestock exporter Kevin Purcell (4 Nov. 2015); Interview with Co Limerick farmer Micheál O'Brien (3 Feb. 2014).

factories listed were located in Dublin and Kildare, with four sited in Waterford, and the same number in Cork (See Figure 1.1).[102] The seven Dublin and Kildare plants included the International Meat Company in Grand Canal Street, Dublin Meat Packers in Ballymun, as well as Central Meat Packers and Kosher Meat Products which worked out of Dublin Corporation Abattoir. Irish Meat Packers in Leixlip – which was incorrectly listed in the 1962 survey as International Meat Packers – Kildare Chilling in Kildare town, and Premier Meat Packers in Sallins were the remaining factories in what could be loosely termed the Pale. The four Waterford factories listed were Clover Meats, Henry Denny and Sons, Bowe Brothers, and Collins Brothers. The four Cork plants included W. P. English of Cobh, Henry Denny and Sons, Lunham Brothers Ltd, and Cork Farmers Union Ltd.[103] The remaining fifteen plants were well dispersed, with two in Limerick, two in Tipperary, two in Wexford, and one each in Laois, Sligo, Longford, Donegal and Louth. The only cluster of beef slaughter plants outside of the country's main ports was in Mayo, which had four factories.[104] However, three of the companies involved in beef processing in Mayo were also active in pig slaughtering – the Castlebar Bacon Company, Claremorris Bacon Company, and Cunniffes of Ballaghaderreen – illustrating again the willingness of existing meat businesses to diversify into beef when opportunities arose. Webbs of Ballyhaunis was the fourth Mayo-based beef processor.[105]

Access to good rail links was an essential consideration for factories in the 1950s, since trains provided the primary means of livestock transport during the period. The majority of the cattle purchased by north Tipperary livestock agent Peter Roe in the early 1950s were moved by rail. For example, cattle he bought at the Mountrath Fair in April 1953 were sent by rail to Hazelhatch outside Dublin, while fifteen Aberdeen Angus heifers he purchased in Sligo were delivered by train from Ballymote to Mountrath. Similarly, Kildare farmer, Joe Barry, whose family were

[102] Confidential draft of the survey team's report on the beef, mutton and lamb industry (1962), appendix p. 2 (NAI, DA/2005/82/1625).
[103] Confidential draft of the survey team's report on the beef, mutton and lamb industry (1962), appendix p. 2 (NAI, DA/2005/82/1625).
[104] There were four in Mayo; two in Tipperary, Roscrea Meats and Clonmel Foods; Shannon Meats and Clover Meats in Limerick; MJ Lyons and Company in Longford; Meat Exporters Ltd in Sligo; Donegal Bacon Company; Clover Meats and Buttles in Wexford; Dennys in Mountmellick; and Dundalk Bacon Company – information from the 'Confidential survey team's report on the beef, mutton and lamb industry', 1962, appendix p. 2 (NAI, DA/2005/82/1625).
[105] Confidential draft of the survey team's report on the beef, mutton and lamb industry (1962), appendix p. 2 (NAI, DA/2005/82/1625).

sales-masters in the Dublin Cattle Market, recalled the importance of the railways in moving cattle from the south and west to the capital.[106] Limerick farmer, Micheál O'Brien, remembered how most of the cattle sold at the Munster Fair in Limerick city during this period were transported by rail to Dublin or Waterford to be exported.[107] Similarly, the importance of the trade to rail operators was outlined by Christy Wynne, a junior clerk at the railway station in Boyle, Co Roscommon in the late 1950s, who claimed that special trains were scheduled for fair days in the town. These trains had thirty or forty wagons, each with up to ten cattle, and went directly to Dublin Port.[108] The importance of transport infrastructure and the consequent cost of moving product was noted in the 1962 survey of, and report into, the meat processing sector. It highlighted a significant disparity in the charge for transporting beef to Britain from Kildare and Dublin compared to product coming from the west and south of Ireland: getting a container of beef from Castlebar to London by rail was almost fifty per cent more expensive than transporting it from Dublin.[109] The British Railways container rate from the Mayo town to London was £58 2s 6d, compared to £40 13s 0d from Dublin. The equivalent charge from Roscrea was £49 18s 11d.[110] Similarly, it cost significantly more to move beef by rail from regional centres in Ireland to the other major urban centres in Britain.

In addition, the survey found that the charge for moving a container of beef from Castlebar to Dublin by road was £13 2s 9d, while the cost from Roscrea was £7 4s 2d. The impact of transport costs meant that beef processed in Castlebar cost around £23 per ton to be transported to London compared to £16 per ton for the equivalent Dublin product – since the standard container took around forty-four quarters of beef or two and a half tons.[111] Put more simply, the average transport cost

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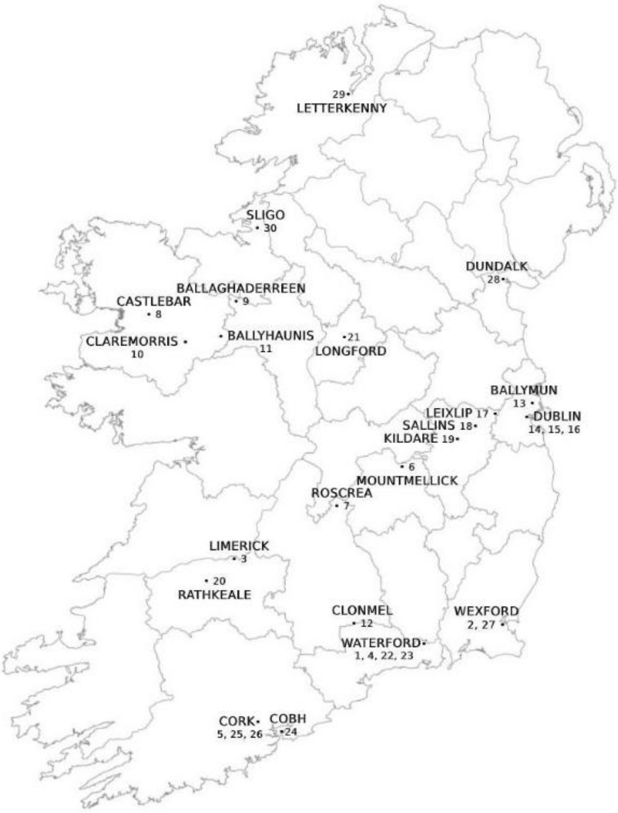
[106] Peter Roe's diary, 10 Apr. and 3 Dec. 1953; Joe Barry interview (2 Nov. 2013).
[107] Micheál O'Brien interview (3 Feb. 2014).
[108] Blog by Christy Wynne entitled 'Fair Day in Boyle' accessed on 2 April 2018 at: http://ctristywynne.blogspot.ie/2016/07/fair-day-in-boyle.html?m=1
[109] Confidential draft of the survey team's report on the beef, mutton and lamb industry (1962), appendix p. 19 (NAI, DA/2005/82/1625).
[110] Confidential draft of the survey team's report on the beef, mutton and lamb industry (1062), appendix p. 19 (NAI, DA/2005/82/1625).
[111] Minutes of National Farmers' Association's livestock committee meeting on 30 May 1956, these records are held in the IFA head office in Bluebell, Dublin; *IP*, 21 Sept. 1954; Rates quoted are for a traditional P.N. type container which carried two and a half tons of meat, Confidential draft of the survey team's report on the beef, mutton and lamb industry (1962), pp 17-19 (NAI, DA/2005/82/1625).

to London for Dublin-based processors was about £3.15s per animal, while for Mayo processors it was £5.8s per animal.[112]



REGISTERED BEEF AND LAMB EXPORT COMPANIES		
NO.	COMPANY NAME	LOCATION
1	CLOVER MEATS	WATERFORD
2	CLOVER MEATS	WEXFORD
3	CLOVER MEATS	LIMERICK
4	HENRY DENNY'S	WATERFORD
5	HENRY DENNY'S	CORK
6	HENRY DENNY'S	MOUNTMELLICK
7	ROSCREA MEATS	ROSCREA
8	CASTLEBAR BACON COMPANY	CASTLEBAR
9	CUNNIFFE'S	BALLAGHADERREEN
10	CLAREMORRIS BACON COMPANY	CLAREMORRIS
11	MJ WEBB	BALLYHAUNIS
12	CLONMEL FOODS	CLONMEL
13	DUBLIN MEAT PACKERS	BALLYMUN
14	INTERNATIONAL MEATS	DUBLIN
15	CENTRAL MEAT PRODUCTS	DUBLIN
16	KOSHER MEATS	DUBLIN
17	IRISH MEAT PACKERS	LEIXLIP
18	PREMIER MEAT PACKERS	SALLINS
19	KILDARE CHILLING	KILDARE
20	SHANNON MEATS	RATHKEALE
21	MJ LYONS & COMPANY	LONGFORD
22	BOWE BROTHERS	WATERFORD
23	COLLINS BROTHERS	WATERFORD
24	WP ENGLISH	COBH
25	CORK FARMERS' UNION	CORK
26	LUNHAM BROTHERS	CORK
27	BUTTLES BARLEY-FED BACON	WEXFORD
28	DUNDALK BACON COMPANY	DUNDALK
29	DONEGAL BACON COMPANY	LETTERKENNY
30	MEAT EXPORTER'S LIMITED	SLIGO

Figure 1.1: Locations of Beef and Lamb Slaughter Plants 1962
Source: The details included in the confidential Survey Team's Report on the Beef, Mutton and Lamb Industry, 1962, appendix p. 2, included in NAI file DA/2005/82/1625.

These price differentials were critically important given the aforementioned slender margins prevalent in the meat business – between one per cent and four per cent.[113] Indeed, the beef processor representative body, the Irish Fresh Meat Exporters' Society (IFMES), at meetings with both the Department of Agriculture and with the National Farmers' Association (NFA) in 1956, cited transport charges as one of the primary impediments to the meat industry's development. IFMES, which was the sole representative body for the beef processors, claimed costs were excessively high and sought support for a fifty per cent reduction in transport charges and a more reliable

[112] This calculation is based on one ton of beef equating to 4.25 animals on average, which is the figure quoted in the ESRI's 1973 report, *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 43.
[113] Gus Fitzpatrick interview (18 Oct. 2016).

service.[114] The meat factories' case was supported by the Fianna Fáil TD for Mayo, Seán Flanagan. He claimed it was cheaper to transport beef from Argentina to London than from the west of Ireland.[115]

However, transport costs were not the only factors influencing the location of meat factories in Dublin and Kildare. The country's eastern fringe had other attractions for the fledgling beef industry. A guaranteed reservoir of finished stock from the traditional fattening lands of the midlands and north Leinster, combined with the sale of up to five thousand animals through the Dublin Cattle Market each week, ensured a constant supply of livestock for the slaughtering facilities based in and around the capital.[116] Indeed, a member of the management team at International Meats at Dublin's Grand Canal Street recalls livestock being purchased in the Dublin Cattle Market on a Wednesday morning and walked through the city centre to the factory.[117]

EMPLOYMENT

Contemporary media coverage illustrates the considerable local excitement created by the sudden growth in meat processing, and the additional jobs the expanding sector provided. Total employment in beef and lamb processing reached 1,300 by 1953-54 and had grown to almost two thousand by 1959, which compared favourably with the 3,600 jobs in the more well-established bacon industry.[118] These jobs were obviously welcome in a country where the number of unemployed workers on the live register reached 54,000 in 1950, and emigration averaged 24,000 a year for the period 1946-1951.[119] The *Irish Independent* reported that close to twenty per cent of cattle exports in 1951 (120,000 head) was shipped as beef, and the newspaper estimated the value of the business at £6.5 million. It described how 'factories for chilling, freezing and

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[114] Minutes of National Farmers' Association's livestock committee meeting on 12 Jan. 1956, 2 Feb. 1956; *CE*, 27 Oct. 1956.
[115] Dáil debates Vol. 157, No. 6, 23 May 1956.
[116] Liam Clare, 'The Rise and Demise of the Dublin Cattle Market' first published in the *Dublin Historical Record*, vol. 55, no. 2, 2002, later published in *Foxrock Local History Club*, no. 65 (2012), p. 25.
[117] Interview A: Former member of the management team with International Meat Company based in Grand Canal Street, Dublin.
[118] *Statistical Abstract of Ireland 1956*, compiled by the CSO, (PR. 3542) p. 109; *Statistical Abstract of Ireland 1960*, (PR. 5492) p. 131; *Statistical Abstract of Ireland 1955*, (PR. 3018) p. 105.
[119] *Statistical Abstract of Ireland 1950*, (PR. 124) p. 146; Adrian, Redmond (ed.), *That was then, this is now – change in Ireland 1949-1999,* a CSO publication (Dublin, 2000), p. 14.

canning meat were springing up all over the country' and employing 'several hundred men'.[120] The blessing and opening of the Shannon Meats factory in Rathkeale, Co. Limerick was a major story for the *Limerick Leader* of 14 February 1953, not only for the unspecified number of jobs it would create, but also for the one thousand cattle a week it would slaughter when fully operational.[121] Likewise in Mayo the Castlebar Bacon Company's shift into beef processing garnered positive reportage and was viewed as an astute move that had protected jobs.[122] The new export contracts not only helped secure existing positions but also provided additional employment, such as the twenty extra jobs created at Canned Products Ltd in Cork Street, Dublin in 1951, or the one hundred additional staff taken on the following year by Denny and Sons in Waterford to deal with the US Forces tender.[123] Although employment in the meat industry was certainly not glamorous, for many it was preferable to moving abroad for work. Gus Fitzpatrick's first job when he joined Premier Meat Packers in Sallins, Co Kildare in 1960 was weighing fat that was ten days old:

> The smell of it was something awful. My mother wouldn't let me into the house, the Lord have mercy on her. She would make me take off my clothes before I got in the front door.[124]

However, Fitzpatrick, who returned from England on April Fools' Day, 1960 was thankful for the work in the Sallins plant – the alternative was emigration.[125] Pay in the meat factories was also generally good, since many of the workers employed on the killing lines were butchers. The average weekly wage for men in beef and lamb processing in 1955 was 163s. 9d.[126] This pay rate was almost double the 85s 6d which farm labourers received, and was also higher than the average industrial wage of 146s. 2d.[127] In contrast, wage rates for female workers in meat processing, which stood at 74s. 2d. in 1955, were lower than the national average of 81s. 11d.[128] Accurate figures are not available on the proportion of women employed in the early beef industry, however, workers suggest it was considerably lower than in pig factories as cattle

[120] *II*, 11 Mar. 1952.
[121] *Limerick Leader*, 14 Feb. 1953.
[122] *Connaught Telegraph*, 12 Jan. 1952.
[123] *IP*, 25 Oct. 1951; *CE*, 26 April 1952.
[124] Gus Fitzpatrick interviews (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017).
[125] Ibid.
[126] *Statistical Abstract of Ireland 1956*, p. 120.
[127] *Statistical Abstract of Ireland 1955*, p. 88; *Statistical Abstract of Ireland 1959*, p. 132.
[128] *Statistical Abstract of Ireland 1955*, p. 88; *Statistical Abstract of Ireland 1959*, p. 132.

slaughtering was heavier work and there was less secondary processing such as boning and sausage making when compared to the bacon plants.[129]

EARLY BEEF PROCESSING

Beef processing in the 1950s and early 1960s was very basic. Indeed, Gus Fitzpatrick describes the industry during this period as 'primal'.[130] However, the two main markets in the US and Britain had very different requirements. The carcass was generally halved into sides of beef for the British market and was delivered fresh. In the case of the US trade, the carcass was totally stripped of beef, with the cuts then boxed and frozen prior to shipping.[131] Gus Fitzpatrick recalled that the boneless beef was shipped to North American buyers in 60lb boxes, with a label stating that it was 'indiscriminately cut to fit'. 'The basic thing was you halved them, sometimes you quartered them – that's the way they [the beef] were exported,' he said.[132] The requirement for the American forces market was that all carcasses had to be chilled on the slaughtering premises immediately after slaughter. The halved or quartered carcass would then be shrouded with cloth, 'to improve the appearance' of the beef, and kept shrouded for twenty-four hours.[133] The US trade took beef from either end of the quality spectrum. There were buyers for top grade cuts such as steaks, and equally for lower grade canning beef, which generally came from cow slaughtering.[134] With British customers also in the market for manufacturing and stewing beef, cows accounted for more than forty per cent of all cattle slaughtered by 1954.[135]

Just two slaughtering centres – Dublin Corporation Abattoir and Clover Meats in Wexford – had the chilling and freezing facilities to meet the US requirements in 1950 but the investment of an estimated £400,000 meant that a further nine premises had the necessary refrigeration installed for the North American trade by November

[129] John Treacy interview (17 July 2019); *'The Price of Bacon',* a documentary on the Castlebar Bacon Company, first broadcast on RTE Radio 1 on 22 Mar. 2009 as part of the Factory Lives series.
[130] Gus Fitzpatrick interviews (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017).
[131] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, pp 76-81.
[132] Gus Fitzpatrick interview (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017).
[133] *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Export Trade in Dressed Meat to the Dollar Area*, paragraph 7, 23 Nov. 1951 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2).
[134] Daly, *First Department*, p. 299; *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Export Trade in Dressed Meat to the Dollar Area*, paragraph 7, 23 Nov. 1951 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2).
[135] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, pp 80-81.

1951.[136] The biggest buyer of Irish beef in 1951-52 was the International Packers' Commercial Company of Chicago, which purchased 1,700 tons of the 6,500 tons exported to the US that year. Other important North American buyers included EM Browne and Company of New York, Philadelphia Dressed Beef Company, and Canada Packers of Toronto.[137] While Irish beef was initially sold to the catering sector in the US, the report of the inter-departmental committee on the export trade in dressed meat to the dollar area noted that by the autumn of 1951 it was being handled by 'wholesale meat distributors' and 'retail butcher shops' as a result of the 'efforts of importers'.[138]

Feeding the 80,000 American forces stationed in West Germany, Italy and Britain also provided a lucrative outlet for Irish beef, and one which was paid for in dollars.[139] This was the height of the Cold War and although the stand-off between the US and the Soviet Union was a global drama, it was primarily focussed on Europe. Dennys won one of the first US forces contracts in autumn 1951 to supply four million pounds (around 1,800 tonnes) of 'prime cuts' of beef. This was shipped from Cork and Waterford to Bremerhaven in consignments of up to two hundred tonnes.[140] The company secured another US forces contract in the spring of 1952 which was supplied from their Waterford plant.[141] Winning these US Army contracts gave the sector both a financial and a reputational boost. The US business highlighted Ireland's disease-free status in relation to Foot and Mouth; more importantly, however, companies which won contracts to export to the US and supply their armed forces had to be United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) approved, and this gave firms a quality and standards approval rating that could act as a 'calling card' to secure further business.[142] The contracts also took significant quantities of product, with Roscrea Meats shipping up to four thousand tonnes of canned stewed beef to the US

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[136] *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Export Trade in Dressed Meat to the Dollar Area*, paragraphs 7, 8, 11 and 46, 23 Nov. 1951 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2).
[137] *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Export Trade in Dressed Meat to the Dollar Area*, paragraph 20, 23 Nov. 1951 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2).
[138] *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Export Trade in Dressed Meat to the Dollar Area*, paragraph 24, 23 Nov. 1951 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2).
[139] Daly, *First Department*, p. 302; *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Export Trade in Dressed Meat to the Dollar Area*, paragraph 26, 23 Nov. 1951 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2).
[140] *IP*, 25 Oct. 1951.
[141] *CE*, 26 April 1952.
[142] Gus Fitzpatrick interview (18 Oct. 2016).

each year from 1951 to the early 1960s when the trade switched to carcass and boxed boneless beef.[143]

As already stated, markets for beef were also opening up in continental Europe; a development attributed to growing consumer demand and restricted cattle supplies. Indeed, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimated that meat production in Western Europe in 1950 was still five per cent below pre-war output levels.[144] The opportunities that arose were grasped by both live exporters and beef processors. Between 1948 and 1950 over eighty thousand Irish cattle were exported to Germany, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland and Italy, while close to 60,000 were shipped to the Continent in 1947-48.[145] These were new markets for large numbers of live cattle and were a lucrative business opportunity for exporters. Meanwhile, Sweden took eight hundred tonnes of beef during 1949-50.[146] Jack Keogh was among a number of factory owners to target the growing continental outlets and his IMP plant in Leixlip shipped frozen beef to Sweden in 1953, with the Nordic state taking one thousand tonnes that year.[147] Keogh was also involved in shipping live cattle to both Belgium and Holland at the time, highlighting the crossover in the sector between live and dead meat trades.[148] The expanding export business to the continent was facilitated by a series of trade agreements which Ireland concluded in 1949 and 1950 with Germany, Sweden, France, Spain and Holland.[149] The Department's annual reports show that Irish beef concerns continued to do significant business with Germany and Holland during the early 1950s. Beef exports to Holland were worth £195,000 in 1951-52, while Germany took edible offal worth £45,000 in the same year.[150] This openness to the potential of new export markets contrasted to the insularity and conservatism of 1950s Irish industry, which Girvin attributed to 'the oligopolistic nature of the closed economy.'[151] Indeed, the willingness of Irish beef

[143] *Meat Trades Journal*, 14 December 1972 – systematic use was not made of this publication as it is not digitised and an archive of back issues is not held in Ireland.
[144] *'World outlook and State of Food and Agriculture – 1950'*, Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (Washington D.C., 1950), p. 12.
[145] Rouse, *Ireland's own soil*, p. 63; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1949-50* (Dublin, 1950), pp 15-16.
[146] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1949-50* (Dublin, 1950), pp 15-16.
[147] Dressed meat exports to Sweden 1951-53 (NAI, DA/2005/82/410).
[148] Keogh, *Cattleman*, pp 77-78
[149] Daly, *First Department*, p. 291; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1949-50* (Dublin, 1950), pp 14-16.
[150] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1952-53* (Dublin, 1953), pp 13-14.
[151] Girvin, *Between Two Worlds*, p.204.

processors to invest in an export-oriented processing industry and to develop and cultivate sales opportunities from Chicago to Cologne challenges Joe Lee's assertion that there was a dearth of enterprise in 1950s Ireland.[152] Table 1.A clearly illustrates the extent of the growth in the beef processing sector in the early years of the 1950s.[153] As already noted, carcass and boneless beef exports increased from 6,400 tonnes to 43,500 tonnes between 1950 and 1954. However, when exports of canned beef are included, then the total tonnage of Irish processed meat rose from 15,400 tonnes to 52,500 tonnes over the same five years.[154] Indeed, 263,000 animals were slaughtered in 1954, which equates to thirty per cent of the nearly 870,000 head exported that year (the 870,000 includes both cattle exported live, and those slaughtered in Ireland and exported as beef).[155]

YEAR	EXPORTS OF CARCASS & BONELESS BEEF (tons)						
	UK	EUROPE	US forces	US & CANADA	REST OF WORLD	TOTAL	CANNED BEEF
1950	3,123	--	N/A	419	2,858	6,400	9,025
1951	6,470	1,980	N/A	6,459	1,416	16,325	11,087
1952	14,280	1,970	N/A	6,556	2,796	25,602	17,848
1953	21,837	6	N/A	2,709	1,794	26,346	10,387
1954	37,122	2,194	N/A	1,530	2,716	43,562	9,036
1955	12,276	1,550	N/A	1,091	2,191	17,108	11,963
1956	7,373	5,075	N/A	1,063	2,504	16,555	9,710
1957	2,519	11,009	N/A	4,297	10,432	28,257	7,968
1958	2,855	6,704	N/A	15,728	3,180	28,467	7,275
1959	6,785	5,624	N/A	23,461	2,042	37,913	8,854
1960	15,266	2,803	3,493	28,795	644	51,001	7,971

Table 1.A: Exports of carcass & boneless beef
Source: Based on CSO data and published in the ESRI's 1973 report entitled *'A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries'*

DOWNTURN

The boom in the 1950s beef industry lasted just five years. It burst into life in 1950, but by the end of 1954 meat processing was in deep trouble. Indeed, if excitement and expansion characterised the sector in the first half of the decade, survival was the primary consideration in the years from 1955 to 1958. This sudden reversal of

[152] Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, p. 359
[153] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78.
[154] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78.
[155] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 36;

fortunes was due to a mix of external developments, domestic considerations, and internal structural weaknesses in the industry. On the external front, the decontrol or deregulation of food prices in Britain in June 1954 delivered a serious blow to the meat industry. The move ended the Ministry of Food's lead role in both managing food imports and setting retail prices for Britain. It effectively handed the business back to private meat importers and traders.[156] More importantly from an Irish perspective, however, it brought to a close the policy of subsidising carcass beef prices.[157] The 1954 revamp of British beef supports involved the replacement of fixed farm-gate beef prices with a Deficiency Payments system.[158] Crucially these supports were targeted at young store cattle, and to a lesser extent fat cattle, rather than beef.[159] Since Irish-born cattle which were retained on UK farms for two months qualified for these deficiency payments, the shift in British policy had immediate implications for the Irish livestock sector. The value of the deficiency payment gave exporters of young stock a competitive advantage over farmers who traditionally fattened animals when both were vying to purchase stock in the fairs and marts. The result was a shortage of livestock for processing.[160] The value of the deficiency payments varied through the year, depending on beef supplies and market prices. A minimum standard price – based on what was considered an acceptable margin for the farmer – was agreed between Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) officials and representatives of the National Farmers' Union in Britain each year. Actual market prices for beef in Britain could drop below the standard price since the UK imported cheap beef from countries such as Argentina and Ireland to meet internal demand. However, the deficiency payment made up the difference between the actual market price and the agreed standard price.[161] Historians such as B. A. Holderness and

[156] Martin, *Development of Modern Agriculture*, pp 79-80.
[157] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, p. 70; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 77.
[158] Under the Deficiency Payments regime a guaranteed price for beef cattle was agreed by the British Agriculture Ministry with the National Farmers' Union for each week of the year. This price varied through the year according to cattle supplies. When the actual market price for cattle dipped below the weekly guaranteed price then a Deficiency Payment from the British Agriculture Ministry made up the difference. The policy created a safety net for British farmers, while allowing imports to keep beef prices for consumers artificially low.
[159] Martin, *Development of Modern Agriculture*, pp 79-80; Holderness, British agriculture since 1945, pp 20-21.
[160] Daly, *First Department*, pp 309-310; Appendix to the confidential survey team's report of 1962 on the beef, mutton and lamb industry, pp 22-23, (NAI, DA/2005/82/1625); *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, 1955-56 (Dublin, 1956), p. 10.
[161] Guy Smith, From Campbell to Kendall: a history of the NFU (Somerset, 2008), p. 128; Martin, *Development of Modern Agriculture*, pp 79-80; Holderness, British agriculture since 1945, pp 20-21;

Cormac Ó Gráda, as well as Louis Smith and Seán Healy, have correctly pointed out that the deficiency payments strategy allowed Britain to maintain a cheap food policy for its consumers by attracting low cost imports, while at the same time protecting their farmers' incomes.[162] Indeed, Ó Gráda identified the deficiency payments system as one of the primary dampeners – along with international competition and sluggish British demand – on beef sector expansion in 1950s.[163] In 1955-56 the value of the British deficiency payment ranged from £9 per head to over £26 per head across the year. Since Irish store cattle were generally making from £45 per head to £56 per head in 1955, it is clear why the British subsidy skewed the Irish cattle market in favour of the live export trade.[164] Irish beef processors were unable to compete with live cattle exporters for top quality animals – a fact that was accepted by the Department of Agriculture.[165] Exports of dressed beef to Britain more than halved between 1954 and 1955, as a result falling from 37,000 tons to 12,000 tons.[166] The Department of Agriculture's annual report for 1955-56 blamed the decline on the fact that 'market prices in Britain for carcass beef were not favourable relative to the prices payable by exporters for fat cattle for slaughter in Britain.'[167] The downturn in the beef processors' fortunes – and stronger competition from Argentine exports into Britain – hit demand for prime fat bullocks, average prices falling from £75 per head to £65 per head between August 1955 and August 1956 as a consequence.[168]

The return of a significant price disparity between carcass beef and live cattle prompted a shift back to the export of store cattle, with numbers increasing from 485,000 head in 1954 to almost 750,000 by 1957.[169] The impact on the processing sector was equally dramatic. The total number of cattle and cows killed and exported as beef fell from 263,200 head in 1954 to 182,300 by 1955, a reduction of over thirty

Confidential survey team's report on the beef, mutton and lamb industry: appendix 1962, pp 22-23 (NAI, DA/2005/82/1625).

[162] Holderness*, British agriculture since 1945*, p. 20; Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, p. 38.

[163] Cormac Ó Gráda, *A rocky road: The Irish economy since the 1920s* (Manchester, 1997), p. 151.

[164] *Annual Report of* the *Minister for Agriculture*, *1955-56*, p. 5.

[165] Confidential memorandum, 25 July 1957, for the IDA on the challenges facing the wider meat processing sector and Clonmel Foods' grant application under the Trade Loan Guarantee Scheme (NAI, DA/10/7/22/1); Minutes of National Farmers' Association's livestock committee meeting, 2 Feb. 1956; Daly, *First Department*, pp 309-310.

[166] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78.

[167] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1955-56*, p. 14.

[168] Cormac Ó Gráda, 'Ireland in the 1950s' in Michael Miley (ed.), *Growing Knowledge*, pp 8-9; *IP*, 4 Aug. 1956; John O'Donovan, 'The history of livestock since 1800,' in T.V. Llewellyn (ed.), *National Farmers' Association Year Book, 1963 – Irish Agriculture Since 1800* (Bray, 1962), p. 29.

[169] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group,* p. 36.

per cent. Meanwhile, exports of fat cattle increased from 123,900 head to 138,900 between 1954 and 1955, and hit 180,200 head in 1956.[170] The live exporters were back in the ascendant. More significantly, deregulation of British food imports in 1954, which was an effective privatisation of the trade, illustrated the vulnerability and exposure of Irish beef exports and the meat processing industry to UK policy changes. The British conceded that major changes to the live cattle and beef trade between the UK and Ireland were likely to follow from deregulation. However, at a meeting in March 1954 the British ruled out any possible extension of deficiency payments to Irish beef imports on the grounds that such a concession might have to be extended to Australia and New Zealand. While Tánaiste Lemass and the Minister for Agriculture, Thomas Walsh, pointed out that the proposed changes could seriously damage Ireland's beef processing sector, the British delegation – which was led by the Minister for Agriculture, Sir Thomas Dugdale – maintained that any difficulties that arose were an inevitable consequence of the 'transition to a free economy'.[171]

POOR CAPITALISATION

Insufficient cash reserves and weak financial management also contributed to the sharp reversal in the Irish beef sector's fortunes. Gus Fitzpatrick maintained that poor capitalisation and cash-flow planning were 'endemic' in the processing industry during the 1950s and 1960s, and this weakness was most notable in 'start-up' ventures that had 'no borrowing strength'.[172] The absence of sufficient capital was exacerbated by inexperienced management, and what Smith and Healy described as the 'primitive conditions' prevalent in the developing industry.[173] Similar difficulties were identified in the co-operative mart societies being formed at the time. The 1955 annual report of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society (IAOS) – the governing body for the country's co-operatives – listed the provision of adequate capital and a lack of experience in running livestock sales operations as the main challenges faced by new marts.[174] Fitzpatrick echoed these sentiments when he recalled an absence of professionalism during this formative period for the processing sector. The

[170] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group,* p. 36.
[171] Note of meeting between Irish and British agriculture delegations at the House of Commons on 4 Mar. 1954 (TNA, MAF 122/18).
[172] Gus Fitzpatrick interview (18 Oct. 2016).
[173] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, p. 70.
[174] *Annual Report of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society Ltd, 1955* (Dublin, 1956), p. 8.

observation was not a criticism of the people involved, he insisted, but rather an acceptance that this was how businesses evolved.[175]

The weakness of the sector in terms of cash-flow management is illustrated in the applications to the Department of Industry and Commerce for financial support under the Trade Loans Guarantee Scheme between 1954 and 1960. Clonmel Foods, for example, sought £100,000 under the scheme in 1957 to finance an extension to the company's refrigeration capacity, and for what it described as 'working capital' – namely, the purchase of livestock.[176] In correspondence with Department of Industry and Commerce officials, and with the Minister for Industry and Commerce, Seán Lemass, Clonmel Foods management stated that the company's financial position was 'critical' and the firm was considering closing. Clonmel Foods processed more than 22,000 cattle in 1956, employed up to three hundred staff at the height of the killing season, and supplied US Armed Forces contracts, as well as buyers in Britain, Germany, Italy and Sweden. Management blamed the company's financial difficulties on increased cattle prices and the 'irregular' demand for beef on the continent.[177] Similarly, Shannon Meats in Rathkeale, Co. Limerick sought a loan guarantee for £70,000 under the Trade Loans Guarantee Scheme in November 1954. The company proposed to pay off existing bank loans of £45,000 and invest £25,000 in plant improvements.[178] It is unclear from the records if these specific grant applications were successful, however, the correspondence with the Department of Industry and Commerce highlights the fragile financial position of some meat processors between 1954 and 1956 when beef exports contracted as demand from British, US and European buyers slumped. The reduction in beef exports to the US during 1954 and 1955 came at the end of what Fanning has described as the 'Korean Boom'. The economic recession which followed resulted in lower prices for beef in the US and

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[175] Gus Fitzpatrick interviews (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017).

[176] Grant application by Clonmel Foods under the Industrial Grant Acts 1956, 17 June 1957, and a confidential memorandum for the IDA on the challenges facing the meat processing sector, 25 July 1957 (NAI, DA/10/7/22/1).

[177] Report of meeting regarding Clonmel Foods' grant application under the Trade Loan Guarantee Scheme, 11 April 1958, a letter from Clonmel Foods' secretary EJ Power to the Minister for Industry and Commerce, Seán Lemass 31 Mar. 1958, and a grant application by Clonmel Foods, 17 June 1957 (NAI, DA/10/7/22/1).

[178] A letter from Shannon Meats to the Department of Industry and Commerce, 10 Nov. 1954 (NAI, INDC/IND/5/44).

made the market 'unattractive' for Irish companies.[179] Meanwhile, Irish exports to Europe were negatively impacted by increased domestic beef supplies on the continent and stronger imports from Argentina.[180] As Figure 1.2 shows, total shipments of carcass and boneless beef more than halved between 1954 and 1955, falling from 43,500 tonnes to 17,000 tonnes. The collapse was most pronounced in exports to Britain, which fell from 37,000 tonnes to 12,000 tonnes. US beef purchases were down by a third to just over one thousand tonnes, while trade with Europe dropped from 2,200 tonnes to over 1,500 tonnes.[181] This was a massive blow to a fledgling industry that, as Fitzpatrick recalled, existed 'from hand to mouth' in financial terms well into the 1960s.[182] The loss of contracts resulted in a major downturn in the industry, and severe financial difficulties, as evidenced by the problems encountered by Clonmel Foods and Shannon Meats.[183] Indeed, the beef factories were still struggling to compete with live exporters for stock in the summer of 1957, prompting the *Irish Farmers' Journal* to comment that:

> The present booming state of the store trade, coupled with the rather depressed state of the beef market, is gradually convincing our farmers that it does not pay any more to finish off fat cattle while Britain is paying her present subsidies for beef production.[184]

The blow to the farm sector, and the loss of both beef export earnings and jobs, was bad news for an Irish government which was struggling in 1955 to deal with a balance of payments crisis and the mounting tide of emigration which averaged almost 40,000 a year between 1951 and 1956 and totalled 412,000 for the ten years to 1961.[185]

The tighter cash-flow management controls required in meat processing posed a serious challenge for cattle exporters accustomed to the relatively straightforward financial transactions of the livestock trade.[186] Although some of the country's leading

[179] Fanning, *The Irish Department of Finance*, p. 464; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture, 1955-56*, pp 11-13.
[180] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1955-56*, pp 11-13; Ó Gráda, 'Ireland in the 1950s' in *Growing Knowledge*, pp 8-9; Holderness, British agriculture since 1945, p. 19.
[181] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78.
[182] Gus Fitzpatrick interviews (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017).
[183] Letter from Clonmel Foods' secretary EJ Power to the Minister for Industry and Commerce, Seán Lemass, 31 Mar. 1958 (NAI, DA/10/7/22/1); Letter from Shannon Meats to the Department of Industry and Commerce, 10 Nov. 1954 (NAI, INDC/IND/5/44).
[184] *IFJ*, 13 July 1957.
[185] Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*, pp 465-467; Girvin, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 190; Redmond (ed.), *That was then, this is now*, p. 14.
[186] Gus Fitzpatrick interview (18 Oct. 2016).

cattle exporters had, as discussed earlier, become involved in the dead meat business, they all struggled at different junctures during the 1950s to keep their beef operations afloat.[187] Gus Fitzpatrick recalled a saying from the period that summed up the difference between the live cattle and dead meat trades: 'When they're alive, they're as good as gold, but when they're dead they must be sold.'[188] In essence, live exporters could delay selling cattle if prices collapsed and simply put the animals to grass; however, holding stocks of meat was not an option in the beef trade, unless the operation was very well financed and had considerable chilled storage facilities. As Fitzpatrick observed,

> If you look at the early part of the trade, a lot of the lads that got into the business came from the live cattle [trade]…and the margins were small enough but because they had the quantity – selling one hundred cattle, if they got a £1 a head they got £100; that's a good day's work back in '57 or '58.[189]

The problems arose when cattle were slaughtered but the processor did not have an immediate outlet for the meat. Holding large stocks of beef was a dangerous business. Two of the larger start-up operations from the early 1950s that learned this lesson to their cost were the Frigorifico in Ireland facility at Grand Canal Street, Dublin, and Shannon Meats in Rathkeale, Co Limerick – both of which, as noted previously, were run by live exporters, the Counihan brothers and Omar Van Landeghem respectively.[190] The Grand Canal Street plant, a completely new development, opened in the spring of 1952, but the business was in trouble by autumn 1953, with reported debts of £770,000.[191] One of the company's main creditors, Irish Assurance Ltd, applied for the appointment of a receiver and in January 1954 the factory was put up for sale.[192] It was eventually bought by Meat Packers Corporation Ltd, a consortium headed up by a Londoner named Joseph Richards, but the sale price of £235,000 left unsecured creditors unpaid and calling for a public inquiry into the collapse of the business.[193] Frigorifico was not the only beef processing business to fail during this

[187] Keogh, *Cattleman*, pp 86-87; *CE*, 21 Sept. 1957, 6 Oct. 1959; *IP*, 9 Oct. 1954.
[188] Gus Fitzpatrick interview (18 Oct. 2016).
[189] Ibid.
[190] Michael Judge, 'A New Era of Hope', in Paul O'Grady (ed.), *Leaders of courage: the story of the ICMSA* (Limerick, 2000), p. 17; *II*, 23 Nov. 1954.
[191] *IP*, 9 Oct. 1954; *II*, 16 Nov. 1951.
[192] *II*, 25 Sept. 1954.
[193] *CE*, 25 Sept. 1954; *IP*, 9 Oct. 1954.

period; but it was the largest and most high profile. Smaller factories which got into financial difficulties in the 1950s simply closed for a period until new investors were identified and then reopened – as was the case with Shannon Meats.[194] Interestingly, among Frigorifico's outstanding debts was a loan for £100,000 raised to purchase cattle. This was essentially working capital which provided cash-flow and liquidity to the company, suggesting that the firm, like Clonmel Foods and Shannon Meats, had weak credit control and financial management structures in place.[195]

Poor capitalisation was also a factor in the difficulties that arose in Shannon Meats in the latter half of the 1950s, as we have seen.[196] The Limerick enterprise, which started operations in 1953, lacked the financial reserves to survive the downturn that hit the meat sector in 1954, and the owners were forced to apply for £70,000 in loan assistance from the Department of Industry and Commerce, as well as additional investment from farmers in the north Munster region as the decade progressed.[197] Up to 4,000 livestock owners from north Kerry, Limerick, north Cork, Tipperary and Clare bought £5 shares in the company – in an investment model that closely resembled that being used at the time to establish the co-operative livestock marts.[198] The initiative was co-ordinated by the Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers' Association (ICMSA), the national dairy farmer representative body formed in 1950, which realised that a structured outlet for cows culled from milking herds was a prerequisite for the dairy sector's future development and expansion.[199] In 1960 the £20,000 farmer shareholding in Shannon Meats was consolidated into one block administered by the ICMSA initially and later by the ICMSA Investment Society.[200] The shareholding meant the farm organisation had three farmer directors on the company's restructured board and retained its interest in the business up to 1987 when it sold its twenty-nine per cent stake to Larry Goodman's Anglo Irish Beef Processors

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[194] Judge, 'A New Era of Hope' in *Leaders of courage*, p. 17.

[195] Statements regarding relations between Irish Assurance Company Limited and Frigorifico of Ireland Limited (NAI, TSCH/3/S15762); *II*, 23 Nov. 1954.

[196] ICMSA briefing note on the association's investment in Shannon Meats received from ICMSA on 25 Oct. 2016.

[197] Judge, 'A New Era of Hope' in *Leaders of courage*, p. 17; A letter from Shannon Meats to the Department of Industry and Commerce, 10 Nov. 1954 (NAI, INDC/IND/5/44); Confidential survey team's report on the beef, mutton and lamb industry: appendix 1962, pp 17-19 (NAI, DA/2005/82/1625).

[198] ICMSA briefing note on the association's investment in Shannon Meats received from ICMSA on 25 Oct. 2016.

[199] Judge, 'A New Era of Hope' in *Leaders of courage,* p. 17.

[200] Discussion with retired ICMSA official who did not wish to be named (20 Dec. 2016).

(AIBP) for approximately Ir£1,000,000.[201] The ICMSA investment in Shannon Meats is interesting in that it illustrates an acceptance by farmers that live exporters' domination of the cattle business in the 1950s was not in their interests, and that the meat factories not only generated competition for livestock but also provided an outlet for old and injured animals.

VOLATILE MARKETS

Volatile international demand which undermined the structured development of the sector was another serious challenge faced by the beef processors in the second half of the 1950s. Demand for Irish carcass and boneless beef in Britain fell sharply between 1954 and 1958, falling from 37,122 tonnes to 2,855 tonnes, as Table 1.2 details.[202] Total beef exports during this period dropped from 43,500 tonnes to 28,250 tonnes, a thirty-five per cent reduction, but fell to a low of 16,500 tonnes in 1956.[203] The British market's contraction was offset to some extent by increased exports to North America, as well as to EEC member states, and to US and Canadian armed forces stationed in Europe.[204] Germany remained a strong market for Irish beef, with exports totalling £1.7 million for 1957-58, although they dropped back to £1.28 million in 1959-60.[205] Sporadic exports to European countries outside the EEC and to non-European states also helped. For example, beef exports to Sweden in 1955-56 were worth £25,000, while Shannon Meats won a one-million-dollar contract in October 1959 to supply chilled beef to Venezuela.[206] However, this business could be very 'hit and miss'. Exports to Norway went from £25,000 to £262,000 between 1956 and 1959, yet the Nordic state was not even listed as a significant importer of Irish beef in the Minister for Agriculture's annual report for 1959-60.[207] The irregular nature of

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[201] *Limerick Leader*, 21 Sept. 1960; *Irish II*, 11 May 1960; *CE*, 20 Aug. 1987; *IFJ,* 8 Aug. 1987; Judge, 'A New Era of Hope' in *Leaders of courage*, p. 17; ICMSA briefing note on the association's investment in Shannon Meats received from ICMSA on 25 Oct. 2016.

[202] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78.

[203] Ibid.

[204] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group,* p. 35; Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, pp 39-39, 70-71; Daly, *First Department*, pp 302-09.

[205] Annual report of the Minister for Agriculture *1956-57*, p. 9; Annual report of the Minister for Agriculture *1957-58*, p. 11; Annual report of the Minister for Agriculture *1958-59*, p. 15; Annual report of the Minister for Agriculture *1959-60*, pp 14-16.

[206] *IP*, 6 Oct. 1959; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1955-56*, p. 9.

[207] Annual report of the Minister for Agriculture *1956-57*, p. 9; Annual report of the Minister for Agriculture *1957-58*, p. 11; Annual report of the Minister for Agriculture *1958-59*, p. 15; Annual report of the Minister for Agriculture *1959-60*, pp 14-16.

these contracts, which was a result of volatile global beef supply patterns, meant that carcass beef plants were often closed for long periods between contracts. For example, in September 1957 the Shannon Meats plant in Rathkeale secured a 12,000-tonne contract to supply beef to Spain, which meant the factory opened again after being closed for the previous nine months.[208] In October 1959 the *Cork Examiner* reported that former Shannon Meats' employees were being urged to return from the building sites in England to work on the aforementioned Venezuelan beef contract. The work created 120 jobs for just three months to the end of December, and gave an outlet for around five thousand cattle. However, the brevity of the contract highlights the precarious and uncertain nature of the carcass meat business.[209]

In contrast, the canned meat business was far more settled. Between 1954 and 1960 canned meat exports were remarkably stable, as Figure 1.2 confirms, varying from over seven thousand tonnes in 1959 to a high of just under twelve thousand tonnes in 1956, but generally averaging around nine thousand tonnes.[210] As discussed, successful firms such as Roscrea Meat Products developed profitable and secure markets for their canned meats, as had Denny's and Clover Meats for their canned stewed steak.[211] Indeed, meat industry analysts claimed that (despite a confidential Department of Agriculture audit in 1962 awarding Roscrea's produce an unimpressive 'fair to good' rating) Roscrea's 'Casserole' brand was the leading canned meat in the UK by 1972, with over thirteen per cent of the market.[212] The company's success was reflected in consistently high weekly kill figures, which generally exceeded one thousand cattle per week through the 1940s and 1950s.[213] The Roscrea plant had the added advantage of a settled workforce. Indeed, total employment at the north Tipperary firm stood at 450 in 1940, and five hundred in 1973.[214] Given the contrasting fortunes of the canned and carcass divisions of the beef business, it is

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[208] *IFJ*, 14 Sept. 1957; *CE*, 21 Sept. 1957.
[209] *CE*, 6 Oct. 1959.
[210] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78.
[211] Confidential draft of the survey team's report on the beef, mutton and lamb industry (1962), appendix p. 29 (NAI, DA/2005/82/1625).
[212] *Meat Trades Journal*, 14 Dec. 1972; Confidential draft of the survey team's report on the beef, mutton and lamb industry (1962), appendix p. 29 (NAI, DA/2005/82/1625).
[213] The weekly kill figures reported in the Roscrea Notes of the *Nenagh Guardian* were consistently above one thousand head. For example, in the edition of 30 Aug. 1941 the weekly kill figure was 1,180, the kill recorded in the 1 Feb. 1958 edition was 1,148, while a total kill of 1,698 cattle was reported in the edition of 16 Jan. 1960.
[214] *IP*, 10 Nov. 1973; *Nenagh Guardian*, 2 Nov. 1940.

noteworthy that a canning plant and chilling facilities were installed by Shannon Meats as part of the ICMSA investment in the company in 1960-61.[215]

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE'S ATTITUDE

The Department of Agriculture adopted what Daly has described as a 'cautious attitude' to the emerging beef industry and to the difficulties which engulfed it in the mid-1950s.[216] Indeed, the collapse in beef exports to Britain in the second half of 1954 and into the spring of 1955 evoked a relatively muted response from the Department. The upheavals which threatened the viability of the industry merited a mere three-line comment in the Department's annual report. It simply stated that processed beef returns were 'not favourable' relative to the prices paid by exporters for fat cattle and stores. It then quantified the fall-off in exports.[217] This understated reaction was in sharp contrast to that of the main farm organisations – with both the NFA and ICMSA viewing the decline in beef exports in the second half of the 1950s as a direct threat to farm incomes – and suggests a certain level of ambivalence to the survival of the industry.[218] Political reaction to the difficulties being encountered by the beef processors was equally muted. Exchanges in the Dáil regarding the beef sector during the autumn, winter and spring of 1954-55 centred on legislation around the licensing and regulation of meat slaughter plants, and differences on cattle breeding.[219] That is not to suggest that the meat factories were bereft of political patronage at this time. The value and potential of beef processing as a creator of employment and as a generator of export earnings was certainly recognised within government. In April 1952 the Fianna Fáil Minister for Agriculture, Thomas Walsh, told the annual dinner of the Dublin Cattle Salesmasters' Association that the dressed meat trade provided an 'important and valuable outlet for fat cattle'.[220] A continuity of approach towards beef processing was confirmed when Walsh's successor, Fine Gael's James Dillon, was equally effusive on the merits of the industry in 1956.

[215] *Limerick Leader*, 21 Sept. 1960.
[216] Daly, *First Department*, p. 301.
[217] Annual report of the Minister for Agriculture *1955-56*, p. 13;
[218] Judge, 'A New Era of Hope' in *Leaders of courage*, p. 17; Minutes of National Farmers' Association's livestock committee meeting on 2 Feb. 1956.
[219] Dáil debates Vol. 147, No. 4, 10 Nov. 1954; Dáil debates Vol. 150, No. 4, 28 Apr. 1955; Dáil debates Vol. 150, No. 10, 12 May 1955.
[220] Speech delivered by the Minister for Agriculture, Thomas Walsh, to the Dublin Cattle Salesmasters' Association's annual dinner, 23 Apr. 1952 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2).

Dillon stated that the development of the dead meat trade was an important part of government policy.[221] The formation in 1950 of the inter-departmental committee to assess the potential of developing beef exports to the US was, in effect, an acceptance of the beef industry's potential. Indeed, the committee – which included Jack Nagle from the Department of Agriculture, T. Ó Muireadaigh from the Department of Industry and Commerce, T. K. Whitaker from the Department of Finance, and Frank Biggar from the Department of External Affairs – predicted that the US market could take up to ten thousand tons of Irish beef each year at a value of up to $10 million.[222] Similarly, the preparation of a memorandum for cabinet in 1952 which outlined the processing capacity of the beef and lamb industry, and the proposed locations of new slaughtering plants, confirms that the sector's development was being monitored by both the Department of Agriculture and by government.[223]

However, while factories slaughtered and processed close to forty per cent of all Irish cattle that were available for export in 1960 – the remaining sixty per cent were shipped on the hoof – the live shipping of store cattle and fat animals to Britain remained the Department of Agriculture's primary concern.[224] The Department's caution regarding the development of the meat processing industry was motivated by a determination to protect Ireland's lucrative live cattle exports to Britain. While 260,000 animals were processed for canned meat and beef exports in 1954, the number of fat and store cattle shipped that year exceeded 610,000.[225] In essence, seven cattle were exported on the hoof for every two animals slaughtered and processed at home. The differential in value terms was equally stark. The average value of the beef exports (fresh, chilled, frozen and tinned beef) for the years 1952 to 1958 inclusive was just under £8.5 million. In contrast, live exports for the same period averaged £34 million annually or four times that of the beef trade.[226]

The significant difference in export earnings between the respective sectors helps explain the Department's determination to prevent the live trade being undermined by the new and expanding beef industry. Up to 1960, livestock exports

[221] Minutes of National Farmers' Association's livestock committee meeting on 12 Jan. 1956.
[222] *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Export Trade in Dressed Meat to the Dollar Area*, summary paragraph 6 and main report paragraph 52, 23 Nov. 1951 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2).
[223] Department of Agriculture memorandum dated 14 March 1952 on the beef processing industry (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2).
[224] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 36.
[225] Ibid.
[226] CSO data as quoted by Daly in *The First Department*, p. 310.

were considered to be not only the cornerstone of the agriculture industry, but a crucial income generator for the entire economy. While Rouse maintained that the country's reliance on the live cattle trade reflected agriculture's inability to compete internationally in other areas, Girvin noted that the cattle industry's importance was predicated on it being a reliable and dependable export earner.[227] In 1949 live cattle shipments were worth £19 million, or almost one-third of the country's traded export earnings.[228] The trade was still a stalwart of the economy a decade later, with cattle and beef exports generating £46 million or thirty per cent of overall exports in 1960.[229] Moreover, the trade consistently delivered these export earnings without recourse to subsidies or other direct support payments. While £4.28 million, or close to twenty per cent, of the total agriculture budget for 1958-59 was spent on export subsidies, mainly for dairy produce and pig-meat – live cattle and beef received no direct supports. Yet, cattle and beef continued to deliver the vast majority of the export earnings. In 1959 live cattle and beef were worth £35 million, in comparison to £3.2 million for dairy produce and £6 million for pigs and pig-meat.[230] In the context of the 1950s, and recurring balance of payments crises, the relative importance of cattle exports cannot be underestimated in terms of the stability of the state's finances. However, Crotty contends that the TB eradication scheme of the late 1950s was effectively a subsidy for live exporters as it protected their primary market in Britain, and that price supports paid to dairy farmers filtered into the beef trade as milk suppliers provided the sector with cheap calves.[231] In addition, Irish farmers benefitted from the British subsidy system as these payments were reflected in cattle prices.

The reluctance of Government to introduce direct supports for the cattle trade suggests a laissez faire attitude to the livestock business held sway in the Department of Agriculture and among politicians. Indeed, this was the traditional stance of successive governments to the sector since the 1920s. This unwillingness to interfere in the cattle trade may have been influenced by the income-generating power of its exports, or by the innate conservatism of the Department of Agriculture, and particularly its secretary Jack Nagle, whose father and family in Cork were cattle

[227] Rouse, *Ireland's own soil*, p. 85; Girvin, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 205.
[228] Statistical Abstract of Ireland 1950, compiled by the Central Statistics Office, p. 94, p. 151.
[229] Statistical Abstract of Ireland 1961, compiled by the Central Statistics Office, (Dublin, 1961), pp 57-82.
[230] Statistical Abstract of Ireland 1960, compiled by the Central Statistics Office (Dublin, 1960), p. 92; Crotty, *Irish Agricultural Production*, pp 201-02.
[231] Crotty, *Irish Agricultural Production*, pp 197-202.

traders.[232] The former IAOS executive, Maurice Colbert, has even questioned if too many politicians were themselves cattle traders.[233] Caution was also a common attribute of the successive Ministers for Agriculture from the late 1940s until the early 1960s, irrespective of party affiliation. Steady management rather than bold initiatives characterised the tenures of Dillon, Walsh and Paddy Smith in the agriculture portfolio. Indeed, Rouse contends that the incapacity of senior management at the Department of Agriculture and the various ministers to 'design a coherent progressive policy framework' subverted the 'expansionist ambitions' of the farm sector.[234] Dillon served two terms as minister, from 1948 to 1951, and from 1954 to 1957. The son of former Irish Parliamentary Party MP and leader, John Dillon, he was independent TD for Monaghan when initially appointed Minister for Agriculture in the Inter-Party government of 1948, but he had joined Fine Gael by the time of his second coming to the position.[235] Dillon was hugely popular among cattle traders and large farmers because of his support for the livestock trade to Britain, and due to their ingrained antipathy towards de Valera and Fianna Fáil who they blamed for the losses sustained during the Economic War.[236] However, his impact on the fortunes of farmers was limited during his time in office. As Rouse points out, Dillon's unrealistic goal of expanding agricultural exports by forty per cent during the 1950s was never achieved.[237] Equally, he set back the introduction of dedicated beef and dairy breeds from the Continent, such as the Friesian and Charolais, by his support for senior Department of Agriculture staff and their steadfast promotion of the Shorthorn. In contrast, Dillon's efforts to improve grassland output, through a national drainage programme and increased fertiliser use, were later adopted as policy, while his support was instrumental in the establishment of the agricultural research body An Foras Taluntais (AFT).[238] Fianna Fáil's primary incumbents in Agriculture House during the 1950s, Thomas Walsh and Paddy Smith, could not have been more

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[232] Patrick Long, 'Jack Nagle', *Directory of Irish Biography,* www.ria.ie/research-projects/dictionary-irish-biography (accessed 06 November 2020).
[233] *II*, 29 September, 2020.
[234] Rouse, *Ireland's own soil*, p. 85.
[235] Maurice Manning, 'James Dillon', *Directory of Irish Biography,* www.ria.ie/research-projects/dictionary-irish-biography (accessed 06 April 2021).
[236] Joe Barry interview (2 Nov. 2013); Hurley, *Noel Murphy*, pp 43-47; Keogh, *Cattleman*, pp 60-63.
[237] Rouse, *Ireland's own soil*, p. 85.
[238] Maurice Manning, 'James Dillon', *Directory of Irish Biography,* www.ria.ie/research-projects/dictionary-irish-biography (accessed 06 April 2021); Rouse, *Ireland's own soil*, pp 148-50; Keogh, *Cattleman*, pp 67-68.

different in terms of style to Dillon – they did not possess the same sense of theatre or profile as the Fine Gael TD – but their approach to the cattle sector were strikingly similar. Kilkenny native Walsh – who had attended Pallaskenry Agricultural College in Limerick and ran a sizeable mixed arable and livestock holding near Goresbridge – clashed with Dillon over his promotion of cattle exports, but he took no action to restrict the trade and his term of office coincided with the initial expansion in beef exports.[239] Likewise, Smith, who was a successful dairy farmer from Bailieborough, Co Cavan, actually facilitated the survival of the live export trade to Britain by assiduously implementing the TB eradication programme from 1957 until leaving office in 1964.[240] A seasoned operator within Fianna Fáil, Smith served as Minister for Agriculture in 1947-48 after succeeding James Ryan, and returned to the portfolio from 1957 to 1964, after also serving a term as Minster for Local Government (1951-54). An IRA veteran of the War of Independence and Civil War – who was captured and sentenced to death in July 1921, but later released under the general amnesty of January 1922 – Smith was generally conservative by nature and classed as frank and blunt by colleagues and officials.[241] However, he skilfully managed the politically fraught establishment of AFT, revamped the marketing of pig-meat through the Pigs and Bacon Commission, and fostered cordial working relations with the NFA and ICMSA – although he was wary of their motivations and resentful of their growing influence.[242]

The extent to which the live export trade took precedence over beef processing was highlighted by a series of policy battles in the early 1950s involving the Department of Industry and Commerce, where Seán Lemass was minister, and the Departments of Finance and Agriculture. An annex in the 1948 trade deal which stipulated that Ireland supply ninety per cent of its top quality cattle to Britain – a requirement which gives credence to John Horgan's observation that the British

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[239] Lawrence William White, 'Thomas Walsh', *Directory of Irish Biography,* www.ria.ie/research-projects/dictionary-irish-biography (accessed 06 April 2021); Dáil debates Vol. 150, No. 4, 28 Apr. 1955.

[240] Daly, *First Department,* pp 348-54; Tom Feeney, 'Paddy (Patrick) Smith', *Directory of Irish Biography,* www.ria.ie/research-projects/dictionary-irish-biography (accessed 06 April 2021).

[241] Tom Feeney, 'Paddy (Patrick) Smith', *Directory of Irish Biography,* www.ria.ie/research-projects/dictionary-irish-biography (accessed 06 April 2021).

[242] Rouse, *Ireland's own soil*, pp 193-95; Tom Feeney, 'Paddy (Patrick) Smith', *Directory of Irish Biography,* www.ria.ie/research-projects/dictionary-irish-biography (accessed 06 April 2021); Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, pp 33, 51.

market was ‘part life-jacket, part straitjacket’ for Irish livestock trade – was the initial flashpoint for the departmental differences.[243] The early expansion in meat processing meant that by 1951 beef and live cattle shipments to non-British markets accounted for fifteen per cent of total exports.[244] The annex was to be reviewed in 1952 and following a series of meetings of the Foreign Trade Committee (which included representatives of the Departments of the Taoiseach, Agriculture, External Affairs, Industry and Commerce, and Finance) it was decided in October 1951 that Ireland could not adhere to the ninety per cent restriction. The Irish ambassador in London, F. H. Boland, was instructed by the cabinet to inform the British Ministry of Food that the dead meat trade in Ireland was developing and that it was government policy to encourage its expansion.[245] Boland subsequently informed the British Minister for Food, Major Gwilym Lloyd-George, that the American export trade was ‘an essential source of dollars’ for Ireland.[246] This position was supported by the Department of Industry and Commerce, and its minister Lemass, who argued that the annex would restrict the future development of the beef processing sector by promoting a return to the live export of store cattle from Ireland to Britain. This view was also shared by the Department of External Affairs which stated in 1949 that it was ‘imperative’ that Ireland freed itself from ‘the restrictions imposed upon our exports of cattle and meat other than to Britain’.[247]

The implications of the trade restrictions were highlighted to government in October 1951 when a memorandum prepared by the Department of Agriculture asked if the export of dressed beef to countries other than the UK should be curtailed as the ten per cent limit had been exceeded.[248] Lemass maintained that any restriction on Irish beef exports risked reinforcing the state’s economic dependence on Britain. He said Ireland’s interests lay in encouraging meat exports by developing alternative markets.[249] However, Jack Nagle – an assistant secretary in the Department at the time

[243] John Horgan, *Seán Lemass, The Enigmatic Patriot* (Dublin, 1997), p. 215; Daly, *First Department*, pp 302-303.
[244] Daly, *First Department*, p. 302.
[245] Minutes of Cabinet meeting 26 Oct. 1951 (NAI, TSCH/3/S14211B).
[246] Correspondence between the Irish ambassador in London, FH Boland, and the Department of External Affairs (NAI, TSCH/3/S14211B).
[247] Memorandum for Government by the Department of External Affairs, 27 Sept. 1949, www.difp.ie/volume-9/1949/memorandum-for-government-by-the-department-of-external-affairs/4979/#section-documentpage (accessed 06 April 2021).
[248] Memorandum for government on beef exports, 24 Oct. 1951 (NAI, TSCH/3/S14211B).
[249] Daly, *First Department*, p. 304.

and a future secretary from 1958 to 1971 – claimed that holding non-UK exports of cattle and beef to the ten per cent limit was in the long-term interests of the Irish cattle industry. A native of Cork city, Nagle was the son of a cattle trader and was immersed in agriculture from a young age.[250] He joined the Department of Finance after graduating from UCC with a commerce degree in 1932, and moved to the Department of Agriculture in 1940, becoming secretary in 1958, a position he held until he retired in 1971.[251] Nagle maintained that securing sustainable contracts for carcass beef in the US and continental Europe could prove difficult and the pursuit of such outlets might endanger Ireland's preferential and guaranteed access to the valuable British market.[252] In essence, the Department of Agriculture's position was that the certainty of stability trumped the vagaries of opportunity. The Department of Agriculture's position was supported by the Minister for Finance, Seán MacEntee. With Ireland facing a record current account deficit of over £61 million in 1951, as well as an emerging sterling crisis, MacEntee could ill afford to endanger the country's live cattle exports to Britain.[253] Nagle also pointed out that the British could insist on the continuation of the ten per cent limit, and British records certainly point to unease and even suspicion in London at the emergence and growth of Irish beef processing.[254] An undated British memorandum on the trade talks strangely attributed the emergence of the Irish beef processing industry to 'slightly sinister' proposals from de Valera, and conceded that 'our [British] real interest lies in fresh meat from the Republic and not in canned meat'.[255] While British officials noted the increase in beef processing and the development of non-UK markets, they were convinced that Britain would remain Ireland's primary outlet: 'Informed opinion is generally sceptical of the long-term probability of any serious shift in supplies away from this country [Britain], provided that fair prices and conditions can be secured.'[256] The British were aware of the battle

[250] Patrick Long, 'John Charles Nagle', *Directory of Irish Biography,* www.ria.ie/research-projects/dictionary-irish-biography (accessed 05 October 2018).

[251] J.C. Nagle, *Agricultural Trade Policies* (Farnborough, 1976), p. 171; Patrick Long, 'John Charles Nagle', *Directory of Irish Biography,* www.ria.ie/research-projects/dictionary-irish-biography (accessed 05 October 2018); Daly, *First Department*, p. 554.

[252] Minutes of Foreign Trade Committee meeting, 15 Aug. 1951 (NAI, TSCH/3/S14211B); Daly, *First Department*, pp 304-05.

[253] Fanning, *The Irish Department of Finance*, pp 472-73; Feeney, *Sean MacEntee*, p. 171.

[254] Daly, *First Department*, pp 304-05.

[255] Undated memorandum from the British Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries entitled 'Proposed discussion between the Minister and the Irish Minister of Agriculture' (TNA, MAF 40/452).

[256] Information note written by HA Silverman entitled 'Irish food supplies and trade with Britain', dated November 1952 (TNA, MAF 40/452).

between the different factions within the Irish government, which they portrayed as a struggle between 'industrialists' and 'agriculturalists'.[257] It has also been depicted as a further instalment in the battle between the Minister for Finance, Seán MacEntee, and Lemass to succeed de Valera. However, Feeney does not agree with either interpretation. To view the differences of 1952-53 in such a light is a 'simplification', he contends. Feeney argues that the discord between MacEntee and Lemass centred on fiscal policy: the Department of Finance wanted investment to be targeted at productive rather than unproductive projects.[258] In the end Nagle's position on the annex prevailed and Ireland agreed in June 1953 to restrict non-UK exports of prime beef and cattle to ten per cent of total output.[259] In return the UK undertook to purchase all Irish supplies of store cattle, fat cattle and carcass beef, and that the price paid for dead meat was directly equivalent to live cattle prices.[260] The agreement was portrayed in the Irish media as a victory for the farm sector, with the *Irish Press* front page headline declaring 'Britain to take all cattle and beef we offer'.[261] The reality, however, was that the difficulties around the annex illustrated the weakness of Ireland's position regarding access to the British beef market. 'The threat of losing its position in the British market cowed the Irish, and the beef rebellion was over,' Rouse observed.[262] Moreover, the dispute regarding the annex confirmed the Department of Finance's dominant position within government. The political discourse around the annex primarily involved the departments of Agriculture and of Industry and Commerce; however, the matter was ultimately decided by the Department of Finance. Since the provisions of the Ministries and Secretaries Act vested control of government expenditure and appointments with the Department of Finance, Fanning noted that the Minister for Finance and his senior officials were therefore the 'paymaster' and 'Big Brother' to all others. 'It is...hardly surprising that no other department has inspired so much hostility and resentment,' Fanning maintained.[263] For their part, the British expressed surprise that Ireland had agreed to the restriction

[257] Undated memorandum from the British Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries entitled 'Proposed discussion between the Minister and the Irish Minister of Agriculture' (TNA, MAF 40/452).
[258] Feeney, *Sean MacEntee*, p. 196.
[259] Text of statement made by the Minister for Agriculture, Thomas Walsh, in the Dáil on 17 June 1953 (NAI, DA/6/29/31).
[260] *II*, 18 June 1953; *IP*, 18 June 1953; Text of statement made by the Minister for Agriculture, Thomas Walsh, in the Dáil on 17 June 1953 (NAI, DA/6/29/31).
[261] *IP*, 18 June 1953.
[262] Rouse, *Ireland's own soil*, p. 115.
[263] Fanning, *The Irish Department of Finance*, pp 564-565.

on beef and cattle exports to non-UK buyers, 'in total contradiction of their opening thesis', and were adamant that they could only purchase Irish canned and carcass beef at market prices.[264] Initial Irish satisfaction with the revised annex faded by 1954 when deregulation of British food pricing, and the introduction of the deficiency payments regime, prompted a collapse in Irish beef exports to the UK. Crucially, meat exports from cows and bulls was not restricted under the new deal, a concession which facilitated the expansion in manufacturing beef exports to the US in the late 1950s. This beef was primarily used in the manufacture of burgers and sausages.[265]

The Department of Agriculture remained extremely sensitive to accusations of preferential treatment for the live export trade over beef processing. This was illustrated by the indignant reaction of senior staff to the findings of a 1952 report on Ireland's industrial potential, which was compiled by US business consultants IBEC. The study was commissioned by IDA chairman, Dr. J. P. Beddy, and entitled *An appraisal of Ireland's Industrial Potentials* (more popularly known as the *Stacy May Report*). The report was hugely significant in drawing attention to Puerto Rico's industrial development which was based on attracting foreign direct investment through corporation tax incentives. This model was subsequently adopted by the IDA to power Ireland's industrial expansion.[266] In terms of the livestock sector, the report controversially questioned the livestock industry's concentration on live exports and its dependence on the British market.[267] Moreover, it was scathing of Ireland's policy on cattle and beef exports, which it described as 'weak' and based on 'a warp of pessimism crossed with a weft of timidity.'[268] While accepting that beef export growth was curtailed by the poor availability of 'refrigeration facilities' and 'refrigerated shipping', the report blamed the Department of Agriculture's 'control procedures', and more specifically, its export licensing regime, for curtailing the sector's expansion and 'limiting the amount of carcass meat shipments to areas other than the United Kingdom.'[269] It was particularly critical of the Department's division

[264] Undated memorandum from the British Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries entitled 'Proposed discussion between the Minister and the Irish Minister of Agriculture' (TNA, MAF 40/452).
[265] Press notice on revised annex to the Anglo-Irish Trade Agreement prepared ahead of statement by the Minister for Agriculture, Thomas Walsh, to the Dáil on 17 June 1953 (NAI, DA/6/29/31).
[266] Barry & Ó Fathartaigh, 'An Irish industrial revolution: the creation of the Industrial Development Authority (IDA), 1949-59' in *History Ireland*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (May/June 2013), p. 46.
[267] IBEC Technical Services Corporation, *An appraisal of Ireland's Industrial Potentials* (The Stacy May Report), (Dublin and New York, 1952), pp 73-74.
[268] *The Stacy May Report*, p. 76.
[269] Ibid., pp 76-77.

of export business among a number of different firms, even though the initial contract may have been negotiated by one individual processor.

> The practice seemed to be one of partitioning out the privilege of filling these generally more lucrative orders among the several Irish producers rather than allowing them to be filled by the ones through whose initiative the orders were obtained.[270]

'Given Ireland's [beef] supply position, the reasons for requiring specific licenses for individual meat shipments are not merely unclear – they would seem to be mischievous,' the report stated.[271] The clear implication was that the authorities were, somehow, putting obstacles in the way of the processing sector's development. The Minister for Agriculture, Tom Walsh, dismissed the report and sought to block its publication. Meanwhile, Jack Nagle complained that Stacy May, the report's author, had addressed staff at Kildare Street like a prosecuting counsel.[272] Interestingly, Nagle's response to the report was ill-tempered and personalised, and extremely defensive. He suggested that Stacy May lacked ability, had little knowledge of Irish agriculture, and possessed a 'truculent attitude'. He also accused the author of departing from the study's terms of reference by advising the Department 'how to conduct trade negotiations with other countries'.[273] Nagle's hostility to the Stacey May report was shared by Fine Gael's, James Dillon. The former Agriculture Minister told the Dáil that he read the report with 'amusement': 'Before the report was published the market had become utterly unprofitable, which shows how much value we should place on Mr Stacy May's opinion in regard to the export market for beef which he knows about as much as my foot, or rather less.'[274] MacEntee and Department of Finance also expressed serious reservations regarding the Stacy May Report and sought to stop its publication. These concerns centred primarily on allegations that the banking system and government channelled savings into British capital markets in preference to retaining them in Ireland for domestic investment. However, despite the efforts of MacEntee, the report was published by the

[270] *The Stacy May Report*, pp 75-76.
[271] Ibid., p. 77.
[272] Daly, *First Department*, p. 301.
[273] Letter from Jack Nagle to John Leydon, secretary of the Department of Industry and Commerce, 6 Feb. 1952 (NAI, TSCH/3/S/15389).
[274] Dáil debates Vol. 136, No. 7, 13 February 1953.

Government in November 1952.[275] The Stacy May Report certainly had its failings. No account was taken of the seasonal nature of Irish cattle supplies, or the volatile nature of demand and price on the British and European markets – factors which impacted negatively on the viability of the industry. However, the findings of the IBEC study, and precedence given to live cattle exports in the negotiation of the revised Anglo-Irish trade agreement in 1953, suggests that beef processing remained the cattle industry's 'poor relation' in the eyes of the Department of Agriculture.

RECOVERY

The recovery in the dead meat trade's fortunes coincided with a rebound in exports of manufacturing beef to the US. Shipments to North America quadrupled between 1957 and 1958, increasing from over four thousand tons to almost sixteen thousand tons.[276] The bulk of this beef was exported as boxed boneless product, destined for what the Americans termed the 'grinding' end of the market or the manufacture of hamburgers and other low-cost meats.[277] The impact of the American trade on the ground was significant. In March 1958 the *Nenagh Guardian* reported that 1,047 cattle were killed at Roscrea Meats that week, with 'thirteen CIE lorries and trailers' required to transport the 'frozen boxed beef' to Dublin Port.[278] The revival in US beef demand was driven by tighter global cattle supplies, particularly in the southern hemisphere. This was flagged by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in its 1958 outlook. 'Where demand for [beef] imports into the UK and United States is likely to remain strong, there will probably not be extra supplies available for exports from the southern hemisphere,' the report correctly predicted.[279] The fall-off in South American beef exports was highlighted by the *Farmers' Journal* on a number of occasions during the summer of 1958, culminating in a report in September which claimed that beef packing houses in Uruguay were closing due to the shortage of cattle.[280] The American business meant total output from Irish beef processors was 28,000 tons for 1958. This matched 1957 production levels, which were boosted by

[275] Feeney, *Sean MacEntee*, pp 191-92.
[276] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78.
[277] Annual report of the Minister for Agriculture *1958-59*, p. 15.
[278] *Nenagh Guardian*, 22 March 1958.
[279] *The State of Food and Agriculture 1958*, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), (Rome, 1958), p. 75.
[280] *IFJ*, 20 Sept. 1958.

the aforementioned 12,000-ton Spanish contract, but was far higher than the 16,000 tons exported in 1956.[281] Beef sales to the US continued to expand rapidly over the following two years, as Figure 1.2 illustrates, reaching almost 30,000 tons by 1960 – by which time total carcass beef output hit 51,000 tons, well ahead of the 1954 high of 44,000 tons.[282] The industry had survived.

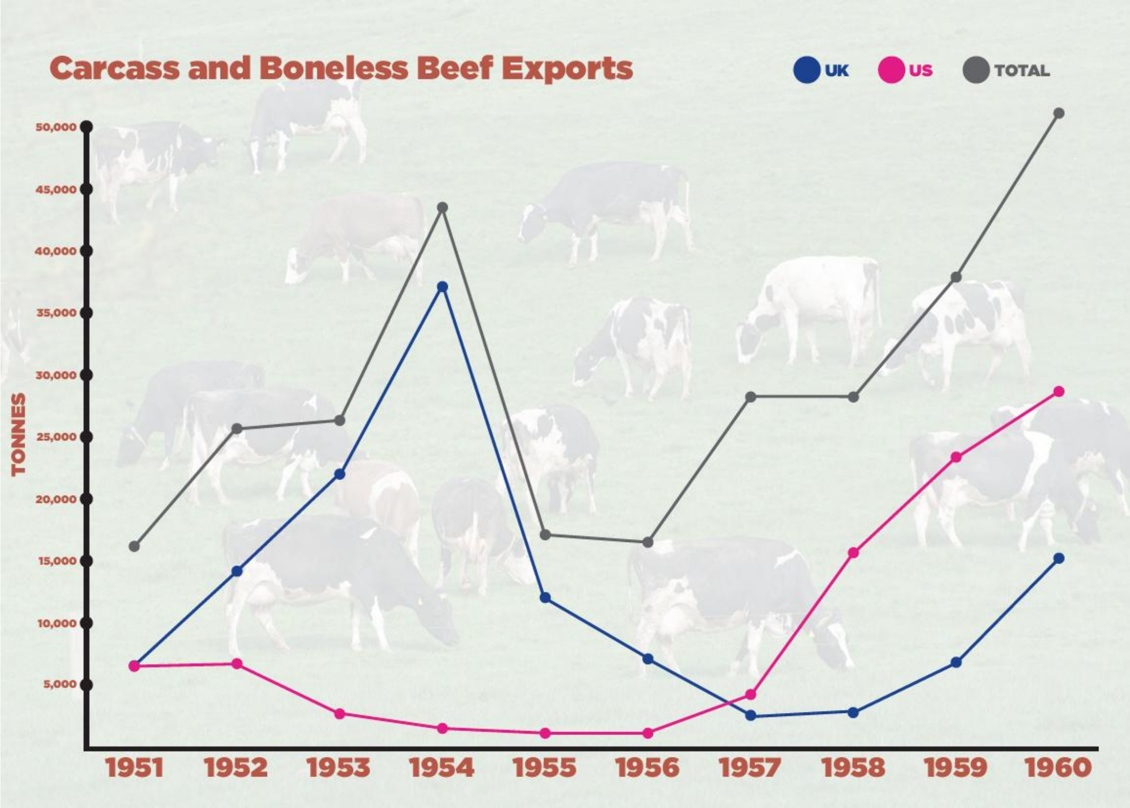

Figure 1.2: The main markets for Irish beef 1950-1960
Source: Department of Agriculture and CSO data

The willingness of the beef processors to change so as to adapt to market developments and requirements was another crucial factor in their survival. This was evident in the years after the 1955 downturn when a number of factories sought licences, and sometimes grant aid, to install canning plants. In addition, this period saw an increase in licence applications to produce open-pack meat products such as pies, and even a number looked to diversify into pig processing. For example, Frank Quinn's International Meat Company at Grand Canal Street in Dublin sought a

[281] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78.
[282] Ibid.

licence in 1958 to manufacture stewed steak, ox tongue, corned beef, and steak and kidney pudding. The previous owners of the plant, Frigorifico in Ireland, had a licence to produce canned stewed steak since 1953.[283] Similarly, Irish Meat Packers applied to the Department of Agriculture for a licence to can ox kidneys in 1954, to manufacture corned beef in 1956, and to can ox tongue in 1958.[284] Meanwhile, the £20,000 invested by ICMSA members in Shannon Meats, as noted earlier, was predicated on the company developing a canning plant at its Rathkeale, Co. Limerick facility.[285] The canning business was attractive to beef firms for a number of reasons. It provided a broader product mix for the companies; a steadier cash-flow as the canned meats were usually sold at a given price, whereas carcass meat prices varied according to market supply and sentiment; canned product did not require refrigeration capacity; and, unlike fresh meat, it could be stored through times of market oversupply. In addition, the meat canning trade was viewed as complimentary to carcass beef processing as it provided a commercial use for low grade meat cuts and offal, such as ox tongue and kidney. Moreover, the Irish beef industry had an established track record in the sector, with Irish stewed steak considered a market leader in Britain.[286] Roscrea, Clover Meats and Castlebar Bacon Company were recognised as the 'big three' in Irish canned meats, but both Shannon Meats and Clonmel Foods also had sizeable operations by the early 1960s.[287] The total number of animals killed for canning and open pack meat products increased substantially as a result of the processing sector's changed focus, growing from 142,000 head to 234,000 head between 1955 and 1959.[288] Interestingly, attempts by IMP, Kildare Chilling, Clonmel Foods and Dublin Meat Packers to secure licences to slaughter pigs in the mid-1950s provoked a furious response from the Bacon Curers' Association. The association claimed there was 'sufficient existing capacity' for pig processing and they warned of the possibility of losing existing suppliers of pigs to new entrants.

[283] Licence application from International Meat Company (NAI, DA/10/7/58/4).
[284] Various IMP licence applications (NAI, DA/10/7/62/4).
[285] *Limerick Leader*, 21 Sept. 1960; *II*, 11 May 1960; Judge, 'A New Era of Hope' in *Leaders of courage*, p. 17; ICMSA briefing note on the association's investment in Shannon Meats received from ICMSA on 25 Oct. 2016.
[286] *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Export Trade in Dressed Meat to the Dollar Area*, paragraph 36, 23 Nov. 1951 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2).
[287] Report of meeting on 11 Apr. 1958 to assess a Clonmel Foods' Trade Loans Guarantee Scheme application (NAI, DA/10/7/22/1); Confidential draft of the survey team's report on the beef, mutton and lamb industry (1962) appendix p. 29, 23 Nov. 1951 (NAI, DA/2005/82/1625).
[288] A Department of Agriculture table on exports of cows and cow beef between 1955 and 1959 (NAI, DA/10/19/4/1).

Denny's, Clover Meats and the Castlebar Bacon Company were represented on delegations that lobbied the Department of Agriculture on the issue in May 1953 and again in February 1955. The irony that all three plants had diversified from pig processing into beef slaughtering but were now blocking their competitors from making a similar transition cannot have been lost on Jack Nagle and ministers Thomas Walsh and James Dillon during their meetings. [289]

The flow of TB positive cows, commonly called reactors, from the national eradication programme during the 1950s also played a part in the processing sector's recovery. Indeed, John Lyons of the Longford-based meat processor, MJ Lyons, said the TB eradication scheme was an important factor in the expansion of their cattle slaughtering business in the 1950s.[290] Slaughter plants provided the only outlet for cattle that tested positive for TB since they could not be exported live to Britain or Europe.[291] Indeed, the impetus for Irish TB eradication scheme, which was launched in 1952, came from Britain where the government committed to eliminating the disease in its cattle herd by 1961.[292] Once Britain had committed to eradicating TB, Ireland had to follow in order to protect its lucrative live cattle export trade. No national figures on the incidence of TB were available in the early but a pilot study carried out in Bansha, Co Tipperary found that thirty per cent of the cattle tested were positive, as were forty-four per cent of the cows.[293] A pilot eradication scheme introduced in 1952 was followed by a voluntary programme in 1954 and a compulsory scheme in 1957. By 1959 the Department of Agriculture was paying farmers £15 per head grant for each reactor cow slaughtered.[294] The impact of the various TB schemes on the dead meat trade can be seen in Table 1.B. The total number of cows slaughtered in export plants doubled between 1954 and 1960 to reach 245,000 head. This figure includes cull cows, TB reactors and injured animals. During the same period cow slaughtering as a percentage of the total kill rose from forty-three per cent to sixty-five per cent – and even hit eighty-one per cent at the height of the

[289] Memorandums dated 5 Oct. 1954 and 25 Oct. 1954 detail Bacon Curers' Association objections to applications for pig slaughtering licences from beef processors (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2).
[290] Interview with John Lyons of MJ Lyons and Sons (15 Aug. 2015).
[291] Crotty, *Irish Agricultural Production*, p. 197.
[292] Rouse, *Ireland's own soil*, pp 200-201; Daly, *First Department*, p. 349.
[293] Daly, *First Department*, p. 349.
[294] Rouse, *Ireland's own soil*, pp 195-203; Daly, *First Department*, pp 350-352.

TB eradication campaign in 1958.[295] The early beef industry was built substantially on cow slaughter.

YEAR	COWS	OTHER CATTLE	TOTAL CATTLE AND COWS	COWS AS % OF TOTAL
1950	90,000	26,300	116,300	77.4
1951	116,400	71,600	188,000	62.0
1952	155,500	98,900	254,400	61.1
1953	192,600	101,200	193,800	47.8
1954	112,400	150,800	263,200	42.7
1955	128,700	53,600	182,300	70.6
1956	123,400	59,700	183,100	67.4
1957	162,900	48,600	211,500	77.0
1958	184,600	43,300	227,900	81.0
1959	227,600	91,500	319,100	71.3
1960	245,000	131,800	376,800	65.0

Table 1.B: Proportion of cows in the overall cattle kill
Source: Based on CSO data and published in the ESRI's 1973 report entitled *'A Study if the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries'*

THE MARTS

The beef processors' revival was also assisted by the improved cattle purchasing arrangements which the expanding livestock mart network provided from 1956 onwards, and by the support which the newly formed farmer representative organisations, the Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers' Association (ICMSA) and the National Farmers' Association (NFA), provided to the industry. The weakness of the existing trading process – where livestock was bought at fairs and off farmers' lands – was flagged in the Stacy May Report of 1952 as a major impediment to the development of a modern beef processing industry. In fact, the report specifically called for an investigation of the 'internal structure of cattle marketing within Ireland', with a view to building sales mechanisms that would incentivise the expansion of

[295] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78; *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 36.

cattle production.[296] It took a mix of private business interests and farmer groups – working under the guidance of the IAOS – to drive the development of the country's livestock marts network from the mid-1950s.[297] In 1956 there were just three co-operative marts operating, these were in Waterford, Kilkenny and Bunclody, Co Wexford.[298] But this figure had increased to over thirty by 1960.[299] The popularity of the livestock marts network was due in part to farmer dissatisfaction with the manner in which cattle were traditionally purchased at the country fairs and the absence of an auction element to the sales process where interested parties bid against one another. Essentially, farmers wanted open and transparent competition for their livestock.[300] Kildare livestock trader, Joe Barry, summed up farmer frustrations with the customs and traditions of the fair and of the Dublin Cattle Market when he described them as 'an archaic way of doing business.'[301] The etiquette of the fair dictated that once a buyer was involved in negotiations with a seller he could not be interrupted, nor could any other party express an interest in the livestock until the haggling process had irrevocably broken down.[302] The fair featured actors such as tanglers, the deal makers who sorted out differences between buyers and sellers, and blockers who were employed by traders to frustrate the purchasing activities of their competitors.[303]

These features of the trade were as much cultural as economic, and were to be found in many traditional societies well outside the Irish sphere, being noted, for instance, by Uchendu in his study on the principles of haggling in peasant markets from Haiti to West Africa.[304] However, these archaic customs and conventions were not universally popular among farmers. Former *Farmers' Journal* reporter, John Shirley, and retired IAOS executive, Maurice Colbert, described the fairs as a 'desperate way of selling cattle', where farmers were at the 'whim of the dealers'. Colbert recalled driving cattle to the fair in Dungarvan, Co Waterford in the 1950s and being met on the way into town by dealers trying to buy the livestock cheaply

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[296] Stacy May Report (1952), p. 87.
[297] Interview with John Shirley, former *Irish Farmers' Journal* columnist, and Maurice Colbert, former executive with the Irish Co-operative Organisation Society (25 March 2014).
[298] *Annual Report of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society Ltd, 1956* (Dublin, 1957), p.8.
[299] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, pp 67-69.
[300] Interview with John Shirley and Maurice Colbert (25 March 2014).
[301] Interview with Joe Barry (2 November 2013).
[302] Ibid.
[303] Keogh, *Cattleman*, pp 78-79; Interview with Maurice Colbert and John Shirley (25 Mar. 2014); Joe Barry interview (2 Nov. 2013).
[304] Victor C. Uchendu, 'Some principles of haggling in peasant markets' in *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, vol. 16, no. 1 (1967), p. 39.

before the sale started in earnest. Similarly, John Shirley recalled fairs from the 1950s where the dealers invariably had a story of a boatload of beef from Argentina forcing down prices in Britain.[305] However, the impetus to establish the marts network was motivated by more than farmers' exasperation at the jaded conventions of the fairs. The marts offered open competition for stock, transparency of the sale process, and guaranteed payment.[306] As Maurice Colbert observed, it was 'one thing getting a price for your animal' but to ensure that you were paid for stock was 'just as important.'[307]

The success of the marts movement facilitated the expansion of domestic meat processing of cattle and sheep by creating reliable trading structures through which the factories were able to source livestock regularly.[308] This point was stressed by IAOS secretary, Dr Henry Kennedy, at the official opening of Cahir Mart in 1958 when he said that good breeding, good feeding and good markets were essential elements to a successful livestock industry.[309] Factory agents, such as Peter Roe from Roscrea, were buying cattle at marts right across the west midlands and mid-west region by the end of the decade. Roe's factory purchase book for 1959 shows that he bought stock at marts in Waterford, Kilmallock, Rathkeale, Thurles, Templemore and Nenagh, a seventy-mile radius, between July and November that year.[310] In addition, the marts challenged the dominance of the exporters in the livestock sector to an even greater degree than the meat factories. This was confirmed when the newly-formed marts targeted the British export trade directly. Indeed, in 1956 representatives from the Kilkenny and Waterford mart societies visited England to explore the possibilities of opening up an export trade. The IAOS annual report stated that the contacts made proved 'very valuable and the resulting export business has been very successful.'[311] Interestingly, the IAOS representatives told the NFA's livestock committee that the reluctance of cattle dealers and exporters to trade with the marts had forced the businesses to deal directly with English importers.[312] Indeed, in its 1956 annual report

[305] Interview with Maurice Colbert and John Shirley (25 Mar. 2014).
[306] Interview with Joe Barry (2 Nov. 2013); Interview with Maurice Colbert and John Shirley (25 Mar. 2014).
[307] Interview with John Shirley and Maurice Colbert (25 Mar. 2014).
[308] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, p. 67.
[309] *Nationalist*, 27 Sept. 1958.
[310] Peter Roe's cattle purchases notebook for 1959, entries dated from 25 July 1959 to 24 Nov. 1959.
[311] *Annual Report of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society Ltd, 1956* (Dublin, 1957), p. 10.
[312] Minutes of the NFA national livestock committee meeting for 9 Nov. 1956.

the IAOS claimed that the lack of support from 'professional buyers' amounted to a 'virtual boycott of the co-operative marts'.[313]

The boycott of the marts by dealers and livestock exporters was extremely damaging for many of the new sales centres, particularly those in the beef producing regions in the west that were dependent on cattle exporters since there was no local tradition of finishing cattle and most animals were shipped as stores. Ivan Gawley, who was a board member with Mayo-Sligo Co-operative Mart in Ballina which opened in 1959, recalled the ‘vice-like’ grip that dealers and traders had on the cattle business in Sligo and north Mayo at that time. Since most of the cattle from the area were shipped to Scotland, the traders’ boycott meant that the exporters, who were the strongest buyers, were not represented at the mart’s sales.[314] The 1960 annual report for Mayo-Sligo Mart listed the boycott by cattle dealers and traders as one of the reasons for the low turnover in the business that year.[315] Exporters defended their actions by claiming that the new marts were ‘impracticable and unworkable’ and implied that their introduction was damaging the ‘successful operation’ of the vital live trade to Britain.[316] The Irish Livestock Exporters’ and Traders’ Association maintained that it was ‘only through the sale and purchase of cattle through the fairs and on the land that the [cattle] trade can be properly carried on and developed.’[317] The *Store Cattle Study Group Report* of 1968 agreed with many of the exporters’ practical misgivings regarding the marts. It pointed out that marts were held too late in the day to facilitate the later transport of the stock by trains. In addition, dealers and exporters could only buy stock in small numbers and therefore were compelled to remain for the day at the mart to put a consignment of animals together.[318] However, the *Irish Farmers’ Journal* editor, Paddy O’Keeffe, disagreed with the exporters claims. He described the boycott as a ‘bare-faced attempt at setting the hands of the clock backward’, which he correctly predicted would fail.[319]

O’Keeffe’s assertion that ‘larger and more responsible dealers’ had ‘disassociated themselves from the campaign’ was also right. Roscrea livestock agent

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[313] *Annual Report of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society Ltd, 1956* (Dublin, 1957), p. 9.

[314] ‘Ivan Gawley Remembers’ in *Mayo-Sligo Co-operative Mart’s Fiftieth Anniversary* (Sligo, 2009). This booklet was published by the mart itself.

[315] Ibid, p. 24. Extract from 1960 Annual Report of Mayo-Sligo Co-operative Mart.

[316] *Kerryman*, 21 Feb. 1959.

[317] Ibid.

[318] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, pp 87-88.

[319] *IFJ*, 29 Nov. 1958.

Peter Roe was actively buying in marts across Munster during the boycott and supplying stock to the leading exporter, Jack Keogh.[320] Although portrayed as a battle between the marts and fairs, this contest was, in fact, a struggle for command of the wider cattle and sheep industry. In essence, the boycott was an attempt by the cattle traders to maintain control of the lucrative live export trade – and, by extension, their 'vice-like' grip on the livestock industry. The exporters' leader, Donal Cronin, confirmed the wider context of the power struggle when he told the United Cattle Traders Association's AGM in January 1958 that live shippers 'had garnered a world of knowledge in the business,' and that 'its destiny was best left in their hands.'[321] The *Store Cattle Study Group Report* highlighted the essential role played by cattle exporters in the livestock trade:

> The major task of the exporters and dealers is the assembly of relatively small lots of cattle produced by individual farmers into suitable lots for export or transfer within the country. In any industry as diversified as the store cattle industry this assembly function is an important one.[322]

Of equal importance were the business and personal connections fostered by the exporters with livestock buyers in Britain. However, Cronin's comments in 1958 indicated that live exporters were clearly sending a message to the marts, and to the wider sector – including the meat industry – that they would defend their pre-eminent position in Irish agriculture.

FARM ORGANISATIONS

The manner in which beef processing developed during the 1950s and early 1960s was also influenced by the formation of cohesive national farmer representative bodies during the period, and the impact these had on agricultural policy and practice. ICMSA's willingness to invest in Shannon Meats, which was detailed earlier, illustrated the importance placed on the meat factories' survival by farmers. In essence, the ICMSA's members needed the slaughter plants to provide an outlet for cull cows – a facility that had not been available in the past – and to compete with the

[320] Peter Roe's cattle purchases notebook for 1959, entries dated from 25 July 1959 to 24 Nov. 1959; *IFJ*, 29 November 1958.
[321] *Nenagh Guardian*, 4 January 1958.
[322] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, pp 88-89.

live exporters for any other livestock sold.[323] The NFA also recognised the importance of a vibrant processing sector. In their book, *Farm organisations in Ireland – A century of progress,* Smith and Healy, the NFA's first economist and national secretary respectively, recalled that relations between the farm body and the processors' organisation, the Irish Fresh Meat Exporters' Society (IFMES), were 'immediately friendly'.

> The NFA immediately related to this dynamic industry. It gave industrial employment in rural areas in slaughter and in processing of hides and offals. It reduced transport cost. It reduced dependence on the store trade, which was known to be unable to absorb the planned increase in livestock production. It broke the monopoly of British buyers.[324]

The strength of the relationship between the NFA and the factories is recorded in the minutes of the farmer body's livestock committee meetings, with IFMES chairman, Matt Lyons, addressing the group in 1956 and 1957 on the difficulties the meat factories were encountering. Lyons even offered processor support for an NFA beef marketing initiative. He said IFMES members wanted 'unified action' on beef marketing and an end to 'cut throat' competition between Irish factories.[325]

Like the factories, the farm organisations were viewed with a degree of wariness by political leaders. The tone of the relations between the NFA and the then Fine Gael-led coalition government were set on the night of its official formation in January 1955 when at a celebratory dinner at Dublin's Royal Hibernian Hotel the Minister for Agriculture, James Dillon, lauded the achievements of the Department of Agriculture, much to the annoyance of those in attendance.[326] Dillon's attitude to farm organisations was possibly coloured by his experience of dealing with the multitude of representative groups that pre-dated the formation of ICMSA and NFA. He famously claimed that talks with sixty-three separate organisations were needed to discern farmers' views on any particular matter.[327] He was no stranger to battles with farmers, either. His announcement in March 1950 that he intended cutting government

[323] Judge, 'A New Era of Hope' in *Leaders of courage,* p. 17.
[324] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, p. 68.
[325] Minutes of the NFA national livestock committee meetings for 2 Feb. 1956 and 5 Feb. 1957.
[326] Matthew Dempsey (ed), *The path to power – 60 years of the Irish Farmers Association* (Dublin, 2015), p. 36.
[327] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations,* p. 22 (Dillon was addressing a Macra meeting at Robinstown, Co Meath in 1952).

supports for farm-gate milk prices by 2d per gallon prompted a storm of protest that eventually resulted in the formation of the ICMSA.[328] Dillon's actions aimed to effectively cut milk prices from 14d to 12d per gallon at a time when Northern Irish dairy farmers were receiving 28d per gallon.[329] The ICMSA held its first annual meeting in October 1950 at Cruise's Hotel, Limerick, with representatives from seven counties attending. By March 1952 the association had 460 branches affiliated.[330] The marked increase in membership was helped by the ICMSA's success in securing higher milk prices. Despite his assertion that Irish butter was losing its market share in Britain to the Danes as a result of high prices, Dillon yielded to both political and farmer pressure and conceded an additional 1d per gallon, with his Fianna Fáil successor Thomas Walsh giving a further penny in 1951.[331] By the summer of 1952 milk prices hit 1s 4d per gallon.[332]

The success of the ICMSA did not go unnoticed in Macra na Feirme, which was founded in 1944 when representatives of young farmers' clubs in Mooncoin, Co Kilkenny teamed up with members of similar groups from Kilmallock, Co Limerick and Athy, Co Kildare to form the national organisation.[333] Although it had a country-wide network, around four hundred clubs and 15,000 members by 1951 – thanks to the work of its early leaders, Stephen Cullinan and John Litton – the organisation shied away from representing the economic interests of young farmers, concentrating instead on educational and social matters.[334] Pressure built on Macra, however, to follow the ICMSA's lead and take a more proactive role in representing farmers politically as the 1950s progressed and this finally culminated in the establishment of the NFA in 1955, with Athy farmer Juan Greene elected its first president.[335] Much of Macra's membership moved over to the new lobby group, which had a full set of county executives and close to 350 branches affiliated by autumn 1955.[336]

The formation of national farm organisations in the 1950s mirrored developments in Britain and reflected the realisation, as Daly notes, 'that farm

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[328] *II*, 24 Mar. 1950.
[329] *CE*, 3 Apr. 1950.
[330] Judge, 'A New Era of Hope' in *Leaders of courage*, pp 12-14.
[331] *IP*, 8 May 1950, 27 Sept. 1951.
[332] *CE*, 26 Apr. 1952.
[333] Jim Miley, *A Voice for the Country – Fifty Years of Macra na Feirme* (Dublin, 1994), pp 19-20.
[334] Daly, *First Department*, p. 340; Miley, *A Voice for the Country*, pp 50, 56.
[335] Dempsey (ed), *The path to power,* p. 35.
[336] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, p. 52.

incomes were increasingly being determined by government.'[337] However, while the National Farmers' Union in Britain was party to annual price negotiations with the Ministry for Agriculture, successive Irish governments were reluctant to offer similar concessions to the Irish farm bodies.[338] Indeed, confrontation rather than consultation was to characterise the farm organisations' relations with successive governments for much of the 1950s and 1960s. The government's tough line was illustrated in 1956 when more than 450 farmers were arrested after the ICMSA and liquid milk suppliers staged a milk price protest outside the Dáil.[339] A more moderate approach from the NFA was equally ineffectual. In 1956 the association sought to be consulted by the Department on 'general matters affecting farming' – as the NFU were in Britain. However, the Department turned down the request.[340]

Despite these setbacks, the farm organisations remained powerful actors in the wider agricultural industry, a fact recognised by the beef processing sector. In helping to establish the mart movement, both the NFA and ICMSA had displayed a willingness to challenge the position and influence of the livestock exporters. Ironically, the skills required to muster, mobilise and the convince farmers to invest in local marts were generally developed and honed in Macra na Feirme rather than in NFA and ICMSA. Along with improving the young farmers' technical knowledge, Macra na Feirme instructed members in the arts of public speaking and managing meetings.[341] Coaching in these practical skills had a significant bearing on the development of the marts, and rejuvenation of the dairy co-operatives, as it nurtured a cadre of confident local leaders who could represent their peers on the boards of these farmer-owned businesses – as well as progressing to regional and national level in the farmer representative bodies or other agricultural organisations. The experience of Tipperary dairy farmer, Tom Cleary, illustrates the pivotal and positive role played by Macra na Feirme in the development of farming generally in the 1950s and 1960s. A founding member of Macra in his native Cloughjordan, the dairy farmer was involved in the fund-raising drive to establish Nenagh Mart, he joined the board of Nenagh's dairy co-operative, and later chaired Bord Bainne. He was also a regional board of

[337] Daly, *First Department*, p. 373.
[338] Martin, *The Development of Modern Agriculture*, p. 71; Daly, *First Department*, p. 373; Smith, From Campbell to Kendall: a history of the NFU, pp 118, 128.
[339] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, pp 33-34; *IP*, 7 March 1956.
[340] Notes on a meeting between Department of Agriculture officials and NFA representatives, 19 Sept. 1956 (NAI, DA/2005/82/622); Smith, From Campbell to Kendall: a history of the NFU, pp 118, 128.
[341] Miley, *A Voice for the Country*, pp 25-26; Tom Cleary interview (13 Oct. 2016).

