

# If you look after the soil, the soil will look after you

Lakeland Dairies Agribusiness division has delivered a **3-step Soil Improvement Programme**, in partnership with **Devenish** and **Thomson & Joseph**. This project was delivered by working with three monitor dairy farms in Cavan, Monaghan and Westmeath over the past four years.

## Key outcomes

- An average increase in grass growth and utilisation, worth €12,000/year (on a whole farm basis) was delivered across the three monitor farms
- An average increase in output of €900/ha/year (on the grazing platform) was also delivered\*. This was due to an increase in stocking rate over the four years, being achieved without any significant increase in fertiliser or concentrate use per cow



Left to right - Jimmy Maloney, Raymond Scott and Clive Reed (Monitor Farmers), with Dr. David Atherton (Thomson & Joseph), Alan Hurst (Lakeland Agri) and Dr. Morgan Sheehy (Devenish), demonstrating some of the key steps in the Soil Improvement Programme

## Key benefits

- ↑ Financial return
- ↑ Grass yield and utilisation
- ↑ Grass quality
- ↑ Stocking rate
- ↑ Milk solids
- ↑ Cow health and fertility
- ↓ Odour during slurry spreading

## Financial return

**On average, Lakeland Monitor farms achieved:**

- An increase in grass growth and utilisation, worth €12,000/year (on a whole farm basis)
- An increase in milk solids output on the grazing platform of 200 kg/ha @ €4.50/kg = €900 increased output/ha/year\*

# 3 Steps in the Soil Improvement Programme

## 1. Physical ..... 2. Chemical ..... 3. Biological

- Smell the soil
- Observe the colour
- Look for earthworms
- Aerate soil in Spring or Autumn, when ground conditions are favourable

- Analyse your soil for key nutrients and take corrective action, based on the analysis

- Add an inoculant called **Digest-It®** to your slurry at least 3 months before spreading

## Which image most resembles your soil?



Healthy soil

Unhealthy soil

**Rusty brown**  
**Fresh**  
**Extensive**  
**Abundance**

**Colour**  
**Smell**  
**Root structure**  
**Earthworms**

**Grey**  
**Stale**  
**Limited**  
**Absence**

## What our three monitor farmers said about the programme



**Raymond Scott, Co. Cavan** "Grass yield and quality is improving all the time. Last year, at the higher stocking rate, we needed to feed some silage during the summer months. This year, there is no silage going in, we are getting it all from grazed grass".



**Clive Reed, Co. Monaghan** "There is now life back in the ground. You can see the earthworms. It is incredible to think what can be achieved from a little more care and attention. Before we started the programme, cows were not cleaning right, we have now managed to sort that problem out."



**Jimmy Maloney, Co. Westmeath** "When we started, there were no earthworms and the soil was grey in colour. It is very different now. Grass growth is much greater and grass looks healthier. In relation to the overall economics of the programme, we are better off. We now have the knowledge and technology to produce more grass and better quality grass."

## Further details on the 3-step Soil Improvement Programme

Please contact your Lakeland Agri Technical Sales Representative or Alan Hurst directly on 087 2901663