Irish Meat Packers (IMP) after it was purchased by farmer shareholders.[342] Similarly, other senior figures in Macra went on to play important roles in the farm sector. Michael Gibbons was Macra chairman in 1953-54, and later chaired Clover Meats. Pa Quinlan was Macra president in 1953-55, and later became president of the co-operative umbrella body, IAOS. Seán Healy was Macra general secretary from 1953 to 1955, and later fulfilled the same role for the NFA.[343]

Farm leaders were moving beyond the confines of traditional lobbying by the close of the 1950s. The presence of Juan Greene and the ICMSA's John Feeley on the study group which examined Irish food marketing – and led to the setting up of Bord Báinne in 1961 – was recognition that both organisations were major industry stakeholders whose input could not be ignored.[344] Indeed, farmer representatives were on the boards of the main dairy processors and other agriculture-related concerns by the early 1960s. For example, ICMSA president, Charles Fletcher, was also chairman of Killeshandra Co-operative in Cavan, while the NFA's Leinster vice-president, John Litton, was on the board of the *Irish Farmers' Journal*. Although the various roles sometimes raised questions around conflicts of interest, these linkages and connections also added weight to the lobbying efforts of the farmer organisations.[345] This dual role as both lobbyists and participants in the farm sector paid dividends for the beef industry when both the IFA and ICMSA supported efforts to establish an independent agricultural research body beyond the control of Department of Agriculture.[346] An Foras Talúntais (AFT) was finally established in 1958 after protracted political wrangling. Its first director was Dr Tom Walsh, an internationally respected scientist who proved to be a combative administrator. He said the research body's role was to provide farmers with the facts to reach informed management decisions.[347] Research into feeding, breeding and animal husbandry techniques, carried out mainly at its beef centre in Grange, Co Meath, helped to change

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[342] Tom Cleary interview (13 Oct. 2016).
[343] Miley, *A Voice for the Country*, pp 56-58.
[344] Report of the Advisory Group on the Marketing of Agricultural Produce (Dublin, 1959), p. 39.
[345] Judge, 'A New Era of Hope' in *Leaders of courage*, p. 13; Matthew Dempsey (ed), *The path to power,* p. 35; Matthew Dempsey, former editor of the *Irish Farmers' Journal,* in a presentation to the conference, 'Remarkable Transformations: Reassessing the History of Agriculture in Ireland', 9 Sept. 2016.
[346] Notes on a meeting between Department of Agriculture officials and NFA representatives, 19 Sept. 1956 (NAI, DA/2005/82/622); Daly, *First Department*, pp 394-95.
[347] *IFJ*, 29 Nov. 1958; William Murphy, 'Thomas Walsh', *Directory of Irish Biography,* www.ria.ie/research-projects/dictionary-irish-biography (accessed 08 Apr. 2021).

fundamentally the nature of Ireland's beef industry over the next three decades, as the country moved away from dual purpose Shorthorn cattle to beef breeds such as Hereford and Angus, and later continental breeds such as Charolais.[348] Welcoming AFT's establishment, *Irish Farmers' Journal* editor, Paddy O'Keeffe, described its 'overdue birth' as one of the highlights of 1958, and he looked forward to the research body becoming an 'arch contriver of technical and planning progress'.[349]

THE IRISH FARMERS' JOURNAL

The role played by the *Irish Farmers' Journal* and the aforementioned O'Keeffe in promoting the beef industry as part of a broader modernising agenda for farming cannot be underestimated. Established by Macra na Feirme in July 1948 as a monthly newspaper for its membership, by the late-1950s the *Farmers' Journal* had become the voice of the agriculture industry and a powerful opinion former within the farming community.[350] In 1951, after struggling commercially for its first three years, the newspaper was bought by Meath-based farmer John Mooney.[351] One of his first moves was to appoint Paddy O'Keeffe as editor. An agricultural science graduate from near Fermoy, Co Cork, O'Keeffe was superintendent at Portrane Hospital farm in north Dublin before moving to the newspaper.[352] Mooney invested close to £10,000 over the next two years until the venture turned a profit in 1953.[353] By 1955 '*the Journal'*, as it became known to farmers, was a weekly publication with a circulation of 15,000 certified copies.[354] The *Farmers' Journal* and O'Keeffe are widely credited with encouraging breeding improvements, and the adoption of new technology and farm management practices in the agriculture sector during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s when the industry went through a period of radical change and modernisation.[355] In fact, Louis Smith and Sean Healy have gone so far as to claim

[348] Miley (ed.), *Growing Knowledge*, pp 44-46.
[349] *IFJ*, 27 Dec. 1958.
[350] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, pp 43-44.
[351] Jim Miley, *A Voice for the Country – Fifty Years of Macra na Feirme* (Dublin, 1994), pp 44-46.
[352] *IT*, 19 Jan. 2013; *II*, 20 Jan. 2013; Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, pp 43-44; Miley, *A Voice for the Country*, pp 44-46.
[353] Miley, *A Voice for the Country*, pp 44-46; Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, pp 43-44.
[354] Dáil debates Vol. 149, No. 5, 24 Mar. 1955.
[355] Interview with Michael Walshe, former head of the Dairy Research Centre at Moorepark from 1959 to 1970 (29 June 2016); Interview with Tom Cleary, dairy farmer and former chairman of the Irish Dairy Board, from Cloughjordan, Co Tipperary (14 Oct. 2016); Miley, *A Voice for The Country*, pp 44-46; Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, pp 43-44.

that the transformation of farming during that period 'would have been impossible without the *Journal*'.[356]

In O'Keeffe the newspaper had a strong and committed editor who was not afraid to challenge vested interests. This did not endear him to some in the Department of Agriculture who felt that his attitude, and even his editorial style, was 'aggressive'.[357] Disputes between the newspaper and the Department of Agriculture or the government were occasionally carried in the national press. For example, differences between the publication and officials regarding the control of a swine flu outbreak was carried in the *Irish Press* in September 1956, while an article by Paddy O'Keeffe criticising the government's failure to provide adequate credit facilities for farmers was published by the same title the following January.[358] The newspaper was regularly cited in Dáil questions and contributions. Fianna Fáil TD Oscar Traynor quoted *Farmers' Journal* figures from May 1956 when estimating that £21 million was spent over the previous twelve months on imported crops that could have been grown in Ireland.[359] Similarly, Fine Gael's former Minister for Finance, Hugh Sweetman, cited the *Farmers' Journal* when complaining that the imposition of tariffs was adding significantly to cost of tillage equipment.[360] Some ministers took exception to the *Farmers' Journal's* reports. In a letter to NFA president, Juan Greene, in 1959, the Minister for Agriculture, Paddy Smith, took issue with the sustained criticism of his department by the NFA which was carried in the *Farmers' Journal*. Describing the *Farmers' Journal* as a publication 'which at times descends to a very low level', Smith said references to 'a closed-shop mentality' in the Department of Agriculture, and claims of an absence of 'co-ordinated endeavour' and an 'out of time' approach amounted to a campaign of 'almost constant abuse and misrepresentation'.[361] However, O'Keeffe's abrasiveness and direct style won him as many admirers as detractors. One such supporter was Michael Walshe, who headed up the country's leading dairy research centre at Moorepark, near Fermoy, Co Cork

[356] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, pp 43-44.
[357] Interview with Interviewee B, a former staff member with the Department of Agriculture who wished to remain unnamed.
[358] *IP*, 8 Sept. 1956, 21 Jan. 1957.
[359] Dáil debates Vol. 157, No. 6, 23 May 1956.
[360] Dáil debates Vol. 165, No. 5, 25 Feb. 1958.
[361] Letter from Paddy Smith, the Minister for Agriculture, to Juan Greene, NFA president, 25 Sept. 1959 (NAI, TAOIS/S/16405).

between 1959 and 1970.[362] In an interview in 2016 he recalled O'Keeffe as a 'remarkable man' who he claimed was 'trying to start an intellectual and scientific movement in agriculture'. He maintained that the *Farmers' Journal* was the most 'important thing that was happening in the country at the time.'[363]

CONCLUSION

The 1950s was a period of profound change for the Irish livestock industry. The growth of the beef processing sector, the establishment and expansion of the farmer-owned co-operative marts, and the emergence of national farmer representative organisations were all significant developments. These changes challenged the existing power structures in the industry by undermining the dominance of the livestock dealers and cattle exporters. The establishment of the beef processing industry was pivotal to this process. Live exporters and butchers had traditionally controlled the livestock trade, but from the early 1950s the slaughter plants provided an alternate outlet for a greater proportion of farmers' cattle. The beef industry's emergence was complimented by the growth of the marts, with the network of sales centres facilitating the regular purchase of cattle and sheep by the meat factories. In essence, the slaughter plants and marts provided a framework for the subsequent development of a modern livestock industry. The farm organisations also fed into this transformational milieu. Macra na Feirme's emphasis on education and innovative training ensured a steady supply of committed and competent leaders at both local and national level for the NFA and ICMSA, and the agriculture-related co-operative businesses.

These achievements challenge the accepted gloomy assessment of the 1950s. Crotty has correctly described Irish agricultural output in the 1950s as 'stagnant', despite the best efforts of successive governments to promote growth.[364] However, this exclusive focus on output disregards the fundamental structural changes which had taken place in Irish agriculture during the decade. Rouse and Lee are equally negative in their analysis of the period. Rouse's claim that 'only in the export of cattle did Ireland command a substantial and viable trade' ignores the expansion in beef

[362] Michael Walshe, *It's a long road that has no turning* (New York, 2014), pp 295-402; Michael Walshe interview (29 June 2016).
[363] Michael Walshe interview (29 June 2016).
[364] Crotty, *Irish Agricultural Production*, pp 191-202.

exports, which grew ten-fold during the decade.[365] Similarly, the success and resilience of the export-oriented beef industry calls into question Lee's contention that the business class in 1950's Ireland lacked an 'enterprise culture'.[366] That the Irish beef factories were capable of identifying, securing and consolidating new markets in Britain, mainland Europe, Israel and North America is surely evidence of enterprise.

YEAR	NUMBER EXPORTED AS		TOTAL EXPORTED	NUMBERS SLAUGHTERED		TOTAL SLAUGHTERED
	STORES	FATS		COWS	OTHER CATTLE	
1954	485,300	123,900	609,200	112,400	150,800	263,200
1955	471,000	138,900	609,900	128,700	53,600	182,300
1956	487,700	180,200	667,900	123,400	59,700	183,100
1957	746,200	78,000	824,200	162,900	48,600	211,500
1958	595,300	52,200	647,500	184,600	43,300	227,900
1959	403,400	78,500	481,900	227,600	91,500	319,100
1960	316,400	219,900	536,300	245,000	131,800	376,800

Table 1.C: Overall cattle disposals
Source: Based on data from the CSO and Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and published in the 1968 report of the Store Cattle Study Group.

The emergence of the beef processing industry, however, was not the result of a planned national strategy. Rather, it was a response to a combination of international opportunities and domestic considerations. The requirement for Ireland to develop and expand dollar exports in the late 1940s was a pivotal factor in the sector's early development. This process was helped by a significant growth in US demand due to the Korean War, higher disposable incomes in Europe and North America as economies recovered after the Second World War, and reduced global beef supplies. However, the absence of a strategic vision for the beef industry resulted in the sector developing in an unplanned and ad-hoc fashion. This had long-term implications for both the factory owners and farmers. Too many beef factories resulted in low profit levels in the Irish beef business, which meant reduced cattle prices to farmers. Despite these difficulties, the 1950s was a decade of significant growth for beef processors, as

[365] Rouse, *Ireland's own soil*, p. 250.
[366] Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, p. 359.

Table 1.C confirms. However, expansion in the sector was by no means linear. The dramatic impact of Britain's deregulation of food imports in 1954 on the number of cattle slaughtered and processed is clearly demonstrated. The overall kill fell by eighty thousand head or thirty per cent in twelve months.[367] That the industry recovered from this crash is testament to its resilience, to its flexibility in moving from processing prime beef to supplying manufacturing product, and to the underlying demand for meat globally during the 1950s. By 1960 carcass beef exports exceeded fifty thousand tons. In fact, over forty per cent of total cattle-related foreign sales that year were exported as beef (see Figure 1.3).[368] However, the downturn of 1954 highlighted both the vulnerability of the beef industry to changes in British farm policy, and the extent to which the export of store cattle remained the 'touchstone of the entire [livestock] business'.[369]

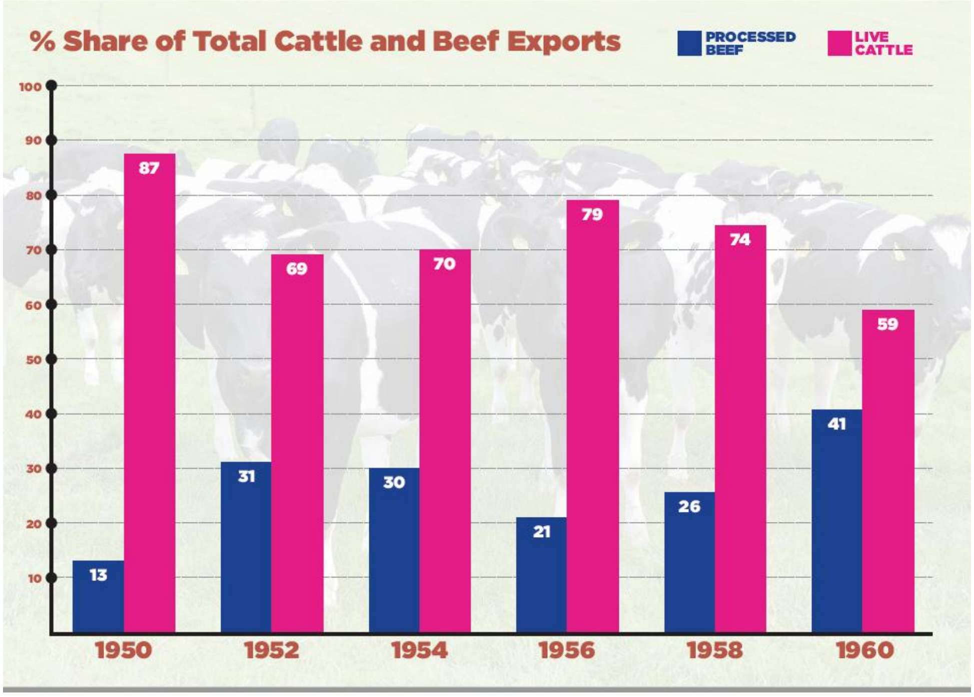

Figure 1.3: Breakdown of cattle and beef exports 1950-1960
Source: Department of Agriculture and CSO data

[367] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group,* p. 36.
[368] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78; *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group,* p. 36.
[369] *Connacht Tribune*, 26 Mar. 1955.

CHAPTER TWO: AIFTA MOVES BEEF CENTRE STAGE; CONSOLIDATION AND GROWTH (1960-65)

The early 1960s was a period of significant change in the Irish cattle sector as a steady expansion in carcass beef sales saw processors increasingly challenge the live exporters' dominance of the industry. Carcass and processed beef exports doubled during the 1960s, and reached an average of 117,000 tonnes for the four years from 1966 to 1969 inclusive.[1] By 1967 the number of cattle slaughtered in Ireland and exported as beef exceeded the total shipped live for the first time.[2] This was a seismic shift in the livestock industry's structure. The foundations for this impressive expansion in beef sales were established in the first half of the decade when the industry finally consolidated its position after the crash of 1954-55. This six-year period, from 1960 to 1965 inclusive, is the primary focus of this chapter. The extent to which increased Irish exchequer support for the meat sector underpinned export growth in carcass beef is examined.[3] In addition, the structure of the meat industry and the development of the beef factory lobby during the early 1960s is assessed, particularly the role played by the Irish Fresh Meat Exporters' Society (IFMES) in fostering political connections and improved contacts with the Department of Agriculture, which was central to securing greater financial backing and greater influence for the dead meat trade.[4] Moreover, this chapter addresses the importance of the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Area Agreement (AIFTA) of 1965 in guaranteeing access to the British market for agreed volumes of Irish beef and at prices supported by the UK exchequer.[5] Similarly, the chapter evaluates the key part played by the then Minister for Agriculture, Charles Haughey, in furthering the interests of the meat processors, which marked a fundamental change in government policy, and his

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[1] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78.
[2] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 36.
[3] *IFJ*, 29 May 1965; *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries* (Dublin, 1963), p.19; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1961-62* (Dublin, 1962), p. 14.
[4] Letter from JJ Bastow, secretary of the Irish Fresh Meat Exporters' Society (IFMES) to the Taoiseach, Seán Lemass, 19 Mar. 1962, and the text of the speech delivered by Seán Lemass to the twenty-first anniversary dinner of IFMES, 16 Dec. 1961 (NAI, TAOIS/97/9/1582); *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, pp 13-79.
[5] *Anglo-Irish Free Trade Area Agreement, 1965* (Dublin, 1966), pp 9-29; *IFJ*, 18 Dec. 1965; *II*, 15 Dec. 1965; *IP*, 16 Dec. 1965.

motivations for doing so.[6] All these events and developments are viewed against the background of changes which flowed from the first and second programmes for economic expansion.

BEEF INDUSTRY OUTLINE

The recovery in the processed beef industry in the latter years of the 1950s, as discussed in Chapter One, was underpinned primarily by steady demand in the US market, lucrative contracts to supply the US armed forces in Europe, and strong growth in exports to Britain. An irregular continental trade, particularly to Germany, France and Sweden, also helped.[7] By 1960 Ireland was exporting more than fifty thousand tonnes of beef, with around fifteen thousand tons going to the UK, almost double that figure being shipped to North America, while the US forces in Europe took close to 3,500 tons, and European buyers just less than three thousand tons (See Table: 2.A.[8]

YEAR	EXPORTS OF CARCASS AND BONELESS BEEF (tons)						Canned beef
	UK	Europe	US armed forces	USA and Canada	Rest of the world	Total	
1960	15,266	2,803	3,493	28,795	644	51,001	8,858
1961	33,031	4,435	2,887	38,264	204	78,821	7,971
1962	20,662	2,960	1,462	33,209	5,647	63,940	5,659
1963	16,989	2,201	4,635	37,076	4,761	65,662	5,123
1964	19,814	20,489	3,386	8,076	2,039	53,804	4,489
1965	28,612	19,250	558	4,838	2,319	55,577	4,109
1966	42,095	7,767	624	21,514	630	72,630	4,245
1967	108,786	2,417	113	39,445	874	151,635	4,238

Table 2.A: Source – Based on CSO data and published in the ESRI's 1973 report entitled 'A study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries'

[6] Interview with John Lyons of MJ Lyons and Sons (15 Aug. 2018); Gus Fitzpatrick interview (1 Mar. 2017); *IFJ*, 13 Feb., 25 Dec. 1965; Draft of Charles Haughey speech to the NFA, 1 Jan. 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/GIS/1/174).
[7] Annual report of the Minister for Agriculture *1956-57*, p. 9; Annual report of the Minister for Agriculture *1957-58*, p. 11; Annual report of the Minister for Agriculture *1958-59*, p. 15; Annual report of the Minister for Agriculture *1959-60*, pp 14-16; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78.
[8] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78.

To supply these markets the beef factories killed and processed 380,000 cows and cattle in 1960, which was a record number for the sector.[9] In monetary terms the industry was also increasingly important, delivering around one-fifth of agricultural exports. Between 1960 and 1962 inclusive total exports from beef and lamb plants – including hides, skins and edible offal – averaged just over £22 million or around twenty per cent of total farm exports of £100 million.[10] Carcass and boneless beef shipments delivered an average of £16 million in export earnings each year during this period, and came close to equalling the £18.5 million generated by store cattle exports to the UK in 1960 – albeit that the live trade was severely disrupted as a result of the TB eradication programmes in both Britain and Ireland during this period.[11] The dead meat trade's capacity to match the export earnings of the store cattle shippers confirmed its growing significance in the livestock sector. This was recognised by Lemass when at the twenty-first anniversary function for the Irish Fresh Meat Exporters' Society (IFMES) in December 1961 he stated that 'healthy competition' between the 'fatstock and the fresh meat export trades' was 'a good stimulus' to cattle prices. Moreover, the Taoiseach lauded the role of 'successful private enterprise' beef processors in what he described as a 'difficult field'.[12] Crucially, in what amounted to political affirmation, Lemass stated that encouraging food processing to the 'maximum degree which is economically practicable' was a 'sound policy for Ireland'.[13] The resilience of the beef processing industry was finally being acknowledged.

The impressive growth in beef exports during the late 1950s and into the early 1960s was mirrored by an increased concentration of the national kill in a small number of factories. A government study of the industry published in 1963 found that eighty-five per cent of all cattle were slaughtered by just nine factories between 1958 and 1962, even though thirty-five companies were licenced to export carcass and processed beef.[14] Although the published draft of the *Report of the Survey Team on the Beef, Mutton and Lamb Industries* established by the Minister for Agriculture does

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[9] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 36.
[10] *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 17.
[11] *Statistical Abstract of Ireland 1962*, p. 32; *IFJ*, 1 April 1961; *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 17.
[12] Seán Lemass's speech to the twenty-first anniversary celebrations for the Irish Fresh Meat Exporters Society, 16 Dec. 1961 (NAI, TAOIS/97/9/1582).
[13] Ibid.
[14] *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 14 and pp 37-38.

not identify the nine plants with the largest cattle throughputs, they are listed in a confidential early version compiled in 1962: Clover Meats' operations in Waterford and Limerick, Denny's in Waterford, Roscrea Meat Products, Castlebar Bacon Company, Clonmel Foods, the International Meat Company in Grand Canal Street, Dublin, Irish Meat Packers in Leixlip, and Shannon Meats in Co. Limerick.[15] The identification of these factories as the leading actors in the industry tallies with a four-page supplement in the *Irish Farmers' Journal* in April 1961, which listed the top six operators in terms of turnover.[16] The article claimed that the International Meat Company in Grand Canal Street, Dublin, and Irish Meat Packers (IMP) in Leixlip – both of which were controlled by Frank Quinn – had a joint turnover of £6.5 million. The turnover at Roscrea Meat Products was put at £3.5 million by the *Farmers' Journal* article, while the beef operations in Clover Meats and Clonmel Foods were both estimated to have turnovers of around £2.5 million, with the beef business in the Castlebar Bacon Company valued at £1.25 million.[17] The accuracy of the *Farmers' Journal* data is questionable since the majority of the firms were private companies and did not have to publish annual accounts – apart from Clover Meats which was a farmer-owned co-operative. However, a Department of Industry and Commerce report on the International Meat Company in 1961 that put the Dublin's plant's turnover at £3 million gives credence to the *Farmers' Journal* figures.[18] (Since both IMP and the International Meat Company were of similar size in terms of kill capacity, a doubling of the turnover figure to £6 million for Frank Quinn's two plants is justified, and is reasonably close to the £6.5 million figure quoted by the *Farmers' Journal*.)[19]

Frank Quinn became the dominant figure in the Irish beef industry from the late 1950s until he eventually sold his business to Cork Marts in 1968-69.[20] Born in 1913 at Rossan near Mohill in south Leitrim, Quinn was one of 12 children, eight boys and four girls. Although raised on a small farm, the family was obviously endowed with a gift for business, as six of the Quinn brothers went on to establish

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[15] Confidential draft of the *'Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries'* (1962), appendix p. 2 (NAI, DFA/2005/82/1625).
[16] *IFJ,* 1 Apr. 1961.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Minutes of senior staff meeting at Department of Industry and Commerce, 24 Apr. 1961 (NAI, INDC/IND/2000/13/23).
[19] *IFJ,* 1 Apr. 1961.
[20] Interview with Joe Heslin, farmer from Rossan, Co Leitrim (1 Aug. 2018); Interview on 9 Aug. 2018 with a former International Meat Company employee who did not want to be named – will henceforth be referred to as Interviewee A; *IFJ*, 2 Nov. 1963, 26 Aug. 1989.

successful commercial enterprises.[21] Frank Quinn was active in the meat trade from a young age. He had moved to Dublin by the outbreak of the Second World War and was using his rural contacts to supply pigs into the capital for slaughter.[22] As outlined earlier, he bought a twenty-five per cent share in the Irish Meat Packers development at Leixlip in 1948, with the remainder of the firm owned Jack Keogh, George Mullen, Noel Cuddihy and Jack Carolan who were all active in the live cattle trade.[23] By 1951 Quinn had opened another small facility at New Street in Dublin's Liberties in which he processed and packaged offal and tripe – the majority of which came from IMP. Livers, lungs and spleens were rendered and exported to pet-food manufacturers in Britain, while the tripe was packed for customers in the UK and the continent. During the early 1950s, Meatpack, Quinn's Dublin business, was also killing up to 400 cattle per week in the Dublin City Abattoir. Most of the beef went for the US and UK markets, but he also won contracts with the US Air Force, as well as in Sweden and France.[24] Quinn's survival during the crash of 1954-55 illustrated his resilience and sharp business acumen. By 1956 his beef business was growing too big to be handled through the Dublin City Abattoir and the New Street plant. As a consequence, he began to lease the then-closed Grand Canal Street slaughter factory for larger contracts. In October 1957 Quinn took out a long-term lease on the Grand Canal Street factory and set up the International Meat Company.[25] Quinn now controlled the biggest cattle slaughter facility in the country, but there is no evidence that he was fazed by the challenge of running such a sizeable operation. At over six foot tall, Quinn was a big man, and he had the intellect to match his stature.[26] Meath beef farmer, Jimmy Cosgrave, recalled him as 'a tall, imposing, striking man, who I only knew to salute as Mr Quinn.'[27] A neighbour from Rossan, Joe Heslin, whose brother worked for Quinn, described him as 'a mighty man to move'.[28]

The dominant position of what the 1963 report described as the nine 'diversified' factories did not exclude all other players from the beef processing

[21] Interview A (9 Aug. 2018); Joe Heslin interview (1 Aug. 2018).
[22] *IFJ*, 2 Nov. 1963, 26 Aug. 1989; Interview A (9 Aug. 2018); Joe Heslin interview (1 Aug. 2018).
[23] Keogh, *Cattleman*, pp 82-88; *IFJ*, 2 Nov. 1963, 26 Aug. 1989.
[24] *IFJ*, 2 Nov. 1963, 26 Aug. 1989; Interview A (9 Aug. 2018).
[25] Interview A (9 Aug. 2018); *IFJ*, 2 Nov. 1963, 26 Aug. 1989.
[26] Interview with Sylvester Byrne, trained butcher and former AFT staff member (11 July 2018); Discussion with Jimmy Cosgrave (14 June 2018); Joe Heslin interview (1 Aug. 2018); Interview A (9 Aug. 2018).
[27] Discussion with Jimmy Cosgrave (14 June 2018).
[28] Joe Heslin interview (1 August 2018); Interview A (9 August 2018).

business.[29] While the nine biggest plants produced the full range of carcass, boned and canned beef, three further factories concentrated on carcass and boned beef production. These were MJ Lyons and Company based in Longford, Premier Meat Packers in Sallins, Co Kildare, and Kildare Chilling.[30] In addition, there were five factories which primarily processed mutton and lamb and had limited facilities for slaughtering cattle. These included Bowe Brothers and Collins Brothers in Waterford, WP English of Cobh, Co Cork, Dublin Meat Packers in Ballymun which was owned by Paddy Nolan, and Mickey Webb's plant in Ballyhaunis, Co Mayo.[31] Meanwhile, Central Meat Products and Kosher Meat Products, both based in Dublin, were listed as non-slaughtering factories processing canned and open-pack meat products.[32] A number of specialist bacon factories were also licensed to process beef and lamb. These included Clover Meats in Wexford, Claremorris Bacon Company, Dundalk Bacon Company, Cork Farmers Union Ltd., Buttles Bacon Company, Wexford, Donegal Bacon Company, Letterkenny, Lunham Brothers of Cork, Denny's plants in Cork and Mountmellick, and Meat Exporters Ltd. of Sligo.[33] Ironically, however, the increased consolidation of the cattle kill in a small number of factories heralded the end for the Dublin Corporation Abattoir as a major slaughtering centre for beef exports. The municipal abattoir was critically important during the early years of the export industry, as noted in Chapter One, when nineteen different food companies that were licensed to export beef to the US used the facility as their registered processing centre in 1952.[34] The abattoir was still used by a handful of small exporters in the early 1960s but the 1963 report concluded that it lacked the 'extensive refrigeration

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[29] *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 14.
[30] Confidential draft of the *'Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries'* (1962), appendix p. 2 (NAI, DFA/2005/82/1625); *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 14.
[31] *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 14; Confidential draft of the *'Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries'* (1962), appendix p. 2 (NAI, DFA/2005/82/1625).
[32] Confidential draft of the *'Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries'* (1962), appendix p. 2 (NAI, DA/2005/82/1625); *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 14.
[33] *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p.14; Confidential draft of the *'Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries'* (1962), appendix p. 2 (NAI, DA/2005/82/1625).
[34] List of registered premises for the export of meat to the US, part of a Department of Agriculture memorandum, 14 Mar. 1952 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2).

and offal handling facilities' required by large-scale processors and therefore returned to primarily servicing the Dublin retail trade.[35]

BEEF & LAMB OUTPUT BY PRODUCT CATEGORY 1961		
CATEGORY	£000	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL GROSS OUTPUT
Total Beef	17,800	67.3
Canned Beef	3,412	10.9
Mutton and Lamb	1,587	6.0
Offal	1,061	4.0
Animal Fats	588	2.2
Hides and Skins	1,487	5.7
Plant Products	288.8	1.1
Open Pack Products	86.4	0.3
Other Products	128.9	0.5
TOTAL	26,440	100

Table 2.B: Beef & lamb output by product category 1961
Source: Data supplied by meat industry and included in the *Report of the Survey Team into the Beef, Mutton and Lamb Industries* – published 1963

The wider industry continued to upgrade facilities, with £6 million to £7 million invested in plant and machinery across the beef and sheep processing sectors between 1960 and 1962.[36] Purpose-built slaughtering facilities such as the International Meat Company sited at Grand Canal Street, Dublin, and Paddy Nolan's Dublin Meat Packers plant in Ballymun meant that modern factories accounted for thirty-four per cent of the industry's productive space in 1962, and the industry's footprint was forecast to increase by a further 130,000 square feet if planned developments went ahead. Meanwhile the sector's refrigeration capacity was classed as 'comparatively new'.[37] However, for all the investment, poor factory site locations, and the conversion of unsuitable old buildings to house processing plants, remained a feature of the industry and posed significant long-term difficulties.[38] Indeed, many of the major meat plants from the 1960s which were situated in urban and semi-urban locations – such as MJ Lyons facility in Longford town, the IMP site in Leixlip, and

[35] *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 14 and p. 109.
[36] Ibid., p. 61.
[37] Discussion with Jimmy Cosgrave, farmer and former investor in Dublin Meat Packers and IMP, (14 June 2018); *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, pp 50-54.
[38] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, ESRI, pp 98-101.

even the International Meat Company's plant in Grand Canal Street, Dublin – were all forced to close by the early 1990s as pollution control issues and commercial considerations aligned against them.[39]

Structurally, the Irish beef processing industry in the early 1960s differed fundamentally from the British and European model, and had more in common with that of other large processed meat exporting countries such as Argentina and Australia.[40] While the Irish beef sector was already dominated by large export plants, in Britain and the continent the majority of cattle for local meat consumption, including imported Irish cattle, were slaughtered in public abattoirs.[41] The survey team report of 1963 cited the example of the public abattoir in Hamburg which had 'first class slaughtering and refrigeration facilities' and was subject to 'strict hygiene controls to meet domestic and export health requirements'.[42] The manner in which the Irish industry was structured was a function of its dependence on exports. The Economic Expansion Plan of 1958 envisaged a third of all Irish farm produce being sold on foreign markets, but over eighty per cent of Irish cattle were actually exported as processed beef or on the hoof in the early 1960s.[43] This reliance on export markets was even more pronounced for beef processors, since the home market was largely supplied by the butchering trade. Consequently, almost ninety-five per cent of the beef factories' output in the 1960s was exported.[44] The importance of foreign sales to Irish processors inevitably led to comparisons with other major beef exporting countries and regions such as North America, Argentina, Australia and New Zealand.[45] Crucially, innovations in meat processing in these countries informed the next phase of development in the Irish industry.

[39] Interview with John Lyons of MJ Lyons and Company (15 Aug. 2018); Interview with Interviewee A (9 Aug. 2018); Discussion with Jimmy Cosgrave, farmer and former investor in Dublin Meat Packers and IMP, (14 June 2018).
[40] *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 67 and p. 103.
[41] Interview with Joe Barry (2 Nov. 2013); Discussion with Jimmy Cosgrave, farmer and former investor in Dublin Meat Packers and IMP (14 June 2018); *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 67 and p. 103.
[42] *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 67.
[43] *Programme for Economic Expansion* (Dublin, 1958), pp 11-12; *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 30.
[44] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 88.
[45] *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 67.

The International Meat Company and IMP led the way in terms of the modernisation of the beef industry during the early 1960s.[46] Frank Quinn, who controlled the Grand Canal Street operation and had a twenty-five per cent stake in IMP, was an enthusiastic supporter and promoter of new technology. In 1959 the International Meat Company was the first meat processor in Europe to install a mechanical processing line.[47] The design used in Grand Canal Street was a version of the Can-Pack Line System that was first seen by Frank Quinn at the Canada Packers plant in Toronto which he visited during a ten-week tour of North and South America in 1959.[48] International Meats did not have the finance to purchase and install the actual Canadian system so the company bought the drawings and amended the plans to suit the Grand Canal Street site.[49] The Can-Pack system used an overhead moving rail onto which the hock or lower leg of the animal was shackled after it had been killed. Tasks such as the removal of the hide, stomach, intestines and other organs, as well as the splitting of the carcass in two, were then undertaken as the carcass moved between the various raised work stations.[50] Prior to the introduction of mechanical processing lines, animals were skinned in designated areas of the factory, with the carcass moved manually to the various work stations by porters.[51] The adoption of mechanical processing lines dramatically increased factory throughput, while making carcass handling far easier and more hygienic.[52] In Grand Canal Street, for example, output increased from around one hundred to a maximum of eight hundred cattle per day within six months of the mechanised line being installed.[53] After IMP commissioned a mechanised line in 1961 the weekly kill for the two plants, in what in

[46] *IFJ*, 11 Nov. 1961; *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 67; Interview with former International Meats Company employee, Interviewee A (9 Aug. 2018).
[47] Interview with Interviewee A (9 Aug. 2018); Departmental conference minutes of Department of Industry and Commerce, 24 Apr. 1961 (NAI, INDC/IND/2000/13/23); *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 67.
[48] *IFJ*, 13 June 1959; Interview with Interviewee A (9 Aug. 2018); Departmental conference minutes of Department of Industry and Commerce, 24 Apr. 1961 (NAI, INDC/IND/2000/13/23).
[49] Interview with Interviewee A (9 Aug. 2018).
[50] Ibid.
[51] Interview with John Lyons of MJ Lyons and Sons (15 Aug. 2018); *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, pp 55-58.
[52] *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 67; Interview with Interviewee A (9 Aug. 2018).
[53] Interview with Interviewee A (9 Aug. 2018).

racing parlance could be described as the 'Quinn stable', averaged four thousand animals, or fifty per cent of the national total.[54]

The move towards more streamlined processing had the added benefit of significantly improving the offal harvesting capability of the processors, which was a major revenue source for the industry and a key contributor to the overall efficiency of individual plants.[55] As Figure 2.3 shows, output of offal, hides and fat from beef and sheep slaughtering plants in 1961 accounted for more than twelve per cent of total income at over £3.4 million.[56] John Lyons, Gus Fitzpatrick and the International Meat Company source confirmed the importance of offal and hides, or what in the industry is described as the 'animal's fifth quarter', to the meat business, and this was also reflected in the survey team report of 1963 which recorded that factory owners were 'alive to the economic importance of offal and other by-products' which were generally 'processed and marketed to the best advantage'.[57] The 'fifth quarter' material attracted an eclectic mix of buyers. Cattle hides were sold to local merchants and fellmongers or else exported.[58] However, more exotic markets were identified for particular products. For example, the gall stones from cattle were sold as an aphrodisiac in Japan.[59] Heart, liver and tongue, or what is termed 'red offal', was generally packaged and sold to Britain. However, bovine tongues could also be canned and sold on the home market.[60] Edible offal, such as the animals head, as well as the lungs and spleen, were primarily exported to Britain for pet food manufacture, while the intestines could be used as casings in sausage production.[61] All remaining offal and by-products, such as animal fats and bones, were processed by digester plants to produce material such as tallow which is sold for industrial processing, or

[54] *IFJ*, 11 Nov. 1961; *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 36.
[55] Interview with Interviewee A (9 Aug. 2018); *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries,* p. 108.
[56] *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 67;
[57] Gus Fitzpatrick interviews (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017); Interview with John Lyons of MJ Lyons and Sons (15 Aug. 2018); Interview with Interviewee A (9 Aug. 2018); *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 106.
[58] *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 47.
[59] Interview with Interviewee A (9 Aug. 2018).
[60] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, pp 106-108. *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, pp 47-49.
[61] *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, pp 47-49.

meat and bone meal which was sold as a fertiliser or as animal feed.[62] Nothing was left to waste.

In contrast to the continued growth in carcass and boneless beef exports during the early 1960s, canned beef production was in decline.[63] Roscrea Meat Products remained the leading Irish player in the trade, along with Clover Meats, Clonmel Foods and Castlebar Bacon Company – the four companies producing close to ninety per cent of the stewed product exported in 1960-61.[64] The Irish canned meat sector also retained an excellent reputation, and boasted some 'blue chip' clients, such as the British armed forces which Shannon Meats supplied.[65] Indeed, when the issue of British soldiers being fed on Irish canned beef was raised in the House of Commons in 1961, MPs were informed that the Irish canners were the only ones to meet the required specifications.[66] However, despite the odd nugget of good news, the Irish canned meats industry was in serious decline. Exports totalled twelve thousand tons in 1955, but had fallen to almost eight thousand tons by 1961, and to less than five thousand tons by 1964.[67] Canned meat sales had halved in a decade. The canners blamed the fall-off in output on increased competition for cows – the main raw material for canned product – from boxed beef producers; but the 1963 survey team report identified an over-reliance on stewed steak, and increased competition on the British market from cheaper South African and Uruguayan produce, as the primary reasons for the decline in exports.[68] The sector was further weakened by the increased targeting of the canned meats market by processors such as Shannon Meats, the International Meat Company and IMP. Shannon Meats was granted a licence for a cannery in 1960, while the International Meat Company expanded into the home market for canned meats when it launched the 'Meatfine' brand in 1962. It already marketed a range of products for the British market.[69] Meanwhile, IMP was approved by the Department of Agriculture in 1954 to can ox kidneys for use in meat and fish pasties by the English firm, Shippan Ltd, of Chichester. By 1957 the company was

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[62] Interview with John Lyons (15 Aug. 2018); Interview with Interviewee A (9 Aug. 2018); *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, pp 47-49.
[63] *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 43, and pp 128-131.
[64] Statistics on the canned meat output (NAI, DA/10/19/41).
[65] *IFJ*, 8 Oct. 1960.
[66] Ibid., 11 Feb. 1961.
[67] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries,* p. 78.
[68] *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries,* pp 128-131.
[69] *IFJ*, 21 May 1960, 27 Jan. 1962.

selling canned corned beef, and in 1960 it was producing a canned beef steak and mushroom pie.[70]

A strict regulatory regime guaranteed meat quality standards underpinned the overall growth in Irish beef exports. This regime was enforced by the Department of Agriculture, and restricted the export of fresh meat to licensed concerns operating out of registered slaughter plants where vets and inspectors were required to be present during and after the slaughter of all animals.[71] Regulations pertaining to the standards required of animal slaughter facilities were initially set out in the Agricultural Produce (Fresh Meat) Acts of 1930 to 1938, but were subsequently updated and amended by the Agricultural Produce (Meat: Miscellaneous Provisions) Act of 1955 which was introduced by the Minister for Agriculture, James Dillon.[72] These statutory controls dictated the manner in which the animals were slaughtered; the hanging, cleaning, cooling and weighing of the meat and offal; the condition of the fresh meat at the time of export; and the packaging of the meat.[73] These inspection and certification procedures, which effectively ensured meat from Irish export plants was fit for human consumption, were vital in securing export contracts, and the key role played by the Department of Agriculture was recognised by processors who recalled the overall 'fairness' of the regime.[74] The rules governing meat processing were strictly enforced. For example, the failure of Clones Canners Limited to have a vet present for the slaughter of four cattle on 20 August 1956 almost cost the company its licence. The factory owner, Mr McAdam, apologised for the actions of the firm and explained that a vet was not available on the day in question. The company risked labour problems if the slaughter of the cattle had not gone ahead, he argued. However, a Department of Agriculture letter informed the firm that it was in breach of the regulations and

[70] IMP application by IMP to can ox kidneys, dated 13 Apr. 1954, letter from Department of Agriculture giving IMP clearance to produce corned beef, 16 July 1957, letter from Department of Agriculture giving IMP clearance to produce stewed steak and mushroom pie (NAI, DA/10/7/62/4).
[71] Memorandum to meat processing companies setting out quality standards, 20 Aug. 1955 (NAI, DA/10/7/24/4); *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, pp 26-29.
[72] Dáil debates Vol. 147, No. 4, 10 Nov. 1954.
[73] *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, pp 26-29; Memorandum to meat processing companies setting out quality standards, 20 Aug. 1955 (NAI, DA/10/7/24/4).
[74] Gus Fitzpatrick interviews (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017); Interview with John Lyons of MJ Lyons and Sons (15 Aug. 2018); Interview with Interviewee A (9 Aug. 2018); *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, pp 26-29.

warned that it would lose its export licence 'if it happened again'.[75] This exchange highlights both the strict manner in which the controls were enforced, and the extensive powers vested in the Department of Agriculture. It had the authority to shut factories down – although there is no evidence from the archives that this power was widely exercised. The sartorial elegance of the industry's female employees was a further casualty of the stringent rules. A Department of Agriculture memorandum from August 1955 stipulated that workers in meat plants were 'forbidden to wear detachable articles such as earrings, necklaces, broaches, rings or hairpins' in case the jewellery ended up in the food chain. Furthermore, it stated that nail varnish was not to be worn, and the 'combing of hair' and 'the application of cosmetics' was strictly prohibited.[76]

LIVE SHIPPERS STILL HOLD SWAY

Despite the impressive performance of the beef processing sector in terms of export growth during the second half of the 1950s, the live export trade remained the dominant force in the cattle business in the early 1960s. Over 715,000 cattle or sixty per cent of animals available for export were shipped on the hoof in 1961 (see Table 2.C), compared to 470,000 head or forty per cent of available stock that were slaughtered, processed and exported as beef.[77] The continued dominance of the live trade during this period is all the more impressive given the fall-off in Irish store cattle exports to Britain during the late 1950s and early 1960s due to concerns regarding progress in the country's TB eradication programme.[78] The Irish TB programme was launched in 1957 and by 1961 most of the country, outside of the dairy heartlands of Munster, was deemed free of the disease.[79] However, British farmer fears concerning the disease status of Irish stock continued to hit the store trade, with exports of light stock falling from almost 750,000 head in 1957 to a low of 316,000 animals in 1960.[80]

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[75] Exchange of letters between Clones Canners Limited and the Department of Agriculture, 21 Aug. 1956 and 31 Aug. 1956 (NAI, DA/10/7/132/2).
[76] Memorandum to meat processing companies setting out quality standards, 20 Aug. 1955 (NAI, DA/10/7/24/4).
[77] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 36.
[78] Crotty, *Irish Agricultural Production*, pp 192-197; *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 36; Daly, *First Department*, pp 350-354.
[79] Daly, *First Department*, pp 350-354.
[80] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 36.

	NUMBER EXPORTED AS		TOTAL EXPORTED	NUMBERS SLAUGHTERED		TOTAL SLAUGHTERED
	STORES	FATS		COWS	OTHER CATTLE	
1960	316,400	219,900	536,300	245,000	131,800	376,800
1961	426,200	289,300	715,500	214,700	256,200	470,900
1962	429,200	140,300	569,500	269,500	133,600	403,100
1963	565,200	90,700	655,900	228,500	175,200	403,700
1964	636,800	149,900	786,700	160,900	141,100	302,000
1965	436,800	146,300	583,100	162,600	149,500	312,100
1966	396,400	205,500	601,900	255,700	173,800	429,500
1967	619,000	27,300	646,300	307,000	446,000	753,000

Table 2.C: Cattle and Beef Exports 1960-67
Source: Based on data from the CSO and Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and published in the 1968 Report of the Store Cattle Study Group

The TB-related disruption resulted in a twenty per cent drop in overall cattle shipments in 1959-60 compared to the average for the previous five years. Indeed, the manager of Midlands Mart, in Banbury, Oxfordshire complained that supplies of Irish cattle had dropped by two-thirds to around 450 animals per week by February 1959 because livestock shippers were concerned that they might struggle to sell the animals.[81] However, live exports still exceeded 530,000 head, and English traders remained the main buyers of prime stock at the Dublin Cattle Market.[82] Meath-based former sales-master and farmer, Jimmy Cosgrave, remembers the English customers at the Dublin market as excellent judges of cattle and very particular about the stock they bought. He recalled that they were always looking for 'a particular type of beast' and from a pen of ten might only buy one animal that suited their specifications.[83] Since the English buyers were weekly visitors to the market, the itinerary for their trips to Dublin rarely changed, as Liam Clare explained:

> English buyers would arrive the evening before the market via the mailboat and lodge overnight in the City Arms Hotel [on Prussia Street] or in local bed and breakfast accommodation. Alternatively, they might come in on a 'dawn flight', assemble their lots of three hundred or four hundred cattle, go off for

[81] Letter from A.P. MCDougall of Midlands Mart Limited, Banbury to MAFF, 12 Feb. 1959 (TNA, MAF 35/836).
[82] CE, 16 Nov. 1961; *II*, 19 April 1962; IFJ, 7 Oct. 1961; *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 36.
[83] Jimmy Cosgrave interview (17 Feb. 2014).

breakfast, settle their account, hand over their purchases to a shipping agent and fly out again.[84]

The long-standing business connections and personal relationships that this export trade fostered between Irish suppliers and British buyers – along with the commercial benefits for those involved – ensured that it remained a key feature of the livestock trade until 1973 when Ireland and the UK joined the EEC and the British deficiency payment supports were abandoned.[85] Indeed, established exporters such as Noel Murphy and the Purcell Brothers hired English marts during the mid-1960s to hold sales of Irish stock. Noel Murphy held his sales primarily in Doncaster, while Purcells who were shipping around one thousand head a week used the mart centre at Rugby in Warickshire to hold auctions of Irish store cattle.[86] These sales of Irish stock were equally popular with English farmers, with detailed reports from centres such as Banbury in Warwickshire carried in the *Birmingham Daily Post* and the *Coventry Standard*.[87] Similarly, the continuing importance of the live trade during the early 1960s is illustrated by the coverage which the Dublin Cattle Market received on Radio Éireann and the national press, reports from the weekly sales being broadcast by Michael Dillon and carried in the daily newspapers.[88] This level of media exposure highlights the extent to which the export trade was still considered the main driver of the Irish livestock industry.

The dominant position of live exports was further consolidated by the conservative vision set out for the farming sector in the *Programme for Economic Expansion* of 1958 and the *Second Programme for Economic Expansion* (1964-70). Both programmes reaffirmed the State's dependence on the tried and trusted policy of shipping cattle on the hoof, with the plans identifying increased livestock exports as a primary driver of growth.[89] While the 1958 programme's primary architect and its main political champion – the Department of Finance secretary general, Ken Whitaker, and the future taoiseach, Seán Lemass – made bold decisions regarding the

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[84] Clare, 'The Rise and Demise of the Dublin Cattle Market', p. 35.
[85] Joe Barry interview (2 Nov. 2013); Interview with livestock exporter Kevin Purcell (4 Nov. 2015); Hurley, *Noel Murphy*, p. 13 and 126.
[86] Kevin Purcell interview (4 Nov. 2015); *IFJ*, 25 Jan. 1964; Hurley, *Noel Murphy*, pp 126-127.
[87] *Birmingham Daily Post*, 16 July 1966; *Coventry Standard*, 14 and 28 July 1966.
[88] *IP*, 23 Nov. 1961; CE, 16 Nov. 1961; *II*, 12 Apr. 1962; *IFJ*, 21 Oct. 1961.
[89] *Second Programme for Economic Expansion*, Part I (Dublin, 1963), pp 28-29; *Programme for Economic Expansion* (Dublin, 1958), pp 11-12.

industrial development of the State (namely the encouragement of foreign direct investment and a move away from industrial protectionism), their approach to agriculture was far less innovative. An increase in cow numbers from 1.2 million head to 1.5 million by 1964 was one of the few quantifiable agricultural objectives of the 1958 plan.[90] However, Crotty is correct in his assessment that this target was motivated primarily by a desire to increase beef cattle numbers rather than expand dairy production. In fact, while the programme stated that the export outlook for dairy products was 'uncertain', it forecast 'continuing demand for meat'.[91] The emphasis put on eradication of Bovine TB, a key requirement for the continued access of Irish cattle to the British market, underlined the importance of the live cattle trade to the agricultural arm of the programme.[92] Although *Irish Farmers' Journal* editor, Paddy O'Keeffe, welcomed the broad thrust of the 1958 programme, he took issue with its focus on the provision of fertiliser grants and increased investment in education and research; all measures which aimed to improve efficiency at farm level, cut production costs, and thereby make Irish exports more competitive. O'Keeffe maintained that modernising the country's 'transport, processing and marketing machinery' was the most pressing and immediate issue for farming.[93] While NFA and ICMSA shared O'Keeffe's concerns regarding the need to improve transport, marketing and food processing – as the focus of their lobbying efforts in the subsequent years, as well as ICMSA's investment in Shannon Meats, clearly illustrate – the farmer organisations never publicly criticised the priorities set out in the programme.[94] After all, agriculture was a central element of the growth strategy.

Despite its positive appraisal of the livestock's sector's expansion prospects, there was no new or novel initiative to develop the meat industry in the 1958 plan.[95] In fact, there was little mention of beef or lamb processing, apart from an assertion that there was adequate plant and equipment available to handle 'any likely increase in output' – hardly a ringing endorsement of the sector.[96] The programme promised

[90] *Programme for Economic Expansion*, p. 15.
[91] Crotty, *Irish Agricultural Production*, p. 192.
[92] *Programme for Economic Expansion*, p. 26.
[93] *IFJ*, 22 Nov. 1958; *Programme for Economic Expansion*, pp 9-26.
[94] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, p. 68; *Limerick Leader*, 21 Sept. 1960; Judge, 'A New Era of Hope' in *Leaders of courage*, p. 17; ICMSA briefing note on the association's investment in Shannon Meats received from ICMSA on 25 Oct. 2016.
[95] Crotty, *Irish Agricultural Production*, p. 192.
[96] *Programme for Economic Expansion*, p. 17.

State aid for the meat industry in areas such as the identification of outlets and uses for offal and other by-products, but a structured plan for the development of beef processing was not mentioned, even though the need for such a strategy was a key recommendation of the Stacy May Report in 1952.[97] The absence of a dedicated policy to encourage home processing is even more surprising given the strong backing which the Stacy May report received from Lemass in 1952 during his tenure as Minister for Industry and Commerce.[98] However, by 1958 Lemass was supporting a policy that favoured live exports, which he had vehemently opposed six years earlier. Moreover, the government's approach to agriculture appeared completely at odds with its industrial policy. While the expansion programme encouraged greater investment and innovation in industry, it appeared to ignore the employment possibilities and greater financial returns that meat processing offered for agriculture.[99]

The economy's continued reliance on the live cattle trade as a major export earner was undoubtedly a factor in the government's conservative approach. Exports of cattle and beef in 1958 were worth close to £44 million to the Irish exchequer, but seventy-eight per cent of this total, or £34.5 million, was delivered by the live cattle trade. Shipments of tinned and carcass beef were worth £9.5 million or just twenty-two per cent of the overall figure.[100] As mentioned previously, live cattle exports were therefore a crucial element of the Irish economy and one that obviously had to be protected. In contrast, the processing sector's standing had suffered during the latter half of the 1950s when operations such as Frigorifico in Ireland, the biggest and most modern plant in the country, went into liquidation with debts of £770,000, while other plants such as Shannon Meats opened only when contracts came on stream.[101] Understandably, therefore, moving away from the tried and trusted certainties of live exports – and risking the country's position as the leading provider of live cattle to Britain, the world's biggest beef importer – for the vagaries of the beef trade represented a dangerous risk and, arguably, an unnecessary gamble. It must be recognised that Britain was the largest importer of beef globally during the 1950s and up to 1961. The UK imported almost 400,000 tonnes of beef (including live cattle expressed as beef) in 1961. The US became the world's biggest beef importer from

[97] The *Stacy May Report*, p. 87; *Programme for Economic Expansion*, p. 17.
[98] Brian Girvin, *Between Two Worlds*, pp 181-82.
[99] *Programme for Economic Expansion*, pp 34-47.
[100] CSO data as quoted by Daly, *First Department*, p. 310.
[101] *IP*, 9 Oct. 1954; *IFJ*, 14 Sept. 1957; *CE*, 21 Sept. 1957.

1962.[102] The continued primacy of live shipping over processing was possibly influenced by Lemass's ambivalent attitude towards farming. Both Lee and Girvin maintain that by the late 1950s Lemass had lost faith in farming's ability to drive economic expansion and employment growth.[103] Girvin pointed out that as early as 1952 Lemass claimed that agriculture appeared to be stagnant and was not contributing to the economy. Meanwhile, Lee noted that output growth from farming was not considered adequate by the future Taoiseach, who had come to the conclusion that the leading role of agriculture in economic development was misplaced and that 'only industrial development could cope with the pressing problems' faced by the Irish economy in the second half of the 1950s because it generated the additional employment that farming had failed to deliver.[104] This view was shared within the Department of Finance in the 1960s, as Whitaker outlined in a letter to Hugh McCann, secretary of the Department of External Affairs. In 1965 he predicted agriculture making a 'progressively smaller proportionate contribution to national output, with the number of those gainfully occupied in it continuing to decline'.[105] This contraction in the agricultural labour force was already under way. Between 1949 and 1961 the numbers in paid employment dropped by 174,000 overall, with 145,000 of these jobs lost in agriculture.[106] Indeed, adopting a more cautious approach on agricultural development was arguably advisable given that Ireland was embarking on an ambitious but unproven new approach to industrial development by opening up the manufacturing sector to foreign investment and greater outside competition.

The live export of animals was again considered the engine of farm sector growth in the *Second Programme for Economic Expansion* published in 1964. The programme targeted a forty per cent expansion in the number of cattle available for export, with the total rising from 1,050,000 head in 1960 to 1,500,000 by 1970.[107] These additional animals were to be exported both as live animals and beef, which unlike the dairy, tillage and bacon sectors, generally operated without established exchequer product price subsidies. However, the programme's authors tellingly

[102] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, pp 42-43.
[103] Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, pp 350-51; Girvin, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 184.
[104] Girvin, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 184; Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, pp 350-51.
[105] Letter from T.K. Whitaker to Hugh McCann, 4 Jan. 1965, *Documents on Irish Foreign Policy, Vol. XII, 1961-1965* (Dublin, 2020), pp 780-784.
[106] Girvin, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 198.
[107] *Second Programme for Economic Expansion*, pp 28-29.

predicted that Irish cattle prices would be 'supported indirectly' through the 'guaranteed price for store cattle finished in Britain.'[108] The obvious implication of this statement was that live exports to the UK were to provide the main outlet for the increased stock numbers. Was this the Department of Agriculture's view of how the trade was to develop? Since senior Department of Agriculture officials were charged with composing much of the plan's farming-related content (Austin Mescal, a Department of Agriculture geneticist in 1963 and later chief inspector, wrote the cattle breeding section of the *Second Programme*) it can be reasonably construed that the plan mirrored the views of senior staff.[109] The ambitious expansion goals set for livestock exports – which were included in *Agriculture and the Second Programme,* or the Brown Book as it is known – were based on raising cow numbers from 1.3 million animals in 1963 to over 1.7 million by 1968. To realise this goal a calved heifer subsidy scheme gave a payment of £15 per head for every in-calf heifer retained by farmers under the programme.[110] The adoption of the heifer payment reflected the greater emphasis in the *Second Programme* on policy mechanisms designed to facilitate the achievement of targets.[111] The performance of the farm sector lagged behind that of industry in the *First Programme* and the absence of mechanisms to achieve goals was identified as a major weakness.[112] For example, the anticipated growth in the national cow herd from 1.26 million head in 1958 to 1.5 million by 1964 fell well short, and cow numbers had reached just 1.32 million by 1963.[113] In a scathing analysis of the 1958 plan, Raymond Crotty argued that it did little to raise agricultural production and he attributed the rise in cow numbers to the substitution of fifty thousand work horses on Irish farms by tractors between 1958 and 1963.[114] Crucially for the wider livestock industry however, the *Second Programme* failed to identify outlets for the additional cattle or whether the livestock would be

[108] *Second Programme for Economic Expansion*, p. 23.
[109] Interview B (24 September 2015).
[110] Daly, *First Department*, pp 455-56; *Second Programme for Economic Expansion*, Part I, p. 45; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 61.
[111] In addition to those targets already cited, the Second Programme forecast annual growth of four per cent, with agricultural growth at 2.7 per cent. The total workforce was projected to grow by 78,000 by 1970 to reach 1.13 million, while emigration was to fall to ten thousand a year -- *Second Programme for Economic Expansion*, Part I, pp 16-22.
[112] John O'Connell, Seamus Sheehy, *'Policies to accelerate agricultural development'*, National Economic and Social Council, (Dublin, 1978), p. 12; *Second Programme for Economic Expansion*, Part I, p. 45.
[113] *Second Programme for Economic Expansion*, Part I, p. 45.
[114] Crotty, *Irish Agricultural Production,* pp 202-203.

slaughtered in Ireland or shipped live. Apart from some aspirational comments regarding the perceived benefits of trade agreements with Britain, and the long-term goal of securing EEC membership, the programme simply stated that 'almost all' the cattle 'will be for export'.[115] As Louis Smith and Sean Healy observed, 'increasing production without a market was an unpleasant form of economic suicide.'[116]

THE LOBBY FOR CHANGE

Although the *Second Programme for Economic Expansion* highlighted a continuing government bias towards cattle exports as the primary arm of the livestock industry, a growing acceptance at both farmer and political level that meat processors had a crucial role to play in the sector's development is also evident in the early 1960s.[117] This public appreciation of the dead meat industry's potential is clear from Lemass's positive remarks at the twenty-first anniversary function for the Irish Fresh Meat Exporters' Society in December 1961, and in an NFA submission to the Department of Agriculture twelve months earlier.[118] The NFA stated that farmers could not agree with 'basing all our agriculture [policy] on a live cattle export trade', pointing out that the output per acre from store cattle production was not sufficient 'to enable a medium-sized farm to obtain a satisfactory income.'[119] Similar reservations were expressed by the *Irish Farmers' Journal* in the spring of 1960 when it cautioned that Ireland could not 'labour under the illusion' that the British market for store cattle 'will remain eternally strong and buoyant'.[120] However, the Department of Agriculture had already acted on beef supports by launching the Guarantee Payments Scheme.[121] The support payment was initially introduced in July 1960 and operated for twenty months until March 1962 and was targeted at cattle that could not be exported as stores to Britain because of the aforementioned TB attestation

[115] *Second Programme for Economic Expansion*, Part I, pp 22-28.
[116] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, p. 39.
[117] *Second Programme for Economic Expansion*, Part I, p. 23 and pp 28-29; A memo from the NFA to the Department of Agriculture on EEC membership, 8 Nov. 1960 (NAI, TAOIS/S/16877G); Written draft of Seán Lemass's speech to the twenty-first anniversary celebrations for the Irish Fresh Meat Exporters' Society, 16 Dec. 1961 (NAI, TAOIS/97/9/1582).
[118] Written draft of Seán Lemass's speech to the twenty-first anniversary celebrations for the Irish Fresh Meat Exporters' Society, 16 Dec. 1961 (NAI, TAOIS/97/9/1582); A memo from the NFA to the Department of Agriculture on EEC membership, 8 Nov. 1960 (NAI, TAOIS/S/16877G).
[119] A memo from the NFA to the Department of Agriculture on EEC membership, 8 Nov. 1960 (NAI, TAOIS/S/16877G).
[120] *IFJ* 12 Mar. 1960.
[121] *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 19.

difficulties.[122] The scheme involved the payment of a subsidy on exports of fat cattle and carcass beef which was set at 9s per cwt under the British Fatstock Guarantee Scheme, and it tracked changes in the UK supports.[123] The scheme effectively set a guaranteed weekly minimum price for fat cattle and beef exports to Britain. For example, the minimum price of live cattle exported to Britain for the week of 4 July 1960 was 146s per cwt, or around 26d per lb for carcass beef. The minimum price for 26 December 1960 was 141s per cwt, while the price for 20 March 1961 was 158s per cwt.[124] The total expenditure under the scheme between July 1960 and March 1962 was £2.5 million on live cattle and £2.1 million on carcass beef.[125]

The introduction of the Guarantee Payments Scheme in 1960 signalled a major shift in policy as it was the first direct aid package to the cattle and beef export trade. Indirect supports for the livestock sector were already in place. Crotty correctly argues that the TB eradication programme was effectively an aid package for live exporters in that its primary objective was to protect Ireland's lucrative cattle export business to Britain.[126] Similarly, the level of veterinary and regulatory oversight provided by the Department of Agriculture to the beef and lamb factories could be viewed as a subvention to the meat processing industry. These inspection and certification procedures, which ensured meat from Irish plants was fit for human consumption, were arguably the foundation on which the industry was built.[127] However, while both the TB eradication programme and the factory inspection regime provided essential backing to the livestock industry, unlike the Guarantee Payments Scheme, they did not deliver direct price supports.[128] It is equally significant that the measure targeted both fat cattle and beef exports to the UK – this was not a support that was aimed at benefitting one arm of the livestock industry at the expense of the other. The Department of Agriculture's recognition that a balanced approach on supports was

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[122] Department of Finance memorandum to Government, entitled 'Observations on the proposals by the Minister for Agriculture to pay a subsidy on fat cattle', 11 Jan. 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/508); *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 19.
[123] *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 19; *IFJ*, 2 July 1960.
[124] *IFJ*, 2 July 1960.
[125] Department of Finance memorandum to Government, entitled 'Observations on the proposals by the Minister for Agriculture to pay a subsidy on fat cattle', 11 Jan. 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/508); *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 19.
[126] Crotty, *Irish Agricultural Production*, pp 200-201.
[127] *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, pp 26-29.
[128] Department of Finance memorandum to Government, entitled 'Observations on the proposals by the Minister for Agriculture to pay a subsidy on fat cattle', 11 Jan. 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/508); *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 19.

necessary is also noteworthy, given the impact British policies such as the deficiency payments regime had in promoting the live trade to the detriment of processed beef export to the UK.

The beef factories and farmers were undoubtedly the big winners from the Guarantee Payments Scheme's introduction, and both the Irish Fresh Meat Exporters' Society (IFMES) and the NFA welcomed the initiative.[129] The scheme helped to settle the fat cattle and beef trade to Britain, with Dublin Cattle Market prices increasing marginally over the following month despite a strike by dock workers disrupting exports.[130] The question remains, however, what motivated the Department of Agriculture's changed approach on direct supports for beef and cattle exports? Was it an acceptance of the importance of processed beef to the livestock sector, given that total canned, carcass and boneless beef exports amounted to almost sixty thousand tons in 1960, were valued at £15.5 million, and accounted for one-third of all cattle-related foreign trade?[131] Or was the shift in the attitude prompted by more effective lobbying on the part of meat processors, and the industry's supporters? The archives and contemporary newspapers do not offer a definitive answer to this question, but they do point to a greater confidence among processors regarding their standing in the agriculture sector. This was reflected in the in the increased activity by IFMES during the early 1960s.[132] For example, in May 1960 the Minister for Agriculture, Paddy Smith, offered support to efforts by IFMES to secure improved weekend transport services from British Rail for member firms supplying meat to Liverpool's Stanley Market.[133] Similarly, IFMES joined Department of Agriculture officials and livestock shipper representatives in an Irish delegation which travelled to lobby West German importers in June 1961 regarding moves to halve Irish beef and cattle purchases.[134] Meanwhile, in March 1962 IFMES called on Lemass to 'remedy by legislation if necessary' a series of strikes by dock workers that disrupted the export of beef and

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[129] *IFJ*, 2 July 1960.
[130] *II*, 7 July 1960; *IFJ*, 9 July, 30 July 1960.
[131] *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries,* p. 18; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries,* p.78.
[132] *II*, 10 June 1961; *IP*, 12 May 1960; Invitation for Taoiseach Seán Lemass to the Irish Fresh Meat Exporters' Society (IFMES) twenty-first anniversary dinner, 16 Dec. 1961 (NAI, TAOIS/97/9/1582); Letter from IFMES to the secretary Department of the Taoiseach, 19 Mar. 1962 (NAI, TAOIS/97/9/1582).
[133] *IP*, 12 May 1960; *II*, 2 May 1960.
[134] *II*, 10 June 1961; *IFJ*, 10 June 1961.

lamb from Dublin Port.[135] In addition, IFMES cultivated a loose alliance with the NFA by ensuring processor support for farmer efforts to secure improvements in the transport and marketing of animals during this period.[136] The factories also endeared themselves to the general farming public by continuing to buy stock at auction sales, as well as purchasing animals directly from farmers, which undermined live exporters' efforts to commercially damage the marts network.[137] This heightened public profile, and access to political power, was certainly a departure from the 'behind the scenes' approach which the processor body adopted during its formative years.

IFMES was originally established in 1941 when an embargo was placed on live cattle shipments to Britain due to an outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease. This meant cattle had to be slaughtered and processed prior to export.[138] Exports of carcass beef exceeded sixteen thousand tons in 1941, as a result, up from just three hundred tons the previous year, and IFMES representatives liaised with British Ministry of Food officials and the Irish Department of Agriculture to ensure supply continuity.[139] It continued to act as the main beef processor representative body even though carcass meat shipments to Britain quickly fell back to the pre-war norm of between five thousand and six thousand tons once the Foot and Mouth scare had passed.[140] IFMES re-emerged as an influential actor in the agricultural sector when, as outlined in Chapter One, it played an important role in the early development of the beef export trade to North America in 1950 after a joint trade mission involving Department of

[135] Letter from IFMES to the secretary Department of the Taoiseach, 19 Mar. 1962 (NAI, TAOIS/97/9/1582).
[136] Minutes of National Farmers' Association's livestock committee meetings, 12 Jan. 1956, 2 Feb. 1956, 26 May 1964.
[137] Peter Roe's cattle purchases notebook for 1959, entries dated from 25 July 1959 to 24 Nov. 1959; *IFJ*, 1 Apr. 1961.
[138] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, p. 70; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries,* p. 76; Central Statistics Office, cattle and beef exports available at:http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Database/eirestat/External%20Trade/External%20Trade_statbank.asp?SP=External%20Trade&Planguage=0(accessed on 8 September 2018).
[139] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries,* ESRI, p. 76; Louis Smith, Sean Healy, *Farm organisations in Ireland*, p. 70; Central Statistics Office, cattle and beef exports available at:http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Database/eirestat/External%20Trade/External%20Trade_statbank.asp?SP=External%20Trade&Planguage=0 (accessed on 8 September 2018).
[140] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, p. 70; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries,* p. 76; Central Statistics Office, cattle and beef exports available at:http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Database/eirestat/External%20Trade/External%20Trade_statbank.asp?SP=External%20Trade&Planguage=0 (accessed on 8 September 2018).

Agriculture staff and IFMES members visited the US.[141] IFMES also acted as a contact point for the Department of Agriculture in the 1950s and early 1960s when European and Israeli businesses initially sourced Irish beef. The Irish embassy network was generally the first point of contact for these commercial enquiries. The Department of External Affairs forwarded queries received to the Department of Agriculture, whose officials then contacted individual processors through the IFMES. For example, beef export contracts to Sweden between 1951 and 1953 were secured in this fashion.[142] This process was also followed by the Israeli authorities when they sought to agree a £1 million deal for Irish beef in 1961. Israeli officials contacted the Irish embassy in London, with staff then alerting the Department of Agriculture. IFMES and Frank Quinn of the International Meat Company were subsequently contacted regarding the business, with Premier Meat Packers in Sallins and Quinn's company eventually vying for the contract but ultimately failing to agree terms with the Israelis.[143] That is not to say that the diplomatic route was the only one used by prospective beef buyers. For instance, enquiries were made through the Gaelic League in Israel in 1961 regarding possible exports of Irish beef to the Middle East.[144] By the early 1960s, however, most beef processors had close links with buyers on the continent or were trading through established agents. In Germany, for instance, the greater part of the Irish beef was supplied by IMP, Clover Meats and the International Meat Company, with the trade being handled by agents such as E. Danhuber in Munich, H. Plambeck in Hamburg, and J. Ruppel in Neuhoff.[145]

The primary architects of IFMES strategy from its inception were Jim Bastow, who was secretary of the society, and Longford-based meat processor, Matt Lyons, who served as chairman for more than a quarter of a century.[146] Lyons was another aristocrat of the meat processing business. Among his first dealings with livestock

[141] *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Export Trade in Dressed Meat to the Dollar Area*, paragraph 4 (NAI, AGF 10/25/2/2).
[142] Communications involving IMP and the Department of Agriculture, 1951-53 (NAI, DA/ 2005/82/410).
[143] Exchanges between the Israeli Food Import Department, the Department of Agriculture, Irish Embassy officials in London, and the IFMES, from 31 May 1960 to 6 Oct. 1961 (NAI, DA/10/6/2/1).
[144] Hand-written and undated memo which refers to a conversation on the 23 October 1961 with the head of the Gaelic League in Israel. Included in NAI file AGF/10/6/2/1 entitled 'Export of meat to Israel'.
[145] Information on German beef market compiled by the Department of Agriculture for the Department of External Affairs, 1963-66 (NAI, DFA/2013/27/229).
[146]John Lyons interview (15 August 2018); Con Lucey interview (25 October 2017); *IFJ*, 27 Mar. 1968; Gus Fitzpatrick interviews (18 October 2016 and 1 March 2017).

producers after moving to Longford from his native Woodford, Co Galway in the mid-1920s was as secretary for the Farmers Party.[147] However, by the 1930s he was shipping pork carcasses to the Smithfield Market in London.[148] In 1941 he switched to carcass beef when a Foot and Mouth outbreak temporarily stopped live cattle exports to Britain and was involved in the establishment of IFMES. Lyons continued in beef processing in the early 1950s, when he was killing cattle on contract for Gordon Counihan and operating out of old tannery in Bridge Street in the town of Longford. He later established a pig slaughter plant at Dromod in Leitrim.[149] Jim Bastow, meanwhile, was a founding partner with Jim Charleton of the accountancy firm Bastow Charleton, which was located in Cavendish Street on Dublin's north-side and counted cattle traders and abattoir owners among its early clients.[150] A keen bridge player, Mr Bastow represented Ireland for two or three years at international level.[151] He was embedded in the meat industry and worked in a number of roles and guises. Bastow acted for the Ballymun-based Dublin Meat Packers when the firm applied for its meat export licence in 1952, and by 1961 personally represented the main beef canning plants – Roscrea Meats, Clover Meats, Clonmel Foods and Castlebar Bacon Company – in their dealings with the Department of Agriculture.[152] This work was undertaken as secretary of the Beef Canners'Advisory Association.[153] He was also a director of the Livestock Credit Corporation (LCC) which was founded in 1958 by Jack and Raymond Keogh – the Dublin Cattle Market sales masters and IMP shareholders – to provide credit facilities for beef finishers.[154] In addition, Bastow Charleton was listed in 1963 as a major exporter of cattle to Germany, shipping more than one thousand head in the month of March alone.[155]

[147] *IFJ*, 19 Apr. 1988; John Lyons interview (15 Aug. 2018).
[148] John Lyons interview (15 Aug. 2018).
[149] Ibid.
[150] Gus Fitzpatrick interviews (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017); John Lyons interview (15 Aug. 2018); Con Lucey interview (25 Oct. 2017).
[151] *IP*, 22 Oct. 1980; *IFJ*, 25 Oct. 1980.
[152] Letter from the Department of Agriculture confirming the granting of an export licence to Dublin Meat Packers, 5 Nov. 1952 (NAI, DA/10/7/42/1); Department of Agriculture note on negotiations regarding meat exports to Israel, 18 Oct. 1961 (NAI, DA/10/6/2/1).
[153] Details on talks between the Beef Canners Advisory Association and the Department of Industry and Commerce, 12 Nov. 1958 (NAI, DA/10/13/4/1).
[154] *IFJ*, 11 Oct. 1958; Keogh, *Cattleman*, pp 99-109.
[155] Information on beef exports to Germany, 1960-63, compiled by the Department of Agriculture for the Department of External Affairs (NAI, DFA/2013/27/229).

Bastow's work with the meat industry, however, was not limited to representing the interests of individual companies. A strategy of maximising state supports to beef processors is apparent from IFMES campaigns during the late 1950s. For instance, in 1958 the processor body successfully lobbied Lemass as Minister for Industry and Commerce to extend political risk insurance to the dollar area. This state-backed insurance covered companies against non-payment for exports.[156] By 1961 IFMES was lobbying for supports on carcass beef exports to Britain, and in a meeting with the Department of Agriculture's secretary general, Jack Nagle, Bastow vigorously made the case for such assistance. While accepting the government's 'difficulty' in considering a direct export subsidy for carcass beef, Bastow pointed out that carcass beef exports had increased from £174,000 to £16 million over the previous eleven years and the trade 'deserved assistance in some way from the state'.[157] He suggested that Irish Shipping Limited provide a dedicated service to Liverpool for carcass meat exports to the north of England.[158] At a subsequent meeting with Irish Shipping, IFMES stated that an investment of £500,000 in refrigerated containers was required, but the proposal was ultimately rejected by the Department of Transport.[159] While the processors' efforts on carcass beef exports to Britain failed, the campaign illustrates a greater confidence and assertiveness in the industry, and more particularly in its representative body IFMES. This new-found confidence was reflected in attempts by the processor body to seek a ban on live cow exports in March 1964; as well as attempting to secure a fat cattle subsidy in 1963 because of fears that low prices for finished animals would prejudice supplies.[160] IFMES and the wider beef processing sector had certainly cultivated its connections with the Department of Agriculture by the early 1960s: this is confirmed by the intensity of its lobbying, and by the adoption of policies such as the Guarantee Payments Scheme of 1960-62.[161] Indeed, in what amounted to a backhanded

[156] Details on talks between the Beef Canners Advisory Association and the Department of Industry and Commerce, 12 Nov. 1958 (NAI, DA/10/13/4/1).
[157] Notes on meeting between Jack Nagle and Donal Buckley of the Department of Agriculture and an IFMES delegation headed by Jim Bastow, 18 May 1961 (NAI, INDC/FT/GEN/679).
[158] Ibid.
[159] Report of meeting between Department of Transport and Irish Shipping Limited officials, 30 May 1961 (NAI, INDC/FT/GEN/679).
[160] Department of Finance memorandum on the proposed introduction of the Carcass Beef Scheme, 11 Jan. 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/508).
[161] John Lyons interview (15 Aug. 2018); Gus Fitzpatrick interview (1 Mar. 2017); *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 19.

compliment to IFMES, the Department of Finance conceded in 1965 that the beef processors had developed into a 'strongly organised pressure group'.[162]

The *Irish Farmers' Journal* and its long-serving editor, Paddy O'Keeffe, also played a crucial role in advancing the case for the dead meat trade. The newspaper was steadfast in its support of the industry during the first half of the 1960s. It repeatedly called for the expansion of carcass beef exports, it endorsed support measures such as the Guaranteed Payments Scheme, campaigned for better marketing of Irish beef in Britain, and lobbied for improved animal breeding for the beef and dairy herds.[163] In essence, the *Farmers' Journal* was working to transform beef farming. Commenting on the fall-off in store cattle exports to Britain in 1960 due to the TB concerns, O'Keeffe claimed it was 'to the advantage of farmers', that beef processors were 'taking up the slack', adding that the industry 'must receive every help and consideration if it is to develop to the general advantage of the state and the farmer'.[164] Indeed, a retired senior Department of Agriculture official, who did not wish to be named, identified the *Farmers' Journal* under O'Keeffe's stewardship as a crucially important promoter of the meat processing sector, and of food processing in general.[165] Along with comprehensive agricultural news coverage, the *Farmers' Journal* also carried excellent technical content, with columnists such as Joe Keane writing illustrated articles each week on topics such as paddock grazing, silage making and livestock housing – practices which in later decades would help increase output and profits on the most innovative farms.[166] This strong technical content ensured the popularity of the newspaper among the country's leading farmers, many of whom were major beef finishers and suppliers of beef cattle to the factories.[167] Of equal significance from a beef perspective, however, were the weekly cattle market reports – dubbed the 'Market Trends' – and the general news coverage on the meat business. These sales reports were compiled for close to twenty years by Michael Dillon – who went on to become the face of Irish farming through the RTE programme *Mart and Market* – and carried prices from the Dublin Cattle Market and

[162] Department of Finance memorandum on the proposed introduction of the Carcass Beef Scheme, 11 Jan. 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/508).
[163] *IFJ*, 20 Feb., 27 Feb., 12 Mar., 2 July 1960, 14 Apr. 1962, 9 Mar. 1963, 14 Dec. 1965.
[164] *IFJ*, 27 Feb. 1960.
[165] Discussion with Interviewee B (7 Aug. 2018).
[166] *IFJ*, 9 Jan. 1957.
[167] Michael Walshe interview (29 June 2016); Tom Cleary interview (14 Oct. 2016).

from fairs and marts around the country. The reports outlined what type of cattle the exporters, the factories and butchers were buying, and what they were paying.[168]

ENTER CHARLES HAUGHEY

Beef processor interests were further buoyed by the appointment of Charles Haughey as Minister for Agriculture in early October 1964.[169] Haughey replaced Paddy Smith after the Cavan TD resigned from office in protest at a government decision to concede a forty-hour working week to Dublin building workers following a lengthy strike. Smith claimed Lemass intervened in the dispute and accused him of paying too much attention to the unions and not enough to farmers.[170] Fanning claims that Smith had shared a common rural suspicion of Lemass and had clashed with the Taoiseach two years earlier when he opposed a proposal to cabinet for tariff concessions for Northern Ireland.[171] Arguably the most divisive public representative to grace the Irish political stage during the second half of the twentieth century, Haughey proved a staunch supporter of the beef factories from early in his tenure at the Department of Agriculture. Indeed, the new minister proposed introducing a support scheme for beef exports soon after being appointed in October 1964, but deferred the initiative because of spending restrictions.[172] Haughey was an unlikely choice to replace Smith. Although born in Mayo, he was reared in the Dublin suburb of Donnycarney, and had limited knowledge of farming. Indeed, the deputy was the first from Dublin to serve as Minister for Agriculture and he admitted in the Dáil in 1958 that he knew 'very little' about farming.[173] However, Haughey had the distinct advantage of being close to Paddy O'Keeffe. In fact, O'Keeffe played down the new minister's lack of agricultural experience in the *Farmers' Journal* shortly after his appointment, maintaining his real value to the industry lay in his 'keen mind and successful

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[168] Every edition of the *Irish Farmers' Journal*, between 1951 and 1965.

[169] *II*, 9 Oct. 1964; *IP*, 9 Oct. 1964.

[170] Daly, *First Department*, pp 458-459; Ronan Fanning, 'Seán Lemass', *Directory of Irish Biography,* www.ria.ie/research-projects/dictionary-irish-biography (accessed 14 April 2021); *IP*, 8 Oct. 1964; *II*, 8 Oct. 1964.

[171] Ronan Fanning, 'Seán Lemass', *Directory of Irish Biography,* www.ria.ie/research-projects/dictionary-irish-biography (accessed 14 April 2021).

[172] Department of Finance memorandum to Government dated 11 Jan. 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/508).

[173] Dáil debates Vol. 168, No. 6, 28 May 1958; Patrick Maume, 'Charles J. Haughey', *Directory of Irish Biography,* www.ria.ie/research-projects/dictionary-irish-biography (accessed 12 April 2021); Bryce Evans*, Sean Lemass, Democratic Dictator*, (Cork, 2011), p. 219; Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, p. 161; Stephen Kelly, *A Failed Political Entity – Charles Haughey and the Northern Ireland Question 1945-1992* (Kildare, 2016), pp 23-24.

business experience'.[174] O'Keeffe was not alone in his recognition of Haughey's competence. His private secretary at the Department of Finance in 1967, Michael Lillis, remembered Haughey as 'extraordinarily hardworking…most impressive, and exceptionally intelligent.' Lillis also described him as a 'decision maker', who when he had made decisions was 'not afraid to implement them'.[175] Similarly, Peter Berry, secretary of the Department of Justice, described Haughey as the ablest minister of the fourteen he served. During a busy and innovative three years as Minister for Justice, from 1961 to 1964, he introduced a raft of overdue reforms. These included the Succession Act of 1964, which protected the inheritance rights of children and spouses, as well as the 1962 Criminal Justice (Legal Aid) Act. Haughey also abolished capital punishment the majority of offences.[176] However, the new minister was not to everyone's liking. Haughey was viewed by stalwarts within Fianna Fáil such as Frank Aiken and Gerald Boland as being one of an ambitious cohort of young TDs – another two were Donogh O'Malley and Brian Lenihan, dubbed the 'men in the mohair suits'– who were accused of brazenly flaunting political influence.[177] Indeed, Boland went as far as to admit that 'the young set' made him 'sick and disgusted'.[178] In addition, Haughey's propensity for bad language, which belied his reputation as a charmer, did not endear him to some in the livestock trade. Cork-based shipper, Noel Murphy, recalled that his use of the 'soldier's word' did not go down well at meetings with cattle exporter representatives. Even so, Murphy still regarded Haughey as 'brilliant' but 'not to be trusted'.[179]

Haughey's strong support for the meat processing sector was articulated very forcefully and publicly within four months of taking office when he told a Belfast audience in February 1965 that the South had 'a most efficient, modern dead-meat industry capable of handling all the meat exports that it would be practicable to consign from the whole of Ireland.'[180] He went on to tell the meeting that the Irish

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[174] *IFJ*, 17 October 1964; Michael Walshe interview (29 June 2016); Gus Fitzpatrick interviews (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017); John Lyons interview (15 Aug. 2018).
[175] Kelly, *A Failed Political Entity*, pp 3-4.
[176] Patrick Maume, 'Charles J. Haughey', *Directory of Irish Biography,* www.ria.ie/research-projects/dictionary-irish-biography (accessed 12 April 2021).
[177] James Downey, *Lenihan: His Life and Loyalties* (Dublin, 1998), p. 44; Evans, *Seán Lemass*, p. 210; Dick Walsh, *The Party: inside Fianna Fáil* (Dublin, 1986), pp 83-84.
[178] Tom Garvin, *Preventing the Future: Why was Ireland So Poor for So Long?* (Dublin, 2004), p. 205.
[179] Hurley, *Noel Murphy*, pp 142-143; Kelly, *A Failed Political Entity*, p. 4.
[180] *IP*, 10 Feb. 1965*; II*, 10 Feb. 1965; *IFJ*, 13 Feb. 1965.

food processing sector, although 'in its infancy', had 'enormous potential'.[181] These comments indicated that the meat processors could depend on the new minister's backing. But why did Haughey offer the dead meat industry such powerful support? One possible explanation is longstanding personal connections. Haughey's ties to the meat industry pre-date his appointment to the cabinet, and, in fact, stretch back to the early 1950s. Archival records show that he lobbied the Minister for Agriculture, Tom Walsh, on behalf of Frank Quinn in 1952, five years before the Leitrim-born businessman took over the former Frigorifico in Ireland plant in Dublin's Grand Canal Street to become the state's leading beef processor.[182] The lobbying related to a successful application by Quinn to develop an offal exporting facility at his premises in Fumbally Lane off New Street, in Dublin's south-inner-city. It involved Haughey writing to Walsh regarding the progress of the application.[183] Longford meat processor John Lyons maintained that this association with the beef industry initially developed through the accountancy practice of Haughey, Boland and Guiney in which Haughey was a partner. Indeed, he contended that Haughey's auditing of the accounts for Burnhouse Limited of Ballinasloe, Co Galway – which disposed of dead animals and rendered animal carcasses to produce both meat and bone meal and fertiliser – was among his earliest interactions with the beef trade.[184]

However, Paddy O'Keeffe's influence on Haughey's policy agenda offers a more plausible explanation for the strident support offered to meat processors from October 1964. In an interview with the *Farmers' Journal* in May 1965 Haughey set out the broad thrust of his ministerial programme. There was considerable overlap with the policies pursued during Paddy Smith's tenure, and with those included in the *Second Programme for Economic Expansion* – such as the continuation of the TB eradication programme, co-ordination of dairy and bacon marketing, and expansion of the cattle herd – but there were also significant policy shifts in three specific areas: the introduction of export supports for processed beef; the purchase of Landrace and

[181] *II*, 10 Feb. 1965; *IFJ*, 13 Feb. 1965; *IP*, 10 Feb. 1965.
[182] Letter from International Meat Company's solicitors to the Department of Agriculture, 9 Oct. 1957 (NAI, DA/10/7/51/1); Note dated 30 Jan. 1952 recorded that representations had been made to the Minister for Agriculture, Tom Walsh, on behalf of Frank Quinn by Charles Haughey (NAI, DA/10/7/145/1).
[183] Letter from Minister Tom Walsh to Charles Haughey 11 Feb. 1952, and note dated 30 Jan. 1952, recording the representations on behalf of Frank Quinn made by Charles Haughey (NAI, DA/10/7/145/1).
[184] John Lyons interview (15 Aug. 2018).

Large White breeding pigs from Sweden and Norway; and the importation of pedigree continental cattle breeds such as Charolais stock to improve the national beef herd.[185] The adoption of all three policies, which had been championed by the *Farmers' Journal* since the late 1950s, illustrates the depth of the relationship that had developed between O'Keeffe and Haughey.[186]As outlined earlier in the chapter, O'Keeffe had welcomed support measures such as the Guaranteed Payments Scheme introduced in 1960, he had repeatedly called for the expansion of carcass beef exports, and lobbied for improved animal breeding for the beef and dairy herds.[187]

The *Farmers' Journal* was also a vocal supporter of the importation of continental beef breeding stock into Ireland, a campaign which came to fruition under Haughey although it was originally instigated by his predecessor Paddy Smith.[188] The manner in which this policy developed and evolved between 1963 and 1965 illustrates again the aligning of agendas between O'Keeffe and Haughey, and also demonstrates how government policy sometimes facilitated the interests of powerful elites. O'Keeffe had been scathing in his criticism of national breeding policy and the absence of a structured programme for genetic improvement in the early 1960s when Ireland's cattle herd was still dominated by the Shorthorn which accounted for around three-quarters of all cows.[189] He claimed in 1961 that the introduction of progeny testing for pedigree bulls and the use of better beef sires was 'progressing at a snail's pace', while he bemoaned the fact that young breeders at that year's RDS Spring Show in Dublin were still talking of 'cattle being full of breed character' and relying on what he described as 'old mystic symbols' such as 'the distance between the animal's eyes' to judge stock quality.[190] The introduction of beef breeds such as Charolais from the continent had been proposed in the *Economic Expansion Plan* of 1958 and was championed thereafter by O'Keeffe and influential cattle breeders such as Omar Van Landeghem.[191] 'The Charolais is particularly valuable for its rapid growth into saleable beef, and for its lean quality and absence of waste fat,' O'Keeffe

[185] *IFJ*, 8 May 1965.
[186] Michael Walshe interview (29 June 2016); Interview with former Department of Agriculture staff member, Interviewee B (7 Aug. 2018); John Lyons interview (15 Aug. 2018).
[187] *IFJ*, 20 Feb., 27 Feb., 12 Mar., 2 July 1960, 14 Apr. 1962, 9 Mar. 1963, 14 Dec. 1965.
[188] Interview B, (24 Sept. 2015); *IFJ*, 22 Aug. 1964.
[189] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 41; *IFJ*, 18 Feb., 6 May 1961.
[190] *IFJ*, 18 Feb., 6 May 1961.
[191] *Programme for Economic Expansion*, p. 16; *IFJ*, 2 Jan. 1960, 12 Jan. 1963, 20 Mar. 1965; Interview B (24 Sept. 2015).

told farmers.[192] Meanwhile, Van Landeghem argued that the improved progeny from Charolais bulls crossed with native cows promised better farmer margins, either from finishing the cattle to beef or selling the stock as stores for export to Britain and the continent.[193] In short, the use of Continental breeds offered a possible solution to the puzzle posed by the 1958 programme which basically sought to cut beef production costs while increasing output.[194] Squaring this circle meant investing in science and animal breeding to improve on-farm efficiency. Realising this, the Department of Agriculture eventually bowed to industry pressure and imported twelve Charolais cattle and two Herefords from the US in 1962 – but a wider import strategy was needed.[195]

The Department of Agriculture was cognisant that any weakening of the state's controls on animal importations could not threaten live cattle exports and the dead meat trade by undermining the country's disease-free status for conditions such as Foot and Mouth Disease.[196] Haughey admitted this at the opening in November 1964 of a quarantine station on Spike Island in Cork which was commissioned to house imported breeding stock from Europe. He said the country was 'concerned to maintain' its disease-free status and that the protocols and procedures governing the importation of pedigree cattle had been formulated 'following consultation at home and abroad, including the United States and Britain'.[197] However, a senior Department of Agriculture official, who was closely associated the early cattle importations in 1964, recalled that the US authorities had a much more hands-on role in the drafting of the protocols. 'They called the shots,' he said.[198] Paddy Smith gave clearance for the first consignment of Charolais cattle to be purchased in Europe – ten heifers and eight bulls – in the summer of 1964 following an expedition to France by a trio of Department of Agriculture staff, John Beatty, Reddy Day and Austin Mescal.[199] As well as sanctioning the strict guidelines around the importation of pedigree stock – which stipulated that the animals had to be bought at two to four months of age and

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[192] *IFJ*, 12 Jan. 1963.
[193] Ibid., 20 Mar. 1965.
[194] *Programme for Economic Expansion*, p. 11.
[195] Daly, *First Department*, p. 347.
[196] Interview B (24 Sept. 2015); *Programme for Economic Expansion*, p. 11; Speech by Charles Haughey at Spike Island, Cork, 2 Nov. 1964 (NAI, TAOIS/GIS/1/174).
[197] Speech by Charles Haughey at Spike Island, Cork, 2 Nov. 1964 (NAI, TAOIS/GIS/1/174).
[198] Interview B (24 Sept. 2015).
[199] *IFJ*, 22 Aug. 1964; Greg Walsh, *Cattle breeds in Ireland: a history* (Wexford, 2017), p. 302; Interview B (24 Sept. 2015).

prior to vaccination for foot and mouth, and had be quarantined both on the continent and later on Spike Island – Smith made the Department of Agriculture the sole importer.[200] Tellingly, however, this decision was overturned when Haughey came to power, with import licences granted to five private individuals. These included: John Mooney from Ashbourne, Co Meath, who had purchased the *Irish Farmers' Journal* in 1951 and appointed Paddy O'Keeffe editor; Raymond Guest who was the US ambassador to Ireland; Laurie Gardner, a former British army officer with business interests in Mayo; Alan Lillingston, a well-known British horse breeder and jockey who lived in Co Limerick; and renowned businessman Joe McGrath who made his fortune as a promoter of the Irish Hospitals Sweepstake.[201] Haughey justified his decision to open up the business to private operators on the grounds that importing pedigree livestock was a job for 'rich people', the former Department of Agriculture official recalled.[202] This accords with press coverage of the official announcement which was made in May 1965. Haughey said it was 'desirable to allow the establishment of a limited number of pedigree herds by private breeders.'[203] He said applications would only be accepted from persons with 'considerable experience in breeding', and he cautioned that the capital investment required 'would be fairly substantial'.[204] It is unclear how the selection process for applicants was carried out since there is no evidence in the archives of an independent appraisal of candidates. This could be attributed to what Lee has termed the lack of 'openness and transparency in public administration', but questions around the selection process were raised by Raymond Keogh in his book, *Cattleman*, where he alleges that Haughey solicited and received a loan of £10,000 from Laurie Gardner, one of the licence recipients.[205] This allegedly took place at a dinner attended by Haughey, Gardner and O'Keeffe in the summer of 1965 prior to the licences being issued to the private importers.[206] While it is difficult to establish the veracity of this allegation, since all involved are now dead, it is worth noting that O'Keeffe wrote the foreword to Keogh's book, and it is therefore reasonable to assume he was aware of its

[200] Walsh, *Cattle breeds in Ireland*, p. 302; Interview B (24 Sept. 2015).
[201] Keogh, *Cattleman*, pp 138-148; Interview B (24 Sept. 2015); Walsh, *Cattle breeds in Ireland*, p. 302.
[202] Interview B (24 Sept. 2015).
[203] *IT*, 5 May 1965; *IP*, 5 May 1965.
[204] *IP*, 5 May 1965; *IT*, 5 May 1965.
[205] Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, pp 350-51; Keogh, *Cattleman*, pp 144-145.
[206] Keogh, *Cattleman*, pp 144-145.

contents.[207] The importation of pedigree stock was certainly a lucrative enough business to attract corruption. For example, £100,000 was offered in 1969 by an American breeder for the Charolais sire *Ambassadeur* that was imported by the Department of Agriculture team in 1964.[208] Whether or not graft was a factor in the winning of the cattle import licences, the manner in which the process was handled by Haughey certainly fitted a pattern for Fianna Fáil which by the mid-1960s was actively courting the country's business class.[209] This drive was put on a semi-official standing with the founding of Táca in 1966, a fund raising organisation which facilitated privileged access to ministers in return for large donations to the party.[210] As Stephen Kelly noted, Táca enabled a 'golden circle of builders, property developers and speculators to align themselves to Fianna Fáil'.[211]A similar trend was emerging in farming.

Haughey's rhetoric around supporting the meat processing trade was given concrete expression with the introduction of the Carcass Beef Subsidy Scheme in February 1965.[212] This subsidy was initially proposed as a temporary measure to encourage the fattening of more cattle for slaughter in Ireland.[213] The scheme aimed to promote dead meat exports to Britain between February and June of 1965, and halt the decline in beef sales to the UK which had fallen by forty per cent between 1961 and 1964 due to the increased shipping of live cattle.[214] The Department of Agriculture claimed the subsidy was necessary to counter what it described as the 'pull' on Irish store cattle which the British Fatstock Price Guarantee Scheme or deficiency payments exerted.[215] The subsidy scheme was warmly welcomed by beef processors, with Frank Quinn maintaining that it was 'magnificent as a gesture of aid to the factories'.[216] Jim Bastow of IFMES said the measure followed discussions with Haughey regarding a continuing shortage of finished cattle for Irish slaughter

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[207] Paddy O'Keeffe's Foreword to *Cattleman*, pp 6-8.
[208] Interview B (24 September 2015).
[209] Evans, *Seán Lemass*, p. 210; Walsh, *The Party*, pp 83-84; Kelly, *A Failed Political Entity*, p. 50.
[210] Walsh, *The Party*, pp 83-84; Kelly, *A Failed Political Entity*, p. 50.
[211] Kelly, *A Failed Political Entity*, p.50.
[212] *IP*, 21 Jan. 1965; *II*, 22 Jan. 1965; *IFJ*, 30 Jan. 1965.
[213] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1964-65*, (Dublin, 1965), p. 39.
[214] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78; *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, pp 34-36; *II*, 22 Jan. 1965; *IFJ*, 30 Jan. 1965.
[215] Department of Agriculture memorandum to Government on the carcass beef export trade, 18 June 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/508).
[216] *IFJ*, 30 Jan. 1965.

plants.[217] However, the scheme was hugely divisive as it was directed solely at the beef trade and excluded live cattle exporters, who bitterly opposed its introduction and later extension.[218] In addition, it was strongly opposed by the Department of Finance who argued that it provided ‘open-ended’ exchequer backing to the beef processing sector.[219] The initiative supported Irish fat cattle prices by paying a subsidy to the meat processors on good quality bullock and heifer beef exported to the UK. The subsidy was paid at rates that closely mirrored the British deficiency payment.[220] For example, in early February the Carcass Beef Subsidy was set at close to 1.5d per lb, which equated to 6-7s per cwt or £3 15s per head for an eleven hundred-weight animal. By April the subsidy had doubled to almost 3d per lb or £7 10s per head.[221] With matching beef subsidies in Ireland and Britain, Irish fat cattle values were expected to track UK prices.[222] However, extraneous factors, such as greater Argentinian beef supplies into Britain during the summer of 1965, atrocious autumn weather, and the failure of the beef factories to reflect the full value of the subsidy in the prices paid for cattle, meant sale values for Irish beef cattle still lagged British levels by 25s per cwt or almost £14 per finished animal at the end of 1965.[223] This differential equated to around twenty per cent of the average sale price of good quality Irish fat cattle, which generally ranged from £78 and £82 per head at the Dublin Cattle Market in December 1965.[224] Despite its failure to maintain a close correlation between Irish and British fat cattle prices, the introduction of Carcass Beef Subsidy Scheme, and its later extension, was strongly supported by the NFA and the *Farmers' Journal*.[225] Joe Bruton of the NFA's livestock committee initially welcomed the subsidy, claiming it satisfied farmers' demands for a ‘minimum price arrangement for beef’, but as the year progressed the measure was increasingly viewed as an aid to ‘underwrite’, rather than improve, beef returns for farmers.[226] Paddy O'Keeffe echoed

[217] *IP*, 21 Jan. 1965.
[218] Minutes of Irish Cattle Traders and Stockowners Association meeting on 16 Feb. 1965 – minute book held by Joe Barry, Kilcock, Co Meath; *CE*, 17 Feb. 1965; *IFJ*, 30 Jan. 1965.
[219] Department of Finance memorandum to Government, 11 Jan. 1965, (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/508).
[220] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1964-65*, p. 39; *II*, 22 Jan. 1965; *IFJ*, 30 Jan. 1965; *IP*, 21 Jan. 1965.
[221] *CE*, 17 Feb., 15 Apr. 1965.
[222] *II*, 24 June 1965; *IFJ*, 30 Jan., 11 Dec. 1965.
[223] *IFJ*, 30 Jan. 1965.
[224] *CE*, 8 Dec. 1965; *II*, 9 Dec. 1965.
[225] *IP*, 21 Jan. 1965; *II*, 22 Jan. 1965; *IFJ*, 30 Jan. 1965; Department of Agriculture memorandum to Government on the carcass beef export trade, 18 June 1965, (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/508).
[226] *II*, 24 June 1965; *IP*, 21 Jan. 1965.

these sentiments in the *Farmers' Journal* ahead of the cabinet decision to extend the scheme through the summer of 1965. He maintained that the subsidy had successfully influenced the price paid for beef on the home market, while also helping to support cattle throughput in the beef factories. He cautioned, however, that the subsidy had to be 'operated on a long-term basis' to provide a 'degree of stability which beef production here [in Ireland] has so far lacked'.[227]

Haughey showed real political commitment to the meat processing sector in getting the beef subsidy scheme through cabinet and onto the statute book, given the strident opposition of both the Department of Finance and live cattle exporters.[228] In a damning assessment of the subsidy proposal, the Department of Finance, which was led by the veteran cabinet member Jim Ryan, maintained that annual expenditure on the scheme could exceed £5 million rather than the £250,000 estimated by the Department of Agriculture if cattle prices collapsed.[229] Furthermore, the Department of Finance memorandum claimed that the Carcass Beef Subsidy was really a support for the meat factories rather than for beef farmers.[230] In addition, it argued that the industry's most pressing problem was not a shortage of finished cattle but its 'inability to compete with the live fat-cattle export trade'.[231] Meanwhile, Finance was in agreement with the contention of both the domestic butchers and live exporters that limiting the subsidy to beef processors skewed the cattle market in the factories' favour.[232] The Irish Livestock Exporters' and Traders' Association, the Irish Cattle Traders' and Stockowners' Association, and the Dublin butchers, all claimed that the subsidy put their members at a disadvantage when competing with factory buyers for cattle in the marts and fairs, because the meat processors could use the Carcass Beef Subsidy to outbid the live exporters.[233] The exporters and butchers maintained that the subsidy gave a monopoly in finished cattle to the meat factories, hindered the

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[227] *IFJ*, 29 May 1965.
[228] Minutes of Cabinet meetings on 19 Jan., 22 June, 26 Oct. 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/508).
[229] Department of Finance memorandum on the proposed introduction of the Carcass Beef Scheme, 11 Jan. 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/508).
[230] Ibid.
[231] Ibid.
[232] *II*, 3 Mar. 1965; *CE*, 17 Feb. 1965; Department of Finance memorandum on the proposed introduction of the Carcass Beef Scheme, 11 Jan. 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/508); Department of Agriculture memorandum to Government on the carcass beef export trade, 18 June 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/508).
[233] *CE*, 17 Feb. 1965; Minutes of Irish Cattle Traders' and Stockowners' Association meeting on 16 Feb. 1965; Department of Agriculture memorandum to Government on the carcass beef export trade, 18 June 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/508).

development of emerging live cattle markets in Europe, and increased domestic beef prices.[234] Contemporary mart reports support this assertion, with factory agents identified as the principal buyers of heavy stock in the five months following the introduction of the subsidy scheme.[235] Interestingly, a Department of Finance memorandum on the subsidy noted that the Oireachtas Public Accounts Committee was already making queries regarding allegations of price fixing by meat canning plants that quoted for cows under the TB Eradication Scheme.[236] Was the Department of Finance implying that beef processors were not to be trusted?

The introduction of the Carcass Beef Subsidy Scheme, and its later extension to September 1965 and then June 1966, signalled a major shift in farm policy.[237] For the first time the interests of the dead meat trade had trumped those of the cattle exporters. Indeed, in justifying the requirement for the subsidy, the Department of Agriculture contradicted four decades of accepted policy by claiming that too many cattle were exported as stores.

> The kernel of the problem is that the supply of fat cattle is not big enough to meet both demands [for live exports and the dead meat trade] as sufficient cattle are not finished here but sold as stores. This is the nub of the problem – the fact that the link with the British Guaranteed prices operates so strongly against the finishing of cattle here and deprives the processing industry of adequate supplies of raw material.[238]

This was a bold statement considering that store cattle exports were traditionally considered the bedrock of the Irish livestock sector.[239] Indeed, earnings from live cattle exports totalled almost £53 million in 1963 and accounted for twenty-eight per cent of the state's trade revenues, while store cattle shipments to Britain alone in 1964 were worth £42.5 million.[240] However, the comments were a reflection of the

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[234] Department of Agriculture memorandum to Government on the carcass beef export trade, 18 June 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/508); *II*, 3 Mar. 1965; *CE*, 17 Feb. 1965.
[235] *IFJ*, 20 Feb., 10 Apr., 12 June 1965.
[236] Department of Finance memorandum on the proposed introduction of the Carcass Beef Scheme, 11 Jan. 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/508).
[237] Minutes of Cabinet meetings on 19 Jan., 22 June, 26 Oct. 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/508).
[238] Department of Agriculture explanatory note on concerns expressed regarding the Carcass Beef Subsidy Scheme, 19 Jan. 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/508)
[239] H.G. Foster, 'Irish trade with Britain' in I.F. Baillie and S.J. Sheehy (eds.), *Irish Agriculture in a Changing World* (Edinburgh, 1971), p.74; Hurley, *Noel Murphy*, pp 111-112.
[240] *Statistical Abstract of Ireland 1964*, (Dublin 1964), p.36; *IFJ*, 20 Feb. 1965.

commercial pressures on the processing industry due to a surge in live exporter activity in 1963 and 1964.[241] Exports of Irish store cattle to Britain returned to 1950s levels by1963 and 1964, helped by the success of the TB eradication programme and a major Department of Agriculture marketing and promotional campaign in England and Scotland which extolled the virtues of Irish stock.[242] In 1963 close to 565,000 stores were shipped, while 640,000 were exported to Britain in 1964 – the highest number since 1957.[243] Increased exports of fat cattle exacerbated an already tight supply situation, with the number of finished stock shipped live in the period from June to September rising from 28,000 head in 1963 to 60,000 head in 1964.[244]

YEAR	UNITED KINGDOM	OTHER COUNTRIES	TOTAL
1960	194,900	25,000	219,900
1961	254,600	34,900	289,500
1962	126,000	14,300	140,300
1963	66,100	24,600	90,700
1964	60,800	89,100	149,900
1965	64,000	82,300	146,300
1966	157,600	47,900	205,500
1967	17,800	9,500	27,300

Table 2.D: Fat cattle exports from Ireland 1960-67
Source: CSO data published in the Store Cattle Study Group Report of 1968

A significant increase in shipments of heavy stock to Europe (see Table 2.D) – due to a shortage of animals because of heavy slaughtering of cattle and calves in Italy, France and Germany over the winter of 1962-63, as well as improved consumer demand for beef – contributed to the expansion of this trade, with exports to the continent nearly hitting 90,000 head in 1964, up from 14,000 in 1962.[245] West Germany was one of the main outlets for live exports of fat cattle, with the numbers shipped rising from 12,000 head in 1962 to almost 60,000 head by 1965. Reports from the Dublin Cattle Market noted that the German buyers took some cows but mainly bought 'nice lean' bullocks and bulls.[246] The restricted availability of stock hit

[241] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p.70; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1963-64*, (Dublin, 1964), p. 19; *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, pp 34-36.
[242] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1962-63*, (Dublin, 1963), pp 24-25; *IFJ*, 13 Oct. 1962.
[243] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 36; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 70.
[244] Department of Finance memorandum on the proposed introduction of the Carcass Beef Scheme, 11 Jan. 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/508).
[245] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1963-64,* pp 20-21; *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 34.
[246] *II*, 15 Apr. 1965; *IFJ*, 20 Feb. 1965; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, pp 54-55.

the beef factories on two fronts: it made cattle dearer, while it increased overheads as the reduced throughput meant the slaughter plants were less efficient. Beef prices were obviously a critical consideration for processors, and generally accounted for around eighty per cent of overall input costs.[247] From 1960 to late 1962 the cost of fat cattle remained relatively stable, with the Department of Agriculture annual reports showing average prices for heavy bullocks of between 122s per cwt and 122s 11d per cwt, or £65-70 per head.[248] However, after a poor start to 1963 when prices dropped twenty per cent as a result of increased beef supplies into Britain from Argentina and Yugoslavia, along with severe winter weather, the cost of fat bullocks rose steadily during the second half of the year and into the spring of 1964 when they reached 160s per cwt or £85-90 per head.[249] By April 1965 top quality fat bullocks were making in excess of 180s per cwt or almost £100 per head.[250] This was a thirty per cent increase in cattle prices in just over two years. The increased competition for stock and higher prices also hit throughput in the factories, as can be seen in Table 2.C. While 470,000 cattle were processed in 1961, and around 403,000 in 1962 and 1963, the numbers slaughtered in Ireland fell to 302,000 and 312,000 respectively in 1964 and 1965.[251] This meant that the share of all available cattle that were processed in Irish beef plants fell from forty per cent in 1961 to twenty-eight per cent by 1964, while the total number of cattle slaughtered fell by twenty-five per cent between 1963 and 1964.[252] This was Haughey's primary justification for introducing the Carcass Beef Subsidy Scheme. At a meeting with the exporter body, the Irish Cattle Traders' and Stockowners' Association, in February 1965 Haughey explained that shipments of live cattle had been so strong the previous year that the factories were unable to compete for stock. He said this was the main reason for introducing the subsidy scheme and supporting the beef processing industry.[253] Haughey could also point to the serious commercial pressures which the beef factories were experiencing, and to the consequent loss of jobs in the sector, with overall employment in the industry falling from 2,900 to 2,300 between 1963 and 1964 as a result of reduced slaughtering

[247] *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 63.
[248] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1960-61,* p.7; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1961-62,* p. 8; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1962-63,* p. 8.
[249] *IFJ*, 12 Jan. 1963, 23 Mar., 30 Mar., 13 Apr. 1963, 22 Feb. 1964.
[250] *II*, 8 Apr. 1965; *IFJ*, 10 Apr. 1965.
[251] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 36.
[252] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1963-64*, pp 38-39; *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 36.
[253] Minutes of Irish Cattle Traders' and Stockowners' Association meeting on 16 Feb. 1965.

levels.[254] As Gus Fitzpatrick commented, 'one man and a dog could load a boat, but sixty or seventy men would get a job if you slaughtered them [the cattle].'[255] Profits at Clover Meats fell to a 'dangerous level' in 1963 due to reduced sales in Britain of the company's boneless beef and canned stewed steak. As a consequence the processor was forced to restructure operations at its Waterford, Limerick and Wexford sites.[256] Similarly, Clonmel Foods was threatened with the appointment of a receiver in 1964 over its failure to repay a Guaranteed Trade Loan of £100,000 which was owed to the Department of Industry and Commerce.[257] Meanwhile, the purchase in October 1964 of Premier Meat Packers in Sallins by the Fatstock Marketing Corporation (FMC), a British farmer-owned co-operative, highlighted the susceptibility of Irish beef processors to takeover by larger foreign concerns as a result of the challenging trading environment.[258] Negotiations on a free trade agreement between Ireland and Britain during 1964 and 1965 provided further grounds, Haughey maintained, for the introduction and extension of the Carcass Beef Suckler Scheme. He argued that retaining these payments under a future trade agreement would be easier if the precedent of formalised state supports for Irish beef exports to Britain was already established.[259] This view was shared by the Department of Finance, although they retained their reservations regarding the scheme.[260]

THE AIFTA

Linking the Carcass Beef Suckler Scheme to the trade talks between Britain and Ireland was not just a clever ploy by Haughey, it also indicated his willingness to protect the interests of the meat processing industry in these crucial negotiations. The question of a trade agreement between Britain and Ireland arose following the failure

[254] Department of Finance memorandum on the proposed introduction of the Carcass Beef Scheme, 11 Jan. 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/508).
[255] Gus Fitzpatrick interview (18 October 2016).
[256] Minutes of Department of Industry and Commerce internal staff meeting, 11 Nov. 1963 (NAI, INDC/IND/2000/13/24).
[257] Minutes of Department of Industry and Commerce internal staff meeting, 4 May 1964 (NAI, INDC/IND/2000/13/25).
[258] *IP*, 17 Oct. 1964; *II*, 16 Oct. 1964; *IFJ*, 24 Oct. 1964.
[259] Department of Agriculture memorandum to Government on the carcass beef export trade, 18 June 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/508).
[260] Department of Finance memorandum on the proposed introduction of the Carcass Beef Scheme, 11 Jan. 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/508); Department of Agriculture memorandum to Government on the carcass beef export trade, 18 June 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/508).

of both countries to secure EEC membership.[261] The negative response of French leader Charles de Gaulle to the UK's EEC application in January 1963 meant the rejection of Ireland's bid was a fait accompli. This failed effort convinced Lemass that a comprehensive trade agreement with London was an essential stepping stone in preparing Irish industry for EEC membership at a later date.[262] The EEC application process also exposed the Irish government's poor preparedness for membership of the trading bloc, and particularly that of the Department of Agriculture. Rouse has characterised the Department of Agriculture's performance during this period as displaying 'lethargy' and lacking 'dynamism'.[263] Tellingly, the Department of Agriculture did commission a number of market reports which highlighted Ireland's weakness in terms of its overall product range and in the promotion and marketing of foodstuffs. However, the *Irish Farmers' Journal* bemoaned the delay in setting up targeted industry study groups to assess the impact of EEC membership on the various agricultural sectors, pointing out that the Department of Industry and Commerce already had such working parties meeting by December 1961, while the Department of Agriculture was still identifying participants.[264] The absence of urgency on the part of the government also infuriated the NFA, whose members, as Gary Murphy noted, were 'very much alive to the benefits of participation in an EEC Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)' and had suggested in the summer of 1960 that Ireland should join the bloc with or without Britain. Such a move was strongly opposed by the Department of Agriculture who feared the loss of access to the UK market and was ultimately rejected by Government.[265]

The critical importance of a trade deal with Britain – or EEC membership – that secured guaranteed market access for the country's growing agricultural exports was identified in the *Second Programme for Economic Expansion*.[266] This focus on market access reflected Europe's changed trading environment as a result of the European Economic Community's (EEC) founding in 1957, and the European Free

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[261] *IP*, 15 Jan. 1963; *II*, 15 Jan. 1963.
[262] Daly, *First Department*, pp 459-460; Bielenber & Ryan, *An Economic History of Ireland*, p. 24.
[263] Rouse, *Ireland's own soil*, pp 238-239.
[264] *IFJ*, 16 Dec. 1961, 06 Jan. 1962; Rouse, *Ireland's own soil*, pp 238-239.
[265] Gary Murphy, 'The Irish Government, the National Farmers' Association, and the European Economic Community, 1955-1964' in *New Hibernia Review*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Winter, 2002), pp 71-74.
[266] *Second Programme for Economic Expansion*, Part I, pp 24-25.

Trade Association's (EFTA) establishment in 1960.[267] The EEC, involving France, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, West Germany and Italy, was the more ambitious of the two blocs. The integrated customs union, with the continent's industrial powerhouses at its heart, had the potential to become a global economic superpower, as was recognised by British cabinet minister Reginald Maudling who admitted to Lemass in May 1959 that he foresaw the EEC gradually gaining a position of trade dominance in Europe.[268] The EFTA, which included the UK, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Austria, Portugal and Switzerland, was a looser trading bloc that confined its activities to reductions in tariffs between member states and the abolition of import quotas.[269] Arguably, the limited scope of the EFTA's remit was more closely aligned with Britain's economic requirements and public sentiment than the wide-ranging EEC project which had both a political and economic agenda. While joining the EEC offered benefits for British industry which had developed increased markets on the Continent during the 1950s, a point made by the Tory Party in promoting the move, membership of the trading bloc threatened to seriously disrupt the UK's established trade relations with Commonwealth states such as New Zealand and Australia.[270] This was a major complicating factor. In addition, the potential benefits of CAP were not as appealing to British farmers as to their counterparts in Ireland. As John Martin points out, the expansion of British farming between 1945 and 1960 had reduced the UK's food import requirements by between £300 million and £400 million per year and raised farmer incomes in the process.[271] Why then would Britain contribute to a CAP policy which offered greater access for imports to the UK market? This was the position taken by the NFU in 1962, when it joined the Labour Party in opposing UK membership of the EEC. NFU president, Harold Woolley, expressed his unease at the decision making on agricultural policy being moved from Westminster to Brussels. Moreover, he pointed out that the EEC was ninety per cent self sufficient in overall food output, compared to the UK's sixty-five per cent, which made the British market a possible outlet for any future surpluses in Continental food production. With no

[267] Horgan, *Seán Lemass,* pp 215-218; Bielenberg & Ryan, *An Economic History of Ireland*, p. 24.
[268] Report on Anglo-Irish ministerial meeting at Gwdyr House, London, 26 May 1959 (NAI, INDC/IND/2/111).
[269] Ibid.
[270] Richard Dunphy, 'The major democracies of Western Europe: France, Italy, Germany and the United Kingdom' in David Gowland, Basil O'Neill and Richard Dunphy (eds.), *The European Mosaic – Contemporary Politics, Economics and Culture*, (Harlow, 1995), pp 136-138; Smith, From Campbell to Kendall: a history of the NFU, p. 135.
[271] Martin, *The Development of Modern Agriculture*, pp 88-90.

possibility of import controls within the EEC, this had the potential to undermine commodity prices, Woolley maintained.[272] The issues raised in the House of Commons regarding EEC membership in January 1963 mirrored the NFU's concerns, and gave voice to deep British reservations around the European project that persisted for two generations. The written questions to the Lord of Privy Seal, Edward Heath, primarily focused on issues of sovereignty, Britain's contribution to the EEC, the political accountability of the EEC commission, and the implications of EEC membership for UK trade with other countries such as Denmark and Ireland.[273]

The emergence of the EEC and EFTA posed a major challenge for Ireland, and particularly for the export-dependent farming industry. The cattle and beef sector was totally reliant on export outlets, with the total number of animals sold to foreign buyers (either shipped live or as beef) averaging over one million head for the years 1960 to 1962 inclusive.[274] While EEC membership had offered Irish beef exporters the promise of lucrative opportunities in Europe, de Gaulle's '*non*' meant that the focus quickly returned to maximising the benefits of preferential access to the British market. As Bielenberg and Ryan observed, the emergence of Europe's trading blocs made Ireland's 'adherence to protectionism increasingly untenable'.[275] Severe volatility and uncertainty in global beef markets illustrated the potential risks for Irish exporters generally. Irish beef processors faced continuous price and demand fluctuations in Britain, Europe and the US in the first half of the 1960s. A pronounced trend towards greater nationalisation of supply in these markets was an added concern for meat exporters, while increased competition from South American and Eastern European beef in Smithfield and other major outlets across England was a recurring feature of the trade during the first half of the 1960s.[276] As early as January 1960 the *Farmers' Journal* predicted that increased output from EEC farmers was likely to

[272] Smith, From Campbell to Kendall: a history of the NFU, p. 135.
[273] *Parliamentary debates* (*Hansard*), *House of Commons*, 1963, Vol. 670 (https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/1963-01-22#undefined) (accessed, 14 April 2021).
[274] The average number of cattle shipped live or as beef for the three years 1960 to 1962 was 1,024,000 head. The average number processed for the period was 417,000; with the average number shipped live being 607,000. These figures are based on statistics from the *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 36.
[275] Bielenberg & Ryan, *An Economic History of Ireland*, p. 128.
[276] Memorandum of meeting between the Irish Ambassador to the US, TJ Kiernan, and US State Department under-secretary, Mr Ball, 9 Jan. 1964 (NAI, DFA/2012/59/2019); *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1959-60,* (Dublin, 1960), p. 14; *IFJ*, 22 Feb. 1961, 12 Jan. 1963, 23 March, 30 Mar. 1963, 13 Apr. 1963.

result in more tariff barriers on imports and subsidised community surpluses being dumped on world markets.[277] Since cattle and beef were Ireland's primary exports, any trade barriers had the potential to negatively impact the industry's development. Restrictions on continental beef markets were already affecting Irish exports by the close of the 1950s as the EEC's dependence on imports contracted. Custom duties of between thirty and thirty-five per cent imposed on Irish live cattle and beef by the French authorities in 1958 were described by processors as constituting 'a serious obstacle to trade.'[278] The following year, difficulties with the export of lamb and mutton to France were attributed to 'EEC considerations'.[279] Similar problems arose in Germany, with Irish officials reporting an 'impasse regarding quotas for live cattle and beef'.[280] Despite these restrictions, access to EEC markets for live cattle and beef remained critically important for Irish exporters up to 1965. As noted earlier in the chapter, exports of fat cattle helped underpin Irish prices from autumn 1963 until the summer of 1965.[281] Beef exports to the continent were equally important. In June 1963 the *Farmers' Journal* described the British beef market as being 'on the floor' and Terry Kennedy of IMP admitted that continental buyers were taking most of the company's output at that time.[282] However, a recovery in cattle numbers in Europe was reflected in increased production, and by 1964-65 the EEC had a net beef surplus of 560,000 tonnes.[283] The variable nature of the EEC beef market is evident from export figures. Irish beef sales to Europe averaged three thousand tons between 1960 and 1963 inclusive, but expanded enormously to exceed twenty thousand tons in 1964 and nineteen thousand tons in 1965 – due to the aforementioned European beef shortage – before falling to negligible levels by the end of the decade.[284] Reflecting on the stop-start nature of the continental trade, the meat processor representative, Jim Bastow, bemoaned what he described as the 'insecurity in the non-British markets'.[285] Processors such as Frank Quinn even sought an extension of the Carcass Beef

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[277] *IFJ*, 16 Jan. 1960.
[278] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1958-59*, p. 13.
[279] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1959-60*, p. 14.
[280] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1957-58*, p. 11.
[281] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 34; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 75; *IFJ*, 12 Jan., 23 Mar. 1963, 22 Feb. 1964; *II*, 8 Apr. 1965.
[282] *IFJ*, 13 Apr., 22 June 1963.
[283] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, pp 56-57.
[284] Ibid., p. 78.
[285] Note of meeting between the Irish Fresh Meat Exporters' Society and Department of Agriculture, 18 May 1961 (NAI, INDC/FT/GEN/679).

Subsidy Scheme to EEC exports, to counteract this demand volatility. However, the appeal was rejected by Haughey on the grounds that beef exports to Europe did not have to compete with national exchequer supports to the live cattle trade, as was the case in Britain.[286]

Irish beef sales to the US market were equally inconsistent in the first half of the 1960s.[287] Exports to North America averaged 34,000 tons between 1960 and 1963, but fell to eight thousand tons and five thousand tons in 1964 and 1965 respectively due to a dramatic downturn in US cattle prices and a greater nationalisation of the market as a consequence.[288] A thirty per cent reduction in cattle prices between 1962 and 1964 – the value of choice cattle fell from $29 per 100lbs to $22 per 100lbs – resulted in calls from the US National Livestock Feeders' Association for greater restrictions on beef imports from Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and Mexico.[289] The ranchers' campaign received support at local and national level, with members of the US Senate and Congress backing the beef farmers' stance. However, the *New York Times* questioned the focus on imports and blamed the cattle price reductions on increased competition from cheaper meats such as poultry and pork, and a marked increase in the US beef herd from sixty million head to seventy-eight million head between 1960 and 1964.[290] As a result of the controversy beef import growth into the US was capped at 3.7 per cent, with Ireland's quota rising from 34,000 tons in 1964 to 36,600 tons in 1966.[291] However, stricter US import regulations and the buoyant EEC beef market meant that only a fraction of the Irish quota was supplied in these years.[292] In a further example of market nationalisation, Ireland lost the contract to supply beef to the US forces stationed in Europe. The business, which was taken over by US-based processors in 1964, was worth £1.33 million annually.[293]

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[286] Department of Agriculture memorandum to Government on the carcass beef export trade, 18 June 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/508); *IFJ*, 30 Jan. 1965.
[287] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78.
[288] *Chicago Tribune*, 23 Feb. 1964; *New York Times*, 22 Mar. 1964; *US News and World Report*, 13 Apr. 1964; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78.
[289] *US News and World Report*, 13 Apr. 1964; *Chicago Tribune*, 23 Feb. 1964; *New York Times*, 22 Mar. 1964.
[290] *New York Times*, 22 Mar. 1964; *Chicago Tribune*, 23 Feb. 1964.
[291] Note of meeting between the Irish Ambassador to the US, TJ Kiernan, and US State Department officials, 25 Feb. 1964 (NAI, DFA/2012/59/2019; *New York Times*, 22 Mar. 1964.
[292] Aide memoire on Irish reaction to US beef import restrictions, 15 Oct. 1964 (NAI, DFA/2012/59/2019; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78.
[293] *IFJ*, 25 Apr., 6 June 1964; Aide memoire on Irish reaction to US beef import restrictions, 15 Oct. 1964 (NAI, DFA/2012/59/2019.

Irish attempts to formalise its trading relationship with the UK was also reflective of the critical importance of the British market. The UK remained Ireland's primary outlet for exports, both industrial and agricultural. Irish beef exports to the UK grew steadily between 1960 and 1965. While less than 3,000 tonnes of beef were exported to the UK in 1958, Britain took 23,000 tonnes on average in the three years from 1960 to 1962 inclusive, and exports topped 28,000 tons in 1965.[294] Beef exports to Britain were helped in the early years of the decade by the reluctance of English and Scottish farmers to purchase Irish store cattle unless they were clear of TB.[295] This disruption to the live trade was compounded in March 1960 when the import of Irish store cattle that had not been tested for TB was prohibited by the UK authorities.[296] The British ban, allied to a shortage fodder and poor cash-flow, resulted in a collapse in store cattle prices in 1960, with values falling by around one-third to an average of £35 per head by August.[297] The beef factories took full advantage of the problems faced by the live trade and the number of cattle slaughtered reached a record high of 470,000 animals in 1961.[298] However, as with the US and European markets, price and demand volatility was an ongoing feature of the British beef market in the early 1960s. Irish produce had to compete with increased beef supplies from South America and Eastern Europe for sales, as well as with expanding output from British farmers. Newspaper reports of increased beef imports into Britain from cheaper sources such as Argentina and Yugoslavia, and occasionally from Australia and Uruguay, were a recurring feature of the early 1960s.[299] For example, Britain imported 25,000 tons of beef from Uruguay in the first six months of 1960 at a price of £180 per ton, which equates 1s 7d per lb. This was 5d per lb under the price Irish exporters received in late 1959 – the South American imports contributed to weaker beef prices in 1960.[300] Similarly, in June 1961 cheap beef imports from Brazil, Argentina and Romania flooded Smithfield Market and prices dropped rapidly as a consequence, falling from 1s 9d per lb to 1s per lb.[301] Competition from global beef suppliers was compounded by increased British production. The deficiency payment

[294] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78.
[295] *IFJ*, 2 Jan., 20 Feb. 1960.
[296] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p.73.
[297] *II*, 4 Aug. 1960; *IFJ*, 13 Aug., 20 August 1960.
[298] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 36.
[299] *IFJ*, 27 Aug. 1960, 10 June 1961, 8 Sept. 1962, 12 Jan., 23 March 1963.
[300] *II*, 11 Aug. 1960; *IFJ*, 27 Aug. 1960.
[301] *IFJ*, 10 June 1961.

supports led to a steady expansion in the British cattle herd, which grew from 9.76 million head in 1955 to 10.8 million head a decade later.[302] UK beef output expanded in line with cattle numbers and rose from 730,000 tons to 882,000 tons between 1960 and 1965, which resulted in the British home supply of overall beef consumption increasing from sixty per cent to seventy per cent during this period.[303] The Irish beef processors were facing stiffer competition for a decreasing share of Britain's market. In addition, a formal agreement between the two countries offered protection to Ireland against the unilateralism of successive UK governments in trade matters. The most serious examples of such unilateral action by the British authorities in the early 1960s included the imposition of 'anti-dumping' duties on Irish butter in 1961; the move to import quotas, or standard quantities, by the UK for food commodities in 1963, and the introduction of a fifteen per cent surcharge on all imports by Harold Wilson's Labour government in November 1964.[304] Although the Irish government protested against each of these measures, and forced some concessions, their adoption highlighted the relative weakness of Ireland in terms of the existing trading relationship with the UK.[305]

Efforts to secure a comprehensive trade agreement with the UK have therefore to be viewed against the background of weakened access to the US market, and an acceptance that the boom in beef and livestock exports to the EEC was transient. It must also be borne in mind that Lemass and his cabinet were defining policy on the wider needs of the Irish economy and not on the particular requirements of agriculture – important as it was – or more specifically of the beef industry. As is noted by Lee, and Bielenberg and Ryan, a closer economic relationship with the UK provided a 'staging post' where Irish indigenous industry could prepare for the intense trading environment of the EEC by initially exposing these businesses to increased competition from British firms.[306] The steady abandoning of protectionism had been in train since the early 1950s and was an implicit consequence of IDA's promotion of foreign direct investment. The adoption of this development strategy – allied to what

[302] Martin, *The Development of Modern Agriculture*, p. 108.
[303] Holderness, British agriculture since 1945, p. 97; *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 43.
[304] Memorandum prepared for Government entitled 'Economic Relations with Britain', 5 Nov. 1964 (NAI, TAOIS/S16674 O/95); Daly, *First Department*, pp 461-462; H. A. Holderness, British agriculture since 1945, p. 97.
[305] Letter from Harold Wilson to Lemass, 22 Feb. 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/778); Daly, *First Department*, pp 461-462.
[306] Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, pp 353; Bielenberg & Ryan, *An Economic History of Ireland*, p. 24.

Horgan has termed the evisceration of the Control of Manufactures Acts – made the removal of protectionism 'less painful', Barry and Ó Fathartaigh contend.[307] However, the scaling back of direct protections for indigenous industry started in earnest in 1963 and 1964 when Ireland unilaterally reduced tariffs by ten and fifteen per cent respectively, in a move which Fanning described as showing a 'commitment to free trade' by Lemass and his government. Indeed, Fanning maintained that cutting the tariffs acted as a 'launching pad' for the trade talks with Britain.[308] The decision to pivot towards Britain and liberalise the country's trade arrangements with its larger neighbour was not without risk. Indeed, the Department of External Affairs warned in a memorandum that the power imbalance between Ireland and the UK risked exposing the state to 'greater political pressure by Britain' and 'inhibiting' the country's freedom of political and economic action. In addition, the memorandum suggested that a deeper trade arrangement with Britain would 'militate against any closer relationship with the Common Market'.[309] In response, Whitaker assured Hugh McCann, the Department of External Affairs secretary, that he 'never contemplated' any arrangement being agreed that might 'kill' Irish industry or cause an overall reduction in output.[310]

Trade talks between UK and Ireland were underway by November 1963 following a series of exploratory meetings through the late spring and summer. However, as Daly points out the participants were at cross-purposes regarding the ultimate aim of the negotiations; while the British wanted to discuss the implications of their new import quotas or standard quantities regime, Ireland was seeking talks on a customs union.[311] The Irish position was set out in general terms in a letter from Lemass to the British secretary of state, Duncan Sandys, in May 1963 when the Taoiseach said Ireland wanted 'preferential access' to the UK market for agricultural commodities such as livestock, beef, butter and bacon, in return for similar access to

[307] Barry & Ó Fathartaigh, 'An Irish industrial revolution: the creation of the Industrial Development Authority (IDA), 1949-59' in *History Ireland*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (May/June 2013), p. 45; Horgan, *Seán Lemass*, p. 239.
[308] Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*, p. 542; Fanning, *The Irish Department of Finance*, pp 608-609.
[309] Memorandum by the Department of External Affairs, 1 Jan. 1965, *Documents on Irish Foreign Policy, Vol. XII, 1961-1965*, pp 779-780.
[310] Letter from T.K. Whitaker to Hugh McCann, 4 Jan. 1965, *Documents on Irish Foreign Policy, Vol. XII, 1961-1965* (Dublin, 2020), pp 780-784.
[311] Daly, *First Department*, p. 461.

the Irish market for British industrial goods, this reciprocal arrangement being best expressed in a 'free-trade-area' deal.[312] The Irish efforts came against a background of Denmark seeking greater access to the UK market for butter and bacon, and increased pressure on the British from the NFU to limit imports of livestock and meat.[313] On the agriculture side, the Irish talks' team was led by the Department of Agriculture secretary, Jack Nagle.[314] Although a veteran of the Anglo-Irish trade negotiations from 1948, 1953, and 1960, Nagle struggled to get traction with his British counterparts on the concept of a deeper trading relationship. Indeed, in January 1964 the British still viewed the talks through the prism of import quotas.[315] Progress in the negotiations was transformed in 1964 by the emergence of severe beef shortages in Britain and Europe during the spring and summer, and the election of Harold Wilson's Labour government in October.[316] The repercussions from a severe fall-off in cattle numbers on the continent were felt in Britain where restricted supplies resulted in a twenty per cent rise in wholesale beef prices in the first four months of the year.[317] The Irish ambassador in London, Con Cremin, was called to a meeting by the British Minister for Agriculture, Christopher Soames, to explain why Irish beef and fat cattle were being exported to Europe at a time of beef shortages in Britain. 'If Britain were providing a market outlet when supplies were plentiful, it seemed only reasonable [to Minister Soames] to expect that the needs of the British market would receive consideration when supplies were not so plentiful,' Cremin reported.[318] Soames did not respond positively to a suggestion from his Irish counterpart, Paddy Smith, that the extension of British price guarantees to Irish fat cattle might deflect exports back to Britain, however, in an example of the changing attitudes in London, Cremin was asked in January by Sir Richard Powell, permanent secretary at the Board

[312] Letter from Sean Lemass to Duncan Sandys, 31 May 1963 (NAI, TAOIS/S16674K/95).
[313] Daly, *First Department*, pp 461-462.
[314] Report of London meeting between British and Irish delegations, 6 June 1963 (NAI, TAOIS/S16674K/95).
[315] Report of meeting between British and Irish delegations, 14 Jan. 1964 (NAI, TAOIS/S 16674M/95); Report of London meeting between British and Irish delegations, 6 June 1963 (NAI, TAOIS/S16674K/95).
[316] *IT*, 16 Oct. 1964; *IFJ*, 22 Feb., 2 May, 30 May 1964.
[317] *IFJ*, 22 Feb., 2 May 1964; Report of meeting between the Irish ambassador to Britain, Con Cremin, and the British Minister for Agriculture, Christopher Soames, 16 April 1964 (NAI, TAOIS/S16674 M/95).
[318] Report of meeting between the Irish ambassador to Britain, Con Cremin, and the British Minister for Agriculture, Christopher Soames, 16 April 1964 (NAI, TAOIS/S16674 M/95).

of Trade, if the Irish government would consider the formation of a customs union.[319] Wilson's election victory also helped the dynamics around the talks' process. After what was described as 'a very cordial meeting' with the prime minister at the British embassy in Paris, the Irish ambassador to France, Dr MacDonald, wrote: 'From what I have seen of Mr Wilson…there seems little doubt about the desire of the present British administration to help some way in regard Irish affairs.'[320] Lemass took full advantage of the changed mood music between the two governments, and the strong rapport that developed between himself and the Labour prime minister is credited by Horgan as facilitating agreement in the trade negotiations.[321]

The momentum for a deal built steadily from March 1965 when the British conceded the principle of extending deficiency payment supports to both fat cattle and beef.[322] This had been a major point of contention in the negotiations. As Daly correctly points out, the British priority was Irish supplies of store cattle, and they were openly hostile to the processing sector.[323] The Irish position on the cattle and beef element of the talks had also developed from early 1964, when the idea of an overall deficiency payment on a set number of cattle (around 780,000 head was mooted) had been suggested. However, a mechanism to disburse this fund between beef processors, store cattle exporters and fat cattle exporters proved problematic.[324] By the end of 1964 the Irish position had settled on seeking UK support payments on 35,000 tons of beef and on whatever numbers of store and fat cattle Ireland exported to Britain.[325] The British countered with an offer of deficiency payments on 20,000 tons of beef, but this was rejected by Lemass who led the Irish delegation at a ministerial meeting in Downing Street in July.[326] The projected cost to the UK

[319] Letter from Irish Minister for Agriculture, Paddy Smith, to his British counterpart Christopher Soames, 24 Apr. 1964 (NAI, TAOIS/S16674 M/95); Letter from the Irish ambassador in London, Con Cremin, to the secretary of the Department of External Affairs, WJ McCann, 17 Jan. 1964 (NAI, TAOIS/S16674 M/95).
[320] Letter from the Irish ambassador, Dr MacDonald, to the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, WJ McCann (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/778).
[321] Horgan, *Seán Lemass,* p. 243.
[322] Aide mémoire on the Anglo-Irish Economic Committee meeting of 25 Mar. 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/778).
[323] Daly, *First Department*, pp 467-68.
[324] Briefing note from the Department of Agriculture on the progress of the trade negotiations, 24 Apr. 1964, (NAI, TAOIS/S16674 M/95).
[325] Department of Finance memorandum for government on the trade talks, 8 Feb. 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/778).
[326] Details of ministerial meeting between Irish and British delegations in London, 26 July 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/782).

exchequer of support payments on livestock imports from Ireland, both cattle and beef, was estimated at between £10 million and £12 million.[327] However, Lemass justified the Irish demands during the Downing Street talks, pointing out that Ireland faced the 'loss of industries and employment in certain sectors' as a result of tariff reductions, and that it was essential for Ireland 'to receive worthwhile counter-balancing advantages on the agricultural side.'[328] The Anglo-Irish Free Trade-Area Agreement (AIFTA) was eventually signed in December 1965. Under the livestock element of the agreement Ireland undertook to maintain exports of store cattle to Britain at 638,000 head each year. In addition, Britain agreed to pay the fatstock guarantee on at least 25,000 tons of Irish processed beef and 5,500 tons of Irish processed lamb. Crucially, however, the residency requirement for live cattle exports to qualify for British support payments was retained, although reduced from three months to two.[329]

CONCLUSION

The AIFTA was a defining event for Irish farming; and for the beef processing industry in particular. It was a watershed not only in the development of the red-meat business, but also in the sector's relationship with the state. Moreover, the agreement permanently altered the power balance within the livestock sector, and, consequently, the beef processors' standing in Irish agriculture. The export of live animals was still the main outlet for Irish beef cattle up to the AIFTA deal. Cattle shipped on the hoof accounted for two-thirds of Irish bovine exports (meat and animals) in 1965, with beef sales making up the remaining one-third. However, by 1967 these statistics were completely overturned, with fifty-five per cent of cattle exported as beef, while forty-five per cent of animals were shipped live.[330] Indeed, while Rouse is correct in his contention that the AIFTA was motivated in part by Ireland's need to defend its position in the British market, he is incorrect when he states that the agreement was 'essentially the extension of existing policy'.[331] The changed fortunes of the live exporters and beef processors were due primarily to the AIFTA deal. The payment of

[327] Department of Finance memorandum for government on the trade talks, 8 Feb. 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/778).
[328] Details of ministerial meeting between Irish and British delegations, 26 July 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/782).
[329] Anglo-Irish Free Trade Area Agreement 1965, White Paper, p. 14; Daly, *First Department,* p. 469.
[330] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 36.
[331] Rouse, *Ireland's own soil*, p. 241.

UK exchequer supports on 25,000 tons of prime Irish beef exports to Britain resulted in a fundamental shift in the Irish cattle business.[332] This concession by the UK government meant that, for the first time since the deregulation of the British food import regime in 1954, Irish factories could realistically compete with live exporters in the marts and at fairs for prime bullocks and heifers. The impact on beef output was dramatic; exports almost trebled between 1965 and 1967, increasing from 55,000 tons to over 150,000 tons.[333] More significantly, the expansion in beef output meant that the meat factory owners replaced the cattle exporters as the dominant force in the Irish livestock industry. This represented an important power shift in Irish agriculture, which was to have long-term implications for farm policy as the proportion of cattle exported as carcass beef continued to expand during the late 1960s.

The beef supports agreed under the AIFTA were the culmination of an important revision in the state's livestock-sector policy. While cattle and beef exports did not traditionally receive grant aid, this changed in 1960-62 when payments were introduced to offset the TB eradication scheme's impact. [334] However, Charles Haughey's introduction of the Carcass Beef Subsidy Scheme in February 1965 marked a more fundamental shift in strategy as the measure was targeted exclusively at carcass beef exports.[335] Effectively, Haughey was turning away from the state's long-standing preference for live cattle exports – which had been identified in both the *Programme for Economic Expansion* (1958) and the *Second Programme for Economic Expansion* (1964) as the primary vehicle to grow agricultural output – in favour of beef processing.[336] This radical re-orienting of agricultural policy – which was opposed by the Minister for Finance, James Ryan, whose department viewed the Carcass Beef Subsidy Scheme as a support for the meat factories rather than for livestock farmers – clearly signalled Haughey's intention to prioritise the interests of the state's meat factories over those of cattle exporters.[337] Haughey's promotion of the beef processors in the 1960s started a long and controversial personal association with

[332] Gus Fitzpatrick interviews (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017); John Lyons interview (15 Aug. 2015); Anglo-Irish Free Trade Area Agreement 1965, White Paper, p. 14; Daly, *First Department,* p. 469.
[333] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 78.
[334] Department of Finance memorandum to Government, entitled 'Observations on the proposals by the Minister for Agriculture to pay a subsidy on fat cattle', 11 Jan. 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/508); *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 19.
[335] *IP*, 21 Jan. 1965; *II*, 22 Jan. 1965; *IFJ*, 30 Jan. 1965.
[336] *Programme for Economic Expansion*, p. 15; *Second Programme for Economic Expansion*, pp 28-29.
[337] Department of Finance memorandum to Government, 11 Jan. 1965, (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/508).

the sector. However, the move cannot be characterised as a 'solo run' on the part of the Minister for Agriculture. Haughey's decision to push for access to UK exchequer supports for Irish beef was ultimately supported by Lemass at various junctures in the AIFTA talks.[338] Crucially, the beef industry's expansion was also viewed as a positive and necessary development by the *Irish Farmers' Journal*.

Undoubtedly, the structured price supports that the AIFTA put in place for beef and lamb processors, which could be equated to contemporaneous concessions offered to foreign-owned companies by the IDA, strengthened the position of the meat industry. The dramatic expansion in the number of cattle slaughtered between 1965 and 1967 improved the efficiency of Ireland's meat factories and was therefore consistent with the overall government objective of preparing domestic businesses for the heightened competition that was anticipated to follow future EEC membership. In addition, it justified the investments made in the sector during the early part of the decade. Close to £7 million was invested in plant and machinery in 1960-62, as factory owners such as Frank Quinn created modern export-oriented slaughtering businesses modelled on the meat companies of North America, Argentina and Australia.[339] The expansion of the beef industry also bolstered the steady but uneven progress in farm modernisation, as evidenced by the growth in creamery milk supplies, the gradual improvement in cattle breeding and increased mechanisation.[340] Although Daly has characterised the AIFTA as a 'triumph of Irish persistence over British indifference', its impact was not entirely positive.[341] Subsidised access to Britain for Irish beef resulted in a five-fold increase in exports and a dangerous over-reliance on the UK market.[342] Moreover, the agreement inspired a heightened sense of farmer expectation that improved access to the British market was a panacea for agriculture's ills. This inflated hope was stoked by Paddy O'Keeffe's enthusiastic reaction to the agreement. In an editorial in the *Farmers' Journal* of 18 December 1965 O'Keeffe maintained that the message to Irish farmers was 'go ahead, expand your agriculture, you will have access to the British market for your produce'. He

[338] Details of ministerial meeting between Irish and British delegations in London, 26 July 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/782).
[339] *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 61.
[340] Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*, p. 550; Murray, 'From Grass to Milk – The Moorepark Story', in Michael Miley (ed.), *Growing Knowledge*, pp 61-74.
[341] Daly, *First Department,* p. 470.
[342] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78.

added that the agreement offered 'confidence in the future' for farmers.[343] Unfortunately, O'Keeffe's faith in the AIFTA was misplaced. Indeed, expectations that the AIFTA might transform Irish agriculture added to farmer anger when cattle prices collapsed in 1966 – directly contributing to the divisive Farmers' Rights Campaign.

[343] *IFJ*, 18 Dec. 1965,

CHAPTER THREE: FROM THE AIFTA TO THE EEC (1966-73)

Charles Haughey's decision to prioritise the interests of the beef processing industry in the AIFTA negotiations of 1965 shifted the balance of power in the cattle trade.[1] The extension of the British deficiency payments to 25,000 tons of Irish prime beef exports agreed under the trade deal enabled meat processors to compete with cattle shippers on an equal footing for the first time since the deregulation of the UK's food purchasing regime in 1954.[2] Factory buyers outbid live exporters for cattle at fairs and marts around the country in the wake of the agreement as processors took advantage of the market supports provided under the AIFTA to treble beef exports from 50,000 tons to almost 150,000 tons between 1965 and 1967.[3] However, the trade agreement was not a panacea for all of the challenges facing the Irish beef industry. There was mounting farmer anger in 1966 and 1967 at the continued disparity between Irish and British cattle prices, despite the greater access to the UK market that the AIFTA provided.[4] Farmer frustration was fuelled by a suspicion, expressed by the NFA and the *Irish Farmers' Journal*, that the meat factories were harvesting the exchequer-funded support payments rather than passing them back to beef producers as higher cattle prices.[5] This chapter examines the AIFTA's impact on the meat processing industry, and the wider livestock sector. In addition, it assesses the co-operative movement's expanded role in meat processing following Cork Co-operative Mart's acquisition in 1969 of the giant Irish Meat Packers' concern, and examines the implications of this purchase for farmers, the farming lobby, and the beef industry.[6] Moreover, the chapter considers how poor profit levels limited the scope for expansion and modernisation among beef farmers, while also exploring how the meat processors reacted to the retail changes prompted by the emergence of supermarkets. Finally, it examines why a government bailout was required by the factories in late 1972 prior to Ireland joining the EEC.[7]

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[1] Details of ministerial meeting between Irish and British delegations in London, 26 July 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/782).

[2] Anglo-Irish Free Trade Area Agreement 1965, White Paper, p. 14; Daly, *First Department,* p. 469.

[3] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 35 and p. 89; *IFJ*, 10 Feb., 21 Sept. 1968; *II*, 2 May 1970.

[4] *Limerick Leader,* 10 Sept. 1966*; IP,* 10 Sept. 1966*; CE,* 15 Sept. 1966; *IFJ*, 30 July, 13 Aug., 8 Oct. 1966.

[5] *IFJ*, 2 Apr. 1966, 6 May 1967.

[6] *IP*, 11 Jan. 1969; *II*, 11 Jan. 1969; *IFJ*, 11 Jan. 1969.

[7] *Dáil Eireann Committee of Public Accounts Report 1976* (Appropriation Accounts); *IFJ*, 26 Apr. 1969.

IMPACT OF THE BEEF EXPORT SUBSIDIES

The introduction of structured carcass beef export payments under the AIFTA transformed the Irish livestock industry by promoting the unprecedented expansion in output during the late 1960s.[8] The supports enabled factory buyers to compete more forcefully for prime cattle, while the trade deal with the UK ensured greater access to the British market for Irish beef.[9] Indeed, by 1967 the number of cattle exported as beef exceeded the number shipped live for the first time.[10] This was a watershed moment for the industry, as it signalled a gradual shifting in power within the cattle business from live exporters to the dead meat trade. However, the AIFTA was not the only mechanism which provided export supports to processors. The decision by the Minister of Agriculture, Charlie Haughey, in July 1966 to guarantee Irish exchequer supports on all prime beef exports to the UK – at the same rate as the British AIFTA payments – was also a major contributor to the dramatic growth in carcass beef production as it significantly increased the level of available subsidies.[11] Haughey's move meant the Irish state effectively established an open-ended support mechanism for Irish beef exports to Britain in excess of the 25,000 tons covered by the AIFTA.[12] The decision tallied with Haughey's vision of developing a vibrant food processing industry.[13] As John Lyons recalled, 'Haughey was keen to get away from live shipping, and get the meat industry going.'[14] Like the AIFTA beef supports, only top quality heifers and bullocks were eligible for payments under Haughey's Carcass Beef Export Guarantee Scheme.[15] Both subsidy regimes were linked to the deficiency payments made under the British Fatstock Guarantee Scheme. These payments were inversely related to cattle prices. They rose when cattle prices were low, falling as prices recovered. They averaged £12 per head between 1960 and 1965.[16] The impact

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[8] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1967-68,* (Dublin, 1968), pp 34-35.
[9] *IFJ*, 10 Feb. 1968, 21 Sept. 1968; *II*, 2 May 1970; *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 35 and p. 89; Anglo-Irish Free Trade Area Agreement 1965, White Paper, p. 14; *Development Study of the Irish Beef Packing and Processing Industries*, produced by Cooper and Lybrand for the IDA (Dublin, 1977), p. 27.
[10] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 36.
[11] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1966-67,* (Dublin, 1967), pp 39-40; *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 33.
[12] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 189.
[13] IFJ, 13 Feb. 1965.
[14] John Lyons interview (15 Aug. 2015).
[15] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1966-67*, pp 39-40.
[16] Text of speech delivered by Charles Haughey to the Dáil, 3 January 1966 (NAI, TAOIS/GIS/1/175); *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 33.

of the export subsidies was reflected in the volume of foreign beef sales, which rose from an average of 62,000 tons for 1960-65 to 127,000 tons for the years from 1966 to 1972. It is also evident from the number of animals slaughtered in Irish factories and shipped as beef, which increased from 312,000 head in 1965 to more than 750,000 head in 1967.[17]

YEAR	COWS	OTHER CATTLE	TOTAL CATTLE	CASES AS % OF TOTAL
1950	90,000	26,300	116,300	77.4
1951	116,400	71,600	188,000	62.0
1952	155,500	98,900	254,400	61.1
1953	192,600	101,200	193,800	47.8
1954	112,400	150,800	263,200	42.7
1955	128,700	53,600	182,300	70.6
1956	123,400	59,700	183,100	67.4
1957	162,900	48,600	211,500	77.0
1958	184,600	43,300	227,900	81.0
1959	227,600	91,500	319,100	71.3
1960	245,000	131,800	376,800	65.0
1961	214,700	256,200	470,900	45.6
1962	269,500	133,600	403,100	66.9
1963	228,500	175,200	403,700	56.6
1964	160,900	141,100	302,000	53.3
1965	162,600	149,500	312,100	52.1
1966	225,700	173,800	429,500	59.5
1967	306,800	445,900	752,700	40.8
1968	267,900	353,200	621,100	43.1
1969	254,900	378,100	633,000	40.3
1970	232,400	465,200	697,600	33.3
1971	260,100	448,200	708,300	36.7
1972	163,100	420,600	583,700	27.9

Table 3.A: Annual slaughterings of cows and other cattle at export premises 1950-1972
Source: Department of Agriculture data as published in the ESRI's 1973 report, *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*

The introduction of the export supports for prime beef also resulted in slaughtering of bullocks and heifers exceeding that of cows for the first time in 1967, with the number of prime animals killed totalling nearly 446,000 head, compared to almost 307,000 cows (see Table 3.A).[18] This fundamentally changed the output of the beef sector. Slaughtering cows for use as manufacturing beef in pies and burgers, or for canning, was the cornerstone of the beef industry up to the mid-1960s, with cows accounting for sixty-four per cent of the total kill in 1962, and sixty per cent in 1966.[19] However, as a Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA noted, the shift to prime beef resulted in

[17] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 36; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78.
[18] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 81.
[19] *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 38; *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 36; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, pp 79-81.

processors moving into the quality end of the market and signalled that the Irish beef packing industry had finally reached 'maturity'.[20]

The carcass beef supports were paid directly to the processors and provided a crucial financial subvention to the meat factories from 1966 until 1971 – when rising livestock prices eroded their value.[21] Export subsidies paid out under the AIFTA and Carcass Beef Export Guarantee Scheme were worth close on £1.5 million to the beef industry in 1966-67 (1 April 1966 to 31 March 1967), but this increased to £6 million for the calendar year of 1967 as cattle prices fell and the support payments increased from 2d per lb to 6d per lb or £16 per head on each eligible animal.[22] A breakdown of the 1967 subsidy payments highlights the significance of the Carcass Beef Export Guarantee Scheme. While £1.4 million of the £6 million total was paid by Britain under its AIFTA commitments, beef processors received the remaining £4.6 million from the Irish exchequer through the Carcass Beef Export Guarantee Scheme.[23] Haughey's intervention had effectively quadrupled the subsidies paid to processors on prime beef exports that year. The impact of the Carcass Beef Export Guarantee Scheme and the AIFTA supports varied according to the level of prime beef exports and the prevailing cattle prices but it remained an important support mechanism and income source for the meat factories. In 1967-68 close to £4.8 million was paid to the processors under the scheme, with the total value of the subsidy reaching £2.2 million in 1968-69, and £940,000 in 1969-70.[24]

The emergence of Britain as the dominant outlet for Irish beef was another significant consequence of the AIFTA.[25] Irish beef exports to the UK increased four-fold to almost 109,000 tons between 1965 and 1967, and averaged close to 100,000 tons up to 1971 – or almost seventy per cent of total foreign sales.[26] This was a major change; as exports to Britain had generally been balanced by sales to the US in the

[20] Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, p. 13.
[21] *IFJ*, 27 Dec. 1969, 29 Jan. 1972; *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 190.
[22] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1966-67*, pp 39-40; *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, pp 189-190.
[23] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 190.
[24] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1968-69*, p. 37; *IFJ*, 27 Dec. 1969.
[25] Report by M.J. Behan of CBF entitled 'Export of Beef and Other Meat to Britain' (NAI, DFA/2012/59/1957); *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 36, pp 75-76 and p.91.
[26] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1967-68*, pp 34-35; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78.

opening decade and a half of the industry.[27] Indeed, beef sales to the UK averaged just thirty-six per cent of total exports in the period from 1960 to 1965.[28] The provision of export supports undoubtedly helped Irish beef processors secure a greater share of the British market, but an outbreak of foot and mouth disease in Britain in the autumn and winter of 1967-68 also contributed to the growth in sales.[29] The outbreak was blamed on a consignment of carcass beef from Argentina, and all imports of beef from South America were subsequently banned for six months by the British authorities.[30] As Argentina supplied more than 100,000 tons of beef to Britain each year, its exclusion from the market provided an obvious opportunity for Irish companies to make up the shortfall, and by 1971 Ireland supplied forty-two per cent of British beef imports and had eclipsed Argentina as the UK's primary beef supplier.[31] The increasing dominance of Britain as an outlet for Irish beef is illustrated by Table 3.B.

YEAR	CARCASS & BONELESS BEEF						
	UK	REST OF EEC	US ARMED FORCES	US AND CANADA	REST OF WORLD	TOTAL	CANNED BEEF
1966	42,095	7,767	624	21,514	630	72,360	4,245
1967	108,786	2,417	113	39,445	874	151,635	4,238
1968	89,790	370	--	28,910	765	119,835	5,083
1969	84,947	1,769	--	36,734	1,430	124,880	3,400
1970	101,627	4,386	1,446	33,647	1,734	142,840	3,109
1971	101,987	803	5,528	33,924	9,089	151,331	3,016
1972	77,295	29,558	9,531	7,159	3,364	126,907	3,264

Table 3.B: Beef Export Markets 1966-72
Source: CSO data as published in the ESRI's 1973 report, *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries.*

Ireland's dependence on the British market was exacerbated by the EEC's introduction of import levies on agricultural products including meat in the mid-1960s, and the adoption of stricter quotas on foreign beef purchases by the US.[32] International Meats chief executive, Frank Quinn, had correctly predicted a refocusing of Irish beef exports onto the British market, and away from Europe, following the

[27] *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, pp 15-18; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78.
[28] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78.
[29] *IP,* 27 Oct. 1967; *II,* 30 Oct. 1967.
[30] *IFJ*, 13 Jan. 1968.
[31] Report on the International Meat Study Group meeting, 17 June 1970 (NAI, DFA/2012/59/1957); *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 77.
[32] Report by M.J. Behan of CBF entitled 'Export of Beef and Other Meat to Britain' (NAI, DFA/2012/59/1957); *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, pp 75-76 and p. 91.

introduction of the Carcass Beef Subsidy Scheme in January 1965.[33] Nevertheless, it was the EEC's decision in 1964 to impose import levies of between sixteen and twenty per cent on beef and live cattle that effectively closed the Continental market to Irish processors for the second half of the 1960s.[34] While these levies were adopted under the EEC's fledgling Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and were an early demonstration of the community's efforts to establish an agreed import policy for food products, they were also motivated by improved supply considerations as beef exports from the six member states exceeded 500,000 tons in 1964-65.[35] Companies such as Clover Meats, IMP and International Meats had sizeable beef contracts on the continent, particularly in West Germany, by the mid-1960s when annual exports to the EEC totalled around 20,000 tons.[36] However, Irish beef sales to Europe fell to 2,400 tons by 1967, and dropped to less than one thousand tons by 1971 in the wake of the EEC's move.[37] In fact, government correspondence from the period continually complained of difficulties in 'getting EEC approval' for exports of live cattle and beef – particularly to West Germany.[38] The beef industry's growing dependence on the British market was also influenced by more stringent US import controls.[39] While the US beef market recovered in the late 1960s after the protectionist campaign of 1964-65, imports were limited by quotas which were generally in the region of 30,000 tons.[40] The growth in Irish beef exports to Britain during the second half of the 1960s was arguably a natural development given the increased economic linkages that the AIFTA fostered, the lower transport costs involved in servicing the UK market compared to Europe or the US, as well as the cultural and culinary similarities

[33] Department of Agriculture memorandum to Government on the carcass beef export trade, 18 June 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/508); *IFJ*, 30 Jan. 1965.
[34] Report by M.J. Behan of CBF entitled 'Export of Beef and Other Meat to Britain' (NAI, DFA/2012/59/1957); *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, pp 75-76 and p. 91.
[35] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, pp 56-57.
[36] Information compiled by the Department of Agriculture for the Department of External Affairs (NAI, DFA/2013/27/229); *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78.
[37] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78.
[38] Note from the Irish ambassador to Germany, Eamon Kennedy, to Donal O'Sullivan of the Department of External Affairs, 15 Mar. 1967, and letter from T.K. Whitaker of the Department of Finance to Jack Nagle of the Department of Agriculture, dated 4 July 1967, included in NAI file FIN/2013/27/231; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1966-67,* p. 29.
[39] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, pp 75-76.
[40] Report by M.J. Behan of CBF entitled 'Export of Beef and Other Meat to Britain' (NAI, DFA/2012/59/1957).

between the two countries.[41] However, the beef industry's dependence on the very open UK market in the late 1960s and early 1970s was to prove problematic, as Irish processors were exposed to supply and price volatility, and to changing British policies towards beef imports.

TRADE DEAL TURNS SOUR

Greater access to the British market resulted in an unprecedented expansion in carcass beef production but the AIFTA was not the 'holy grail' for Irish farmers that had been suggested by Charles Haughey or anticipated by industry commentators such as Paddy O'Keeffe.[42] The *Farmers' Journal* editor maintained the trade agreement gave 'the green light' for expansion to farmers and argued that it provided a 'stepping stone' to EEC membership.[43] The growth in beef output was undoubtedly of benefit to the meat factories, as evidenced by the healthy financial returns of IMP and the International Meat Company whose joint operating profits averaged £370,000 for the three years from 1967 to 1969 inclusive.[44] However, beef farmers did not share in the benefits of the dead meat sector's growth. Indeed, Haughey was mistaken in his confident prediction that the UK trade deal would improve returns for beef producers by ending the differential between British and Irish cattle prices.[45] In fact, the opposite happened: beef prices collapsed in 1966 as a result of increased numbers of cattle and a deflated British market.[46] The decline in store cattle prices started during the spring of 1966 but gathered pace when cattle numbers in the marts increased during the autumn and winter. Healy and Smith note that store cattle prices fell by more than a quarter in 1966, but contemporary mart reports point to a reduction of close to forty per cent, with the value of stores dropping from 180-190*s.* per cwt to 110-120*s.* per cwt in the six months from April to October – and by 10*s.* per cwt in a single week at Kanturk Mart in north Cork.[47] The fall in prices equated to almost £30 per animal.

[41] Dispatch from British ambassador to Ireland, Sir Andrew Gilchrist, 18 Aug. 1967 (TNA, BT 11/6879); H.G. Foster, 'Irish trade with Britain', pp 74-97; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, pp 88-90.
[42] Text of speech delivered by Charles Haughey to the Dáil, 3 Jan. 1966 (NAI, TAOIS/GIS/1/175); *IFJ*, 18 Dec. 1965, 1 Jan. 1966.
[43] *IFJ*, 18 Dec. 1965.
[44] Ibid., 21 Feb. 1970.
[45] *IP,* 6 Jan. 1966; *IFJ*, 1 Jan. 1966.
[46] Daly, *First Department*, pp 475-76; Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, p. 67 and p. 172; *IFJ,* 5 Mar. 1966.
[47] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, p. 172; *IFJ*, 9 Apr., 29 Oct. 1966.

Meanwhile, the differential between British and Irish fat cattle prices persisted, and averaged £17 per head by January 1967.[48] The collapse in Irish cattle prices during 1966 and early 1967 followed a marked downturn in demand for store cattle in Britain.[49] A shortage of fodder on farms across England and Scotland during the winter of 1966-67 adversely affected the market for stock, and this was exacerbated by tighter credit restrictions – which also cut investment on Irish farms – and by a shipping strike during August 1966.[50] Ironically, poor hay reserves for the winter of 1966-67 forced many Irish farmers to dispose of store cattle despite the low prices as they did not have the fodder to keep them.[51] Meanwhile, the difficulties in the British trade were compounded by the closure of the EEC market for both carcass beef and live cattle.[52] Clearly, the interests of beef processors and beef producers did not overlap as Haughey had forecast. The Department of Agriculture recognised in summer 1966 that the outlook for agriculture was decidedly fraught when it reduced its projected farm incomes for 1966-67 by £2.8 million to around £148 million, and introduced a support package that it claimed was worth £5.5 million. This included a 2d per gallon increase in milk prices, higher quality premiums for prime beef cattle, and grants for hill sheep.[53]

The loss of the export trade in fat cattle to Britain and Northern Ireland because the AIFTA favoured store and carcass beef exports dealt a further blow to farmers by effectively removing shippers of finished cattle from the marts and fairs.[54] While the AIFTA sought to encourage the export of more than 630,000 Irish store cattle to the UK each year – and exports remained relatively steady between 1966 and 1970, averaging over half a million head each year – sales of Irish fat cattle in Britain collapsed during the same period.[55] Close to eighty thousand finished cattle were

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48 *IFJ*, 18 Feb. 1967.
49 Daly, *First Department*, pp 474-75; Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, p. 172; *IFJ*, 5 Mar. 1966.
50 *IFJ*, 5 Mar., 12 Feb. 1966; Daly, *First Department*, pp 474-75.
51 Robert O'Connor, 'Implications of Irish Agricultural Statistics' in I.F. Baillie and S.J. Sheehy (eds.), *Irish Agriculture in a Changing World*, p. 31; Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, p. 186.
52 Information note on beef exports to Germany 1963-66, compiled by the Department of Agriculture for the Department of External Affairs (NAI, DFA/2013/27/229; Daly, *First Department*, pp 474-75.
53 Dáil address by Minister for Agriculture, Charles Haughey, Dáil debates Vol. 222, No. 15, 26 May 1966; Daly, *First Department*, p. 473.
54 *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 75; *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, pp 33-34.
55 *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, 1969-70 (Dublin 1970), p.29; Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, 1971-72 (Dublin 1972), p. 31; Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 36.

exported on average each year to factories in the UK for slaughter between 1962 and 1965, and this figure increased to over 155,000 in 1966.[56] However, exports fell to almost eighteen thousand animals in 1967 and dropped to around five thousand by 1969 as a result of the carcass beef supports.[57] Exporters of fat cattle were seriously disadvantaged by the extension of the fatstock guarantee payments to beef under the AIFTA and by Haughey's Carcass Beef Export Guarantee Scheme, since payments under the latter scheme were restricted to dead meat sales, while Irish cattle had to be domiciled in the UK for at least three months to qualify for British fatstock guarantee supports.[58] As the vast majority of fat cattle exported to Britain and Northern Ireland went for immediate slaughter – and it was therefore not feasible for the purchasers to keep the stock for three months to qualify for the UK fatstock guarantee payments – the supports available to the beef processors from the Irish and British exchequers essentially gave the factories' cattle buyers a premium with which to outbid fat-stock exporters in the marts. For example, in 1968 the value of the support payments varied between £3.0*s*.9*d* and £10.0*s*.3*d* on finished animals that were making £90 to £100 a head.[59] This was essentially the level of competitive advantage which the meat processors enjoyed when buying finished animals that year. The introduction by Haughey of an export subsidy of £6-7 per head on fat cattle in November 1966 assuaged some of the criticism from livestock shippers and helped maintain the business at a reduced level, but the trade in finished stock to the UK never fully recovered and fat-cattle exporters were a spent force in the livestock business.[60]

The downturn in the British cattle trade provoked strong farmer resentment on both sides of the Irish Sea. Irish farmer anger over the collapse in cattle prices during 1966 was matched by that of English, Scottish and Welsh farmers who blamed the increased level of Irish beef imports under the AIFTA for undermining cattle returns, which fell by £3 per cwt between the spring and autumn of 1966. By the end of the year the NFU leader, Gwilym Williams, was calling for the UK subsidy on Irish beef

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[56] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 34.
[57] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1969-70, p. 29; Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 34.
[58] Anglo-Irish Free Trade Area Agreement 1965, White Paper, pp 13-15; Daly, *First Department,* p. 469; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 75; *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, pp 33-34.
[59] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1968-69*, p. 37.
[60] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 75; *Irish Farmers' Journal*, 26 November 1966.

to be removed.[61] With Irish processors regularly accused of dumping product onto the UK market during the late 1960s and early 1970s, British calls for the revocation or amending of the AIFTA was a recurring theme.[62] The difficulties posed by increased Irish beef supplies onto the British market were exacerbated by domestic UK factors. A serious outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease in October 1967 in the west of England, and the failure of the farm price review process of 1968 and 1969 to keep pace with inflation, added to British farmer frustrations.[63] While British prime minister Harold Wilson insisted in the House of Commons that the AIFTA 'did not in any way harm or prejudice' the interests of UK farmers, this view was not widely shared.[64] In truth, the agreement was extremely unpopular with British farmers from the time of its signing. The British regional and agricultural press, as well as UK farm leaders, was strongly opposed to the trade agreement.[65] Arthur Guy of the National Farmers' Union (NFU) characterised the AIFTA as a 'monstrous agreement' for British farmers shortly after it was signed because of the UK support payments it provided and the greater market access it secured for Irish producers.[66] The Farmers' Union of Wales expressed similar sentiments, pointing out that its members produced the same commodities as their Irish counterparts and could be disadvantaged by the trade deal.[67] Meanwhile the *Western Daily Press* in Norwich asked why special concessions, which had not been granted to farmers in Commonwealth countries such as Australia and New Zealand, were agreed with 'Éire' even though it was 'not an ally' and had remained neutral in the Second World War.[68] Northern Irish farmers were also unhappy with the agreement, with JT O'Brien of the Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU) describing it as 'outrageous'.[69] Indeed, such was the level of British farmer unease at the AIFTA that Haughey was forced to assure reporters at the Royal Show in Kenilworth, Birmingham in July 1966 that Ireland would not use the AIFTA to

[61] *IFJ*, 27 Aug., 15 Oct., 3 Dec. 1966, 7 Jan. 1967.
[62] Market outlook in Britain for Irish beef drawn up 14 Dec. 1970, and letter from British Embassy in Dublin to the Department of Foreign Affairs, 22 March 1971 (NAI, DFA/2012/57/1957); *IFJ*, 27 Aug., 15 Oct. 1966, 7 Jan. 1967.
[63] Smith, From Campbell to Kendall: a history of the NFU, pp 146-149.
[64] *Parliamentary debates* (*Hansard*), *House of Commons*, 1965, Vol. 722, 14 Dec. 1965 (https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1965-12-14/debates/c5f60000-57bf-4c3f-917b-4a715def1ebf/IrishRepublic(FreeTradeArea)) (accessed 20 Apr. 2021).
[65] Daly, *First Department*, p. 470.
[66] *IFJ*, 1 Jan. 1966.
[67] *Western Mail*, 14 Dec. 1965.
[68] *Western Daily Press*, 29 Dec. 1965.
[69] *Farmers' Weekly*, 31 Dec. 1965

‘flood’ the UK with cheap beef and dairy produce.[70] Despite Haughey’s comments, however, reports of cheap Irish beef on offer on British wholesale markets were a recurrent feature of trade throughout the winter of 1966-67. In October 1966 for instance, the *Farmers’ Journal* reported of ‘violent prejudice’ among ‘British and Scots’ farmers towards Irish produce because of what it described as ‘weak selling of Irish meat and fatstock’.[71] Issues around Irish beef imports were also raised in the House of Commons by Tory and Ulster Unionist MPs in November 1966. The MPs questioned why British taxpayers were subsidising the meat industry in Ireland; they accused Irish companies of ‘dumping’ beef onto the English market; and claimed the AIFTA had resulted in a ‘very serious situation’ developing in the Northern Irish dead-meat sector.[72] Similar concerns were raised in April 1967 when the British Minister of Agriculture, Fred Peart, conceded that he had discussed the matter of subsidised Irish beef imports into Britain with Neil Blaney, who had succeeded Haughey as Minister for Agriculture the previous autumn.[73] Peart’s intervention had little impact, however. By the summer of 1967 UK officials feared that supplies of Irish beef and fat cattle might totally undermine British prices which were already 50s per cwt below 1966 levels – this equates to £25-30 per head on a finished beef animal. The NFU blamed Irish imports for causing the fall-off in British beef and cattle prices at a meeting with the NFA in August 1967.[74]

PROTESTS AND MARKETING

In the Republic, the NFA’s Farmers’ Rights Campaign of 1966 provided a ready-made conduit for beef producers’ anger and frustration over the collapse in cattle prices and the chaotic nature of the beef trade. Difficulties in the beef business were a central theme for the NFA protests, with more structured commodity prices and farmer participation in the marketing of farm produce among the key demands that the farm body wanted addressed.[75] The protests had their roots in low agricultural

[70] *IP*, 7 July 1966; *II*, 7 July 1966.
[71] *IFJ*, 15 Oct. 1966.
[72] *Parliamentary debates* (*Hansard*), *House of Commons*, 1966, Vol. 735, 2 Nov. 1966 (https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1966-11-02/debates/2faece8d-bc5d-422a-be3b-44386cdd5e0d/IrishCattle) (accessed 21 Apr. 2021).
[73] *Parliamentary debates* (*Hansard*), *House of Commons*, 1967, Vol. 745, 28 Apr. 1967 (https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/1967-04-28/debates/6766779b-cbe6-4939-8f02-3039561743fe/IrishBeef(Export)) (accessed 20 Apr. 2021).
[74] *II*, 28 July 1967; *IFJ*, 15 July, 5 Aug. 1967.
[75] *IP*, 8 Oct. 1966; *CE*, 11 Oct. 1966; *IFJ*, 8 Oct. 1966; Daly, *First Department*, pp 475-77.

incomes, and the failure, as Ferriter observes, of the main political parties to adequately represent farmer interests.[76] Although farm incomes were expected to rise to £148 million in 1966 compared to £145 million a year earlier, the NFA claimed that forty per cent of its members (close to 90,000 farmers) earned less than £5 per week, at a time when £10 per week was considered the minimum living wage.[77] This assertion was repeated in the Dáil by Fine Gael's Mark Clinton, who warned that a 'serious situation' was developing in the west and southwest of country in particular; areas that were traditionally dependent on the production of store cattle. He said the £10 to £20 per head reduction in store cattle prices had left 'many people' in the bracket of 'earning as little as £5 per week'.[78] Similar sentiments were expressed by Clinton's party colleague, Gerry L'Estrange, who told the Dáil that farmers were being forced to work seventy and eighty hours a week to make 'a decent living'.[79]

The realisation that agricultural incomes were not keeping pace with those of industrial workers added to farmers' discontent, despite farm supports and commodity prices invariably acting as the trigger for disputes. This challenge was recognised in the *Second Programme for Economic Expansion* which conceded that 'the maintenance of a reasonable balance between agricultural and non-agricultural incomes is by no means an easily achieved objective, even in highly developed countries.'[80] The decline in farm incomes relative to those of workers in the services and manufacturing sectors was a feature of the Irish economy since the 1950s. The combined results of the *National Farm Survey* between 1955 and 1958 found that average annual family income on farms of thirty to fifty acres was £464.[81] Although the average wage for industrial workers in the manufacturing sector in 1958 was considerably lower at £302 per year, it had increased by almost a quarter in the previous five years.[82] The upward trend in both private and public sector wages unnerved farmers. An editorial in the *Irish Farmers' Journal* in May 1958 bemoaned the fact that a new round of wage increases would be 'conceded with no insistence on

[76] Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*, pp 553-554; Daly, *First Department*, pp 475-77.
[77] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, p. 185; Daly, *First Department*, p. 472; Dempsey (ed), *The path to power*, p. 49.
[78] Dáil debates Vol. 224, No. 8, 12 Oct. 1966.
[79] Dáil debates Vol. 222, No. 12, 18 May 1966.
[80] *Second Programme for Economic Expansion*, Part I, p. 22.
[81] *National Farm Survey* 1955-56 and 1957-58, Central Statistics Office, (Dublin, 1961), p. 3.
[82] Data supplied by CSO's Earnings Analysis Section, earnings for industrial workers in manufacturing industries.

any increase in productivity.' However, as Ó Gráda notes, staying in line with the wage increases conceded through centralised bargaining was a key demand of the farm lobby during the 1960s.[83] By the late 1960s the differential between farm incomes and those of industrial workers was moving in the latter's' favour. It was against this background that NFA leader Rickard Deasy led hundreds on the eleven-day 'Farmers' Rights March' from Bantry to Dublin in October 1966 to highlight their grievances.[84] It was a clever means of gaining publicity for the farmers' campaign and the arrival in Dublin of the marchers and their supporters on the evening of 18 October prompted reports in the *Cork Examiner* that farmers had the capital surrounded.[85] The refusal of Haughey, or any other government minister, to meet with the NFA leaders or enter discussions on their demands poisoned relations between the two sides and led to a bitter three-year campaign of civil disobedience by farmers which included further protests, a rates strike and blockades. This in turn resulted in hundreds of NFA members being imprisoned and the confiscation of farm assets. [86] The appointment of Neil Blaney as Minister for Agriculture in November 1966 contributed to the deterioration in relations between the government and farmers. He adopted an aggressive policy in dealing with the NFA, which Patrick Maume attributes to a belief – widely held within Fianna Fáil – that the association was 'dominated by Fine Gael-supporting big farmers'.[87] Blaney also clashed with Paddy O'Keeffe and the *Irish Farmers' Journal*. In fact, one of his first actions as minister was to withdraw Department of Agriculture advertising from the publication. O'Keeffe described the move as taking a 'line of coercion against farming interest'.[88] The differences between Blaney and O'Keeffe were not confined to the farmers' rights campaign. Many of Blaney's policy initiatives, such as the Bonus Incentive Scheme of 1968 and the introduction of the two-tier milk pricing, supported or protected the interests of small-scale farmers.[89] However, O'Keeffe believed these measures facilitated the retention of unviable holdings and worked against efforts to modernise Irish agriculture. When Blaney was dismissed in May 1970 due to the

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[83] Cormac Ó Gráda, *A rocky road*, p. 159.
[84] *II*, 12-20 Oct. 1966; *IP*, 12-20 Oct. 1966; *Sunday Independent*, 23 Oct. 1966; *Sunday Press*, 23 Oct. 1966.
[85] *CE*, 19 October 1966.
[86] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, pp 182-210; Daly, *First Department*, pp 476-77.
[87] Patrick Maume, 'Neil Blaney', *Directory of Irish Biography,* www.ria.ie/research-projects/dictionary-irish-biography (accessed 21 April 2021).
[88] *IFJ,* 19 Nov. 1966.
[89] Daly, *First Department,* pp 498-99; *IFJ,* 9 Mar. 1968.

scandal which led to the Arms Trial, O'Keeffe showed little compassion for the Donegal TD. He was 'not a great loss to agriculture', O'Keeffe maintained. 'In his three-year term in office he has captured neither the confidence nor the imagination of the farmer...Being charitable, it could be said that he was not one of our good ministers.'[90] In contrast, O'Keeffe bemoaned the fall of Haughey, who he described as 'one of the best Ministers for Agriculture in the history of the state'.[91] The appointment of Jim Gibbons as Blaney's successor resulted in an appreciable improvement in relations between Fianna Fáil and the NFA, and ultimately led to the government conceding that the farm representative bodies had negotiating rights for farmers. The new minister's bother, Michael Gibbons, was active in the NFA and IAOS, and had property seized from his Co Kilkenny farm during the farmers' rights campaign.[92]

Farmer agitation for more structured meat marketing, and therefore better prices and returns for livestock producers, was central to the broader farmers' rights campaign. The struggle, which developed into a test of strength and influence between the NFA and the meat factories, had started in the early 1960s but was given added impetus following the collapse in cattle prices during the winter of 1966-67.[93] The NFA and ICMSA wanted a national body to take control of beef and lamb promotion and sales on export markets; similar to Bord Báinne or the Pigs and Bacon Commission which handled the marketing of dairy produce and pigmeat respectively.[94] This position was strongly supported by the *Farmers' Journal*, which regularly claimed that improved marketing was the best protection for farmers against low and volatile beef prices.[95] However, while the centralised selling of beef and sheep meat had been considered by the Advisory Committee on the Marketing of Agricultural Produce in 1959 – the same body that recommended the setting up of Bord Báinne, and which was chaired by NFA president, Juan Greene, and included ICMSA leader John Feely – the group's final report saw no benefit in, or need for, a

[90] *IFJ*, 16 May 1970.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, pp 209-210.
[93] Representations made by the NFA to the Department of Agriculture in April and May 1964 (NAI, TAOIS/S17543C/95); *Irish Farmers' Journal*, 14 Apr. 1962; Minutes of National Farmers' Association's livestock committee meeting, 25 Sept. 1963.
[94] *Report on the Export of Livestock and Meat*, (Dublin, 1959), p. 34; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p.119; Daly, *First Department*, pp 181-182, pp 355-361;
[95] *IFJ*, 1 Apr. 1961, 14 Apr. 1962, 18 Jan. 1964.

national entity to oversee export sales.[96] Crucially, the factories' representatives on the Advisory Committee insisted that meat exports to the UK be excluded when assessing the requirement for a state-sponsored marketing entity to oversee beef and lamb exports. This decision effectively killed the concept of a beef marketing board since exports of beef and livestock outside of Britain were deemed to be 'largely marginal' in terms of overall sales.[97] However, the issue of marketing was raised repeatedly by the NFA during the early 1960s as beef price volatility eroded farmers' income and confidence. In his address to the NFA's annual general meeting in May 1960, the association's general secretary, Seán Healy, bemoaned what he described as the beef industry's 'segmented and disjointed' approach to marketing.[98] Three years later the NFA's livestock committee claimed that Ireland was one of the few beef-producing countries without 'controlled marketing', and was unique in having 'no classification of animals', or 'no system to regulate standards'.[99] In May 1964 meat marketing was again central to discussions between the NFA and Department of Agriculture, with the newly elected leader of the farm body, Rickard Deasy, unsuccessfully lobbying for more co-ordinated action on beef and lamb export sales. The NFA proposed a marketing body which was funded by levies, and that would initially be responsible for market intelligence and product promotion, and later move into direct sales. Controversially, however, it also proposed that the new entity introduce a carcass classification regime to enforce quality standards, operate a floor price mechanism for beef, and carry out intervention buying at this floor price if the market was over-supplied.[100]

Meat processor reservations on centralised marketing were motivated by concerns that such an organisation could be controlled by farmer representatives and therefore prioritise farmers' interests – namely, beef prices.[101] Equally, factory owners were also unwilling to surrender their own business independence by selling through a state marketing agency.[102] As a consequence, the meat processors strenuously

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[96] *Report on the Export of Livestock and Meat*, pp 37-39.
[97] Ibid., pp 34-37.
[98] Information on resolutions passed by the council of NFA, (NAI, DTS16405).
[99] Minutes of NFA's livestock committee meeting on 25 Sept. 1963.
[100] Representations made by the NFA to the Department of Agriculture in April and May 1964 (NAI, TAOIS/S17543C/95).
[101] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 119; *IFJ*, 4 Mar. 1967.
[102] Interview with John Lyons (15 Aug. 2018); Interview with former International Meats Company employee, Interviewee A (9 Aug. 2018).

opposed efforts to establish an independent meat marketing authority: they would only support such a body if its powers were limited, and it was not controlled by farmer representatives.[103] Senior Department of Agriculture officials displayed some sympathy for the meat processors' position. In meetings with the NFA, the department's deputy secretary and assistant secretary, Michael Barry and Donal Buckley, defended the meat factories' opposition to the introduction of beef grading and classification as part of overall marketing initiative, pointing out that Australian beef was considered inferior to Irish product by US officials even though the Australians had a meat classification regime in place.[104] The Irish Fresh Meat Exporters' Society (IFMES) continued to resist calls for centralised marketing, despite the mounting political and farmer pressure for change that followed the marked growth in Irish beef exports to Britain in the aftermath of the AIFTA, and the subsequent collapse in cattle prices.[105] Paddy O'Keeffe described as 'chaotic' the manner in which Irish beef was sold in Britain in early 1967, with the newspaper reporting instances of Irish beef being 'dumped' on meat markets in Smithfield and Bristol and being sold at a significant discount as a consequence. Moreover, it highlighted cases where Irish factories competed with one another, pushing down prices in the process.[106] Meanwhile, the British Minister of Agriculture, Fred Peart, visited Dublin in an effort to secure 'a more orderly marketing of cattle and beef in Britain'.[107] However, IFMES still insisted that the sale of meat was best left in the hands of the factories on the grounds that private enterprise could do a better job.[108]

The issue of meat marketing was finally addressed in 1969 when Coras Beostoic agus Feola (CBF) was established.[109] In what amounted to a major coup for the beef industry, CBF's role was entirely promotional; it took responsibility for stands at trade fairs and other activities that had previously been undertaken by the Department of Agriculture but it did not have a direct role in meat sales.[110] In essence, CBF was a watered down version of the body the NFA had sought. As Daly notes, the

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[103] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 119; Interview with John Lyons (15 Aug. 2018); Interview A (9 August 2018); *IFJ*, 4 Mar. 1967.
[104] Notes on NFA and Department of Agriculture meeting, 29 May 1964 (NAI, TAOIS/S17543C/95).
[105] *IFJ*, 25 Feb. 1967.
[106] Ibid., 11 Sept. 1966, 18 Feb., 4 Mar. 1967.
[107] *CE*, 8 Feb. 1967.
[108] *IFJ*, 25 Feb. 1967.
[109] Daly, *First Department*, pp 495-96.
[110] Report on role of CBF 1969 to 1971 (NAI, DA/2002/8/165).

farm organisations wanted an entity that operated a 'deficiency payments scheme for Irish beef'.[111] It took the fallout from the cattle price collapse of 1966-67, and the findings of the Store Cattle Study Group in 1968 which recommended the establishment of a promotions authority for Irish livestock, to finally convince the Government to take action on the matter.[112] Fears that greater restrictions – by way of import levies – could be imposed on Irish food exports to Britain also influenced the decision to establish CBF. Indeed, Blaney, who oversaw and supported the formation of the beef and lamb marketing body, had warned that the imposition of wide-ranging import levies by the UK risked completely undermining the value of the AIFTA for Ireland.[113] Given this uncertainty, the creation of a national beef marketing body appeared a wise investment. However, the remit of CBF and the structure of its board did not please the NFA. The restricted scope of CBF's responsibilities had been flagged more than two years prior to its eventual launch when Haughey indicated that its role would be primarily promotional.[114] This provoked a furious reaction from NFA leader Rickard Deasy who told the *Farmers' Journal* that the marketing body's role would be confined to providing 'propaganda' for Irish meat factories in export markets. 'This, to our way of thinking is only a secondary function of a real meat marketing board...What we want is a business-like board that can administer our greatest national export industry,' Deasy stated.[115] The limiting of CBF's remit was a victory for the beef processors. Similarly, the make-up of the CBF board – which included two beef processors, two live exporters, four farmer representatives, a Department of Agriculture official and an independent chair – satisfied beef factory demands that it not be farmer controlled.[116]

The meat sector's successful defence of its position on marketing illustrates the effectiveness of the processors' lobby, and highlights the industry's growing influence on farming policy by the end of the 1960s. Gus Fitzpatrick of Premier Meat Packers attributes the improved relations between the meat factories and the Department of Agriculture to the close relationship that developed between IFMES secretary Jim Bastow and the Department's assistant secretary Donal Buckley during

[111] Daly, *First Department*, pp 495-96.
[112] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, pp 198-99.
[113] Daly, *First Department*, pp 494-95.
[114] *IFJ*, 15 Oct. 1966.
[115] Ibid.
[116] *II*, 10 Jan. 1969; *IFJ*, 4 Jan. 1969

this period. 'They had a vision that if we could create more jobs by slaughtering cattle in Ireland, and that then if we could get downstream processing...[we would] bring jobs to parts of Ireland that badly needed it.'[117] The improved relations between the meat processing sector and the Department of Agriculture provoked a degree of resentment within the NFA. In a telling critique of 1960s Fianna Fáil and its association with the meat industry, which was expressed a generation later, Rickard Deasy maintained that farm policy in the Lemass era was influenced by 'gombeen types' who owned 'hole-in-the-wall meat factories'.[118] Furthermore, Deasy accused Department of Agriculture general secretary Jack Nagle and his deputy Michael Barry of being 'Victorian minded civil servants' who harboured 'doctrinaire objections' to marketing boards, and possessed a 'dyed-in-the-wool belief' in the right of the entrepreneur.[119]

BEEF INCOMES

Significantly lower returns from drystock farming compared to dairying and tillage compounded beef farmers' dissatisfaction in the late 1960s, and heralded an important power shift within Irish agriculture. With well-run dairy units delivering twice the income of similar-sized beef holdings, milk replaced meat as the primary on-farm wealth generator by the end of the decade.[120] Paddy O'Keeffe highlighted the poor returns from beef relative to other enterprises as early as 1957 when he wrote: 'Unfortunately beef, which is our main meat product, in past experience, has given the lowest profit per acre and per £1 invested.'[121] The comparative weakness of beef and sheep production relative to dairying was subsequently confirmed by the *National Farm Survey* of 1955-58 and its successor, the *Farm Management Survey* of 1966-69. The purposes of both surveys was to determine the level of overall farm output, the costs and income arising at farm level, and the variation in these according to region, farm size and farming enterprise. The survey results provided the kind of detailed information necessary for a fuller understanding of the economic situation at farm level. The 1955-58 survey was undertaken by the Central Statistics Office, but the

[117] Interviews with Gus Fitzpatrick (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017).
[118] A letter from Rickard Deasy to John Horgan dated 9 Aug. 1995 as quoted in John Horgan, *Seán Lemass, The Enigmatic Patriot,* p. 237.
[119] Quoted by Daly in *The First Department*, p. 475 and p. 482.
[120] *National Farm Survey* 1966-69, p. 118 and p. 124.
[121] *IFJ*, 20 July 1957.

work was subsequently carried out by AFT.[122] The combined results of the 1955-58 survey found that the average annual income for 'mixed cattle farms' of between thirty and fifty acres was £416. This was thirty per cent lower than the £543 average recorded for holdings involved in 'mainly dairying', and one-third below the £557 generated by those growing 'mixed crops'.[123] This income disparity between the various enterprises increased during the 1960s. The *Farm Management Survey* of 1966-69 found that while dairy farms of between thirty and forty acres generated an average income of £716, drystock farms of thirty to fifty acres had an average income of just £354.[124] In effect, the average profit level on beef farms was half that of dairy units. Paddy O'Keeffe attributed the 'meagre' profit margins in drystock farming to a dearth of research into beef breeding and grass utilisation on drystock farms, in addition to fluctuations in cattle prices – which he described as 'among the great uncertainties of Irish life'.[125] The income differential between beef and milk resulted in a sizeable shift into dairying during this period – particularly among commercially-minded farmers. As Daly points out, milk offered 'better and more consistent returns compared to the volatility of cattle prices.'[126] This was reflected in sales of milking machines which were being installed at the rate of around two thousand per year by 1963.[127] One of the stand-out features of those who converted to dairying was their adoption of the new technology and management practices. Tom Cleary from Cloughjordan in north Tipperary, who converted to milk production in the late 1950s, moving away from the heifer-supply enterprise which his father developed, introduced paddock grazing and was among the first farmers in the county to cut silage. 'There was hardly anyone else doing it in north Tipperary at the time,' he recalled.[128] Dairy farmers who featured in the *Farmers' Journal* in the early 1960s were similarly innovative. Although the average dairy farmer in 1966 supplied 3,600 gallons from six or seven cows, Ned Phelan from Dungarvan kept twenty-two cows on fifty-two acres and his herd was producing an impressive 750 gallons per cow –

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122 John F. Heavey, 'The Farm Management Survey 1966 to 1969', in the *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland*, Vol. XXII, Part IV, 1971-72, pp 143-144.
123 *National Farm Survey* 1955-56 and 1957-58, p. 3.
124 *Farm Management Survey* 1966-69, p. 118 and p. 124.
125 *IFJ*, 18 Feb. 1961, 8 Sept. 1962, 18 Jan. 1964.
126 Daly, *First Department*, p. 486.
127 *IFJ*, 3 Aug. 1963.
128 Interview with Tom Cleary, dairy farmer from Cloughjordan, Co Tipperary and former chairman of Bord Bainne and subsequently the Irish Dairy Board (13 Oct. 2016).

double the national norm.[129] As Holderness correctly observed, 'the occupational class of farmers is far from homogenous'.[130]

The income disparity between dairying and beef, and the expansion in milk production had long-term implications for farming as it shifted the power-base within Irish agriculture from drystock and tillage to milk production.[131] The relationship between dairying and beef finishing up to the early 1960s was akin to that between Gaelic football and rugby. Gaelic football was the more popular sport; but rugby had the more influential support. Similarly, although dairying has been accurately described by Daly as the lynchpin of Irish agriculture, the real influence within the Irish farm sector lay in large-scale beef finishing and tillage.[132] This was reflected in the backgrounds of the early NFA leaders. The first NFA president, Juan Greene, farmed around five hundred acres near Athy; while his successor, Rickard Deasy – an Oxford-educated former captain in the Irish army – had an extensive holding in north Tipperary.[133] Joe Bruton was another powerful force in the NFA during the 1950s and 1960s who epitomised the farm organisation's association with the beef sector. Bruton – father of Fine Gael's John Bruton – was a significant cattle trader and finisher, who had extensive land holdings in Meath and in north Clare.[134] The attitude of beef farmers to dairying was summed up by the Dublin Cattle Market salesmaster, Joe Barry, who attributed his lack of dairy knowledge to 'snobbery', since beef farmers 'looked down on the dairy man.'[135]

> It was really funny because if a cattleman turned to milking cows he was looked on as a bit of a failure, that he couldn't hack it in the real world so to speak. And, as a result, I grew up knowing little or nothing about dairying.[136]

However, raw economics and earning power changed this attitude, and by 1967 the growing influence of dairying within the NFA resulted in Tipperary milk supplier, TJ Maher, being elected president of the association.[137]

The expansion in dairying paralleled a pronounced shift towards greater specialisation as the 1960s progressed. Mixed farms that kept beef and sheep, and

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[129] *IFJ*, 21 May 1966, 15 July 1961.
[130] Holderness, British agriculture since 1945, p. 122.
[131] Daly, *First Department*, pp 486, 499.
[132] Ibid., p. 486.
[133] Dempsey (ed), *The path to power*, pp 41-50.
[134] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, p. 62; Joe Barry interview (2 Nov. 2013).
[135] Joe Barry interview (2 November 2013).
[136] Ibid.
[137] Dempsey (ed.), *The path to power*, p. 72.

maybe dairy cows and a few pigs, as well as growing oats or barley for animal feed, gradually gave way to one- and two-enterprise operations. For example, the writer's father kept sheep, dairy cows, beef and pigs on the family farm in Kildimo, Co Limerick up to the late 1960s. However, he stopped rearing sheep and pigs by the early 1970s and activity was focused primarily on dairying from then on, with an associated beef-rearing enterprise.[138] The trend towards greater specialisation was most starkly illustrated by the marked decrease in cereal and root crop plantings, which dropped from 1.7 million acres in 1960 to 1.4 million acres by 1965.[139] Farmers reduced the area given over to growing feed crops for livestock and purchased animal rations from millers instead. This approach allowed the farmers to carry more dairy cows, beef cattle or sheep as a consequence. John Joe Dunne from Mountmellick in Laois recalled the changes this process prompted: 'The farmyard scene of hens and ducks and their free-range eggs was also coming to an end in many places. The sight of ducks coming back to the safety of their house after a long day on the river would be but a memory.'[140] Dr Tom Walsh, director of the agricultural research body An Foras Talúntais (AFT), had a far less romantic view of these developments. He maintained that increased specialisation was the natural consequence of 'low price and income elasticities in the demand for food'.[141] Increased mechanisation and rural electrification facilitated the shift towards more specialised farming, while profoundly changing Irish agriculture. The expansion in milk production was made possible by electrically-powered milking machines, while the introduction of tractors and combine harvesters enabled the emergence of intensive cereal growers. Although widespread tractor ownership was delayed in Ireland by the impact of the Economic War and the Second World War, sales increased steadily during the 1950s and topped 43,500 by 1960 and almost reached 85,000 a decade later.[142] The arrival of electricity and the tractor took much of what farmers termed the slavery (tough physical work) out of the daily routine, but that is not to say that it totally disappeared. I recall as a young boy in mid-Limerick in the

[138] Personal memory of Declan O'Brien, who was reared on a farm in Kildimo, Co Limerick.
[139] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1960-61, p. 1; Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1965-66, p. 19.*
[140] John Joe Dunne, *Sparks from the embers: a journey through a changing Ireland*, (Tullamore, 2013), p. 220.
[141] Dr Tom Walsh, 'Research and Future Agricultural Development' in I.F. Baillie and S.J. Sheehy (eds.), *Irish Agriculture in a Changing World*, p. 149.
[142] Jonathan Bell & Mervyn Watson, *Irish farming life, history and heritage,* (Dublin, 2014), p. 145; Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*, p. 550.

late 1960s watching my brothers pulping turnips by hand for cattle, and carrying 'bearts' or bundles of hay tied with ropes to cows and cattle out-wintered on a nearby crag or rocky field. Hardship on farms was not confined to Limerick. A man from Swatragh in south Derry often told of how a labourer who had fallen out with a local farmer placed a small advert in the local paper with his former employer's number as the contact. The advert read: 'Big man wanted for light horse work'.[143] The story was undoubtedly embroidered, but the sentiments were real.

The growth in milk output, coupled with the widening income differential between milk suppliers and drystock producers, posed serious financial and policy challenges for the government, the farm organisations and agricultural researchers. The immediate concern for government was budgetary; how could the exchequer curtail subsidy payments on ever-increasing butter and cheese exports?[144] For the wider agricultural sector – which included stakeholders such as AFT, the Department of Agriculture, the meat processors, and the NFA – the test was to somehow increase beef profitability so that farmers could build viable enterprises in areas not suited to dairying or tillage.[145] The challenge facing the government in terms of dairy supports was stark. Milk output increased from 490 million gallons in 1957 to 525 million gallons in 1963, and reached almost 790 million gallons by 1969.[146] Much of this expansion was driven by the adoption of improved grassland management, increased fertiliser usage, and better breeding and feeding.[147] However, ego also played a part. One Waterford Co-operative supplier admitted that he decided to increase cow numbers after he saw the 'pitiful sup of milk' that his herd produced splashing around in the bottom of a newly purchased bulk tank.[148]

Exchequer spending on dairy supports grew considerably as a consequence of the higher milk volumes and a doubling of Irish butter exports to Britain under the AIFTA, with costs increasing from £6 million in 1963-64 to £21 million by 1968-

[143] Story related to Declan O'Brien in the late 1990s.
[144] Extract from the Financial Statement by the Minister for Finance, 7 May 1969 (NAI, TAOIS/98/6/647).
[145] *IFJ*, 18 Feb. 1961, 16 Mar. 1963, 11 Dec. 1965.
[146] Robert O'Connor, 'Implications of Irish Agricultural Statistics' in I.F. Baillie and S.J. Sheehy (eds.), *Irish Agriculture in a Changing World*, p. 27; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1965-66,* p. 39.
[147] Tom Cleary interview (13 Oct. 2016); *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 41; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1969-70,* p. 39; *IFJ*, 21 May 1966, 15 July 1961.
[148] Jim O'Brien, Proinnsias Breathnach, Caroline Smiddy, *Dungarvan Co-operative and its Legacy*, (Kilkenny, 2019), p. 61.

69.[149] The extent of exchequer supports on dairy exports was estimated at 6.5p per gallon in 1965.[150] Fortunately for the state however, exchequer subsidies were calculated on what was described as manufacturing milk; supplies which were processed by the creameries into mainly butter and cheese. While the increase in creamery intakes of milk was not of the same magnitude as overall production growth, it was still significant. The volume of milk processed by creameries grew by twenty-eight per cent between 1966 and 1969, increasing from 410 million gallons to 526 million gallons.[151] Faced with what the Department of Finance described as the 'steeply rising cost of supporting creamery milk' in 1969, and Bord Bainne warning of a dairy over-supply on international markets, Neil Blaney moved to curb further milk output growth by introducing a two-tier milk price in September 1968, and a Beef Cattle Incentive Scheme to attract small dairy farmers into beef in February 1969.[152] The two-tier milk price originally paid an extra 1d per gallon on the first seven thousand gallons produced, as a bonus to small suppliers. However, it later developed into a more complicated price control mechanism which cut subsidies to larger milk suppliers.[153] The Beef Cattle Incentive Scheme encouraged farmers to switch stock from dairy to beef by paying a subsidy of £8 on every calved cow that produced milk to raise beef calves rather than being supplied to a creamery. The stated logic behind the initiative was that it was easier to sell beef than dairy products.[154] The scheme proved extremely popular, and by 1970 it had over 50,000 participants, and paid out £4.8 million to beef farmers or an average of £95 per herd owner.[155] However, despite the success of the Beef Cattle Incentive Scheme, improving the underlying profitability of beef production was what farmers really needed.

Challenging the low-input, low-output model of Irish beef production by finishing and slaughtering cattle at younger ages was the approach AFT researchers took to

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[149] Extract from the Financial Statement by the Minister for Finance, 7 May 1969 (NAI, TAOIS/98/6/647); *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1966-67, p. 28.*

[150] *IFJ*, 2 Apr. 1966.

[151] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1966-67, p. 43; Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1969-70, p. 39.*

[152] Daly, *First Department*, p. 491; *IFJ*, 14 Dec. 1968, 11 Oct. 1969, 18 Oct. 1969; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1968-69*, pp 37-38; Extract from the Financial Statement by the Minister for Finance, 7 May 1969 (NAI, TAOIS/98/6/647).

[153] *IFJ*, 11 Oct., 18 Oct. 1969, 4 Dec. 1971; Daly, *First Department*, p. 491.

[154] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1968-69*, pp 37-38.

[155] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1970-71*, p. 37.

improving margins on cattle farms.[156] A combination of traditionally low returns from beef finishing, inadequate and sub-standard housing on the vast majority of farms, and poor quality winter feed meant that Irish beef cattle were generally finished off grass at three and four years old.[157] JF Heavey of AFT summed up the difficulties facing the beef and sheep sectors when he observed that drystock farming, even when practised on top-quality holdings, was 'not capable of giving an output sufficiently high to generate a satisfactory income on the vast majority of farms, except where the prevailing premium productivity can be achieved with absolutely minimum expenditure per acre'.[158] Researchers at the AFT beef centre in Grange, Co Meath aimed to finish and kill stock at twenty-four to thirty months old, in order to significantly increase farm output, and ultimately raise profit levels, by reducing the time cattle spent on the farm.[159] This approach mirrored that being taken by researchers in Britain at the time.[160] Interestingly, Michael Drennan, who joined AFT in 1964, recalled that beef research during the 1960s was 'very much farmer-driven' and focussed primarily on improving margins at farm level. There was little beef processor input.[161] During this period trials were carried out on single and double suckling – where beef cows raised a single calf or two calves – and on various approaches to finishing cattle off grass and off silage.[162] In addition, the merits of using continental beef bulls on Irish cows were evaluated, with trials undertaken on the finishing of Charolais cross-bred calves in 1966.[163] The research undertaken at Grange was crucial in transforming management practices on Irish livestock farms. For example, Roger McCarrick's work on the harvesting and ensiling of silage under Irish conditions was instrumental in expanding its appeal, with the tonnage produced increasing from around 300,000 tons in 1961 to 1.3 million tons by 1966.[164] Indeed,

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[156] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, pp 65-67; Michael Drennan interview (24 Oct. 2017); Paddy Smith, 'Leading Progress in Beef Production', in Michael Miley (ed.), *Growing Knowledge*, pp 79-82.

[157] Michael Drennan interview (24 Oct. 2017); *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, pp 65-67; Paddy Smith, 'Leading Progress in Beef Production', pp 79-82.

[158] J.F. Heavey, 'On Farm Efficiency' in I.F. Baillie and S.J. Sheehy (eds.), *Irish Agriculture in a Changing World*, p. 124.

[159] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, pp 65-67; Michael Drennan interview (24 Oct. 2017); Paddy Smith, 'Leading Progress in Beef Production', pp 79-82.

[160] Holderness, British agriculture since 1945, p. 66.

[161] Michael Drennan interview (24 Oct. 2017).

[162] *IFJ*, 4 Sept., 11 Dec. 1965, 8 Jan. 1966, 17 June 1967.

[163] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1966-67*, p. 34; *IFJ*, 19 Feb. 1966.

[164] Robert O'Connor, 'Implications of Irish Agricultural Statistics' in I.F. Baillie and S.J. Sheehy (eds.), *Irish Agriculture in a Changing World*, p. 30.

while hay accounted for ninety-nine per cent of all fodder in 1957, silage provided thirteen per cent of the country's winter feed needs by 1969.[165] Similarly, Grange-based trials helped overhaul farmyard layout and design through research work on self-feed silage systems and the use of slurry storage and slatted sheds for livestock.[166] However, these innovations took time to take hold in what was still a largely conservative industry. As a consequence, profit margins per acre for beef still lagged well behind dairying throughout the 1960s – despite the best efforts of AFT. In 1962 Crotty noted that the average output per acre in dairying was £14.3, while the corresponding figure for cattle farming was £9.3 per acre.[167] Seven years later the *National Farm Survey* for 1966-69 found that the average margin for all dry-stock farms was £6 per acre, and £7.9 per acre for farms of between thirty and fifty acres. In contrast, the average margin for all dairy farms was £10.1 per acre, increasing to £11.7 per acre for holdings of between thirty and fifty acres.[168]

IMP PURCHASE

The persistently low beef-farmer incomes recorded by the *National Farm Survey*, allied to the beef factories' success in frustrating the introduction of a national meat marketing body - and the AIFTA's failure to significantly reduce the differential in cattle prices between Ireland and Britain - convinced the NFA that farmers needed to become directly involved in meat processing. This conviction ultimately led to the purchase of the country's largest meat processor IMP by the farmer-owned Cork Co-operative Marts in January 1969.[169] The £4-million take-over transformed the Irish meat sector as IMP controlled between thirty-five and forty per cent of the annual cattle kill at that time.[170] Formed in 1967 following the merger of Frank Quinn's International Meats, based at Grand Canal in Dublin, and IMP, which was located at Barnhall in Leixlip, Co Kildare, the company had the capacity to kill more than seven thousand cattle a week, the same number of sheep, as well as one thousand pigs.[171]

[165] Paddy Smith, 'Leading Progress in Beef Production', pp 80-81.
[166] *IFJ*, 7 May 1966, 30 Jan. 1971; Paddy Smith, 'Leading Progress in Beef Production', pp 82-83.
[167] Crotty, *Irish Agricultural Production*, p. 198.
[168] *National Farm Survey* 1966-69, p. 43 and p. 45.
[169] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, pp 172-73; *National Farm Survey* 1955-56 and 1957-58, p. 3; *National Farm Survey* 1966-69, pp 118, 124; IFJ, 11 and 18 Jan. 1968.
[170] Maurice Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years, a personal account* (Naas, 2007), pp 75-76; *IFJ*, 30 Nov. 1968.
[171] *IP*, 14 June 1967; *II*, 13 June 1967.

Indeed, the processor set a record in November 1967 when the two factories killed eight thousand cattle in a single week.[172] In contrast, IMP processed 1,200 cattle a week on average through each plant at quieter periods in the year, particularly during the later spring and summer.[173] However, while the size of the IMP business was undoubtedly impressive, the scale of Cork Mart's ambition in seeking to take control of the country's most successful beef and lamb business was equally striking.

The decision by Cork Marts to move into meat processing was flagged in 1967 when the co-operative purchased one hundred acres outside Midleton, Co Cork to develop 'a major abattoir'.[174] The extent to which this investment was influenced by the NFA was alluded to by the *Farmers' Journal* which reported that Cork Marts' decision was in line with the farm body's policy to encourage 'greater participation by farmers through their co-ops (sic) in the meat industry'.[175] The *Farmers' Journal* intimated that the initiative was informed by broader strategic considerations when it stated: 'There is a strong feeling that in the absence of an effective meat [marketing] board, such a trend [co-operative investment] offers the best hope of farmers gaining a measure of control within the industry.'[176] Cork Marts' aspirations of building a meat factory in Midleton – which eventually came to fruition in 1971 after being initially overtaken by the purchase of IMP – illustrates the ambition of its management, and the determination of the wider co-operative movement to increase its presence in the processing business.[177] However, local considerations were also critical. In fact, farmer demands for a modern slaughter plant in Cork were deemed sufficiently important that the Midleton factory was completed in late 1971 despite IMP not having sufficient cattle supplies to utilise the full capacity at the business's existing sites in Dublin and Leixlip.[178] Although Cork Marts was diversifying into a new area in buying IMP, the co-operative had a track record of being both innovative and expansive. From its formation in 1956 Cork Marts had developed – through merger with other mart societies and organic growth – into the country's largest livestock sales businesses by the end of the 1960s with centres in Mallow, Macroom,

[172] *II*, 18 Nov. 1967.
[173] Interview on 9 August 2018 with a former International Meat Company employee, Interviewee A; *IFJ*, 24 Feb. 1968.
[174] *CE*, 1 Feb. 1967; *IFJ*, 4 Feb. 1967.
[175] *IFJ*, 4 Feb. 1967.
[176] Ibid.
[177] *CE*, 15 Oct. 1971; *IFJ*, 7 Aug. 1971.
[178] *IFJ*, 29 Nov. 1971.

Mitchelstown, Fermoy, Bandon, Skibbereen, Cahir and Dungarvan.[179] It was also active in the live export of stock to Britain since the late 1950s, establishing contacts with English buyers and shipping cattle directly from Cork and Waterford.[180] Indeed, in the late 1960s Cork Marts capitalised on the expanding dairy herd to develop a niche market for Irish-bred Friesian heifers in the west of England and Yorkshire.[181]

The confidence of Cork Marts to move into meat processing was fuelled by the success of both the co-operative livestock marts and the farmer-owned creameries during the 1960s. The campaign to establish the marts network had revived the co-operative movement after four decades of stagnation, and reconnected IAOS with committed and motivated farmers who were hungry for change. By the end of the 1960s there were thirty co-op mart societies, many of them like Cork Marts, Golden Vale Marts and Clare Marts had multiple outlets.[182] In 1967 the Store Cattle Study Group found that there were 133 marts in the country, fifty-one of which were farmer-owned co-operative outlets, while the remaining eighty-two were privately run.[183] The sudden growth in the number of marts had a huge impact on the livestock trade. As the marts took over from the fairs, the numbers sold through the auction rings increased exponentially. This was reflected in the value of the sales that the marts handled. In 1961 total livestock sales in the co-operative marts were valued at over £7.6 million.[184] However, by 1963 this figure rose to almost £13 million, and exceeded £46 million by 1969.[185] Total mart sales in all outlets in 1966 were estimated at £60 million.[186] The rise of the livestock marts through the 1960s was in stark contrast to the fortunes of what could be termed the 'old cattle industry' represented by the Dublin Cattle Market and the local fairs. The Dublin market was dominated by cattle finishers, traders and shippers, and was dependent on the live trade to Britain for its commercial survival.[187] However, as buyers abandoned the Dublin Market to purchase cattle in the marts, the number of stock on offer collapsed.

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[179] Interview with Donie Cashman, former IFA president (3 July 2019); Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, pp 75-77; *IFJ*, 2 Nov. 1968.
[180] Interview with Maurice Colbert and John Shirley, (25 Mar. 2014); Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, pp 75-77; Hurley, *Noel Murphy*, pp 146-47.
[181] *IFJ*, 11 June 1966.
[182] *Annual Report of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society Ltd, 1969* (Dublin, 1970), p. 40.
[183] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 86.
[184] *Annual Report of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society Ltd, 1961* (Dublin, 1962), pp 81-82.
[185] *Annual Report of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society Ltd, 1963* (Dublin, 1964), pp 85-86; *Annual Report of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society Ltd, 1969* (Dublin, 1970), p. 40.
[186] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 88.
[187] Jimmy Cosgrave interview (17 Feb. 2014); Joe Barry interview (2 Nov. 2013).

Weekly sales at the Prussia Street facility fell from a high of five thousand cattle in the 1950s to around seven hundred head by 1970, which was less than the average throughput at marts such as Mallow and Fermoy. The Dublin Market eventually closed in May 1973.[188] Similarly, the 1960s was an extremely successful period for the co-operative creameries, which was marked by the merger of small societies, the rationalisation and consolidation of processing – key recommendations of the Knapp Report on the co-operative sector – and the emergence by the end of decade of large commercial entities such as Nenagh Co-operative in Tipperary, Mitchelstown Co-operative and Ballyclough Co-operative in north Cork, Waterford Co-operative, and Avonmore Co-operative in Kilkenny.[189] Given the success of the marts and creameries, the co-operative movement's diversification into meat processing seemed a logical progression.

The IMP purchase by Cork Marts was strongly backed by the *Farmers' Journal*, and particularly by its editor Paddy O'Keeffe. Colleagues at the newspaper claimed that O'Keeffe admitted to persuading Frank Quinn to accept the Cork Marts' offer – a move he bitterly regretted later when the business struggled and eventually failed.[190] 'Farmers own your own business' was the catch cry of a shareholder drive which aimed to raise £3 million from farmers to fund the purchase.[191] Farmer-ownership of meat processing was not a new concept in Ireland: Clover Meats was a co-operative after all. There were also successful examples in Britain, where Fatstock Marketing Corporation (FMC) and Buchan Meats were sizeable, farmer-owned, livestock processing concerns.[192] The farmer-shareholder model of ownership adopted for Cork Marts' purchase of IMP differed from that employed by the FMC in England and Wales.[193] FMC, which took a controlling share in Sallins-based Premier Meat Packers in 1964, was a public company but was majority owned by British farmers through the NFU. It controlled half the pig kill in Britain, and between twelve and

188 Liam Clare, 'The Rise and Demise of the Dublin Cattle Market', p. 30; *IFJ*, 12 Dec. 1970.
189 Martin Ryan, *The Story of Arrabawn Co-Op…so far* (Nenagh, 2013), pp 122-140; Daly, *First Department,* pp 489-492; Joseph G. Knapp, *An Appraisement of Agricultural Co-operation in Ireland* (Dublin, 1964), p. 108.
190 Discussions with former *Irish Farmers' Journal* staff who did not wish to be named (5 Feb. 2019).
191 Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, pp 75-76.
192 Holderness, British agriculture since 1945, pp 88-89; Martin, *The Development of Modern Agriculture*, p. 79; *IFJ*, 24 Sept. 1966.
193 Martin, *The Development of Modern Agriculture*, p. 79; Holderness, British agriculture since 1945, pp 88-89.

fifteen per cent of the total cattle and sheep slaughterings.[194] However, the IMP ownership model more closely resembled that employed by Buchan Meats in Aberdeenshire, Scotland. The firm was owned by 3,800 beef producers and the *Farmers' Journal* maintained that its primary function was securing 'the best possible return' for its shareholders' cattle.[195] The active role played by the *Farmers' Journal* in the IMP takeover highlighted the extent to which the newspaper not only saw itself as the voice of farming, but as an active participant in the development of the industry. This duality of purpose was, and arguably still is, a feature of the newspaper. Indeed, while editing the newspaper O'Keeffe served two separate terms as chairman of AFT from 1973 to 1979.[196] O'Keeffe accepted in an editorial of 26 October 1968 that the £3 million required to fund the IMP deal could place a 'definite strain' on the resources of farmers, but he argued that the purchase offered real benefits.[197] Along with being a profitable concern, O'Keeffe maintained that buying IMP provided an opportunity, with improved marketing, to tackle the £7-9 per head differential that still existed between Irish and British cattle prices - despite the increased access to the UK market which had been secured under the AIFTA.[198] These claims, and the strident championing of the IMP purchase by the *Farmers' Journal*, the NFA and IAOS, proved a major embarrassment just three years later when the company teetered on the brink of collapse.[199]

However, there was no talk of possible failure in the closing months of 1968 when the funding campaign was in full flight. The drive was co-ordinated primarily by IAOS and Cork Marts, with the NFA and Macra also adding support.[200] The case for the deal was made at public meetings by IAOS and Cork Marts staff. The level of farmer interest was extremely strong across Cork particularly and the *Farmers' Journal* claimed that 50,000 copies of the invitation to subscribe were sent out in the first fortnight of the campaign.[201] Cork Marts' marketing manager Paddy Ronayne maintained that £25,000 was raised in southwest Cork alone by the end of the first

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[194] Holderness, British agriculture since 1945, pp 88-89; *IP*, 17 Oct. 1964; *II*, 16 Oct. 1964; *IFJ*, 24 Oct. 1964.
[195] *IFJ*, 24 Sept. 1966.
[196] Michael Miley (ed.), *Growing Knowledge*, pp 31, 206-207.
[197] *IFJ*, 26 Oct. 1968.
[198] Ibid.
[199] *CE*, 25 Feb. 1972; *IP*, 21 Feb. 1972; *II*, 22 Feb. 1972; *IFJ*, 26 Feb. 1972.
[200] Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, pp 75-76; *IFJ*, 26 Oct. 1968 to 18 Jan. 1969.
[201] *IFJ*, 2 Nov. 1968.

week in November, with £300 being the average investment. Former IAOS president, PF Quinlan, said the main difficulty facing those involved was 'the hard slog and the late nights of travelling to meetings that never seemed to run out of questions about, and interest in, the project.'[202] However, fundraising was not restricted to Cork. North Tipperary dairy farmer, Tom Cleary, recalled collecting money for IMP 'from all over the county', while the fund-raising efforts of IAOS official, Maurice Colbert, were concentrated in the southeast.[203] The first million pounds was reached by early December, but farmer resistance to the initiative was evident in parts of Leinster, and Colbert recalled meetings with Paddy O'Keeffe in Murphy-Flood's Hotel, Enniscorthy, Co Wexford to review progress.[204] They need not have worried. By the time the campaign ended in January1969 more than 28,000 farmers had committed £3.2 million to the venture, with £1.4 million or almost forty-five per cent of that total coming from Cork.[205] The IMP purchase by Cork Marts meant farmer-owned co-operatives controlled fifty-five per cent of the national beef slaughtering capacity in 1969. As well as IMP's thirty-five per cent of the kill, a further twenty per cent was in the hands of Clover Meats.[206] The reaction of the farming press to the deal was euphoric, with the *Farmers' Journal* hailing it a 'fine job', but just the 'first step'.[207] The IAOS annual report was equally ebullient, describing 1969 as 'the year when farmers won control over the meat processing and marketing industry.'[208]

The purchase of IMP by Cork Marts was described by the *Farmers' Journal* as a 'good investment' judged by the 'operating efficiency' of the factories involved, and since the business had recorded average profits of £340,000 in 1965, 1966 and 1967.[209] IMP's margins averaged around two per cent for the three years on a turnover of £14 million; which, although tight, was significantly higher than the 0.5 per cent recorded by Cork Marts' livestock trading operations in 1968.[210] In addition, Cork Marts could justifiably point to moves by Golden Vale Marts to invest in the meat processing sector. The Limerick-based co-operative agreed to invest £300,000 for a

[202] *IFJ*, 26 Oct., 2 Nov., 9 Nov. 1968.
[203] Tom Cleary interview (13 Oct. 2016); Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, pp 75-76.
[204] Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, pp 75-76; *IFJ*, 7 Dec. 1968.
[205] *IFJ*, 11 Jan. 1969; Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, pp 75-76.
[206] Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, pp 75-76.
[207] *IFJ*, 18 Jan. 1969.
[208] *Annual Report of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society Ltd, 1969* (Dublin, 1970) as quoted in Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, p. 103.
[209] *IFJ*, 26 Oct. 1968.
[210] *IP*, 14 June 1967; *II*, 13 June 1967; *IFJ*, 26 Oct. 1968, 1 Mar. 1969.

sixty per cent stake in a new factory at Rathdowney, Co Laois which was being developed by the Lyons Group from Longford.[211] After a slow start, farmer co-operatives were now competing with one another to invest in cattle and sheep processing. However, the meat business was a difficult one in which to make money, as the co-operatives found out to their cost when margins in the trade collapsed in 1971 and 1972.[212]

DIFFICULT UK MARKET

Britain was both a lucrative and difficult market for Irish beef processors during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Worryingly, however, attempts by the British authorities to row back on the level of access afforded to Irish agricultural produce under the AIFTA were a recurring feature of the Anglo-Irish trade relations in the period from 1968 to 1972.[213] These efforts were successfully rebutted in 1967 and 1968, although they prompted some anxiety and anger in the farming sector. Indeed, *Irish Farmers' Journal* editor, Paddy O'Keeffe, a man not given to nationalistic outbursts, cited the Treaty of Limerick when commenting on the British attempts to redraw the AIFTA. 'While the treaty offers us protection, we not forget Britain's record after Limerick, and after all the other forgotten treaties contracted between our two nations,' he wrote.[214] In the spring of 1969, however, the Irish government was forced to cut the level of support provided under the Carcass Beef Export Guarantee Scheme to 1.25d per lb below that paid under the British Fatstock Guarantee Scheme following pressure from the UK authorities worried at the level of Irish beef exports.[215] In addition, the British drastically reduced tariffs on beef imports into the UK in October 1969, cutting the rates from twenty per cent to five per cent in an effort to attract increased supplies from Argentina and other South American countries that had

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[211] Sean Liston, *From Fair to Mart and Beyond - A history of Golden Vale Co-operative Mart Limited 1956 – 2016* (Kilmallock, 2017), p. 193.
[212] *CE*, 25 Feb. 1972; *IP*, 21 Feb. 1972; *II*, 22 Feb. 1972.
[213] Note on meeting between British and Irish officials at the Board of Trade in London on 7 July 1969, and note from the British Board of Trade to the Department of External Affairs dated 23 July 1969, report of meeting between British and Irish officials held on 29-30 October 1969 (NAI, DFA/2012/59/1992); Note from Department of Agriculture to the Department of Finance, 21 May 1971 (NAI, DFA/2012/59/1957); Aide memoire for government from the Department of Agriculture, 17 Jan. 1972 (NAI, DA/2012/59/195).
[214] *IFJ,* 23 Nov. 1968.
[215] Aide memoire for government from the Department of Agriculture, 17 Jan. 1972 (NAI, DA/2012/59/195).

switched to supplying Italy, Spain and the US following their exclusion from the UK market in the wake of the foot and mouth outbreak of 1967.[216] Meanwhile, Ireland had to battle for exclusion from an import levy initiative which was introduced by the British government in July 1971 to regulate supplies into the UK of critical foodstuff such as meat and dairy products.[217] Beef exports to the UK qualified for rewarding supports from the British and Irish governments, as noted earlier in this chapter; however, the market's position as the primary outlet for Irish meat left processors extremely exposed to changes in UK trade policy and to British market trends and developments.[218] With the UK market taking almost seventy per cent of Ireland's beef exports by 1971, or more than 100,000 tons, the country's meat companies could ill afford major disruptions to either the volume or conditions of trade between the two countries.[219]

British efforts to review the operation of the AIFTA were prompted by repeated complaints from UK farm representatives and civil servants – generally officials with either the Board of Trade or the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) – that Irish processors were effectively dumping beef on the British market and undermining prices as a consequence.[220] Calls from the NFU for more ordered exports of Irish beef were echoed by British civil servants who blamed the enormous growth in meat shipments from Ireland on the supports paid under Haughey's Carcass Beef Export Guarantee Scheme.[221] The British pointed out that Irish beef exports were four times the level envisaged by the AIFTA as a result of the Carcass Beef Export Guarantee Scheme's introduction, while store cattle exports had

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[216] Note on meeting between British and Irish officials at the Board of Trade in London on 7 July 1969, and note from the British Board of Trade to the Department of External Affairs, 23 July 1969 (NAI, DFA/2012/59/1992).

[217] Report of meeting between British and Irish officials, 29-30 October 1969 (NAI, DFA/2012/59/1992); Note from Department of Agriculture to the Department of Finance, 21 May 1971 (NAI, DFA/2012/59/1957).

[218] *IFJ*, 27 Dec. 1969; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1967-68*, pp 34-35; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78.

[219] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1967-68*, pp 34-35; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78.

[220] Letter from the British Embassy to the Department of Foreign Affairs, 22 Mar. 1971 (NAI, DFA/2012/59/1957); *IFJ*, 27 Dec. 1969; Report of meeting between UK Department of Trade and MAFF officials and Department of Agriculture staff, 25 and 31 Jan. 1972 (NAI, DA/2012/59/195).

[221] *IFJ*, 27 Dec. 1969; Report of meeting between UK Department of Trade and MAFF officials and Department of Agriculture staff, 31 Jan. 1972 (NAI, DA/2012/59/195); Letter from the British Embassy to the Department of Foreign Affairs, 22 Mar. 1971 (NAI, DFA/2012/59/1957).

failed to reach the 638,000 animals stipulated in the agreement.[222] British frustrations were forthrightly articulated in a letter from the UK embassy to the Department of Foreign Affairs in 1971. It claimed Ireland was subsidising 'the export of carcass beef to the United Kingdom with the aid of monies from the United Kingdom exchequer under the agreement on store animals and carcass meat'.[223] Essentially, the UK government was accusing the Irish state of using British exchequer supports to subsidise Irish beef exports to Britain. The UK perceptions of the AIFTA cannot have been helped when agriculture minister Neil Blaney sought an increase in the tonnage of Irish beef that qualified for British exchequer subsidies under the AIFTA in the spring of 1970. Blaney's endeavours were summarily dismissed by British treasury officials who accused the Irish minister of 'blatantly trying it on' and advised that he should be 'firmly and politely rebuffed'.[224]

'Soft selling' of Irish beef remained a feature of the British meat trade into the early 1970s, despite strenuous denials from senior Department of Agriculture staff, such as Donal Buckley and Jimmy O'Mahony, that an oversupply of Irish beef was destabilising the market.[225] The economic attaché at the Irish embassy in London, H.G. Foster, claimed that a potential 'debacle' on the British beef market was only averted in December 1970 because Irish meat factories were short of containers – a fact he described as 'a blessing'.[226] In a briefing note to Donal Buckley, the deputy secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Mr Foster stated that the Irish beef sector had 'attracted adverse comments both in the trade and in official circles' because of its failure to 'phase' supplies away from the October to January period when British beef output was also at its height.[227] Foster's despatches were followed within a month by NFA accusations that the Irish beef processors were undermining returns to

222 Report of meeting between UK Department of Trade and MAFF officials and Department of Agriculture staff, 25 and 31 Jan. 1972 (NAI, DA/2012/59/195).
223 Letter from the British Embassy to the Department of Foreign Affairs, 22 Mar. 1971 (NAI, DFA/2012/59/1957).
224 Letter from P. Jefferson-Smith (British Treasury) to D.T. Taylor (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), 4 May 1970 (TNA, FCO 30/819).
225 *IFJ*, 16 Jan., 6 Feb. 1971, 11 Nov. 1972; Briefing note from H.G. Foster of the Irish Embassy in London to Donal Buckley, deputy secretary of the Department of Agriculture, 14 Dec. 1970 (NAI, DFA/2012/59/1957); Briefing document from Department of Agriculture's Jimmy O'Mahony to Robert McDonagh, assistant secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs, 7 April 1971 (NAI, DFA/2012/59/1957); Department of Agriculture memorandum to government, 17 Jan. 1972, and Aide Memoire to British officials dated 20 Jan. 1972 (NAI, DA/2012/59/195).
226 Briefing note from H.G. Foster of the Irish Embassy in London to Donal Buckley, 14 Dec. 1970 (NAI, DFA/2012/59/1957).
227 Ibid.

farmers by undercutting one another on the British market.[228] This assertion was rejected by Jim Bastow of the Irish Fresh Meat Exporters' Association (IFMEA), but the reality on the ground was that Irish beef was 4d per lb cheaper than English or Scottish product in 1970, although it was considered of similar standard from a meat quality perspective.[229] This equated to over £10 on a 640lb carcass. Indeed, the *Farmers' Journal* accused butchers and wholesalers in Smithfield Market of deceiving consumers and farmers by selling cheap Irish beef as English meat in order to secure the local premium. Similar practices were observed in Glasgow by H.G. Foster.[230]

MARKETING COMEBACK

The difficulties experienced by Irish meat factories in Britain in 1970 and early 1971, and the resultant stagnation in cattle prices, forced beef marketing back onto the agricultural agenda. Beef prices for November, the busiest month of the year for cattle disposals, held at 36-37d per lb during 1969 and 1970, and were on the equivalent of 38d per lb in 1971 when the post-decimilisation price was 16p per lb.[231] Against a background of increasing input costs. this stalling of beef price increases was effectively an erosion of farmer incomes. Ironically, the marketing debate had receded somewhat during 1968 and 1969 as tight cattle supplies in Britain in the wake of the 1967 foot and mouth outbreak prompted higher prices and improved returns for Irish livestock farmers.[232] However, as Daly observes, the higher prices were mainly due to exchequer supports such as the Carcass Beef Export Guarantee Scheme and Calved Heifer Scheme.[233] Store cattle prices rose from a base of £6 per cwt in October 1966 to £10 per cwt by 1968, and to £12-15 per cwt by April 1969.[234] Exports of store cattle to the UK averaged around 600,000 animals in 1967 and 1968 as demand for beef in Britain gathered pace due to the ban on meat imports from South America and

[228] *IFJ*, 16 Jan., 6 Feb. 1971.
[229] Report by H.G. Foster of the Irish Embassy in London on the trade for Irish meat in Glasgow, compiled 21-23 October 1970 (NAI, DFA/2012/59/1957); *IFJ*, 6 Feb. 1971.
[230] Report by H.G. Foster of the Irish Embassy in London on the trade for Irish meat in Glasgow, compiled 21-23 October 1970 (NAI, DFA/2012/59/1957); *IFJ*, 9 Oct. 1971.
[231] *IFJ*, 8 Nov. 1969, 7 Nov. 1970, 6 Nov. 1971.
[232] *CE*, 21 Dec. 1967; IP, 16, 28 Nov. 1967; *IFJ*, 13 Jan. 1968.
[233] Daly, *First Department,* pp 484-85.
[234] *IFJ*, 29 Oct. 1966, 9 Mar. 1968, 12 Apr. 1969.

the loss of stock in the foot and mouth cull.[235] Indeed, Ray Taylor of Banbury Market in Oxfordshire told the *Farmers' Journal* in January 1968 that he was receiving dozens of calls each day from farmers looking for Irish cattle. Similar reports were received from Hexham, Newcastle and Stirling in Scotland, the newspaper reported.[236] Stronger beef prices during this period mirrored the improvement in the live cattle trade. While the quoted factory price for beef hit a low of 23d per lb in December 1966, it rebounded to 36d per lb by November the following year, and reached almost 40d per lb by the middle of 1969.[237] However, as noted earlier, this recovery lost momentum in 1970 when shipments of South American beef into the UK recovered as the import tariff reductions introduced by the British in 1969 began to have an impact. The total tonnage of fresh and frozen beef imported from Argentina increased from 34,000 tons in 1968 to 122,000 tons in 1969.[238] In addition, demand for beef in the UK was impacted by a sizeable lift in British output, which saw UK cattle numbers rise from 10.79 million animals in 1960-62 to 11.57 million in 1970-72, and self-sufficiency in beef go from sixty-four per cent to seventy-three per cent between 1960 and 1970.[239] The immediate impact was even more dramatic in 1970, with British cattle slaughterings increasing by 7.5 per cent over those of 1969, and imports of fresh and frozen beef falling as a consequence by twenty-four per cent during the first nine months of the year.[240]

Tackling the challenges that emerged in the British beef market in 1970-71 resulted in the newly-formed CBF working with the meat companies that had opposed its establishment. Relations between the two sides were fraught and were not helped by CBF seeking statutory powers to enforce a 'code of practice' in the industry which covered areas such as quality control, animal classification and grading, and factory standards.[241] Indeed, John O'Callaghan, the chair of the meat processor representative group, IFMES, did not disguise his reservations regarding CBF when he opened a meeting between the two bodies by asking his members to accept that the marketing

[235] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 36; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1967-68*, p. 28; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1968-69*, p. 29.
[236] *IFJ*, 6 Jan. 1968.
[237] *IP*, 28 Nov. 1967; *IFJ*, 3 Dec. 1966, 7 June 1969.
[238] Report on International Meat Study Group meeting, 17 June 1970, (NAI, DFA/2012/59/1957).
[239] Holderness, British agriculture since 1945, pp 170-174.
[240] An assessment of the British beef and livestock trade for 1970-72, compiled by Irish Embassy staff, 27 Nov. 1970 (NAI, DFA/2012/59/1957).
[241] Document setting out the role, achievements and plans for CBF (NAI, TAOIS 2002/8/165).

agency was now in place 'for better or for worse'.[242] CBF was headed up by Peter Needham. A native of Gurteen in south Sligo, he worked with both Coras Tráchtála and the United Distillers of Ireland prior to joining CBF in 1969.[243] Needham signalled a more proactive approach by CBF to beef marketing when the state body launched trials on a carcass grading and classification system in February 1970. 'Our beef industry is at present mainly production minded. It has to lay more stress on marketing...Grading and [carcass] classification are vital to a marketing programme,' he stated.[244] However, Needham's views on marketing were totally at odds with those of the beef processors. Whereas CBF wanted to focus marketing efforts on retailers and consumers, the meat companies insisted that meat agents who operated out of municipal markets such as Smithfield in London and the Stanley Market in Liverpool had to be central in any promotional campaign.[245] These differences surfaced at a meeting between CBF and IFMES in February 1971. Needham maintained that processors needed to create a 'quality symbol' and brand Irish meat on the British market to 'delineate it' from British and South American product. However, Paddy Nolan of Dublin Meat Packers pointed out that fifty per cent of Irish beef exports were handled by wholesalers and that any marketing campaign that ignored that fact had 'a very limited chance of improving the selling of Irish meat'.[246] Veteran IFMES secretary, Jim Bastow, went further, and warned that processors' funding for CBF was dependent on any future marketing campaign in Britain targeting wholesalers.[247] Despite the meat companies' opposition, consumers were the primary target of a major CBF beef marketing campaign aimed at London and England's south-east.[248] Launched in September 1971, and backed up by television advertisements, CBF said the £80,000-spend aimed to create a 'national identity' for Irish beef at retail level in England.[249]

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[242] Report of meeting between the Irish Fresh Meat Exporters Society (IFMES) and CBF, 3 Feb. 1971 (NAI, 2002/8/165).
[243] *II*, 20 Sept. 1969; *IFJ*, 30 Aug. 1969, 7 Feb. 1970.
[244] *IFJ*, 7 Feb. 1970.
[245] Report of meeting between the Irish Fresh Meat Exporters Society (IFMES) and CBF, 3 Feb. 1971 (NAI, 2002/8/165).
[246] Ibid.
[247] Ibid.
[248] *Sunday Times,* 5 Sept. 1971; *IFJ*, 14 Aug. 1971; *Sunday Telegraph,* 26 Sept. 1971.
[249] *Irish Livestock and Meat News* (a CBF information publication), Nov. 1971 (NAI, DA/2002/8/165); Document setting out the role, achievements and plans for CBF (NAI, TAOIS 2002/8/165); *Sunday Times,* 5 Sept. 1971; *Sunday Telegraph,* 26 Sept. 1971.

Although the factories lost the battle on the London beef promotion, they were more successful in seeing off further attempts from both the *Farmers' Journal* and CBF to introduce centralised marketing. The *Farmers' Journal* proposal, floated in January 1972, envisaged the establishment of one or two Irish-controlled meat marketing organisation in Britain. One of these would be centred on the co-op processors, IMP and Clover Meats, with the privately-owned firms using CBF for their sales and marketing.[250] However, the concept failed to make it beyond the pages of the newspaper. CBF's plan, which was launched three months later, proposed the establishment of a body termed the Meat Marketing Corporation of Ireland that would be jointly financed by a grant from CBF, a levy on meat shipments, and by share capital from meat processors who would have directors in the company. Its function would be to market meat and meat products and to grade all meat exports.[251] While some processors were open to considering the merits of the plan, including Roger McCarrick of IMP, others were less enthusiastic. Larry Goodman, of Louth-based Anglo Irish Meats, maintained that the initiative would simply benefit those plants doing 'a poor job' of selling meat, while Paddy Nolan of Dublin Meat Packers feared the proposed entity would be monopolised by the bigger interests in the meat industry.[252] Support for both initiatives quickly faltered.

Beef processors were certainly not Luddite when it came to selling meat and the early 1970s witnessed significant changes to the UK meat trade, such as factories selling directly to wholesalers and retailers, and moving business away from traditional centres such as Smithfield Market.[253] This profoundly altered the beef business in the long-term. At the aforementioned meeting between the IFMES and CBF in February 1971, D.C. Crowley of Roscrea Meats supported Needham's approach to branding, explaining that as a result of a CBF promotion he had secured a contract which paid a 2d per lb premium for carcasses of an agreed specification. Irish meat would have to be branded and classified 'if it was to be sold in the best possible manner, and at the best possible price,' he told the meeting.[254] This illustrated an

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[250] *IFJ*, 8 Jan. 1972.
[251] *CE,* 21 Apr. 1972*; IFJ*, 29 Apr. 1972.
[252] *IFJ*, 29 Apr. 1972.
[253] Irish Embassy report on the British beef market, October 1969 (NAI, DFA/2012/59/1992); *IFJ*, 14 Feb. 1970.
[254] Report of meeting between the Irish Fresh Meat Exporters Society (IFMES) and CBF, 3 Feb. 1971 (NAI, 2002/8/165).

acceptance by Crowley that the beef sector was changing. Developments in the manner in which Irish meat was sold resulted in companies moving away from a dependence on Smithfield Market.[255] For example, Clover Meats sold ninety per cent of its beef on a commission basis through Smithfield Market in 1969, but eighty-four per cent of its business was done on agreed-price orders by January 1970. This meant that the company went from a policy of shipping first and selling later, to one where they sold first and then shipped, explained Clover Meats' CEO, Michael Collins.[256] Similarly, Gus Fitzpatrick of Premier Meat Packers in Sallins recalled that the company reduced the volume of sales through Smithfield in the early 1970s, forging direct links instead with wholesale meat traders such as Swifts, Thomas Borthwick and Sons, and Vestey Brothers who owned the Dewhurst chain of butcher shops.[257] Describing Smithfield as 'basically a dumping ground', Fitzpatrick said companies could secure a premium price if they 'picked out a couple of decent butcher chains' or secured private contracts with large buyers of meat such as hotels. A contract with the Cumberland Hotel in London's west end in the early 1970s paid twenty-five shillings for hind-quarter pistola cuts that were virtually unsalable anywhere else, Fitzpatrick maintained.[258] IMP took a similar approach, establishing the London-based Irish Meat Marketing Limited in 1970. This was a joint venture with Swifts and aimed to develop direct sales to hotels, chains of butcher shops and supermarkets by utilising Swifts' sixty-six depots across Britain.[259] The impact of these changes was detailed in a report prepared by the Irish Embassy in October 1969 which estimated that two-thirds of Irish meat traded during the month of September that year was sold subject to 'firm offers' from customers, with the remainder being handled through Smithfield.[260] This was a significant change for the industry given that the 1963 industry survey found that 'the great bulk' of beef sold in Britain was sold through the 'central wholesale markets in the large population centres'.[261]

The emergence of the supermarkets as direct buyers of meat was another notable development during this period. Ironically, this change was facilitated by the

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[255] Interviews with Gus Fitzpatrick (Oct. 18, 2016 and Mar. 1, 2017); Irish Embassy report on the British beef market dated, October 1969 (NAI, DFA/2012/59/1992); *IFJ*, 14 Feb. 1970.
[256] *IFJ*, 14 Feb. 1970.
[257] Interviews with Gus Fitzpatrick (Oct. 18, 2016 and Mar. 1, 2017).
[258] Ibid.
[259] *IFJ*, 23 May 1970.
[260] Irish Embassy report on the British beef market dated, October 1969 (NAI, DFA/2012/59/1992).
[261] *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 68.

growth in UK imports of boneless, vacuum-packed meat cuts from South America in the aftermath of the foot and mouth outbreak of 1967.[262] Although British butchers were reported to be 'apprehensive' about consumer reaction to vacuum-packed beef, Irish officials correctly forecast that the better presentation of prime cuts would be adopted by the supermarkets and that Argentine imports could 'break the ground' for Irish supplies.[263] The move into vacuum-packed beef by the Irish processors was facilitated by trials carried out by the Meat Research Department of AFT at Dunsinea, near Ashtown in Co Dublin.[264] The industry was already producing some vacuum-packed product, with IMP contracted to supply the US armed forces in Europe in this fashion.[265] In 1968 Terry Kennedy of IMP forecast the critical importance of supermarket contracts to the meat industry by predicting that beef processing was moving towards 'supplying boneless cuts prepared in the factory' for both retail butchers and supermarkets.[266] This retail trend was facilitated by vacuum-packing as it allowed the butcher or supermarket to buy exactly the quantity of specific cuts they required rather than whole sides of beef.[267] Establishing boning halls to produce these primal cuts was a feature of the industry during this period.[268] By 1970 Clover Meats was supplying the Armour Group in Britain with boneless vacuum-packed cuts, while IMP was supplying the Pricerite supermarket chain in the south of England, with Dutch and German supermarket contracts following in 1972.[269] The volumes of beef involved in these direct retail sales were small, but the trade fostered important business relationships for the sector.

PROCESSING PROBLEMS

Irish beef processor profits were largely dependent on AIFTA-related support payments at the start of the 1970s, despite the industry's success in moving a proportion of its sales away from wholesale markets such as Smithfield. An examination of IMP's results for 1967 and 1968 suggests that British and Irish

[262] Interview with Sylvester Byrne, trained butcher and former AFT staff member (11 July 2018); Aide memoire on the proposed UK import tariff reductions, 14 July 1969 (NAI, DFA/2012/59/1992).
[263] Irish Embassy report on the British beef market dated, October 1969 (NAI, DFA/2012/59/1992).
[264] Interview with former AFT and Teagasc researcher, Tony Kenny (19 Feb. 2019); Sylvester Byrne interview (11 July 2018); *IFJ*, 20 Feb. 1971.
[265] Sylvester Byrne interview (11 July 2018).
[266] *IFJ*, 7 Dec. 1968.
[267] Sylvester Byrne interview (11 July 2018).
[268] *Meat Trades Journal*, 14 Dec. 1972.
[269] *IFJ*, 14 Feb., 28 Mar. 1970, 25 Oct. 1972.

exchequer supports essentially funded the company's profits.[270] This assessment is based on the total value of the supports paid to the industry in 1967 and 1968, an estimation of the likely share of these payments that IMP secured, and the stated profits for the company for the years in question. The total value of beef supports paid to meat processors in 1967 under the British Fatstock Guarantee Scheme and Haughey's Carcass Beef Export Guarantee Scheme was £6 million.[271] Since IMP's share of the national kill was estimated at thirty-five to forty per cent, it is reasonable to conclude that the company received at least twenty-five per cent of the total supports paid to processors or around £1.5 million.[272] However, the stated profits for IMP in 1967 were just £623,000.[273] The figures suggest, in fact, that IMP could have incurred losses of around £800,000 in 1967 without the subsidies paid on prime cattle by the British and Irish governments. It is a similar situation in 1968. The total beef export supports paid to the beef factories in 1968-69 was £2.2 million.[274] A twenty-five per cent share of this figure equates to around £550,000. Yet, IMP profits in 1968 were just £159,000 – or thirty per cent of the beef export support payments the company could reasonably have expected to receive.[275] While Terry Kennedy of IMP attributed the low profits in 1968 to high beef stocks in cold stores due to an American dock strike which delayed shipments to the US, these figures still indicate that at the end of the 1960s the commercial viability of the country's largest beef processor– and, by extension, those of other meat companies – were completely reliant on the supports delivered by the exchequer-funded beef export subsidies.[276] While this exercise is indicative rather than forensic, it is based on a reasonable evaluation of the available information. The contention that profit levels in the beef industry were dependent on exchequer subsidies is corroborated by the Department of Agriculture which conceded that the 1969 reduction in Irish beef export supports to 0.52p per lb below the level available under the British Fatstock Guarantee Scheme

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[270] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1966-67*, pp 39-40; *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, pp 189-190; *IFJ*, 7 Feb. 1970.
[271] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, pp 189-190.
[272] Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, pp 75-76; *IFJ*, 30 Nov. 1968; II, 13 June 1967; *IP*, 14 June 1967.
[273] *IFJ*, 7 Feb. 1970.
[274] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1968-69*, p. 37.
[275] *IFJ*, 7 Feb. 1970.
[276] Ibid.

reduced meat companies' incomes by £300,000 in 1971.[277] Moreover, this view is also borne out by the severe losses reported by slaughter plants in 1971-72 when export supports fell to negligible levels because of a significant increase in cattle prices.[278]

A sustained rise in cattle prices in 1971-72 eventually exposed the weak trading position of the beef factories, and their financial dependence on British and Irish export support payments, with the meat companies forced to seek short-term loans from the government to secure their commercial survival.[279] The cost of beef bullocks and heifers for slaughter rose almost twenty per cent between April 1971 and November 1972, increasing from 19.6-19.0p per lb to 24-22p per lb during this period.[280] Strong competition from live exports to the EEC was the primary reason for pronounced improvement in the cattle trade, with shipments of livestock to the continent increasing from eight thousand animals in 1970 to almost 100,000 in 1972.[281] Payments to European farmers to remove old cows from their herds, which were introduced by the EEC in the late 1960s at a time when the Common Market had surplus meat, rebounded on the policy planners in 1972 when a shortage of beef forced the Community to lift import duties on both live cattle and carcass beef from external sources.[282] The European beef shortage prompted a major expansion in exports of Irish cattle to the continent as traders sought to take advantage of the £5-6 per cwt differential between Irish prices and those of Holland, Germany and Italy. While fat cattle made around £20 per cwt on the continent during the early summer of 1972, heavy stock sold for £14-15 per cwt in Irish marts.[283] Close to 27,000 fat cattle and 10,000 fat cows were exported to the Continent in the first six months of 1972, with in excess of 23,000 head being shipped following the EEC decision to suspend import levies in June. In the last six months of the year a further 60,000 fat cattle were

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[277] Memorandum for government, entitled 'The support Level for Carcass Beef Exports', 17 Jan. 1972 (NAI, DA/2012/59/195).

[278] *CE*, 25 Feb. 1972; *IP*, 21 Feb. 1972; *II*, 22 Feb. 1972; *IFJ*, 29 Jan., 12 Feb. 1972; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1971-72, p. 35.*

[279] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1971-72, p. 35; IFJ*, 8 Jan., 29 Jan., 25 Mar. 1972; *CE*, 25 Feb. 1972; *IP*, 21 Feb. 1972; *II*, 22 Feb. 1972.

[280] *IFJ*, 3 Apr. 1971, 18 Nov. 1972.

[281] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, 1972-73, p. 35.

[282] Gus Fitzpatrick interview (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017); *IFJ*, 1 Jan. 1972; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 79.

[283] *IFJ*, 10 June, 17 June 1972.

shipped to the EEC.[284] Competition for cattle was good news for farmers. Writing in the *Farmers' Journal* of August 19, Michael Dillon described how a German buyer in Mullingar Mart drove prices 'sky high'.[285] On average cattle in the marts were £3 per cwt dearer than the same week in 1971, which equated to over £30 per animal.[286] The lift in prices and increased competition for stock meant that the live shippers temporarily eclipsed the slaughter plants as the primary outlet for cattle in 1972. While Irish factories processed and canned 130,000 tonnes of beef or the equivalent of 580,000 cattle, the number shipped live reached just under 600,000.[287] How was this level of cattle disposals possible?

	EXPORT SLAUGHTERINGS			LIVE	TOTAL	HOME	TOTAL
	COWS	PRIME	TOTAL	EXPORTS	EXPORTS	CONSUMPTION	DISPOSALS
1950	90	26	116	495	611	180	791
1955	129	54	183	619	802	176	978
1960	245	132	377	542	919	186	1,105
1965	163	150	313	597	910	203	1,113
1966	256	174	430	625	1,055	206	1,261
1967	307	446	753	671	1,424	211	1,645
1968	268	353	621	625	1,246	232	1,478
1969	255	378	633	553	1,186	235	1,421
1970	232	465	697	529	1,226	240	1,466
1971	260	448	708	616	1,324	243	1,567
1972	163	416	579	597	1,176	234	1,410

Table 3.C: Cattle Disposals 1950-72
(All figures are 'ooo head)
Source: CSO and Department of Agriculture data as published in the *Cooper and Lybrand Report* (1977) for the IDA

The answer lies in the growth of the national herd, which went from 4.48 million cattle in 1955 to 6.44 million head in 1972. [288] This expansion meant that annual cattle disposals in Ireland increased by close to fifty per cent between 1960 and 1971, rising from 1.1 million animals to 1.57 million in just over a decade (see Table 3.C).[289] Ireland's ability to increase dead meat output significantly while maintaining live cattle exports was facilitated by this unprecedented lift in cattle numbers.

This marked increase in cattle prices undermined processor margins on two fronts, as it negated the need for support payments under both the British Fatstock

[284] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 79; *IFJ*, 3 June 1972.
[285] *IFJ*, 19 August 1972.
[286] Ibid., 20 Aug. 1971, 11 Aug. 1972.
[287] Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, p. 14; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, 1972-73, p. 35 and p. 39.
[288] Central Statistics Office, cattle and beef exports (http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=TSA04&PLanguage=0) (8 July 2014).
[289] Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, p. 14.

Guarantee Scheme and the Irish Carcass Beef Export Guarantee Scheme, and it increased factories' expenditure on cattle which accounted for around eighty per cent of the meat companies' cost base.[290] Indeed, the Department of Agriculture annual report for 1971-72 noted that because of the high cattle and beef prices in Britain supports were paid under the Fatstock Guarantee Scheme for just three weeks.[291] This was a major loss to the beef factories, given that these supports were worth £3.8 million to the industry in 1970-71.[292] Meanwhile, the number of cattle slaughtered by Irish factories fell significantly as the processors struggled to compete with the live shippers for cattle. Throughput for British contracts in the busy October to December period fell almost twenty per cent between 1970 and 1971, dropping from 158,000 to 122,000 animals. While in January 1972 the number of cattle killed for UK outlets almost halved.[293] Processors ability to pass on the higher cost of cattle in 1971-72 to the retailers and the British public met with strong resistance from consumers, amid warnings that 'housewives would turn to chicken and pork' because of the increased cost of beef.[294] The retail price of beef increased on average by thirty-five per cent between 1968 and 1971, with the cost of round steak rising by fifty per cent – going from 28p per lb to 42p per lb.[295] This difficult trading environment put intense financial pressure on the meat companies. 'There wasn't a meat factory in Ireland that was making money in 1971,' Gus Fitzpatrick of Premier Meat Packers in Sallins, Co Kildare recalled. He said the beef industry was 'on its knees' as it struggled to compete with live shippers for cattle.[296] In January 1972 the beef processors appealed to the government for short-term loans to cover growing losses in the sector.[297] A loan fund for the industry totalling £750,000 – and later increased to close to £1 million – was approved by government in March 1972 after the seriousness of the crisis facing the industry was confirmed when it emerged that IMP had amassed losses of £800,000 in 1971 and was losing money at a similar rate during the opening weeks of

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[290] *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, 1963, pp 26-27; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, 1972-73, p. 35*; Irish Independent,* 22 February 1972.
[291] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, 1971-72, p. 35.
[292] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, 1970-71, p. 36.
[293] Aide memoire to the British authorities regarding the beef export supports differential between the UK and Ireland, 20 Jan. 1972 (NAI, DA/2012/59/195).
[294] *IFJ*, 9 Jan. 1971.
[295] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, pp 82-83.
[296] Gus Fitzpatrick interview (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017).
[297] *IFJ*, 29 Jan. 1972.

1972.[298] The news sent shockwaves through the Irish agricultural sector, coming as it did just three years after twenty-eight thousand farmers had taken part in an unprecedented campaign to raise in excess of £3.3 million to purchase the business.[299] The immediate fall-out of the news was the removal of Terry Kennedy as chief executive of the business. He was replaced by Jerry Beechinor who headed up Cork Marts, the driving force behind the IMP purchase in 1968-69.[300]

High cattle prices due to strong competition for livestock between the beef factories and live shippers were the primary cause of IMP's financial difficulties. However, this challenge was compounded by the failure of the company's marketing efforts in Britain to secure premium outlets for Irish beef, and by the contradictory objectives which arose from beef farmers owning a meat processing concern.[301] Securing the maximum price for their stock was the priority for IMP's beef farmer shareholders. In contrast, the primary aim of the business was to buy the cattle as cheaply as possible, since livestock purchases were the company's most significant overhead.[302] These goals were mutually exclusive, in most instances, and needed to be balanced carefully within IMP. However, the intense pressure on the farmer-owned business to pay a strong cattle price was illustrated by Paddy O'Keeffe's comments in the *Farmers' Journal* when he welcomed IMP's early success in a 1970 column, but insisted that the company would be judged by 'its capacity to become the acknowledged leader in cattle prices'.[303] These contradictory objectives provoked tensions at board level between the old management of IMP and the representatives of the new farmer owners.[304] The differences in outlook and perspective between the two groups are evident from the comments of an International Meats' veteran who admitted that it was 'hard to sit in a board room with fourteen farmer directors'. 'They were not meat people,' he maintained. 'They'd talk all day about breeds [of cattle] and crossbreeds, and artificial inseminations – instead of the bloody meat trade.'[305]

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[298] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1972-73, p. 35; IT*, 23 Feb. 1972; *IFJ*, 26 Feb. 1972.
[299] *CE*, 25 Feb. 1972; *IP*, 21 Feb. 1972; *II*, 22 Feb. 1972; *IFJ*, 29 Jan., 12 Feb. 1972.
[300] *IFJ*, 26 Feb. 1972.
[301] Interview with a former International Meat Company employee, Interviewee A (9 Aug. 2018); *II,* 22 Feb. 1972; *IFJ*, 26 Feb. 1972.
[302] *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, 1963, pp 26-27.
[303] *IFJ*, 27 June 1970.
[304] *II*, 22 Feb. 1972.
[305] Interview with Interviewee A (9 Aug. 2018).

Board tensions also surfaced regarding the decision to proceed with the development of the factory in Midleton, Co Cork.[306] Paddy O'Keeffe questioned the wisdom of IMP building another slaughter plant, and argued that the £170,000 spent on the Midleton site in 1970 would have given a better return if invested in marketing.[307] However, the Midleton development was strongly supported by Cork-based board members, including the newly appointed chief executive, Gerry Beechinor, who argued that building a modern slaughter plant in the south had been the main reason for Cork Mart's move into processing, and an important factor in the success of the farmer share drive which funded the purchase of IMP.[308] However, the value of the Midleton investment was difficult to justify in 1972 as factories struggled to secure cattle supplies. In fact, the three IMP factories killed just 1,500 head animals in the last week of February in 1972, even though the plants had capacity to slaughter up to five thousand.[309]

The under-utilisation of slaughtering capacity was not confined to IMP, but, rather, was major structural weakness of the beef industry during the early 1970s.[310] The ESRI report of 1973 found that the annual slaughtering capacity of the sector in 1971, if working at peak throughput for the entire year, was 1.7 million cattle. However, the total cattle kill that year was just 708,000 which put the average capacity utilisation of the industry at forty-two to forty-four per cent.[311] This was an ongoing challenge for the beef sector and was aggravated by the seasonal nature of Irish cattle supplies. Terry Kennedy of IMP pointed that the industry had the capacity to process 1.25 million animals in 1968, but just 600,000 cattle were killed.[312] The capacity usage for the year was therefore just forty-eight per cent. Seasonal variations in cattle supplies contributed to the poor capacity usage of Irish meat factories. The vast majority of Irish cattle were – and still are to a large extent – finished off grass in

[306] *II*, 22 Feb. 1972; *IFJ*, 26 Feb. 1972.
[307] *IFJ*, 29 Nov. 1969, 4 Sept. 1971.
[308] *II*, 22 Feb. 1972; *IFJ*, 26 Feb. 1972.
[309] *IFJ*, 4 Mar. 1972.
[310] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 95; Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, pp 14-19; *IFJ*, 24 Feb. 1968, 26 Apr. 1969, 17 Jan. 1970.
[311] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, pp 100-101; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, 1973-74*, (Dublin, 1974), p. 52.
[312] *IFJ*, 26 Apr. 1969.

the autumn at thirty months of age.[313] As noted earlier, this was a function of the low profitability in the sector. It also reflected the fact that beef cattle were a by-product of the dairy herd, the vast majority of dairy calves being born in the spring.[314] However, the manner in which cattle supplies for slaughter were concentrated primarily in the period from September to December was described as a 'crippler' for the industry by Gus Fitzpatrick of Premier Meat Packers.[315] Terry Kennedy explained that the weekly kill at the company's factories varied from a high of four thousand animals in November, to a low of 1,200 in May; with the processor slaughtering two-thirds of its annual throughput in the second half of the year.[316] As a consequence of this supply pattern, many of the country's factories operated on a seasonal basis and closed during the summer months. Factories such as Roscrea Meats processed the bulk of their annual supply in the five months from August to December, then worked at a reduced rate from January to March, and shut from April to July.[317] This 'frenzy to fallow' supply pattern was a major impediment to the development of the industry as it effectively consigned a large proportion of Irish beef to the lower-margin end of the trade in Britain epitomised by London's Smithfield Market. Shutting factories for three months was not an option for companies supplying wholesalers or supermarket contracts which required weekly deliveries. However, efforts to promote more balanced cattle supply patterns for these plants by encouraging the winter-finishing of cattle – where stock were housed and fed from autumn to spring on silage or hay and cereals – were undermined by an absence of suitable housing and the low profitability of the enterprise. Figures produced by IMP in 1969 showed that winter finishing was generating a profit of just £1 per head.[318] By 1972 Paddy O'Keeffe was calling for a rationalisation scheme for beef plants along the lines of that proposed the previous year by the Pigs and Bacon Commission for the pigs sector.[319] However, the opening of IMP's Midleton factory illustrated how local considerations often trumped commercial reality in the agriculture sector.

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[313] Michael Drennan interview (24 Oct. 2017); Interviews with Gus Fitzpatrick (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017); *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, pp 65-67; Paddy Smith, 'Leading Progress in Beef Production', pp 79-82.
[314] Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, p. 21.
[315] Interviews with Gus Fitzpatrick (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017).
[316] *IFJ*, 24 Feb. 1968.
[317] *Nenagh Guardian*, 12 Apr. 1958, 18 July 1959.
[318] *IFJ*, 13 Dec. 1969, 23 Mar. 1968.
[319] Ibid., 2 Oct. 1971, 8 Jan. 1972.

The government acted swiftly to support the beef processors in 1972. In addition to guaranteeing the loan package to the sector in March, Irish officials also reduced the differential between the beef exports supports available under the Carcass Beef Export Guarantee Scheme and those paid by the British Fatstock Guarantee Scheme from 0.52p per lb to 0.104p per lb.[320] The promptness of the government's response to beef factories' difficulties demonstrates not only the importance of the sector, but the lobbying power of the industry, and the close relations that had developed between officials in the Department of Agriculture and meat factory representatives. The importance of meat processing to the wider economy was highlighted by the 1973 ESRI report, *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, which calculated that the sector supported 13,800 jobs in 1971, around eight thousand directly, and generated earnings of £43 million.[321] Indeed, protecting jobs in meat processing was the main justification offered by the Department of Agriculture for providing the loans to the industry, and for reducing the differential between Irish and British export supports.[322] The Department of Agriculture's annual report for 1971-72 stated that the aim of the loans was to: '...secure a better turnover of cattle supplies in the difficult circumstances obtaining in the [beef] trade, and to avoid staff redundancies in the factories.'[323] Similar sentiments were expressed in communications with the British authorities regarding the reduction in the export support differential. The Irish officials warned of 'grave redundancies' in the beef industry if action was not taken.[324]

The government's willingness to provide loans to the processors in 1972 was a reflection of the close working relationship that had developed between Jim Bastow of IFMES and the Department of Agriculture assistant secretary Donal Buckley. The original plan was that the processor loans would be repaid from British Fatstock Guarantee Scheme payments. However, the funding was never repaid as the loans were drawn down in 1972 and the British Fatstock Guarantee Scheme finished when

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[320] Memorandum to government dated 17 Jan. 1972 regarding the supports differential and aide memoire to the British authorities on the same issue, 20 Jan. 1972 (NAI, DA/2012/59/195); *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, 1971-72, p. 35.

[321] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, pp 115-16.

[322] Memorandum to government dated 17 Jan. 1972 regarding the supports differential and aide memoire to the British authorities on the same issue, 20 Jan. 1972 (NAI, DA/2012/59/195); *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, 1971-72, p. 35.

[323] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, 1971-72, p. 35.

[324] Aide memoire to the British authorities regarding the beef export supports differential between the UK and Ireland, 20 Jan. 1972 (NAI, DA/2012/59/195).

the UK entered the EEC with Ireland in January 1973. The episode proved highly embarrassing for the Department of Agriculture, which was strongly criticised by the Dáil's Public Accounts Committee for the manner in which the loans were disbursed after it emerged that there was no expectation of the funds being repaid.[325] The committee noted that the Department of Finance had decided to waive the obligation to repay the loans on the recommendations of the Department of Agriculture because of the 'circumstances in which the decision to assist the meat factories was first taken, the purpose for which the assistance was intended, and the constraints at the time associated with the issuing of straight forward subsidy.'[326] In a damning indictment of the Department of Agriculture's accounting controls, the committee concluded the exact status of the supports was not established, but that the factories considered the funds to be have been provided as subsidies 'more or less permanently'. The report maintained that the funds might not have been lost to the exchequer if the Department of Agriculture 'had been more diligent in the matter'.[327]

The downturn in the beef processing industry and the revival of the live trade provoked some difficult questions for the farm lobby in the early 1970s. Traditionally farm leaders warmly welcomed any lift in the export trade as a bonanza for farmers. However, in the wake of the IMP purchase, farmers were factory owners as well as cattle suppliers. The delicate balancing act that was required as a consequence was aptly demonstrated by TJ Maher, president of the IFA – the farmer representative body formed in 1971 following the merging of the NFA, the Beet and Vegetable Growers Association, Irish Commercial Horticulture Association, the Leinster Milk Producers and the Cork Milk Producers – when addressing farmers in March 1972.[328] He welcomed the lift in prices that the European live trade delivered, but reminded farmers that they also needed a beef processing industry.[329] Farmer involvement in meat processing was also cleverly exploited by IFMES. As competition with live exporters intensified in 1971, Jim Bastow reminded farmers that those who sold cattle to the factories were 'selling in a market that is approximately sixty per cent farmer

[325] *Dáil Eireann Committee of Public Accounts Report 1976* (Appropriation Accounts), (Dublin, 1979) pp 2-4.
[326] Ibid.
[327] Ibid.
[328] Dempsey (ed), *The path to power*, p. 73;
[329] *IFJ*, 18 Mar. 1972.

controlled'.[330] However, unlike Bastow whose comments were motivated primarily by commercial considerations, Maher's stance on cattle sales reflected a deeper concern within farming circles regarding IMP's difficulties. The possible collapse of the business had major implications for the reputations of farm bodies – such as the IFA, IAOS, Macra na Feirme and the *Irish Farmers' Journal* – that had encouraged thousands of farmers to invest in IMP.[331] While saving the company and protecting farmers' investment remained the immediate focus during the first six months of 1972 when IMP was dependent on AIB to provide cashflow funding for survival, the reputational damage that could be done to the co-operative model by the collapse of IMP was obviously not lost on farm leaders. As Paddy O'Keeffe admitted: 'In the context of future development in Irish farm business, the recovery of IMP is of extreme importance. If farmers were to lose control of the organisation, or if the once prosperous plants struggle along at low profit levels, paying lower prices than private factories, Irish farming will take a bad beating.'[332] IMP was not the only farmer-owned processor in serious financial trouble in 1971-72. Losses at the Rathdowney factory in Laois which was owned by Limerick-based Golden Vale Marts had exceeded £780,000 at the end of 1971 and the meat business was threatening the viability of the entire co-operative.[333] However, IMP was the flagship meat processor for the co-operative movement because of the size of its operations and its status within the industry. It could not be allowed fail.

The IFA's concerns regarding the finances of IMP were not entirely altruistic: there were also more practical considerations at play. The introduction of the European Involvement Fund (EIF) levy in 1972 provided the IFA with a model for financing the association's activities, but the funding mechanism required the marts, creameries and meat factories to act as collectors for the farm body.[334] The levy was set at 0.1 per cent of the value of a farmer's output (£1 per £1,000) and was collected at the point of sale by farmer-owned co-operative businesses such as the creameries, livestock marts and factories.[335] Therefore, if a farmer sold three cattle in a mart for £1,000, then £1 of the total sale value was held back by the mart for the IFA.

[330] *IFJ*, 6 February 1971.
[331] Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, pp 75-76; *IFJ*, 26 Oct. 1968 to 18 Jan. 1969.
[332] *IFJ*, 4 Mar., 25 Mar. 1972.
[333] Liston, *From Fair to Mart and Beyond*, p. 206; *IFJ*, 25 Mar. 1972.
[334] Interview with Con Lucey, former chief economist with the IFA (25 Oct. 2017); *IFJ*, 2 Dec. 1972.
[335] *IFJ*, 2 Dec. 1972; Con Lucey interview (25 Oct. 2017).

Ostensibly created to fund the IFA's office in Brussels (therefore the name), and launched by the association's deputy president, Donie Cashman, the levy became a major source of income for the organisation and helped to finance its operations and expansion during the 1970s.[336] Acceptance of the levy within the industry was given a boost in December 1972 when Cork Marts-IMP agreed to operate the new funding mechanism.[337] Other co-operative marts and milk processors came on board the following year. However, with IMP controlling close to forty per cent of the country's total cattle kill, the IFA had another reason for ensuring the processor's survival and success; and with the levy being progressively adopted by the private marts and meat processors during the 1970s, the farm body's fortunes became even more closely tied to those of the wider food sector.

EEC MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the EEC offered a possible escape from the difficulties faced by the beef processors in the UK market and was strongly supported by the IFMES and the meat companies ahead of the referendum in May 1972. Clover Meats' chairman, Cyril Power, told the *Farmers' Journal* and local newspapers in the south-east on the eve of the vote that meat processors, farmers and workers would all benefit from EEC membership.[338] It is was a similar message from Michael O'Mahony of the Irish Livestock Exporters and Traders' Association, who warned of a return to the depression and trade disruption of the Economic War were Ireland to reject EEC membership and the UK join.[339] The opportunities of EEC membership were significant. An Irish Grassland and Animal Production Association study in 1972 predicted that Ireland's agricultural output could grow by £190 million a year following EEC accession, with the beef and dairy sectors accounting for £150 million of this figure.[340] The report cautioned that an investment of £50 million per year for five years would be required to realise these production increases, but it ambitiously forecast the creation of 24,000 jobs on the back of this expansion.[341] While the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement of 1965 opened up the British market of fifty-six-million - and put the meat processing industry on a much firmer footing in the process -

[336] Con Lucey interview (25 Oct. 2017); *IFJ*, 2 Dec. 1972.
[337] *IFJ*, 2 Dec. 1972; Con Lucey interview (25 Oct. 2017).
[338] *Munster Express*, 5 May 1972; *IFJ*, 6 May 1972.
[339] *IFJ*, 6 May 1972.
[340] Ibid., 15 Jan. 1972.
[341] Ibid., 15 Jan. 1972.

access to the EEC and 270 million of the world's wealthiest consumers was the ultimate goal for Ireland's farm leaders.[342] As the renowned agricultural economist, Seamus Sheehy, observed: 'Free access to a market of this size is clearly an attractive proposition from the point of view of a food-exporting country such as Ireland.'[343] The benefits offered by the EEC were recognised by the meat industry and farm organisations. As noted earlier, the NFA's national council argued in 1957 that Irish membership of the EEC would be preferable to a free trade agreement with Britain.[344] The association's first president, Juan Greene, insisted that the European project was not a challenge for Irish farmers but, rather, could be their 'salvation'. 'If we survive it will be as a partner in a larger viable economic unit of an international character,' Greene said.[345] This conviction that EEC membership was the right option for Irish agriculture was repeated fourteen years later. IFA leader TJ Maher urged both small and large farmers to back EEC membership, warning that small holders could be 'wiped out' if Ireland remained outside the Common Market.[346] The ICMSA also actively backed the 'yes' campaign in the referendum, citing full access to a regulated and minimum-priced dairy market as the primary reason.[347] However, the farm body was a reluctant convert to EEC membership, with ICMSA president, Jimmy O'Keeffe, expressing serious reservations regarding the policies of Sicco Mansholdt, the EEC Commissioner for Agriculture, who supported the managed decline in farmer numbers and targeted supports for those considered viable and commercial food producers.[348] This was not the EEC that Irish farmers dreamed of joining.

CONCLUSION

The Irish Grassland and Animal Production Association study is indicative of the heady air of expectation that characterised the farming sector in 1972. In a *Meat Trades Journal* report from December 1972, management at Roscrea Meats spoke of

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[342] Population Statistics 2006 – Eurostat section European Commission (Luxembourg, 2006), p. 55.
[343] Seamus Sheehy, 'EEC Policy – the Implication for Irish Agriculture', in I.F. Baillie and S.J. Sheehy (eds.), *Irish Agriculture in a Changing World* (Edinburgh, 1971), p. 176.
[344] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, pp 138-39; Gary Murphy, 'The Irish Government, the National Farmers' Association, and the European Economic Community, 1955-1964' in *New Hibernia Review*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Winter, 2002), pp 71-74.
[345] Speech by NFA president Juan Greene (NAI, S.16405).
[346] *IFJ*, 1 Jan. 1972.
[347] *IP*, 2 May 1972.
[348] Brian Gilsenan, 'Into Europe', in Paul O'Grady (ed.), *Leaders of courage*, pp 33-35; Daly, *First Department,* pp 503-518.

the 'bonanza' awaiting Irish meat processors once the country joined the EEC.[349] Similarly, the prospect of increased cattle numbers and better beef prices after EEC membership persuaded the management at Golden Vale Marts to retain control of its embattled meat plant in Rathdowney despite the heavy losses incurred by the firm.[350] Farmer and processor attitudes to the EEC were coloured by the higher prices and supports available for farm produce. In the summer of 1972 the average price differential between Ireland and the EEC was £10 per cwt or £120 on a finished animal.[351] Surprisingly, however, given the possible benefits that EEC membership offered the farming community, the referendum did not dominate the comment pages of the farming press during this period. Indeed, a simple survey of the topics covered in the *Farmers' Journal's* main editorial column between January and June 1972 found that Europe was the subject for discussion on just five occasions – including a front page editorial on the Saturday before the referendum which read 'May 10th must be Yes Day'. In contrast, serious financial difficulties in the meat processing industry – and more pointedly in the farmer-owned IMP operation – was the lead editorial comment item in seven of the twenty-six issues.[352] That is not to say that Andy Bielenberg and Raymond Ryan were incorrect in their assertion that Ireland's entry into the EEC was a "decisive turning point in the economic history of the state" and especially for agriculture.[353] EEC membership had the potential to transform Irish farming, and this point was consistently made by farm leaders as they campaigned around the country in the months ahead of the crucial referendum. Yet, it would be incorrect to suggest that EEC membership was viewed as a panacea for the sector's problems. In fact, the *Farmers' Journal's* editorials on the continuing difficulties in the meat processing industry, and worsening nightmare in IMP, as well as concerns such as growing milk output across Europe, tensions around creamery amalgamations, and access for Irish lamb to the French market, illustrate the ongoing challenges farming faced. Maybe farmers and their leaders had also learned that it was wiser to temper expectations given the bitter disappointment that followed the AIFTA signing in 1966 and the purchase of IMP three years later.

349 *Meat Trades Journal*, 14 Dec. 1972.
350 Liston, *From Fair to Mart and Beyond*, p. 209.
351 *IFJ*, 3 June 1972.
352 *IFJ*, 1 Jan. 1972 to 24 June 1972.
353 Bielenberg & Ryan, *An Economic History of Ireland*, p. 25.

CHAPTER FOUR: MAKING THE CAP FIT: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF EEC MEMBERSHIP (1973-80)

Joining the EEC had a profound and transformative impact on the Irish beef sector. An unprecedented expansion in beef output saw the number of cattle slaughtered annually double to almost 1.2 million between 1973 and 1978 as processors took advantage of the supports available under the EEC's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).[1] Meanwhile, sustained output growth of four to five per cent during what Seamus Sheehy and John O'Connell termed farming's 'boom years' was reflected in an impressive rise in both family farm incomes and agricultural exports.[2] Family farm income rose from £364 million to £842 million in the five years after EEC accession, while overall agricultural exports trebled to almost £1 billion.[3] Bielenberg and Ryan maintain that joining the EEC was the 'most critical turning point in the economic history of the state' and this contention was certainly true for farming.[4] Increased output and higher prices underpinned the improvement in farmers' incomes. For example, total cattle disposals for export – either as beef or shipped live – expanded by fifty per cent between 1973 and 1978, while factory prices for bullocks more than doubled, rising from 30p/lb to almost 70p/lb.[5] This equated to an additional £250 on a typical 620lb carcass. The beef industry certainly shared fully in the expansion and growth opportunities that EEC membership offered the wider farm sector. Beef output doubled to over 280,000 tonnes between 1972 and 1975, and exceeded 340,000 tonnes by 1980.[6] Indeed, the beef trade accounted for more than one-third of total

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[1] Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, pp 1-2, 39-49; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1973-74,* (Dublin, 1974), p. 52: *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1978,* (Dublin, 1979), p. 30.

[2] John J. O'Connell and Seamus Sheehy, *'Policies to accelerate agricultural development'*, National Economic and Social Council (NESC), No. 40, (Dublin, 1978), pp 16-17; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1973-74,* (Dublin, 1974), pp 17-25; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1978,* (Dublin, 1979), pp 13-24.

[3] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1973-74*, pp 17-25; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1978,* (Dublin, 1979), pp 13-24.

[4] Bielenberg & Ryan, *An Economic History of Ireland*, p. 190.

[5] *IFJ*, 12 May 1973, 27 May 1978; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1973-74*, pp 49-52: *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1979,* (Dublin, 1980), p. 32.

[6] Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, p. 28; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1980,* (Dublin, 1981), p. 30.

agricultural exports in 1975 when foreign sales exceeded £220 million.[7] The meat industry was also an important provider of jobs in the mid-1970s, with more than 5,500 employed directly in the slaughter and processing of cattle and sheep.[8] The marked improvement in agricultural earnings during this period resulted in farm incomes finally matching the average industrial wage in 1973 and going on to exceed pay levels in manufacturing by fifteen per cent half a decade later.[9] Meanwhile, a four-fold lift in land prices, the rural economy's great weathervane, confirmed the strength of the farm sector's revival. While good agricultural ground generally made £600-800 per acre in 1973, strong farmer competition for land pushed prices to over £3,000 an acre in parts of Munster and Leinster by 1978, prompting the Agricultural Credit Corporation (ACC) to warn that the market was overheating.[10] EEC membership also resulted in considerable changes at administrative level as the Commission in Brussels took over many of the Department of Agriculture's responsibilities in the area of policy formulation and commodity price supports. Indeed, EEC price guarantees for products such as beef, butter and bacon came into force in February 1973, replacing Irish government supports.[11] As a consequence government spending on agriculture fell by almost £20 million in 1973-74 to £59.5 million, and dropped by a further £10 million the year after. The relative decline in the state's expenditure on farming continued through the 1970s, with the EEC covering almost seventy per cent of total agriculture spending by 1978.[12] The significance of the power shift from Dublin to Brussels was not lost on the IFA or the beef industry. The IFA moved quickly to have a full-time presence in Brussels by early 1973, with its office initially headed up by its former chief economist and the future Fine Gael leader and Minister for Agriculture, Alan Dukes.[13] The meat processors were slower out of the blocks, but the Irish Fresh Meat Exporters' Society (IFMES) joined the

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[7] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1975,* (Dublin, 1976), p. 13; Coopers and Lybrand report for the IDA, pp 1-2.

[8] Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, p. 2.

[9] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, p. 211: *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1973-74*, p. 25: *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1978,* (Dublin, 1979), p. 13.

[10] *IFJ*, 6 Jan. 1973, 29 Apr. 1978.

[11] Daly, *First Department*, pp 504-07.

[12] Bielenberg & Ryan, *An Economic History of Ireland*, p. 61; Daly, *First Department*, pp 504-05; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1973-74*, p. 31; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1978*, p. 15.

[13] Con Lucey interview (25 Oct 2017); Dempsey (ed), *The path to power*, p. 76; *IFJ*, 13 Jan., 17 Mar. 1973.

Confederation of Irish Industries (CII) in 1974 and made use of its lobbying presence in the Belgian capital.[14]

This chapter will examine how the beef processing industry changed and developed between Ireland's EEC accession in 1973 and the major downturn in farm incomes which the end of the decade heralded. The interaction of the meat factories with the Department of Agriculture and the farm organisations is also explored, as is the manner in which the processors adapted to the requirements of a changing market, where supermarket buyers and their representatives eclipsed wholesale traders as the primary commercial buyers of beef.[15] In addition, this section of the thesis will assess the extent to which the meat processors, like the food industry in general, sought to maximise the benefits available under the various CAP schemes, and the impact these market control measures had on their operations and on the beef sector in general. CAP utilised measures such as intervention, aids to private storage (APS) and export refunds to control supply and commodity prices in the Community's internal beef, grain and milk markets, along with subsidising exports outside the EEC.[16] The CAP regime was the main attraction in joining the EEC for the meat processors, dairy co-ops, and farmers. This was openly conceded by both factories and farmers in the run-up to Ireland's entry. Twelve months before Ireland joined the EEC the *Farmers' Journal* reported that beef and dairy output could expand by £150 million per annum on the back of the improved prices and the CAP supports which EEC membership offered.[17] On the eve of Ireland's accession the young farmer body, Macra na Feirme, was expounding the benefits of six-month work placements on continental farms which it was organising for its members.[18] A similarly positive view of EEC membership was conveyed in a December 1972 article on Roscrea Meat Products in the *Meat Trades Journal*. The banner headline effectively told the story: 'Looking Forward to the European Bonanza'.[19] From the processors' perspective, access to 270 million of the world's wealthiest consumers was obviously a major attraction of EEC

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[14] *IFJ*, 18 May 1974.

[15] Interview with John B. Keane, former Bord Bia, CBF and meat industry executive, (19 Feb. 2019); Gus Fitzpatrick interviews (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017); Coopers and Lybrand report for the IDA, pp 46-50.

[16] *Report of the Review Body on Beef Intervention and Cattle Slaughter Premium Systems*, chaired by Dr. Tom Walsh, (Dublin, 1976), pp 20-21; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, 1973-74*, pp 36-44; Daly, *First Department*, pp 504-08.

[17] *IFJ*, 15 Jan. 1972.

[18] *Anglo-Celt*, 29 Dec. 1972.

[19] *Meat Trades Journal*, 14 Dec. 1972.

membership – as well as the generous support measures that CAP offered – particularly since the industry was already supplying European customers and therefore complied with the required quality standards.[20] However, it would be incorrect to portray January 1973 as a total break with the past; there was considerable continuity. Although the EEC had taken over the role of 'paymaster in chief' for farming, the Department of Agriculture remained a crucial funder, driver and implementer of farm policy. It was the initial point of contact for organisations seeking to influence new policy in a particular area, or to amend existing regulations. As Daly correctly notes, it was also a key lobbyist and influencer of policy in Brussels. The Department of Agriculture's senior civil servants played a prominent role in negotiations concerning EEC agricultural policy, and establishing price levels for farm commodities each year.[21] In fact, Alan Dukes contended that a key benefit for the IFA's presence in Brussels was the depth of knowledge and political intelligence it provided when 'it came to negotiations with the Department of Agriculture in Dublin'.[22] In addition, the Department of Agriculture's interpretation of EEC regulations was critical as there was significant discretion in the manner in which policy was applied at national level. Complex support programmes, such as the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme for farmers working marginal land or the beef intervention scheme, had to be designed and implemented locally. Indeed, in the case of the beef intervention programme, the Department of Agriculture was the EEC's designated agent in Ireland – a role which was ultimately to cause it serious embarrassment.[23]

Despite the opportunities offered by the EEC market, however, the UK was still Ireland's main trading partner for agricultural goods, taking fifty per cent of exports in 1980, compared to twenty-eight per cent for the rest of the EEC.[24] Even so, EEC membership certainly was a major turning point for Irish agriculture, as Louis Smith and Sean Healy observed. The 'honeymoon years' of 1973 to 1978 provided the 'greatest boom of Irish agricultural history', they pointed out, with farm incomes

[20] Population Statistics 2006 – Eurostat section European Commission, p. 55.
[21] Daly, *First Department*, p. 505.
[22] Dempsey (ed), *The path to power,* p. 76.
[23] *Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the Beef Processing Industry*, p. 714; Dempsey (ed), *The path to power,* pp 76-77; Daly, *First Department*, p. 505.
[24] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1980*, p. 24.

rising by one-third in real terms and gross agricultural output increasing by 183 per cent in value terms.[25]

CAP SCHEMES

CAP funding played a crucial role in supporting beef sector expansion during the 1970s.[26] Consequently, any examination of the Irish beef industry's growth, and its wider sectoral influence, post EEC membership cannot ignore the critical importance of the various CAP supports. Indeed, the expansion in beef exports during this period tracked the increased financial subvention which the Irish cattle and beef industry secured from the EEC in the years after the country's accession into the Common Market. Over £27 million was paid in CAP supports to the beef and cattle sector in 1974, with beef sales totalling 200,000 tonnes for the year.[27] By 1977 supports had reached almost £90 million and exports grew to 262,000 tonnes; while £160m in CAP payments were made to the beef industry in 1980 and foreign beef sales exceeded 340,000 tonnes.[28]

The CAP regime was based on a combination of guaranteed prices for commodities such as beef and butter produced within the EEC, the subsidised export of surplus agricultural output, and the levying of import tariffs on goods from outside the Community.[29] The noted agricultural economist, Andy Conway, described the policy succinctly when he explained that 'CAP applies import levies and export subsidies, and also intervenes by public purchasing, to support its internal price at a level above external market prices'.[30] CAP payments to the beef industry, and to agriculture in general, were distributed under FEOGA (Fonds European d'Orientation et de Garantie Agricole or the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee

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[25] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, p. 211.
[26] John B. Keane interview (19 Feb. 2019); Gus Fitzpatrick interviews (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017); Con Lucey interview (25 Oct. 2017); *Report of the Review Body on Beef Intervention and Cattle Slaughter Premium Systems*, p. 21.
[27] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1974*, p. 29; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1975*, p. 37.
[28] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1977*, pp 20-33; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1980*, pp 19-30.
[29] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, pp 266-67; Andy Conway, 'Agricultural Policy' in Patrick Keatinge (ed.) *Ireland and EEC Membership Evaluated,* (London, 1991), pp 46-47; Daly, *First Department*, pp 368-369.
[30] Conway, 'Agricultural Policy', p. 46.

Fund).[31] There were two separate FEOGA funds. The commodity price and market supports were paid out under the FEOGA Guarantee Fund, while the FEOGA Guidance Fund provided assistance for structural developments at farm and food processing levels.[32] For Ireland, the main price supports were available on beef, pig meat, grain, skim milk powder and butter. No supports were paid in 1973 for sheep, potatoes, poultry and eggs.[33] A CAP structure for sheep was opposed by France, and the French farming unions, who feared the impact of cheap British lamb on their home market. This exclusion was successfully challenged in the European Court of Justice by the IFA and Cork Mart-IMP in 1975, but a common EEC policy for sheep and lambs was not finally agreed until 1979 and came into force the following year.[34] In terms of the beef industry, intervention, monetary compensation allowances (MCAs), and the introduction of the 'Green Pound' were the most influential CAP measures during the 1970s. The following section will outline and examine the operation and impact of these measures, in addition to that of other CAP innovations such as export refunds, slaughter premiums and aids to private storage.

INTERVENTION

Intervention was critically important to the development of Ireland's beef industry during the country's first twenty years of EEC membership. Ireland put more than two million tonnes of beef into intervention between 1973 and 1992, which provided an outlet for product valued at over £4 billion.[35] However, this market control mechanism was arguably the most contentious of the CAP tools employed. Indeed, abuse of the intervention scheme during the 1980s by Irish beef processors, along with the Department of Agriculture's failure to rigorously oversee its administration, were among the key findings of the 1994 Beef Tribunal Report.[36] Under intervention the EEC bought up surplus produce – such as beef, skim milk powder and butter – thereby taking it off the market so that supply was controlled and commodity prices

[31] FEOGA stands for Fonds European d'Orientation et de Garantie Agricole or the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund.
[32] Daly, *First Department*, pp 368-369, 507; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, 1973-74*, pp 36-48; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1974*, pp 24-29.
[33] Daly, *First Department*, p. 508.
[34] Paddy Smith, 'Developing a Modern Sheep Industry', in Michael Miley (ed.), *Growing Knowledge*, p. 97; Bielenberg & Ryan, *An Economic History of Ireland*, p. 60; *IFJ*, 17 May 1975.
[35] Justice Liam Hamilton, *Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the Beef Processing Industry*, p. 35.
[36] Byrne, *Political Corruption In Ireland 1922-2010*, pp 124-125; Justice Liam Hamilton, *Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the Beef Processing Industry*, pp 703-14.

were protected. This intervention produce was later sold outside the EEC on world markets by the Commission, sometimes at reduced prices. The CAP budget bore the cost difference between the intervention purchase price of the product and the eventual sale price.[37] Essentially, intervention was a safety net which aimed to prevent a collapse in EEC agricultural commodity prices. Purchases into beef intervention were limited initially to prime hind-quarter cuts from top quality bullocks and heifers, and were based on the guide price for adult live cattle which was fixed by the EEC Council of Agricultural Ministers each year. These values were then converted into a price per lb for beef.[38] For example, the guide price was set at £14.18 per cwt for 1972-73, but was increased to £16.43 per cwt in June 1973, and to £22.45 per cwt in October, 1974.[39] The buy-in price for intervention was at various percentages of the guide price. Between 1974 and 1977 this varied from ninety-three per cent of the guide price to ninety per cent.[40] This meant that processors could sell into intervention once returns dropped below ninety per cent of the cattle guide price.

The Department of Agriculture was the official intervention agent for the EEC in Ireland. Its primary role was to purchase and store the intervention beef. Where losses were incurred from the sale of beef out of intervention stores, the Department of Agriculture was reimbursed by FEOGA.[41] The first Irish beef was sold into intervention in October 1973, and close to 10,000 tonnes were in cold stores by the end of March the following year.[42] However, intervention usage expanded rapidly through the summer and autumn of 1974 and into the spring of 1975 as a sustained reduction in cattle prices was exacerbated by increased cattle numbers and a significant downturn in beef sales due to the energy crisis and recession that followed the Arab-Israeli War of October 1973.[43] Close to 120,000 tonnes of Irish beef was

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[37] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1973-74*, p. 48; Daly, *First Department*, pp 507-508.

[38] Daly, *First Department*, pp 508-509; *Report of the Review Body on Beef Intervention and Cattle Slaughter Premium Systems*, pp 20-22.

[39] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1973-74*, p. 48; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1974*, p. 26; *Report of the Review Body on Beef Intervention and Cattle Slaughter Premium Systems*, pp 20-21.

[40] *Report of the Review Body on Beef Intervention and Cattle Slaughter Premium Systems*, p. 20.

[41] Daly, *First Department*, p. 508; *Report of the Review Body on Beef Intervention and Cattle Slaughter Premium Systems*, p. 22.

[42] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1973-74*, p. 48; Daly, *First Department*, p. 508; *Report of the Review Body on Beef Intervention and Cattle Slaughter Premium Systems*, p. 22.

[43] Robert O'Connor & Pat Keogh, *'Crisis in the Cattle Industry',* Economic and Social Research Institute, Broadsheet No. 13, (Dublin, 1975), pp xi, 25; Daly, *First Department*, pp 508-509; *Report of the Review Body on Beef Intervention and Cattle Slaughter Premium Systems*, p. 1.

sold into intervention in 1974, with the figure reaching 135,000 tonnes the year after as factories struggled to cope with the unprecedented increase in the number of stock killed.[44] Total cattle slaughterings rose from 677,000 animals in 1973 to one million in 1974, and to 1.36 million in 1975 as farmers with insufficient winter fodder supplies were forced to sell livestock at a loss during the cattle crisis of autumn, winter and spring of 1974-75.[45] Ireland's cold store capacity was overwhelmed by the increased volumes in intervention. As a consequence, Irish intervention beef stocks were stored in Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium and France, as well as at home. Intervention stocks were also stored on chartered refrigerated ships, while the IDA introduced grants for the construction of additional cold stores, and the EEC authorised the de-boning of intervention beef in order to reduce storage capacity requirements.[46]

MONETARY COMPENSATION ALLOWANCES AND THE GREEN POUND

Monetary compensation allowances (MCAs) and the Green Pound were two other CAP innovations which profoundly influenced the development of the beef sector in the 1970s. Introduced in 1973, MCAs were a complex system of levies imposed on imports and exports between EEC member states. These levies were charged and collected by the Department of Agriculture on behalf of FEOGA.[47] The MCA regime was introduced to prevent any trade distortion in products which enjoyed CAP supports, such as beef, as a consequence of exchange rate changes between the community's various national currencies.[48] CAP payments were denominated in what was termed units of account (UAs), with a representative rate then set to convert UAs into national currencies. When Ireland and the UK joined the EEC the representative rate for sterling was £1 to 2.1644 UAs.[49] This representative rate also formed the basis for intra-EEC trade in CAP products. In the case of currencies such as sterling which

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[44] *Report of the Review Body on Beef Intervention and Cattle Slaughter Premium Systems*, pp 22-23; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1975*, p. 35.
[45] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1975*, p. 36; O'Connor & Keogh, *Crisis in the Cattle Industry*, p. 25.
[46] *IFJ*, 1 June, 15 June 1974; *Report of the Review Body on Beef Intervention and Cattle Slaughter Premium Systems*, p. 23; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1975*, p. 35; Daly, *First Department*, p. 509.
[47] John B. Keane interview (19 Feb. 2019); Con Lucey interview (25 Oct. 2017); *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1974*, p. 26.
[48] O'Connell & Sheehy, *'Policies to accelerate agricultural development'*, p. 43.
[49] Con Lucey interview (25 Oct. 2017); *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1974*, p. 26.

depreciated in value relative to its representative rate – it fell fifteen per cent relative to its representative rate between January 1973 and autumn 1974 – MCAs were charged on exports and refunded on imports. Conversely, in the case of member states with strong currencies, such as West Germany and the deutschmark, MCAs were refunded on exports and charged on imports.[50] The MCA regime was a major obstacle for Irish food companies, as it limited their ability to expand exports into countries such as Germany, since the MCA levies imposed on goods undermined the competitiveness of Irish produce. Former IFA chief economist, Con Lucey, likened the MCA regime to a 'fifteen per cent tax on exports'.[51] *Farmers' Journal* editor, Paddy O'Keeffe, claimed Irish produce was effectively being 'locked out of continental markets' by the MCAs as the levy on beef exports exceeded 5p per lb in July 1975, and reached 6p per lb twelve months later.[52] Secondary processors of meat – producers of canned beef, beef pies and burgers – were particularly badly affected by the changes. Canned meat output was in decline since the early 1960s, but the high MCA charges of the 1970s, and the increased cost of beef due to intervention, fatally undermined any chance of the sector's recovery.[53] As Smith and Healy have pointed out, sales of Irish canned meat into Britain fell from £9.5 million to just £115,000 between 1974 and 1977.[54]

The impact of the MCAs on agricultural exports and commodity prices, such as that of beef, led directly to the adoption of the Green Pound in 1974. Its introduction followed the continued devaluation of sterling against the EEC's strong currencies, particularly the deutschmark and Dutch guilder.[55] The consequent difficulties this posed for Irish agriculture resulted in the government seeking a reduction in the UA-sterling representative rate for trade in farm produce to bring it closer to the actual market exchange rate for the pound.[56] As this new rate only applied to CAP payments and farm-related goods, the 'agricultural currency' was therefore referred to as the Green Pound. Mark Clinton's efforts to secure this

[50] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1974*, p. 26; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1978*, pp 22-23.
[51] Con Lucey interview (25 Oct. 2017).
[52] *IFJ*, 29 Mar., 29 May, 5 July 1976.
[53] Bielenberg & Ryan, *An Economic History of Ireland*, p. 61; Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, p. 213; Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, pp 87-88.
[54] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, pp 267-268.
[55] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1974*, p. 26; Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, p. 474.
[56] *CE*, 16 July 1974; *IP*, 16 July 1974; *II*, 18 July 1974.

concession from the EEC Commission and his fellow agriculture ministers came against the background of a thirty per cent drop in the value of light store cattle – animals of six to seven cwt and still eighteen months from slaughter.[57] The EEC acceded to Ireland's request in October 1974 and the Irish Green Pound representative rate was fixed at 1.9485 UAs to the pound. The equivalent British Green Pound rate was lower at 2.0053 UAs to the pound.[58] The new Irish Green Pound rate was initially fixed at just three per cent above sterling's market exchange rate. MCAs on farm exports were cut from fourteen per cent to three per cent as a result of what was effectively a devaluation.[59] The Green Pound devaluation also increased the value of CAP supports such as intervention by over ten per cent, and was immediately reflected in a £10-12 per animal increase in cattle prices in the marts.[60] However, MCA charges on Irish food exports increased again to around twelve per cent by the end of 1974 as sterling continued to fall on money markets.[61] Lobbying for Green Pound devaluations by the IFA and ICMSA, in order the raise commodity prices and increase farmers' incomes, became a feature of the Irish agricultural sector during the 1970s.[62] Its effectiveness was eventually eroded by the creation of the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) as part of the European Monetary System (EMS) in 1978-79, as Con Lucey correctly pointed out.[63] The ERM curtailed the movement of participating EEC currencies within agreed bands or limits, and consequently negated the need for MCAs.[64] However, the UK's refusal to join the mechanism brought to an end Ireland's 150-year link with sterling that had lasted since 1826, and resulted in the launch of the Irish pound or punt in March 1979.[65]

Export refunds, slaughter premiums, headage payments and aids to private storage were among a number of further measures adopted by the EEC to support the cattle and sheep industries during the 1970s. Export refunds were subsidies paid on exports to EEC markets outside of the community. These payments enabled EEC

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[57] *IFJ*, 2 June 1973, 1 June 1974.
[58] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1974*, p. 26.
[59] *IFJ*, 5 Oct. 1974; *CE*, 5 Oct. 1974; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1974*, p. 26.
[60] *II*, 8 Oct. 1974; *IFJ*, 5 Oct. 1974.
[61] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1974*, p. 26.
[62] John B. Keane interview (19 Feb. 2019); Con Lucey interview (25 Oct. 2017); Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, p. 213.
[63] Con Lucey interview (25 Oct. 2017); Bielenberg & Ryan, *An Economic History of Ireland*, pp 41 and 61; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1978*, p. 22.
[64] Bielenberg & Ryan, *An Economic History of Ireland*, pp 40-41; Con Lucey interview (25 Oct. 2017).
[65] Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, pp 492-93; Bielenberg & Ryan, *An Economic History of Ireland*, pp 40-41.

exporters, primarily of livestock, meat or dairy produce, to compete for contracts on world markets against cheaper supplies from South America or Australia and New Zealand.[66] Indeed, access to export refunds played a crucial role in helping to secure markets for Irish live cattle in Libya and Egypt in the late 1970s.[67] The slaughter premium scheme, which was introduced at the height of the cattle crisis in August 1974, encouraged farmers to stagger cattle sales over the winter months and financially rewarded those who finished animals for slaughter in spring when meat factory throughput was traditionally at its lowest, rather than in autumn and early winter when supplies usually peaked.[68] Slaughter premium payments in 1974 ranged from £9.24 per head for cattle killed in August, to £37.72 per animal for those slaughtered and processed in February.[69] Headage payments were introduced in 1975 to support farm incomes in what were deemed 'disadvantaged areas', or parts of the country with poor quality farmland.[70] These top-up payments were made on a set number of animals, with £16 each paid on the first five livestock units, £10 each on the next ten, and £8 each on a further fifteen. The scheme made payments worth almost £10 million to 24,000 farmers in 1975. [71] Meanwhile, the 'aids to private storage' scheme was introduced in the summer of 1976 when beef sales fell sharply following a Europe-wide heat wave. Aid to private storage was introduced as an outlet for surplus fore-quarter beef cuts and cow-beef, both of which did not qualify for intervention.[72] It continues to be used today as a market control measure by the EU.

WORKING THE NEW REGIME

CAP blunted the commercial focus of the Irish beef industry. With the MCAs limiting access to lucrative markets in Germany, Holland and France, beef processors became increasingly dependent on intervention as an outlet for large quantities of beef.[73]

[66] Conway, 'Agricultural Policy', pp 46-47; Kevin Purcell interview (4 Nov. 2015).
[67] Kevin Purcell interview (4 Nov. 2015); *IFJ*, 19 May 1979.
[68] O'Connor & Keogh, *Crisis in the Cattle Industry,* p. 27; Memorandum for government on the Cattle Slaughter Premium Scheme, 31 Oct. 1974 (NAI, DA/2005/151/637).
[69] Memorandum for government on the Cattle Slaughter Premium Scheme, 31 Oct. 1974 (NAI, DA/2005/151/637).
[70] Conway, 'Agricultural Policy', pp 46-47; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1975*, pp 38-39.
[71] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1975*, pp 38-39.
[72] Ibid.
[73] O'Connor & Keogh, *Crisis in the Cattle Industry,* p. 34; *Report of the Review Body on Beef Intervention and Cattle Slaughter Premium Systems*, p. 21; Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, pp 48-49.

Indeed, intervention was viewed as a 'gravy train' by some processors as early as 1974, when almost forty per cent of Ireland's beef exports were purchased under the scheme.[74] This was particularly so for companies that had large chills and cold stores that could hold significant quantities of carcasses, Gus Fitzpatrick of Premier Meat Packers recalled.[75] Intervention provided processors with a guaranteed outlet for beef at a set return for the factory, since the meat companies were effectively selling to the state rather than on commercial markets. By removing the requirement to market and sell a large proportion of their beef output, intervention thereby simplified the business model for the meat processors, observed former IFA economist, Con Lucey.[76] This 'intervention-focussed' business model proved extremely profitable for the beef processors during the cattle crisis of 1974-75. Farmers accused the factories of profiteering as the cattle crisis deepened during the autumn of 1974 by purchasing stock at 23-25p per lb although the intervention rate was closer to 27p per lb.[77] This was equivalent to a loss of £12-24 per animal to the farmer. Farmers' suspicions were confirmed by the *Report of the Review Body on Beef Intervention and Cattle Slaughter Premium Systems* that was published in 1976. The review maintained that factories' gross margins increased by over £13 million during the crisis, with processors' profits on their intervention beef business ranging from 4p per lb to 10p per lb. The higher margin equated to around £65 per animal and was secured where factories purchased cheap stock in the marts, slaughtered them and sold the beef into intervention. The slaughter of surplus cows was an equally lucrative enterprise for the meat companies, delivering £7.7 million in increased returns during the period.[78] However, the monetary windfall that intervention provided for the beef companies came at a political cost.

The Irish meat industry's dependence on intervention as an outlet for between twenty per cent and forty per cent of national beef output during the 1970s provoked disquiet in the European Commission and within the Department of Agriculture.[79] The ESRI had confidently forecast in 1973 that buoyant global beef demand and prices

[74] *Report of the Review Body on Beef Intervention and Cattle Slaughter Premium Systems*, p. 22; Gus Fitzpatrick interviews (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017); Daly, *First Department*, p. 509.
[75] Gus Fitzpatrick interviews (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017).
[76] Con Lucey interview (25 Oct. 2017).
[77] *IFJ*, 21 Sept., 28 Sept., 5 Oct 1974.
[78] *Report of the Review Body on Beef Intervention and Cattle Slaughter Premium Systems*, pp 30-31.
[79] Article from *Europe* news agency, 7 Oct. 1977, included (NAI, DA/2007/111/1181); *IFJ*, 5 Apr., 12 Apr. 1975, 1 Jan. 1977; Speech by the Minister for Agriculture, Jim Gibbons, 19 Nov. 1979 (NAI, TSCH/GIS/1/170).

was likely to 'persist' or even 'intensify' as the decade progressed; however, the cattle crisis of 1974-75 ended such optimism, and although the tonnage of beef sold into intervention by Irish factories reduced significantly from the high point of 1975, the scheme remained a critical feature of the market for the remainder of the decade, as Table 4.A illustrates.[80]

YEAR	INTERVENTION QUANTITIES PURCHASED (t)	TOTAL BEEF SALES (t)	INTERVENTION AS % OF TOTAL BEEF SALES (%)
1973	2,383	131,000	2
1974	121,682	198,300	61
1975	136,635	271,000	50
1976	70,916	180,000	39
1977	90,897	249,000	37
1978	86,148	262,700	33
1979	88,458	254,600	35
1980	102,188	344,000	30

Table 4.A: Intervention Beef Purchases 1973-80
Source: Data compiled from Department of Agriculture and Beef Tribunal Report

The quantity of Irish beef sold into intervention ranged from 76,000 tonnes in 1976, to 91,000 tonnes in 1977. In both 1978 and 1979 a total of 87,000 tonnes were put into intervention, while the figure reached 102,000 tonnes in 1980.[81] Tellingly, however, Ireland accounted for a quarter to one-third of the EEC's entire beef intervention stocks by the second half of the 1970s, even though Irish beef production accounted for just five per cent of the EEC's total output.[82] In 1977 there was 264,000 tons of beef in intervention across the EEC, of which thirty-five per cent was Irish.[83] By 1980 the Irish share of the EEC's beef intervention stocks had fallen to twenty-five per cent, but the overall tonnage in storage had increased to more than 400,000 tonnes.[84]

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[80] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 121.
[81] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1976*, p. 38; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1977*, p. 31; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1978*, p. 30; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1979,* p. 31; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1980,* p. 28.
[82] O'Connell & Sheehy, *'Policies to accelerate agricultural development'*, p. 52; O'Connor & Keogh, *Crisis in the Cattle Industry,* p. 24; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 43; Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, pp 38-39; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1978*, p. 30; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1979,* pp 31-33; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1980,* pp 28-30.
[83] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1978*, p. 30.
[84] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, 1980, p. 28.

The emerging reliance of the beef factories on intervention had prompted concerns domestically as early as 1973. In November that year, just one month after the beef intervention scheme had opened, the Fine Gael Minister for Agriculture in the coalition government, Mark Clinton, claimed there was no reason for Irish firms to sell into intervention and stated that he was 'displeased' with those that did.[85] The tone of Clinton's remarks suggests that the Irish authorities were already fearful that the scheme could effectively become a lucrative dumping ground for beef. Such reservations were also noted by Robert O'Connor and Pat Keogh in the 1975 ESRI report on the cattle crisis when they pointed out that intervention isolated processors from the marketplace, and they urged the government to ensure the measure was 'not abused'.[86] The scheme's impact on processors' operations was already evident in 1974-75 when exports of beef cuts fell by one-third, with just ten per cent of product vacuum-packed, despite this market segment providing a fifteen to twenty-five per cent higher margin.[87] Excess boning capacity in Britain and the remainder of the EEC compounded this problem, as wholesalers and distributors increasingly opted to purchase sides of beef, with the carcasses then boned out locally.[88] Indeed, in 1975 around three-quarters of prime beef was still shipped as sides or quarters, while just fifty per cent of cow-beef was deboned.[89] Intervention was effectively undermining the value-added element of the meat business by offering the industry a lucrative outlet for large quantities of unprocessed product. Clinton finally moved to control intervention in April 1975 when he restricted processors to selling fifty per cent of production from each factory into the scheme. Sixty-five per cent of weekly output at the time was being sold into the intervention, with the *Farmers' Journal* claiming that the industry was 'hooked' on the scheme.[90] However, intervention remained an essential outlet for Irish beef despite Clinton's actions, with half the output from Clover Meats and IMP – two of the country's largest processors – being sold into the scheme in 1976.[91] Further intervention restrictions were imposed in 1978 by Clinton's successor at the Department of Agriculture, Fianna Fáil's Jim Gibbons, who excluded

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[85] *IFJ*, 17 Nov. 1973.

[86] O'Connor & Keogh, *Crisis in the Cattle Industry,* p. 35.

[87] Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, pp 46-49.

[88] Contributions to European Parliament debate of 12-16 June 1978 by Conservative MEP for Norfolk, Paul Howell, and Fine Gael's Gerry L'Estrange, in notes on Strasbourg session of European Parliament, 12-16 June 1978 (NAI, DFA/2009/120/840; Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, pp 49-50.

[89] O'Connell & Sheehy, *'Policies to accelerate agricultural development'*, p. 122.

[90] *IP,* 12 Apr. 1975*; II,* 7 Apr. 1975*; IFJ*, 4 Jan. 1975, 12 Apr. 1975.

[91] *IFJ*, 13 Nov. 1976.

heifers from the scheme.[92] This move followed increased criticism, particularly from the British government, of the surplus production which CAP spending encouraged, and the announcement of a major review of farm supports by the EEC's Agriculture Commissioner, Finn Gundelach, in which the Danish politician likened beef intervention to a 'Greek tragedy'.[93] Gibbons was highly critical of the beef industry's 'irresponsible reliance on intervention'. He warned the meat companies that it was 'naive to expect a continuing blank cheque' for intervention and urged processors to make greater efforts to find commercial markets.[94]

Processors blamed the EEC's MCA regime for the high level of intervention usage by Irish factories. IMP's Roger McCarrick claimed in 1976 that the Irish beef industry had the potential to generate £10 million in additional export earnings if the MCA system was suspended. 'If we were free of MCAs not one pound of Irish beef would go into intervention,' he told the *Farmers' Journal*.[95] This was a bold assertion by Mr McCarrick given that Ireland put more than 70,000 tonnes into intervention in 1976, and that over £40 million in various beef supports were provided by the EEC that year.[96] Undoubtedly, however, MCA charges were a serious impediment to exports, as the Department of Agriculture secretary, Michael Barry, conceded. With MCA charges totalling £11 million in 1975, Mr Barry insisted the levies were undermining the competitiveness of Irish beef exports.[97] 'We want to use [intervention] only in periods of crisis but our plants are forced into intervention by the very high costs of selling to the continent. To sell profitably into Germany there needs to be a difference in market prices of about £134 a head,' Mr Barry claimed.[98] The MCA regime also negatively impacted the beef trade with Britain, with the market flooded by cheap Irish and continental beef supplies.[99] Larry Goodman, who owned Anglo-Irish Meats that had two beef factories in Cahir, Co Tipperary and Dundalk, complained that profit margins in Britain had been seriously eroded by June 1974 because more product was being redirected from continental markets to the UK

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[92] *Anglo-Celt*, 7 Apr. 1978; *IP*, 4 Apr. 1978; *II,* 8 Apr. 1978.
[93] Article from *Europe* news agency, 7 Oct. 1977, included in (NAI, DA/2007/111/1181).
[94] Speech by the Minister for Agriculture, Jim Gibbons, to the CBF board, 11 Nov. 1979 (NAI, TSCH/GIS/1/170).
[95] *IFJ*, 4 Dec. 1976.
[96] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1976*, p. 28.
[97] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1975*, p. 24; *IFJ*, 31 May 1975.
[98] *IFJ*, 31 May 1975.
[99] Report on meeting between Department of Agriculture and EEC Commission officials, 2 Aug. 1978 (NAI, DA/2009/120/792); *IFJ*, 29 June 1974, 1 February 1975, 22 April 1978.

due to MCA charges of 4.5p per lb being imposed on Irish meat. Mr Goodman maintained there was a better return from intervention than commercial markets in Britain, as a consequence. 'We are now faced with the situation where the English market has virtually collapsed and we have to look to intervention,' Mr Goodman told the *Farmers' Journal*.[100] The Green Pound's introduction in October 1974, as noted previously, provided the Irish authorities with a mechanism to negate the short-term impact of the MCA regime.[101] However, differences in the Green Pound representative rates between Ireland and Britain prompted further difficulties, particularly for the export of live cattle and for secondary processing operations such as meat canning and boning.[102] This was due to the manner in which MCA rates were calculated on both live cattle and beef which had undergone secondary processing.[103] The impact of MCA rates on the live cattle trade was illustrated by cross-border cattle movements in 1977. A CBF review of the year estimated that 165,000 animals travelled from the Republic of Ireland to Northern Ireland for slaughter in the first five months of the year. However, this flow of cattle was reversed following the suspension of MCA payments on live cattle in June 1977, and 140,000 head went from the North to the Republic for slaughter during the final six months of the year.[104] The impact of MCA anomalies between the United Kingdom and Ireland had a longer-lasting and more profound influence on the canned beef sector. While Irish canned beef processors that sold into the British market paid 30-32p per lb for beef in December 1976, UK firms could purchase German fore-quarter beef for 19p/lb because of the MCA subsidies on Deutschmark-denominated meat exports.[105] These MCA anomalies put Irish firms at a considerable disadvantage and contributed to the long-term decline of the canning business during the 1970s.[106] Indeed, Roscrea Meats, one of Ireland's leading canned meat exporters during the 1950s and 1960s, threatened to relocate its canning operations to Britain in 1978 to circumvent the MCA problem.[107] Meanwhile, the higher MCA rates charged on boneless beef compared to bone-in beef – which

[100] *IFJ*, 29 June 1974.
[101] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1974*, p. 26; Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, p. 474; *CE*, 5 Oct. 1974; *IFJ*, 5 Oct. 1974.
[102] *IFJ*, 5 Oct. 1974
[103] Ibid*.,* 8 March October 1978.
[104] CBF press release, 27 Dec. 1977 (NAI, TAOIS/2009/135/71); *CE*, 16 June 1977.
[105] *IFJ*, 18 Dec. 1976.
[106] Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, pp 87-93; Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, pp 268-69.
[107] Report on meeting between Department of Agriculture and EEC Commission officials, 2 Aug. 1978, (NAI, DA/2009/120/792).

equated to around £20 per animal – led to an increase in the carcass beef exports, and to Irish companies contracting British firms to bone and vacuum-pack product on their behalf.[108] For example, IMP contracted a firm in Kent to bone carcasses that had been processed in Ireland and vacuum-pack the cuts. The company could thereby reduce their MCA charges.[109] However, establishing new processing ventures abroad was an expensive business, particularly when the inventiveness of the Irish factories could identify simpler and cheaper ways around the regulations. In 1976, for example, the factories realised that they could reduce the MCA levies charged on meat cuts for the German market by adding seasoning. This enabled the meat companies to export more beef at competitive prices. The practice became known in the trade as the 'salt and pepper loophole'.[110] Another was the 'Atlas bone loophole'. This involved taking out the Atlas bone in forequarter cuts bound for the British market. This simple action, which the British put down to poor butchering on the part of the Irish factories, changed the categorisation of the cuts for MCA purposes. The *Farmers' Journal* estimated that the loophole was worth £700,000 to one processor before it was finally discovered and closed by the EEC authorities.[111] 'In 1976 and 1977 you [the Irish factories] drove a coach-and-four through the regulations by shaking a little salt and pepper on beef bound for Germany. In 1977 and 1978 you drove a second coach through them by removing the Atlas bone. What is the next stroke for 1979,' a British meat buyer asked the *Farmers' Journal*.[112] The MCA regime remained a serious threat to secondary processors, as the collapse in exports of Irish canned meats illustrated.[113] Another significant casualty of the uncertainty in the processed beef business was Continental Irish Meats (CIM) which closed in May 1977.[114] Jointly owned by Clover Meats and a consortium of investors from the continent – and based at Clover's Christendom site in Ferrybank, Waterford – the business opened in September 1976 but had amassed trading losses of £420,000 by the following March, and a further £100,000 in April. The CIM plant processed beef – it was not a slaughtering facility –

[108] *IFJ*, 8 Apr., 22 Apr. 1978.
[109] Ibid., 22 Apr. 1978.
[110] A number of meat factory sources who talked to the author on condition of anonymity; *IFJ*, 24 Mar. 1979.
[111] *IFJ*, 24 Mar. 1979.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, pp 267-268.
[114] *Munster Express*, 13 May 1977; *IP*, 14 May 1977; *IFJ*, 14 May 1977.

with the vacuum-packed cuts it produced sold in Northern Ireland and Germany.[115] The extent of the losses in such a short period – which initially prompted a Garda investigation – highlighted the seriousness of the challenge faced by secondary processors at this time.[116]

Irish government efforts to have MCAs abolished or restructured between 1974 and 1978 were consistently opposed at EEC level by the Germans, Dutch and French, due to the valuable trading advantages these countries enjoyed over the UK and Ireland as a consequence of the levy regime.[117] The inability of successive Irish governments to secure meaningful changes to the MCA system, despite the serious difficulties the mechanism created for Irish food exporters, exposed the country's relative weakness within the EEC. More importantly, however, the absence of MCA reform meant that devaluing the Green Pound was the only route open to the Irish authorities to mitigate the impact of the levy regime on food processors. However, although this approach was favoured by the farm organisations because of the commodity price increases and improved CAP supports that resulted, it was extremely damaging to the secondary processors.[118] Indeed, the Green Pound's adoption was strongly opposed by the Confederation of Irish Industry (CII), with the employers' body warning of increased wage and raw material costs, and of a possible weakening of the sterling-Irish pound link, should the proposal be approved.[119] Ironically, the meat processors were openly supportive of the Green Pound's introduction, even though they were technically aligned to CII through the Irish Fresh Meat Exporters' Society. In a *Farmers' Journal* interview in June 1974 Larry Goodman described efforts to get EEC approval for the Green Pound as the only 'light' in the business, and he said the measure was needed 'immediately' to restore the industry's competitiveness in continental markets.[120] Although CII's reservations regarding the Green Pound were dismissed by the IFA and ICMSA in 1974, the industry body's

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[115] *Kilkenny People*, 27 May 1977; *IP*, 14 May 1977; *IFJ*, 14 May 1977; John Treacy, former worker and union representative at Clover Meats in Christendom, Ferrybank, Waterford (interviewed by Declan O'Brien, 17 July 2019).
[116] *IP*, 14 May 1977; *II*, 13 May 1977.
[117] Report on meeting between Department of Agriculture and EEC Commission officials, 2 Aug. 1978 (NAI, DA/2009/120/792); Con Lucey interview (25 Oct. 2017); *II*, 1 Nov. 1975; CE, 16 June 1977; *IFJ*, 1 Feb. 1976, 13 Mar. 1976, 3 Apr. 1976.
[118] Con Lucey interview (25 Oct. 2017); Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, p. 213; Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, pp 87-88; Bielenberg & Ryan, *An Economic History of Ireland since Independence*, p. 61.
[119] *II*, 16 July, 17 July 1974; *IP*, 17 July 1974.
[120] *IFJ*, 29 June 1974.

fears were well founded.[121] While the British food processing industry had the scale and domestic market to prosper following EEC membership – with food and drink exports to the Community increasing from £23 million in 1972 to over £310 million by 1978 – in contrast, secondary processors of food in Ireland struggled. In a somewhat dramatic statement Louis Smith and Seán Healy claimed that 'the high value-added food processing industry' was virtually 'exterminated' in the 1970s by a combination of the MCA regime and continual Green Pound devaluations.[122] CBF's Annual Report for 1979 contradicts this contention; while confirming that the sector was certainly under pressure. The report noted that annual exports of processed meats expanded in value terms from almost €5 million to €12 million between 1975 and 1979. However, sales to Britain – Ireland's biggest export market – contracted by thirty per cent in 1979, while imports of cooked meats increased by fifty per cent between 1978 and 1979.[123] The creation of the EMS in 1979, as outlined earlier in this chapter, eventually obviated the requirement for MCAs.[124] This was probably just as well since political patience and understanding for beef processors' persistent complaints regarding the levies was beginning to falter. In a speech to the CBF board in October 1979, the Minister for Agriculture, Jim Gibbons, caustically mocked the beef industry's 'dreary old cry about [MCA] anomalies', while bemoaning the sector's continued dependence on intervention.[125]

COMMERCIAL PRESSURES

Profit margins in the beef industry remained stubbornly low during the second half of the 1970s, with revenues undermined by a combination of falling beef sales in Britain and in other EEC markets due to the economic recession, greater competition for cattle supplies from live exporters, and long-standing weaknesses in the industry such as the seasonality of supply and poor utilisation of slaughtering capacity.[126] Many

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[121] *IP*, 17 July 1974; *II*, 17 July 1974.
[122] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, p. 213.
[123] '*CBF Review of 1979: Outlook for 1980'*, (Dublin, 1980), p.10, included in (NAI, DFA/2014/23/8).
[124] Con Lucey interview (25 Oct. 2017); Bielenberg & Ryan, *An Economic History of Ireland*, pp 41, 61; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1978*, p. 22.
[125] Speech by the Minister for Agriculture, Jim Gibbons, to the CBF board, 11 Nov. 1979 (NAI, TSCH/GIS/1/170).
[126] *Report of the Review Body on Beef Intervention and Cattle Slaughter Premium Systems*, pp 7-8, 27-31; Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, pp 17-19; *IFJ*, 14 Apr. 1973, 16 Sept., 30 Sept., 16 Dec. 1978.

Irish meat processors struggled to survive in the business despite CAP supports to the cattle sector increasing from £60 million to £160 million between 1975 and 1980, and the number of animals slaughtered doubling to almost 1.4 million in the first seven years of EEC membership.[127] Indeed, the increased beef factory margins which the cattle crisis of 1974-75 provided were inexorably lost during the last five years of the decade. The sector recovered in 1973 from the travails of the previous two years, and meat factories generally posted strong profits for 1973 and 1974. In fact, Clover Meats recorded profits of £1.1 million in 1973, while IMP had recovered from the disastrous performance of 1971 – when losses exceeded £750,000 – to see its revenues for Ireland's first year in the EEC reach £500,000.[128] However, this recovery was temporary, and the beef factories were in financial trouble again by 1975 and into 1976. Clover Meats recorded losses of £2.2 million in 1976, necessitating a total restructuring of the business over the following three years as the management battled to save the farmer-owned co-operative from collapse.[129] The news was not as bad for IMP – the other leading co-operative venture in the beef business – but it was also facing serious difficulties by the close of the decade. Profits for 1978 were £640,000, back from £1.7 million the previous year, and the business had debts of £2.8 million.[130] It was not the sort of performance the 28,000 farmers had been promised when they invested over £3 million in the country's largest beef processor a decade earlier. The sector's troubles were not restricted to IMP and Clover Meats. However, the co-operatives were invariably in the spotlight given that they were among the meat business's biggest operators. It was estimated that close to fifty-five per cent of Ireland's total annual cattle kill was in co-operative hands after Cork Mart's purchased IMP in 1969, and farmer-owned concerns still slaughtered more than one third of all animals in 1975.[131] Crucially, they also provided a window into what Smith and Healy have termed 'the dark area of the meat trade', since co-operatives were legally required to publish accounts each year.[132] In contrast privately-owned operators were not obliged to be as commercially transparent. Indeed, the *Farmers'*

[127] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1973- 74*, p. 52; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1975*, p. 24; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1980*, p. 19 and p. 30.
[128] *IFJ*, 1 Sept. 1973, 20 July 1974, 14 Sept. 1974.
[129] Minutes of meetings of the Steering Committee of Clover Meats, in Clover Meats' records, held by Kilkenny County Library, 10 Nov. 1975, 24 Nov. 1975; *II*, 8 Oct. 1977; *IFJ*, 15 Oct. 1977.
[130] *IFJ*, 29 Sept. 1979.
[131] Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, pp 75-76; Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, p. 53.
[132] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, p. 220.

Journal's business correspondent, John O'Reilly, complained in 1978 of privately-owned processors flouting company law by not compiling returns. However, he did not name the companies involved.[133]

RECESSION HITS

The global recession of 1974-75 crushed any faint hope that Ireland's growing beef output could be absorbed by the EEC's lucrative meat markets. The economic downturn which struck in the wake of Arab-Israeli War of October 1973, resulted in a trebling of oil prices in just eighteen months and prompted the deepest economic depression since the 1930s.[134] As Simon Reid-Henry pointed out: 'By the start of 1975 the US stock market stood at half of what it had been in 1972. Unemployment soared and industrial production across the industrialised world had dropped by ten per cent.'[135] Moreover, the recession exposed the vulnerability of Ireland's export-oriented beef industry to external forces, and to the volatility of global consumer demand. Caught in the vice-grip of rising inflation and falling disposable incomes, many families across the western world were forced to reduce their beef consumption and switch instead to cheaper protein sources such as pork and poultry. In Britain, for example, beef and veal consumption per person fell from 21.4kgs per annum in 1970 to 20.5kgs by 1980. In contrast, average poultry intakes rose from 10.7kgs to 13.4kgs during the same period, while pork consumption increased from 11.1kgs to 12.6kgs.[136] Interestingly, higher incomes resulted in Irish domestic demand for beef improving significantly during the early 1970s, with the number of cattle required for the home market increasing from 220,000-240,000 animals in 1967 to around 350,000 head by 1973. [137] However, since domestic sales accounted for less than one-quarter of the country's total cattle disposals, the Irish beef sector's fortunes were actually dictated by consumer sentiment in Munich and Manchester rather than Mullingar.[138] Higher domestic cattle supplies in the UK and the rest of the EEC compounded the

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[133] *IFJ*, 12 Aug. 1978.

[134] Peter Frankopan, *The Silk Roads: a new history of the world* (London, 2015), p. 444; O'Connell & Sheehy, *'Policies to accelerate agricultural development'*, pp 42-43; Martin, *The Development of Modern Agriculture*, p. 140.

[135] Simon Reid-Henry, *Empire of Democracy – The Remaking of the West Since the Cold War 1971-2017*, (London, 2019), p. 66;

[136] Martin, *The Development of Modern Agriculture*, pp 145-146.

[137] Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, p. 39.

[138] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1973- 74*, pp 49-52; Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, p. 39.

recession's impact on beef export markets. Cattle numbers in Britain rose from 11.3 million to 13 million between 1970 and 1975, as UK farmers, like their Irish counterparts, retained more animals in the expectation of higher prices following EEC accession. [139] There was a marked expansion in British beef and veal production as a consequence of the increased herd size, with output growing from 950,000 tonnes in 1970 to 1.2 million tonnes five years later. UK self sufficiency in beef improved from seventy-three per cent to seventy-nine per cent as a result.[140] Total British beef imports dropped by a quarter during this period, due to the increased UK output, falling from 310,000 tonnes to 230,000 tonnes.[141] Although Irish beef exports to the UK held at around 100,000 tonnes in 1974 and 1975, the factories were certainly operating in a very difficult and uncertain market.[142] Larry Goodman admitted in June 1974 that established contracts that had been fostered over the previous eight years with British meat buyers were being lost because of the economic downturn.[143] The situation in the UK market deteriorated further as 1974 progressed, with the *Irish Independent's* farming editor, Jim Norton, pointing out that Britain's weekly kill of prime bullocks and heifers in October increased by almost thirty per cent to 70,000 animals compared to 1973, while a record number of cows were also culled.[144] European and world markets were equally difficult. EEC cattle numbers had increased by almost six per cent to over seventy-nine million head from 1972 to 1974, and the Community was ninety-nine per cent self sufficient in beef by 1976.[145] Irish beef exporters were essentially operating, as a consequence, in what O'Connell and Sheehy termed an 'environment of over-production'.[146] It was a similar story in the world's leading beef exporting nations. Argentina's foreign beef sales dropped sixty per cent between 1973 and 1974, while finished cattle prices in Australia were one-third lower.[147] Unfortunately for Irish beef exporters, political and economic uncertainty in Britain – the most important outlet for Irish beef – continued to negatively impact

[139] Martin, *The Development of Modern Agriculture*, pp 108-109; *Report of the Review Body on Beef Intervention and Cattle Slaughter Premium Systems*, p. 12.
[140] Holderness, British agriculture since 1945, p. 174; Martin, *The Development of Modern Agriculture*, p. 110.
[141] Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, p. 45.
[142] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1975,* p. 37.
[143] *IFJ*, 29 June 1974.
[144] *II*, 8 Oct. 1974.
[145] CBF newsletter, *Irish Livestock and Meat News*, spring 1976 edition (NAI, DA/2007/111/1145); O'Connell & Sheehy, *'Policies to accelerate agricultural development'*, p. 41.
[146] O'Connell & Sheehy, *'Policies to accelerate agricultural development',* p. 42.
[147] *Report of the Review Body on Beef Intervention and Cattle Slaughter Premium Systems*, pp 10-13.

beef sales as the decade progressed. Unemployment of over 1.2 million, inflation rates of close to twenty per cent, a growing balance of payments deficit, and serious industrial relations problems had helped destroy confidence in the British economy by the spring of 1976. A run on sterling eventually forced the UK to seek a bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the first major western industrial country to do so, and resulted in the resignation of Labour prime minister Harold Wilson.[148] The situation had not improved by the summer of 1977 when the EEC Commission blamed 'high unemployment' and a 'less favoured economic situation' for 'stagnating' beef consumption across the community, with the UK and Italy identified as the member states most severely affected.[149]

IMPACT OF LIVE EXPORTS

Live exports continued to undermine beef factories' profits during the 1970s, as increased competition for stock pushed up the cost of cattle for meat processors. Indeed, the contest between factory buyers and exporters for cattle was a recurring theme in the farming press through the decade.[150] The impact of this competition was reflected in higher factory prices for cattle. These rose by a quarter between October 1975 and October 1976, increasing from 38p per lb to 50p per lb.[151] As the price of cattle accounted for around eighty-five per cent of overall processor costs in the 1970s, it is obvious that increased expenditure on animals resulted in reduced profits for the beef factories.[152] In addition, the loss of 500,000 animals a year on average between 1971 and 1980 seriously compromised meat plant efficiency by reducing throughput – and this in an industry that was already struggling with over-capacity, as discussed in Chapter Three.[153] Even so, significant levels of live cattle exports represented a reality that the beef factories could accept up to the mid-1970s because of the sustained growth in the national herd. Processors regularly bemoaned the

[148] Reid-Henry, *Empire of Democracy*, pp 66-68, 86-88; Richard Dunphy, 'The major democracies of Western Europe: France, Italy, Germany and the United Kingdom' in David Gowland, Basil O'Neill and Richard Dunphy (eds.), *The European Mosaic – Contemporary Politics, Economics and Culture*, (Harlow, 1995), pp 137-138; *Illustrated London News*, 1 Sept. 1976; *Liverpool Echo*, 20 Jan. 1978; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 2 Mar. 1977.

[149] Draft communication from the EEC Commission to the Council of Ministers, July 1977 (NAI, 2014/41/50).

[150] *II*, 20 Apr., 16 July 1977; *IFJ*, 31 Mar. 1973, 12 Jan. 1974, 5 Apr. 1975, 1 May 1976, 24 Sept. 1977, 30 Sept. 1978, 31 Mar. 1979.

[151] *IFJ*, 25 Oct. 1975, 30 Oct. 1976.

[152] Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, pp 60-61.

[153] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, pp 100-101; Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, p. 53.

export of cattle on the hoof, a view Larry Goodman articulated in 1974 when he reiterated the meat industry's assertion that the wider economy benefitted if store cattle were finished, slaughtered and processed at home, rather than being shipped live.[154] Notwithstanding meat processor complaints, exports of cattle on the hoof accounted for forty per cent of total cattle disposals in the five years from 1971 to 1975.[155] This was despite a marked slowdown in live exports to Northern Ireland and Britain following EEC accession. Live exports to the UK dropped from 590,000 in 1971 to between 340,000 and 350,000 by 1973 and 1974.[156] The decline in cattle exports to Northern Ireland and Britain was attributed primarily to the ending of the deficiency payment scheme when the UK joined the EEC with Ireland and Denmark, an increase in the British beef cow herd, and a steady running down of live shipping capacity during the early 1970s.[157] Increased Irish cattle numbers during the early 1970s had also helped to curb tensions between the shippers and processors, as the continual herd expansion ensured sufficient supplies of livestock were available to meet the demands of both the live and dead meat trades – albeit that capacity utilisation within the meat processing industry was negatively affected. The Irish cattle herd increased from 4.5 million head in 1955, to 5.4 million by 1965, and to almost 7.2 million animals by 1974.[158] Relations between the live exporters and processors deteriorated markedly following the cattle crisis of 1974-75, however, when cattle supplies tightened significantly. The national herd fell from the 7.2 million high to 6.9 million head by 1976 as farmers sold or slaughtered excess stock because they lacked the fodder, capital and cash flow to retain and finish the animals to beef.[159] A twenty-five per cent fall in finished cattle prices and even more severe reductions in the value of calves and lighter stock were recorded during the winter of 1974-75.[160] The cattle crisis was a shattering experience for beef many farmers.

[154] *IFJ*, 29 June 1974.
[155] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1975*, pp 36-37; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1977*, p. 33; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1980*, p. 30.
[156] O'Connor & Keogh, *Crisis in the Cattle Industry,* p. 44.
[157] Interview with Paddy Gernon, live cattle exporter from Dublin and former Bord Bia board member (14 Jan. 2016); O'Connor & Keogh, *Crisis in the Cattle Industry*, p. 44; *IFJ*, 5 Jan. 1974.
[158] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1955-56*, p. 5; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1965-66*, p. 17; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1975*, p. 16.
[159] O'Connor & Keogh, *Crisis in the Cattle Industry,* p. 7; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1975*, p. 16; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1976*, p. 40.
[160] Daly, *First Department*, p. 509.

Meath beef farmer and cattle trader, Jimmy Cosgrave, recalled going to Kilrush Mart in west Clare at the height of the crisis to buy stock. 'That was soul destroying,' he said. 'Farmers with bills to pay, looking for a few bob for cattle they had to sell.' [161]

The contraction in the national herd had serious ramifications for beef processors. Factory throughput fell by 400,000 animals between 1975 and 1976 – back from 1.36 million head to 965,000 – and the value of beef exports dropped by twelve per cent to £176 million, compared to over £200 million the previous year.[162] (See Figures 4.2 and Table 4.4) Equally significant was the 700,000-head decrease in overall cattle disposals in the same twelve-month period.[163] This was a direct result of the large-scale culling of beef cows and replacement heifers during the cattle crisis, along with other excess animals, which inflated the overall kill figures for 1975 by around thirty per cent, but robbed the industry of feeder stock in subsequent years. Indeed, the *Farmers' Journal* reported in August 1975 that cow slaughterings for the year were seventy thousand ahead of 1974 levels, which tallies with a 1984 Department of Agriculture study which noted that suckler cow numbers dropped by 185,000 head to around 550,000 animals between 1974 and 1976.[164]

YEAR	SHIPPED LIVE	SLAUGHTERED	TOTAL EXPORT DISPOSALS
1971	616,000	708,000	1,324,000
1972	597,000	579,000	1,176,000
1973	475,000	677,000	1,152,000
1974	448,000	1,060,000	1,508,000
1975	655,000	1,360,000	2,055,000
1976	370,000	965,000	1,335,000
1977	450,000	1,170,000	1,620,000
1978	550,000	1,180,000	1,730,000
1979	327,000	1,180,000	1,490,000
1980	550,000	1,370,000	1,920,000

Table 4.B: Cattle Disposals 1971-80
Source: Department of Agriculture

[161] Jimmy Cosgrave from Enfield, Co Meath in conversation with Declan O'Brien (14 June 2018).
[162] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1976*, pp 32-40.
[163] Ibid., p. 40.
[164] *IFJ*, 9 Aug. 1975, 10 Jan. 1976; Report of the Working Party on a *Four-Year Plan for Agriculture, 1984-1987*, commissioned by the Department of Agriculture, 14 Feb. 1984 (NAI, DA/2014/72/1).

The downturn in cattle numbers in 1976 had a devastating impact on the financial performance of the beef processors, and brought into sharp focus the battle for supplies between live exporters the meat factories. Clover Meats recorded losses of £2.2 million in 1976, and required a government-backed loan of £1.4 million from the Agricultural Credit Corporation (ACC) to prevent the business's possible collapse.[165] It was also a difficult year for IMP, with profits back by two-thirds to £830,000 for 1976-77 compared to the previous twelve months.[166] Both co-operative processors cited the downturn in cattle throughput, and the impact of live exports by extension, as a major factor in the firms' reduced returns. IMP chairman, Jim Mullins, warned farmer shareholders in June and September 1976 that poorer financial results were likely for the year since the overall cattle kill was back by around thirty per cent. He said the adverse trading conditions were compounded by the drought which followed the summer heat wave, and by a bank strike.[167] Michael Collins was under even more pressure at Clover Meats. Indeed, he nearly had to battle on as many fronts to keep the firm solvent as his famous uncle and namesake did to keep the Irish revolution on track over half a century earlier. Clover Meats had suffered losses of £1.5 million in 1975, and Collins questioned if the firm was in a position to maintain a 'proportionate share' of the available livestock pool given the level of competition from other meat factories and live exporters.[168] The difficult trading environment was reflected in a high number of meat factory closures, sales and leases during 1976 and 1977. Golden Vale Mart's (GVM) factory in Rathdowney, Co Laois was the most high profile meat processing venture to fail during this period. The co-operative business started killing cattle in February 1974, but a combination of poor throughput – the factory killed just 190 animals per week for the first sixteen months – difficult markets, and a working capital requirement in excess of £500,000 resulted in the plant closing in September 1976. GVM, which had marts in Limerick, Offaly and Leitrim, was left with debts of £550,000 as a consequence.[169] Some privately-owned meat companies also struggled financially. Nenagh Chilling Company was bought by Larry

[165] Minutes of meetings of the Steering Committee of Clover Meats, 10 Nov. 1975, 24 Nov. 1975; *II*, 12 Mar., 8 Oct. 1977; *IP*, 11 Mar., 8 Oct. 1977; *IFJ*, 26, 19 Mar., 15 Oct. 1977; *Munster Express*, 8 Apr., 5 Aug. 1977.
[166] *CE*, 12 Sept. 1977; *IFJ*, 11 Sept. 1976.
[167] *IFJ*, 6 June, 11 Sept. 1976.
[168] Minutes of meetings of the Steering Committee of Clover Meats, 10 Nov. 1975, 24 Nov. 1975; *IFJ*, 10 Mar. 1976.
[169] Liston, *From Fair to Mart and Beyond*, pp 217-233; *IFJ*, 2 Apr. 1974, 7 Jan., 12 Aug. 1978.

Goodman's Anglo-Irish Meats in November 1976, while the dairy co-operative, North Connacht Farmers (NCF), purchased the meat factory at Deepwater Quay in Sligo in August 1977 after Fursey Quinn and Bobby Cuddy had decided to stop killing at the site two months previously.[170]

The increased export of live cattle to North Africa and the Middle East in the second half of the 1970s compounded the difficulties caused by the reduction in cattle numbers. Although fewer than four thousand Irish cattle a year were exported to the Middle East and North Africa when Ireland joined the EEC, this figure reached almost ninety thousand animals by 1979, and peaked at more than 220,000 cattle in 1983.[171] The live cattle trade to North Africa was initially opened in 1966 when nine thousand bullocks were exported to Egypt. The trade was handled by the renowned shippers, the Molihan brothers from Ardagh, Co Longford, and initially comprised bullocks of eight- to nine-hundred-weight that were shipped from Waterford to the Egyptian port of Alexandria.[172] Ironically, given the lengths to which beef processors went to shut down the live cattle trade more than a decade later, one of the men involved in buying stock for the Egyptian deal was Hugh Tunney who later owned Clones Meats and two further plants in Northern Ireland. He was working with the Molihans at the time.[173] The market for Irish cattle in the Middle East and North Africa remained an occasional rather than a consistent outlet for stock over the following nine years, but this changed in 1975 when Tunisia took over eleven thousand cattle, and the trade moved into a different league the following year when almost seventeen thousand cattle were shipped to Libya.[174] This marked the start of a lucrative and long-lasting trading relationship with the oil-rich state, which was led by the enigmatic Colonel Muammar Gaddafi. In 1977 the Purcell Brothers shipped more than thirty thousand cattle to Libya, the Gaddafi regime took 67,000 in 1979, and 116,000 in 1980.[175] The increase in live exports posed a serious challenge to the beef factories on two fronts: it made cattle scarcer and dearer. In fact, by 1978-79 cattle prices were at record levels. In October 1978 beef bullocks were making thirty per

[170] *Sligo Champion*, 12 Aug. 1977; *IFJ*, 13 Nov. 1976, 6 Aug. 1977.
[171] CBF and CSO data supplied to the author by Bord Bia, received Nov. 2016.
[172] *IFJ*, 29 Jan. 1966; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 70.
[173] Paddy Gernon interview (14 Jan. 2016); *IFJ*, 3 Nov. 1973, 29 Mar. 1975.
[174] CBF and CSO data supplied to the author by Bord Bia, received November 2016.
[175] Kevin Purcell interview (4 Nov. 2015); CBF and CSO data supplied to the author by Bord Bia, received Nov. 2016.

cent more than they had done two years earlier, both in the marts and factories. Finished bullocks made £365 a head on average in Cork Marts for the week ending 23 October 1976, and 51p per lb in the factories. In contrast, the average live price two years later was £480 a head, while the factory quotes stood at 64-65p per lb.[176] Arctic weather conditions in January 1979 brought the cattle trade to a standstill and prices rose sharply as a consequence, with 72p per lb being paid by the factories for beef bullocks, while mart prices for finished cattle hit £520 per head.[177] On the cattle supply front factories were finding it increasingly difficult to get stock from the autumn of 1977 to early 1979. In the third week of September 1977 live exports hit almost ten thousand head, with two cattle shipments to Libya, two more to Ostend in Belgium, and four to Britain.[178] Although the Libyan market was taking mainly Friesian stock, which were not ideal beef animals, the loss of the cattle numbers was hitting the factories.[179] The matter came to head in January 1979 when Clover Meats and Roscrea put staff on protective notice. Lyons of Longford and Tunney Meats in Clones also restricted operations as they struggled to get adequate cattle supplies. The factories' actions followed the shipping of four thousand beef cattle and forward stores to Libya during the last two weeks of December 1978. A boat-load even left on Christmas Day, the *Farmers' Journal* reported – adding that the 'exodus has exacerbated the shortage of finished cattle and the beef plants are feeling the pinch.'[180]

SAME OLD PROBLEMS

Seasonality of cattle supplies and the consequent poor utilisation of slaughtering capacity continued to undermine beef-factory profitability in the 1970s – just as it had done in the 1950s and 1960s. Supply seasonality was identified in the 1963 *Report of the Survey Team into the Beef, Mutton and Lamb Industries* as a major impediment to the beef industry's development, and these concerns were repeated in the ESRI's 1973 report on the meat processing sector. The 1963 study found that capacity utilisation in beef processing averaged just fifty-three per cent, and ranged through the year from

[176] *IFJ*, 23 Oct. 1976, 21 Oct. 1978.
[177] *II*, 13 Jan. 1979; *IFJ*, 13 January 1979.
[178] *IFJ*, 24 Sept. 1977.
[179] Kevin Purcell interview (4 Nov. 2015).
[180] *IFJ*, 13 Jan. 1979.

forty-three per cent to seventy-three per cent depending on the number of livestock killed.[181] The industry's overall performance had not improved a decade later when the ESRI report found that the average capacity utilisation was just fifty-four per cent.[182] The seasonal nature of Irish cattle supplies, which saw close to sixty per cent of animals killed in the five months from August to December, was identified in both reports as the primary reason for the sector's poor utilisation of slaughtering capacity.[183] The cattle-kill's concentration into what farmers term the 'back end' of the year was a serious headache for factory owners and workers. It meant that many factory workers were employed on a part-time basis during the busy August to December period. Generally, they were then let go in January or February until late summer when cattle supplies increased again.[184]

The absence of a consistent cattle supply throughout the year was similarly disruptive for the beef processors. It restricted the factories' ability to secure contracts with the increasingly influential retail butcher chains and supermarkets, since the processors were unable to guarantee sufficient beef supplies during the first six months of the year, and particularly in the second quarter (April to June) when cattle numbers were usually at their lowest.[185] As can be seen from Table 4.C, the skewed nature of cattle slaughterings was a particularly Irish phenomenon. Studies of European cattle slaughtering patterns between 1971 and 1974 found that just over forty-one per cent of Irish cattle were killed in the January to June period, with fifty-nine per cent slaughtered in the second half of the year. In contrast, European beef plants had a much more even kill distribution, since there was a tradition of housing and fattening cattle on grain and other feedstuffs during the winter. For example, in West Germany 48.5 per cent of cattle were supplied in the first six months of the year, with 51.5 per cent killed between July and December. Similarly, forty-eight per cent of Dutch cattle were slaughtered between January and June, with fifty-two per cent

[181] *Report of the Survey Team on the Beef, Mutton and Lamb Industries*, pp 59-60.
[182] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, pp 100-103.
[183] *Report of the Review Body on Beef Intervention and Cattle Slaughter Premium Systems*, p. 7; *Report of the Survey Team on the Beef, Mutton and Lamb Industries*, pp 59-60; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, pp 92-95.
[184] John Treacy interview (17 July 2019); *'The Price of Bacon',* a documentary on the Castlebar Bacon Company, first broadcast on RTE Radio 1 on 22 March 2009 as part of the Factory Lives series.
[185] *Report of the Review Body on Beef Intervention and Cattle Slaughter Premium Systems*, pp 7-8; Gus Fitzpatrick interview (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017).

killed during the remaining six months.[186] The IDA responded to the difficulties of over-capacity in the beef industry by halting grant aid to new slaughter plants by 1976 on the grounds that there were already too many beef factories. However, the state agency continued to support secondary processing.[187] This approach was recommended in a Cooper and Lybrand report on the beef processing sector which was commissioned by the IDA and published in 1977. The report forecast that cattle throughput in Irish meat plants was likely to reach around 1.5 million head in 1978-79, but it contended that no additional slaughtering capacity was needed until 1980 at the earliest.[188] Consequently, the IDA refused an application in 1976 by Amalgamated Meat Packers of Bagenalstown for grant aid to develop a new beef slaughtering plant in Galway, while still providing forty per cent investment support to secondary processing developments such as the £200,000 expansion in 1980 of Alpha Foods burger manufacturing plant in Carrickmacross, Co Monaghan.[189]

COUNTRY	QUARTER 1 (%)	QUARTER 2 (%)	QUARTER 3 (%)	QUARTER 4 (%)
IRELAND	23.0	18.5	25.8	32.6
WEST GERMANY	24.8	23.5	24.5	27.3
UK	24.5	22.8	24.3	28.8
BELGIUM	24.0	24.8	25.3	26.0
DENMARK	26.0	24.5	24.2	25.7
FRANCE	24.5	23.9	24.5	26.5
ITALY	25.2	25.0	25.9	24.4
NETHERLANDS	25.0	23.0	23.8	28.0
EEC	24.3	23.8	24.5	27.0

Table 4.C: Percentage of cattle slaughtered in each quarter in EEC (average 1971-74)
Source: UK Meat and Livestock Commission

Efforts were made by both the processors and EEC administrators during the 1970s to rebalance Irish cattle supplies and reduce the adverse impact of fluctuating livestock numbers on the beef processing sector. The slaughter premium scheme was the main EEC policy initiative that sought to address the difficulties associated with seasonal cattle supplies. Introduced at the height of the cattle crisis in August 1974, the scheme encouraged farmers to finish animals for slaughter away from the autumn peak by means of a variable premium, valued at a maximum of £37.72 per animal in

[186] *Report of the Review Body on Beef Intervention and Cattle Slaughter Premium Systems*, pp 7-8.
[187] *IFJ*, 23 Oct. 1976.
[188] Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, pp 78-79 and 118-120.
[189] *IFJ*, 23 Oct. 1976, 22 Mar. 1980.

1975 for those slaughtered in February that year.[190] The value of the premium was subsequently adjusted each year. The factories were also active in seeking to encourage farmers to finish more animals in the spring. For example, in 1976 IMP offered low-interest loans – £50 per bullock and £30 per heifer, to a maximum of £5,000 – to farmers willing to supply finished cattle between March and May.[191] Meanwhile, NCF Meats entered contract arrangements with finishers in the midlands to secure supplies of finished cattle during the spring and early summer.[192] NCF Meats was taking advantage of an established tradition of farmers in the east and southeast finishing cattle over the winter for both the home market and for export. Joe Barry remembers travelling in the 1950s with his father, a sales-master in the Dublin Cattle Market, to buy finished cattle off farms in Wexford, Wicklow and Carlow.[193] Likewise, Jimmy Cosgrave recalled that thousands of cattle were purchased in the west each autumn and finished over the winter on farms in north county Dublin and east Meath. In the 1950s and early 1960s these animals were generally sold in the Dublin Cattle Market and exported for slaughter in England or the continent.[194] However, Dublin Meat Packers in Ballymun was killing a sizeable proportion of this stock by the early 1970s, Cosgrave maintained.[195] The challenge for the beef sector was to expand the number of farmers involved in 'winter finishing' so that a more even supply of cattle to the factories could be guaranteed. Winter finishing had the potential to deliver a significantly higher annual income than traditional beef production systems. This was confirmed by the Farm Management Survey of 1976 which recorded a profit margin of £155 per acre for winter finishing, compared to £47 per acre for farms involved in calf-to-store (calf to eighteen months old) operations, and £38 per acre for store-to-finished-animal enterprises (eighteen months to thirty or thirty-six months old). Dairy farming gave an average margin of £104 per acre, while the figure for wheat production was £86 per acre.[196] However, few farms had the necessary facilities to winter-finish cattle, given that these units were essentially feed

[190] Memorandum for government on the Cattle Slaughter Premium Scheme, 31 Oct. 1974 (NAI, DA/2005/151/637).
[191] *IFJ*, 23 Oct. 1976.
[192] Speech by the Minister for Agriculture, Jim Gibbons, at the official opening of the NCF meat plant in Deepwater Quay, Sligo, 5 Dec. 1977 (NAI, TSCH/GIS/1/170).
[193] Joe Barry interview (2 Nov. 2013).
[194] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 34; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, pp 73-75; Discussion with Jimmy Cosgrave (14 June 2018).
[195] Discussion with Jimmy Cosgrave (14 June 2018).
[196] *IFJ*, 14 Jan. 1978.

lots. The making of ‘outdoor silage’ was a feature of farming during the period, Con Lucey of IFA said, while beef researcher Michael Drennan recalled that the majority of cattle in the early 1970s were out-wintered on ‘crags’ (rocky ground) or were ‘ploughing up fields’.[197] The level of investment in winter housing, silage pits and slurry storage that was required to develop a modern winter finishing enterprise was outlined in the *Report of the Review Body on Beef Intervention and Cattle Slaughter Premium System.* It estimated that developing suitable facilities to finish cattle in twenty-four months – essentially a winter finishing unit or feed lot – required an investment equivalent to £43 per acre. In contrast, the capital costs associated with finishing cattle at thirty months were £25 per acre, while a capital cost of just £7.50 per acre was required where cattle were being finished at forty months.[198] Although the financial investment required in winter finishing units was high, the thirty per cent grants available for farm buildings under the CAP-funded Farm Improvement Scheme (FIS) made such developments possible for many farmers. [199] Indeed, almost £10 million was paid in FIS grants to more than fifty thousand farmers between 1973 and 1975 for work on new farm buildings and water supplies.[200] Much of this on-farm investment during the 1970s undoubtedly took place on dairy farms, given that creamery milk supplies grew by fifty per cent to almost 900 million gallons in the six years from 1973 to 1979.[201] However, this period also witnessed the growth of specialist beef finishing, with farmers such as Jim Kidney from Crosshaven, Co Cork, who fattened close to two hundred heifers each year, entering the business.[202] Even so, efforts to significantly alter the cattle supply profile to the country’s beef slaughter plants failed, despite the various incentives. In fact, the *CBF Review of 1979: Outlook for 1980* found that the uneven nature of factory throughput had deteriorated during the decade. While the study into the intervention regime noted that in the years 1971 to 1974 sixty per cent of Irish cattle were supplied on average to factories between

[197] Con Lucey interview (25 October 2017); Michael Drennan interview (24 October 2017).
[198] *Report of the Review Body on Beef Intervention and Cattle Slaughter Premium Systems*, p. 50.
[199] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1973-74*, pp 102-105.
[200] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1975*, p. 83.
[201] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1979,* p. 39; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1973-74*, p. 55.
[202] *IFJ*, 10 Feb. 1973.

July and December, by 1979 this figure had increased to sixty-four per cent, with thirty-six per cent supplied from January to June.[203]

BEEF SECTOR REACTION

Irish beef processors increased their commercial sales by more than one-third during the 1970s, despite the serious economic challenges the industry encountered. Average beef exports for the years 1971 to 1973 were 135,000 tonnes. However, beef sales to foreign markets, excluding the quantities sold into intervention, increased thirty-four per cent to 190,000 tonnes for the years 1978 to 1980. [204] Similarly, export revenues from beef sales increased from £135 million in 1974 to £325 million by 1978 when the business accounted for one-third of total foreign sales in farm goods.[205] This was a creditable performance by the industry given the depressed economic environment, and the obstacles to growth posed by the previously discussed MCA regime. Indeed, the commercial achievements of the beef industry during the late 1970s are easily overlooked since the various CAP schemes introduced following Ireland's EEC accession invariably attract most comment and attention. Yet, commercial markets provided an outlet for close to seventy per cent of the 1.5 million tonnes of Irish beef exported between 1976 and 1980. That is almost 1.1 million tonnes.[206] As former beef researcher, Tony Kenny, remarked, factory owners at this time took a very pragmatic approach to the beef business by riding the 'two horses' that the commercial markets and intervention provided. 'It was better to use intervention and survive than go hell's bells for progressive product development and go to the wall,' Kenny observed.[207] British and European beef markets started to improve – albeit from a weak base – during the second half of 1975, as consumption slowly began to recover. [208] For example, Premier Meat Packers in Sallins was selling valuable hind-quarters in

[203] *'CBF Review of 1979: Outlook for 1980'*, (Dublin, 1980), p. 4 (NAI, DFA/2014/23/8); *Report of the Review Body on Beef Intervention and Cattle Slaughter Premium Systems*, pp 7-8.
[204] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1973- 74*, p. 53; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1978*, p. 30; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1979*, p. 31; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1980*, pp 28-30.
[205] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1975*, p. 29; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1978*, p. 24.
[206] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1976*, p. 38; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1977*, p. 31; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1978, p. 30*; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1979*, pp 31-33; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1980*, pp 28-30.
[207] Tony Kenny interview (19 Feb. 2019).
[208] *Irish Livestock and Meat News* (CBF information publication), Spring 1976 edition (NAI, 2007/111/1145).

Britain and cheaper fore-quarters to French customers and other continental buyers in early 1974.[209] The firm's efforts to expand continental beef sales intensified as the British market weakened during late 1974, with former chief executive, Gus Fitzpatrick, recalling that the company developed lucrative contracts with a number of wholesale butcher chains in Holland. 'They had around eighty shops that we were supplying every week, with quite a substantial amount of beef,' Fitzpatrick explained. IMP also had a varied mix of customers. The firm sold beef in Britain, Italy, Scandinavia, Germany and Israel in 1975.[210] Similarly, a mix of British and continental customers purchased the vast majority of the output from the NCF Meats plant in Sligo.[211] The dairy co-operative, which had milk suppliers across Mayo, Sligo and Roscommon, entered the beef business in 1977 when it bought the Sligo Meat Exporters plant at Deepwater Quay in Sligo.[212] The beef factory was operated from 1973 to 1977 by the former IMP executives Fursey Quinn and Bobby Cuddy.[213] John B. Keane worked in sales and marketing with NCF Meats and estimated that around eighty per cent of the firm's beef went to Britain, while Italy was their biggest market in mainland Europe. French buyers took the offal.[214] The geographic breakdown of Irish beef exports is illustrated in Table 4.D.[215]

The extent to which continental Europe became a crucial and consistent outlet for Irish beef is clear from Table 4.D. The EEC had a reputation in the beef business during the 1960s of being a profitable but unreliable market. European beef buyers had a tendency to buy 'in a blast' and then 'back out' of the market almost entirely, Gus Fitzpatrick observed. [216] This view is borne out by trade statistics. Irish beef exports to the EEC totalled just over two thousand tonnes in 1963; but sales expanded rapidly to 20,000 tonnes in 1964 and 1965 following a beef shortage on the continent,

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209 *IFJ*, 12 Jan. 1974; Interviews with Gus Fitzpatrick (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017).
210 *II*, 13 Sept. 1975.
211 John B. Keane interview (19 Feb. 2019).
212 *Sligo Champion*, 12 Aug. 1977; *IFJ*, 6 Aug. 1977.
213 *IFJ*, 22 Sept. 1973.
214 John B. Keane interview (19 Feb. 2019).
215 The one serious caveat with these export figures is the inclusion of beef sold into intervention, much of which was stored outside the country – primarily in Holland and the UK – and was therefore classed as exports. However, it is a weakness in the statistics that will have to be accepted, given that there is no separation of exports into commercial or intervention. Indeed, CBF highlighted this issue in its Spring 1976 edition of *Irish Livestock and Meat News*.
216 Interviews with Gus Fitzpatrick (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017).

before falling back again to two thousand tonnes by 1967.[217] Similarly, there was a sudden rise in beef exports to the EEC in 1971 and 1972, increasing from six thousand tonnes to 37,000 tonnes.[218] However, these extreme fluctuations were not repeated after 1974. In fact, continental markets absorbed thirty-eight per cent of overall Irish beef exports in the three-year period from 1978 to 1980 inclusive, with fifty-two per cent going to Britain.[219]

YEAR	UK	EEC	US	ELSEWHERE	TOTAL
1971	102,000	6,200	30,000	8,100	146,300
1972	77,000	37,500	7,200	4,900	126,600
1973	50,000	61,000	6,000	14,000	131,000
1974	105,000	50,000	21,000	22,300	198,300
1975	96,000	136,000	4,000	35,000	271,000
1976	81,000	76,000	1,000	22,000	180,000
1977	124,000	111,000	-	14,000	249,000
1978	141,000	109,000	-	12,700	262,700
1979	149,000	94,000	-	11,600	254,600
1980	162,000	123,000	-	59,000	344,000

Table 4.D: Beef Exports Markets (t)
Source: Department of Agriculture

Ironically, the displacement of the traditional Shorthorn in the dairy herd by leaner Friesian cows facilitated the growth in Irish beef sales to the continent. In 1967 close to sixty per cent of the country's 1.5 million cows were Shorthorns, while just twenty per cent were Friesians. However, the national herd's make-up was totally transformed by the increased adoption of artificial insemination (AI) and the work of the country's AI technicians – or 'Austin Bullmen' as they were known because of the Austin Devon A40 cars they drove.[220] By 1971 more than half the country's dairy cows were Friesian and close to sixty per cent were inseminated to Friesian sires the following year.[221] European buyers preferred the lean meat which these Friesian cattle produced, rather than the high fat cover for which Angus, Hereford and Shorthorn carcasses were noted.[222]

[217] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78.
[218] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1973- 74*, p. 53.
[219] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, 1980, p. 30.
[220] John A. Quish, *A Hundred Years of Going to the Creamery*, (Cork, 2010), p. 129; *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 41.
[221] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, pp 84-85.
[222] Ibid., pp 79-83.

The 1970s also marked the end of Irish beef exports to North America, after the US authorities alleged that EEC export refunds were being used to subsidise the trade.[223] It was an unfortunate development given the crucial role beef sales to the US, and to its armed forces, played in the genesis and expansion of Irish beef processing during the 1950s and 1960s. Exports to the US averaged around 30,000 tonnes in the late 1960s, but, as Figure 4.4 shows, the trade went into decline from 1972.[224] The competitiveness of Irish beef on the US market was seriously compromised when increased sales to Europe resulted in a fifty per cent lift in cattle prices. Beef sales to the US dropped from 30,000 tonnes to just seven thousand tonnes between 1971 and 1972 as factory quotes for prime cattle rose from 16p per lb to 24p per lb.[225] A significant increase in the US cattle herd also negatively impacted on demand for imported beef. Cattle numbers rose from 108 million head in 1967 to 131 million by 1975, while annual slaughterings increased from 33 million head to 40 million between 1973 and 1975.[226] Seven Irish factories continued to supply US customers up until 1976, despite the pressures and the volume of business having contracted significantly. These included the three IMP beef plants at Dublin's Grand Canal Street, Leixlip and Midleton, as well as Clover Meats, Clonmel Foods, Kildare Chilling, and Premier Meat Packers in Sallins.[227] However, the viability of the trade was totally undermined when the US authorities halved the annual import quota for Irish beef from four thousand tonnes to two thousand tonnes in March 1976.[228] The US authorities accused the Irish beef processors of using CAP export refunds to subsidise the trade and threatened to impose duties on meat imports.[229] The matter was raised by Taoiseach Liam Cosgrave when he travelled to Washington to meet US president, Gerald Ford, on St Patrick's Day 1976. However, President Ford later

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[223] Letter from US president Gerald Ford to the Taoiseach, Liam Cosgrove, 31 Apr. 1976 (NAI, TAOIS/2009/135/71); Letter from the Foreign Agricultural Service of the USDA at the US Embassy in Dublin, to the Minister for Agriculture, Mark Clinton, 30 Mar. 1976 (NAI, TAOIS/2008/148/87).
[224] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1973-74*, p. 53; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78.
[225] *IFJ*, 6 Nov. 1971, 18 Nov. 1972; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1973-74*, p. 53.
[226] *Washington Post*, 20 Jan. 1977; *Demand and Price Situation 1974*, United States Department of Agriculture, (Washington DC, 1974), p. 11.
[227] Letter from the Irish Embassy in Washington to the First Secretary of the US Embassy in Dublin, Bryan Baas, 31 Mar. 1976 (NAI, TAOIS/2008/148/87).
[228] Letter from the Foreign Agricultural Service of the USDA at the US Embassy in Dublin, to the Minister for Agriculture, Mark Clinton, 30 Mar. 1976 (NAI, TAOIS/2008/148/87).
[229] Undated document entitled 'Note for the Taoiseach's information – exports of beef to US' (NAI, TAOIS/2009/135/71).

conceded in a letter to Cosgrave that there was no obvious solution to the difficulties raised. [230] Essentially, Ireland had forfeited access to the US market in the process of securing access to the EEC.

The expansion of existing outlets for Irish beef such as Israel, and the emergence of new markets in the Middle East, more than compensated for the loss of US customers in the mid-1970s. In addition, Ireland continued to supply beef to the US armed forces in Europe, although there was increased competition from Yugoslavia and France for this business.[231] Indeed, Israel and the US armed forces accounted for the majority of the non-EEC or Third Country beef exports between 1975 and 1977, when the volumes of beef involved ranged from 14,000 tonnes to 35,000 tonnes.[232] Beef and sheep-meat exports to Arab states such as Libya and Tunisia became a feature of the trade from the mid-1970s. Paddy Nolan's Dublin Meat Processors' plant in Ballymun pioneered the export of sheep-meat to North Africa in 1975, and the following year he sold over two thousand tonnes into the Libyan market.[233] Gus Fitzpatrick sold around four hundred tonnes of beef into Libya in 1975.[234] However, changes to the MCA payments regime which made intervention a more rewarding alternative meant the export tonnages to North Africa remained small up until the Tallaght-based firm, Agra Trading, won a £4-million contract in 1980 to supply 500 carcasses per week to Libya. The cattle were killed and processed at the Abbey Meats plant outside Belfast that Agra Trading owned, with the carcasses flown each week from Aldergrove Airport to Tripoli.[235] Ironically, though, it was the export of live cattle to the Middle East rather than beef that had the greatest impact on meat processors' fortunes in the 1970s.

[230] Letter from US president Gerald Ford to the Taoiseach, Liam Cosgrove, 31 Apr. 1976 (NAI, TAOIS/2009/135/71).
[231] *Irish Livestock and Meat News* (CBF information publication), Spring 1976 edition (NAI, 2007/111/1145); *IFJ*, 7 Dec. 1974, 1 Jan. 1977; *II*, 30 Dec. 1976, 26 Oct. 1978.
[232] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1977*, p. 33; *II*, 30 Dec. 1976, 26 Oct. 1978; *IFJ*, 1 Jan. 1977.
[233] *IFJ*, 31 May 1975; *II*, 1 Mar. 1975, 30 Dec. 1976.
[234] *II*, 1 Mar. 1975, 30 Dec. 1976; *IFJ*, 31 May 1975.
[235] *IFJ*, 26 Apr. 1980; *II*, 20 May 1980.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

The second half of the 1970s witnessed the emergence of a new generation of private meat factory owners. This group was led by men such as Larry Goodman of Anglo-Irish Meats and Hugh Tunney of Tunney Meats who established beef businesses with multiple slaughtering and boning sites.[236] These companies adapted to the challenging beef processing environment of the mid-1970s by maintaining a strict focus on cost control, thereby increasing the efficiency of their factories and consequently their profit margins.[237] The expansion of Anglo-Irish Meats and Tunney Meats was undoubtedly facilitated by volatile beef-sector profit margins in the years following Ireland's accession to the EEC. Low and uncertain profits persuaded some industry investors to exit the meat business where possible. This was illustrated by Goodman's purchase of Nenagh Chilling in November 1976. The small Tipperary factory, which killed close to two thousand sheep per week and had capacity for around one thousand cattle, was jointly owned by four local shareholders and the former CBF chief executive, Peter Needham.[238] Goodman also had a sixteen per cent share in the Nenagh business, and when he offered to buy out the other investors – which included Needham, Jimmy O'Hara a local grain merchant, Oliver Healy a former butcher and managing director of the business, a local businesswoman called Mrs Hackett, and Tim Stapleton who was a local farmer – the shareholders readily accepted and the sale was agreed within two months.[239] However, while the expansion of Anglo-Irish Meats and Tunney Meats provided a welcome exit mechanism for investors in small beef factories such as Nenagh Chilling, the streamlined beef processing operations which Goodman and Tunney developed directly challenged the viability of established but less efficient meat factories. In essence, their emergence heralded a changing of the guard in the beef industry.

The success of the processing operations built by Goodman and Tunney relative to other established businesses was illustrated by their respective profit margins. While IMP's meat division had a profit relative to turnover of just 1.6 per cent for 1977-78 – £1.6 million in profits on a turnover of £100 million – the *Farmers' Journal* estimated that Anglo-Irish Meats recorded profits of £3 million on a

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[236] *IP*, 5 Nov. 1976; *II*, 5 Nov. 1976; *IFJ*, 29 Mar. 1975, 11 Mar. 1978.
[237] *IFJ*, 29 Mar. 1975, 11 Mar. 1978.
[238] *II*, 5 Nov. 1976; *IP*, 5 Nov. 1976; *IFJ*, 23 Oct. 1976, 13 Nov. 1976.
[239] *IFJ*, 23 Oct., 13 Nov. 1976; *II*, 5 Nov. 1976; *IP*, 5 Nov. 1976.

turnover of £70 million for the same year. That was a profit margin of 4.3 per cent, or almost three times that achieved by IMP.[240] The relative strength of Anglo-Irish Meats' performance is even more impressive when compared to Clover Meats, which had a profit margin of just 0.2 per cent for 1977-78.[241] Goodman's business model, as already noted, was built around keeping a tight rein on costs. However, his ability to control costs was based on a deep knowledge of the meat business. A native of Castlebellingham, Co Louth, his father – also Larry Goodman – was one of the most prominent livestock exporters in the country and a former chairman of the Irish Livestock Traders' Association.[242] Goodman started out in the meat trade in the late 1950s dealing in sheep skins, but had progressed to slaughtering sheep and cattle for export by the mid-1960s. He was using local abattoirs and the Dublin City Abattoir for this trade up until 1966 when he purchased the Anglo-Irish Meats factory at Ravensdale outside Dundalk.[243] Goodman's business expanded further in 1973 when he bought Erin Meats in Cahir, Co Tipperary for £550,000.[244] The subsequent purchase of the Nenagh Chilling plant for £700,000 three years later cemented Goodman's position as an emerging force in meat processing, and gave Anglo-Irish Meats the capacity to kill almost four thousand cattle per week.[245] By this time Goodman's personal wealth was estimated to be in excess of £10 million by the *Farmers' Journal*. He had amassed close to two thousand acres in Louth by the mid-1970s, and had entered the beef finishing business, with feedlots and wintering facilities for around six thousand cattle.[246] The extent of Goodman's activities in the beef finishing business did not illicit a negative reaction from farmers, however. On the contrary, the fact that Goodman's factories paid for cattle the day after they were killed, rather a week to ten days later which was the industry norm, ensured that he was generally viewed in a positive light by beef farmers.[247]

Hugh Tunney was the other major challenger to co-operative control of Irish beef processing in the 1970s. Among the country's leading businessmen during the last three decades of the twentieth century, Tunney's commercial interests were

[240] *IFJ*, 11 Mar., 30 Sept. 1978.
[241] *The Nationalist*, 16 Sept. 1978; *CE*, 13 Sept. 1978; *IFJ*, 16 Sept. 1978.
[242] *Drogheda Independent*, 13 Aug. 1976; *II*, 14 Aug. 1976.
[243] *II*, 27 Mar., 5 Nov. 1976; *IFJ*, 11 Mar. 1978.
[244] *IFJ*, 14 Apr. 1973, 11 Mar. 1978.
[245] *IP*, 5 Nov. 1976; *II*, 5 Nov. 1976; *IFJ*, 29 Mar. 1975, 11 Mar. 1978.
[246] *II*, 27 Mar., 5 Nov. 1976; *IFJ*, 11 Mar. 1978.
[247] *IFJ*, 11 Mar. 1978.

centred primarily on beef processing and hotels.[248] By 1976 he owned Dublin's Gresham Hotel and Sach's Hotel, as well as the Talbot Hotel in Wexford, the Central Hotel in Bundoran, Co Donegal, and the Westenra Hotel in Monaghan.[249] Indeed, the cattle dealer's son from Trillick, Co Tyrone was trading with nobility by the end of the 1970s and had purchased Classiebawn Castle in Mullaghmore from the Mountbatten family in the years prior to the infamous killing of Lord Mountbatten in an IRA bombing at the Co Sligo seaside village in 1979. [250] However, it was in the cattle trade rather than hotels that Tunney initially made his fortune. Born in 1928, Tunney had originally trained as a butcher before moving to London in 1954.[251] Although he initially worked in butchering in the UK, by 1956 Tunney had drifted into his father's line of business and was working with the Molihan brothers from Longford, sourcing Irish cattle for buyers in England, Scotland and the continent.[252] He later established his own cattle exporting business which was based in Belfast, but by 1969 he had diversified into beef processing following his purchase of Clones Meat Packers, which was located on the site of the old workhouse in the Co Monaghan border town.[253] Tunney remained active in the live export business and shipped around ten thousand cattle to Libya in 1970 in a contract worth over £1 million.[254] However, his main focus had shifted to the dead meat sector and in March 1973 he agreed a deal with Ulster Farmers' Mart to develop a slaughter plant in Enniskillen.[255] Later that year Tunney won a contract worth £1.5 million to supply beef to the military government in Portugal.[256] The subsequent purchase of Abbey Meat Packers at Newtownabbey near Belfast in 1975 confirmed Tunney's standing as the largest beef processor on the island of Ireland. The overall capacity of the three plants at Clones, Newtownabbey and Enniskillen was in excess of 15,000 cattle per week. This was more than IMP and Clover Meats combined.[257] Jim Norton of the *Irish*

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[248] *Sunday Independent*, 26 June, 2011; *IFJ*, 29 Mar. 1975; *Sligo Champion*, 20 June, 2011; *II*, 23 June 2011.
[249] *Sligo Champion*, 20 June, 2011; *Anglo-Celt*, 4 April, 1976; *Sunday Independent*, 26 June, 2011.
[250] *II*, 23 June 2011; *Sunday Independent*, 26 June, 2011; *Sligo Champion*, 20 June, 2011.
[251] Bill Hayes, *Drunk and Disorderly* (Sydney, 2001), pp 86-88; *Sligo Champion*, 20 June, 2011; *II*, 23 June 2011.
[252] Paddy Gernon interview (14 Jan. 2016); Bill Hayes, *Drunk and Disorderly*, pp 88-91.
[253] Bill Hayes, *Drunk and Disorderly*, pp 93-94; *Anglo-Celt*, 27 June, 1969, 14 Feb. 1975.
[254] *Anglo-Celt*, 14 August, 1970; Paddy Gernon interview (14 Jan. 2016); Bill Hayes, *Drunk and Disorderly*, pp 91-92; *IFJ*, 22 Aug., 29 Aug. 1970.
[255] *IFJ*, 23 Mar. 1973.
[256] Bill Hayes, *Drunk and Disorderly*, pp 82-83; *IFJ*, 3 Nov. 1973.
[257] *IFJ*, 29 Mar. 1975.

Independent referred to Tunney as 'the current king of the Irish meat scene' in the wake of the Abbey Meat Packers deal.[258] Bill Hayes, an English meat trader and slaughter plant manager – who had joined Tunney's operation from MJ Lyons in 1973 – was even more effusive in his praise for the Tyrone-man, describing him as 'the first Irish meat baron'.[259]

IMP, Clover Meats, Anglo-Irish Meats and Tunney Meats dominated the Irish beef processing industry in the mid-1970s. These were the sector's big four concerns in terms of slaughtering and processing capacity. Although the dominant position of these operators was not openly stated in the 1977 study by *Cooper and Lybrand* for the IDA, the report noted that eight of the country's twenty-five export plants accounted for fifty-seven per cent of the total national kill, with the sixteen largest factories slaughtering eighty-six per cent of the overall number of animals processed in the country.[260] This concentration of processing capacity in a small number of plants was not new, and was actually a feature of the Irish beef industry since the late 1950s. While nine slaughter plants handled eighty-five per cent of the cattle killed in 1958-62 period, the ESRI noted that seven factories processed sixty-four per cent of all animals slaughtered at export factories in 1971.[261] However, a seventy per cent increase in the overall number of cattle slaughtered in 1977-79 compared to 1971-73 – 1.18 million animals a year on average compared to 700,000 head – meant that significantly greater numbers were being processed in the late 1970s by the largest factories in the country.[262] This provided an opportunity for increased profits where companies had their costs tightly controlled. Conversely, however, bigger cattle numbers could result in bigger losses for inefficient slaughter plants.

Ireland's beef industry had a degree scale and scope which was not matched by processors in Britain or Europe in the mid-1970s. Despite the trading and cattle supply difficulties which Irish beef processors faced in the years following EEC accession, the *Cooper and Lybrand Report* noted that the average kill from the country's beef export plants was 1,600 per week, 'considerably higher' than that

[258] *II*, 18 Oct. 1975.
[259] Bill Hayes, *Drunk and Disorderly*, p. 96.
[260] Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, p. 53.
[261] *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 37; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 98.
[262] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, 1973-74*, p. 52; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture, 1979, p. 32.*

recorded in other Common Market member states. [263] This was due to the British and European markets still being primarily supplied by wholesale butchers operating from municipal abattoirs.[264] The *Cooper and Lybrand Report,* which was commissioned by the IDA to identify how the authority might assist the sector's development, put the number of beef slaughter plants at twenty-five in 1975.[265] This is broadly in line with CBF data from the period, and a *Farmers' Journal* study of the sector in 1978. There are twenty-eight plants listed on the CBF data, which is three more than the figure stated in the *Cooper and Lybrand Report* because the CBF list includes factories which only killed lamb. Among these was the meat factory in Ballyhaunis, Co Mayo which was established by Mickey Webb in the late 1950s and purchased in 1974 by Halal Meat Packers. This firm was owned by the Pakastani businessman, Sher Rafique, who went to considerably expand his presence in both the Irish beef and lamb processing sectors during the 1970s and 1980s.[266] The *Cooper and Lybrand* study found that eight factories had a weekly slaughter capacity of two thousand cattle or more, while a further eight could kill between one thousand and two thousand animals per week.[267] However, as with other industries, there were major variations in operational costs between the various beef plants. Unfortunately, the economic climate of the 1970s offered little protection for inefficient indigenous businesses. Former household names such as Cork pig processors Lunham Brothers and Ranks Mills in Limerick struggled to survive in the increasingly competitive trading environment that followed EEC membership.[268]

The *Cooper and Lybrand* report exposed a striking differential in processing overheads between factories, with boning costs increasing five-fold from the most efficient slaughter plants to those that were clearly less competitive.[269] Although the *Cooper and Lybrand* study confirmed that the purchase price of cattle remained the most important overhead for processors at eighty-seven per cent of total costs – compared eighty per cent in 1963 – wage rates and operational efficiency were also critically important in an industry where profit margins rarely exceeded four per cent

[263] Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, p. 53.
[264] *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p.103; Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, p. 53; Gus Fitzpatrick interviews (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017).
[265] Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, pp 4, 53.
[266] *IFJ*, 14 Dec. 1974.
[267] Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, p. 53.
[268] Bielenberg & Ryan, *An Economic History of Ireland*, pp 86-87.
[269] Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, pp 61-64.

of turnover, and generally ranged between one per cent and three per cent.[270] Despite the tight margins, however, the IDA report found that the killing costs for factories ranged from £1.50 to £3 per animal. More striking was the variation in boning costs, which ranged from £2.65 per animal to almost £13 per animal – a five-fold differential.[271] This significant divergence in costs between the various factories obviously resulted in a wide variation in profit levels. Surprisingly, ten of the plants surveyed still averaged a margin on turnover of 3.8 per cent for the five years from 1970 to 1974 inclusive.[272] This level of profit appears high, given the severe difficulties the beef industry experienced during 1971-72 when a government loan of £1 million was required to offset losses and protect jobs.[273] It suggests that the ten factories that supplied data must have included the sector's most efficient slaughter plants. More importantly, however, this finding points to the emergence of a two-tier meat industry in Ireland, with the most streamlined and efficient processors securing far higher profit margins than their competitors. Interestingly, the average profit margin of the ten Irish factories is appreciably higher than the 1.3 per cent recorded by British beef processors for 1971-74, and the 1.7 per cent returned by Northern Ireland slaughter plants in 1975.[274] While this may be a reflection on the efficiency of Ireland's top meat processors, it also points to the high returns which intervention generated. The EEC support was fully available to Irish beef plants at this time but not to their UK counterparts, as the British government restricted access to the scheme in an effort to limit food inflation.[275]

The growth of Anglo-Irish Meats and Tunney Meats in the 1970s effectively killed the co-operative sector's ambitions of dominating the beef industry. While farmer-owned co-operatives completely controlled the milk processing industry by the mid-1970s – through co-operative dairy businesses such as Avonmore, Kerry, Waterford, Golden Vale, Mitchelstown, NCF and Ballieboro – and had consolidated their grip on the livestock sales business, their efforts to replicate this success in meat

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[270] *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 36; Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, pp 60-61.
[271] Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, pp 62-64.
[272] Ibid., p. 72.
[273] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1972-73, p.35; IT*, 23 Feb. 1972; *IFJ*, 26 Feb. 1972.
[274] John Davis, 'The Structure and Performance of the Northern Ireland Beef Sector' in *Irish Journal of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (1981), p. 161.
[275] *IFJ*, 29 May 1976.

processing floundered by the end of the decade.[276] This decline in the co-operative sector's fortunes in the meat business was evident by 1975. Although, farmer-owned co-operatives controlled fifty-five per cent of the national cattle kill following Cork Marts' purchase of IMP in 1969 – IMP killed thirty-five per cent of the cattle slaughtered, while Clover Meats processed a further twenty per cent – the *Cooper and Lybrand Report* found that this figure had fallen to thirty-five per cent just six years later.[277] This decline in the co-operative share of the national kill was a function of the poor commercial performance of IMP and Clover Meats. This, in turn, was due to a combination of factors such as poor work practices and labour relations, high debt levels, a lack of investment, weak management, and excessive farmer influence on cattle pricing.[278] A management consultants report on the staffing levels at Clonmel Foods, which was owned by Clover Meats, illustrates the co-operative's problems. The study by Dublin-based Cruess Callaghan and Associates found that seventy-eight staff should have been sufficient to operate the Clonmel slaughter line at a kill-rate of fifty cattle per hour. However, in 1978 the factory had 139 staff employed on the line. That was forty-four per cent more workers than were technically required to run the line, according to the consultants. Following the findings of the study the number of staff working on the killing line was reduced to ninety-six; however, this was still eighteen per cent over the number suggested in the study.[279] High absenteeism across the Clover Meats group was offered as a justification for the elevated staffing levels. A fifteen per cent allowance was made for absenteeism at Clonmel Foods. Meanwhile, Clover Meats resorted to hiring two doctors in 1975 in an effort to counter severe difficulties with absenteeism at the co-operative's factories in Limerick and Wexford.[280]

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[276] Jim O'Brien, Proinnsias Breathnach, Caroline Smiddy, *Dungarvan Co-op and its Legacy*, (Kilkenny, 2019), pp 76-89; Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, pp 117-130; Bielenberg & Ryan, *An Economic History of Ireland*, pp 86-87; Joe Murray, 'From Grass to Milk – The Moorepark Story', in Michael Miley (ed.), *Growing Knowledge*, pp 74-75.

[277] Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, pp 75-76; Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, p. 53.

[278] *IFJ*, 20 Aug. 1977, 13 Jan., 7 Apr., 20 Oct. 1979, 31 May, 21 June, 20 Sept. 1980; Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, pp 127-130; Studies carried out by management consultants Cruess Callaghan and Associates at Clover Meats, records at Kilkenny County Library, Nov. 1978 and 17 Jan. 1979 (reference CL/784); John Treacy interview (17 July 2019).

[279] Cruess, Callaghan and Associates' study at Clover Meats, 17 Jan. 1979, Kilkenny County Library (reference CL/784).

[280] Minutes of meeting of the Steering Committee of Clover Meats, 13 Oct. 1975, in Clover Meats' records, Kilkenny County Library; Cruess, Callaghan and Associates' study at Clover Meats, 17 Jan. 1979, Kilkenny County Library (reference CL/784).

Bonus payments and wage levels were another major concern for the co-operative meat processors during the late 1970s. Indeed, the *Cooper and Lybrand* report attributed the excessive cattle-slaughtering and boning costs recorded in some factories to 'abnormally high' bonus and overtime payments. The report claimed the bonus and overtime agreements failed to 'establish a correlation between payment and performance', and needed to be restructured on 'more realistic productivity criteria'.[281] These observations were echoed by the management consultants Cruess Callaghan and Associates with regard to Clonmel Foods, and by Clover Meats managing director Michael Collins. The management consultants found that labour costs at Clonmel averaged £8.35 per animal processed in 1978. This average cost included the slaughtering of each animal, the dressing or preparing the sides of beef for wholesale markets, and the cleaning and packing of the offal.[282] The consultants claimed this cost was £4 per animal too high, or almost fifty per cent, and they blamed the excessive labour charges on the thirty-four different bonus schemes operating in the factory. Indeed, butchers could double their wages to £130 per week thanks to the generous bonus mechanisms – this was more than double the average industrial wage at the time, which was £55 per week – while these top-ups were worth close to seventy per cent extra for non-skilled workers in an ordinary week.[283] Collins realised the impact of these overheads on Clover Meats in 1975 when he conceded that although the co-operative had high 'volume killing' it didn't have 'the margin'.[284] Similar issues arose in IMP. Wage costs for the processor's 1,600 workers across its three beef plants at Grand Canal Street, Leixlip and Midleton – as well as its sheep factory in Athleague, Co Roscommon – rose from £5.3 million in 1977 to £8 million by 1979-80.[285] This was an increase in wage costs of £3.7 million or almost seventy per cent in just three years. More importantly, however, wage costs in 1979-80 were more than ten times the profit levels of £730,000 recorded by IMP that financial year.[286] The *Farmers' Journal's* business correspondent, John O'Reilly, claimed that high labour costs and low productivity were major contributors to IMP's poor

[281] Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, pp 64-65.
[282] Cruess, Callaghan and Associates' study at Clover Meats, Nov. 1978, Kilkenny County Library (reference CL/784).
[283] The average weekly earnings quoted are for manufacturing industry and are based on CSO statistics supplied to the author on 17 December 2015; Cruess, Callaghan and Associates' study at Clover Meats, Nov. 1978, Kilkenny County Library (reference CL/784).
[284] Minutes of meeting of the Steering Committee of Clover Meats, 10 Nov. 1975.
[285] *IFJ*, 20 Sept. 1980.
[286] *IP*, 18 Sept. 1980; *II*, 18 Sept. 1980; *IFJ*, 20 Sept. 1980.

financial performance during the late 1970s.[287] He noted in 1979 that IMP's annual throughput per labour unit at 191 animals per worker was around 2.5 times lower than that recorded by one private beef company. Unfortunately, O'Reilly didn't name the more efficient beef processor in the *Farmers' Journal* article. [288]

Poor labour relations further undermined the financial standing of both Clover Meats and IMP. Moreover, recurring problems with industrial unrest restricted the co-operatives' scope to address difficult issues such as bonus payments and inefficient work practices. Labour relations issues were not new to the beef processing industry. As early as 1960 the *Farmers' Journal* complained that the 'restrictive practices of the butchers' trade unions in Dublin were 'adding considerably to the cost of producing carcass beef'.[289] Neither were strikes in the beef sector confined to the co-operative meat processors – for example, two hundred employees were laid off in May 1975 at Hanley's beef and pig slaughtering facility in Rooskey, Co Roscommon after workers refused to alternate between the pig and cattle killing lines – but industrial unrest was particularly prevalent in IMP and Clover Meats during the late 1970s and did serious financial and reputational damage to the businesses.[290] Disagreements relating to bonus schemes and restrictive working practices were the primary triggers for strikes at both co-operatives during the late 1970s. There were some outliers of course; as when an unofficial strike closed the IMP plant at Grand Canal Street in September 1978 after four employees were suspended for leaving work without permission to attend an Ireland-Northern Ireland soccer international.[291] Similarly, the three IMP beef factories – at Grand Canal Street, Leixlip and Midleton – were shut by an unofficial strike for much of January 1977 after two shop stewards at the Dublin plant left work without permission to go for a drink.[292] However, industrial action at the co-operative beef plants primarily centred on the existing bonus structures that were in place. While the workers and unions sought the continuation of these bonus payments, management attempted to scale them back. For example, IMP's plant in Midleton was closed by an unofficial strike in January 1976 when nine maintenance workers picketed the factory. They were seeking comparable bonus payments to their

[287] *IFJ*, 20 Oct. 1979.
[288] Ibid.
[289] Ibid., 27 Feb. 1960.
[290] *Longford Leader*, 2 May 1975; *IFJ*, 17 May 1975, 13 Oct. 1979; 20 Sept. 1980.
[291] *II*, 22 Sept, 1978.
[292] *Evening Herald*, 18 Jan. 1977; *CE*, 21 Jan. 1977; *IP*, 8 Jan. 1977.

counterparts in IMP Leixlip and Grand Canal Street.[293] In April of the same year, seven quality control technicians disrupted production at Grand Canal Street in a dispute over re-grading.[294] The industrial relations troubles continued in 1977 when production at Leixlip was shut down for a week in March after the dismissal of sixteen butchers, while maintenance staff seeking a basic pay of £76 per week shut IMP's three beef plants for much of September 1979.[295] Relations between the unions and management were also extremely fraught in Clover Meats, and especially so in their Waterford and Limerick plants. Indeed, the fractious atmosphere in the Limerick factory, which management threatened to close in August 1976 due to labour problems, was summed up by the *Irish Press* shortly after it was eventually closed by the co-operative in April 1977.[296]

> Over the past ten years its whole future has been jeopardised by severe labour trouble. Strikes, go slows, walkouts and other forms of industrial action took place with such monotonous regularity that the newspapers hardly bothered to report what was happening – it was no longer news.[297]

Management at Clover Meats, and the co-operative's farmer shareholders, blamed the workers and unions for the industrial relations problems in Limerick and elsewhere.[298] A letter to the Limerick Leader in March 1977 demonstrated farmers' anger with the Clover Meats' workers; and also unwittingly betrayed a suspicion that the interests of the co-operative's farmer owners were being sabotaged by the employees. Patrick Fitzgerald from Caherconlish, Co Limerick – who was active in the IFA in the county – blamed Clover Meats' pork butchers for putting the future of the plant in jeopardy by refusing to engage with local management on a rescue plan that involved changed and flexible work practices.[299] The same farmer was equally critical of the co-operative's management in a subsequent letter to the *Irish Farmers' Journal* the following year. Fitzgerald claimed the failure of management to confront the unions 'head on' had contributed to the closure of the Limerick factory. 'If the nettle had

[293] *Evening Echo*, 26 Jan. 1976.
[294] *IP*, 30 Apr. 1976.
[295] *CE*, 17 Sept. 1979; *IFJ*, 26 Mar. 1977; *IP*, 15 Sept. 1979.
[296] *IFJ*, 21 Aug. 1976; *IP*, 15 Apr. 1977.
[297] *IP*, 15 Apr. 1977.
[298] Minutes of meeting of the Steering Committee of Clover Meats, 10 Nov. 1975; *Limerick Leader*, 16 Aug. 1976; *IFJ*, 21 Aug. 1976; *II*, 25 Jan. 1977; *IP*, 20 Mar. 1980; *Munster Express*, 14 Nov. 1980.
[299] *Limerick Leader*, 12 Mar. 1977.

been grasped...the plant could now be operating under a reorganised workforce and new management,' he wrote.[300]

Butchers at Clover Meats' Limerick factory rejected responsibility for its closure. They blamed a heavy-handed and belligerent approach by management for the co-operative's poor labour relations.[301] The ITGWU said employees at the Limerick plant had shown a commitment to the future of the business by forgoing the full implementation of the national wage agreement in July 1976 because of the financial difficulties Clover Meats was experiencing.[302] In addition, the union contrasted the poor labour relations at Clover Meats with the good worker-management relationship at the O'Meara-controlled Bacon Company of Ireland factory in Limerick.[303] The workers claimed that management proposals on changed working conditions and pay, such as the package agreed in August 1976, were invariably accompanied by warnings that the site faced closure if an agreement was not reached.[304] The ITGWU characterised this approach as using the 'big whip' to workers.[305] There was no real negotiation of the proposals on offer in such circumstances, union officials contended, and this prompted worker disaffection and resulted in further disputes.[306] Although Clover Meats management pointed to the losses at plants such as Limerick – which totalled more than £200,000 in 1976 – to justify the hard line approach adopted in negotiations, this assertion was rejected by the unions.[307] John Treacy, who was a shop steward at the Clover Meats' factory in Waterford, said management's attitude was based on the flawed presumption that the co-operative's workers were at fault for business's losses. His assertion that the co-operative's leaders 'didn't have a clue' and were actually culpable for the poor financial standing of the business illustrates the deep distrust which characterised worker-management relations in the late 1970s.[308] These troubles were compounded by a belief among workers in Limerick, and at the Clover Meats-owned Donnelly Pork Products plant in Dublin, that all disputes and issues of contention were micro-managed from Waterford. This absence of autonomy undermined local management,

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[300] *IFJ*, 7 Jan. 1978.
[301] *IP*, 15 Apr. 1977.
[302] *Limerick Leader*, 25 Jan. 1977.
[303] *IP*, 15 Apr. 1977.
[304] *IFJ*, 21 Aug. 1976; *Limerick Leader*, 16 Aug. 1976.
[305] *Limerick Leader*, 16 Aug. 1976.
[306] *IP*, 15 Apr. 1977.
[307] *Limerick Leader*, 12 Mar. 1977; *IP*, 15 Apr. 1977.
[308] John Treacy interview (17 July 2019).

the unions argued, to the detriment of both businesses.[309] However, the labour problems were real, as was the impact of these disputes on plant efficiency. For example, Clover management contended that it took twice as many man-hours to process a pig in Limerick in 1976 as it did in its Wexford factory.[310]

Poor labour relations in the meat processing sector must be viewed in the context of the wider economy. As Ó Gráda has pointed out, industrial unrest was a common feature in Ireland during the 1970s and early 1980s. Indeed, 720,000 working days were lost on average each year between 1975 and 1979 because of industrial disputes. This was significantly higher than the 400,000-day average for 1980-84, or the 237,000 average recorded for 1985-89. In fact, 1970-74 was the only period with a worse record for strikes; with 940,000 working days being lost on average in each of these five years.[311] One of the main reasons for the increased level of industrial unrest was the high rate of inflation in the late 1970s, which fuelled workers' pay demands. In 1978 the rate of inflation was nine per cent, but it rose to thirteen per cent in 1979 – the highest recorded rate since the Second World War.[312] Meat factory workers suffered 'by association' when processing was impacted as a result of industrial action by other groups. For example, cattle slaughtering was significantly curtailed when a strike by oil tanker drivers severely disrupted the country's transport system in the spring of 1975. Industrial action by Department of Agriculture vets later that summer caused similar difficulties.[313] A bank strike in July 1976 shut twelve of the twenty-six meat factories due to cash-flow problems, while pickets by CIE staff at ports in 1978 restricted exports and meat factory operations.[314] However, the union troubles in the co-operative meat plants finally came to a head in 1980 when Clover Meats' main processing site at Christendom in Waterford and the IMP factory in Dublin's Grand Canal Street were threatened with closure by management following extended strikes in which workers initially opposed pay and productivity packages.[315]

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[309] *IP*, 15 Apr. 1977, 25 June 1979.
[310] Ibid., 15 Apr. 1977.
[311] Ó Gráda, *A rocky road*, pp 102-03.
[312] Redmond (ed.), *That was then, this is now*, pp 75-76; *II,* 26 Jan. 1980.
[313] *CE*, 23 Apr. 1975; *Munster Express*, 25 April 1975; *IP*, 24 Apr. 1975; *Evening Herald*, 9 June 1975; *Limerick Leader*, 7 June 1975.
[314] *Nationalist*, 10 July 1976; *IFJ*, 10 July 1976; *CE*, 16 Aug. 1978.
[315] *Munster Express*, 16 May 1980; *II*, 17, 27 May 1980.

The commercial viability of both IMP and Clover Meats was in serious doubt by the end of the 1970s. A combination of high overheads and debts, and low profits, was threatening the future of both co-operative meat processors.[316] The difficult labour relations in both businesses, as outlined earlier, exacerbated these problems. Clover Meats' chairman, Michael Gibbons – who was a brother of Fianna Fáil Agriculture Minister, Jim Gibbons – highlighted the financial damage caused by industrial unrest when he told its AGM in 1980 that a seven-week unofficial strike that spring by butchers at the Christendom plant in Waterford cost the business £150,000.[317] Clover Meats' finances were in disarray for much of the late 1970s and could ill afford this level of additional losses. Although the co-operative recorded profits of over £1.1 million for 1973-74, reduced cattle supplies and a more difficult trading environment during 1975 and 1976 – due to the impact of MCA payments and the global economic recession – resulted in losses of £1.9 million for 1975-76 and £2.2 million for 1976-77.[318] Indeed, a government bailout of Clover Meats was required to prevent the co-operative's collapse.[319] As part of a rescue package agreed with government in March 1977, Clover Meats appointed a steering committee to draw up a plan to restructure the business. The plan was financed initially by way of a £1.4 million government-backed loan from the Agricultural Credit Corporation (ACC), with the state guarantee increased to £2 million in 1979. Further funds were to be raised through the sale of assets, and by farmer subscriptions raised through a share drive – the same mechanism used to underwrite the purchase of IMP by Cork Marts in 1969.[320] High debt levels and significant interest and capital repayments on these loans were a considerable financial drain on Clover Meats during the 1970s and early 1980s. As late as 1979-80 the co-operative's repayments on loans exceeded £1 million, totally offsetting the business's trading profits for the year which were of an equal magnitude.[321] Similarly, loan interest charges in 1977-78 exceeded £900,000.[322] John O'Reilly of the *Irish Farmers' Journal* attributed the high borrowings at Clover Meats, which totalled £11 million in 1976 and £10 million in 1977, to a 'poorly

[316] Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, pp 127-128; CE, 19 June 1980; *IFJ*, 13 Oct. 1979, 21 June 1980; *Munster Express*, 14 Nov. 1980.
[317] *Munster Express*, 14 Nov. 1980; *II*, 20 Mar. 1980; *IP*, 20 Mar. 1980.
[318] *IFJ*, 20 July 1974, 15 Oct. 1977, 16 Sept. 1978; *II*, 8 Oct. 1977.
[319] *IP*, 11 Mar. 1977; *II*, 12 Mar. 1977; *IFJ*, 26 Feb. 1977.
[320] *II*, 12 Mar. 1977; *Munster Express*, 8 Apr., 5 Aug. 1977; *IFJ*, 26 Feb. 1977, 13 Oct. 1979; *IP*, 11 Mar. 1977.
[321] *Munster Express*, 14 Nov. 1980; *IFJ*, 25 Oct. 1980.
[322] *II*, 13 Sept. 1978; *IFJ*, 16 Sept. 1978.

planned and executed expansion drive' in the late 1960s and early 1970s.[323] This involved the acquisition by Clover Meats of the Dublin-based Donnelly Pork Products in 1967, Clonmel Foods was purchased in 1968, and the renowned bacon business, Lunham Brothers of Cork, was acquired in 1972.[324] Also purchased during this period was O'Keeffe's rendering and pet food operation, which was located off Cork Street in Dublin's Liberties – close to the Donnelly plant.[325] Clover Meats' general manager, Michael Collins, did not accept that the seeds of co-operative's financial troubles were sown during this period of ambitious growth. He told the board in November 1975 that the 'decisions to expand were right at the time'. As noted earlier, he attributed the co-operative's difficulties to a combination of the fall-off in cattle numbers, the economic recession of 1974-75, and higher wage costs.[326] The co-operative's trading position was aggravated by a significant reduction in canned meat sales in Britain, and an over-capacity in the country's pig slaughtering sector. As Smith and Healy noted, sales of Irish canned meat into Britain fell from £9.5 million to £115,000 between 1974 and 1977 due to the MCA regime's impact, and increased competition from British firms.[327] Clover Meats and Roscrea Meats were the two Irish processors most affected by this change. Meanwhile, the number of pigs slaughtered annually fell from two million to 1.5 million between 1970 and 1976 as farms became more specialised and the practice of keeping and finishing a small number of pigs waned.[328] Alarm at board level at the escalating losses eventually resulted in Collins's resignation in the summer of 1976, and his successor, Dermot McDermott, was tasked with resuscitating Clover Meats.[329]

A significant consolidation of Clover Meats' operations was a critical element of the rescue plan presented by the government-backed steering committee in 1977.[330] The co-operative had meat processing facilities in Wexford, Limerick and Waterford, as well as the three plants purchased in Cork, Dublin and Clonmel, and rendering facilities – where the residue of the animal's carcass is broken down into tallow, meat

[323] *IFJ*, 16 Sept. 1978, 25 Oct. 1980.
[324] *Nationalist*, 22 June 1968; *IP*, 19 Jan. 1972, 25 June 1979; *Waterford News and Star*, 21 Jan. 1972.
[325] *IP*, 25 June 1979.
[326] Minutes of meeting of the Steering Committee of Clover Meats, dated 10 Nov. 1975.
[327] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, pp 267-268.
[328] *IFJ*, 20 Mar. 1976.
[329] Minutes of meeting of the Steering Committee of Clover Meats, dated 10 Nov. 1975.
[330] *Nationalist*, 23 July 1977; *II*, 14 July 1977; *IFJ*, 16 July 1977.

and bone meal, fertiliser and other products – at National Proteins in Waterford.[331] The steering committee's plan envisaged the consolidation of cattle and pig processing at the Wexford, Waterford and Clonmel sites, with the National Proteins rendering plant also being retained. The Donnelly Pork Products factory and Lunham Brothers business were to be sold. Also for sale was the Limerick meat factory and the O'Keeffe's pet food and rendering business that were closed in April 1977 and November 1975 respectively.[332] The rescue package was already in train to some degree in the spring of 1977 when the O'Keeffe's rendering facility and its 'Spot' pet-food brand were purchased by Frank Quinn, who had exited the meat processing industry in 1969 following the sale of IMP to Cork Marts. Quinn was a large-scale cattle finisher by the late 1970s, and had also opened one of Dublin's top cabaret venues at the Braemor Rooms in Churchtown.[333] He subsequently invested more than £1 million upgrading the O'Keeffe's facility and expanding its pet food operation.[334] Further sales followed at Clover Meats. Cappoquin Bacon Company purchased Lunham Brothers for £500,000 in October 1977, while the Limerick factory site was bought by the Boards of Works to extend the nearby Limerick Jail – despite attempts by local farmers to have factory reopened, and approaches by former Ballyhaunis meat factory owner, Mickey Webb, regarding the possible lease or purchase of the plant.[335] A potential redundancy bill of £340,000 for Donnelly's two-hundred-and-seventy workers, allied to an improvement in the pork and bacon market, delayed the closure of the business.[336] However, the factory was finally shut in July 1979, with angry workers blaming its closure on Clover Meats' failure to invest in the facility and in Donnelly's valuable brands.[337] Despite the objections voiced by farmers and workers to the various plant closures, the trading position of Clover Meats did improve. Borrowings were reduced by one-third to £7.3 million between 1976 and 1978 – which was helped by the investment of £700,000 by farmers and other co-operatives in the business as a result of the share drive – and Clover Meats recorded

[331] *IFJ*, 20 July 1974.

[332] *II*, 14 July 1977; *IFJ*, 16 July 1977; *Nationalist*, 23 July 1977; *IP*, 15 Apr. 1977; Minutes of meeting of the Steering Committee of Clover Meats, dated 24 Nov. 1975.

[333] Minutes of meeting of the Steering Committee of Clover Meats, 8 Apr. 1977; *IFJ*, 2 Aug. 1980.

[334] *IFJ*, 2 Aug. 1980.

[335] *IP*, 8 Oct. 1977; *II*, 15 Oct. 1977; Minutes of meeting of the Steering Committee of Clover Meats, 18 Apr. 1977 and 16 Aug. 1977.

[336] Minutes of meeting of the Steering Committee of Clover Meats, 2 Nov. 1977; *IFJ*, 16 Sept. 1978.

[337] *IP*, 25 June 1979.

profits of £175,000 for 1977-78.[338] However, as detailed earlier, the co-operative's substantial loans, which totalled £9.5 million by 1980, remained a significant drag on trading profits and had to be carried by a far smaller business post-consolidation.[339] As John O'Reilly noted in the *Irish Farmers' Journal*:

> The slimming down of the [Clover Meats'] group has left it carrying debt levels and interest charges inconsistent with its present trading base...Clover then seems to be in shape operationally, but its fate rests on external factors – interest rates and trading climate.[340]

The outlook at IMP in 1979-80 was challenging, but not as precarious as that facing Clover Meats. Although IMP had borrowings of £5.7 million in 1979-80, Maurice Colbert observed that the co-operative remained 'financially sound and solvent'.[341] IMP's fortunes rose and dipped with the vagaries of the beef trade during the 1970s. After suffering a disastrous £700,000 loss on a contract to supply beef to Israel in 1972-73 – the sale price with the Israelis was agreed in US dollars but IMP's margin was completely eroded when sterling's exchange rate against the dollar fell by ten per cent following the British government's decision in June 1972 to allow the pound to float against other major currencies – the co-operative recovered to record profits of £3.3 million and £2.3 million for 1974-75 and 1975-76 respectively.[342] Expansion at IMP had resulted in a new beef plant being commissioned in Midleton in 1972 and a lamb plant at Athleague, Co Roscommon four years later.[343] However, this growth was tempered by the co-operative's exit from the extremely competitive pig business in 1975, when IMP sold its Cork Farmers' Union plant in Ballincollig.[344] Margins on its sheep and beef business remained worryingly low. IMP recorded profits in 1977-78 of £1.53 million, which equated to 1.52 per cent of turnover at the firm. However, by 1979-80 profits fell to £730,000 or 0.55 per cent of turnover.[345] At the same time, costs were increasing, with the *Irish Farmers' Journal* noting that the

338 *IFJ*, 16 Sept. 1978; *Munster Express*, 5 Aug. 1977; *II*, 30 July 1977.
339 *Munster Express*, 14 Nov. 1980; *IFJ*, 16 Sept. 1978, 25 Oct. 1980.
340 *IT*, 3 Aug. 1972, 18 Jan. 1973; *IFJ*, 25 Oct. 1980.
341 Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, pp 127-128; *CE*, 19 June 1980.
342 *IFJ*, 14 Apr. 1973, 11 Sept. 1976.
343 Western People, 17 Jan. 1976; *IFJ*, 14 Apr. 1973.
344 *IFJ*, 6 Sept. 1975.
345 *CE*, 19 June 1980; *IFJ*, 20 Sept. 1980.

working capital requirement at the business increased from £8.6 million in 1976-77 to £14.3 million for 1977-78.[346]

The low profit margins at IMP and Clover Meats restricted investment in the business. While IMP spent £2 million upgrading the boning halls and chill-room capacity at its Leixlip and Midleton plants in 1976, the co-operative's capital budget for 1980 was cut to just £600,000, back from £900,000 in 1979, despite the aging facilities at Grand Canal Street requiring a major overhaul.[347] Meanwhile, planned capital investment for 1975 at Clover Meats was just £530,000 across its four main plants in Limerick, Waterford, Wexford and Clonmel.[348] In contrast, Larry Goodman's Anglo-Irish Meats spent £10 million on its plants at Cahir and Dundalk during 1977-78 to take capacity at the sites to over four thousand animals per week.[349] Much of this investment was funded through the EEC-backed FEOGA grants, which covered around forty per cent of the development costs of processing facilities. Anglo-Irish Meats received close to £1.8 million in FEOGA grants in 1977. Other processors to secure significant grant-aid that year were Kildare Chilling which successfully applied for £290,000, and Premier Meat Packers in Sallins which was awarded over £100,000.[350] It is telling that there were no successful grant applications from co-operative meat processors. This suggests that either the businesses did not have the matching funds to undertake major capital projects, or they were not investing in plant and machinery.

The concept of farmer-owned meat factories was further undermined in the 1970s by the commercial failure of beef processing businesses involving Golden Vale Marts (GVM) and North Connaught Farmers (NCF). The successful Limerick-based GVM group, which had livestock sales centres in Kilmallock, Dromcollogher, Abbeyfeale and Tullamore, lost more than £500,000 as a result of its failed beef processing venture in Rathdowney, Co Laois. Indeed, losses at GVM's meat division, which traded as Golden Vale Meats, almost compromised the viability of the entire co-operative.[351] Similarly, NCF's meat factory at Deepwater Quay in Sligo lost almost £1.2 million between 1977 and 1980, before management at the dairy co-

[346] *IFJ*, 30 Sept. 1978.
[347] *CE*, 19 June 1980; *IFJ*, 11 Sept. 1976, 31 May 1980.
[348] Minutes of meeting of the Steering Committee of Clover Meats, 24 Nov. 1975.
[349] *IFJ*, 11 Mar. 1978.
[350] *II*, 8 Jan. 1977.
[351] Liston, *From Fair to Mart and Beyond,* pp 227-233.

operative decided to exit the sector.[352] GVM's involvement in meat processing dated back to 1969 when the co-operative took a sixty per cent shareholding in the development of a meat factory on the site of the old Perry family brewery in Rathdowney. The remaining forty per cent was held by the Lyons family of MJ Lyons in Longford, who were well established in the meat processing business.[353] However, in 1970 the Lyons family withdrew from the project and GVM became the sole owners of the site.[354] It took another four years and an investment of £1.1 million before the factory at Rathdowney was finally operational and cattle slaughtering began in February 1974.[355] The Rathdowney plant was managed for its first eighteen months in partnership with the British meat company Brook Bond Liebig and delivered profits of £66,000 in 1974.[356] However, losses of £155,000 in 1975, despite throughput at the factory having reached one thousand cattle per week by August, led to tensions between the British firm's management team at Rathdowney and the GVM board. GVM claimed the meat plant was being operated for the benefit Brook Bond Liebig rather than for the co-operative and its farmer shareholders.[357] Moreover, differences emerged regarding outstanding debts for meat stocks and services. GVM maintained that the co-operative was owed £135,000 for beef supplied to Brook Bond Liebig, while the British firm sought £90,000 in payment for services.[358] A later report for GVM by management consultants Craig Gardner found that Golden Vale Meats received no margin on beef sold through Brook Bond Liebig, and just two per cent on sales to third parties. In addition, the Department of Agriculture threatened to revoke the factory's export licence because of serious deficiencies in the quality of beef sold into intervention from the Co Laois plant.[359] The deteriorating relations between Brook Bond Liebig and GVM led to the departure of the British management team by the end of 1975.[360] As a result, GVM staff members were left to operate the factory, while also attempting to source £600,000 in working capital for 1976. This funding was needed to finance the purchase of cattle, the processing of these animals,

[352] *Western Journal*, 30 May 1980; *IFJ*, 8 Mar. 1980.
[353] *Nationalist and Leinster Times*, 7 Mar. 1969; *Leinster Express*, 15 Mar. 1969; *IP*, 12 Mar. 1969.
[354] Liston, *From Fair to Mart and Beyond,* pp 200-201.
[355] *IFJ*, 2 Apr. 1974; Liston, *From Fair to Mart and Beyond,* p. 217.
[356] Liston, *From Fair to Mart and Beyond,* p. 221.
[357] *IT*, 26 Oct. 1977; *IFJ*, 12, 19 Nov. 1977; Liston, *From Fair to Mart and Beyond,* pp 221-224.
[358] Liston, *From Fair to Mart and Beyond,* pp 221-224; *IFJ*, 12, 19 Nov. 1977.
[359] *IFJ*, 19 Nov. 1977.
[360] *IT*, 26 Oct. 1977; *IFJ*, 15 Nov. 1975, 12, 19 Nov. 1977; Liston, *From Fair to Mart and Beyond,* pp 222-223.

and the subsequent marketing of the meat.[361] GVM was eventually forced to close the factory in October 1976 after farmers failed to support a share drive to restructure the meat plant's debts and provide the necessary working capital.[362] Ironically, given the Rathdowney site's history as a brewery, the factory was sold to the Guinness family in December 1976, and it resumed operations as Meadow Meats the following April.[363] The episode seriously damaged GVM commercially and tarnished the co-operative's reputation. It left GVM with a deficit of £526,000 in 1976, primarily due to the £450,000 loss incurred that year by its meat division.[364]

NCF's losses on its meat processing venture were double those of GVM. As noted earlier, the dairy co-operative entered the beef business in 1977 when it bought the Sligo Meat Exporters plant at Deepwater Quay which was operated from 1973 to 1977 by the former IMP executives Fursey Quinn and Bobby Cuddy.[365] Unfortunately, the Sligo factory lost almost £1.2 million during the thirty-two months that it was operated by NCF – between August 1977 and April 1980.[366] This loss was exaggerated to an extent by NCF's decision to lease the factory in 1980 when it exited the business, rather than selling the premises and recouping some of the £700,000 it originally paid for the site and business.[367] NCF's tenure in charge of the meat factory started badly, with the firm losing more than £400,000 between August and December 1977. 'By any standards, the loss was staggering,' the *Farmers' Journal* later commented.[368] Losses at the firm continued to build as NCF management struggled to bring costs under control. In 1978 the deficit at the Sligo plant totalled £600,000. As John B. Keane who worked with NCF Meats in sales and marketing observed, beef processing was a high turnover business, with the potential to deliver significant profits or equally significant losses.[369] While the business aimed to cut losses to £250,000 in 1979, tight cattle supplies and higher prices meant this target was not achieved and overall losses reached almost £1.2 million by April 1980.[370] NCF decided to exit the meat processing business at this stage, leasing the factory to Frank

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[361] Liston, *From Fair to Mart and Beyond,* pp 225-227; *IFJ*, 2, 23 Oct. 1976.
[362] *Nationalist and Leinster Times*, 5 Nov. 1976; *IFJ*, 2, 23 Oct. 1976.
[363] *IT*, 22 Dec. 1976; *Nationalist and Leinster Times*, 31 Dec. 1976, 29 Apr. 1977; *IFJ*, 14 Oct. 1978.
[364] Liston, *From Fair to Mart and Beyond,* p. 234; *IT*, 26 Oct. 1977.
[365] *Sligo Champion*, 12 Aug. 1977; *IFJ*, 22 Sept. 1973, 6 Aug. 1977.
[366] *Western Journal*, 30 May 1980; *IFJ*, 8 Mar. 1980.
[367] *IT*, 5 Aug. 1977; *Sligo Champion*, 11 Apr. 1980.
[368] *IFJ*, 7 July 1979.
[369] Interview with John B. Keane, (19 Feb. 2019).
[370] *Western Journal*, 30 May 1980; *IFJ*, 8 Mar. 1980.

Mallon of Phoenix Meats – which later became Liffey Meats. Mallon was also leasing Hanley's slaughtering plant in Rooskey, Co Roscommon at that time.[371]

The failure of NCF and GVM to successfully manage, develop and integrate their new meat divisions in a structured fashion illustrated the co-operatives' lack of understanding of the beef industry. In fact, the co-operatives' inability to articulate a clear and explicit reason for becoming involved in beef processing demonstrated a somewhat cavalier and arrogant attitude to these investments. NCF naively explained that its decision to purchase the Sligo meat factory was in line with the co-operative's policy to 'assist farmers to produce and market their stock to best advantage'.[372] GVM's motivation for entering beef processing was less idealistic but equally questionable. 'Cork Marts were in the meat business and it looked like Golden Vale was going to be left out in a limb,' recalled Brendan Danaher, a former board member and GVM chairman.[373] However, keeping up with the Jones's was not a credible business strategy and, as we have seen, this investment ultimately cost GVM dearly and provoked considerable rancour among shareholders.[374] An investigation by the co-operative umbrella group IAOS into the losses at Golden Vale Meats attributed the firm's failings to a combination of poor management, a lack of clarity around profitability levels, delays in payments for product, and difficulties in securing government and EEC support payments.[375] However, GVM auctioneer, Phil Purcell, provided a simpler explanation when he observed that 'we were out of our depth in the meat industry'.[376] This assessment, which was an astonishingly costly realisation, could have equally applied to NCF. In the wake of co-operative's decision to cease operations at its Sligo factory, a spokesman admitted that 'nobody at NCF realised just how difficult the meat trade really is'. The same spokesman went on to describe meat processing as a 'high risk business' which was 'very competitive' and had 'no guaranteed markets'.[377] These comments suggest that NCF management was somehow unaware of the pitfalls and commercial dangers inherent in meat processing. However, this cannot have been the case, given the well-documented troubles and heavy financial losses which co-operatives such as Clover Meats, IMP and GVM

[371] *Sligo Champion*, 11 Apr. 1980; *IT*, 3 Apr. 1980.
[372] *IT*, 5 Aug. 1977.
[373] Liston, *From Fair to Mart and Beyond,* pp 235-36.
[374] *IT*, 26 Oct. 1977; Liston, *From Fair to Mart and Beyond,* p. 234; *IFJ*, 12 Jan. 1977.
[375] Liston, *From Fair to Mart and Beyond,* p. 232.
[376] Ibid., p. 238.
[377] *Sligo Champion*, 11 Apr. 1980.

recorded during the 1970s. In fact, former IFA president, TJ Maher, warned NCF management that they were entering 'jungle territory' by diversifying into beef processing.[378] The farm leader's prophetic words were not heeded, however. Over-confidence also contributed to the failure of NCF's meat division, as general manager, Jim O'Mahony, conceded at the co-operative's AGM in 1980.[379] This confidence, or arrogance, was based on the successful dairy processing, livestock marts and farm supplies businesses NCF had developed during the 1970s and which delivered pre-tax profits of £746,000 in 1976.[380] In fact, failure was not something NCF was used to, as a co-operative spokesman admitted following the leasing of the Sligo meat plant. 'It was very much out of character for NCF to have this disappointment,' he stated.[381] The NCF general manager said the co-operative's beef venture was not helped by industrial relations issues at the plant, or by a shortage of finished cattle in the north-west. Interestingly, however, O'Mahony also acknowledged that NCF lacked the expertise to correctly operate a meat processing factory, and he identified the co-operative's inability to recruit suitable staff as a critical weakness of the business.[382]

Farmer influence on livestock pricing policy and other operational decisions was a further issue of contention in co-operative meat businesses. While farmer-shareholders argued that the raison d'être for co-operative meat processors was to pay the maximum price possible for cattle, thereby increasing beef farmer incomes, management at these farmer-owned businesses claimed such an approach undermined their commercial viability. IFA chief economist, Con Lucey, reflected farmer expectations around cattle pricing by co-operative meat factories when he stated that beef finishers viewed Cork Marts' 1969 purchase of IMP as 'a ray of light' for the sector because farmers now controlled a major processor.[383] Similar sentiments were expressed by GVM chairman, John P. McCarthy, when he stated that Golden Vale Meats' showed its value during the cattle crisis of 1974 when it was one of the country's few processors to pay farmers a realistic price for cattle.[384] However, such support for farmers was expensive, which IMP discovered to its cost in 1974. Responding to pressure from the farm organisations and the *Irish Farmers' Journal* to

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[378] *Sligo Champion*, 11 Apr. 1980; *Western Journal*, 30 May 1980.
[379] *Western Journal*, 30 May 1980.
[380] *Irish Times*, 5 Aug. 1977; *Sligo Champion*, 11 Apr. 1980.
[381] *Sligo Champion*, 11 Apr. 1980.
[382] *Western Journal*, 30 May 1980.
[383] Con Lucey interview (25 Oct. 2017).
[384] Liston, *From Fair to Mart and Beyond,* p. 224.

hold cattle prices during the summer and autumn of 1974, IMP paid 27p per lb for bullocks in September when the private processors were generally quoting 25p per lb. A similar premium was paid for heifers and cows. Given that IMP was killing in excess of 1,200 animals each day at the time, paying this additional 2p per lb cost the business close to £70,000 per week.[385] This price pressure on co-operative meat processors remained a feature of the sector during the 1970s, despite the significant costs involved, and the precarious finances of the farmer-owned businesses.[386] Farmer lobbying of the co-operative meat processors was not confined to the farm organisations, and was not limited to cattle prices; it also happened at board level and extended to operational matters. For example, Clover Meats' managing director, Michael Collins, was forced to defend the co-operative's cow prices in October 1975 when questioned at a meeting of the board's steering committee.[387] Similarly, IFA deputy president, Joe Rea, successfully lobbied Clover Meats' board on the planned closure of the co-operative's Clonmel plant in January 1976, despite management pointing out that the factory was restricted to primarily killing cows and its margins were 'totally inadequate'.[388] Rea farmed at Ballylooby outside Cahir and was a Clover Meats' board member for south Tipperary. He was therefore representing the interests of local farmers while arguing for the retention of the Clonmel.[389] Of course Rea's intervention was not the only consideration in Clover Meats' decision to keep Clonmel operational: the likely reaction of local shareholders, and the impact on cattle and pig supplies to the processor, were more important determinants of whether a factory remained open or was closed.[390] However, Rea's actions highlight the influence farmers wielded at board level in co-operative meat processors. Interestingly, the steering committee established by government in 1977 to draw up a rescue plan for Clover Meats recognised and sought to curb this power when it described the co-operative's twenty-one-person board as 'a focal point for farmer grievances' and proposed that it be cut to twelve.[391]

[385] *IFJ*, 1 June, 13 July, 14, 28 Sept., 5 Oct. 1974.
[386] Liston, *From Fair to Mart and Beyond,* p. 224; *IFJ*, 1 June, 13 July, 5 Oct. 1974, 27 Aug. 1977; *Western Journal*, 18 Apr. 1980.
[387] Minutes of meeting of the Steering Committee of Clover Meats, 13 Oct. 1975.
[388] Minutes of meeting of the Steering Committee of Clover Meats, 26 Jan. 1976.
[389] *IT*, 4 July 2007; Minutes of meeting of the Steering Committee of Clover Meats, 26 Jan. 1976.
[390] Minutes of meeting of the Steering Committee of Clover Meats, 24 Nov. 1975.
[391] *The Nationalist*, 23 July 1977; *Irish independent*, 14 July 1977.

Farmer confidence in co-operative meat processors was badly shaken by the forced exit of GVM and NCF from the sector, and the uncertainty that surrounded IMP and Clover Meats. This was illustrated by the poor farmer response to share drives launched by Clover Meats and GVM in 1976-77 when both co-operatives failed to mobilise sufficient support from ordinary livestock producers.[392] It was clear that farmers were losing faith with co-operative involvement in beef processing. In stark contrast to the IMP share drive of 1969 when 28,000 farmers contributed £3.3 million to purchase the country's two largest meat factories, Clover Meats' efforts to raise equity in 1976-77 were extremely disappointing.[393] The campaign was run under the slogan 'Clover: an asset to the farmer' and aimed to raise £1 million for the co-operative. The chairman, Cyril Power, said the investment was required to 'restructure' the business's 'financial resources' and 'develop its trading activities'.[394] However, his successor as chairman, Paddy Fitzgerald, characterised the share drive as a vote of confidence in the co-operative. He maintained that farmers' reluctance to support the share drive would result in the processor falling into private or foreign control. 'The basic question farmers are being asked is do you want Clover Meats to remain in farmers' hands or not? The future of Clover depends on the support of farmers in the share capital drive and on farmers' loyalty to the concept of the co-operative,' Fitzgerald insisted.[395] Unfortunately for the co-operative, many farmers no longer viewed Clover Meats as an asset in which they wished to invest. While some may have agreed with Alf Melvin, of the Dublin County Committee of Agriculture, when he said it was 'vital to keep Clover Meats in farmer ownership', not enough farmers were willing to commit financially to a meat processor with such a poor commercial track record.[396] Maurice Colbert of IAOS was drafted in to help on the Clover Meats share drive in Kilkenny and west Waterford, but it was a struggle to get farmers to commit to investing in the co-operative. 'I realised very quickly that farmers were adopting a much more critical attitude to investment in beef...Farmers were already beginning to ask the hard questions,' Colbert recalled.[397] Co-operative

[392] Liston, *From Fair to Mart and Beyond,* p. 228; IFJ, 2, 23 October 1976; Minutes of meeting of the Steering Committee of Clover Meats, 8 July 1977.
[393] Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, pp 75-76; *IFJ*, 11 Jan. 1969, 14 Apr. 1973, 17 July, 11 Sept., 20 Nov. 1976.
[394] *Munster Express*, 5 Nov. 1976; *IFJ*, 30 Oct., 20 Nov. 1976.
[395] *IFJ*, 21 May 1977.
[396] *Munster Express*, 5 Nov. 1976.
[397] Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, p. 127.

solidarity was eventually required to salvage Clover Meats' share drive, with the dairy processors Avonmore Co-operative and Waterford Co-operative, along with the co-operative marts in the south-east, having to invest in the meat processor.[398] Even IMP committed £50,000 to help support its competitor.[399] However, the amount finally raised still totalled just £700,000 – well short of the £1 million target.[400] The GVM share drive fared equally badly, despite management warning in a letter to shareholders that 'it would be a sorry day indeed for Irish farming' if the co-operative was forced to dispose of the Rathdowney factory.[401] The anger evident at GVM's annual general meeting in 1977 goes some way to explain the failure of the share drive to get traction among the co-operative's farmer shareholders. A vote of no confidence in GVM's four-man sub-committee which ran Golden Vale Meats was carried by four hundred votes to twelve. In addition, all four sub-committee members, including GVM chairman, John P. McCarthy, either resigned or were voted off the co-operative's board.[402] Farmers were beginning to call time on their involvement in beef processing.

Although the slow demise of co-operative meat businesses represented the main change in the processing sector's structure during the 1970s, private meat companies also struggled to survive during this period. A number of plants changed ownership as the existing operators decided to exit the business or debtors called time on their operations. As John O'Reilly observed in *Farmers' Journal's* business pages in January 1979: 'The co-operatives are of course not alone in sharing the industry's problems. Hardly a month goes by without rumours of imminent closures among the private sector.'[403] Operations at the Longford-based Lyons Group were consolidated in the midlands when, as noted earlier, the firm leased its factory in Charleville, Co Cork to Dublin-based Tara Meats in 1977.[404] Another beef factory to change ownership at this time was the facility at Ballaghaderreen, Co Roscommon which was owned by the Cunniffe family who were active in the pork and bacon business. It was

[398] Minutes of meeting of the Steering Committee of Clover Meats, 19 July 1976; *IFJ*, 9 Oct. 1976, 31 Jan. 1977.
[399] *IFJ*, 9 Oct. 1976.
[400] *Nationalist*, 23 July 1977; *Munster Express*, 8 Apr. 1977.
[401] Liston, *From Fair to Mart and Beyond,* p. 227.
[402] *IFJ*, 12 Nov. 1977.
[403] Ibid., 13 Jan. 1979.
[404] Ibid., 10 Sept. 1977.

commissioned in 1978 but was sold in November 1979 to the live cattle exporter Andrew Towey.[405]

THE PROCESSOR LOBBY

Beef remained the main Irish agricultural export during the second half of the 1970s – despite the significant changes in ownership structure of the industry – and its importance was reflected in the sector's ability to influence farm policy in meat processors' favour. This influence was based on the beef factories providing more than 5,500 jobs and delivering over £220 million in export earnings by 1975, as well as the essential role the industry played in providing farmers with an outlet for a million cattle each year.[406] The extent of meat industry's influence is most clearly illustrated in the Irish government's effort to stymie live cattle exports in the late 1970s in order to protect cattle supplies to the beef processors. However, it is also evident from the meat industry's success in curtailing the power of the state's meat marketing body, CBF, and in the factories' ability to frustrate efforts to introduce a national carcass classification regime.

Securing government support for its efforts to limit live cattle shipments confirmed the beef industry's importance as a crucial export sector, and signalled the meat factories' effectiveness as a sectoral lobby. Restricting live exports was a pivotal policy objective of the beef factories and obtaining government backing for this position clearly demonstrates meat processors' growing influence on farm policy in the late 1970s. It is particularly significant given that this was achieved despite the stringent opposition of both IFA and ICMSA – whose power as a national lobby was demonstrated by what Lee described as its 'furious' reaction which ultimately prevented the implementation of major tax reforms in 1978-79.[407] The move to curtail live exports, as noted earlier in the chapter, gathered momentum following the crisis of 1974-75 when overall cattle disposals contracted significantly.[408] However, it gained significant traction when a more decidedly pro-processor stance was adopted

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[405] *IFJ*, 10 Nov. 1979.

[406] Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, pp 1-2; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1975*, pp 36-37; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1977*, p. 33; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1980*, p. 30.

[407] Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, pp 491-92.

[408] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1975*, pp 36-37; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1977*, p. 33; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1980*, p. 30.

by Jim Gibbons who succeeded Mark Clinton as Minister for Agriculture following Fianna Fáil's general election victory in 1977.[409] Kilkenny native Gibbons, who later became an advisor to the beef processor Hibernian Meats, flagged his opposition to live exports within six months of taking office when he told the *Farmers' Journal* that he was 'negative to the export of anything in live form'.[410] Gibbons subsequently blamed the national cattle herd's decline in 1975 and 1976 on the high level of calf exports, and to the running down of suckler cow numbers.[411] The factories skilfully exploited the minister's opposition to live exports by linking the shipment of cattle and calves on the hoof to reduced economic activity and opportunity for Ireland, and to possible job losses. For example, Roger McCarrick of IMP claimed in 1978 that exports of over 100,000 calves to Italy and France was costing the economy £45 million each year and around one thousand jobs. [412] This assertion, as we will see later, helped to attract trade union and political support for the meat processors' position.

Gibbons' opposition to live exports was indicative of a wider policy shift within government to 'push processing', recalled a former senior official at the Department of Agriculture. He explained that farmers benefitted from live exports since the increased competition for stock 'kept the meat factories honest'.[413] Indeed, the Store Cattle Study Group report recommended in 1968 that the number of cattle slaughtered and processed at home should be capped at 500,000 head, with a further 690,000 animals being exported live. This approach aimed to promote competition between the three main groupings that purchased livestock; the factories, the exporters of store animals, and fat cattle shippers.[414] The 1968 recommendation to limit meat processing was not acted on, since the primary focus of Irish livestock policy in the wake of the AIFTA was expanding carcass beef exports. Ironically, it was live cattle exports that were facing restrictions a decade later. Inter-departmental communications from the period confirm that live exports were tolerated rather than promoted during the late 1970s. In fact, a September 1978 briefing note from the Department of the Taoiseach to Jim O'Mahony, secretary of the Department of

[409] Daly, *First Department*, p. 523; Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985,* p. 484.
[410] *IFJ*, 28 Jan. 1978; O'Toole, *Meanwhile Back at the Ranch*, p. 152.
[411] Address to the CBF board by the Minister for Agriculture, Jim Gibbons, 11 Oct. 1979, (NAI, TSCH/GIS/1/170).
[412] *IFJ*, 30 Sept. 1978.
[413] Interview B (24 Sept. 2015).
[414] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, pp 192-193.

Agriculture, states that CBF should not 'actively promote' live exports, even though this was major part of the state body's remit. Tellingly, the information note is prefaced by the statement: 'I am directed by the Taoiseach'.[415] More jobs in meat processing and increased export earnings were the obvious benefits to Jack Lynch's government from supporting increased beef processing. As a Department of the Taoiseach official noted, the live export trade created 'no employment and the value added of these [exported] cattle is nil' – although the author did concede that live exports helped underpin cattle prices.[416]

Gibbons' immediate goal was rebuilding the cattle herd to the high of 7.2 million recorded in 1974.[417] Consequently, curbing the export of calves, which totalled more than 130,000 head in 1978, was his first target.[418] This trade was primarily to Italy and started in 1974 at the height of the cattle crisis when exports were viewed as a vital outlet for calves that were effectively unsalable at home. Cork Marts and Golden Vale Marts were very active in the business. Indeed, Cork Marts pioneered the air transport of calves to Italy in autumn 1974 when flights went out from Shannon. Golden Vale exported almost 50,000 animals by the same means in 1975.[419] However, Gibbons introduced regulations in the spring of 1979 which aimed to frustrate calf exports. The minimum space required per calf on flights was increased by the Department of Agriculture from three square feet to four square feet, effectively cutting the maximum number of calves that could be carried per flight from five hundred to around three hundred and seventy. In addition, brucellosis checks which took three weeks were introduced. These forced exporters to hold and feed calves for up to a month before export, which increased costs and cut margins.[420] The measures provoked an angry farmer and political reaction, as live exports to the continent were viewed as keeping a floor on the calf market and prices.[421] The Cavan Agriculture Committee passed a resolution condemning the restrictions; while Limerick TD, Tom O'Donnell, claimed Minister Gibbons' actions risked damaging

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[415] Information note from the Department of the Taoiseach to the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Jim O'Mahony, 18 Sept. 1978 (NAI, TAOIS/2009/135/71).
[416] A letter from the Department of the Taoiseach to the Department of Finance, 8 Sept. 1978 (NAI, TAOIS/2009/135/71).
[417] Address to the CBF board by the Minister for Agriculture, Jim Gibbons, 11 Oct. 1979 (NAI, TSCH/GIS/1/170).
[418] *IFJ*, 20 Jan., 18 Aug. 1979.
[419] Liston, *From Fair to Mart and Beyond*, p. 238; *IFJ*, 9 Nov. 1974.
[420] *IFJ*, 16 Dec. 1978; Liston, *From Fair to Mart and Beyond*, pp 238-239.
[421] *Limerick Leader*, 13 Jan. 1979; *Anglo-Celt*, 12 Jan. 1979; *IFJ*, 19 July 1975, 3 June 1978.

the export trade for calves which he claimed was worth £30 per head to farmers. [422] Not surprisingly, the restrictions were strongly opposed by the IFA and ICMSA. The farm organisations accused the minister of interfering in the calf export business and they sought an EEC Commission ruling on the legality of the regulations.[423] However, Gibbons was unapologetic. 'We exported little or no calves at all before 1973, and the sooner we get back to that position the better for everyone in our beef industry. We need to finish all our calves, and more, if the industry is to grow as it should,' he maintained.[424] The minister was certainly in the beef factories' corner.

Gibbons targeted cattle exports next. Beef processors complained in 1978-79 that the live trade enjoyed an unfair advantage because of the different levels of support the two sectors received for exports outside of the EEC. These support mechanisms favoured live shippers by £12-14 per animal. Gibbons sought to level the playing field by lobbying Brussels to eliminate the differential between supports paid on carcass beef and live cattle exports.[425] Known as export refunds, these support payments were essentially export subsidies given to companies to cover the difference between the internal EEC price of a commodity and the lower world market value. This meant that European beef and cattle exports had to be generously subsidised to compete against South American and Australian companies for lucrative international contracts. Indeed, Kevin Purcell maintained that 'heavy' export refunds were crucial in beating rival South American bids and securing the lucrative Libyan contracts.[426] The refunds on live cattle in early 1979 were worth £41.83 per 100kgs. This meant that around £255 in export refunds was paid on a 600kg bullock. However, if this same animal was exported as carcass beef, the export subsidy of 79.9p/kg totalled around £241-243.[427] It was this differential Gibbons sought to address. In a further move against the live exporter trade, the Department of Agriculture prohibited the shipping of store cattle from herds with TB, even though this had traditionally been seen as reliable outlet for these cattle since they were invariably housed in closed finishing units and then went directly to slaughter. The private marts warned that this decision risked causing severe difficulties for farmers and could have a 'disastrous'

[422] *Anglo-Celt*, 12 Jan. 1979; *Limerick Leader*, 13 Jan. 1979.
[423] *Nenagh Guardian*, 20 Jan. 1979, *IFJ*, 20 Jan. 1979.
[424] Address to the CBF board by the Minister for Agriculture, Jim Gibbons, 11 Oct. 1979 (NAI, TSCH/GIS/1/170).
[425] *IFJ*, 10 Mar. 1979.
[426] Kevin Purcell interview (4 Nov. 2015).
[427] *IFJ*, 19 May 1979.

impact on live exports.[428] Gibbons never openly articulated his reasoning for seeking to equalise the export refund payments, however, reports in the farming press earlier in the 1979 maintained that the minister was pressed by the processors 'to have the Libyan trade curtailed' as the factories were finding it difficult to get 'good finished cattle'.[429]

The beef industry's efforts to restrict live shipping in the late 1970s involved a broader coalition of interests than was the case earlier in the decade. A greater effort was made to co-opt the support of beef finishers by stressing the reduced earning potential of these farming operations when store cattle and calves were exported live, and were therefore not available to be fattened. In addition, the backing of the trade unions was sought by highlighting the potential for job losses in beef processing should live exports continue unabated.[430] The Irish Fresh Meat Exporters Society (IFMES) suggested in autumn 1978 that the industry could process up to two million cattle by 1985, and increase employment from five thousand to fourteen thousand, if exports on the hoof were curtailed in the short-term and phased out in the longer-term.[431] Detailed proposals on how this expansion was to be achieved were not outlined by IFMES, but the processors continued to argue that livestock exports were costing jobs in the meat industry. 'This trade [live cattle shipping] should be vigorously opposed in the interests of future job creation and the added value contribution to the national economy,' IFMES claimed.[432] The courting of trade union support for the beef processors continued in 1979 when Larry Goodman as chairman of IFMES hosted a news conference in April outlining the opportunities being lost to Ireland in terms of employment and export earnings as a result of calf exports to Italy.[433] The IFMES campaign forced Jim Costigan and Michael McMonagle of the Irish Livestock Exporters' Association to defend the role and the record of cattle shippers. They pointed out that live cattle exports gave employment to five thousand people in 1979, was worth over £185 million in foreign sales, provided competition in the market for cattle, and supported the store cattle trade in areas of the country, such

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[428] *Leitrim Observer*, 11 Aug. 1979; *Kilkenny People*, 10 Aug. 1979; *IFJ*, 15 Aug. 1979.
[429] *IFJ*, 10 Mar. 1979.
[430] *II*, 19 Sept. 1978; *IFJ*, 16, 30 Sept, 1978, 7 Apr. 1979; *CE*, 2 Apr. 1979.
[431] *CE*, 13 Sept. 1978; *II*, 19 Sept. 1978; *IFJ*, 16, 30 Sept. 1978.
[432] Undated response by the Irish Fresh Meat Exporters Society (IFMES) to the publication of the Green Paper entitled *'Development for Full Employment'* in June 1978 (NAI, TAOIS/2009/135/71).
[433] *CE*, 2 Apr. 1979; *IFJ*, 7 Apr. 1979.

as the west and northwest, where the land was not suitable for finishing cattle.[434] The *Irish Farmers' Journal* broadly supported the live exporter position. The shippers paid £17-18 per head more for finished cattle in 1978 than the Irish factories were willing to pay because British processors needed stock, the publication's editor, Paddy O'Keeffe, pointed out.[435] However, the factories' countered that the live exporters operated on a 'spasmodic basis' and lacked the markets to provide a guaranteed outlet for sufficient numbers of Irish stock. They also argued that the mix of private and co-operative ownership of Irish meat factories ensured competition for livestock from within the processing sector, therefore negating the contention that live exporters were required to keep the beef plants 'honest'.[436] Trade union support for the processors' campaign to curb live exports was secured by 1979. Both the Irish Transport and General Workers Union (ITGWU) and the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union (ATGWU) supported calls for a total ban on live exports after 370 workers at Irish Leather Group's tanneries in Gorey, Carrick-on-Suir and Portlaw were threatened with redundancy as a result of difficulties in the company.[437] Tannery employees blamed the increased levels of live cattle exports, and the consequent reduction in the availability of hides, for aggravating the sector's difficulties and undermining their jobs.[438] Live exports were also registering as an issue in the 1979 local elections. Waterford-based Fianna Fáil candidate, Philip Frisby, said he 'could not understand' how the live cattle trade was allowed to continue when Waterford city's Clover Meats' plant was operating at fifty per cent capacity and there were 'thousands of jobs at stake'.[439] This was not the first occasion when concerns were raised by politicians regarding live exports. Fianna Fáil TD Brendan Crinion called on the Minister for Agriculture, Mark Clinton, in June 1973 to seek permission from the EEC to halt exports of store cattle and calves, while his party colleague, Sean Moore, asked the minister if any jobs in the meat plants had been lost due to livestock exports.[440] However, in contrast to earlier in the decade, the political support for a ban on live exports in 1979 was part of a broader, more co-ordinated effort.

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[434] *II*, 19 Jan. 1979; *IFJ*, 27 Jan. 1979.
[435] *IFJ*, 16 Sept. 1978.
[436] Undated response by the Irish Fresh Meat Exporters Society (IFMES) to the publication of the Green Paper entitled *'Development for Full Employment'* in June 1978 (NAI, TAOIS/2009/135/71).
[437] *The Nationalist*, 13 Jan. 1979; *IP,* 3 Jan. 1979; *IFJ*, 27 Jan. 1979.
[438] *IP,* 20 Jan. 1979; *The Nationalist*, 13 Jan. 1979; *II,* 17, 19 Jan. 1979.
[439] *Waterford News and Star*, 13 Apr. 1979.
[440] *IFJ*, 16 June 1973.

Factory concerns regarding live exports were clearly not a post-cattle-crisis phenomenon. The severe difficulties experienced by the beef industry in 1972 following strong exports of live cattle to continental Europe are detailed in Chapter Three. An exchange of letters between Taoiseach Liam Cosgrave and a Dublin-based Fine Gael supporter, Patrick Rock, shortly after the coalition government came to power confirms that processors continued to view live exports as a serious threat to the viability of the industry in the spring of 1973.[441] Rock conveys the concerns of IMP's Roger McCarrick and Larry Goodman of Anglo-Irish Meats regarding processor difficulties in sourcing cattle and sheep due to the activities of shippers. In addition, Rock explains that Irish factory owners feared their businesses could be possible acquisition targets for large foreign meat processors – although there was no evidence to support this contention. 'I believe it is vital that we should protect our meat processing industry from unfair competition, and prevent the definite trend of overseas interests picking up, very cheaply, Irish meat plants that are in financial trouble due to inadequate supplies of cattle,' Rock states.[442] In reply, Cosgrave advises Rock – who the Taoiseach appointed chairman of the Arts Council in 1975 even though Rock's background was in management consultancy – that any proposals that emerged from a scheduled meeting with Goodman should be passed on directly to the Agriculture Minister, Mark Clinton.[443] Since Rock was a close personal friend of Cosgrave from his south Dublin constituency, which is clear from the informal manner in which the pair addressed one another in the letters, this correspondence confirms the level of political access afforded to beef processors, and the extent to which they could lobby on national policy in both a personal capacity and through IFMES.[444] Although this access and influence had little impact on cattle disposals in the first half of the decade – with exports on the hoof still accounting for forty per cent of all livestock sales between 1971 and 1975 – the threat posed by high levels of

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[441] Letter from An Taoiseach, Liam Cosgrove, to Patrick Rock, 26 Fairy Hill, Blackrock, Co Dublin, 10 Apr. 1973; Letter from Patrick Rock, 26 Fairy Hill, Blackrock, Co Dublin to An Taoiseach, Liam Cosgrove, 7 Apr. 1973, letters included in (NAI, TAOIS/2005/7/125).

[442] *IP*, 3 July 1975; *II*, 3 July 1975; Letter from Patrick Rock, 26 Fairy Hill, Blackrock, Co Dublin to An Taoiseach, Liam Cosgrove, 7 April 1973 (NAI, TAOIS/2005/7/125).

[443] Letter from An Taoiseach, Liam Cosgrove, to Patrick Rock, 26 Fairy Hill, Blackrock, Co Dublin, 10 April 1973 (NAI, TAOIS/2005/7/125).

[444] Fine Gael members described Patrick Rock as a lifelong member of the party and close associate of Liam Cosgrave. A Cavan native, Rock was educated in St Patrick's College, Cavan, and afterwards in UCD, where he studied maths and physics. He was a senior management consultant with the Irish Management Institute, and a board member with the Irish Sugar Company, Bord Iascaigh Mhara, and the National Institute of Higher Education (NIHE), Dublin.

store cattle sales to the Middle East, and calves to Italy and France, prompted a far more aggressive reaction from the meat processing sector in the late 1970s.[445] In fact, the factories were calling for limits on live exports by the autumn of 1978 – even though it was clear that such a policy could not be enforced under EEC law.[446]

A perception of increased live exporter activity in the second half of the 1970s was successfully created by the beef processor lobby even though it was not supported by Department of Agriculture statistics. Although exporters shipped more than fifteen thousand cattle to Libya by St Patrick's Day 1979, and Purcell Brothers secured a contract to supply a further fifty thousand forward store bullocks between that summer and December, live exports actually dropped from 550,000 head in 1978 to 327,000 the following year.[447] A fifteen per cent reduction in the total number of animals available for slaughter or export – a consequence of the cyclical nature of cattle supplies – actually caused the cattle shortages of 1979, not live exports.[448] Indeed, cattle supplies to the factories were unchanged at 1.18 million head in both 1978 and 1979.[449] Department of Agriculture data confirms that the numbers of cattle shipped live fell from an average of 565,000 head for the 1971-75 period, to 450,000 head for 1976-80. Similarly, live shipping as a percentage of overall cattle disposals fell from forty per cent in 1971-75, compared to twenty-seven per cent for the period from 1976 to 1980.[450] The beef supply situation to the factories in 1979 was further complicated by the introduction of a two per cent production levy on the sale of all farm produce by the Minister for Finance, George Colley, as Fianna Fáil struggled to expand the tax take from agriculture. The cost of this levy was to be borne by farmer.[451] Although the government eventually abandoned the levy following a High Court challenge that was referred to the European Court, it caused considerable disruption in the beef sector during the early summer of 1979 as farmers held back

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[445] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1977*, p. 33; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1980*, p. 30; *IFJ*, 1 May 1976, 3 June 1978.
[446] *II*, 19 Sept. 1978; *CE*, 13 Sept. 1978; *IFJ*, 16, 30 Sept. 1978.
[447] *IFJ*, 10, 31 Mar. 1979; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1980*, p. 30.
[448] Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, pp 36-37; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1980*, p. 30.
[449] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1980*, p. 30.
[450] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1975*, pp 36-37; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1977*, p. 33; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1980*, p. 30.
[451] Paddy Smith, 'Taxes, Levies and Travel' in *Leaders of Courage – The Story of the ICMSA*, pp 47-50; Dempsey (ed), *The path to power,* p. 86.

stock in the hope that the measure would be rescinded.[452] Indeed, by the third week of May 1979 the *Farmers' Journal* estimated that one-third of the country's beef factories were shut because they were unable to source sufficient stock.[453] Despite the success of the factories' public relations campaign, Gibbons' efforts to restrict the live export trade floundered in Brussels. The EEC's beef management committee decided against changing export refund rates, and the Commission also forced the Department of Agriculture to lift its restrictions on calf exports.[454] Ironically, the Commission cited the Irish beef sector's poor marketing efforts and its use of intervention for almost fifty per cent of total output as justification for its refusal to alter the export refund regime.[455] This was an embarrassing rebuke to both the beef industry, and to the Minister for Agriculture, Jim Gibbons.

Meat marketing and carcass grading were two further areas in which processors demonstrated their growing influence during the 1970s. Indeed, it was somewhat ironic that the meat industry's poor marketing record foiled Gibbons' attempts to curtail live exports, since intense opposition from processors thwarted efforts by successive governments to introduce a national promotion and sales strategy for Irish beef and lamb.[456] In addition, the factories consistently opposed the adoption of an independent carcass grading regime for the beef industry – a subject which will be addressed later in the chapter.[457] The beef industry was regularly accused of weak and uncoordinated marketing during the 1970s – as it had been during the 1960s. Italian and German meat buyers told CBF's International Beef Symposium in 1978 that Irish processors were losing export sales because the beef supplied was too fat and the quality of the product delivered was inconsistent.[458] These observations tallied with the findings of the Cooper and Lybrand study of 1977 which bemoaned the casual attitude of some Irish processors to delivery times and specifications, and noted the absence of dedicated sales personnel for the Irish meat

[452] Dempsey (ed), *The path to power,* p. 86; Smith, 'Taxes, Levies and Travel' in *Leaders of Courage*, pp 47-50; *IFJ*, 19 May 1979.
[453] *IFJ*, 19 May 1979.
[454] *Western Journal*, 28 Dec. 1979; *II*, 12 Jan. 1980; *IFJ*, 19 May, 1 Dec. 1979.
[455] *IFJ*, 19 May 1979.
[456] Letter from Jim Bastow of IFMES to the Taoiseach, Liam Cosgrave, 17 Dec. 1976 (NAI, TAOIS/2009/135/71); *IP*, 28 Jan. 1974, 20 Feb. 1979; *II*, 26, 30 Jan. 1974, 3 Feb. 1979; *IFJ*, 16 June 1973, 27 Nov. 1976, 5 June 1979.
[457] *IFJ*, 25 Aug. 1973, 4 Jan. 1975, 16 Apr. 1977, 11 Mar. 1978, 11 Aug. 1979; 23 Aug. 1980.
[458] *IP*, 5 Apr. 1978; *II*, 4 Apr. 1978.

companies on the continent.[459] Three years earlier the *Farmers' Journal* editor, Paddy O'Keeffe, claimed that inadequate marketing was 'crippling beef profits', while the Minister for Agriculture, Mark Clinton, characterised the industry's approach to selling meat as 'fragmented'.[460] It had been envisaged by the farm organisations that the establishment of CBF in 1969 was the first step in the development of a national beef and lamb sales structure. In fact, the ESRI report of 1973 recommended a central role for CBF in marketing Irish beef so that the full potential of the emerging European market could be realised.[461] The NESC similarly proposed that CBF be given a greater role in supplying market information and intelligence to the sector. In a 1978 report drawn up by noted economists Seamus Sheehy and John J. O'Connell, the NESC called for increased funding for CBF, the introduction of structured marketing of Irish beef and the development of an Irish meat brand along the lines of Kerrygold.[462] However, as outlined in Chapter Three, the NFA were disappointed that CBF's remit was restricted to promotional support rather than actual marketing.[463] Marketing bodies that handled sales were already a feature of the Irish food industry. Bord Bainne, which became the Irish Dairy Board in 1974, had proven hugely successful in developing Kerrygold as a blue-chip brand for Irish butter during the 1960s.[464] Dairy output, as Daly notes, had increased significantly during the 1960s and 1970s. Milk production expanded from 480 million gallons in 1960 to reach almost 770 million gallons fifteen years later; while butter exports increased by one-third to almost sixty thousand tonnes between 1972 and 1975.[465] An innovative marketing strategy was the key to Bord Bainne's success in establishing the Kerrygold brand. However, former Bord Bainne chief executive, Tony O'Reilly, said that process involved initially explaining the difference between selling and marketing to board members. 'Marketing was a concept not known even to our board. Ireland was selling [butter] surpluses on a staccato basis. A dry summer and the creameries were out of stock and out of the market,' O'Reilly explained.[466] Unfortunately, meat

[459] Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, pp 70-71.
[460] *IFJ*, 19 Jan., 20 Apr. 1974.
[461] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, pp 118-119.
[462] O'Connell & Sheehy, *'Policies to accelerate agricultural development'*, pp 108-114.
[463] Daly, *First Department*, pp 495-96.
[464] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, p. 75; Bielenberg & Ryan, *An Economic History of Ireland*, p. 81.
[465] Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries 1973-74, p. 57; Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries 1975, p. 45; Daly, *First Department*, pp 490-91.
[466] *II*, 17 May 2011.

factory opposition to the concept of centralised beef and lamb marketing made emulating the success of Bord Bainne extremely difficult for CBF.

The reluctance of the factory owners to concede a role for CBF in central marketing of beef and lamb reflected the independent character of meat factory owners, and the fact that they rarely acted in concert. 'Meat companies were run by highly-driven, very capable individuals who competed aggressively with each other,' explained John B. Keane, who worked with both CBF and NCF Meats in Sligo. 'They wouldn't want that opportunity taken from them by being required to deal through a central marketing agency. In any event, it is unclear if a central marketing agency would have been any more successful than individual plants in marketing Irish beef,' he added.[467] Gus Fitzpatrick of Premier Meat Packers agreed. 'Back in the old days we were so secretive we didn't want anyone to know what we were doing.'[468] Meanwhile, fundamental differences between dairy processing and meat processing undermined the contention that creating a Kerrygold brand for Irish beef was a realistic expectation. Keane pointed out that whereas dairy processing is an assembly operation which creates butter, cheese or milk powders from raw milk, beef processing is a disassembly action which breaks a carcass down into twenty to thirty distinct parts. Unlike butter or cheese, it is more difficult to brand and market various meat cuts, Keane explained. 'You have to explore every corner to find a home for all those cuts.'[469] This view was shared by Paddy Moore, a former head of CBF. He maintained that there was never enough 'understanding and appreciation' of the differences that existed between marketing butter and beef.[470] Other factors also contributed to the meat processors' reluctance to support centralised marketing of beef and lamb through CBF. For example, there was no clarity around what was to happen processors' existing marketing and sales structures. IMP and Clover Meats had sales offices in London and Brussels, while all the Irish meat firms had sales arrangements with wholesalers and traders in Britain, France, Italy, Germany and Holland.[471] In addition, the factories were suspicious of farmer involvement in the selling of beef, arguing that such a move inevitably resulted in cattle prices taking precedence over

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[467] John B. Keane interview (19 Feb. 2019).
[468] Gus Fitzpatrick interviews (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017).
[469] John B. Keane interview (19 Feb. 2019).
[470] Interview with Paddy Moore, formerly of CBF (24 Oct. 2017).
[471] Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, pp 70-71; Gus Fitzpatrick interviews (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017).

processor margins. The privately-owned factories could justifiably point to the experience of the co-operative meat companies in this regard.[472] A further issue of contention related to the funding of CBF, and how much the processors were to contribute. There were also disagreements around the marketing strategy adopted by CBF in Britain and the continent.[473]

Processor intransigence on CBF was highlighted by IFMES's firm and aggressive rejection in 1974 of fresh proposals on beef and lamb marketing from the Minister for Agriculture, Mark Clinton. The minister's plan involved a trebling of CBF's budget to £1.5 million and expansion of its activities from simply promoting Irish meat into developing an over-arching sales and marketing strategy for beef and lamb exports.[474] The minister had appointed five additional beef factory representatives to an enlarged CBF board the previous year in an effort to assuage processor concerns that the marketing body was farmer controlled.[475] The new board members included Larry Goodman of Anglo-Irish Meats, Paddy Nolan of Dublin Meat Packers, Paddy Donovan of Kildare Chilling, Jim Mullins of IMP, and Michael Collins of Clover Meats.[476] The changes brought the level of processor representation on the CBF board to seven out of seventeen, as both Matt Lyons, of MJ Lyons in Longford, and Frank Quinn were existing members.[477] Clinton's plan aimed to establish a £1.5 million fund to develop a promotional strategy and co-ordinate the marketing of Irish beef and lamb on international markets. Half of the marketing budget was to be exchequer funded, with the remaining £750,000 coming in the form of a levy on all cattle slaughtered in the factories and sold in the marts. The levy on beef equated to 40p per carcass, which was to be paid by farmers and collected by the processors.[478] The minister's ambitious proposals were arguably influenced by his close friendship with the *Irish Farmers' Journal* editor, Paddy O'Keeffe, who had been calling for a structured approach to beef marketing since the early 1960s.[479]

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[472] Liston, *From Fair to Mart and Beyond,* p. 224; *IFJ*, 1 June, 13 July, 5 Oct., 1974, 27 Aug. 1977; *Western Journal*, 18 Apr. 1980.
[473] Letter from Jim Bastow of IFMES to the Taoiseach, Liam Cosgrave, 17 Dec. 1976 (NAI, TAOIS/2009/135/71); Letter from Jim Bastow of IFMES to Reddy Day, CBF chairman, 21 Dec. 1976 (NAI, TAOIS/2009/135/71).
[474] *IFJ*, 9 Feb. 1974; *II*, 26 Jan. 1974.
[475] *II*, 19 June 1973; *IFJ*, 23 June 1973; *CE*, 19 June 1973.
[476] *IFJ*, 23 June 1973; *CE*, 19 June 1973; *II*, 19 June 1973.
[477] *CE*, 19 June 1973; *II*, 19 June 1973; *IFJ*, 23 June 1973.
[478] *II*, 26 Jan. 1974; *IFJ*, 9 Feb. 1974.
[479] *IFJ*, 27 Feb. 1960, 1 Apr. 1961, 14 Apr. 1962, 18 Jan. 1964.

Clinton and O'Keeffe were close confidantes from the early 1950s, when the former Meath footballer and future politician turned around the failing fortunes of Peamount Hospital Estate in Newcastle, Co Dublin, by developing a herd of one-hundred-and-fifty Friesian cows.[480] However, the processors rejected Clinton's plan, claiming that 'members could not point to any tangible benefit resulting from promotion campaigns conducted by CBF'.[481] Furthermore, IFMES chairman, John O'Callaghan, expressed 'deep reservations' about how CBF spent its existing budget of £470,000.[482] The clear implication of this statement was that if CBF could not be trusted with £470,000 then it could not be trusted with £1.5 million. This disparaging put-down, which purposely ignored and dismissed CBF's efforts to raise the profile of Irish beef over the previous four years, clearly illustrates the level of animosity felt by meat processors towards the marketing body. Indeed, the severity of the remarks suggests that the factory owners may have viewed CBF as posing a threat to their independence. The comments prompted an immediate rebuke from Clinton, who accused the meat processors of being 'negative'.[483] However, the meat processors were not alone in opposing the minister's proposals on CBF. The marts were dissatisfied with the proposals and refused to collect the CBF levy on the grounds that it could be charged on a single animal on multiple occasions since beef cattle were generally traded in the sales rings around four times in their life. Meanwhile, live exporters were unhappy at what they perceived as their inadequate representation on the CBF board and they opposed the levy as a consequence.[484] The eventual rejection of Clinton's plan, and the very public disagreement with the meat processors which followed, had immediate implications when CBF's general manager, Peter Needham, resigned. The *Farmers' Journal* claimed Needham's failure to convince the meat sector of the benefits of CBF had hastened his departure.[485] It was somewhat ironic therefore that Needham became a very successful meat trader after leaving CBF. His client companies included the Sligo plant owned by Fursey Quinn and Bobby Cuddy, and later by NCF, as well as Slaney Meats in Enniscorthy, Tunney Meats, and Nenagh

480 Terry Clavin, 'Mark Clinton', *Directory of Irish Biography,* www.ria.ie/research-projects/dictionary-irish-biography (accessed 28 Apr. 2020); *IT*, 27 Dec. 2001; Discussions with former staff members of the *IFJ* and contemporaries of Paddy O'Keeffe.
481 *IFJ*, 26 Jan. 1974; *II*, 30 Jan. 1974.
482 *II*, 26 Jan. 1974.
483 *CE*, 28 Jan. 1974.
484 *Kilkenny People,* 8 Nov. 1974; *IFJ*, 7 Sept., 26 Oct. 1974.
485 *II,* 15 June 1974; *IFJ*, 8 June 1974.

Chilling in which he had a small shareholding.[486] The processors clearly did not want CBF marketing their beef, but obviously they had no objection to contracting its former general manager to sell meat for them.

IFMES's opposition to CBF hardened during 1976-77 as farmer lobbying of Clover Meats and IMP to change their stance on the carcass levy began to gain traction.[487] In January 1977 Clover Meats' general manager, Dermot McDermott, and his counterpart in IMP, Jerry Beechinor, confirmed that the co-operatives had broken from the IFMES position and now supported the introduction of a carcass levy to fund CBF. This followed intense lobbying of the farmer-owned processors by the IFA and ICMSA, both of which strongly supported an increased role for CBF in the marketing of Irish beef and lamb.[488] The co-operatives were in no position to reject the farm organisations' approaches, given their weakened financial position at the time, and the fact that Clover Meats required the support of IFA and ICMSA members to ensure the success of its share drive. In addition, the plan for CBF funding had been moderated by 1976. The proposed levy was now set at 25p per carcass, rather than the original 40p per carcass, with the overall CBF budget to total £750,000. Around £250,000 was to be raised by the levy.[489] Setting out the necessity for increased funding, CBF general manager, John Corr, told the *Farmers' Journal* that the organisation's existing income of £470,000 was being steadily 'eroded by the devaluation of sterling'. He claimed the increased funding was justified given CBF's extensive work in developing markets in the EEC and elsewhere, as well as carrying out studies into the prospects for vacuum-packed beef in the UK, and manufacturing meat in Germany, and undertaking promotions at consumer, supermarket and retail butcher level in Britain.[490] However, IFMES remained firmly opposed to the introduction of the levy on dead meat exports, despite the reduced level of funding being sought by CBF, and the changed stance of Clover Meats and IMP.[491] IFMES secretary, Jim Bastow, ruled out any possibility of the privately-owned meat factories agreeing to the levy proposal. In an ill-tempered reply to a letter from CBF chairman, Reddy Day, Bastow

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[486] *IFJ*, 8 June 1974, 20 Sept. 1975, 23 Oct. 1976.

[487] Letter from Jim Bastow of IFMES to the Taoiseach, Liam Cosgrave, 17 Dec. 1976, and letter from Jim Bastow of IFMES to Reddy Day, CBF chairman, 21 Dec. 1976 (NAI, TAOIS/2009/135/71).

[488] *IP*, 8 Jan. 1977; *II,* 15, 25 Jan. 1977*; IFJ*, 1 Jan. 1977.

[489] *II,* 15, 25 Jan. 1977*; IFJ*, 1 Jan. 1977; *IP*, 8 Jan. 1977.

[490] *IFJ*, 27 Nov. 1976.

[491] Letter from Jim Bastow of IFMES to the Taoiseach, Liam Cosgrave, 17 Dec. 1976, and letter from Jim Bastow of IFMES to Reddy Day, CBF chairman, 21 Dec. 1976 (NAI, TAOIS/2009/135/71).

again questioned the effectiveness of CBF's retail and consumer promotions in Britain, which he conceded were 'excellent in concept and execution' but were 'almost entirely negative in terms of results'.[492] Although Harvard professor, Ray Goldberg, was to urge beef processors to 'get direct to the consumer' at Dublin's International Beef Symposium in April 1978, this was not the message being promoted by IFMES fifteen months earlier.[493] 'The fact has to be faced that what the industry is, and is likely to be engaged in for a considerable time to come, is commodity selling, and it is definitely our view that money spent on promoting a commodity at wholesale and retail level is largely wasted,' Bastow informed Day.[494] Furthermore, he suggested to the Taoiseach Liam Cosgrave that 'it would be prudent to transfer the duties and functions of CBF relating to the fresh meat industry' to Córas Tráchtála.[495] However, the belligerence of Bastow's stance provoked unease among some leading factory owners and, in a decisive shift, Larry Goodman of Anglo-Irish Meats came out in support of a compulsory levy soon after IFMES's correspondence with CBF became public.[496] This was a major turning point in the saga. Goodman's intervention fatally undermined processor opposition to a levy-funding model for CBF, even though the exact role of the organisation was still contested two years later. The beef processors contended that CBF should concentrate on promotions and limit its marketing activities to establishing contacts with government agencies which in the 1970s operated the meat importing businesses in many non-EEC countries – for example the armed forces controlled much of the cattle and beef import contracts for Libya and Egypt.[497] In contrast, the farm organisations wanted CBF to be more involved in Europe and working to cut the difference that existed between Irish beef prices and those paid in Britain, Germany, Italy and France.[498] When CBF was finally put on a statutory footing in May 1979 its remit was closer to that sought by the processors, with the organisation given the responsibility for promoting Irish beef and lamb within the EEC, while having a limited marketing

[492] Letter from Jim Bastow of IFMES to Reddy Day, CBF chairman, 21 Dec. 1976 (NAI, TAOIS/2009/135/71).
[493] II, 4 Apr. 1978.
[494] Letter from Jim Bastow of IFMES to Reddy Day, CBF chairman, 21 Dec. 1976 (NAI, TAOIS/2009/135/71).
[495] Letter from Jim Bastow of IFMES to the Taoiseach, Liam Cosgrave, 17 Dec. 1976 (NAI, TAOIS/2009/135/71).
[496] *II*, 28 Jan. 1977; *IFJ*, 29 Jan. 1977.
[497] Kevin Purcell interview (4 Nov. 2015 and 20 Oct. 2016); *IFJ*, 10 Feb. 1979.
[498] *IFJ*, 10 Feb. 1979.

role outside Europe.[499] The eventual solution to the meat marketing controversy had the appearance of a compromise, but the fact remained that the beef processors had defied two government ministers and the formidable farmer lobby to restrict the role of CBF. It was a remarkable demonstration of the beef industry's effectiveness as a lobby.

The beef processors' power and influence was similarly demonstrated by their ability to frustrate and delay the introduction of a national beef grading and classification scheme for over seven years. Beef grading is a mechanism whereby the quality of a carcass is classified according to meat yield and fat cover. This classification informs payment levels to farmers, with the best price per lb (or per kg now) paid for lean animals with high meat yields. Conversely, animals that are over-fat or too thin achieve a lower price on a graduated payment structure. The benefit of adopting a national grading or animal classification regime, in an ideal scenario, is that farmers are encouraged to breed better quality animals because they will be rewarded with higher prices.[500] The importance of carcass grading was recognised in the 1960s by the farm organisations, meat processors and commentators on the beef sector. The merits of a national beef classification scheme was raised in discussions between the NFA and Department of Agriculture in 1964, and had already featured in the editorial pages of the *Farmers' Journal* in 1960 when the newspaper cautioned that the 'reputation for [Irish] beef must not be adversely affected by the export of low grade beef from immature and unfinished cattle'.[501] The processors were also increasingly conscious of the benefits of sourcing quality cattle by the late 1960s. Indeed, Premier Meat Packers in Sallins was operating a very basic quality-bonus regime by the late 1960s, and the company was anxious to encourage farmers to supply animals for slaughter that were correctly fattened and finished.[502] Gus Fitzpatrick of Premier Meat Packers recalled the company's production manager, John Flood, bringing in beef finishers and explaining why certain carcasses qualified for higher payments than others. Over a few bottles of 'Guinness or McArdles' the farmers graded a selection of cattle live, and later viewed the carcasses of these same animals and graded them again. In this way the farmers saw what type of cattle the

[499] *CE*, 3 May 1979; *IFJ*, 5 May 1979.
[500] *IT*, 13 June 1973; *IFJ*, 25 Aug. 1973.
[501] Notes on meeting between the NFA and Department of Agriculture, 29 May 1964 (NAI, TAOIS/S17543C/95); *IFJ*, 27 Feb. 1960.
[502] Gus Fitzpatrick interviews (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017).

factory wanted and what animals they did not want, Fitzpatrick said. 'It was an educational thing.'[503] However, Premier Meat Packers' approach to cattle grading was the exception rather than representative of the industry as a whole. Indeed, most cattle sourced by processors in the late 1960s and into the early 1970s were purchased on what was termed a 'flat' price. This was where an average value was paid to an individual farmer for the cattle he or she supplied to a factory on a given day. Therefore, if a farmer sold five cattle to a factory, they generally received an average price for the animals, rather than five separate prices. As Dr Paddy Power of the Department of Agriculture observed; 'This system does not reward for quality or penalise for lack of it.'[504] However, it suited the factories as the value of cattle in such a scenario was dictated by negotiation; whereas the adoption of a beef classification scheme meant prices were established by a structured and impartial assessment of each animal's worth by trained graders. Beef classification removed sentiment from cattle pricing and replaced it with science.

Processor efforts to frustrate the introduction of beef classification and grading centred on the administration and finance of the new regime.[505] The scheme was developed by an industry technical group, which included representatives of the meat processors' body IFMES, the Department of Agriculture, UCD and the Agriculture Institute, and was to be introduced in autumn 1973 or early the following year.[506] However, IFMES put the overall expense of operating the scheme at £300,000 per annum – this included the cost of employing and training staff to grade the cattle – and the factory body said meat processors were not willing to carry this additional outlay.[507] Moreover, the factories were opposed to any involvement by CBF in the operation or supervision of the classification scheme.[508] This followed efforts by CBF to enforce a 'code of practice' in the beef industry which covered issues such as quality control, animal classification and grading, and factory standards.[509] Amazingly, the stand-off on grading lasted another four years, and was only resolved in 1978 after the Minister for Agriculture, Jim Gibbons, agreed that his department was to employ forty graders to work in the meat factories. The cost to the exchequer

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[503] Gus Fitzpatrick interviews (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017).
[504] *IT*, 8 Apr. 1976.
[505] *CE*, 30 Jan. 1974; *II*, 30 Jan. 1974; *IFJ*, 25 Aug. 1973.
[506] *IP*, 14 Nov. 1970; *IFJ*, 25 Aug. 1973.
[507] *IFJ*, 25 Aug. 1973.
[508] *II*, 30 Jan. 1974; *CE*, 30 Jan. 1974.
[509] Document setting out the role, achievements and plans for CBF (NAI, TAOIS/2002/8/165).

was put at £200,000 per annum.[510] However, CBF general manager, John Corr, argued that the absence of a beef classification scheme had already cost the beef sector markets because of poor quality standards in the industry.[511] This contention was confirmed by the aforementioned Italian and German meat buyers who told CBF's International Beef Symposium in 1978 that Irish processors were losing export sales because the beef supplied was too fat and the quality of the product delivered was inconsistent.[512] Similarly, Irish processors lost a major Danish supermarket contract for vacuum-packed beef in 1975 because of poor quality product.[513] The new beef classification scheme was eventually introduced in May 1980.[514] However, John Shirley of the *Farmers' Journal* pointed out that just two factories were using the scheme as a basis on which to set cattle prices almost four months after its introduction. These were IMP and Dublin Meat Packers. Amalgamated Meats in Bagenalstown, Co Carlow had paid for cattle as per the classification scheme, but this stopped after the processor was taken over by Larry Goodman's Anglo-Irish Meats group in June 1980.[515] After delaying and frustrating the introduction of a national beef classification and grading scheme for more than seven years, the factories were now simply ignoring it.

FARM ORGANISATION RESPONSE TO PROCESSOR LOBBY

The ability of the farm organisations to aggressively oppose the meat factories' growing influence during the 1970s was hampered by co-operative involvement in beef and lamb processing. Ironically, farmer ownership of IMP and Clover Meats – and to a lesser extent GVM Meats and NCF Meats – curbed the farm bodies' licence to comment freely on the meat industry, even though ownership of these businesses ensured the co-operatives had a sizeable foothold in the sector.[516] Since the IFA and ICMSA had encouraged around thirty-five thousand farmers to invest in IMP and Clover Meats, the farm organisations were sometimes reluctant to adopt policies or take positions that might damage the commercial viability of the co-operative meat

[510] *IFJ*, 25 Feb., 1 Apr. 1978, 11 Aug. 1979.
[511] *CE*, 6 Apr. 1976; *IP*, 6 Apr. 1976; *IFJ*, 1 May 1976.
[512] *II*, 4 Apr. 1978; *IP*, 5 Apr. 1978.
[513] *IFJ*, 22 Mar. 1975.
[514] *IP*, 6 May 1980; *IFJ*, 3 May 1980.
[515] *IFJ*, 21 June, 23 Aug. 1980.
[516] Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, p. 53; Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, pp 75-76.

processors and thereby undermine the investment of their members.[517] This is not to say that the IFA and ICMSA did not confront the meat processors on issues such as livestock prices or marketing policy. On the contrary, the 1970s were marked by a number of serious disagreements between the farm organisations and meat factories. For example, the farm bodies accused the factories of price fixing and profiteering during the cattle crisis of 1974-75, of excessively trimming fat from carcasses and thereby not paying the full weight of animals in 1976, and of not returning the full value of CAP payments such as the slaughter premium in 1979. These accusations were rejected by the processors, but the disagreements illustrate the underlying tensions that existed between farmers and the factories.[518] Meanwhile, the IFA and ICMSA displayed their strength as a lobby at national level by mobilising farmers to support EEC membership in the referendum of 1972, and similarly in opposing tax reform later in the decade.[519] However, the internal IFA strains that resulted from farmer ownership of the co-operative meat factories were exposed by the association's conflicted position on live cattle exports. IFA representatives had to balance the farm body's support for the live export of cattle with the necessity to maintain an adequate supply of cattle for the country's beef factories, even though the export of calves to Italy and store cattle to Libya and Egypt was hugely popular with farmers as these markets provided a crucial outlet for stock, and helped underpin prices.[520] The adoption of this compromise position on live exports was a direct consequence of co-operative ownership of meat factories. The IFA could not be seen to damage IMP and Clover Meats commercially by promoting the export of cattle and calves, after encouraging tens of thousands of its members to invest in the businesses.[521] The IFA's unease on the issue also reflected the differing views on live exports that existed within its broad membership. While the IFA's dairy-farmer members supported live exports because the trade ensured higher calf prices, those involved in beef finishing generally opposed the business as it increased competition for store cattle and made

[517] Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, pp 75-76; *II,* 25 Jan. 1977; *IFJ*, 11 Jan. 1969, 18 Mar. 1972, 14 Apr. 1973, 21 July 1973, 7 Feb. 1976.
[518] *IFJ*, 4 Jan., 12 July 1975, 24 Jan., 20 Nov. 1976, 24 Nov. 1979.
[519] Donie Cashman interview (3 July 2019); Con Lucey interview (25 Oct. 2017); Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*, pp 681-82; *Magill,* March 1978.
[520] *Limerick Leader*, 13 Jan. 1979; *IFJ*, 21 July 1973, 9 Nov. 1974, 23 Oct. 1976, 21 Oct. 1978; Liston, *From Fair to Mart and Beyond*, p. 238.
[521] Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, pp 75-76; *II,* 25 Jan. 1977; *IFJ*, 11 Jan. 1969, 18 Mar. 1972, 14 Apr. 1973, 21 July 1973, 7 Feb. 1976.

them more expensive as a consequence.[522] The delicate handling required on live exports was demonstrated in 1972 by IFA leader, TJ Maher, who told a meeting of farmers in Meath that the future of the meat industry depended on a 'correct balance' being achieved between the number of cattle that 'leave the country live and those that are slaughtered and processed at home'.[523] Maher cautioned that the higher prices paid for cattle by live exporters represented a 'short-term gain' for farmers. He said the country's beef processing industry could not be run down 'to the point where its future was threatened' because of a shortage of cattle due to the increased live shipping of animals.[524] Maher's sensible assessment of the livestock sector mirrored his balanced judgement during nine years of NFA and IFA leadership between 1967 and 1976. Hugely popular with ordinary farmers, the Tipperary dairy and beef producer was instrumental in rebuilding relations with government following the farmers' rights campaign, and he subsequently played a crucial role in mobilising farmer support for EEC membership.[525] Maher's views on the difficulties facing beef processing in the early 1970s were echoed a year later by John Murphy who was secretary of the IFA livestock committee – which represented the interests of beef producers and finishers – when he warned that the continued export of calves could 'denude the livestock and meat industry of its raw material'. It was therefore crucial that the beef factories received an 'economic throughput of cattle', Murphy maintained, so that they could 'operate effectively and consistently in export markets'.[526] While Murphy was undoubtedly expressing the opinions of cattle finishers, this stance did not enjoy widespread support among producers of store animals or dairy farmers.[527] Indeed, the live cattle shipping issue exposed major differences within the IFA, with the association's county dairy committees in Limerick, Cork and Kerry taking a contrary position to the association's national livestock committee by strongly supporting calf exports throughout the late 1970s.[528] As noted earlier in the chapter, the collapse in calf prices in 1974 cost dairy farmers over £13 million, and ICMSA president, Jimmy O'Keeffe, referenced that period

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[522] *Kerryman*, 5 Oct. 1979; *IFJ*, 21 July 1973, 12 Jan. 1980.
[523] *IFJ*, 18 Mar. 1972; *Meath Chronicle*, 29 Apr. 1972.
[524] *Meath Chronicle*, 29 Apr. 1972; *IFJ*, 18 Mar. 1972.
[525] Dempsey (ed), *The path to power,* pp 72-75; Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, pp 206-10.
[526] *IFJ*, 21 July 1973.
[527] *Limerick Leader*, 13 Jan. 1979; *IFJ*, 7 Feb. 1976, 12 Jan. 1980.
[528] *Kerryman*, 5 Oct. 1979; *IFJ*, 12 Jan. 1980.

when he asked where the opponents of calf exports were when farmers could not get buyers for their young stock during the cattle crisis.[529]

Factory involvement in the collection of funding levies for the IFA also raised questions around the farm body's capacity to effectively oppose meat processor interests. While the IFA refuted suggestions that the collection model compromised its independence in representing farmers' concerns, the arrangement certainly gave the factories additional leverage over the farm organisation.[530] The funding levy or European Involvement Fund (EIF) was introduced in 1973 to finance the staffing and operational costs of the aforementioned IFA office in Brussels, and to cover the travel and general expenses involved in sending farmer delegations on EEC-related business to the Belgian capital or elsewhere.[531] The IFA deputy president, Donie Cashman, was one of the main promoters and architects of the EIF. 'When we [Ireland] made the decision to join [the EEC], it was very clear to us [IFA] that we would need to be represented in Brussels. That automatically meant, of course, huge costs,' Cashman recalled.[532] However, the IFA presence offered equally significant benefits. The association's office in Brussels acted as IFA's eyes and ears with regard to proposed EEC Commission policy developments, while also enabling the association to foster closer links with other EEC farmer representative bodies through its membership of the European umbrella group COPA. Moreover, participation in COPA gave IFA access to the various EEC commodity advisory committees, which influenced support payments on products such as beef, milk, butter and grain.[533] The IFA established particularly close ties with the French farm organisations, which mirrored those at government level where Ireland and France were staunch defenders of CAP. The IFA was strategic in its building of alliances, Matthew Dempsey observed. 'The IFA had a close working relationship with the French Farmers' Union – FNSEA. The relationship with the German Farmers' Union, DBV, was also very strong and important. Germany was the paymaster for the CAP, with France dominating decisions on agriculture. The IFA had meagre resources relative to the big European farmers' unions, but recognising the importance of personal relationships, invested

[529] *Report of the Review Body on Beef Intervention and Cattle Slaughter Premium Systems*, p. 54; *IFJ*, 7 Feb. 1976.
[530] *IFJ*, 13 Jan. 1977.
[531] Dempsey (ed), *The path to power*, p. 76; Donie Cashman interview (3 July 2019); Con Lucey interview (25 Oct. 2017).
[532] Donie Cashman interview (3 July 2019).
[533] Con Lucey interview (25 Oct. 2017); Dempsey (ed), *The path to power,* pp 76-77.

heavily in travelling to those countries and maintaining close contacts with their farm leaders.'[534]

The EIF funding mechanism that was introduced by IFA levied £1 for every £1,000 in value terms that a farmer sold through the marts and into the meat factories – it was later extended to the dairies.[535] The levy was quickly adopted by co-operative businesses such as Cork Marts and Golden Vale Marts, Cashman recalled.[536] Others followed and by the end of January 1973 the *Irish Farmers' Journal* listed forty-eight marts that had signed up to collect the levy.[537] The link between Cork Marts and IMP meant that the country's largest meat processor came on board early in 1973, with many of the privately-owned factories becoming involved in subsequent years.[538] Such was the success of the EIF levy that by 1978-79 it had become a crucial IFA income source, providing almost £900,000 or close to eighty per cent of total revenues.[539] Indeed, former IFA chief economist, Con Lucey, maintained that the EIF transformed the association by enabling it to establish a network of twelve regional offices, and hire additional staff to provide a more comprehensive range of services to farmers. 'I think a lot of positive things came out of that levy system that would not have happened otherwise,' Lucey said.[540] The obvious disadvantage of this income stream, however, was its inherent dependence on factory and mart co-operation and goodwill. This was highlighted at the height of the CBF funding controversy in January 1977 when three unnamed factories threatened to halt collection of the EIF. The processors informed the *Irish Independent* that they had stopped deducting the levy because of farmer objections. IFA honorary treasurer, Alan Gillis, described the dispute as a 'small operational problem' rather than a 'major crisis'.[541] However, the IFA could ill-afford a serious disruption to its EIF levies given that just forty per cent of farmers were estimated to be paying their membership subscriptions and the association was facing losses of £40,000 in 1977 and the deficit was forecast to reach £70,000 by 1978.[542] The IFA did not alter its position on the CBF funding dispute, as noted earlier

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534 Dempsey (ed), *The path to power,* p. 77.
535 *IFJ*, 13, 27 Jan. 1973, 6 Oct. 1979; Donie Cashman interview (3 July 2019); Con Lucey interview (25 Oct. 2017).
536 Donie Cashman interview (3 July 2019).
537 *IFJ*, 27 January 1973.
538 Donie Cashman interview (3 July 2019).
539 *IFJ*, 6 Oct. 1979; Con Lucey interview (25 Oct. 2017).
540 Con Lucey interview (25 Oct. 2017).
541 *II*, 13 Jan. 1977.
542 *IFJ*, 6 Oct. 1979.

in the chapter, but the factory threat to stop collecting the EIF levy illustrates the extent to which the funding mechanism left the association vulnerable to meat processor pressure – and this exposure increased as the co-operative share of the beef and lamb business decreased.

Another constraint on the farm organisations' lobbying activities was the coalescing of interests within the agricultural sector following EEC accession in 1973. This resulted in the Department of Agriculture, the farm organisations, and food processors effectively working to maximise CAP payments to Ireland.[543] Ferriter correctly observes that EEC membership brought the farm organisations and government closer together, following the discord of the 1960s, as there was 'no sectional disputes' about competition for funds, 'only the desire to get as much as possible' from CAP.[544] Ó Gráda went even further, maintaining that the Department of Agriculture became a 'lobbying conduit to ministers and to Brussels' for the farm organisations and food industry.[545] However, Daly was more sympathetic in her assessment of the department in the 1970s. 'The main economic purpose behind Ireland's application for membership of the EEC was the belief that it would bring major benefits to Irish agriculture and a significant rise in farm incomes. Once Ireland became a member of the Community, the Department of Agriculture set out to ensure that the anticipated benefits were realised in full.'[546] The Department of Agriculture and successive governments did an impressive job if judged solely in terms of the monetary transfers Irish farming received in the years immediately following EEC accession. From a standing start in 1973 direct CAP transfers rose to £100 million by 1976, and reached £450 million by 1979.[547] This increased spending was reflected in total family farm income which rose from £364 million to £741 million between 1973 and 1979.[548] Meanwhile, revenues from beef exports, to commercial markets and into intervention, rose from £136 million in 1974 to £337 million by 1979.[549] However, CAP was coming under sustained attack by the end of the decade from British

[543] Ó Gráda, *A rocky road*, p. 156; Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*, p. 683; Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, p. 474; Daly, *First Department,* p. 505.
[544] Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*, p. 683.
[545] Ó Gráda, *A rocky road*, p. 156.
[546] Daly, *First Department,* p. 505.
[547] Conway, 'Agricultural Policy', p. 57; Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, p. 501.
[548] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1973-74*, p. 25; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1979*, p. 11.
[549] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1975*, p. 29; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1979*, p. 25.

politicians who viewed Europe's farm policy as a misguided use of Community resources which caused food inflation and production surpluses. Roy Hattersley, the British secretary of state for prices and consumer protection, summed up UK opposition to CAP in 1979 when he described as 'intolerable' the allocation of seventy per cent of the EEC's budget to agriculture, and called for a freeze in commodity prices for 1979-80.[550] The Irish were equally strident in their defence of CAP. A briefing note for Taoiseach Jack Lynch compiled ahead of a visit to Dublin by EEC Commission president, Roy Jenkins, in September 1978 insisted that Irish government policy in relation to CAP was 'clear and unequivocal, we cannot agree to any fundamental changes'. It argued that Ireland should invoke 'vital national interests' and veto any proposals that involved radical changes to CAP.[551] Against the background of increased meat sales and higher farmer incomes there was therefore an obvious incentive for the farm organisations and beef and lamb processors to downplay their differences and solidly support the Department of Agriculture and successive Irish governments in defending CAP.

The poor performance of beef as a farming enterprise, however, sometimes tested the united front which the agricultural sector assembled in defence of CAP. At the height of the cattle crisis in September 1974, for example, the *Irish Farmers' Journal* editor Paddy O'Keeffe accused the factories of 'blatantly cashing in on the market situation' and of compounding the 'financial difficulties of farmers' by paying 'as little as possible for stock'. Westmeath County Agriculture Committee member, and Fine Gael TD and MEP, Gerry L'Estrange, went even further that same month when he likened the factories to 'bare-faced robbers' and 'parasites'.[552] The meat processors and beef farmers remained at loggerheads as the decade came to a close, with the IFA's Seymour Crawford appealing to the factories for higher cattle prices in autumn 1979, and the farm body warning that cattle finishers risked losing close to £40-50 per animal due to poorer beef markets and a consequent fall in returns.[553] This frustration with the meat factories reflected both the lack of trust that existed between the processors and their farmer suppliers, and the low income levels that beef farming

[550] Speech by Roy Hattersley, Secretary of State for Prices and Consumer Protection, to the Oxford Farmers' Conference, 8 Jan. 1979 (NAI, DFA/2010/19/999).
[551] Undated briefing note for Taoiseach Jack Lynch, ahead of a visit to Dublin in September 1978 by EEC Commission president, Roy Jenkins (NAI, DFA/2010/19/999).
[552] *IFJ*, 7, 28 Sept. 1974.
[553] *II*, 10 Oct. 1979; *Kerryman*, 5 Oct. 1979; *IFJ*, 15 Sept. 1979.

delivered relative to other farm enterprises such as dairying and tillage.[554] Although commodity prices had increased by 163 per cent between 1972 and 1977 on the back of higher EEC price supports and green pound devaluations, beef farmer incomes remained significantly lower than those involved in dairying and crop production.[555] The Farm Management Survey of 1972 confirmed that dairying delivered double the profit margin of traditional beef farming. While farmers supplying creamery milk generated a margin of £39 per acre, the figure for beef or drystock farming was £17 per acre.[556] The primary reason for the income disparity between dairying and beef was that milk prices – which were set on a monthly basis – were relatively stable in the main, but cattle values were invariably volatile and variable, explained former ICOS executive, Maurice Colbert. In addition, dairy farmers enjoyed the benefit of being paid monthly for their milk, which provided a steady cash-flow for the nine months cows were milking. In contrast, beef farmers' revenues were restricted to occasions when they sold stock either in the marts or to the factories. 'The greater stability in dairying gave farmers the confidence to invest and improve their farms and the efficiency of their operations,' Colbert maintained.[557] The performance of beef relative to dairying had not improved by the mid-1970s. The 1976 Farm Management Survey found that creamery milk suppliers enjoyed a margin of £104 per acre, compared to £47 per acre for farmers involved in raising beef stock from calf to store cattle or around eighteen months of age. Farmers with suckling enterprises – who reared calves from beef cows to nine months of age – had a margin of £37 per acre, while those who purchased store cattle and fattened them to beef recorded profits of £38 per acre.[558] Winter beef finishing – the purchase of store cattle in the autumn and the fattening of the animals in feedlots and yards over the winter – was the only livestock enterprise that gave a return comparable to dairying. Winter finishers actually made a margin of £155 per acre in 1976, one-third higher than dairy farmers.[559] However, it was an extremely risky and highly capitalised business. It required a sizeable investment in infrastructure – silage pits, slurry tanks and slatted

[554] *Farm Management Survey 1980*, An Foras Talúntais, (Dublin, 1981), p. 2.22; *IFJ*, 10 Nov. 1973, 14 Jan. 1978.
[555] O'Connell & Sheehy, *'Policies to accelerate agricultural development'*, pp 43-45; *Farm Management Survey 1980*, p. 2.22; *IFJ*, 10 Nov. 1973, 14 Jan. 1978.
[556] *IFJ*, 10 Nov. 1973.
[557] Discussion with Maurice Colbert (25 May 2020).
[558] *IFJ*, 14 Jan. 1978.
[559] Ibid.

sheds for cattle – and the finisher had also to pay for the cattle up front in the autumn and then hope that the spring beef price left a margin.[560] Beef finishers obviously made a strong margin in 1976; however, they were exposed in a falling market such as 1979 when they suffered losses of £40-50 per head.[561] The absence of fixed contract prices for cattle from the factories added to the exposure and level of risk being taken on by winter finishers. Indeed, the ESRI report into the beef industry in 1973 proposed that feedlots should be targeted for development grants and the factories encouraged to offer finishers forward prices for cattle to reduce the level of risk involved in the business.[562] This proposal was supported by the 1976 intervention system report which identified the practice of buying and selling cattle four and five times between birth and slaughter as a major inhibitor of profitability in beef enterprises. The authors suggested that farmers adopt more integrated systems with cattle being reared from near birth to slaughter on the same farm and thereby necessitating far less livestock trading.[563] Although the intervention report's observations mirrored those of many progressive dairy farmers, who considered their counterparts in beef to be more traders than farmers, its suggestions on integrated units ignored the fact that two-thirds of the animals for beef production came from the dairy herd so an element of trading in the beef sector was inevitable.[564]

Disparities between the level of resources committed to research and development in beef and dairy production accentuated the income gap between the two enterprises. Although An Foras Talúntais (AFT) had developed an internationally recognised centre for dairy research at Moorepark near Fermoy, Co Cork, its commitment to beef research was not nearly as ambitious.[565] Indeed, Seamus Sheehy and John J. O'Connell claimed that AFT had just nine graduates working on beef and pig meat research in 1977.[566] Tellingly, AFT director, Tom Walsh, accepted that beef research was 'lagging behind' dairying and tillage in terms of technology adoption by farmers and that this was having an adverse impact on profit levels in the sector.[567] In

[560] Gus Fitzpatrick interviews (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017); *IFJ*, 10 Feb., 21 Apr., 19 May 1973.
[561] *IFJ*, 14 Jan. 1978, 15 Sept. 1979.
[562] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 98.
[563] *Report of the Review Body on Beef Intervention and Cattle Slaughter Premium Systems*, p. 63.
[564] Conversations with dairy farmers and farm representatives for this thesis; *Report of the Review Body on Beef Intervention and Cattle Slaughter Premium Systems*, pp 46-47.
[565] Michael Walshe interview (29 June 2016); Joe Murray, 'From Grass to Milk – The Moorepark Story', in Michael Miley (ed.), *Growing Knowledge*, pp 60-74.
[566] O'Connell & Sheehy, *'Policies to accelerate agricultural development'*, pp 122-123.
[567] *IFJ*, 5 Aug. 1978.

contrast to the relative stagnation in beef, dairy farming was transformed in the 1970s. Average yields per cow rose from five hundred gallons to over eight hundred gallons, with stocking rates increasing to around a cow to the acre. These improvements were supported by the research carried out at Moorepark.[568] Advances at farm level by milk suppliers were matched by the major co-operative creameries. While the fortunes of IMP and Clover Meats in the 1970s oscillated between small profits and heavy losses, most dairy co-operatives recorded steady growth, and even overseas expansion. Indeed, Irish Dairy Board chief executive, Joe McGough, was named 'Man of the Year' by *Business and Finance* magazine in 1976 after dairy exports exceeded £300 million.[569] Waterford Co-operative reported profits of £1.23 million for 1976-76, while NCF had profits of over £600,000 in 1975 and its milk pool increased by fourteen per cent.[570] However, Kerry Co-operative's performance was even more impressive. The farmer-owned business raised £1.15 million in 1974 to buy the assets of the Dairy Disposal Company in Kerry. Over the next four years it grew annual profits to exceed £2.5 million and the Listowel-based dairy processor was purchasing food companies in the US and expanding into the North American market by 1978.[571] The lure of higher dairy incomes attracted many beef farmers who had the financial resources to invest in the required infrastructure – such as a milking parlour, animal housing and silage pits – and the land quality to make the transition a success. The new entrants to dairying included farmers such as Ted Lyons from Ballyfeard, Co Cork who had initially finished bullocks on his ninety-acre holding, then went into sucklers, before finally opting to milk cows because of the higher income it offered.[572] The ESRI's 1975 report on the cattle crisis urged beef farmers with small holdings to follow a similar path to Lyons and transition into dairying or tillage.[573] However, this suggestion pre-supposed that switching to dairying or crop production was an option for most beef farmers. However, many small-scale beef farmers might not have had enough land around the farmyard to establish a viable dairy operation, there may not have been a creamery locally to supply – as was the case in much of the west – or the

568 Murray, 'From Grass to Milk – The Moorepark Story', in Michael Miley (ed.), *Growing Knowledge*, p. 74.
569 *II*, 8 Jan. 1977.
570 *IFJ*, 12 June 1976, 24 July 1976.
571 Micheál Ó Fathartaigh, *Irish Agriculture Nationalised: The Dairy Disposal Company and the making of the modern Irish dairy industry*, (Dublin, 2014), p. 256; *IFJ*, 7 Sept. 1974, 15 July 1978.
572 *IFJ*, 7 July 1973.
573 O'Connor & Keogh, *Crisis in the Cattle Industry*, p. 6.

farmers lacked the finances to invest in buildings. Interestingly, Ó Gráda, Sheehy and O'Connell have also pointed to lower human capital as a factor that impeded development and change in the farm sector. Ó Gráda noted that only sixteen per cent of farm managers in the mid-1970s had completed any post-primary education, while Sheehy and O'Connell found that ninety per cent had no agricultural education, and nearly half were over sixty-five years of age.[574] In fact, greater specialisation resulted in the number of dairy farmers falling by around twenty per cent to 70,000 between 1973 and 1979.[575] Increased specialisation also resulted in Ireland importing potatoes for the first time in 1973, and in the acreage of tillage halving in Connacht and Ulster between 1960 and EEC accession.[576] Increased livestock production became the default option for many small farmers exiting tillage and dairying in this changing environment. Ironically, however, higher CAP subsidies were being sought by farm organisations and processors by the end of the 1970s to enable these farmers make a living from their livestock enterprises despite the unprecedented expansion in beef exports during the 1970s. IMP chairman, Jim Mullins, called in 1978 for the introduction of an EEC-funded support scheme to underpin beef farmer incomes, while Paddy O'Keeffe suggested that a headage payment or subsidy for suckler cows was required. He advised beef farmers to consider switching to tillage if adequate EEC supports were not forthcoming.[577]

CONCLUSION

Ireland's accession to the EEC in 1973 profoundly changed the beef processing industry, and the state's relationship with the sector. Membership of the Common Market resulted in significant growth in the industry, along with substantial refocusing of its marketing and restructuring in terms of ownership. As Seamus Sheehy and John J. O'Connell noted in the NESC report of 1978, output from the beef industry increased four-fold in the decade from 1968 to 1978. 'This was a very significant achievement for an industry which was virtually non-existent in the early

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[574] Ó Gráda, *A rocky road*, p. 156; John J. O'Connell and Seamus Sheehy, *'Policies to accelerate agricultural development'*, p. 28.
[575] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1973-74*, p. 57; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1979*, p. 40.
[576] *IFJ*, 3 Feb. 1973; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1973-74*, p. 19.
[577] *IP*, 5 Apr. 1980; *II*, 4 Apr. 1978; *IFJ*, 17 Feb. 1973, 29 Nov. 1975, 15 Sept. 1979.

1950s,' the UCD economists commented.[578] Beef exports doubled to over 260,000 tonnes in the first six years of EEC membership, with the value of this business increasing to £325 million by 1978 and accounting for one-third of total foreign sales in farm goods.[579] Greater access to continental European markets and the CAP intervention scheme consolidated the beef processing industry's position as the leading agricultural export sector in the 1970s, despite the value of dairy sales trebling to over £240 million between 1974 and 1978. [580] Moreover, processed beef exports generated double the revenues of live cattle shipping by 1978, even though Libya and Tunisia took significant numbers of Irish stock that year.[581] A significant refocusing of beef exports was also evident. The US market, which was central to the early development of the industry, effectively closed by 1976 and was replaced and surpassed in volume and earnings by intervention and continental European outlets.[582] Meanwhile, the industry was transformed at processor level by the emergence of a new generation of private meat factory owners, such as Larry Goodman and Hugh Tunney, who established highly efficient beef businesses with multiple slaughtering and boning sites.[583] The rise of the private processors was mirrored by the contemporaneous decline of co-operative meat concerns such as IMP and Clover Meats that struggled to compete with their more streamlined opposition.[584]

These developments transformed the Irish beef industry and changed the manner in which it interacted with the state during the 1970s, and into the 1980s. The favourable treatment offered to meat processors by successive governments during the 1970s reflected the increased significance of the beef industry to the rural and national economy and its growing influence on farm policy. The £2 million government-backed loan facility provided to Clover Meats in 1977-79 was a manifest example of the state's willingness to directly support the beef industry.[585] Similarly, the sector's

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[578] O'Connell & Sheehy, *'Policies to accelerate agricultural development'*, p. 122.
[579] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1973-74*, p. 53; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1978*, p. 24; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1979*, p. 33.
[580] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1975*, p. 29; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1979*, p. 33.
[581] CBF and CSO data supplied to the author by Bord Bia, received November 2016; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1979*, p. 33.
[582] Letter from US president Gerald Ford to the Taoiseach, Liam Cosgrove, 31 April 1976 (NAI, TAOIS/2009/135/71); *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1977*, p. 33 and p. 51.
[583] *IP*, 5 Nov. 1976; *II*, 5 Nov. 1976; *IFJ*, 29 Mar. 1975, 11 Mar. 1978.
[584] Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, pp 75-76; Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, p. 53.
[585] *II*, 12 Mar. 1977; *Munster Express*, 8 Apr., 5 Aug. 1977; *IFJ*, 26 Feb. 1977, 13 Oct. 1979; *IP*, 11 Mar. 1977.

political influence was illustrated by Jim Gibbons' unsuccessful attempts as Agriculture Minister to restrict the live export of calves and cattle in 1978-79.[586] Moreover, the Department of Agriculture's failure to robustly challenge the beef processors' opposition to CBF and the introduction of cattle grading, or to decisively act on the meat factories' over-dependence on intervention, not only illustrated the sector's critical economic importance but also confirmed the state's reluctance to confront the industry.[587] Was this reluctance informed by the power and reach of the beef industry? There is no evidence to suggest that it was. However, in providing an outlet for 1.2 million cattle each year the beef factories' influence extended directly or indirectly into every townland and livestock farm in the country.[588] The emphasis placed by successive governments on maximising EEC monetary transfers and securing the highest possible agricultural commodity prices under CAP offers another possible explanation. Beef intervention, as well as other CAP schemes such as aid to private storage and export refunds, offered multiple benefits for both the meat industry and farmers. It offered an outlet for produce, a floor price for cattle, and also acted as a conduit by which EEC funds were funnelled into the Irish economy.[589] Indeed, total CAP supports to the Irish beef processors totalled over £70 million by 1979.[590] Green pound devaluations, as outlined earlier in the chapter, offered similar rewards by increasing commodity prices to farmers and increasing the value of supports to the meat factories and creameries.[591] Lee contends that chasing CAP payments in this way meant that successive governments failed to formulate an over-arching agricultural strategy post-EEC accession, 'beyond making the biggest possible short-term killings'.[592] However, maximising CAP payments had a detrimental impact on the development of secondary processing, and on the survival

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[586] Address to the CBF board by the Minister for Agriculture, Jim Gibbons, 11 Oct. 1979 (NAI, TSCH/GIS/1/170); *IFJ*, 28 Jan. 1978.

[587] *IFJ*, 25 Aug., 17 Nov. 1973, 26 Jan. 1974, 25 Feb., 1 Apr. 1978, 11 Aug. 1979; *II*, 30 Jan. 1974; Letter from Jim Bastow of IFMES to Reddy Day, CBF chairman, 21 Dec. 1976 (NAI, TAOIS/2009/135/71); Speech by the Minister for Agriculture, Jim Gibbons, to the CBF board, 11 Nov. 1979 (NAI, TSCH/GIS/1/170).

[588] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1979*, p. 32.

[589] *IFJ*, 4 Jan. 1975, 14 Apr. 1979, 5 July 1980; *Report of the Review Body on Beef Intervention and Cattle Slaughter Premium Systems*, p. 20; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1975*, p. 24; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1979*, p. 20; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1979*, p. 19.

[590] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1979*, p. 19.

[591] Con Lucey interview (25 Oct. 2017); Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, pp 267-69; Conway, 'Agricultural Policy', p. 47.

[592] Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, pp 474-75.

of existing operators such as the meat canning sector. This industry was effectively closed in the mid-1970s by higher beef costs and the vagaries of the MCA regime.[593] As Smith and Healy point out, differences in MCA rates between Ireland and UK meant that while Irish food companies purchasing beef for secondary processing paid 32p per lb in December 1976, British firms paid 19p per lb.[594] This obviously put Irish food processors at a significant disadvantage when competing with British firms on both the domestic and UK markets. Moreover, it seriously undermined the long-term development of the country's food industry.[595] That the requirements of secondary food processors were effectively ignored by successive governments during the late 1970s illustrates the extent to which the interests of farmers and primary processors monopolised the state's considerations regarding CAP. As the 1980s heralded a shift from unbridled growth to deep recession for Europe's farm sector, the interests of Ireland's privatised beef processing industry was to increasingly frame and influence state policy towards the livestock industry.

593 O'Connell & Sheehy, *'Policies to accelerate agricultural development'*, p. 122; Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, pp 267-68.
594 Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, pp 267-68.
595 O'Connell & Sheehy, *'Policies to accelerate agricultural development'*, p. 122; Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, pp 267-68.

CHAPTER FIVE: CO-OPERATIVES EXIT THE BEEF BUSINESS AS GOODMAN MOVES CENTRE-STAGE (1980-86)

The 1980s was the decade when the country's main meat processing co-operatives finally exited the beef business, pushed out by a combination of their own inefficiency and stern competition from more aggressive and streamlined privately-owned rivals.[1] This unhappy end for farmers' aspirations of controlling the livestock industry through co-operative marts and meat factories – which had inspired 28,000 farmers to invest over £3 million in IMP in 1969, and thousands more to do likewise in Clover Meats – coincided with the re-emergence of a powerful elite in the cattle industry. However, unlike the 'agristocracy' of the 1950s and early 1960s which was dominated by live cattle exporters, the sectoral kingpins of the 1980s were processors such as Larry Goodman who owned Anglo-Irish Meats, or men who had diversified from live shipping into the dead meat trade, such as Seamus Purcell who was the main cattle exporter to the Middle East from the late 1970s and went on to establish a sizeable meat business in the 1980s.[2] Another critical influence in the 1980s livestock business was the emergence of the Middle East and North Africa as crucial markets for Irish beef and live cattle.[3] Indeed, if the EEC shaped the beef industry in the 1970s, then the Middle East played a significant role in its development during the 1980s. By 1986 over twenty per cent of Irish beef exports were purchased by Iran and the Arab states of the Middle East, and the trade was worth close to Ir£100 million.[4] Britain still took forty per cent of the country's beef in 1985, and intervention remained an essential support for the sector – taking almost thirty per cent of total output in the first six years of the decade – but non-EEC outlets, or Third Country markets as they were termed, became a critical element of the trade as the 1980s progressed.[5] The main Third Country customers for Irish beef were the oil-rich North

[1] Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, pp 127-130; *Munster Express*, 7 Dec. 1984; *Kilkenny People*, 7 Dec. 1984; *IFJ*, 1 Dec., 8 Dec. 1984, 21 Dec., 28 Dec. 1985; *CE*, 21 Sept. 1985; *IT*, 12 Aug. 1986.

[2] *IFJ*, 11 Jan. 1969, 5 Oct. 1985; Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, pp 75-76.

[3] *Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the Beef Processing Industry*, pp 33-34; *Sunday Press*, 25 Nov. 1984; *II*, 21 Feb. 1984; *IFJ*, 17 Sept. 1983, 5 Jan. 1985.

[4] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1986,* (Dublin, 1987), p. 24 and p. 33.

[5] *Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the Beef Processing Industry*, p. 35; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1982,* (Dublin, 1983), p. 32; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1983,* (Dublin, 1984), p. 31; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1986,* p. 33.

African states of Libya, Algeria and Egypt, as well as Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran.[6] Livestock-related trade contacts with these countries were initially pioneered in the 1970s by live cattle exporters such as the aforementioned Purcells who were headquartered in Waterford, and the Cork-based Horgans. North Africa and the Middle East remained a crucial outlet for Irish cattle exports and the numbers shipped live averaged almost two hundred thousand animals each year between 1980 and 1985, or around half of total live exports.[7] However, increasing demand for processed beef in Libya, Algeria and Egypt meant that by 1982 Irish companies had contracts to supply eighteen thousand tonnes of chilled and frozen meat to the North African states.[8] Anglo-Irish Meats and Agra Meats based in Tallaght were among the first Irish beef companies to secure sizeable contracts to North Africa, but by the end of 1982 the IFA was again accusing processors of undercutting one another to secure deals in Libya.[9] Purcells were also active in the North African business, with the live shippers establishing a meat processing division which enabled them to tender for contracts. By 1984 Purcells had bought the Sallins slaughter plant from the UK-based Fatstock Marketing Corporation (FMC) and also the Ulster Meats factory in Lurgan, Co Armagh. This gave the firm the capacity to kill five thousand cattle per week.[10] Purcells were followed into the dead meat business by Horgans; fellow live shippers who contract killed cattle at the Lyons' Group's factory in Charleville, Co Cork from 1983 and later purchased the plant.[11] The country's main cattle exporters were now beef processors as well. However, the elbowing of live shippers into the meat processing industry was not the only significant change to the beef sector in the early 1980s. The downturn in the wider Irish economy from 1980, and a sharp fall in farm incomes between 1978 and 1981, changed the trading environment for agriculture in the early years of the decade as the steady expansion of the 1970s stalled.[12] Meanwhile, the introduction of milk quotas in 1984 and the continued contraction in

[6] Information accessed on the Central Statistics Office website on 4 December 2017. Link listed below: http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Database/eirestat/External%20Trade/External%20Trade_statbank.asp?SP=External%20Trade&Planguage=0; *IFJ*, 11 Apr. 1981, 17 Apr. 1982, 13 Aug. 1983, 5 Jan. 1985; *II*, 21 Feb. 1984; *CE*, 27 Feb. 1985.
[7] CSO and CBF data supplied to the author by Bord Bia, received Nov. 2016.
[8] *IFJ*, 28 Aug. 1982.
[9] Minutes of the IFA national livestock committee meeting for 16 Dec. 1982; *IFJ*, 28 Aug. 1982.
[10] *IFJ*, 28 Aug. 1982, 25 Feb. 1984.
[11] John Lyons interview (15 Aug. 2015); *IFJ*, 4 Aug. 1984.
[12] Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, p. 500; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1979*, p. 11; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1981*, p. 11;

the national beef herd, as well as ongoing trading difficulties in the co-operative-owned meat processors of IMP and Clover Meats, ensured that the first six years of the decade was a transformational period for Ireland's beef processing industry.[13]

THE RECESSION BITES

The extreme farm-income shock of the early 1980s contributed to the profound changes in the beef processing industry. Family farm incomes fell by twenty per cent – dropping from Ir£842 million in 1978 to Ir£674 million by 1980 – as tighter margins on produce such as beef, grain and milk, as well as increased debt levels, and lower CAP supports combined to significantly reduce agricultural earnings.[14] Farmers sold excess livestock during 1979 and 1980 as a consequence of the worsening financial situation. This ensured strong processor margins for 1980 as throughput in slaughter plants increased by sixteen per cent.[15] However, the resultant shortage of finished cattle in 1981 and 1982 – due to the higher slaughter and export levels in 1979 and 1980 – seriously tested the viability of many processors. Indeed, the financial stresses of the early 1980s – which will be discussed in more detail later – ultimately proved fatal to some of the old established meat processing businesses such as the co-operatives, IMP and Clover Meats, and Roscrea Meats.[16] The recession of the early 1980s had its origins in the economic dislocation and inflationary pressures which followed the Middle East's Yom Kippur War of 1973 and the subsequent oil crisis. A further energy shock in the aftermath of Iran's Islamic revolution in 1979 prompted a second more severe economic downturn across Europe, which left millions unemployed.[17] While Girvin described the 1980s as 'Ireland's first industrial recession', the impact was not confined to manufacturing and services. In fact, it was equally damaging to the farm sector.[18] The *Four-Year Plan for Agriculture* commissioned by the Department of Agriculture in 1984 to chart a recovery strategy for the industry noted that while commodity prices – such as cattle, sheep, pigs, grain and milk – increased on average by twenty-two per cent between 1978 and 1981,

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[13] *Munster Express*, 7 Dec. 1984; *Kilkenny People*, 7 Dec. 1984; *IFJ*, 1 Dec., 8 Dec. 1984, 21 Dec., 28 Dec. 1985; Dempsey (ed), *The path to power,* p. 95.

[14] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1978*, p. 13; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1980*, p. 13; Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, pp 500-501.

[15] *IFJ*, 3 Jan. 1981; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1981*, pp 31-32.

[16] *IT*, 12 Aug. 1986; *CE*, 21 Sept. 1985; *IFJ*, 1 Dec., 8 Dec. 1984, 19 Oct., 21 Dec., 28 Dec. 1985; *Munster Express*, 7 Dec. 1984; *Kilkenny People*, 7 Dec. 1984.

[17] Simon Reid-Henry, *Empire of Democracy*, pp 89-90.

[18] Girvin, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 202.

input prices rose by forty-eight per cent.[19] For example, factory bullock prices rose from 65p per lb in October 1978 to 80p per lb by 1981 – which equates to almost Ir£100 per head on a 660lb fat animal – but this additional return to the farmer was totally eroded by higher input costs.[20] The impact of inflation during this period, which peaked at almost twenty per cent, was reflected in the cost of agricultural diesel which more than doubled in price between 1977 and 1981, rising from 45p per gallon to more than Ir£1 per gallon.[21] Meanwhile, the *Farmers' Journal* calculated that animal ration costs rose by nine per cent in 1981 alone.[22] CAP transfers to Ireland were also negatively impacted as the EEC sought, under pressure from Britain primarily, to reduce overall spending on farm supports in response to the deteriorating economic situation.[23] An analysis of net CAP transfers by economist Alan Matthews shows that supports to Irish agriculture fell from Ir£369 million in 1979 to Ir£276 million by 1981. CAP transfers did not recover to 1979 levels until 1983.[24]

The recession resulted in a forty per cent drop in farm incomes between 1978 and 1981 when allowance is made for inflation and relative spending power.[25] A significant readjustment in land prices and tractor sales illustrates the impact of this income shock at farm level. Sales of new tractors fell from eight thousand units in 1978 to just three thousand two years later.[26] Similarly, the sale price of good quality farmland dropped from a high of Ir£3,000 per acre in 1978 to Ir£2,000-1,500 per acre by 1982.[27] Indeed, a survey of all public auction results showed that the average price of farmland fell from Ir£2,365 per acre in 1979 to Ir£1,474 per acre in 1980.[28] Farmers with large debts were hardest hit, as higher interest charges combined with reduced margins to erode incomes. As Bielenberg and Ryan point out, borrowings on Irish farms rose from just over £30 million in the early 1960s to more than Ir£960 million by 1979 as progressive farmers sought to expand their businesses through the

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[19] 1984 report of a working party on farm sector, commissioned by the by the Department of Agriculture, entitled '*Four-Year Plan for Agriculture*', p. 18 (NAI, DA/2014/72/18).
[20] *IFJ*, 28 Oct. 1978, 31 Oct. 1981.
[21] Redmond, (ed.), *That was then, this is now: Changes in Ireland 1949-1999*, p. 75; *Drogheda Independent*, 23 Dec. 1977; *IFJ*, 18 July 1981.
[22] *IFJ*, 2 Jan. 1982.
[23] Martin, *The Development of Modern Agriculture*, pp 143-144; *IFJ,* 2 Feb. 1980, 7 Apr. 1980.
[24] Alan *Matthews,* 'Common Agricultural Policy Reform and National Compensation Strategies' in the Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland, vol. XXVI, Pt. 1, (Dublin 1988), p. 5.
[25] Hennessy and Kinsella, *40 years of Irish farming since joining the European Union*, p. 26.
[26] *IFJ*, 15 Nov. 1980.
[27] *II*, 17 July 1981; *IFJ*, 29 Apr. 1978, 20 Sept. 1980, 18 Oct. 1980.
[28] *IP*, 4 Oct. 1981.

purchase of land and the modernisation of their farm yards and facilities.[29] This drive to increase output was centred primarily in the dairy sector and was reflected in increased output. Milk supplies to creameries expanded by almost thirty per cent to 870 million gallons in the seven years between Ireland's entry into the EEC and 1980.[30] As a consequence, a high proportion of the 1980s debt problems were concentrated in the dairy sector.[31] Michael Drennan of An Foras Talúntais (AFT) recalled that intensive beef finishers also invested heavily from the mid-1970s, building the necessary infrastructure such as silage pits, slurry storage facilities, and slatted sheds which units of scale required; although the uneven nature of beef farm development was highlighted by the IFA national livestock committee which claimed that fifty per cent of cattle were still out-wintered in 1981 and fed on 'poor quality winter feed'.[32] This assessment was supported by a 1980 farmer survey in Kilkenny, carried out by the farm advisory and training service, ACOT, which was later subsumed into Teagasc. The ACOT survey found that just one-third of Kilkenny's farmers made silage that year.[33] The cost of borrowings for farm development projects proved a major drag on farm income as interest rates on term and development loans reached between seventeen and nineteen per cent from 1979 – which was seven per cent to ten per cent higher than the rates available to farmers in Holland, France or Germany.[34] Later research by the farm advisory body Teagasc noted that expenditure on interest payments more than doubled between 1979 and 1982, and in 1981 interest charges comprised the highest proportion of farm overhead costs. In fact, interest payments on farms of over two hundred acres became the second largest cost, exceeding even animal feed payments.[35] The worsening situation prompted angry exchanges in the Dáil. Michael D'Arcy and Gerry L'Estrange of Fine Gael claimed that forced land sales were becoming an increasingly common occurrence by the spring of 1981. 'Some of them [farmers] have had to sell part of their farm. Others have applied to the Land Commission for permission to sell part of their land and have been refused permission. Others have had to sell their farms altogether,'

[29] Bielenberg & Ryan, *An Economic History of Ireland*, pp 148-149.
[30] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1972-73*, p. 55; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1980*, p. 37.
[31] Con Lucey interview (25 Oct. 2017).
[32] Michael Drennan interview (24 Oct. 2017); Minutes of the IFA national livestock committee meeting for 29 May 1981.
[33] *Kilkenny People*, 17 Oct. 1980.
[34] *CE*, 22 Sept. 1979; *II*, 22 Sept. 1979; *IFJ*, 4 July 1981.
[35] Hennessy & Kinsella, *40 years of Irish farming since joining the European Union*, p. 30.

L'Estrange maintained.[36] The response of Fianna Fáil's Minister for Agriculture, Ray MacSharry, was constrained by a combination of reduced CAP payments and domestic exchequer difficulties. However, the government restructured existing loans at reduced rates, as well as introducing other cost savings such as cutting farmers' exposure to land rates and suspending disease eradication levies.[37] A more structured 'rescue' package was eventually agreed by the Department of Agriculture and the banks which offered income relief on up to Ir£100,000 of eligible debt, alleviated some of the difficulties, but ACOT estimated that ten thousand farmers still had 'severe' debt problems in 1984 and predicted that 1,400 would 'find it difficult' to trade their way out of trouble.[38] As the 1984 industry plan noted: 'By 1981, therefore, agriculture was in the trough of the recession. Gross output had dropped, incomes were seriously depressed, livestock numbers had fallen to an alarming level, the servicing of debt had become a serious problem and there were indications of deteriorating productivity.'[39] Indeed, Gerry L'Estrange said the immediate consequence of the recession was that farm incomes fell significantly behind those of industry, with the average weekly income from agriculture dropping to Ir£55 per week by 1981, compared to Ir£87 per week in industry.[40] Commenting on the situation at farm level in 1980, UCD agricultural economist, Seamus Sheehy, claimed that the sudden and severe depression had 'wiped out the gains of the 1970s', with farmers forced to survive by living off savings, reducing input costs and postponing bank repayments.[41]

The beef factories did not escape unscathed from the income shock of 1979-80. While processors benefitted from the increased number of cattle slaughtered in 1980 – as farmers sold excess stock in an effort to reduce overheads and pay down debts – they struggled to survive in 1981 and 1982 when overall factory throughput fell by one-third or close to 500,000 animals.[42] This reflected the contraction in the national cattle herd, with animal numbers falling from 7.2 million to 6.7 million

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[36] Dáil debates Vol. 328, No. 8, 9 Apr. 1981.
[37] Ibid.
[38] *IFJ*, 16 Jan. 1982, 27 Oct. 1984.
[39] *Four-Year Plan for Agriculture*, pp 18-20 (NAI, DA/2014/72/18).
[40] Dáil debates Vol. 328, No. 8, 9 Apr. 1981.
[41] *IFJ*, 5 July 1980.
[42] *Nationalist*, 23 Jan. 1982; *Nationalist and Leinster Times,* 24 December 1982; *II*, 11 Dec. 1982; *IFJ*, 5 July 1980, 2 Jan. 1982.

between 1978 and 1982.[43] Table 5.A (below) shows the significant lift in factory slaughterings in 1980, up almost 200,000 head compared to 1979. Equally, it illustrates the extent of the supply contraction in 1981 and 1982 when the overall cattle kill fell by around 490,000 and 440,000 respectively relative to 1980.[44] The extent of the cattle supply crisis was highlighted by CBF in September 1981 when the marketing body pointed out that kill levels at export plants for the first seven months of the year were at their lowest since 1973.[45] The increased animal disposals of 1979 and 1980 had long-term implications for the livestock industry as a whole since it reduced cattle availability in subsequent years for both slaughter and export, with total cattle disposals falling by thirty per cent or close to 550,000 head between 1980 and 1982 (see Table 5.A).[46]

YEAR	SLAUGHTERED	LIVE EXPORTS	TOTAL
1979	1,175,000	327,000	1,500,000
1980	1,368,000	474,300	1,842,000
1981	883,000	431,000	1,314,000
1982	936,400	359,000	1,287,400
1983	977,400	431,000	1,408,400
1984	1,125,000	386,000	1,511,000
1985	1,253,000	311,800	1,564,800
1986	1,453,000	322,200	1,755,200

Table 5.A – Cattle disposals, 1979-85
Source: Department of Agriculture

To compound processors' difficulties, cattle prices rebounded as a result of the livestock scarcity, driving up the cost of their raw material. CBF estimated that the sale price of beef cattle rose by eleven per cent on average in 1981 compared to the previous year. This is borne out by factory quotes for the crucial month of October, when prices rose from 68p per lb in 1980 to 80p per lb twelve months later. The reduction in cattle numbers and increased animal prices was also reflected in mart

[43] *Four-Year Plan for Agriculture*, p. 20 (NAI, DA/2014/72/18).
[44] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1981*, pp 31-32; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1982*, pp 31-32.
[45] *Limerick Leader*, 5 Sept. 1981.
[46] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1981*, pp 31-32; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1982*, pp 31-32.

sales. Naas Mart recorded a ten per cent drop in cattle numbers between November 1981 and March 1982 compared to the sales figures for twelve months earlier. Similarly, throughput at Roscommon Mart between January and March 1982 was ten per cent down on the figures for 1981.[47] Smaller mart sales invariably resulted in higher cattle prices, as factory buyers and live exporters competed for the declining number of available stock. For example, fat Hereford bullocks generally sold for 81p per kg at Kilkenny Mart in October 1980. Two years later the same breed and weight of cattle made thirty per cent more or Ir£1.06 per kg.[48] However, scarcity and cost of cattle were not the only challenges factories encountered. Differences in the CAP support regimes between the UK and Ireland resulted in higher subsidies being paid on cattle in Northern Ireland. The differences centred on the British variable premium scheme, which was introduced in 1975, with the blessing of the EEC, as a subsidy for farmers to replace the old deficiency payment. The premium gave Northern Irish factories a 10p per lb or £65 per head advantage in terms of buying power compared to their Southern counterparts.[49] As a consequence, Northern processors were travelling as far south as Waterford and Cork to buy cattle in the winter of 1983-84.[50] Meanwhile, CBF estimated that between 90,000 and 130,000 cattle were smuggled from the Republic to Northern Ireland in the first seven months of 1981 in an effort to avoid payment of Ir£40 in MCA charges on each animal.[51]

Beef processors' operations and profits were severely impacted by the acute cattle supply difficulties. Many of the country's leading beef export plants were forced to scale back killing to three days a week by the spring of 1981 as they struggled to source sufficient numbers of cattle.[52] The seriousness of the situation was highlighted when IMP and Clover Meats let go two hundred workers in January 1981 as the weekly kill at beef export factories dropped below eleven thousand cattle, fifty per cent of normal levels.[53] The industry was battling the same problem two years later, with eight of the country's beef factories still on a three-day week. These included Sallins, IMP Midleton, Lyons' plant in Longford, Kildare Chilling, Halal in

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[47] *IFJ*, 20 Mar. 1982.
[48] *Kilkenny People*, 17 Oct. 1980, 8 Oct. 1982.
[49] *IFJ*, 7 Aug. 1984.
[50] *CE*, 21 Jan. 1984; *IP*, 24 Jan. 1984; *IFJ*, 25 Jan. 1984.
[51] *IP*, 1 Sept. 1981; *Evening Press,* 10 Sept. 1981; *Kilkenny People*, 4 Sept. 1981.
[52] *IFJ*, 10 Jan., 4 Apr. 1981, 2 Jan., 6 Nov. 1982; *Nationalist*, 23 Jan. 1982; *Nationalist and Leinster Times,* 24 Dec. 1982; *II*, 11 Dec. 1982.
[53] *II*, 7 Jan. 1981; *IFJ*, 10 Jan. 1981.

Ballyhaunis, Dublin Meat Packers, Meadow Meats in Rathdowney, and Tunney Meats in Clones.[54] Indeed, restricted cattle supplies and increased prices were cited by the *Farmers' Journal* as a significant contributory factor in the Ir£1.4 million loss recorded by Cork Marts-IMP in 1981.[55] Other meat processors also saw their margins come under significant pressure in 1981 and 1982. Profits at Shannon Meats fell from Ir£638,000 for 1979-80 to just Ir£30,000 for 1981-82, while Clover Meats' losses totalled Ir£250,000 for the same financial year.[56] Long-standing structural weaknesses added to meat processors' problems. The beef industry continued to be hamstrung by excess processing capacity, poor plant efficiencies, and weak marketing.[57] These same problems were identified by the ESRI in its 1973 study of the beef sector, and by Cooper and Lybrand in its report for the IDA four years later.[58] Interestingly, however, the lucrative returns to the factories from CAP schemes such as beef intervention and Aid to Private Storage (APS) were cited in the *Four-Year Plan for Agriculture* as a factor in the industry's failure to address these problems. It stated that beef processors' continued dependence on intervention was 'liable to blunt any incentive to pursue consumer-oriented marketing efforts'.[59] Added to these perennial difficulties was the resurgence in live exports, mainly to North Africa and the Middle East, and policy changes in Brussels which aimed to cut dairy cow numbers and thereby further restrict cattle supplies to the factories.[60] The number of cattle exported on the hoof to the Middle East almost trebled between 1979 and 1980, rising from 82,000 to 213,000 head (see Table 5.B).[61] Libya and Egypt remained the primary markets, but over seventeen thousand cattle were shipped to Tunisia in the first eight months of 1980. In total, Tunisia imported more than fifty thousand Irish animals

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[54] *IFJ*, 11 Dec. 1982.

[55] *CE,* 24 June 1982; *II*, 24 June 1982; *IFJ*, 26 June 1982.

[56] *IP,* 5 Aug. 1982; *II*, 5 Aug. 1982; *IFJ*, 12 Dec. 1981, 3 Dec. 1983.

[57] 1984 report of a working party on farm sector, commissioned by the by the Department of Agriculture, entitled '*Four-Year Plan for Agriculture'*, p. 84 and pp 126-127 (NAI, DA/2014/72/18); *Report and Recommendations of the Export Steering Group set up by ACOT at the request of the Government*, (Dublin, 1982) pp 17-18 (NAI, DA/2013/100/953); *IFJ*, 2 Mar., 7 Aug. 1982, 23 June 1984.

[58] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, pp 100-101; Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, pp 53-65.

[59] 1984 report of a working party on farm sector, commissioned by the by the Department of Agriculture, entitled 'Four-Year Plan for Agriculture', pp 126-127 (NAI, DA/2014/72/18).

[60] Tim Ryan, 'Milk Quotas and Land Tax' in *Leaders of Courage – The Story of the ICMSA*, pp 67-68; Dempsey (ed.), *The path to power,* p. 95; CBF and CSO data supplied to the author by Bord Bia, received Nov. 2016.

[61] CBF and CSO data supplied to the author by Bord Bia, received Nov. 2016.

during 1979 and 1980.[62] However, these figures were dwarfed by exports to Libya and Egypt.

Ireland shipped 110,000 cattle on average annually to Libya during 1980, 1981 and 1982, while sales to Egypt were at similar levels from 1981 to 1984 inclusive.[63] However, the number of cattle exported on the hoof during this period was not exceptional when viewed historically. Live exports averaged 423,000 head for the years 1980 to 1983 inclusive, more or less on par with the numbers shipped live between 1976 and 1979 – which stood at 425,000 head – but well short of figures for 1970 to 1973 when 540,000 cattle were exported on the hoof.[64] However, live shipping in the early 1980s had a far greater influence and impact on the sector because of the significant contraction in the national herd which followed the cattle crisis of 1974-75. Cow numbers fell from 2.2 million head in 1974 to 1.98 million head by 1981, which meant there were two hundred thousand fewer cattle coming through the system to be either exported live or processed.[65] With industry figures for the period showing that around seventy per cent of all cattle were slaughtered at home, the fall-off in the cow numbers effectively cost the factories 140,000 animals a year. This is reflected in the overall slaughter figures for 1974 and 1981, which were 1.06 million head and 883,000 head respectively.[66] Since throughput at an average processing plant totalled around nine-hundred animals per week or 45,000 head a year, this drop in cattle numbers equated to the annual requirements of three factories.[67] The type of cattle exported live was also a concern for the factories. While exporters had traditionally shipped store cattle to the Middle East – animals of between eighteen and twenty months of age requiring a further six or eight months to fatten and finish – from the early 1980s they exported heavier store animals and fat cattle. In fact, Purcells won a contract in June 1982 to source 100,000 forward store

[62] *IFJ*, 6 Sept. 1980; CBF and CSO data supplied to the author by Bord Bia, received Nov. 2016.
[63] CBF and CSO data supplied to the author by Bord Bia supplied to the author by Bord Bia, received Nov. 2016.
[64] CSO figures as published in the Irish Meat Exporters' Association Yearbook and Diary 1984, (Dublin, 1983), p. 41; CBF and CSO data supplied to the author by Bord Bia, received Nov. 2016.
[65] CSO figures as published in the Irish Meat Exporters' Association Yearbook and Diary 1984, p. 27.
[66] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1975,* p. 37; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1982,* p. 32; CSO figures as published in the Irish Meat Exporters' Association Yearbook and Diary 1984, p. 39.
[67] This estimate is based on annual cattle kill of around 1.175 million head – which was the norm from 1977 to 1979 – and twenty-six licensed beef export factories operating in the State.

and fat cattle for the Libyan market.[68] The live exporters were now eating the beef processors' supper.

YEAR	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
BRITAIN	180,461	104,826	93,174	49,206	39,228	16,085	9,503	15,194	22,660
N. IRE	168,491	71,666	97,010	91,368	97,494	175,909	207,103	206,122	210,656
TOTAL	348,952	176,492	190,184	140,579	136,722	191,994	216,606	221,266	233,316
REST EEC	158,792	68,293	70,301	18,258	8,748	7,125	1,272	4,519	10,094
YEMEN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,000	0
MOROCCO	3,175	0	0	0	2,177	0	0	0	0
TUNISIA	3,750	9,926	43,392	24,873	10,658	3,243	0	0	0
S. ARABIA	0	0	800	0	0	9,484	2,754	2,264	2,351
LIBYA	31,663	67,042	116,107	144,289	75,456	77,301	68,863	40,425	46,366
EGYPT	0	0	15,193	93,328	116,167	137,680	95,215	42,441	29,811
CANARY ISLANDS	2,772	5,339	5,059	8,822	8,748	4,591	2,929	0	295
ELSEWHERE	653	155	32,687	889	470	76	63	15	2
INT. TOTAL	42,013	82,462	213,238	272,201	213,676	232,375	169,824	86,145	78,825
OVERALL TOTAL	549,757	327,247	473,723	431,034	359,146	431,494	387,702	311,930	322,235

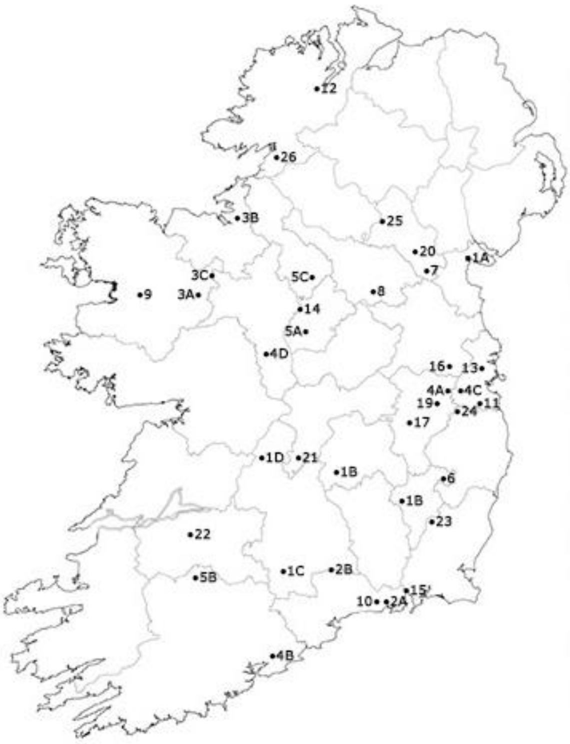
Table 5.B: Main live cattle export markets, 1978-1986
Source: CSO and CBF

CO-OPERATIVE DEMISE

The beef factories' difficulties during the early 1980s proved fatal for direct co-operative involvement in the Irish meat industry. Both IMP and Clover Meats had struggled financially during the 1970s, as noted in Chapter Four, and the two co-operatives were ill-equipped to survive the commercial challenges of 1981-83. High debt levels and poor efficiency relative to the leading privately-owned meat companies was ultimately their undoing.[69] However, the co-operatives still controlled a quarter of the country's cattle and sheep slaughter plants in the early 1980s, with IMP and Clover Meats operating seven of the state's twenty-six meat factories that

[68] *Munster Express*, 4 June 1982; *CE*, 2 June 1982; *IFJ*, 19 June 1982.
[69] *IFJ*, 16 Jan. 1982, 8 Jan., 16 July, 24 Oct. 1983, 23 June, 1 Dec., 8 Dec. 1984, 28 Dec. 1985; *II*, 14 July, 6 Dec. 1984; *CE*, 19 Sept. 1985.

were licensed to export beef and lamb (see Figure 5.1).[70] Scale, unfortunately, was no guarantor of survival in meat processing, as Clover Meats had learned to its cost during the 1970s. Indeed, the debts accrued by the co-operative during its expansion in the late 1960s were central to the business's eventual failure.[71]



IRISH BEEF AND LAMB FACTORIES 1983		
NO. ON MAP	FACTORY NAME	LOCATION
1A	ANGLO-IRISH MEATS	RAVENSDALE, DUNDALK, CO LOUTH
1B	ANGLO-IRISH BEEF PACKERS	BAGENALSTOWN, CO CARLOW
1C	CAHIR MEAT PACKERS	CAHIR, CO TIPPERARY
1D	NENAGH CHILLED MEATS	NENAGH, CO TIPPERARY
2A	CLOVER MEATS	CHRISTENDOM, WATERFORD
2B	CLONMEL FOODS	CLONMEL, CO TIPPERARY
3A	HALAL MEAT PACKERS	BALLYHAUNIS, CO MAYO
3B	HALAL MEAT PACKERS	DEEPWATER QUAY, SLIGO
3C	HALAL MEAT PACKERS	BALLAGHADERREEN, CO ROSCOMMON
4A	IRISH MEAT PACKERS	LEIXLIP, CO KILDARE
4B	IRISH MEAT PACKERS	MIDLETON, CO CORK
4C	CONVENIENCE FOODS	COOKSTOWN INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, DUBLIN
4D	CONNAUGHT MEAT PRODUCERS	ATHLEAGUE, CO ROSCOMMON
5A	MJ LYONS AND COMPANY	BRIDGE STREET, LONGFORD
5B	WESTERN MEATS	CHARLEVILLE, CO CORK
5C	WESTERN MEATS	DROMOD, CO LEITRIM
6	BACON AND LAMB COMPANY	HACKETSTOWN, CO CARLOW
7	BALLYBAY MEAT EXPORTS	BALLYBAY, CO MONAGHAN
8	LIFFEY MEATS	BALLYJAMESDUFF, CO CAVAN
9	CASTLEBAR BACON COMPANY	CASTLEBAR, CO MAYO
10	DAWN MEATS	CARROLLS CROSS, CO WATERFORD
11	DJS MEATS	COOKSTOWN INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, DUBLIN
12	JAMES DOHERTY LTD	CARRIGANS, CO DONEGAL
13	DUBLIN MEAT PACKERS	CLOGHRAN, CO DUBLIN
14	J HANLEY AND SONS	ROOSKEY, CO ROSCOMMON
15	IRISH LAMB EXPORTERS	THE GLEN, WATERFORD
16	KEPAK	CLONEE, CO MEATH
17	KILDARE CHILLING	KILDARE, CO KILDARE
18	MEADOW MEATS	RATHDOWNEY, CO LAOIS
19	PURCELL MEAT EXPORTS	SALLINS, CO KILDARE
20	RANGELAND MEATS	CASTLEBLANEY, CO MONAGHAN
21	ROSCREA MEAT PRODUCTS	ROSCREA, CO TIPPERARY
22	SHANNON MEATS	RATHKEALE, CO LIMERICK
23	SLANEY MEAT PACKERS	BUNCLODY, CO WEXFORD
24	TARA MEATS	COOKSTOWN INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, DUBLIN
25	TUNNEY MEAT PACKERS	CLONES, CO MONAGHAN
26	R&E WALSH	ROCKHILL, BALLINTRA, CO DONEGAL

Figure 5.1: Main Beef and Lamb Export Factories 1983

Clover Meats' borrowings totalled Ir£9.5 million in 1980, and although these were reduced to Ir£8.3 million the following year, the co-operative's debts exceeded Ir£11 million when the business was finally put into receivership in December 1984.[72] The restructuring plan of 1977-79, which involved the sale of Donnelly's and O'Keeffe's in Dublin, as well as Lunham's in Cork, and the closure of the co-operative's factory in Limerick, had helped to reduce Clover Meats' losses from Ir£635,000 in 1979 to just Ir£50,000 in 1980.[73] However, as John O'Reilly of the *Farmers' Journal* correctly observed, Clover Meats was a far smaller enterprise post restructuring and

[70] Irish Meat Exporters' Association Yearbook and Diary 1984, p. 23.
[71] *IFJ*, 16 July, 23 July 1983, 1 Dec., 8 Dec. 1984.
[72] *Munster Express*, 14 Nov. 1980; *IFJ*, 31 Oct. 1981, 1 Dec. 1984.
[73] *Kilkenny People*, 24 Oct. 1980; *Munster Express*, 24 Oct. 1980; *CE*, 23 Oct. 1980; *IFJ*, 16 July 1983.

the co-operative struggled to service its borrowings during the 1980s.[74] Clover Meats' operations were concentrated at four sites by the 1980s. Its plant at Christendom outside Waterford city slaughtered pigs and cattle, its Wexford factory also processed pigs, while Clonmel was exclusively a beef plant. In addition, the co-operative had a rendering facility, National Proteins, in Waterford.[75] However, despite the significant consolidation, the extent to which Clover Meats was still financially hamstrung by interest payments on its legacy debts is illustrated in Figure 5.4.[76] The irony of Clover Meats' eventual demise was that the co-operative had streamlined its operations in the years prior to its collapse and was a far leaner and more efficient organisation in 1983 than it had been in the 1970s, as demonstrated by the three-fold increase in trading profits in 1979-80 to over £1 million (see Table 5.C).[77] Similarly, the co-operative's trading performance in 1982-83, when Clover Meats effectively broke even for the first time since 1978, suggested that the restructured entity might actually survive.[78] This revival of sorts coincided with the appointment of Limerick native, Eddie Power, as Clover Meats' general manager in 1980 following the departure of Dermot McDermott.[79] The business recorded trading profits of between Ir£860,000 and £1.27 million during his first four years in charge.[80] Although the processor accumulated losses of more than Ir£500,000 for the difficult years of 1981 and 1982, Power, who was a UCC engineering graduate, appeared to be turning Clover Meats' fortunes around.[81] The performance was praised by the *Farmers' Journal*. It contrasted Clover Meats' achievement of recording a Ir£500,000 trading profit in 1981-82 on its beef operation with that of IMP which lost Ir£400,000. The differing results at the farmer-owned businesses illustrated the 'tightening up' that had taken place at Clover Meats and the extent to which IMP's operations required 'surgery', the *Farmers' Journal* stated.[82] The co-operative's strong performance during the early 1980s also belied Clover Meats' reputation for poor industrial relations, and supports the subsequent contention of union representative, John Treacy, that employees at the business were open and willing to adopt new work practices. Treacy admitted that Clover Meats was

[74] *IFJ*, 25 Oct. 1980.
[75] *II*, 6 Dec. 1984; *IP*, 1 Dec. 1984.
[76] Data in Figure 5.4 first published in the IFJ, 16 July 1983.
[77] *CE*, 23 Oct. 1980; *Kilkenny People*, 24 Oct. 1980; *Munster Express*, 24 Oct. 1980.
[78] *II*, 14 July 1983; *IFJ*, 16 July 1983; *Munster Express*, 22 July 1983.
[79] *Munster Express*, 11 July 1983; *IP*, 10 July 1980; *IFJ*, 16 July 1983.
[80] *IP*, 10 July 1980; *IFJ*, 16 July 1983; *Munster Express*, 11 July 1983.
[81] *II*, 14 July 1983; *Munster Express*, 22 July 1983; *IFJ*, 16 July 1983.
[82] *IFJ*, 7 Aug. 1982.

often slow to 'move with the times', but he said this reticence to embrace change was equally common among management and workers.[83] However, management claimed that the confidence of financial institutions in Clover Meats' long-term viability was undermined by trade union resistance to the streamlining of killing operations in 1984, and workers' opposition to the interchange of butchering staff between the pig and cattle plants.[84]

IMPACT OF INTEREST CHARGES ON CLOVER MEATS						
	1978	**1979**	**1980**	**1981**	**1982**	**1983**
TRADING PROFIT	924	360	1,007	867	896	1,269
INTEREST	828	995	1,059	1,226	1,089	1,271
LOSS (PROFIT)	(96)	635	52	359	193	2

Table 5.C: Clover Meats – interest charges and impact on profitability
(All values Ir£ (,000))
Source: The Irish Farmers' Journal

High borrowings eventually shut Clover Meats. As the *Farmers' Journal* observed, the co-operative was a 'hostage to its balance sheet' and to its legacy debts.[85] Interest payments on the meat processor's debts resulted in the business recording losses each year from 1980 to 1983 – as Table 5.C shows – despite the co-operative continually enjoying sizeable trading surpluses. In 1983 for example, Clover Meats' entire trading profit of Ir£1.27 million was consumed by interest payments, and these charges exceeded Ir£1 million for the three previous years.[86] The business was essentially running to stand still, as it was unable to reduce its overall level of borrowings. This meant that one poor trading year could effectively bankrupt the co-operative, should the business be unable to service its debts. That year arrived in 1984. Rumours of an emerging liquidity problem at Clover Meats began circulating in November, and came in the wake of a strike at the bacon plant at Waterford's Christendom site which stopped both pig and cattle slaughtering for five weeks in the

[83] John Treacy interview (17 July 2019).
[84] *II*, 4 Dec. 1984.
[85] *IFJ*, 31 Oct. 1981.
[86] *Munster Express*, 22 July 1983; *II*, 14 July 1983.

crucial high-cattle-throughput months of September and October.[87] The uncertainty around the financial standing of the business resulted in a number of suppliers switching cattle and pigs to other factories, while some farmers sought payment up front for their livestock.[88] Meanwhile, the co-operative's short-term financial difficulties were compounded by a government decision to alter the payment regime for intervention beef purchases. From 1984 factories were paid four months after the sale of beef into intervention, rather than two months after supply as had been the case. This change resulted in payments of Ir£3 million to Clover Meats being critically delayed.[89] The intervention of the Waterford-based, Minister for Agriculture, Austin Deasy, appeared to forestall the co-operative's inevitable collapse when an agreement to provide Ir£5 million in interim funding was reached in principle following negotiations involving Eddie Power of Clover Meats, and representatives of Bank of Ireland, ACC and Banque Nationale de Paris.[90] However, in a move that later caused considerable rancour, the banks reneged on providing the interim funding – citing Clover Meats' failure to meet 'substantive conditions' attached to their letter of offer. Bank of Ireland subsequently applied to have a receiver appointed to the business.[91] As former IAOS official Maurice Colbert observed, Clover Meats' failure to achieve an adequate level of 'viability and liquidity' eventually led to its failure.[92]

The chaotic nature of Clover Meats' collapse left bad blood and bad debts in its wake, and exposed the distrust which existed between the co-operative's farmer shareholders and its workers. More than eight-hundred workers were laid off, while 750 farmers were listed as unsecured creditors that were owed Ir£1.64 million for cattle and pigs supplied to the co-operative prior to the receiver being appointed.[93] Some farmers were owed in excess of Ir£40,000.[94] However, most creditors were small farmers such as Danny Doyle from Adamstown, Co Wexford. Doyle was owed Ir£12,000 for sixteen cattle sent to Christendom for slaughter two weeks before the factory closed. He said the Clover Meats' cheque he received for the livestock

[87] *CE*, 20 Oct. 1984; *II,* 4 Dec. 1984.
[88] *IFJ*, 1 Dec. 1984.
[89] *Kilkenny People*, 7 Dec. 1984; *IP*, 1 Dec. 1984.
[90] *IFJ*, 1 Dec., 8 Dec. 1984; *IP*, 1 Dec. 1984.
[91] *IP*, 1 Dec. 1984; *II*, 6 Dec. 1984; *IFJ*, 1 Dec., 8 Dec. 1984.
[92] Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, p. 128.
[93] *Nationalist*, 1 December 1984; *IFJ*, 6 Apr. 1985.
[94] *II*, 5 Dec. 1984.

bounced 'like a rubber ball'.[95] These farmer creditors eventually settled for 60p on the Ir£1, but they were not paid for their stock in some instances until October 1986, nearly two years after the co-operative failed.[96] Farmer board members generally blamed either the workers or the banks for the failure of Clover Meats – a narrative that conveniently absolved the co-operative's management and directors of any responsibility for the collapse. In a self-serving statement to the newspapers, board members Jim Bergin and Michael O'Dwyer contended that the union's 'disastrous action' of extending the bacon factory dispute to the Waterford beef plant was primarily to blame for the co-operative's collapse. Moreover, the statement claimed the banks' actions were timed to limit the 'exposure' of the financial institutions while causing 'maximum losses to [Clover Meats'] farmer suppliers'.[97] Meanwhile, the former Clover Meats' chairman, Michael Gibbons, accused the banks of taking a 'dog in the manger' attitude to providing interim funding to the co-operative. Describing the funding facility as a 'secured bridging loan', Gibbons said ACC and Bank of Ireland 'did not want to provide the money themselves, but they did not want anybody else to supply it either'.[98] Tellingly, the Clover Meats' board members took no responsibility for the disorderly demise of the co-operative, nor did they express regret that hundreds of workers had lost their jobs as a consequence of the meat processor's collapse. Even so, the banks were the primary focus for blame in the political exchanges that Clover Meats' closure prompted. An act of 'gross irresponsibility' is how Kilkenny Fianna Fáil TD, Liam Aylward characterised the actions of ACC and Bank of Ireland.[99] However, ACC chief executive Michael Culligan, defended the banks' approach to Clover Meats and effectively accused management at the co-operative of reckless trading when he asked why the business had purchased livestock from farmers without 'money in the bank'.[100] The closure of Clover Meats was a significant setback for the co-operative movement and for the concept of farmer involvement in beef processing. IMP's exit from the beef business thirteen months later was a further body blow.

95 *IFJ*, 19 Jan. 1985.
96 *Munster Express*, 13 Sept. 1985, 31 Oct. 1986.
97 Statement from Jim Bergin, Freshford, Co Kilkenny and Michael O'Dwyer, Cashel, Co Tipperary, carried in the *Irish Farmers' Journal*, 8 December 1984.
98 *Kilkenny People*, 7 Dec. 1984.
99 Dáil debate of 28 Nov. 1984 (Accessed on Oireachtas.ie on 28 Aug. 2020); *Kilkenny People*, 7 Dec. 1984.
100 *II*, 3 Dec. 1984.

However, the Cork-based co-operative learned from the Clover Meats debacle and departed in a more orderly and structured fashion. An inability to control costs and stem trading losses precipitated the closure of IMP. The farmer-owned co-operative lost Ir£10 million in the six years prior to the winding up of the business in December 1985.[101] IMP operated out of five sites in the early 1980s. It had slaughter plants at Grand Canal Street in Dublin, Leixlip in Kildare, Midleton in Cork, and Athleague in Roscommon. In addition, it owned Convenience Foods based in Tallaght, which was secondary processing facility that produced vacuum-packed cuts and other meat products primarily for supermarkets and the wholesale butcher trade.[102] IMP also benefitted from being part of Cork Marts, the leading livestock sales group in the country in the 1970s and 1980s. A profitable business, Cork Marts had sales centres in Macroom, Mallow, Skibbereen, Bandon, Fermoy, Mitchelstown, Dungarvan and Cahir.[103] However, as was the case with Clover Meats, scale did not ensure efficiency or guarantee profits. The *Farmers' Journal* estimated that the 1980 trading loss at IMP was Ir£1.2 million, with overall losses for livestock sales and meat divisions of Cork Marts put at almost Ir£1.4 million for 1981-82.[104] Defending the co-operative's performance in 1980-81, IMP chief executive Jerry Beechinor pointed to the extremely difficult trading environment. Beef consumption had fallen by one per cent in Germany and Britain due to the economic recession, with many consumers switching to cheaper protein sources such as pig meat and poultry. This resulted in the EEC's internal beef market being oversupplied for the first time.[105] These challenges were compounded in 1981 by the reduction in available cattle numbers as a result of the high level of disposals during the previous two years, and the impact of live exports to the Middle East and North Africa.[106] IMP moved to counter its rising cost base by closing its factory at Grand Canal Street in January 1981, with the loss of 370 jobs.[107] Grand Canal Street was one of the most modern beef slaughter plants in Europe in the early 1960s, but two decades later it had become a major cost burden for IMP, with losses at the site exceeding Ir£1.5 million in the three years prior to its

[101] *IT*, 17 Sept. 1987; *IFJ*, 7 Sept., 28 Dec. 1985, 20 Sept. 1986.
[102] *IFJ*, 26 June 1982, 7 Sept. 1985; *IT*, 12 Aug. 1986; *IP*, 19 Sept. 1981.
[103] Donie Cashman interview (3 July 2019); Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, pp 75-77.
[104] *IFJ*, 26 June 1982.
[105] *II*, 19 Sept. 1981; *IP*, 19 Sept. 1981.
[106] *IP*, 19 Sept. 1981; *II*, 19 Sept. 1981.
[107] *Sunday Independent*, 25 Jan. 1981; *II*, 23 Sept. 1981.

closure. Management attributed the continual losses to high staffing and pay levels. Unions blamed a lack of investment in the site.[108]

The closure of IMP's Grand Canal Street factory failed to staunch the losses at Cork Marts' meat division. The co-operative recorded a trading deficit of Ir£1.8 million for 1982-83.[109] However, while the co-operative posted profits of Ir£420,000 the following year, this apparent recovery was an aberration in the context of IMP.[110] The improved results were based on a strong performance by the group's marts division, which generated profits of Ir£230,000.[111] In contrast, the beef division recorded a trading loss of almost Ir£130,000, and the deficit might have been even greater had IMP's slaughter plants at Leixlip and Midleton not been closed for eight months due to the loss of a lucrative beef export contract to Canada and industrial unrest.[112] The strike followed attempts by management to introduce compulsory redundancies and replace the permanent employment status of some workers with seasonal contracts to reflect the variable nature of cattle supplies and IMP's related labour requirements. These proposals were rejected by workers at both sites and industrial action followed.[113] The *Farmers' Journal* blamed management's failure to address high staffing levels and operating costs for IMP's financial difficulties. Despite the closure of Grand Canal Street, the *Farmers' Journal* claimed that the processor's overheads and labour costs remained a 'good deal higher' than other meat plants, and that IMP's financial strength was being 'eroded' by management's failure to come to grips with the processor's problems.[114]

The departure and death of senior management and board figures added to IMP's difficulties in the early 1980s. The sudden death of the co-operative's chairman, Kilkenny farmer Jim Mullins, over the Christmas period of 1979 was a significant setback for IMP, given the challenges posed by the deepening recession.[115] Former IAOS executive, Maurice Colbert, recalled that Mullins had an 'exceptional knowledge of the cattle and the meat business'. The fact that the Goresbridge farmer, who was a brother of the famous horse trainer Paddy Mullins, 'possessed a keen

[108] *II*, 21 Sept. 1981; *IFJ*, 26 Sept. 1981.
[109] *CE*, 21 June, 23 June 1984; *IP*, 21 June 1984.
[110] *IP*, 21 June 1984; *CE*, 21 June 1984.
[111] *CE*, 21 June 1984.
[112] *Sunday Independent*, 14 July 1985; *II*, 23 July 1985; *IFJ*, 23 June 1984.
[113] *II*, 10 Aug. 1983; *IFJ*, 13 Aug. 1983.
[114] *IFJ*, 26 June 1982.
[115] *Kilkenny People*, 18 Jan. 1980; *CE,* 16 Jan. 1980,

business sense' and had served as chairman of Kilkenny Marts and the NFA grain committee meant that he 'commanded respect' among both farmers and factory owners, Colbert explained. 'He was an inspirational figure. His sudden and untimely death...was a major blow to his family and to the Cork Mart-IMP group.'[116] His loss was compounded by the departure of Dan Browne who was head of operations at Midleton, and Roger McCarrick who was general manager of IMP's slaughter plants.[117] Ironically, both men had joined IMP from An Foras Talúntais (AFT). Browne, who was from Douglas, outside Cork city, completed a degree in agricultural science in UCD and returned to his native county after being recruited by Michael Walshe soon after he established AFT's dairy research centre at Moorepark.[118] He joined IMP in 1974, and left six years later to set up Dawn Meats with the Waterford-based Queally family.[119] Sligo native, Roger McCarrick, followed a similar career path to Browne. A respected researcher with AFT prior to joining IMP, he was responsible for much of the early Irish-based work on silage usage as a fodder source. McCarrick established Rangeland Meats following his departure from IMP in 1981, which was a beef boning and vacuum-packing business located outside Castleblaney, Co Monaghan.[120] In fact, the extent to which IMP inadvertently acted as a nursery or academy for meat-sector start-ups is illustrated by the number of successful processing businesses that were established by former executives. In addition to Browne and McCarrick, former IMP employees Tim Lloyd and Tony Dunne founded Tara Meats, a meat processing and de-boning operation that had bases in Tallaght and Kilbeggan, as well as a unit in Shrewsbury, England.[121] Another business to develop out of IMP was the Dublin-based DJS Meats, set up by Seamus Hand and Derek Montgomery.[122] The number of successful businesses established by former IMP staff is indicative of the opportunities that the meat sector offered in the 1980s despite the impact of the economic recession, and it suggests that there was no absence of innovative thinking or entrepreneurial spirit among the industry's senior staff. As John B. Keane the former CBF executive commented, the meat industry had a

[116] Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, pp 125-127.
[117] *IFJ,* 4 Oct. 1980, 25 July 1981.
[118] Michael Walshe, *It's A Long Road That Has No Turning*, (New York, 2014), pp 301-303; *Irish Examiner*, 18 Sept. 2008.
[119] *Irish Examiner*, 18 Sept. 2008; *IFJ*, 4 Oct. 1980.
[120] Michael Drennan interview (24 Oct. 2017); *IFJ*, 25 July 1981; *Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the Beef Processing Industry*, pp 600-604.
[121] *Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the Beef Processing Industry*, p. 614; *IFJ*, 25 July 1981.
[122] *IFJ*, 25 July 1981.

reputation as a 'rough and ready business' but it was led by 'driven entrepreneurs' who were 'by and large very sharp, able people'.[123] However, as the *Farmers' Journal* pointed out, the perception that IMP had an excellent track record of producing meat industry innovators was cold comfort to the co-operative's 28,000 farmer shareholders.[124]

The inability of Cork Marts-IMP to retain or attract high-level management was starkly illustrated when the co-operative was unable to find a replacement for Jerry Beechinor who announced in July 1984 that he was stepping down as chief executive the following February.[125] The interim chief executive, Bob Stewart, was still in charge six months after Beechinor's departure, even though the business was in serious financial difficulty. Like Clover Meats, high debt levels were a constant drag on the financial performance of IMP during the 1980s. However, these borrowings were more than balanced by significant shareholder funds up to the early 1980s. For example, while the accounts for 1980-81 put borrowings at around Ir£5 million, these debts were comfortably balanced by shareholder funds of close to Ir£11 million.[126] Unfortunately, the losses recorded by IMP in the 1981-83 period meant that by 1984 borrowings had increased to Ir£7.2 million, while shareholder funds had been eroded to a similar level of Ir£7.25 million.[127] The co-operative was essentially running down its liquidity. The situation deteriorated further in 1985. Trading losses for 1984-85 totalled almost Ir£750,000. The meat division lost Ir£930,000 overall, with operations at the Leixlip factory costing the co-operative Ir£1.2 million. The Ir£200,000 profit recorded by the marts was the only positive element in the results.[128] The losses pushed shareholder funds at Cork Marts-IMP under Ir£6 million, as more bad news loomed; there were widespread rumours in the industry over Christmas 1985 that trading losses at the group were likely to exceed Ir£2 million for the year.[129] With Cork Marts' management rapidly running out of options, the preservation of the livestock trading division, and the consequent sale of IMP's meat plants, became the co-operative's primary focus.[130] As John O'Reilly of the *Farmers' Journal*

[123] John B. Keane interview (19 Feb. 2019).
[124] *IFJ*, 25 July 1981.
[125] *Sunday Independent*, 22 July 1984; *IFJ*, 21 July 1984.
[126] *IFJ*, 26 Sept. 1981.
[127] *IP*, 21 June 1984; *IFJ*, 23 June 1984.
[128] *IFJ*, 7 July 1985.
[129] Ibid., 7 Sept., 21 Dec., 28 Dec. 1985.
[130] *Evening Echo*, 24 Dec. 1985; *II*, 24 Dec. 1985; *IFJ,* 21 Dec., 28 Dec. 1985.

commented: 'The axing of the meat side [at IMP] is an obvious attempt both to forestall receivership and preserve the marts' business intact.' [131] An orderly exit from beef processing was therefore essential for Cork Marts, as the co-operative required the goodwill of farmers to continue its livestock sales business. Cork Marts could not afford the disruption and angst of a chaotic Clover Meats-style closure.

A government bailout for Clover Meats or IMP was never a realistic option given the precarious state of the national finances in the mid-1980s. Such state assistance was possible in the 1970s – a government-backed ACC loan for £2 million prevented the collapse of Clover Meats in 1977 – however, the economic environment had totally changed by 1984.[132] As Lee observed, the economic growth of the 1970s was bought 'at the price of massive indebtedness', with the state's foreign debt growing from Ir£1 billion in 1979 to more than Ir£5 billion by 1982.[133] Lee's analysis was shared by UCD-based economist, Robbie Kelleher, who described a thirty-four per cent increase in the 1980 public service pay bill as 'the biggest public expenditure boozy bonanza of all time'.[134] The economic situation was not helped by increased political instability, which resulted in three elections and three different governments in the seventeen months from June 1981 to November 1982, as Fine Gael-Labour coalitions swapped places with the Charlie Haughey-led Fianna Fáil.[135] A Fine Gael-Labour coalition finally took power in November 1982 with a slim working majority of just three TDs.[136] However, *Farmers' Journal* editor Paddy O'Keeffe said an 'air of despondency' had taken hold of the country on the back of the deepening economic crisis and the political stalemate.[137] Reflecting on the perilous state of the nation's finances, and the consequent high levels of unemployment and emigration, Girvin observed that Ireland's economy during the 1980s more closely resembled those of

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[131] *IFJ*, 28 Dec. 1985.

[132] Minutes of meetings of the Steering Committee of Clover Meats, 10 Nov. 1975 and 24 Nov. 1975, in Clover Meats' records, held by Kilkenny County Library; *II*, 12 Mar., 8 Oct. 1977; *IP*, 11 Mar., 8 Oct. 1977; *IFJ*, 19 Mar., 26 Mar., 15 Oct. 1977; *Munster Express*, 8 Apr., 5 Aug. 1977.

[133] Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, pp 500-515.

[134] *IFJ*, 17 Dec. 1983.

[135] A minority coalition administration involving the Garret Fitzgerald-led Fine Gael and Labour won the first of the elections in June 1981, but the government collapsed in January 1982 after failing to pass a budget that proposed the imposition of value added tax on children's clothes and footwear. The subsequent ballot in February saw Charles Haughey elected Taoiseach once more at the head of Fianna Fáil minority government, but this administration's grip on power only lasted nine months before imploding after Kildare TD, Charlie McCreevey, tabled a motion of no confidence in Haughey as Fianna Fáil leader.

[136] Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*, pp 695-697; Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, pp 506-510.

[137] *IFJ*, 20 Feb. 1982.

Latin America than Western Europe.[138] This comparison clearly had wider currency as it tallied with comments made by the Minister for Finance, Alan Dukes, in a secret memorandum for government from June 1984 in which he told his fellow ministers that 'Ireland's indebtedness now exceeds that of even many of the crisis-ridden Latin American debtor countries, and is far in excess of that of any comparable OECD countries'.[139] He warned that without 'drastic action' the state's borrowings for day-to-day spending could 'balloon' to over Ir£1 billion, threatening the 'immediate withdrawal of the present support we enjoy from foreign banks'.[140] Seeking tax-payers' money to support failing co-operatives in such an economic climate was never likely to get traction.

The potential for government to financially support or bail out IMP or Clover Meats was further restricted by the fact that many private beef processors were also forced to close or sell their businesses during the early 1980s. The state, therefore, could not justify providing financial assistance specifically for co-operatives without putting in place an industry-wide support package. An early private processor casualty was Towey Meats in Ballaghaderreen, Co Roscommon. The company was established in 1979 when the well-known live shipper, Andrew Towey, bought the Ballaghaderreen slaughter plant from the Cunniffe family who were involved in the processing of pigs.[141] The Toweys were renowned and respected exporters of live cattle, particularly Andrew Towey's father Mickey. Jimmy Cosgrave, the Meath-based farmer and former cattle trader, recalled attending a fair in Elphin in the 1960s and trying to buy Blue-Grey heifers – beef cattle bred from a black Aberdeen Angus cow and a Shorthorn bull – but 'no-one would sell until Mickey Towey got first dibs of the cattle'.[142]

Problems with Towey Meats first emerged in January 1981 when a number of farmers and marts indicated to the IFA that they had not been paid for cattle.[143] The company's debts eventually totalled over Ir£2 million, with nine marts in the west

[138] Girvin, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 204.
[139] Alan Dukes claimed in a secret memorandum to government in June 1984 that Ireland's per capita debt stood at Ir£2,600, compared to Ir£2,300 in Venezuela, Ir£1,400 in Argentina, and Ir£730 in Brazil: memorandum for government from the Minister for Finance, Alan Dukes, 27 June 1984, (NAI, 2014/105/626).
[140] Secret memorandum for government from the Minister for Finance, Alan Dukes, 27 June 1984 (NAI, 2014/105/626).
[141] *IFJ*, 10 Nov. 1979.
[142] Discussion with Jimmy Cosgrave (14 June 2018).
[143] Minutes of the IFA national livestock committee meeting for 14 Jan. 1981.

owed significant amounts. These included NCF Marts, Tuam, Ballina, Gort, Castlerea, Elphin, Ballinasloe and Kilfenora. However, the worst affected was Tulsk Mart in Roscommon which suffered losses of close to Ir£100,000.[144] In the face of mounting creditor anger the Department of Agriculture eventually withheld close to Ir£200,000 in CAP grants which were owed to Towey Meats. Farmers who were owed money by Towey Meats were advised to obtain judgements in the courts against the company; these were then forwarded to the Department of Agriculture for payment.[145] The factory was eventually taken over by Sher Rafique's Halal Meats in 1983.[146] Other factory take-overs and failures followed. Among these was AIBP's purchase of Paddy Nolan's Dublin Meat Packers in 1983. The company had sustained losses totalling around Ir£1 million during the early 1980s, and had serious cashflow problems by the summer of 1983 when it closed and was later bought by Larry Goodman's firm.[147] The Ballyjamesduff Chilling plant in Co Cavan was another to close and change ownership. The company, which was owned locally by the Lynch family, had accumulated losses of Ir£800,000 between 1979 and 1981 as a result of the difficult trading environment. Its problems were exacerbated by high interest rate payments on borrowings of Ir£750,000, and bad debts of Ir£60,000 which were suffered following the collapse of the British meat trader, TH Hawker and Company.[148] A receiver was appointed to Ballyjamesduff Chilling in April 1982 after both the IDA and Foir Teoranta (a State body which provided reconstruction finance for potentially viable industrial concerns which were unable to raise capital from the normal commercial sources) refused to invest in the concern.[149] The Ballyjamesduff plant remained closed until spring 1983 when it was purchased by the Frank Mallon-owned company, Liffey Meats. Mallon had been leasing the former NCF plant at Deepwater Quay in Sligo.[150] However, he was forced to relocate his operations after his Sligo base was sold to Halal Meats in April 1983.[151] The losses incurred by Ballyjamesduff Chilling due to the collapse of TH Hawker and Company demonstrated that the meat trade's problems in the early 1980s were not confined to

[144] *IFJ*, 24 Apr. 1982.
[145] Minutes of the IFA national livestock committee meeting for 22 July 1981.
[146] *IFJ*, 6 July 1983.
[147] *II,* 3 June 1983; *IFJ*, 4 June, 16 July 1983.
[148] *Anglo-Celt*, 7 Jan. 1983; *IFJ*, 20 Mar. 1982.
[149] *IFJ*, 24 Apr. 1982.
[150] *Anglo-Celt*, 16 Dec. 1983; *IFJ*, 23 May 1981.
[151] *IFJ*, 2 Apr., 9 Apr. 1983; *Anglo-Celt*, 16 Dec. 1983.

Ireland. However, the closure of the British-owned Fatstock Meat Corporation's (FMC) plants in Newry and Sallins in the spring of 1983 was a more immediate illustration of British meat sector's trading difficulties.[152] FMC's future in the meat business – and particularly that of its Irish operations – was in doubt after the farmer-owned firm recorded losses of stg£2 million in 1981-1982 and stg£800,000 in 1982-1983.[153] It was not a great shock, therefore, when the company called time on its Irish adventure.

Slaughter plants involved in secondary processing, such as Roscrea Meats, also struggled to trade through the difficult business environment of the 1980s. Established in 1935 by Cork brothers Con and Jeremiah Crowley, and German industrialist George Fasenfeld, the company had become a leading supplier of canned meats to the British market by the 1950s and 1960s through the success of its Casserole brand.[154] However, as noted in Chapter Four, this segment of the Irish meat industry was devastated by the introduction of the Monetary Compensation Allowance (MCA) regime following Ireland's EEC accession, with export sales of canned product falling from £9.5 million in 1974 to £115,000 in 1977 because British, Dutch and German competitors could source cheaper beef.[155] The company struggled to replace the revenue lost due to the demise of its canned meat business and by the 1980s it was primarily involved in slaughtering and boning cattle for intervention, in addition to contract killing for Seamus Purcell's company, Purcell Meat Exporters.[156] With Roscrea Meats encountering grave cash-flow problems by October 1985, the Crowley family – sole owners of the company by the 1980s – decided to put the firm into voluntary liquidation.[157] Another pioneer of the beef processing industry was gone.

Firms did not have to fail spectacularly like Clover Meats to exit meat processing. Some operators just drifted slowly out of the business because the profit levels they recorded during the early 1980s were not sufficiently strong to justify reinvesting in aging factories. Shannon Meats in Rathkeale, Co Limerick was one

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[152] Holderness, British agriculture since 1945, pp 88-89; *Belfast Telegraph*, 26 Mar. 1983; *IFJ*, 2 Apr. 1983.
[153] *II*, 11 June 1983.
[154] *Southern Star*, 24 Sept. 1938; *Leinster Express*, 10 Aug. 1935; Keogh, *Cattleman*, pp 50-51; Statistics on the canned meat output (NAI, DA/10/19/41).
[155] Smith & Healy, *Farm organisations*, pp 267-268.
[156] *Nenagh Guardian*, 12 Oct., 19 Oct. 1985; *IFJ*, 4 Sept. 1982, 19 Oct. 1985.
[157] RTE news report on the closure of Roscrea Meats, 13 Dec. 1985 RTE News Archive (rte.ie/archives/collections/news) (accessed 9 Sept. 2020); *IFJ*, 19 Oct. 1985.

such business. Turnover at the firm increased from Ir£25 million to Ir£28 million between 1984 and 1985, but profits during the same period fell from Ir£420,000 to just Ir£103,000. Indeed, they dropped from a high of Ir£640,000 in 1980. The low level of profits in 1985, which equated to just to 0.4 per cent of turnover, highlighted the wafer thin margins in beef processing.[158] Shannon Meats' chairman, Maurice Cowhey, said the firm's results drew attention to 'the unsatisfactory condition of the Irish beef industry' as a whole: 'The continuing and growing over-capacity in the sector relative to available supply, coupled with the increasing seasonality of the trade, makes it virtually impossible to operate profitably.'[159] Low margins were nothing new in beef processing. The Meath beef farmer, Jimmy Cosgrave, recalled that during his time as shareholder in Dublin Meat Packers there 'wasn't much money in it'. He said margins rarely exceeded two per cent, a view shared by former NCF Meats and CBF executive, John B. Keane.[160] This analysis was also supported by industry data. A survey by the UK's Meat and Livestock Commission found that profit margins among British meat companies in 1981 ranged from two per cent down to 0.1 per cent, while 1985 results for the Northern Irish operations of Larry Goodman's AIBP and Purcell Meat Exporters showed profit levels of 2.7 per cent and 2.3 per cent respectively.[161] The extremely low profit margins had long-term implications for companies with high debts or those that lacked scale. By 1987 Shannon Meats' shareholders had decided that there was no future for the company. The ICMSA Investment Society, which had a twenty-nine per cent shareholding in Shannon Meats dating back from 1961, controversially joined with the Co Dublin-based but Belgian-born cattle exporter, Omar Van Landeghem, to sell their controlling interest in the business to Larry Goodman's AIBP for Ir£1.7 million.[162] John O'Reilly, *Farmers' Journal* business reporter, said the low margins in beef processing inexorably 'drew the life blood' out of the businesses as it denied them the cash reserves to reinvest.[163] The Longford-based Lyons Group was another firm that slowly exited meat processing during the 1980s. The company had signalled a certain reticence regarding the future of the beef industry when it decided against developing

[158] *IFJ*, 12 Dec. 1981, 7 Dec. 1985.
[159] Ibid., 7 Dec. 1985.
[160] Discussion with Jimmy Cosgrave (14 June 2018); John B. Keane interview (19 Feb. 2019).
[161] *IFJ*, 13 Oct. 1984, 13 Sept., 20 Sept. 1986.
[162] *CE*, 20 Aug. 1987; *II*, 25 Aug. 1987; *IP* 26 Aug. 1987; *IFJ*, 8 Aug. 1987.
[163] *IFJ*, 7 Dec. 1985.

a plant in Rathdowney, Co Laois in September 1970 and sold its interest in the venture to Golden Vale Marts.[164] However, the company still had slaughter, processing and rendering operations in Longford town, Charleville, Co Cork, as well as in Co Leitrim at Dromod, Corriscoffey and Clondra.[165] The firm leased its Western Meats factory in Charleville to Tara Meats in 1977, and the factory was converted to Halal slaughter for the Egyptian market when the live exporters, Horgans, took it over in 1983.[166] Difficulties with effluent control and smells restricted killing at the firm's main beef slaughter site in Longford town in the early 1980s, and by 1983-84 the company was boning sides of beef on contract, while also killing lamb for Halal Meats.[167] However, by 1987 the Lyons Group was in serious financial difficulties. The company exited the slaughter business after a receiver was appointed and the firm's factories at Longford and Dromod were subsequently purchased by AIBP.[168] Another pioneer of Irish beef processing had exited the industry.

WHY THE CO-OPERATIVES FAILED

The failure of IMP, Clover Meats and the other co-operative meat processors cast a long shadow across Irish agriculture. Not only did it end the dream of greater farmer control of the livestock industry, but it also represented a major setback for the Irish co-operative movement. As former IAOS executive, Maurice Colbert, noted: 'The entry of the co-operatives into beef proved to be a costly, futile and ultimately very damaging experience for Irish farmers involved in livestock.'[169] Equally, the problems encountered by co-operatives in the beef industry were somewhat disconcerting since the success generally enjoyed by farmer-owned businesses in both dairy processing and livestock sales had engendered a degree of confidence that bordered on arrogance. This is evident from the reaction of NCF management to the mounting losses at their Sligo beef factory, and the eventual decision to dispose of the facility. An NCF spokesman stated that the problems at the co-operative's meat division were 'out of character' for an enterprise with successful dairy processing, livestock marts and farm

[164] Liston, *From Fair to Mart and Beyond*, p. 200.
[165] John Lyons interview (15 Aug. 2018).
[166] *IFJ*, 10 Sept. 1977; Interview with John Lyons (15 Aug. 2018).
[167] John Lyons interview (15 Aug. 2018).
[168] *Longford Leader*, 12 June, 2 Oct. 1987; *IFJ*, 12 Sept. 1987.
[169] Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, p. 130.

supplies businesses.[170] A similar air of confidence pervaded Cork Marts' purchase of IMP, which was characterised as one of the greatest achievements of the Irish co-operative movement.[171] This level of belief in the co-operative model was underpinned by the achievements of farmer-owned businesses in the dairy processing industry through the creameries, and the livestock sales sector by virtue of the marts network.[172] Indeed, while Clover Meats was heading towards closure in 1984, Waterford Co-operative's dairy business was returning profits of Ir£1.25 million.[173] The other major co-operative dairy processors posted equally healthy profits during this period. Kerry Co-op recorded profits Ir£4 million in 1983, profits at Mitchelstown exceeded Ir£1.4 million for 1982, while Avonmore returned profits of Ir£2.7 million for the same year.[174] The one exception was the Charleville-based co-operative, Golden Vale, which had profits of Ir£900,000 for 1983, but recorded losses from 1980 to 1982 due to poor investments.[175]

The ability of the farmer-owned creameries to impose discipline on their milk suppliers was a significant factor in their relative success compared to the meat sector co-operatives. Unlike beef producers, dairy farmers were supplying a perishable product to the creameries; therefore they needed the security of a guaranteed outlet or buyer for their milk each day. Changing milk processors on a monthly or even an annual basis was not a realistic option for dairy farmers. As a consequence, the dairy co-operatives effectively had a captive supply base.[176] 'This engendered discipline among suppliers and the co-operative could more easily enforce its rules,' explained former IFA president, Donie Cashman.[177] Yet, in contrast to the dairies, the co-operatives in the beef industry did not have a contracted or tied cattle supply, and they therefore lacked the levers to impose discipline on their farmer shareholders.[178] Beef farmers invariably sold their livestock wherever or to whoever offered the highest price. 'I think that some of the farmers wanted to have it both ways. They wanted to

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[170] *Sligo Champion*, 11 Apr. 1980; *IT*, 5 Aug. 1977.
[171] Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, p. 103.
[172] Liston, *From Fair to Mart and Beyond,* pp 189-242; Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, pp 72-103; Joe Murray, 'From Grass to Milk – The Moorepark Story', in Michael Miley (ed.), *Growing Knowledge*, pp 61-75.
[173] *IFJ*, 9 June 1984.
[174] *Kilkenny People*, 1 July 1983; *II*, 1 July 1983; *IFJ*, 21 May 1983, 14 Jan. 1984.
[175] *CE*, 19 Apr. 1984; *II*, 19 Apr. 1984.
[176] Con Lucey interview (25 Oct. 2017); Former IFA president, Donie Cashman, in conversation with Declan O'Brien (3 July 2019); *II*, 29 Sept. 2020.
[177] Donie Cashman in conversation with Declan O'Brien (3 July 2019).
[178] Ibid.

sell their cattle to the factory for a good price, but they also wanted to be able to benefit from the live export trade by selling through the marts when that suited them,' Colbert recalled.[179] This search for the highest price tallied with the perception that farmers involved in beef made as much out of trading animals as they did from rearing or finishing stock.[180] However, while Meath beef farmer, Jimmy Cosgrave, accepted that he was as likely to sell cattle to a live exporter as to a factory buyer – even though he was a shareholder in Dublin Meat Packers – he argued that this was a reflection on the low margins in beef, which meant that the highest price had to be taken. 'You didn't have a choice... When a fellow came to you [to buy cattle], you didn't worry if he was buying for the factory or buying for export.'[181] Interestingly, Maurice Colbert contends that co-operative mart organisations such as Cork Marts and GVM should never have invested in meat processing because the livestock sales business was inextricably linked to cattle exports. He maintains that there was, therefore, a clear conflict of interest in seeking to operate in what were essentially competing arms of the livestock trade.[182] The inability of meat processors, both co-operative and privately owned, to build a loyal supplier base impacted negatively on profits as the factories were forced to compete against one another for cattle. This added to costs and eroded already slender margins.

The absence of a singular focus on profit was a significant factor in the beef co-operatives' demise. In fact, the raison d'être of co-operatives was a fundamental cause of their commercial weakness in beef processing. Co-operatives are defined as organisations that are 'owned by members' and, crucially, 'whose benefits go mainly to these members'.[183] In the context of the beef industry this meant that co-operatives had to provide an ongoing outlet for farmer-shareholders' cattle, while paying the best possible price for the livestock. This was the very reason farmers supported and funded the purchase of meat businesses by co-operatives.[184] Unfortunately, the pressure to pay a premium price for cattle ultimately compromised the viability of

[179] *II*, 29 Sept. 2020.
[180] Donie Cashman in conversation with Declan O'Brien (3 July 2019); *II*, 22 Sept. 2020.
[181] Discussion with Jimmy Cosgrave (14 June 2018).
[182] *II*, 29 Sept. 2020.
[183] Nikola Balnave, Greg Patmore, *A Global History of Co-operative Business*, (New York, 2018), p. 2.
[184] *IFJ*, 26 Oct. 1968; Con Lucey interview (25 Oct. 2017); Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, pp 127-128.

these co-operatives.[185] Former IFA chief economist, Con Lucey, explained that beef farmers had traditionally been 'price takers' in the livestock industry, as the value of cattle was set by the live exporters and the meat factories.[186] However, Cork Marts' purchase of IMP in 1968-69 was portrayed as a solution to this problem by enabling farmers to take control of the livestock business. Cork Marts and other supporters of the IMP purchase, such as NFA, Macra na Feirme , IAOS and the *Farmers' Journal*, naively expected that owning the biggest meat processor in the country inevitably meant increased returns for livestock producers since a greater share of the final market value of every animal slaughtered was returned to the co-operative's shareholders.[187] Similar justifications were made by Golden Vale Marts (GVM) for its development of the beef slaughter plant in Rathdowney, and later by North Connacht Farmers (NCF) following its purchase of the beef factory in Sligo.[188] Supporting cattle prices and making profits, however, are not complimentary endeavours in beef processing – as the co-operatives learned to their cost. For example, GVM chairman, John P. McCarthy, claimed that Golden Vale Meats' 'showed its value' during the cattle crisis of 1974-75 when it was one of the country's few processors to pay farmers what he judged was 'a realistic price' for cattle. However, a cash injection of £500,000 was required by GVM Meats in June 1976 to save the business from collapse.[189] Similarly, Clover Meats' managing director, Michael Collins, was forced to defend the co-operative's cow prices in October 1975 when questioned by farmer representatives at a meeting of the board's steering committee. However, the following April the business announced losses of more than £1.5 million.[190] Meanwhile, IMP paid 2p per lb above what private processors were quoting for bullocks and heifers during the cattle crisis of 1974-75, in response to pressure from the farm organisations and the *Farmers' Journal.* This action cost the business potential revenues of close to £70,000 per week during the peak cattle supply months of September and October.[191] While the move was in keeping with the co-operative ethos of supporting farmer-shareholder incomes, the measure is difficult to justify

[185] Liston, *From Fair to Mart and Beyond,* p. 224; Minutes of meeting of the Steering Committee of Clover Meats, 13 Oct. 1975; *IFJ*, 10 Apr. 1976; *IFJ*, 1 June, 13 July, 14 Sept., 28 Sept., 5 Oct. 1974.
[186] Con Lucey interview (25 Oct. 2017).
[187] Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, pp 75-103; Con Lucey interview (25 Oct. 2017).
[188] *IT*, 5 Aug. 1977; Liston, *From Fair to Mart and Beyond,* p. 194.
[189] Liston, *From Fair to Mart and Beyond,* p. 224.
[190] Minutes of meeting of the Steering Committee of Clover Meats, 13 Oct. 1975; IFA, 10 Apr. 1976.
[191] *IFJ*, 1 June, 13 July, 14 Sept., 28 Sept., 5 Oct. 1974.

from an enterprise that struggled to compete with more efficient privately-owned meat companies during the 1970s and 1980s and that invested just 0.7 per cent of turnover in fixed assets during its last ten years.[192] This absence of what John B. Keane described as a 'selfish' focus on profits weakened the co-operatives. The former CBF and NCF Meats executive explained that beef processors, because of the high turnover in the sector, had the potential to 'make a lot of money', or equally to 'lose a lot of money' if they made 'one slip along the way'.[193] This is evident from the slender profit margins and sizeable losses that many processors recorded in the twelve years following Ireland's EEC accession.[194] While accepting that farmer shareholders were entitled to have 'a big say' in the running of co-operative meat businesses, Keane said this input had to be balanced by an 'acknowledgement that the company had to make profits as well'.[195] Unfortunately, this acknowledgement was not always forthcoming.

The rigid committee management structure employed by the co-operatives also hindered their profitability. It curbed the flexibility of the businesses and restricted their ability to react to price and market changes in what was an extremely fluid sector.[196] In contrast to the streamlined management of the private processors, the co-operatives had a far more complex structure. The Cork Marts-IMP committee configuration illustrated this point. A series of regional committees elected two councils, one for the Cork Marts' area of south Munster, and the other for the rest of the country. These councils elected a committee of management of twenty-seven, which in turn elected a board of eleven. As the *Irish Times* observed, it was 'democracy gone mad'.[197] Maurice Colbert agreed: 'Cork Marts-IMP had become top heavy with committees, and the decision-making process was strangled to death.'[198] Whether all IMP's committees were required, or not, was questioned not only by industry commentators such as the *Farmers' Journal*, but also by some committee members. Paddy O'Keeffe described the farmer representation model at IMP as 'a complicated structure' which 'had not worked with full efficiency and with optimum

192 CE, 23 Oct. 1975; *IFJ*, 20 Sept. 1980, 7 Sept. 1985.
193 John B. Keane interview (19 Feb. 2019).
194 Discussion with Jimmy Cosgrave (14 June 2018); John B. Keane interview (19 Feb. 2019); *IFJ*, 12 Dec. 1981, 7 Dec. 1985.
195 John B. Keane interview (19 Feb. 2019).
196 Interview with former International Meats Company employee, Interviewee A (9 Aug. 2018); John B. Keane interview (19 Feb. 2019); *IT*, 12 Aug. 1986; *IFJ*, 8 Jan. 1983, 21 Sept. 1985.
197 *IT*, 12 Aug. 1986.
198 Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, pp 128-129.

performance'.[199] Meanwhile, Tom Cleary from Cloughjordan, Co Tipperary was on an IMP regional council, but the dairy farmer – who was a director of Bord Bainne – doubted he had much to offer the beef processor. 'I was really a dairy man, and I should not have been on it [the IMP regional council] by right, but I was elected because people knew me,' Cleary explained.[200] Despite criticism of the committee structure, IMP's interim chief executive, Bob Stewart, rejected suggestions of a 'management by committee syndrome' at the co-operative. Tellingly, however, he admitted in September 1985 that all critical decisions at the business were taken by a sub-committee headed by IMP chairman, P.I. Meagher.[201] The impact of this committee structure was that decision making – such as setting livestock prices – became more susceptible to farmer lobbying. In addition, it restricted the co-operatives' freedom to react quickly to market changes as the committees did not meet every day. 'The co-operatives were too cumbersome to accommodate the fast-moving nature of the meat business,' John B. Keane observed.[202]

In-fighting at board level and an inability to attract experienced beef industry management also undermined and weakened the co-operatives. The discord within Clover Meats' during the late 1970s illustrated the corrosive impact of board divisions.[203] Members of the society's steering committee claimed that deliberate leaks from board meetings contributed to the resignation of Clover Meats' general manager, Michael Collins, in July 1976. Board members bemoaned the reputational damage that such actions inflicted on the co-operative, and warned that the practice was continuing.[204] Board differences also surfaced within Cork Marts-IMP. The co-operative's chairman, Batt Higgins, was voted off the board by angry farmers after the business posted losses of Ir£1.8 million for 1982-83. The position was taken on by Tipperary farmer, P.I. Meagher – who had also served time as chairman of Cahir Mart and the Irish Agricultural Wholesale Society (IAWS) – but the *Farmers' Journal* reported that there was plenty of interest in the office despite IMP's difficulties, with a number of IFA members 'jockeying to take over the role'.[205] Similarly, John P. McCarthy was replaced as GVM chairman, and three other directors lost their

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[199] *IFJ*, 8 Jan. 1983.
[200] Tom Cleary interview (14 Oct. 2016).
[201] *IFJ*, 21 Sept. 1985.
[202] John B. Keane interview (19 Feb. 2019).
[203] Minutes of meeting of the Steering Committee of Clover Meats, 19 July 1976.
[204] Ibid.
[205] *IFJ*, 24 Oct. 1983, 7 Jan. 1984.

positions, after the Rathdowney meat factory investment brought the marts' group to the brink of bankruptcy.[206] Unfortunately for the co-operative meat processors, finding suitable candidates to take up senior management positions was not as easy as replacing chairmen. Clover Meats had three general managers during its last nine years of operations; IMP failed to replace Jerry Beechinor and had no chief executive for most of its final year of trading, while Rathdowney was run by four board members for its last three months.[207] These difficulties were not confined to the Munster-based meat processing co-operatives. NCF chief executive, Jim O'Mahony, admitted that the co-operative lacked the expertise to correctly manage its beef factory in Sligo, and he identified the business's failure to recruit suitable staff as a major weakness.[208] The inability of the co-operatives to fill these senior positions suggests that appropriate candidates within the industry did not believe farmer-owned meat businesses had a future. This in itself was telling.

The difficulties encountered by co-operatives in the beef processing industry during the 1970s and 1980s were not unique to Ireland and were mirrored internationally. 'The record of co-operatives in the meat sector worldwide has not been impressive,' as Maurice Colbert told a National Farmers' Union (NFU) conference in 1999.[209] This was particularly the case in Britain where the decline in the commercial fortunes of the Fatstock Marketing Corporation (FMC) in the early 1980s, was a serious setback to farmer involvement in UK meat processing.[210] Established in 1954 as a co-operative by the NFU, the FMC initially purchased finished cattle directly from farmers for resale as dead meat through wholesale outlets.[211] Significant expansion resulted in the status of the business changing to a publicly listed company by 1960, albeit still predominantly farmer owned. By 1970 FMC was the largest meat handling concern in Europe, with sizeable pig, poultry,

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[206] *II*, 5 Dec. 1977; *IFJ*, 10 Dec. 1977.
[207] Liston, *From Fair to Mart and Beyond,* pp 226-230; *IFJ*, 7 Aug. 1976, 12 July 1980, 7 Sept. 1985.
[208] *Western Journal*, 30 May 1980.
[209] Presentation by IAOS executive, Maurice Colbert, entitled *'Successful Co-operation In The Meat and Livestock Sector – The Irish Experience'* to the NFU/Barclay Conference at Ardingly, England on 17 Nov. 1999.
[210] Smith, *From Campbell to Kendall: a history of the NFU*, pp 165-66; Holderness, *British agriculture since 1945*, pp 88-89.
[211] Martin, *The Development of Modern Agriculture*, p. 79; Holderness, *British agriculture since 1945*, pp 88-89;

beef and lamb businesses.[212] In fact, Cork-based live-shipper, Noel Murphy, exported fat cattle to FMC factories in the southwest of England.[213] The enterprise was in serious financial trouble, however, by the early 1980s. In 1982 it announced losses of over £2.5 million, and sold its Irish meat factories in Newry and Sallins the following year.[214] British agricultural historian, B.A. Holderness, attributed FMC's commercial difficulties to an unstable British bacon market, increased poultry imports and erratic financial management. However, in a striking parallel to the experience of Irish meat industry co-operatives, Holderness and Guy Smith – who wrote a history of the NFU – both maintain that attempts by FMC to support the price paid to farmers for livestock contributed the business's failure.[215] Interestingly, a share drive launched by the NFU to rescue FMC was abandoned due to 'farmer apathy' – a reaction similar to that of GVM and Clover Meats' shareholders in Ireland. The share drive had a target of £10 million, but less than ten per cent of that figure was raised. The business was finally sold in 1983.[216] A similar fate befell the farmer-owned Aberdeenshire co-operative, Buchan Meats.[217] It was lauded in the 1960s as an example of what could be achieved if Irish co-operatives took a greater share in the meat processing industry.[218] Having made it through the 1980s, its closure in 1996 was blamed on reduced profit margins and over-capacity in Scottish meat processing.[219] In his NFU conference address Colbert maintained that co-operatives were not suited to 'high-risk commercial operations such as the meat business', which have significant working capital requirements but provide a return on investment of just one to two per cent.[220] The difficult trading environment for 'agri-co-operatives' was compounded in the 1980s by increased deregulation and globalisation of markets, Patmore and Balnave noted, and greater competition from 'transnational agri-food corporations'.[221] Co-operatives involved in meat processing were particularly exposed to changes

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[212] Smith, *From Campbell to Kendall: a history of the NFU*, pp 121; Holderness, British agriculture since 1945, pp 88-89.
[213] Hurley, *Noel Murphy*, p. 126.
[214] *IFJ*, 14 May, 19 Sept., 8 Oct. 1983.
[215] Holderness, *British agriculture since 1945*, pp 88-89; Smith, *From Campbell to Kendall: a history of the NFU,* pp 165-66.
[216] *IFJ*, 13 Aug., 20 Aug. 1983; Smith, *From Campbell to Kendall: a history of the NFU*, pp 165-66.
[217] *The Herald* (Scotland), 31 Jan. 1996; *IT*, 29 Feb. 1996.
[218] *IFJ*, 24 September 1966.
[219] *The Herald* (Scotland), 31 January 1996.
[220] Presentation by IAOS executive, Maurice Colbert, entitled *'Successful Co-operation In The Meat and Livestock Sector – The Irish Experience'* to the NFU/Barclay Conference at Ardingly, England, 17 Nov. 1999.
[221] Balnave & Patmore, *A Global History of Co-operative Business*, p. 101.

internationally. Even in countries where co-operatives prospered in dairying, such the Netherlands, Denmark, New Zealand and Canada, Colbert maintained that a similar level of success was not achieved by farmer-owned beef processors, the exception being France where the state invested in beef processing using a partnership model with co-operatives which was effective.[222]

The collapse of Clover Meats' and the sale by Cork Marts of its IMP factories sounded the death knell for direct farmer involvement in the meat processing sector. However, there were legacy issues and implications beyond the co-operative movement's immediate exit from beef and lamb slaughtering. A long-term consequence was the damage inflicted on cattle producers' confidence in the concept of beef sector co-operatives.[223] Although the three main dairies – Kerry Group, Avonmore and Dairygold – all purchased meat businesses during the 1980s and 1990s, they had largely exited the sector by the new millennium, or 2003 in the case of Dairygold, and no further efforts were made to establish a dedicated beef processing co-operative.[224] 'The expectation of farmers going into IMP was enormous, hence the real feeling of betrayal when the closures finally came. The story of co-operatives in beef is a chastening and sad one,' Colbert recalled.[225] The feeling of disappointment in the case of Clover Meats was exacerbated by the fact that 750 farmers were owed more than Ir£1.64 million for cattle and pigs supplied to the co-operative prior to its closure.[226] The compulsory cancellation by Cork Marts of 14,000 shareholdings in 1989 added to the sense of disillusionment. These shares were largely owned by farmers who had invested in the Cork Marts-IMP venture in 1968-69 but no longer traded with the co-operative a generation later. 'It may make some farmers more wary about future fund raising,' the *Irish Times* commented.[227] Moreover, the dramatic closure of IMP was a serious embarrassment to the *Farmers' Journal* and IFA, both of which had strongly supported the initial proposal for Cork Marts to purchase IMP, and subsequently played central roles in organising the farmer share drive which funded the deal.[228] More important, however, was the reputational

[222] *II*, 29 Sept. 2020.
[223] Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, p. 128; *II*, 22 Sept. 2020.
[224] *IFJ*, 18 Apr. 1992, 23 Dec. 1995, 12 June 1999; *Anglo-Celt*, 16 Apr. 1992; *Connaught Telegraph*, 14 July 1999; *CE*, 22 Apr. 1992, 11 Sept. 2003; Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, p. 128.
[225] *II*, 29 Sept. 2020.
[226] *Nationalist*, 1 Dec. 1984; *IFJ*, 6 Apr. 1985.
[227] *IT*, 10 Sept. 1989.
[228] Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, pp 75-76; *IFJ*, 26 Oct. 1968 to 18 Jan. 1969.

damage which the failure of Clover Meats and IMP visited on the co-operative movement as a whole. Workers' Party TD, Tomás MacGiolla, and Fine Gael's Brendan Durcan asked why IMP, having received over Ir£2 million in FEOGA and IDA grants since 1974, was in dispute with workers at its former Leixlip facility over redundancy payments.[229] Meanwhile, the *Cork Examiner* questioned the 'advisability' of having majority farmer representation on the board of IMP: 'Farmers by their nature are producers of raw materials. They have not got the marketing experience for an enterprise of this magnitude'.[230] The fact that there was majority farmer representation on the board of the very successful Kerry Co-op at the time was conveniently forgotten by the newspaper.

CONSOLIDATION AND CHANGE

The closure of IMP and Clover Meats heralded a period of consolidation and change in the beef processing industry. The exit of the co-operatives from the meat business provided the space for existing industry leaders such as Larry Goodman's AIBP to continue its expansion, while also facilitating the growth of a number of new entrants.[231] Among the new arrivals was Master Meat Packers, controlled by former CBF executive Paschal Phelan.[232] Phelan helped establish CBF's office in Milan in 1975 and was involved in marketing campaigns in Italy, Belgium, Holland, Germany and Greece.[233] He was subsequently hired in 1980 by Larry Goodman to expand AIBP's vacuum-packing operations but left the company three years later and established his own meat business when he bought Hegarty Meats in Bandon – a small local factory that mainly killed dairy cows.[234] However, while he started modestly, Phelan developed a sizeable beef operation with a turnover of close to Ir£100 million during the following four years. He purchased Omagh Meats in 1984 from the British-based Dalgety Group, Clonmel Foods in 1985 from Clover Meats, in 1986 he secured a factory in Freshford, Co Kilkenny from the Staunton family, while

[229] Dáil debates Vol. 364, No. 6, 6 Feb. 1986; Dáil debates Vol. 365, No. 11, 30 Apr. 1986.
[230] *CE*, 19 Sept., 1985.
[231] *Munster Express*, 13 Sept. 1985; *IFJ*, 2 Mar. 1985.
[232] *Nationalist,* 2 Mar. 1985; *IFJ*, 2 Mar. 1985.
[233] Note from CBF head office in Dublin to the Irish Embassy in Rome, 30 July 1975 (NAI, DFA/2014/63/8); *IP*, 1 Oct. 1987.
[234] *IFJ*, 13 Aug. 1983, 24 Jan. 1987; *Nationalist,* 5 Oct. 1985.

also building a new processing plant at Ballymahon in Co Longford.[235] An earlier entrant into the beef business was Oliver Murphy, who owned Hibernia Meats. The firm was established by Murphy in 1978 and operated mainly as a beef trading company. Murphy later developed a beef processing plant in Athy with the French meat business, CD Viandes. Hibernia Meats was among the first Irish firms to export beef to Iraq.[236] Murphy was one of the beef industry's leading lights in the 1970s. He joined CBF straight from college in 1971, and worked on the first promotional campaign for Irish beef in Britain, before leaving after four years to join IMP. His close contacts with Fianna Fáil, and Minister for Agriculture, Jim Gibbons, in particular, paid dividends in 1977 when he became the youngest ever chairman of CBF at just thirty years of age.[237] Sher Rafique's Halal Meat Packers was another dynamic meat company that underwent significant expansion in the early 1980s. At the start of the decade the company was among Europe's largest suppliers of ritually-killed or halal lambs for the EEC's growing Muslim community, with the factory in Ballyhaunis slaughtering 20,000 head per week.[238] By 1981 the company had contracts to supply halal beef to Algeria and Tunisia. The firm completed a major extension at its Ballyhaunis site to meet its additional processing requirements, and also purchased the former NCF factory in Sligo in March 1983.[239] Later that summer Halal Meats had three factories in the northwest after the company bought Cunniffe's factory at Ballaghaderreen – which, as noted earlier in the chapter, had controversially been run for a period by Towey Meats.[240]

Dawn Meats and Kepak were the other two meat processors of note to emerge in the 1980s. Indeed, both of these firms have played a central role in the development of the modern Irish beef industry over the last forty years. Dan Browne was the public face of Dawn Meats. As noted earlier in the chapter, Browne established a boning and cold store facility at Carroll's Cross near Kilmacthomas, Co Waterford after leaving IMP in 1980. This venture was in partnership with Queally family, who were also

[235] *Nationalist,* 2 Mar. 1985; *IP*, 1 Oct. 1987; *Sunday Independent*, 21 June 1987; *II*, 27 June 1986; *IFJ*, 13 Aug. 1983, 18 Aug. 1984, 2 Mar. 1985, 25 Jan. 1986, 19 July 1986, 8 Nov. 1986.
[236] *Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the Beef Processing Industry*, pp 633-639; *IFJ*, 19 Nov. 1977, 23 Mar. 1985; *II*, 21 May 1998.
[237] O'Toole, *Meanwhile Back at the Ranch*, p. 152; *IFJ*, 12, 19 Nov. 1977; *II*, 21 May 1998.
[238] *IFJ*, 19 Jan. 1980.
[239] *Sligo Champion*, 1 Apr. 1983; *IFJ*, 3 Jan., 5 Sept. 1981.
[240] Minutes of the IFA national livestock committee meeting for 14 Jan. , 22 July 1981; *IFJ*, 3 Jan., 6 July 1983.

involved in pig processing.[241] In autumn 1985 Dawn Meats moved more directly into the cattle slaughter business after the firm opened a new factory at Grannagh outside Waterford city, on the site of a former Irish Paper Mills' plant. The modern facility had the capacity to kill four hundred cattle per day, although it initially had a production workforce of just fifty.[242] Kepak emerged as a force in the beef business at the same time as Dawn Meats. The company was started by Noel Keating, who moved to Dublin in the 1960s from Kilrush in west Clare after completing an apprenticeship in the family-owned butcher shop.[243] Described by his contemporaries as 'real entrepreneur', Keating was running butcher shops in Francis Street and Thomas Street by the mid-1970s, and diversified into the wholesale meat supply business following the purchase of an abattoir at Ossery Road in the East Wall area of the capital. He also took a share in Goldstar Meats, based in Glasnevin, which manufactured burgers and other meat products.[244] Keating moved into the mainstream beef slaughter business when he constructed a purpose-built meat factory in 1980 at a green-field site at Clonee, Co Meath, on the outskirts of Dublin.[245] Kepak's base in Meath, allied to Keating's intense love of Gaelic football, led to a very successful association with the county's GAA teams. Indeed, the firm sponsored Meath's senior footballers during two All-Ireland-winning campaigns in the 1980s.[246] Kepak was equally successful in the business arena. By the time of Keating's sudden death in 1993, the firm had a turnover of Ir£180 million and operated out of five slaughter and processing sites at Clonee, Glasnevin, Hackettstown, Athleague and Ballymahon.[247]

Ironically, the success of the meat sector's new entrants was informed by a determination not to repeat the failings of the co-operatives in terms of cattle pricing and staffing levels. Industry commentator, Martin Ryan, recalled that the owners of these emerging meat companies brought a very clear focus on margins by paying what he described as an 'economic price' for cattle. The companies could take this approach since they were privately owned and were therefore not susceptible to farmer lobbying – in contrast to IMP and Clover Meats. 'These factories paid over the

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[241] *Munster Express*, 30 May, 1986; *IFJ*, 3 Oct. 1980.
[242] *Waterford News and Star*, 18 Oct. 1985; *Munster Express*, 30 May, 1986.
[243] Interview with Sylvester Byrne, trained butcher and former AFT staff member (11 July 2018); Discussion with Jimmy Cosgrave (14 June 2018).
[244] *IP,* 19 Apr. 1993; *IFJ*, 24 Apr. 1993; *Meath Chronicle*, 24 Apr. 1993; Sylvester Byrne interview, (11 July 2018).
[245] *IFJ*, 24 Apr. 1993; *Meath Chronicle*, 8 May 1993.
[246] *Meath Chronicle*, 8 May 1993; *IP,* 19 Apr. 1993.
[247] *IFJ,* 24 Apr. 1993.

odds at times when they needed stock, but they could bring it [the price of cattle] back on the double whenever they got an opportunity,' Ryan explained.[248] This assessment tallies with views expressed by Paschal Phelan. He blamed the closure of IMP and Clover Meats on the co-operatives' inability to control costs, and the committee management structure which restricted their ability to take decisive action when needed.[249] In terms of costs, companies such as Kepak, Dawn Meats and Master Meat Packers had the added advantage of effectively being start-up ventures. This meant that the firms hired staff as required, which controlled overheads. For example, Master Meat Packers re-opened the Clonmel Foods factory with just eighty workers, compared to a workforce of 170 when Clover Meats went into receivership.[250] Similarly, Dawn Meats hired just fifty staff when starting operations at its Grannagh site, as already noted.[251] Unfortunately, choosing who among the eight hundred or so former Clover Meats' workers was to be employed by the meat companies that purchased the co-operative's factories, or expanded following its closure, proved an extremely contentious issue in Waterford. Former Clover Meats' worker John Treacy maintained that anyone who was active in the union, as he had been, was not hired by either AIBP after the company purchased the Christendom plant, or by Dawn Meats. 'I never got any work after [Clover Meats closed],' Treacy admitted.[252] In fact, the Workers' Party in Waterford claimed a blacklist of union representatives was being operated by Dawn Meats and AIBP. However, this allegation was flatly rejected by Dan Browne who pointed out that Dawn Meats had hired former Clover Meats' workers.[253] The start-up operations developed by Dawn Meats and Kepak meant the plants were also among the country's most technologically advanced, delivering savings in terms of labour requirements and cattle throughput.[254] Even the Clonmel plant purchased by Master Meat Packers' had a modern slaughter line which was commissioned shortly before Clover Meats collapsed.[255] Other private operators remained active despite the changed trading environment of the mid-1980s. Among the four largest independent meat businesses that came through this period of flux

[248] Conversation with Martin Ryan – an agricultural journalist who has worked with RTÉ, the *Limerick Leader,* the *Cork Examiner* and the *Irish Independent* over the last fifty years – (25 Sept. 2020).
[249] *IFJ*, 8 Nov. 1985.
[250] *Nationalist,* 5 Oct. 1985.
[251] *Waterford News and Star*, 18 Oct. 1985; *Munster Express*, 30 May, 1986.
[252] John Treacy interview (17 July 2019).
[253] *CE*, 9 Oct. 1986; *Waterford News and Star*, 10 Oct. 1986.
[254] *IFJ*, 24 Apr. 1993; *Waterford News and Star*, 18 Oct. 1985; *Munster Express*, 30 May, 1986.
[255] *Nationalist,* 7 Sept., 5 Oct. 1985.

were Kildare Chilling which was controlled by Sean Conlon, and Slaney Meats in Bunclody, Co Wexford which was managed by local businessman, Bert Allen. Both of these firms killed both beef and lamb.[256] In addition, Frank Mallon's Liffey Meats operation at Ballyjamesduff, Co Cavan remained an important outlet for cattle in the northeast, while Agra Meats – controlled by German national Friedhelm Danz – had developed a factory at Watergrasshill in east Cork that was capable of killing up to a thousand cattle per week.[257] The factory, which was bought from Ross and Company and refitted in 1983, was operated by Michael Behan who had joined Agra Meats from the Pigs and Bacon Commission. Agra Meats also owned Abbey Meats in Belfast.[258]

Larry Goodman's AIBP was the primary beneficiary of the co-operative's exit from beef processing, but the company's continued expansion and growth stoked fears among beef farmers and the IFA that the firm was gaining a stranglehold on the industry.[259] Despite the emergence of Halal Meats and Master Meat Packers as sizeable operators in the sector during the mid-1980s, AIBP's purchase of Clover Meats' main factory at Christendom on the outskirts of Waterford city for over Ir£2 million in 1985 meant the company controlled close to one-third of the country's total cattle kill.[260] Goodman's firm now had six slaughter and processing plants in the Republic. As well as Christendom, AIBP had the three plants it owned from the 1970s at Dundalk in Co Louth, as well as Cahir and Nenagh in Co Tipperary. In addition, it bought Amalgamated Meat Packers in Bagenalstown, Co Calow for Ir£2.3 million in 1980, as well as Dublin Meat Packers in 1983.[261] Moreover, the closure of Clover Meats enabled Goodman to expand his rendering business – the final processing of the offal and carcasses of the cattle left after primary butchering and boning – through the purchase of its National Proteins division.[262] However, the acquisition of Clover Meats' factories was not a seamless exercise, for either AIBP or Paschal Phelan's Master Meat Packers that took over the Clonmel Foods arm of the business. The 750 farmers who were owed Ir£1.64 million for cattle and pigs supplied to the co-

[256] *Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the Beef Processing Industry*, pp 698-702; *Sunday Independent*, 21 June 1987; *IFJ*, 2 Aug. 1980, 6 Oct. 1984.
[257] *Sunday Independent*, 21 June 1987; *IFJ*, 29 Oct. 1983.
[258] *IFJ*, 29 Oct. 1983; *Sunday Independent*, 21 June 1987.
[259] RTE news report on the sale of IMP's factory in Midleton, 6 Feb. 1986, from RTE News Archive (rte.ie/archives/collections/news) (accessed 9 Sept. 2020); *II*, 7 Feb. 1985; *IFJ*, 28 Sept. 1985.
[260] *II*, 7 Feb. 1985; *IFJ*, 28 Sept. 1985.
[261] *IFJ*, 21 June 1980, 16 July 1983.
[262] *Munster Express*, 13 Sept. 1985.

operative prior to its collapse demanded payment for their livestock from the buyers of the factories or from Clover Meats' bankers, ACC and Bank of Ireland.[263] A bitter dispute followed, which to some extent presaged the fractious discourse that often characterised relations between the privately-owned meat processors and beef farmers over the following three decades. The Clover Farmers' Creditors' Committee, which represented the unpaid livestock producers, called in February 1985 for a national boycott of AIBP by farmers unless Goodman's company agreed to settle the co-operative's outstanding debts to livestock producers. To complicate matters further, the former Clover Meats' workers picketed the plants demanding improved severance packages and the repayment of Ir£400,000 invested by employees in the co-operative.[264] In response, Goodman threatened to row back on plans to upgrade and re-open the Christendom factory and the National Proteins plant, and warned of a re-examination of his 'Irish operation' if the farmer boycott was enforced. In a move which showed the weakness of the farmers' position relative to that of AIBP, the boycott threat was withdrawn after being condemned by IFA president, Joe Rea.[265] The pickets by former workers were eventually lifted following the intervention of the ITGWU, while a settlement with the unpaid farmers in autumn 1985 gave them 60p for every £1 owed. This agreement was financed from funds provided by Goodman, Phelan, ACC and Bank of Ireland.[266] However, it was autumn 1986 before the Christendom factory was reopened or the farmers were paid for their cattle and pigs.[267]

IFA concerns that AIBP controlled too great a proportion of the country's cattle processing capacity following its purchase of Clover Meats' Christendom plant prompted a more serious confrontation between Goodman and the farm organisation when IMP's factories were sold in early 1986.[268] Goodman's interest in purchasing the IMP factories in Leixlip and Midleton, and the co-operative's Convenience Foods business in Tallaght, was widely reported in the national media in January 1986.[269] However, the IFA and some Cork Marts' directors were worried that the sale of Midleton to AIBP gave an excessive share of the cattle slaughtering capacity

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[263] *II*, 7 Feb., 11 Feb. 1985.
[264] *IFJ*, 28 Sept. 1985; *Munster Express*, 13 Sept. 1985; *II*, 11 Feb. 1985.
[265] *II*, 11 Feb. 1985; *Munster Express*, 27 Sept. 1985.
[266] *IFJ*, 31 Aug. 1985; *Munster Express*, 13 Sept. 1985; *II*, 11 Feb. 1985.
[267] *Munster Express*, 22 Aug., 31 Oct. 1986.
[268] *Sunday Independent*, 19 Jan. 1986; *IFJ*, 25 Jan. 1985.
[269] *IFJ*, 18 Jan. 1985; *Sunday Independent*, 19 Jan. 1986.

nationally to the company, particularly in east Munster, since Goodman already had factories in Cahir, Nenagh and Waterford.[270] If the government harboured similar reservations then it was careful not to publicise them. When questioned in the Dáil regarding the sale of IMP Midleton, Patrick Hegarty, junior minister at the Department of Agriculture, simply stated that 'a number of interesting proposals' appeared to be under consideration which 'would guarantee jobs and help to expand operations' at the site.[271] IFA was more forthright in its assessment. Its leader, Joe Rea, said the proposed purchase of Midleton by AIBP was not in farmers' interests – although he stressed that this opposition was motivated by a fear of 'monopolies' rather than a dislike of 'personalities'.[272] Rea's intervention confirms the IFA's anxiety about AIBP's continued growth, and the impact this could have on the livestock trade by reducing competition for cattle. Indeed, members of the IFA livestock committee claimed competition in the cattle trade in Leinster had been damaged by the closure of IMP's Leixlip factory in April 1985.[273] Unease at AIBP's continued expansion was highlighted by IFA support for what were described as more 'farmer friendly' alternatives.[274] One was a consortium involving Dawn Meats and the farmer-owned insurance company FBD; the other was the dairy processor, Kerry Group.[275] IFA's opposition to an AIBP take-over of Midleton was stated openly by the association's vice-president in Munster, Michael Slattery. He reiterated the association's position that a Larry Goodman-purchase of any of IMP's meat plants was likely to damage competition in the beef industry, adding that IFA's preference was for Kerry Co-operative to buy the Midleton plant.[276] For the IFA such a move provided an opportunity for Midleton to remain nominally in farmer ownership – since Kerry Group was still a co-operative – although the farmer owners were to be milk suppliers from Kerry rather than cattle producers from Cork. Goodman reacted angrily to what he described as IFA 'interference' in the sale process and he withdrew

[270] *Sunday Independent*, 19 Jan. 1986; RTE news report on the sale of IMP's factory in Midleton, 6 Feb. 1986, from RTE News Archive (rte.ie/archives/collections/news) (accessed 9 Sept. 2020); *IFJ*, 25 Jan. 1985.
[271] Dáil debates Vol. 363, No. 5, 29 Jan. 1986.
[272] RTE news report on the sale of IMP's factory in Midleton, 6 Feb. 1986, from RTE News Archive (rte.ie/archives/collections/news) (accessed 9 Sept. 2020).
[273] Minutes of the IFA national livestock committee meeting for 11 Mar. 1985.
[274] *Cork Examiner*, 29 Jan. 1986.
[275] RTE news report on the sale of IMP's factory in Midleton, 6 Feb. 1986, from RTE News Archive (rte.ie/archives/collections/news) (accessed 9 Sept. 2020); *Sunday Independent*, 19 Jan. 1986.
[276] *CE*, 29 Jan. 1986.

his offer.[277] Newspaper reports suggested that AIBP had also threatened to stop collecting the European Involvement Fund (EIF) levy on behalf of the IFA as a result of the Midleton disagreement, but there is no firm evidence that such action was ever considered.[278] Kerry Group eventually bought the Midleton plant and IMP's Convenience Foods operation for Ir£5 million, with Cork Marts retaining a twenty per cent stake in the business.[279] IMP's Leixlip site was purchased by a firm called Bayzana Limited for close to Ir£2.2 million in spring 1986, with the processing and canning equipment sold a year later following an agreement with the former workers on redundancy pay and other issues.[280] Media reports suggested that Bayzana was a vehicle used by a consortium of beef processors who wanted the Leixlip factory to remain closed. As the *Irish Times* noted at the time, 'This cannot be confirmed, but it has not been denied.'[281] If the industry rumours were correct then the market did what the politicians and the Department of Agriculture were unwilling to do, i.e. deal with over-capacity in meat processing by encouraging plants to leave the business. IMP's site at Grand Canal Street was sold in January 1986. It was bought for around Ir£1 million by Rhatigan Holdings, a property development company. The factory site ultimately provided a base for Google after the Grand Canal Basin area of Dublin became the city's digital hub.[282] Meanwhile, the IFA's promotion of Midleton's purchase by Kerry Group demonstrated the extent to which beef farmer influence in the meat business had been seriously compromised by the demise of IMP and Clover Meats. The larger dairy co-operatives now offered the sole realistic mechanism for farmer involvement in beef and lamb processing, and a means of halting the sector's total privatisation. However, this vehicle served only to delay the co-operatives' eventual departure from the red meat business, which was virtually complete by the end of the millennium.

The expansion in beef exports to the Middle East and North Africa was a further catalyst for change in the beef processing sector, both in terms of the industry's make-up and the increased government supports which the trade required. As previously outlined, the Arab world had become a significant outlet for live cattle exports by the

[277] *IFJ*, 15 Feb. 1986.
[278] *Evening Echo*, 12 Feb. 1986; *CE,* 4 Mar. 1986.
[279] *CE*, 13 Feb. 1986.
[280] *Evening Echo*, 20 May 1986; *IP*, 9 Aug. 1986; *IFJ*, 4 Apr. 1987.
[281] *IP*, 13 Aug. 1986; *IT*, 12 Aug. 1986.
[282] *IT*, 12 Aug. 1986; *IFJ*, 25 Jan. 1985.

late 1970s and early 1980s. Indeed, between 1979 and 1981 live exports increased by almost one-third to over 430,000 animals, with the Arab states of North Africa accounting for almost sixty per cent of the trade.[283] Libya imported more than 140,000 cattle in 1981, Egypt took close to 90,000 animals, while 25,000 head were shipped to Tunisia.[284]

YEAR	EXPORTS (t)	VALUE
1980	12,727	£14,282,000
1981	19,490	£23,194,000
1982	32,019	£50,165,000
1983	41,179	£51,344,000
1984	48,692	£68,107,000
1985	75,354	£96,515,000
1986	74,668	£84,383,000

Table 5.D: Tonnage and value of carcass beef exports to Middle East, 1980-86
Source: CSO

However, a fourteen per cent increase in CAP export refund supports on beef shipments to non-EEC countries in 1981, in addition to an oversupply of beef from domestic sources on the EEC market, combined to shift the Middle Eastern business from an exclusively live trade to a predominantly processed beef business.[285] Export refunds were CAP supports paid on agricultural commodities to bridge the difference between EEC intervention prices and world market prices. The fourteen per cent increase in export refunds was worth around 14p per lb on beef exports. This equated to an additional Ir£85 on a 600lb carcass.[286] By 1983 export refunds were worth between 47p per lb and 80p per lb depending on the cut of steer beef. This level of support, calculated at an average of 63p per lb, gave refund payments in excess of Ir£350 per carcass.[287] Beef exports to the Middle East were not only viable but lucrative given this level of CAP support. These higher refund payments resulted in

[283] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1981,* (Dublin, 1982), p. 31; CSO data on cattle exports provided to the author by Bord Bia.
[284] CSO data on cattle exports provided to the author by Bord Bia.
[285] *IFJ*, 11 Apr. 1981; *II*, 19 Sept. 1981.
[286] *II*, 19 Sept. 1981; *IFJ*, 11 Apr. 1981.
[287] Irish Meat Exporters' Association Yearbook and Diary 1984, p. 55.

exports of processed beef to the Middle East – including Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Iraq and Libya – expanding six-fold between 1980 and 1986. The overall tonnage of Irish beef sold to these states rose from almost thirteen thousand tonnes in 1980 to over 76,000 tonnes by 1985, as Table 5.D shows. The value of the trade increased accordingly, rising from Ir£14 million in 1980 to Ir£96 million five years later.[288] The growth in beef exports to the Middle East during the first half of the 1980s was mirrored by a corresponding reduction in sales of red meat to Britain and the rest of the EEC. As Table 5.E illustrates, annual sales of beef to the EEC, excluding Britain, averaged around 50,000 tonnes by 1984-86. This is back from 60,000 tonnes in 1981, and an average of close to 100,000 tonnes, including intervention, for 1978 and 1979.[289] There was a similar drop in the proportion of overall beef exports to Britain. While trade with the EEC's 'continental member states' accounted for twenty-eight per cent of Irish beef exports in 1981, this fell to twenty-three per cent by 1985, and to a low of fifteen per cent in 1986.[290] The continued operation of the variable premium scheme by the UK, which gave British processors a 10p per lb advantage over their Irish counterparts, contributed to the reduction in Irish beef sales to Europe, explained Eugene Regan of the Irish Meat Exporters' Association (IMEA) – which had succeeded IFMES as the primary representative body for meat processors in the early 1980s. Likening the variable premium to an 'export subsidy' for UK beef, Regan said British firms had been able to displace Irish product from a number of 'key segments' of the European market.[291] Meanwhile, beef exports to Britain fell to a low of 82,000 tonnes by 1984, before recovering to 120,000 tonnes in 1986. Moreover, the share of Irish beef exports that went to Britain fell from forty-six per cent to thirty-six per cent in the period from 1981 to 1986.[292] Still, Britain remained Ireland's primary beef export outlet in the 1980s despite the reduced volumes. However, the Arab world and Iran had eclipsed continental Europe as Ireland's second beef export market of choice by the middle of the decade.

[288] Based on data supplied to the author by the trade division of CSO.
[289] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1980*, p. 30; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1981*, pp 32-33; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1986*, p. 33.
[290] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1980*, p. 30; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1981*, pp 32-33; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1986*, p. 33.
[291] Irish Meat Exporters' Association Yearbook and Diary 1984, p. 11; *IFJ*, 7 Aug. 1984.
[292] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1980*, p. 30; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1981*, pp 32-33; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1986*, p. 33.

BREAKDOWN OF BEEF EXPORTS 1980-86						
		UK	REST OF EEC	MIDDLE EAST	ELSEWHERE	TOTAL
1980	Tonnes	162,000	123,000	13,000	46,000	344,000
	%	47	36	4	13	
1981	Tonnes	101,000	62,000	19,000	37,000	219,000
	%	46	28	9	17	
1982	Tonnes	98,000	55,000	32,000	24,000	209,000
	%	47	26	15	12	
1983	Tonnes	96,000	47,000	41,000	47,000	231,000
	%	42	20	18	20	
1984	Tonnes	82,000	41,000	49,000	37,000	209,000
	%	39	20	23	18	
1985	Tonnes	83,000	60,000	76,000	38,000	257,000
	%	32	23	30	15	
1986	Tonnes	121,000	52,000	75,000	91,000	339,000
	%	36	15	22	27	

Table 5.E: Destination of beef exports by tonnage and percentage, 1980 -86
Source: Department of Agriculture and CSO

The opening of the Middle East market for beef provided the opportunity for the country's main live shippers to diversify into meat processing. Purcells and Horgans had developed a strong working relationship with importers in North Africa, and Libya and Egypt in particular, which gave them the local connections and confidence to tender for beef import contracts in both countries. In fact, Purcell's contacts in the region were such that he helped arrange two meetings in Tripoli between Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Gaddafi and the then Fianna Fáil leader Charles Haughey. The 1984 visits came a time when Irish exports to the North African state had stalled due to Ireland's reluctance to purchase Libyan oil.[293] The live exporters' likely entry into the beef business was flagged in the farming press shortly after the EEC decision to increase export refunds in April 1981. Purcell was purchasing cattle for slaughter a

[293] Terry Clavin, 'Seamus Purcell', *Directory of Irish Biography,* www.ria.ie/research-projects/dictionary-irish-biography (accessed 06 Oct. 2020); Kevin Purcell interview (4 Nov. 2015); *CE*, 16 Feb. 1984; *Sunday Independent*, 26 Feb. 1984; *II*, 16 Feb. 1984.

month later, when his firm won a contract with AIBP to supply five thousand tonnes of chilled beef to Libya.[294] John Horgan also moved into processing, as noted earlier, with the Cork-based live shipper contract killing cattle at the Lyons' Group's factory in Charleville from 1983.[295] Purcell was slaughtering almost seven hundred cattle a week, eighteen months after entering the beef processing business, with these animals killed on a contract basis at the Clover Meats factories in Clonmel and Waterford, the IMP plants in Midleton and Leixlip, and at Roscrea Meats.[296] The Waterford-based exporter had plans to build a new factory, targeted at the requirements of the Muslim market, at a green-field site in Kilsheelan, Co Tipperary.[297] Given that Purcells' cattle-exporting base was close to Waterford port, a beef processing plant in south Tipperary arguably suited the business as it kept its main operating centres in the same general area – even though there were existing meat factories in Clonmel and Waterford. However, in 1983 the Kilsheelan plan was put in cold storage after Purcells bought Lurgan Meats in Co Armagh for an undisclosed price in the spring of 1983, and then paid almost Ir£2 million for FMC's plant in Sallins, Co Kildare after the British processor decided to depart the Irish meat sector. These two plants, and the contract-killing agreement in Roscrea and elsewhere, gave Purcell Meats an overall kill capacity of five thousand cattle per week.[298] Seamus Purcell was now the dominant figure in Ireland's livestock industry.[299] Indeed, the *Farmers' Journal* maintained the Purcell organisation had expanded to such an extent that the 'health of the Irish cattle industry' was 'closely allied to the well-being and the viability of the Purcell group'.[300] In addition to the two beef plants, Purcells bought the Robert Wilson Group's businesses in the Republic in February 1983. These included rendering facilities and pet food operations in Ringsend, Ballinasloe and Cahir.[301] Meanwhile, a network of more than ten farms across the country facilitated the purchase by Purcells of between four thousand and seven thousand cattle per week for export.[302]

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[294] *IFJ,* 11 Apr., 9 May 1981.
[295] John Lyons interview (15 Aug. 2015); *IFJ*, 4 Aug. 1984.
[296] *Nationalist*, 28 Aug. 1982; *IFJ*, 4 Sept., 9 Oct. 1982.
[297] *IFJ*, 7 Aug. 1982.
[298] *Kilkenny People*, 23 Sept. 1983; *Munster Express*, 23 Sept., 1983; *IFJ*, 19 Mar., 17 Sept. 1983.
[299] Terry Clavin, 'Seamus Purcell', *Directory of Irish Biography,* www.ria.ie/research-projects/dictionary-irish-biography (accessed 06 Oct. 2020).
[300] *Irish Farmers' Journal*, 30 April 1983.
[301] *II*, 26 Feb., 1983; *IFJ*, 19 Feb. 1983.
[302] Kevin Purcell interview (4 Nov. 2015); *IFJ*, 30 Apr. 1983; Terry Clavin, 'Seamus Purcell', *Directory of Irish Biography,* www.ria.ie/research-projects/dictionary-irish-biography (accessed 06 Oct. 2020).

Purcell's purchase of beef factories did not signal a winding down of the live export part of the business. He had paid Ir£10 million for two ships to transport livestock in 1981, and was involved in export contracts for more than 200,000 animals to Libya, Egypt and Tunisia the following year.[303] The live export business Purcell had developed in North Africa had catapulted him into 'national and international prominence', as Terry Clavin has pointed out, and remained the primary income generator for his expanding business.[304] Indeed, between 1983 and 1986 more than 500,000 Irish cattle were shipped to North Africa, with both Purcell and Horgan supplying the majority of this livestock.[305] The importance of Purcell to the beef sector was illustrated by his impact in the livestock marts. Kilkenny-based livestock auctioneer, George Candler, recalls that there was 'a buzz around the sales ring' every time Purcell's agents were buying at marts in the 1980s, because they helped put a floor or a base on prices.[306] However, operating as both a cattle exporter and a meat processor was a difficult assignment given the fraught relationship between the competing arms of the beef industry. The beef factories blamed live exports for the industry's ongoing problems in the 1980s, even though studies by the IDA and ESRI a decade earlier attributed low profit levels to a number of factors that included substandard meat marketing, excess slaughter capacity, and inefficient factories.[307]

In February 1982 the Confederation of Irish Industry (CII) – of which the factories' representative body, the Irish Meat Exporters' Association (IMEA), was a constituent member – claimed that the excessive live shipping of cattle was costing the economy Ir£64 million per year in reduced added value and resulted in the loss 2,500 jobs in meat plants over the previous fifteen months.[308] This was a frequent complaint from the factories and one that was repeated invariably when cattle supplies were particularly tight. For instance, the IMEA maintained that thirty-five per cent of the cattle available for slaughter during the first quarter of 1984 were exported on the

[303] *Munster Express*, 23 Sept., 1983; *IFJ*, 24 Oct. 1981, 6 Feb. 1982.

[304] Terry Clavin, 'Seamus Purcell', *Directory of Irish Biography,* www.ria.ie/research-projects/dictionary-irish-biography (accessed 06 Oct. 2020).

[305] CSO data on cattle exports provided to the author by Bord Bia; Terry Clavin, 'Seamus Purcell', *Directory of Irish Biography,* www.ria.ie/research-projects/dictionary-irish-biography (accessed 06 Oct. 2020).

[306] Conversation with George Candler of Kilkenny Mart (18 Sept. 2020).

[307] Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, pp 61-71; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, pp 100-102; *IFJ*, 6 Feb. 1982, 16 June 1984.

[308] *IP*, 3 Feb. 1982; *II*, 3 Feb. 1982; *IFJ*, 6 Feb. 1982.

hoof.[309] However, given the poor economic environment of early 1980s – when unemployment reached a new record of 144,000 in February 1982, and emigration was once more increasing – the obvious implication of the CII statement was that exporting cattle equated to exporting jobs, despite the benefits the trade brought in terms of increased cattle prices for farmers.[310] The timing of the CII's move was also instructive. It followed the announcement of deals by Purcells and Horgans to export 200,000 live cattle to Libya, Egypt and Tunisia, at a time when, as already stated, the country's main processors were struggling to secure livestock and were forced to operate a three-day working week.[311]

Purcell's furious response to what he perceived as an orchestrated effort by CII and IMEA to restrict live exports suggests that he remained committed to shipping cattle and that it continued to be a valuable arm of his business. He pointed out that the spring 1982 deals for live cattle shipments to North Africa were worth Ir£140 million in export earnings – as well as to farmers and rural communities – considerably more than the Ir£64 million CII said the trade was costing processors. Moreover, he claimed that cattle shippers had effectively opened up North Africa and the Middle East for beef exports by developing the live trade to the Arab states over the previous five years.[312] 'If the North African markets had not first been opened by the live trade for Ireland we would not have been able to clinch the recent valuable beef outlets negotiated,' Purcell said in response to the CII's February 1982 pronouncement. He urged beef processors to 'stop moaning' and to 'get off their bottoms' and develop new markets.[313] Purcell's comments prompted a series of very public and sharp exchanges between the processors and shippers. A subsequent letter to the *Farmers' Journal* from IMEA chief executive, Eugene Regan, rejected as 'nonsense' Purcell's claim that the live shippers opened up the North African market, and contended that it was the successful IMEA lobbying for increased export refunds on beef shipments to the Middle East and North Africa in 1981, rather than the live exporters' trading connections as Purcell suggested, that facilitated the opening of these meat markets.[314]

[309] *IFJ,* 16 June 1984.
[310] *CE*, 5 Feb. 1982; *II*, 9 Feb. 1982.
[311] *IFJ*, 2 Jan. 1982, 6 Feb. 1982; *IP*, 8 Feb. 1982.
[312] *IP*, 8 Feb. 1982; *IFJ*, 6 Feb. 1982.
[313] *IFJ*, 6 Feb. 1982.
[314] Eugene Regan letter, published by *IFJ*, 6 Feb. 1982.

The intensity of the exchanges between Purcell and Regan highlighted the strained relations between the live exporters and meat processors, which was a recurrent theme within the Irish livestock industry. More importantly, however, the dispute illustrates the issues, and egos, at the heart of these tensions. These centred on the perceived leadership of the industry in the lucrative Middle Eastern markets. Beef exports to North Africa and the Middle East were worth Ir£50 million in 1982, and reached Ir£100 million by 1985. This equated to over twenty per cent of total beef exports that year.[315] Tellingly, Regan's letter in the *Farmers' Journal* hinted at fears among factory owners that cattle shippers such as Purcell and Horgan could use the profits from their livestock exporting operations to compete for beef contracts in the region. He warned that such a move risked turning North Africa and the Middle East into a 'second Smithfield' – a reference to the renowned London meat market where Irish beef processors regularly undercut one another during the 1950s and 1960s.[316] Ironically, the IMEA and Regan had to represent Purcell's beef processing interests a year later, following the live exporter's purchase of FMC's factory in Sallins.[317]

POLITICS AND POLICY CHANGE

The Middle East trade continued to dominate beef processing during the 1980s, with access to the lucrative multi-million-pound contracts on offer heavily influencing the make-up and shape of the industry. Seamus Purcell and Larry Goodman were the most active Irish processors in the market by 1982, and they utilised the substantial revenues from this business to consolidate their grip on the Irish beef sector. For example, a contract to supply 54,000 tonnes of beef to Iraq – in addition to 130,000 chickens and two billion eggs – was agreed by Purcell in September 1981. This Iraqi deal potentially accounted for a quarter of the country's processed beef output, and was reported to be worth Ir£120 million.[318] However, Irish processors actually supplied just 17,000 tonnes of beef to Iraq in 1982, with these exports valued at Ir£34 million.[319] Still, the Iraqi deal illustrates the scale of the contracts on offer in the Middle East, and the increased buying power which the country's incredible oil

[315] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1986,* (Dublin, 1987), p. 24; Data on beef exports supplied to the author by the CSO.
[316] Eugene Regan letter, published by *IFJ*, 6 Feb. 1982.
[317] Irish Meat Exporters' Association Yearbook and Diary 1984, p. 23.
[318] *Evening Press*, 24 Sept. 1981; *IFJ*, 26 Sept. 1981.
[319] Statistics supplied to the author by the trade division of CSO.

wealth guaranteed. Iraq's annual oil revenues increased fifty-fold between 1972 and 1980, rising from $575 million to $26 billion.[320] Other beef contracts in the Middle East and North Africa followed. Purcell signed an agreement to supply 10,000 tonnes of beef to Libya in 1982, and a further 3,500 tonnes to Algeria. A beef supply deal with Iran in 1983 was reported to be worth Ir£20 million to Purcell Meats, while the firm was flying four plane-loads of beef a week from Shannon to Libya the following year.[321] Indeed, the turnover in Purcell's live exports and processing businesses was reported to be in excess of Ir£400 million by 1985.[322] Goodman was equally active. After signing a contract with Purcells to ship 5,000 tonnes of beef to Libya in 1981, Goodman's AIBP group subsequently supplied Iraq, Iran, Morocco and Egypt over the following four years, with the quoted prices for individual contracts ranging from Ir£17 million to Ir£80 million.[323]

The expansion of Purcell's and Goodman's meat processing operations in the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland and Britain mirrored the growth in the companies' beef exports to the Arab states and Iran.[324] Goodman and Purcell were the first Irish beef firms to purchase sizeable processing facilities in Britain. Purcells paid £1 million for the Scottish firm, FK Meats, which had a slaughter plant at Saltcoats, near Paisley.[325] Meanwhile, Goodman purchased FMC's plant at Newry in 1983, having bought Fermanagh Meats in 1980.[326] However, AIBP's 1985 acquisition of the Dalgety Meat Group – which had factories in York, Blisworth, Reading and Wellingborough – meant Goodman's firm had truly become an Anglo-Irish operation and was killing more than 400,000 cattle a year at twelve sites.[327] Interestingly, both Goodman and Purcell maintained that the shortage of cattle in Ireland was a factor in their decision to expand in Britain. 'Our development of new markets in the EEC, North Africa and the Middle East has highlighted a definite problem about the adequacy of raw material supplies in Ireland,' Goodman told the *Farmers' Journal*.[328] Meanwhile, Purcell claimed that Irish firms were not in a position to tender for the

[320] Frankopan, *The Silk Roads*, p. 443.
[321] *IFJ*, 28 Aug. 1982, 13 Aug. 1983, 28 July 1974.
[322] RTE news report on the sale of Purcell Meats' factories, 14 Oct. 1986, from RTE News Archive (rte.ie/archives/collections/news) (accessed 9 Sept. 2020); *II*, 23 Oct. 1986.
[323] *II*, 26 Jan. 1982, 8 Sept. 1983; *IP,* 4 Oct. 1983, 26 Mar. 1984; *IFJ*, 9 May 1981, 11 Aug. 1984.
[324] *Belfast Telegraph*, 11 Oct. 1983; *IFJ*, 8 Oct. 1983, 5 Jan., 6 Apr. 1985.
[325] *IFJ*, 6 Apr. 1985.
[326] *Belfast Telegraph*, 11 Oct. 1983.
[327] *Nenagh Guardian*, 22 Dec. 1984; *IFJ*, 5 Jan. 1985; *Belfast Telegraph*, 24 Dec. 1984.
[328] *IFJ*, 5 Jan. 1985.

largest contracts in the Middle East because of their inability to source sufficient cattle numbers in Ireland. He urged the government to expand suckler cow numbers by increasing subsidy payments on beef cows to Ir£70 per head.[329] The government appeared to take note, particularly after profound changes to EEC's dairy policy prompted a shift of emphasis from dairying back to beef.

The manner in which the Irish state reacted to the imposition of milk quotas in 1984 clearly demonstrates how the requirements of the beef industry influenced agricultural policy. Milk quotas were introduced by the European Commission in 1984 to reduce the EEC's overall dairy supplies and the quantities of produce such as butter that was going into intervention.[330] However, curbing dairy expansion meant the beef industry moved centre stage once more and became the primary focus in the state's efforts to increase overall farm output. 'Agricultural growth suddenly equals cattle,' explained Liam Downey, director of the farm advisory service, ACOT.[331] This represented a major policy shift for Irish agriculture, given that dairying had been the most profitable farm enterprise since the 1960s.[332] It also had implications in terms of the influence which the beef industry, and the country's leading meat processors, could exert on the Department of Agriculture and the government. The imposition of milk production restrictions was part of a wider effort by the European Commission to reduce over-production of food commodities within the EEC and curb CAP spending. This policy had the added benefit of assuaging the EEC budgetary concerns of powerful member states such as Britain and West Germany.[333] All EEC countries were to limit national milk output to 1981 levels under the initial Commission proposals. However, a determined campaign by the Irish government – in which the Taoiseach, Garret Fitzgerald, threatened to veto any agreement that damaged Ireland's 'vital national interests' – resulted in farmers receiving a 4.6 per cent increase on their 1983 milk output. This was an implicit recognition that Ireland's dairy industry was not at the same level of development as member states such as the Netherlands and Denmark. The agreement gave Ireland a national milk quota of close to 1.2 billion

[329] *IFJ*, 5 Jan. 1985.
[330] Tim Ryan, 'Milk Quotas and Land Tax' in *Leaders of Courage*, pp 67-68; Dempsey (ed), *The path to power,* p. 95.
[331] *IFJ*, 2 Nov. 1985.
[332] *National Farm Survey* 1966-69, pp 118, 124.
[333] *Financial Times*, 22 Nov. 1984; *II*, 15 Oct., 27 Oct. 1983; *IFJ*, 9 Feb., 19 Apr., 1980, 7 Nov. 1981.

gallons.[334] Despite the concessions secured by Fitzgerald, and the Minister for Agriculture, Austin Deasy, the introduction of milk quotas meant the overall growth potential of the Irish dairy sector was totally restricted for more than a generation. The focus for expansion shifted primarily to beef and sheep, as a consequence, with tillage providing an option for farmers with lands suited to growing cereal crops. This new reality was articulated by the *Farmers' Journal* editor, Paddy O'Keeffe, when he admitted in 1985 that 'expansion in suckler beef is now one of the few ways of increasing farm profit'.[335] Suckler beef is a farming system whereby a calf, or two, is reared by its mother or another beef cow from birth until it reaches weaning age at around nine months. The calf is then sold by the farmer or fattened to beef.[336]

The shift in emphasis away from dairying posed serious challenges for meat processors and the beef industry generally. Restricting milk output meant capping dairy cow numbers, and this had serious implications for dry-stock farmers and the beef factories given the extensive connections between the two livestock enterprises. Around forty per cent of dairy calves went directly for beef finishing, while milk suppliers provided two-thirds of all animals for the dry-stock industry.[337] In addition, beef was a significantly less profitable enterprise than dairying. Paddy O'Keeffe maintained that profits of Ir£150 per acre were possible from 'intensive suckler beef'. This assertion was supported by trials at the An Foras Talúntais (AFT) research centre in Grange, Co Meath which found that margins of up to Ir£230 per acre were attainable where the offspring were finished to beef. [338] However, the profit levels on research farms did not mirror the findings of AFT's *National Farm Survey* for 1985. It found that family farm income on the average dairy holding was Ir£168 per acre, while the corresponding figure for beef farms was just Ir£47 per acre.[339] This meant that beef enterprises delivered less than one-third the profit levels of dairying. Low profit margins in beef were also identified in the report of a working party on a four-year plan for Irish agriculture. The 1984 study, commissioned by the Department of

[334] Dempsey (ed), *The path to power,* p. 95; Ryan, 'Milk Quotas and Land Tax' in *Leaders of Courage*, pp 67-68; *IP*, 2 Apr. 1984; *Evening Press*, 31 Mar. 1984; *Sunday Independent*, 25 Mar. 1984.
[335] *IFJ*, 10 Aug. 1985.
[336] Michael Drennan interview (24 Oct. 2017); Discussion with Jimmy Cosgrave (14 June 2018).
[337] *Report of the Review Body on Beef Intervention and Cattle Slaughter Premium Systems*, pp 46-47.
[338] *IFJ*, 5 Jan., 10 Aug. 1985.
[339] *National Farm Survey 1985*, (Dublin, 1986), p. 12.

Agriculture, found that production systems in the cattle and beef sector were 'generally characterised by low output and low incomes'.[340]

The low level of returns from beef resulted in a sustained contraction in beef cow numbers during the 1970s. The beef cow herd had grown from 230,000 head in 1968 to 730,000 animals by 1974 due to a combination of support payments under the Beef Cattle Incentive Scheme and high calf prices.[341] However, beef cow numbers had fallen to 424,000 head by 1981.[342] Interestingly, AFT researchers found that the decline in beef cow numbers during the 1970s was more pronounced in the east and south where the land was generally of better quality and there were opportunities for farmers to move into other enterprises such as lowland sheep or dairying. In contrast, beef cow numbers were relatively stable in the west and northwest where alternatives to suckler farming were limited. For example, while beef cow numbers fell by forty-seven per cent in Meath between 1974 and 1977, the suckler herd contracted by just three per cent in Leitrim during the same four-year period.[343] The reduction in beef cow numbers nationally provoked serious concern among both beef processors and farmer representatives. The executive committee of Clover Meats had warned in October 1980 that an increased suckler cow subsidy was urgently required to address what it described as 'a serious decline' in beef cow numbers. The reduction in the beef cow herd 'will have serious consequences for the cattle industry, both as a source of [livestock] supplies and in employment in the processing sector', the executive explained.[344] Similar fears were expressed by the IFA's livestock committee in January 1980 when it sought a subsidy of Ir£50 per head on suckler cows. It claimed that such a payment was required to 'encourage the breeding and production of better quality beef cattle'.[345]

Austin Deasy and his senior officials sought to address the twin challenges of reduced livestock numbers - due to the introduction of milk quotas - and low profit levels from beef by increasing an existing EEC-funded subsidy called the suckler cow

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[340] Report of the Working Party on a *Four-Year Plan for Agriculture, 1984-1987*, p. 85, commissioned by the Department of Agriculture, 14 Feb. 1984 (NAI, DA/2014/72/1).
[341] *Beef Cow Study: Prospects and Problems of Expansion,* (Dublin, 1980), p. 1.
[342] Report of the Working Party on a *Four-Year Plan for Agriculture, 1984-1987*, p. 88, 14 Feb. 1984 (NAI, DA/2014/72/18).
[343] *Beef Cow Study: Prospects and Problems of Expansion*, p. 10.
[344] *Munster Express*, 24 Oct. 1980.
[345] Minutes of the IFA national livestock committee meeting for 30 Jan. 1980.

payment, and expanding the number of farmers who qualified for the support.[346] Deasy announced a doubling of the headage grant for beef cows in October 1984, with the payment going from Ir£32 to Ir£70 per head. The minister said the move was aimed at expanding the suckler herd by 45,000 head.[347] His strategy also involved a re-focussing of ACOT's resources to provide additional advisors for dry-stock farming generally, and suckler farms in particular. ACOT's development programme for 1986-90 targeted an increase of 250,000 in the suckler herd. In addition, the advisory body developed Athenry College as a specialist dry-stock facility.[348] 'Dairying would have been our focus, but for the super-levy [milk quotas]. The centrepiece of the corporate plan is now dry-stock,' admitted ACOT's Liam Downey in 1985.[349] The changed priorities also informed agricultural research policy. 'If we want to expand the beef industry we must increase the suckler herd,' said Jim O'Grady, director of the AFT beef research centre in Grange, Co Meath.[350] The increased suckler cow payments attracted strong support from both the beef factories and the farm organisations, demonstrating the extent to which the interests of both were closely entwined in the 1980s. Subsidies for suckler cows helped secure cattle supplies for beef factories, while providing a mechanism to improve farmers' incomes.

Efforts to address the exodus from suckling had actually started in 1980 with the introduction of the suckler cow subsidy, which was worth Ir£13.18 per head. This was increased to Ir£27.40 per cow in 1981, by the Fianna Fáil Minister for Agriculture, Ray MacSharry. More than 50,000 farmers received close to Ir£10 million under the scheme in 1981, with the full cost of the measure crucially provided by EEC grant aid.[351] There was a definite reluctance in Government to commit additional national revenues to agriculture given the level of CAP subsidies the sector already received. Indeed, the Barry Desmond, the Minister for Health and Social Welfare, was scathing in his assessment of the working party's report on the *Four-Year Plan for Agriculture* in 1984. He said the report was 'not a plan but a list of

[346] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1981*, p. 35; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1985*, p. 33.
[347] *IFJ*, 13 Oct. 1984.
[348] *Kerryman*, 27 Sept. 1985; *Sligo Champion*, 20 Sept. 1985; *IFJ*, 2 Nov. 1985.
[349] *IFJ*, 2 Nov. 1985.
[350] Ibid., 8 Sept. 1984.
[351] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1981*, p. 35.

future schemes acceptable to the many interest groups involved'.[352] Similarly, Ray MacSharry in his role as Minister for Finance opposed an earlier iteration of the plan in 1982, pointing out that proposals for additional spending of Ir£30 million per year could not be justified given that 'substantial expenditure cuts' or 'taxation increases' were already required.[353] However, by 1984 close to 60,000 farmers received CAP payments under the suckler cow scheme, with the number of cows covered by the support reaching 390,000 head.[354] Grants were also available for every additional beef heifer and calf. These were worth Ir£170 per cow and calf in the parts of the country that were classified as 'disadvantaged areas' from a farming perspective. The premium paid was Ir£118 per cow and calf in the parts of the country that were outside 'disadvantaged areas'.[355]

Deasy's revised and co-ordinated approach to expanding the suckler herd was showing results by 1987. The suckler herd exceeded 530,000 cows that year, and reached one million by 1994.[356] The recovery in beef cow numbers was helped by improved farmer margins, with ACOT maintaining that profit levels on highly-stocked suckler farms had reached Ir£170-200 per acre by 1988.[357] Suckler farmer incomes also benefitted from the adoption of continental cattle breeds such as Charolais, and later Limousin, and increased investment in both research and advisory supports.[358] Ironically, by the late 1980s and early 1990s many small dairy farmers were opting to sell their milk quotas and switch to sucklers. Leitrim farmer, Joe Heslin, sold his twelve cows in 1992 and went into sucklers.[359] Vincent Roddy from Ballaghaderreen, Co Mayo switched to sucklers in 1996 after selling his 14,000-gallon milk quota. 'I was at a point where I either had to invest heavily or get out of dairying, so I decided on the latter,' Roddy explained. 'I had some suckler cows

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352 Undated written reaction of the Minister for Health and Social Welfare, Barry Desmond, to the Report of the Working Party on a *Four-Year Plan for Agriculture, 1984-1987* (NAI, DA/2014/72/18).
353 Observations by the Minister for Finance, Ray MacSharry, on the interim recommendations of the working party on the Four-Year Plan for Agriculture, 17 Nov. 1982 (NAI, 2012/90/850).
354 *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1985*, p. 33.
355 Report of the Working Party on a *Four-Year Plan for Agriculture, 1984-1987*, p. 88 (NAI, DA/2014/72/18).
356 CSO data provided in response to a query by the author, also available on https://statbank.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?MainTable=AAA03&TabStrip=Select&PLanguage=0&FF=1.
357 *Nationalist*, 2 Apr. 1988.
358 Michael Drennan interview (24 October 2017); *IFJ*, 2 Nov. 1985.
359 Joe Heslin interview (1 Aug. 2018).

bought before I finished milking. The sale of dairy stock and the milk quota financed the purchase of the remaining suckler cows.'[360]

YEAR	TOTAL BEEF SALES (t)	INTERVENTION PURCHASES (t)	INTERVENTION AS % OF TOTAL BEEF SALES
1980	344,000	102,000	30
1981	219,000	47,000	21
1982	209,000	61,000	29
1983	231,000	61,000	26
1984	211,000	67,000	32
1985	258,000	74,000	29
TOTAL	1,472,000	412,000	28

***Table 5.F: Intervention beef purchases as a percentage of overall beef output, 1980-*85**
Source: Data from Department of Agriculture and Beef Tribunal Report

The pivotal role played by Department of Agriculture in reviving beef cow numbers illustrated the state's commitment to expanding the national herd and, by extension, cattle supplies for the beef processors. Similarly, the Irish state's extensive financial commitment to Middle East beef exports in the 1980s must be viewed against the background of the meat industry's continued dependence on intervention, and fears that the EEC might in some manner seek to curtail spending on the support measure as had happened with dairying. Intervention accounted for twenty-eight per cent of overall beef disposals during the period from 1980 to 1985 inclusive (see Table 5.F).[361] The intervention scheme took over 400,000 tonnes of Irish beef off the market during this period, with the value of these purchases exceeding Ir£840 million.[362] The mechanism was also vital at farm level. Intervention buying was crucial in keeping a floor on beef prices during the income crisis of 1980, and also in 1984 when an additional 800,000 tonnes of beef came on the EEC market as a result

[360] Discussion with Vincent Roddy, drystock farmer Ballaghaderreen, Co Mayo (6 Oct. 2020).
[361] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1980*, p. 30; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1983*, p. 31; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1985*, p. 31; *Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the Beef Processing Industry*, p. 35.
[362] *Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the Beef Processing Industry*, p. 35.

of increased cow culling following the introduction of milk quotas.[363] However, the pressures on the EEC intervention regime were clear. The higher kill of 1984 left the European Commission struggling to source cold storage space for beef.[364] The EEC Commission subsequently sold a quarter of its beef intervention stocks, close to 175,000 tonnes, to the USSR for one-third of the purchase price.[365] Negative commentary by EEC officials on beef intervention added to Irish apprehensions around the support mechanism. In 1980 senior commission official, Kaj Barlebo-Larsen, linked spending on supports such as intervention to the 'extremely urgent' need for EEC budgetary reform.[366] EEC agriculture commissioner, Poul Dalsager, expressed similar concerns in 1983 when he warned that the beef intervention regime required greater 'flexibility'.[367] Meanwhile, questions around the efficacy of beef intervention were raised by Claude Villain, Director General for Agriculture with the EEC Commission, when he cautioned that the support regime had to be adapted to match developments in the European meat markets.[368] Meanwhile, the Irish beef industry's dependence on intervention was highlighted by a *Farmers' Journal* report in 1984 which found that fourteen of the top twenty-two Irish beef factories were putting between forty-six and fifty per cent of their weekly output into the market support mechanism. Interestingly, the only factory not to use intervention was Seamus Purcell's plant in Sallins.[369] (See Table 5.G) Concern at the level of intervention usage by the Irish factories was expressed in the 1984 *Four-Year Plan for Agriculture*. It cautioned that 'further refinement' of the intervention regime could not be ruled out and it urged the beef industry to end its dependence on the CAP scheme and 'concentrate on developing secondary processing' such as vacuum-packed cuts for the supermarket trade.[370]

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[363] *IFJ*, 5 July 1980, 19 May, 28 July 1984.
[364] *Southern Star*, 3 Nov. 1984; *Drogheda Independent*, 2 Nov. 1984.
[365] *CE*, 21 Sept. 1985.
[366] *IFJ*, 19 Apr. 1980.
[367] *Connaught Telegraph*, 2 Feb. 1983.
[368] *Drogheda Independent*, 2 Mar. 1984.
[369] *IFJ*, 6 Oct. 1984.
[370] Report of the Working Party on a *Four-Year Plan for Agriculture, 1984-1987*, p. 127, 14 Feb. 1984 (NAI, DA/2014/72/18).

FACTORY LOCATION	COMPANY	% INTERVENTION USAGE
Anglo-Irish Meats Dundalk	AIBP	50
Cahir Meat Packers	AIBP	50
Nenagh Chilled Meats	AIBP	47
Anglo-Irish Bagenalstown	AIBP	29
Anglo-Irish Dublin	AIBP	38
Clover Meats, Waterford	Clover Meats	50
Clonmel Foods	Clover Meats	49
Halal Ballyhaunis	Halal Meats	49
Halal Ballaghadereen	Halal Meats	46
IMP Leixlip	IMP	50
Tunney Meat Packers Clones	Tunney Meat Packers	50
James Doherty, Carrigans	James Doherty	49
Meadow Meats Rathdowney	Meadow Meats	49
Kepak Clonee	Kepak	49
Horgan Meats Charleville	Horgan Meats	49
Liffey Meats, Ballyjamesduff	Liffey Meats	49
Agra Meats Watergrasshill	Agra Meats	34
Kildare Chilling	Kildare Chilling	33
Shannon Meats Rathkeale	Shannon Meats	29
Roscrea Meat Products	Roscrea Meat Products	13
Slaney Meats Bunclody	Slaney Meats	10
Purcell Meats Sallins	Purcell Meat Exports	NIL

Table 5.G: Intervention usage September 1984
Source: Department of Agriculture figures for the week ending 8 September 1984, published in the *Irish Farmers' Journal* of 6 October 1984.

The meat industry also recognised that its dependence on intervention was not sustainable. In 1980 the processors representative organisation, the Irish Fresh Meat Exporters Society (IFMES), formulated a national livestock development programme to be put forward as a working document to government. IFMES invited contributions from AFT, the live cattle exporters, the farm organisations, ICOS and CBF, with the process being co-ordinated by Sean Conlon of Kildare Chilling and Paschal Phelan, who was working with Larry Goodman's AIBP at the time.[371] The beef processors' finished document represented a complete *volte fac*e for the industry when compared to its position of the mid-1970s. While IFMES secretary, Jim Bastow, had insisted in 1976 that the beef industry was involved in 'commodity selling' and that time spent on retail sales was 'largely wasted', the working party report of 1980 took a

[371] *IFJ*, 22 Mar., 2 Aug. 1980.

completely contrary view.[372] Accepting that greater intervention restrictions were likely, the report stated that a more orderly marketing of beef was required. It called for the prioritisation of vacuum-packed secondary processing, as well as the development of an industry quality assurance scheme, increased beef labelling and traceability, in order to facilitate the move from wholesale to supermarket clients.[373] In addition, the IFMES report suggested that farmers should be encouraged to breed beef animals which matched market requirements, and that payments for stock needed to be structured to reward the supply of such cattle.[374] This was an acceptance of the benefits of cattle grading, which IFMES vehemently opposed during the 1970s.[375] The radical transformation in approach from IFMES followed a change at the head of the society, with the appointment of Eugene Regan as executive director in February 1980. Regan had been the IFA's representative in Brussels, however, his move to IFMES signalled a shift in focus for the processor body.[376] The decision of the factories to appoint an executive director followed an internal examination of IFMES's effectiveness, after some leading meat exporters, including Larry Goodman, were critical that their representative organisation was reacting to decisions taken in Brussels and Dublin rather than influencing policy.[377] Ironically, Jim Bastow died suddenly in Lourdes just eight months after Regan took over at IFMES.[378] The reorienting of beef processing to meet the requirements of the increasingly powerful supermarkets was reflected in a five-fold increase in the percentage of output that was sold as vacuum-packed beef during the 1980s. While fifteen per cent of beef sales were vacuum-packed in 1974, this figure had fallen to ten per cent by 1975, and to four per cent by 1980 as a result of the MCA levies, greater demand for sides of beef for further processing in Britain and Germany, and the impact of intervention.[379] However, Irish vacuum-packed sales increased to twenty per cent of total beef exports by 1990, with CBF investing heavily in promoting this market segment.[380] John B.

[372] Letter from Jim Bastow of IFMES to Reddy Day, CBF chairman, 21 Dec. 1976 (NAI, TAOIS/2009/135/71); *IFJ*, 2 Aug. 1980.
[373] *IFJ*, 2 Aug. 1980.
[374] Ibid.
[375] *II*, 30 Jan. 1974; *CE*, 30 Jan. 1974; *IP*, 6 May 1980; *IFJ*, 25 Aug. 1973, 3 May 1980.
[376] *II*, 25 Oct. 1980; *IP*, 22 Oct. 1980; *IFJ*, 2 Feb., 25 Oct. 1980, 9 Apr. 1988.
[377] *IFJ*, 13 Oct. 1979.
[378] *IP*, 22 Oct. 1980; *IFJ*, 25 Oct. 1980; *II*, 25 Oct. 1980.
[379] Cooper and Lybrand report for the IDA, pp 48-49; *IFJ*, 11 Oct. 1980; *Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the Beef Processing Industry*, p. 32.
[380] *Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the Beef Processing Industry*, p. 32.

Keane, who had returned to work with CBF by the early 1980s, said the development necessitated the processors working with the supermarkets to get 'closer to the consumer'.[381] AIBP was particularly successful in this area, winning supermarket contracts in Britain, France, Italy and West Germany – including a supply agreement with the Kathreiner Group in Munich.[382] The opportunities emerging in the vacuum packed market were also a catalyst for the establishment and expansion of stand-alone boning halls that specialised in the production and marketing of vacuum packed cuts. These included Tara Meats, DJS Meats, Dawn Meats, and Rangeland Meats in Monaghan.[383]

Maximising beef exports to the Middle East remained a critical objective for processors and government, despite the industry's success in realigning a greater proportion of its sales within the EEC away from the wholesale sector and towards supermarkets. Indeed, the general uncertainty around intervention, and the curbing of further growth in dairying, heightened the focus on exports to North Africa and the Gulf States as the most lucrative avenue for beef sales outside the EEC. However, trading conditions in the Middle East differed significantly from the European and North American beef markets where the Irish meat companies had traditionally operated. Put simply, the nature and structure of the multi-million-pound contracts concluded with the Arab states and Iran during the 1980s necessitated greater political support and engagement. Beef export agreements in Iran and the Arab countries of North Africa and the Gulf were invariably negotiated with state bodies. Kevin Purcell recalled that the live cattle contracts to Libya and Egypt were all 'gilt-edged government jobs'.[384] The same was true for beef exports to the region. O'Toole points out that Iraqi beef purchases during the 1980s were handled primarily by the State Company for Foodstuff Trading, which was government controlled.[385] The need for Irish companies to have political supports when doing business in the region was recognised as early as 1981 when the Minister for Industry and Commerce, Desmond O'Malley, accompanied Seamus Purcell to Iraq to conclude the aforementioned Ir£120-million beef and food supply deal.[386] Other political interventions followed.

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381 John B. Keane interview (19 Feb. 2019).
382 *IFJ*, 7 Mar. 1981, 8 Oct. 1983.
383 John B. Keane interview (19 Feb. 2019).
384 Kevin Purcell interview (4 Nov. 2015).
385 O'Toole, *Meanwhile Back at the Ranch*, pp 48-49.
386 *Evening Press*, 24 Sept. 1981; *IFJ*, 26 Sept. 1981.

Haughey's visits to Tripoli in 1983 and 1984 could be classed as opportunism, but equally they reflected a requirement that commercial interests – in this case Seamus Purcell's – had sufficient influence to enlist powerful political patronage.[387] The intervention of the Minister for Agriculture, Austin Deasy, with Egyptian authorities in 1985 to secure an export contract for Irish processors must be viewed in a similar light.[388]

What could be termed the 'politicisation' of beef exports to the Middle East was therefore influenced by the fact that trade agreements for the region were negotiated by state agencies, they required political support from the Irish government, and involved significant tonnages of product.[389] However, this political advocacy mutated into exchequer funding as international competition for the lucrative Middle East beef contracts intensified. The manner in which the government was drawn into the role of guarantor for Irish beef exports first arose after Irish firms failed to secure an Egyptian state contract for 30,000 tonnes of chilled beef in 1985.[390] A twelve-month credit offer backed by the French government secured the Egyptian deal for French beef firms. This was not the first instance of Irish companies competing against state-backed entities. A 50,000-tonne beef contract for Iraq and a 60,000-tonne deal in Egypt were awarded to Brazilian firms in 1983 after both agreements were supported by a twelve-month credit clause which was funded by the South American state. Similarly, West German and Argentine beef companies were offering state-supported 'sweetheart deals' on credit when competing for Middle East business.[391] As a consequence of the French actions in Egypt, Austin Deasy flew to Cairo to counter what he described as 'sharp practice'.[392] His forceful intervention resulted in Ireland securing a further 30,000-tonne beef contract from the Egyptian authorities. However, the Irish government had to provide twelve months' credit to the Egyptian purchaser to secure the business.[393] The emergence of state backing for private beef exporters was characterised as a 'sinister development' by the *Farmers'*

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[387] Terry Clavin, 'Seamus Purcell', *Directory of Irish Biography,* www.ria.ie/research-projects/dictionary-irish-biography (accessed 06 Oct. 2020).
[388] *CE*, 13 June 1985; *II*, 13 June 1985; *IFJ*, 22 June 1985.
[389] *Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the Beef Processing Industry*, p. 351.
[390] *Munster Express*, 14 June 1985; *Sunday Independent*, 9 June 1985; *IFJ*, 8 June 1985.
[391] *Sligo Champion*, 14 June 1985; *II*, 6 June 1985; *IFJ*, 8 June 1985; Minutes of the IFA national livestock committee meeting for 14 May 1985.
[392] RTE news report on visit to Egypt by the Minister for Agriculture, Austin Deasy, 8 June 1985, from RTE News Archive (rte.ie/archives/collections/news) (accessed 9 Sept. 2020); *IFJ*, 8 June 1985.
[393] *CE*, 13 June 1985; *II*, 13 June 1985; *IFJ*, 22 June 1985.

Journal.[394] However, there was intense pressure on the Irish government from the meat processors and the farm organisations to match the credit terms and other inducements being offered by competitors, as close to 40,000 tonnes of beef, valued at almost Ir£50 million, was forecast to be exported to the Middle East between Easter and autumn 1985.[395] In bowing to this pressure, Deasy committed the Irish state to providing a costly safety net for beef exports to the Middle East.

The provision of increased government supports for beef exports to the Middle East had long-term implications for the state as it exposed the Irish exchequer and taxpayers to considerable losses. This was particularly the case in relation to Irish government assistance for beef exports to Iraq which took the form of export credit insurance. As Fintan O'Toole explained, export credit insurance was a 'guarantee to private companies trading in risky markets that, in the event of the purchaser defaulting on payment, the [Irish] government...will pay the debts owed to the company'[396] This cover, which was primarily confined to Goodman's AIBP group and the far smaller Hibernia Meats, resulted in the Irish state indemnifying beef exporters to the regime of Iraqi president Saddam Hussein against potential losses.[397] Moreover, the arbitrary manner in which export credit insurance was allocated, which was essentially at the discretion of the minister for industry and commerce, exposed the state to charges of political favouritism and even corruption as such cover was necessary to do business with Iraq.[398] Iraq's debts to Goodman totalled Ir£180 million when Saddam Hussein regime's defaulted on its financial commitments following the invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. Total unsecured borrowings at the company were estimated at Ir£460 million when an examiner was subsequently appointed to Goodman's beef business to prevent its collapse.[399] The cost to the Irish exchequer of the export credit insurance cover was close to Ir£50 million, more than Ir£20 million of which was not recovered.[400] Could the collapse of a major Irish beef processor have been anticipated when increased government export support for the meat industry was

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[394] *IFJ*, 8 June 1985.
[395] Minutes of the IFA national livestock committee meeting for 3 Apr. 1985; *IFJ,* 3 Jan., 3 Apr. 1985.
[396] O'Toole, *Meanwhile Back at the Ranch,* pp 49-50.
[397] *Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the Beef Processing Industry*, p. 36; Byrne, *Political Corruption In Ireland 1922-2010*, p. 118.
[398] Byrne, *Political Corruption In Ireland 1922-2010*, pp 120-125; O'Toole, *Meanwhile Back at the Ranch*, pp 127-128.
[399] *IT*, 1 Sept. 1990; *Sunday Independent*, 2 Sept. 1990; O'Toole, *Meanwhile Back at the Ranch*, p. 3.
[400] Byrne, *Political Corruption In Ireland 1922-2010*, p. 124.

being considered in the mid-1980s? It is difficult to say, but it is worth noting that export credit insurance was already in place for Iraq in 1983, although limited to a maximum of Ir£55 million.[401] However, the factors that contributed to the collapse of the Goodman Group in 1990 had their origins in this period.

Ironically, the concentration of a large proportion of the country's processing capacity in the hands of Goodman, and to a lesser extent Purcell, ultimately undermined their position. The pre-eminence of Goodman can be traced back to the opening of the Middle East market for beef exports in the early 1980s, as noted earlier in this chapter, and gathered pace after the demise of the co-operatives. It was accelerated by Seamus Purcell's exit from the beef processing sector in autumn 1986, after a severe funding crisis at the business resulted in the forced sale of Purcell Meats' three factories at Lurgan, Sallins and Saltcoats, Glasgow.[402] The Lurgan plant was bought by Halal Meats, Dawn Meats purchased the Glasgow operation, while Oliver Murphy's Hibernia Meats took over the Sallins site.[403] A lowering of CAP exports refunds on beef exports outside the EEC, which reduced supports on shipments to the Middle East by around Ir£24 per carcass, in addition to a fall in value of the US dollar, contributed to Purcell's financial difficulties in the autumn of 1986.[404] An over-reliance on the Middle East beef market added to the firm's problems. Indeed, Purcell's reluctance to develop outlets for beef in Britain or Europe, or to sell into intervention, resulted in Gus Fitzpatrick leaving Purcell Meats within six months of the group's purchase of Sallins from FMC in 1983.[405] However, the withholding of Ir£3.5 million in export refunds following a dispute with the Department of Agriculture ultimately precipitated Purcell's exit from the beef business. The Department of Agriculture's actions unnerved Purcell's bankers and forced the business to restructure its loans. This process resulted in the sale of the Purcell Meats' beef factories, and significant land holdings.[406]

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[401] O'Toole, *Meanwhile Back at the Ranch*, pp 67-68.
[402] RTE news report on the sale of Purcell Meats' factories, 14 October 1986, from RTE News Archive (rte.ie/archives/collections/news) (accessed 9 Sept. 2020); *IP*, 14 Oct. 1986; *II*, 14 Oct. 1986; *IFJ*, 18 Oct. 1986.
[403] *IP*, 14 Oct. 1986; *II*, 14 Oct. 1986; *IFJ*, 18 Oct. 1986.
[404] *IFJ*, 18 Oct. 1986; *IP*, 27 Oct, 1986; *II*, 23 Oct. 1986.
[405] Kevin Purcell interview (26 Oct. 2016); *IFJ*, 17 Sept. 1983, 25 Feb. 1984.
[406] Terry Clavin, 'Seamus Purcell', *Directory of Irish Biography,* www.ria.ie/research-projects/dictionary-irish-biography (accessed 6 Oct. 2020); *IFJ*, 18 Oct. 1986.

Goodman was now the last beef baron standing, and the dominant figure in the Irish beef industry. His position as the pre-eminent Irish beef processor was confirmed in 1987 when Charlie Haughey's government controversially announced a Ir£260-million development plan for the meat sector which envisaged Goodman's company building four new beef plants and extending five existing factories.[407] As O'Toole observed, a private company's proposal for its own development had become 'a national plan for a key indigenous industry'.[408] Goodman's firm was already considered the largest beef processor in Europe, with an annual kill of around 400,000 animals and a turnover estimated at Ir£500 million.[409] However, the positioning of his rebranded food group, Goodman International, as a hub around which to further develop the beef industry as a whole was actually consistent with the country's national development strategy. A review of Ireland's industrial development policy by the Telesis Consultancy Group in 1982 – which was commissioned by the National Economic and Social Council on behalf of government – proposed increasing funding for Irish companies that traded internationally, thereby reducing the country's dependence on foreign direct investment (FDI) by multinational firms.[410] Although agriculture was strictly outside the remit of the study, the Telesis Report proposed that government policy should encourage the development of businesses with scale, rather than supporting a multitude of small enterprises.[411] The Goodman plan of 1987 met all these criteria. However, the problem with this strategy, as Lee has correctly identified, was an absence of confidence in the state's capacity to choose independently the domestic companies that should be supported and promoted.[412] Tellingly, allegations that Haughey had influenced the detail of the development plan in Goodman's favour, and pressured the IDA into supporting the initiative, were raised in the Dáil by opposition TDs including Pat Rabbitte and John Bruton, and were subsequently repeated at the Beef Tribunal of 1991-93, established following the collapse of Goodman International in 1990.[413]

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407 *CE*, 19 June 1987; *IP*, 19 June 1987; *IFJ,* 20 June 1987.
408 O'Toole, *Meanwhile Back at the Ranch*, p. 77.
409 *IFJ*, 20 June 1987; O'Toole, *Meanwhile Back at the Ranch*, p. 117.
410 *A review of industrial policy*, NESC, (Dublin, 1982), p. 6.
411 *A review of industrial policy*, pp 35-36.
412 Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, p. 536.
413 Dáil debates Vol. 373, No. 13, 24 June 1987; *IT*, 15 Oct. 1992*, IP*, 10 Oct. 1991.

The evidence to the Beef Tribunal exposed the close connections between individual beef processors and the country's leading politicians, and political parties. Fianna Fáil admitted to receiving Ir£374,000 in donations from beef processors between 1982 and 1992, with Goodman giving Ir£175,000 of this amount.[414] A further Ir£33,000 was donated to Fine Gael by Goodman, with the party receiving almost Ir£140,000 in total from beef processors between 1987 and 1991.[415] Other beef processor donors to Fine Gael during this period were Agra Trading which gave Ir£20,000, Kepak donated Ir£17,500, along with five other companies that gave Ir£11,500 in total.[416] Paschal Phelan of Master Meats donated Ir£75,000 to political parties, with Ir£60,000 given to Fianna Fáil, Ir£10,000 to Fine Gael, and Ir£5,500 going to the Progressive Democrats.[417] Oliver Murphy of Hibernia Meats told the Beef Tribunal that he was a lifelong Fianna Fáil supporter, although he admitted to greatly respecting Alan Dukes. He gave Ir£50,000 in donations to Fianna Fáil in 1987, employed a son of the Minister for Finance, Ray MacSharry, and listed the former Minister for Agriculture, Jim Gibbons, as an advisor to Hibernia Meats.[418] Meanwhile, Seamus Purcell also admitted to providing financial assistance to the family of Fianna Fáil leader Charles Haughey. Purcell revealed during his evidence to the Moriarty Tribunal – officially called the Tribunal of Inquiry into Certain Payments to Politicians and Related Matters – that he provided Ir£12,000 in funding for the helicopter company owned by Haughey's son Ciarán in 1985.[419] However, as Elaine Byrne has pointed out, the Beef Tribunal Report never addressed why the provision of export credit insurance for Iraq was reinstated by the Minister for Industry and Commerce, Albert Reynolds, in 1987. It also failed to explain why the limit for insurance cover was raised from Ir£70 million to over Ir£150 million, and never dealt with the core issue of why this cover was confined primarily to Goodman International and the much smaller Hibernia Meats between 1986 and 1989. Byrne contends that 'much of what emerged during its [the Beef Tribunal] hearings, and its

[414] *IP*, 17 Sept. 1992*; Sunday Independent*, 20 Sept. 1992.
[415] *Sunday Independent*, 20 Sept. 1992; Byrne, *Political Corruption In Ireland 1922-2010*, p. 123.
[416] Byrne, *Political Corruption In Ireland 1922-2010*, p. 123.
[417] *CE*, 27 June 1992; *II*, 27 June 1992.
[418] O'Toole, *Meanwhile Back at the Ranch*, pp 152-155; *CE*, 5 June 1992; *II*, 5 June 1992, 21 May 1998.
[419] Terry Clavin, 'Seamus Purcell', *Directory of Irish Biography,* www.ria.ie/research-projects/dictionary-irish-biography (accessed 6 Oct. 2020); Evening Herald, 19 May 1999; *Irish Examiner*, 20 May 1999.

conclusions, remain as contested today by some interested parties and vested interests as they were in 1994.'[420]

CONCLUSION

The Beef Tribunal has cast a long shadow over the Irish meat processing sector, and one that has influenced the interpretation of events in the industry in both the 1980s and 1990s. Industry developments from this period are invariably classified as either causes or consequences of the tribunal hearings in Dublin Castle. However, a number of the beef sector changes which occurred during the first half of the 1980s were profoundly influential for the meat industry, and farmer-factory relationships, in their own right – albeit that these happenings also had implications for the Beef Tribunal. The demise of the co-operative meat processors is a prime example. This was a pivotal event for the meat industry, the farm organisations and the co-operative movement. Indeed, while the closure of IMP and Clover Meats certainly facilitated the growth of Goodman's beef operations by removing two sizeable competitors and enabling AIBP to acquire the Christendom factory in Waterford, the co-operatives' inability to survive in the beef industry was equally significant. The collapse of Clover Meats and the closure of IMP during a dramatic fifteen-month period in 1984-85 represented the first serious reversal for the co-operative business model, which had proven extremely successful in both the livestock sales and dairy sectors over the previous thirty years. It was an equally serious setback for the IFA. The farm organisation, through its predecessor the NFA, was instrumental in the campaign to purchase IMP in 1969, and in convincing 28,000 farmers to invest in the business.[421] Although the motivations involved in the venture were laudable, IMP's failure was a major embarrassment for IFA. Moreover, it was a blow to the organisation's reputation since successive IMP boards were populated by leading members of the farm organisation such as Joe Bruton, father of future Taoiseach John Bruton, Kilkenny native Jim Mullins who was IMP chairman, Stan Brophy from Carlow, and Pat Bobbett from Meath.[422] The near total privatisation of the industry which followed the demise of the co-operative processors resulted in less transparency around processor margins, and a decidedly more fractious relationship between the farmers

[420] Byrne, *Political Corruption in Ireland 1922-2010*, pp 108-123.
[421] *IFJ*, 11 Jan. 1969; Maurice Colbert, *Recollections of the Co-op Years*, pp 75-76.
[422] *II*, 26 Feb. 1972; *CE,* 16 Jan. 1980; *IFJ*, 7 Jan. 1984.

and factory owners. This was illustrated in the bitter dispute between Goodman and the farmers who were owed for livestock supplied to Clover Meats prior to its collapse; and the subsequent struggle with IFA for control of IMP's factory at Midleton.[423] Indeed, both wrangles could be characterised as trials of strength between the two main power brokers left in the livestock sector. Ironically, the closure of IMP and Clover Meats gave IFA greater freedom to challenge the processors, secure in the knowledge that its belligerence was not damaging farmers' interests by weakening either co-operative. However, it also left the IFA vulnerable financially, as the meat factories collected the European Involvement Fund (EIF) levy for the organisation, and this had become an increasingly important income source for the farm body and provided up to fifty percent of its funding.[424]

The introduction of milk quotas in 1984 was another watershed event for both the dairy sector and the beef industry. Denied the opportunity for further expansion in milk production, dairy farmers were compelled to expand their beef operations. This reversed a decade of decline in the beef cow herd, with numbers increasing by twenty-five per cent to more than a half a million sucklers by 1987, and then doubling to exceed one million over the following eight years.[425] In addition, the widespread adoption of continental breeds improved the genetics of the suckler herd, thereby increasing the potential for higher farmer incomes and enabling processors and CBF to market Irish beef as a premium product. The expansion in suckler cow numbers illustrated the consistent focus by the Department of Agriculture and successive Agriculture Ministers, from Ray MacSharry to Austin Deasy, to reverse the decline in the national herd following the farm income shock of 1979-80.[426] Equally, however, it highlighted the continued dependence of the beef sector on public funding. The value of beef exports rose from Ir£350 million to Ir£500 million between 1981 and 1986, with the number of cattle slaughtered increasing by more than sixty per cent to 1.4 million head, and the tonnage of beef exported rising by over fifty per cent to 340,000

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[423] *Nationalist*, 1 Dec. 1984; *IFJ*, 6 Apr. 1985; *CE*, 29 Jan. 1986.

[424] Con Lucey interview (25 Oct. 2017); *Evening Echo*, 12 Feb. 1986.

[425] CSO data provided in response to a query by the author, also available on https://statbank.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?MainTable=AAA03&TabStrip=Select&PLanguage=0&FF=1.

[426] *IFJ,* 17 Apr. 1982; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1981*, p. 35; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1985*, p. 33.

tonnes.[427] However, the level of EEC subventions also grew significantly. The cost of beef intervention purchases alone rose from Ir£80 million to Ir£370 million.[428] Meanwhile, beef incomes at farm level were supported by a combination suckler cow premiums and headage payments. Indeed, net CAP transfers to Ireland grew from Ir£500 million to Ir£1.1 billion between 1981 and 1986.[429] Given the extent of the CAP funding available at all levels of the beef industry in the mid-1980s, it is therefore somewhat ironic, and telling, that the meat factories demanded, and received, additional national supports to export beef to the world's wealthiest regimes during the final years of the decade.

[427] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1982*, pp 25-32; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1986*, pp 24-33.
[428] *Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the Beef Processing Industry*, p. 35.
[429] Conway, 'Agricultural Policy' in Patrick Keatinge (ed.) *Ireland and EEC Membership Evaluated,* p. 57.

CONCLUSION

The beef processing sector's establishment and expansion ranks as one of the most important developments in Irish agriculture since the Second World War. Less than ten per cent of Ireland's cattle-related exports were shipped as beef in the late 1940s, with the trade dominated by live-animal sales; but expansion in the dead-meat business since 1950 has seen Ireland become the leading net exporter of beef in the Northern Hemisphere, and the world's fourth largest overall.[1] This transformation, the foundations of which were laid between 1950 and 1985, led to profound changes in agricultural policy, and a major reorienting of Ireland's livestock-related exports away from a dependence on the shipping of cattle on the hoof, to increased carcass beef sales. However, this expansion and growth in beef processing did not always mirror developments in other sectors of the Irish economy; the industry's examination, therefore, offers a unique and different historical perspective.

The unprecedented growth in Irish beef exports in the 1950s poses profound questions around the historiography of the decade and prevailing views regarding the overall contribution of agriculture to the country's economic fortunes during the period. Between 1949 and 1960 Irish beef exports increased eight-fold, expanding from six thousand tons to over fifty thousand tons.[2] This remarkable growth took place against a background of severe difficulties in the broader economy, which was wracked by recurring balance of payments deficits, rising unemployment, a continual weakening in the value of sterling, and insufficient dollar-denominated exports to pay for the country's increased level of US imports.[3] While the expansion in beef exports confirms what might be described as the 'exceptionalism' of the meat processing industry during this period, more importantly, the unprecedented increase in international sales challenges the gloomy assessment of agriculture's performance during the decade. Lee paints a bleak picture of rural Ireland during the 1950s. He contends that growth at just one-quarter of the European average had resulted in a society characterised by 'begrudgery' and 'lost souls' who were consigned to emigration. 'Those who did not inherit the land – the half-indulged, half despised

[1] Teagasc, *The Beef Manual* (Carlow, 2016), p. 14.
[2] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p.78.
[3] Fanning, *The Irish Department of Finance*, pp 505-506; Feeney, *Sean MacEntee*, pp 181-182; Girvin, *Between Two Worlds*, pp 185, 190.

maiden aunt and uncle.'[4] However, while this reflects the overall economic malaise to which Ireland had succumbed, Lee fails to take account of positive developments such as the emergence of beef processing and its long-term implications. Girvin is equally dismissive of the performance of the Irish economy, and agriculture in particular. While accepting that 46,000 jobs were created as a result of increased investment in 1952-53, Girvin argues that the failure of agriculture to 'increase exports and expand national income' contributed to the serious economic crisis which engulfed the country between 1955 and 1958.[5] Meanwhile, Crotty and Rouse largely ignore the impact of the meat processing industry, despite forty per cent of livestock exports being shipped as carcass and boxed beef by 1960, in what amounted to a major reconfiguration of the livestock sector.[6] Crotty correctly describes Ireland's overall agricultural output in the 1950s as 'stagnant'.[7] This exclusive focus on output, however, disregards the significance of the beef processing industry's emergence, and other fundamental changes such as the establishment of the livestock marts network. Rouse is equally blinkered in his assessment of the period, claiming that 'only in the export of cattle did Ireland command a substantial and viable trade'.[8] Again, there is no detailed examination or analysis of the beef processing sector's impact.

However, as this study has shown, the beef industry's emergence was pivotal to the modernisation of Irish farming. By providing an outlet for sick and old animals, as well as for prime cattle, the factories challenged the monopoly position that was traditionally enjoyed in the livestock sector by exporters and butchers. The formation and work of Macra na Fairme, ICMSA and NFA, and the subsequent role these farm representative bodies played in establishing the livestock mart network – along with the co-operative umbrella group IAOS – added to the commercial pressures on the cattle exporters. In consigning the fairs to history, the marts effectively weakened the exporters' and livestock dealers' grip on the cattle trade.[9] The beef factories' expansion was complimented by that of the marts; with the network of sales centres facilitating the regular purchase of cattle and sheep by the meat factories. Essentially, the slaughter plants and marts provided the necessary infrastructure for the

[4] Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, pp 359, 646, 649.
[5] Girvin, *Between Two Worlds*, pp 185, 190.
[6] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78; *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group,* p. 36.
[7] Crotty, *Irish Agricultural Production*, pp 191-202.
[8] Rouse, *Ireland's own soil*, p. 250.
[9] Interview with John Shirley and Maurice Colbert (25 Mar. 2014).

development of a modern livestock industry – as the Stacy May Report had correctly predicted in 1951.[10] This development in the 1950s – along with the formation of the farm organisations, the establishment of AFT, and the later consolidation of the creameries – put in place the necessary foundations for the subsequent modernisation and transformation of Irish farming.

The success and resilience of the export-oriented beef industry, moreover, directly challenges Lee's contention that the business class in 1950's Ireland lacked an 'enterprise culture'.[11] Indeed, that the emerging beef industry was capable of identifying and securing new export markets for ninety-five per cent of its output is not only evidence of enterprise, but it also questions the characterisation of Ireland during this period as a backward and insular economy.[12] The evidence in this study confirms that the beef industry from its establishment was ambitious and adventurous in seeking to develop and foster export opportunities.[13] The success of beef sector leaders such as Frank Quinn of IMP contradicts Lee's assertion that 'a native entrepreneurial cadre of the requisite quality had failed to emerge' during the 1950s and 1960s.[14] As outlined in Chapter Two, Quinn built one of the most progressive and modern meat processing enterprises in Europe, which was modelled on the beef packing operations of North and South America. The mechanical processing lines installed in his company's factories at Dublin's Grand Canal Street and Leixlip were the first to be commissioned in Europe. In fact, his vision for an export-oriented beef processing sector arguably shaped the Irish industry, and created a template that was replicated by others in the industry such as Longford-based processor, Matt Lyons, and Clover Meats.[15] While there was a persistent reliance on the British market to take between twenty and forty per cent of Irish processed beef output in the first fifteen years of the industry's expansion, the factory owners did significant business in the US, as well as securing blue-chip contracts to supply the American armed forces stationed in Europe. In addition, Israel, Holland, Germany, Sweden and France became sizeable markets for Irish beef, particularly during the 1950s and 1960s.

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[10] *The Stacy May Report*, pp 76, 86-87.
[11] Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, p. 359.
[12] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 88.
[13] Dressed meat exports to Sweden 1951-53 (NAI, DA/2005/82/410); *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1952-53* (Dublin, 1953), pp 13-14.
[14] Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, pp 528-536.
[1515] *IFJ*, 13 June 1959, 2 Nov. 1963; Interview with Interviewee A (9 Aug. 2018).

Niche markets for offal were also identified in Europe and the Far East.[16] Much of the customer base for Irish beef exports had to be developed organically, even though a number of Irish processors had the benefit of also supplying pig-meat to these markets, while others could depend on contacts formed through the live cattle business. This made the establishing of outlets for up to 50,000 tonnes of beef by 1965 an impressive achievement. Moreover, it is a testament to the industry that Ireland was capable of displacing Argentina as the primary supplier of beef into Britain by the late 1960s – albeit with the help of significant state subsidies.[17] The beef industry's dynamism is also illustrated by the level of investment and company turnover. Nine of the country's leading factories spent a total of £400,000 on refrigeration units in 1951.[18] Meanwhile, annual turnover in Quinn's two factories had exceeded £6 million by 1960.[19] This level of expansion and performance is in stark contrast to Lee's characterisation of Irish-owned industry during the 1950s, which he maintains was unable to compete internationally and 'could not even compete on the home market'.[20] This appraisal accords with the views of the British ambassador to Ireland, Sir Andrew Gilchrist, who expressed surprise at Irish industry's 'unhealthy complacency' and 'wilful blindness' to the business opportunities in Britain following the liberalising of trade between the two countries by the AIFTA.[21] However, the successful establishment and expansion of the beef processing industry suggests that a more nuanced assessment of the fortunes of Irish-owned businesses during the 1950s and 1960s is merited.

From a strictly agricultural perspective, the beef processing industry's supplanting of live exports as the dominant enterprise in the livestock industry marked a fundamental shift in Irish farming. The intense competition which developed between the meat factories and live exporters for cattle supplies and political influence is a recurring theme within the livestock sector during this period. Up to the

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[16] Annual report of the Minister for Agriculture 1956-57, p. 9; Annual report of the Minister for Agriculture 1957-58, p. 11; Annual report of the Minister for Agriculture 1958-59, p. 15; Annual report of the Minister for Agriculture 1959-60, pp 14-16; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78.

[17] Report on the International Meat Study Group meeting, 17 June 1970 (NAI, DFA/2012/59/1957); *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, pp 77-78.

[18] *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Export Trade in Dressed Meat to the Dollar Area*, paragraphs 7, 8, 11 and 46, 23 Nov. 1951 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2).

[19] *IFJ,* 1 Apr. 1961; Minutes of senior staff meeting at Department of Industry and Commerce, 24 Apr. 1961 (NAI, INDC/IND/2000/13/23).

[20] Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, p. 536.

[21] Memorandum on the impact of the AIFTA on Anglo-Irish trade and investment from the British Ambassador to Ireland, Sir Andrew Gilchrist, 18 Aug. 1967 (TNA, BT 11/6879).

end of the 1950s the live exporters remained the dominant lobby group in the cattle sector, but their position was gradually eroded by the continued growth in beef processing. The success of the beef sector's representative body, IFMES, in skilfully linking the export of store and fat animals to the loss of potential jobs in slaughter-houses – and of the added-value that meat processing generated for the economy – was crucial to the factories' ultimate success in their battle to eclipse the cattle exporters. This was achieved by IFMES carefully building a loose coalition of interests – including the unions, politicians and beef finishers – in support of its position. The manner in which this approach influenced the national discourse around live cattle exports was illustrated in April 1981 when IFMES warned at a Dublin press conference that the high level of live exports that year had put 2,500 meat factory jobs in danger. Workers' concerns were subsequently raised in the Dáil by Dublin Fine Gael TD, George Birmingham.[22]

The AIFTA negotiations of 1965 represented the first demonstration of the beef processors' growing influence, when the Minister for Agriculture, Charles Haughey, signalled a major change in the state's position regarding livestock-related exports by openly promoting the interests of the beef processors over those of the live exporters. Beef exports trebled between 1965 and 1967 as a consequence of the AIFTA, while the number of cattle slaughtered and processed in Irish factories exceeded the total shipped on the hoof for the first time.[23] This represented a significant volte-face in agricultural policy. Whereas Jack Nagle effectively restricted beef exports in 1953-55 by invoking an annex to the 1948 Anglo-Irish trade deal, Irish governments in the late 1970s and early 1980s reversed this approach by purposely obstructing live cattle exports.[24] This is evident from the measures introduced by Minister for Agriculture, Jim Gibbons, in 1977-79 to curtail the activities of live shippers, as detailed in Chapter Four, and in the efforts made by successive governments in the 1980s to encourage Middle Eastern countries to shift away from live cattle purchases to buying beef instead. Indeed, cattle exporter, Seamus Purcell, challenged the Government to admit in 1983 that it was effectively 'trying to kill the

[22] Dáil debates Vol. 328, No. 8, 9 Apr. 1981; *II*, 8 Apr. 1981.
[23] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 36; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, p. 78.
[24] Text of statement made by the Minister for Agriculture, Thomas Walsh, in the Dáil on 17 June 1953 (NAI, DA/6/29/31); Address to the CBF board by the Minister for Agriculture, Jim Gibbons, 11 Oct. 1979 (NAI, TSCH/GIS/1/170); *IFJ*, 28 Jan. 1978.

live trade'.[25] However, support for the beef processing industry was consistent with the state's broader industrial policy of supporting export-oriented enterprises that were relatively labour intensive. The practical matter of providing employment at twenty-five to thirty centres around the country, and retaining the added-value benefits of primary slaughtering and secondary downstream processing within the Irish economy, underlay Government support for the processors. A simplistic assessment of the relative merits of live exports versus processing, often quoted by the meat factory owners, was that one man and a dog could load two hundred cattle onto a boat, but there was work for sixty or seventy people if the animals were slaughtered at home.[26] Such pronouncements invariably carried weight in rural Ireland where the levels of emigration and unemployment meant that protecting and maintaining up to five thousand jobs in beef processing trumped most other considerations. The live trade also generated employment. Indeed, a 1995 study for the Irish Livestock Exporters Association by UCD economist John O'Connell estimated that incomes from exports equated to around four thousand jobs.[27] However, a breakdown of this total was not provided, and the overall figure does not tally with Kevin Purcell's recollections. He estimated that around 300 staff were employed directly by Purcells – by far the country's largest livestock shippers in the 1970s and 1980s – in live cattle exports.[28] Indeed, Purcell's estimate suggests that less than one thousand were directly employed in live exports. Basic economics was also a factor in the preference of successive governments for beef processing. Earnings from beef sales were generally worth three times those of live cattle exports in the late 1970s and early 1980s. For example, live exports generated export income of Ir£166 million in 1980, compared to almost Ir£470 for beef sales.[29]

The absence of a national plan or a strategic vision for the beef processing industry, however, was a serious failing and undermined the sector's long-term development. While beef processing experienced remarkable growth during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s – slaughtering close to 1.4 million animals in 1980 – it was not a planned industry and serious structural weaknesses inhibited efficiency and

[25] *Evening Press*, 24 Sept. 1981; *CE*, 13 June 1985; *II*, 13 June 1985; *IFJ*, 26 Sept. 1981; 30 Apr. 1983, 22 June 1985.
[26] Gus Fitzpatrick interview (18 Oct. 2016).
[27] John O'Connell, *The Contribution of Live Cattle Exports to the Irish Economy* (Dublin, 1995), p. 2.
[28] Kevin Purcell interview (4 Nov. 2015).
[29] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1980*, p. 24.

profit levels as a consequence.[30] In contrast to other food and land-use enterprises established in the 1930s and 1940s, such as sugar processing or Bord na Móna's turf harvesting operations, the beef industry was not developed in an ordered fashion at specifically chosen and serviced locations. There were no planned factory sites such as Cómhlucht Siúicre Éireann had at Tuam, Thurles, Carlow and Mallow.[31] Instead, the beef industry expanded and evolved in an ad-hoc and reactive manner. For example, with the exception of the factory in Roscrea, no beef slaughter plants had dedicated rail links for the transport of cattle. Indeed, International Meats at Dublin's Grand Canal Street, the largest slaughter plant in the country in the 1950s and 1960s, walked cattle that had been purchased in the Dublin Cattle Market across the capital to the factory.[32] The unplanned nature of the industry's expansion was also reflected in a regional imbalance in the location of slaughter plants. There was a concentration of factories in Kildare and Dublin, for example, but few in the traditional cattle fattening areas such as Meath or the midlands.[33] Poor design and cramped factory layouts was another common feature of the industry. Indeed, many of the early beef firms, including IMP Leixlip, Shannon Meats and Clones Meat Packers, were based in converted workhouses, warehouses or other historic buildings.[34] This had a negative impact on factory operations, work-flow and plant efficiency as the slaughter plants were not purpose-built facilities. In an industry operating on profit margins of one to four per cent, factory efficiency was a vital consideration.[35]

More importantly, the absence of a long-term development plan for the industry resulted in a major over-capacity problem. There were simply too many factories from the mid-1950s, and too much slaughtering capacity, for the number of cattle being killed and processed each year. This was a recurring problem in the sector. It was referenced in an industry report in 1962, the ESRI report of 1973, and again in the *Cooper and Lybrand* report commissioned by the IDA in 1977. In fact, the 1962 report into the beef industry recorded that overall capacity utilisation was just fifty-three per cent; the ESRI report noted that this figure had fallen to forty per

[30] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1980*, p. 30.
[31] Daly, *First Department,* pp 190-191.
[32] Interview B (24 Sept. 2015).
[33] List of registered premises for the export of meat to the US, included in a Department of Agriculture memorandum, 14 Mar. 1952 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2).
[34] Bill Hayes, *Drunk and Disorderly*, pp 93-94; *Anglo-Celt*, 27 June, 1969, 14 Feb. 1975; Discussion with Jimmy Cosgrave (14 June 2018); *Limerick Leader*, 14 Feb. 1953.
[35] *Cooper and Lybrand* report for the IDA, pp 72-73.

cent a decade later; while the *Cooper and Lybrand* report found that low boning capacity utilisation was reflected in a significant variation in beef processing costs in the mid-1970s.[36] Other factors, such as the seasonal cattle supplies, fed into the industry's capacity utilisation problems.[37] The failure of successive governments or the Department of Agriculture to plan the development of the beef processing industry, or to limit the number of factories operating in the sector, illustrates the extent to which the state's laissez faire attitude to the live export of cattle was mirrored in its approach to the dead meat sector. This outlook was illustrated by the reluctance of the Minister for Agriculture, Tom Walsh, in 1951 to curtail the issuing of licences to new beef factories in the Dublin-Kildare area, despite concerns within government that too many factories were concentrated in the region.[38] Similarly, no planned state policy was introduced to restrict slaughtering capacity in the early 1970s, or again in the early 1980s, despite the severe financial difficulties the industry was experiencing during these periods. Indeed, it is instructive that it took the commercial failure of IMP, and the subsequent closure of its factories in Leixlip and Grand Canal Street, rather than government action, to eventually reduce slaughtering capacity.

The absence of a structured development plan for the beef industry is also a reflection of the difficult relationship that existed between the Department of Agriculture and the dead meat sector during the 1950s and early 1960s. The innate conservatism of the department was illustrated by the conviction of senior officials such as Jack Nagle that protecting live cattle exports remained its primary policy objective, with processed beef sales acting in a supporting role.[39] Despite this bias, however, the Department of Agriculture played a crucial role in the development of Irish beef processing. It provided the regulatory framework, as well as the disease controls, the veterinary inspection service, and the factory supervisory regime

[36] Confidential survey team's report on the beef, mutton and lamb industry, appendix 1962, p. 59; *Cooper and Lybrand* report for the IDA, pp 61-65; *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, pp 100-101.

[37] *A Study of the Irish Cattle and Beef Industries*, pp 100-102; Confidential survey team's report on the beef, mutton and lamb industry, appendix 1962, p. 104; *Cooper and Lybrand* report for the IDA, pp 17-19.

[38] Daly, *First Department*, p. 301; Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the export trade in dressed meat to the dollar area, paragraph 16, 23 Nov. 1951 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2).

[39] Daly, *First Department*, pp 304-05.

required to support a modern food industry.[40] Indeed, beef processing could not have developed as it did without the institutional and practical supports provided by the Department of Agriculture. Beef exports to the US and to the American armed forces in Europe – a critical market for Ireland, particularly following the deregulation of British food imports in 1954 – were dependent on the industry operating to accepted quality standards. The Department of Agriculture inspection and supervisory regimes provided the necessary assurance, as this study has shown.[41] Moreover, it was to the Department of Agriculture's credit that Ireland was the only state in 1950s Europe, apart from Iceland, that was considered entirely free of Foot and Mouth Disease – another crucial factor in the beef industry's development.[42]

However, closer ties to the beef industry in the years following the AIFTA and EEC membership ultimately compromised the Department of Agriculture. The controversial loans package secured by the meat factories in 1972 provides an early example of the department's willingness – and that of the Minister for Agriculture, Jim Gibbons – to flout EEC regulations, which Ireland was subject to as an accession state, in order to support the beef processors.[43] The department was equally negligent in not taking a tougher stance on sharp practices by the meat factories around MCA rules, such as the 'salt and pepper' and 'Atlas bone' loopholes of the late 1970s.[44] Arguably, this 'light touch' approach to regulation led to the intervention scheme irregularities and fraud that was later highlighted in the Beef Tribunal. The sharp criticism levelled by Justice Liam Hamilton at the ineffectual manner in which the Department of Agriculture operated the EEC's beef intervention regime in Ireland was one of the primary findings of the Inquiry.[45] As Elaine Byrne has noted, the intervention problems ultimately cost the Irish taxpayer over €80 million after the European Commission's anti-fraud agency fined Ireland €86 million (Ir£68 million) in 1996 because of the Department of Agriculture's failure to recover sums lost to fraudulent claims by meat processors. The overall cost to the State was reduced somewhat when AIBP later agreed to pay the Department of Agriculture €3.8 million

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[40] Memorandum to meat processing companies setting out quality standards, 20 Aug. 1955 (NAI, DA/10/7/24/4); *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, pp 26-29.

[41] Gus Fitzpatrick interview (18 Oct. 2016); *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, pp 26-29.

[42] *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Export Trade in Dressed Meat to the Dollar Area*, paragraph 27, 23 Nov. 1951 (NAI, DA/10/25/2/2).

[43] *Dáil Eireann Committee of Public Accounts Report 1976* (Appropriation Accounts), pp 2-4.

[44] *IFJ*, 24 Mar. 1979.

[45] *Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the Beef Processing Industry*, p. 714.

in compensation for intervention beef irregularities.[46] However, the department's interactions with the beef industry are invariably viewed through the prism of the Beef Tribunal Report. This has resulted in significant reputational damage. Fintan O'Toole has accused the department of being 'ambivalent' to beef industry wrong-doing because of the close relationship it had developed with beef processors.[47] This view accords with the more general observations of Ó Gráda that in the 1970s the Department of Agriculture became a 'lobbying conduit' between the farm sector on the one hand, and, on the other, both government ministers and Brussels.[48] However, this justified criticism must be weighed against the positive role the institution played in providing the technical support and assistance which enabled the beef industry's sustained growth from the early 1950s.

The forced exit of the farmer-owned co-operatives from beef processing, as this study has identified, was a watershed event in the development of the industry. The collapse and closure of Clover Meats and IMP accelerated the complete privatisation of the sector, and facilitated the expansion of Larry Goodman's AIBP by removing two significant competitors. In addition, the demise of both farmer-owned concerns seriously weakened farmers' faith in the co-operative movement and its business model, and inflicted considerable reputational harm on the farm organisations. Moreover, the significant challenges of the beef processing industry cruelly exposed the limitations of the co-operative business model. Indeed, the controversy and discord around the departure of IMP and Clover Meats from the beef sector, along with the earlier exit of Golden Vale Marts (GVM) and North Connacht Farmers (NCF), ended any hope of meat-processing co-operatives making a comeback. As Maurice Colbert observed, the closure of IMP and Clover Meats did 'irreparable damage' to 'farmer confidence in meat co-operatives'.[49] Future investment by farmer-owned businesses in beef slaughtering were 'bolt-on' purchases by successful dairy processors such as Mitchelstown Co-operative, Kerry Co-operative and Avonmore.[50] Did the manner of the co-operatives' exit from beef also influence business structures in the dairy industry? There is no explicit evidence that it

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[46] *IT*, 19 July 2003; Byrne, *Political Corruption In Ireland 1922-2010*, pp 124-125.
[47] O'Toole, *Meanwhile Back at the Ranch*, p. 266.
[48] Ó Gráda, *A rocky road: The Irish economy since the 1920s*, p. 156.
[49] Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, p. 128.
[50] *Anglo-Celt*, 16 Apr. 1992; *Connaught Telegraph*, 14 July 1999; *CE*, 22 Apr. 1992, 11 Sept. 2003; *IFJ*, 18 Apr. 1992, 23 Dec. 1995, 12 June 1999; Maurice Colbert, *Recollections of the Co-op Years*, p. 128.

did. However, it is hardly coincidental that the slow demise of Clover Meats and IMP was contemporaneous with dairy sector moves – led by Kerry Co-operative – towards the development of a hybrid business model, in which their commercial operations were part-owned by public limited companies.[51]

The farm organisations were also damaged by the co-operative movement's exit from beef processing. The NFA, for all the right reasons, played a pivotal role in the campaign to convince 28,000 farmers to invest over £3 million in the purchase of IMP in 1968-69.[52] It was not alone in this endeavour. The IAOS, Macra na Feirme, and the *Farmers' Journal* were all active in the share drive.[53] Moreover, leading members of NFA-IFA sat on the boards and acted as chairmen of IMP and Clover Meats. The failure of both businesses was, therefore, by association, a reflection on the farm organisations. In essence, it suggested that farmers were unable to successfully run meat processing concerns – a view that was given further credence by ICMSA's sale of its thirty per cent shareholding in Shannon Meats to Larry Goodman's AIBP.[54] In the longer-term, the departure of the co-operatives, and AIBP's later purchase of Shannon Meats, was detrimental to beef industry transparency and to farmer-factory relations. While IMP, Clover Meats and Shannon Meats published financial results each year, the same was not true for the private operators. A vital window into the industry – which was actually beneficial to the private operators as it confirmed the low margins in the meat business – was firmly shut following the co-operatives' exit and the sale of Shannon Meats. The veil of secrecy around beef processor turnover and profit levels added to farmer-factory distrust in the late 1980s. Indeed, the absence of transparency remains an issue of contention in the modern beef industry four decades later.

The failure of beef industry expansion to deliver increased incomes for cattle producers added to farmer-factory tensions, and to the fractious and confrontational relationship that emerged between the two groups – particularly after the exit of the co-operatives. This situation caused real frustration among farmers and was exacerbated by the state's blind and misguided focus on expanding cattle numbers, in a clear illustration of how livestock policy was increasingly formulated through the prism of beef factories' needs rather than those of cattle producers. The declining

[51] *IFJ,* 18 Jan. 1986.
[52] Tom Cleary interview (13 October 2016); *IFJ*, 4 Feb. 1967.
[53] Colbert, *Recollections of the co-op years*, pp 75-76; *IFJ*, 26 Oct. 1968 to 18 Jan. 1969.
[54] *CE*, 20 Aug. 1987; *II*, 25 Aug. 1987; *IP,* 26 Aug. 1987; *IFJ,* 8 Aug. 1987.

income levels in beef farming relative to dairying and tillage undermined the enterprise's standing in Irish farming. This trend was confirmed by the *National Farm Survey* results. The 1955-58 survey showed that dairy farmer incomes were ten per cent higher than those of beef producers.[55] This gap had widened to fifty per cent a decade later, while beef farms made less than one-third the profit levels of dairy holdings by the mid-1980s.[56] Ironically, the state's focus on increasing beef cattle numbers – which was national policy from the *Programme for Economic Expansion* of 1958 up to the 1980s – compounded the income difficulties of beef producers. This approach presupposed that increased cattle numbers equated to higher beef farmer incomes. Unfortunately, this assessment was flawed, as it failed to address the issue of poor efficiency and profitability at farm level. In addition, the government position incorrectly assumed that the interests of cattle producers were congruent with those of beef processors. Indeed, the misconception that meat processors interests were invariably aligned with those of farmers – a dichotomy which is still evident today – resulted in policy for the sector being informed primarily by the processors' requirements. While the factories ideally wanted high cattle numbers and low prices to maximise profits; conversely, beef farmer incomes fared best during periods of low numbers and high livestock prices. Events in the beef sector in 1971-72 and 1974-75, and again in 1980-82, confirmed the correlation between supplies and incomes for both the farmer and factory. Beef processors were forced to seek a government bail-out in 1971-72 as a consequence of significantly lower livestock numbers and high prices.[57] In contrast, the factories' gross margins grew by over £13 million during the unprecedented cattle crisis of 1974-75 when the national herd reached a record level of 7.2 million head but livestock prices fell by fifty to sixty per cent as a result of increased EEC supplies and reduced beef demand.[58] The introduction of the suckler cow premium in 1980 ultimately provided a solution to the conundrum posed by the competing market aspirations of the beef farmers and processors. The premium provided farmers with an annual payment for keeping the beef cow and calf; raw material supplies for the processors were secured as beef cow numbers expanded to

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[55] *National Farm Survey 1955-56 and 1957-58*, Central Statistics Office, p. 3.
[56] *National Farm Survey* 1966-69, p. 43 and p. 45; *National Farm Survey 1985*, p. 12.
[57] Gus Fitzpatrick interviews (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017).
[58] *Report of the Review Body on Beef Intervention and Cattle Slaughter Premium Systems*, pp 30-31.

more than one million head; and the Irish exchequer escaped any expense as the scheme was EEC-funded.[59]

State and European supports were equally critical to the commercial viability of beef processors. Indeed, the central role played by public funding in the beef processing sector's expansion cannot be underestimated. This study shows that periods of significant growth in beef output invariably coincided with the provision of increased subsidisation. Direct and indirect payments to the beef factories were a feature of the industry from its establishment. For example, Roscrea Meats was commissioned in the mid-1930s as a State-contracted slaughter plant which disposed of old and sick cows. Similarly, processors used payments provided under the TB eradication programme in the 1950s and 1960s to expand their slaughtering operations.[60] However, expansion in the industry was invariably linked to the provision of direct government subsidies. The payment of £2.1 million in export supports under the Guarantee Payments Scheme between 1960 and 1962 helped to consolidate the sector.[61] However, as outlined in Chapter Three, beef exports trebled in the wake of the AIFTA when close to £8 million in public funding was paid to the processors between 1966 and 1970.[62] The Store Cattle Study Group attributed the impressive expansion in Irish beef exports during this period to what it termed a 'massive injection of public money'.[63] Indeed, the controversial government loans of 1972 confirm the industry's dependence on public subsidies by this time. When the AIFTA-related exchequer supports – which were linked to cattle prices and worth around £2 million per year – declined in 1971-72 as a result of buoyant demand for live exports to the continent, the industry was forced to effectively seek a government bailout.[64] Beef processors could not survive without public funding. A similar correlation between beef export growth and state supports is evident during the mid-1970s and 1980s, when processors enjoyed the safety net of the CAP's intervention regime, and subsequently expanded beef sales to the Middle East with the help of EEC-funded export refunds and Export Credit Insurance which was underwritten by

[59] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1981*, p. 35; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1985*, p. 33; *IFJ,* 17 Apr. 1982..
[60] John Lyons interview (15 Aug. 2018).
[61] Department of Finance memorandum to Government, 11 Jan. 1965 (NAI, TAOIS/96/6/508); *Report of the survey team on the beef, mutton and lamb industries*, p. 19.
[62] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries*, *1968-69*, p. 37; *IFJ*, 27 Dec. 1969; *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 119.
[63] *Report of the Store Cattle Study Group*, p. 119.
[64] *Dáil Eireann Committee of Public Accounts Report 1976* (Appropriation Accounts), pp 2-4.

the Irish government. As a consequence of the generous subsidy regimes, beef exports expanded by seventy per cent between 1974 and 1986 to reach 340,000 tonnes.[65] However, the cost of the supports package increased accordingly as Ireland sought to maximise EEC monetary transfers. Overall expenditure on the beef intervention scheme rose four-fold to Ir£370 million by 1986, while net CAP payments to Ireland totalled Ir£1.1 billion.[66] Indeed, the evidence from this study suggests that while the beef industry of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s was privately owned, it was publicly funded.

In charting the development of the Irish beef processing industry, this study has effectively traced the modernisation of the country's farm sector through the lens of the meat factories. The limitations of time, word counts and Covid-19 have combined to restrict research in some areas, and further work on the beef sector is certainly justified. For example, additional research is merited into the development of beef processing in Northern Ireland, and how its growth mirrored and differed from that of the Republic. In addition, a more in-depth analysis of the *Meat Trades Journal* should offer a fascinating insight into the attitude of the British industry to Ireland's expanding meat sector. Moreover, a comprehensive examination of Clover Meats' records could be equally informative, in detailing the actual experiences of the meat processor during the crucial early decades of the beef industry.

The emergence and growth of the beef processing industry between 1950 and 1986 was largely positive for the Irish economy in general and the farm sector in particular. As this study shows, the expansion of locally-owned beef companies increased competition for livestock, moved Ireland away from a dependence on live exports to Britain, provided an outlet for cull cows from the dairy herd, and facilitated the development of the Irish beef herd. In addition, export revenues in excess of Ir£500 million by 1986 meant the beef industry was Ireland's most important farming sector.[67] The economic influence of the beef industry was amplified by its unparalleled reach. Beef factories were active in every parish and townland in the country, with processors purchasing close to one million cattle each year from the 1970s, and up to 1.4 million by the 1980s. They were also trading with close to

[65] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1976*, pp 40-41; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1986*, pp 24-33.
[66] Conway, 'Agricultural Policy' in Patrick Keatinge (ed.) *Ireland and EEC Membership Evaluated,* p. 57; *Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the Beef Processing Industry*, p. 35.
[67] *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1986*, pp 24-33.

120,000 livestock farmers.[68] The findings of the Beef Tribunal exposed the political connections and influence of the beef factory owners. More importantly, the evidence presented at the Tribunal tarnished the reputation of the beef industry to such an extent, that it has hindered a purely historical assessment of the industry's importance. However, despite the failings exposed in the Beef Tribunal, the positive impact of the beef industry on the modernisation of Irish farming cannot be ignored. This was recognised by Justice Liam Hamilton in the Beef Tribunal Report.

> What is distinctive about the last twenty-five years is that Ireland, long a successful producer of live cattle, has become a successful processor [of beef] and [an] international trader as well. The benefits to the Irish economy, by way of value added and job creation, deriving from the export of processed beef rather than the export of live cattle are self-evident.[69]

His assessment echoes comments in 1978 by the National Economic and Social Council, which described the four-fold increase in cattle slaughtering between 1965 and 1975 as a 'very significant achievement for an industry which was virtually non-existent in the early 1950s'.[70]

The influence of the meat factories was not always positive. IFMES certainly frustrated the development of a more progressive and retail-oriented beef industry in the 1960s and 1970s by its strident but illogical opposition to the concept of centralised marketing and the establishment of CBF.[71] Equally flawed was the beef factories opposition to the introduction of livestock grading and a more transparent and technical payment system for beef cattle.[72] Against this, however, the resilience and flexibility of the beef industry has to be conceded. The sector reinvented itself after the deregulation of the British food import regime in 1954 by switching from killing prime steers and heifers for the British market to slaughtering cows for sale in the US as manufacturing beef. Britain became the prime outlet for beef once more following the AIFTA, while the industry refocused its efforts away from the US to

[68] Gus Fitzpatrick interviews (18 Oct. 2016 and 1 Mar. 2017); *Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the Beef Processing Industry*, pp 31-35; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1976*, pp 40-41; *Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture*, *1986*, pp 24-33.

[69] *Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the Beef Processing Industry*, p. 32.

[70] O'Connell & Sheehy, *'Policies to accelerate agricultural development'*, National Economic and Social Council, p. 122.

[71] Letter from Jim Bastow of IFMES to the Taoiseach, Liam Cosgrave, dated 17 Dec. 1976, in NAI file TAOIS/2009/135/71; Letter from Jim Bastow of IFMES to Reddy Day, CBF chairman, dated 21 Dec. 1976, in NAI file TAOIS/2009/135/71.

[72] *IFJ*, 25 Aug. 1973; *II*, 30 Jan. 1974; *CE*, 30 Jan. 1974.

Europe after EEC membership, before finally establishing significant export contracts in the Middle East. The industry also displayed flexibility in moving away – albeit belatedly – from a dependence on commodity beef sales through wholesale markets such as Smithfield, to the supply of beef cuts for retail butchers and supermarkets.[73] In fact, the concentration on the intervention scheme's role in the meat industry of the 1970s and the 1980s has obscured the fact that three-quarters of Irish beef output during this period was sold to 'real' customers.

The development of the beef processing industry was not a panacea for the Irish livestock sector's ills. Beef farmer incomes continued to lag those attainable in other agricultural enterprises. In addition, the collapse of the co-operative meat processors was a major setback for farmer involvement in the business, while the lack of foresight to protect and promote secondary processing represented a missed opportunity. However, these failings must be balanced against the achievement of establishing an internationally competitive beef industry between 1950 and 1986. It must also be recognised that beef processing is an extremely challenging activity. Indeed, most of the leading firms in the Irish industry from the 1950s to the 1980s either went into liquidation, examinership, or were sold. As well as IMP and Clover Meats, the casualty list includes Frigorifico in Ireland, Tunney Meats, Roscrea Meats and the Longford-based Lyons group of companies. The dramatic exit of Purcell Meat Exports in 1986 was more than matched by the collapse of Halal Meats and Goodman International in the early 1990s. Even two aristocrats of the Irish business world, Kerry Group and the Guinness family, entered and exited beef processing in the 1980s and 1990s, having failed to make sense of the sector. It was, and is, an unforgiving trading environment.

[73] John B. Keane interview (19 February 2019); Gus Fitzpatrick interviews (18 October 2016 and 1 March 2017); Coopers and Lybrand report for the IDA, pp 46-50; *IFJ*, 27 Nov. 1976.

APPENDIX 1: Ministers for Agriculture 1948-1987

James Dillon	1948-1951
Thomas Walsh	1951-1954
James Dillon	1954-1957
Frank Aiken	1957
Seán Moylan	1957
Patrick Smith	1957-1964
Charles Haughey	1964-1966
Neil Blaney	1966-1970
James Gibbons	1970-1973
Mark Clinton	1973-1977
James Gibbons	1977-1979
Ray MacSharry	1979-1981
Alan Dukes	1981-1982
Brian Lenihan	1982
Austin Deasy	1982-1987

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G. BROADCASTS

'The Price of Bacon' first broadcast on RTE Radio 1 on 22 March 2009. The radio documentary was part of the Factory Lives series.

H. INTERNET SOURCES

Agriland, online news service: *www.agriland.ie*

Blog by Christy Wynne entitled 'Fair Day in Boyle' accessed on: http://ctristywynne.blogspot.ie/2016/07/fair-day-in-boyle.html?m=1

Central Statistics Office online information on the number of cattle shipped live and exported as beef each year: http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Database/eirestat/External%20Trade/External%20Trade_statbank.asp?SP=External%20Trade&Planguage=0

Dáil debates archive: www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/find/?debateType=dail

Dictionary of Irish Biography (https://dib-cambridge-org)

Documents on Irish Foreign Policy (www.difp.ie)

Hansard (https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons)

RTE News Archive (rte.ie/archives/collections/news)

RTE online news: www.rte.ie