

DNA SCHEME

Tim Cullinan

Profile

I am a pig producer in Tipperary. We produce pigs from birth to slaughter. Cereals that are used in our mill are mainly sourced from the local area.

Former Chairman of IFA's National Pig and Pigmeat Committee.

I was involved in setting up the pig DNA scheme. It was a world first in traceability – a national database of a genetic sample to identify every boar used in the Irish herd. This allows IFA and IdentiGen to definitively say whether a piece of pigmeat labelled as Irish is genuinely that.

I was involved in the first joint programme between Teagasc and Irish producers. I was also involved in convincing the EPA to acknowledge regulations governing the application of pig manure to farmland.

Currently I am IFA North Tipperary County Chairman.



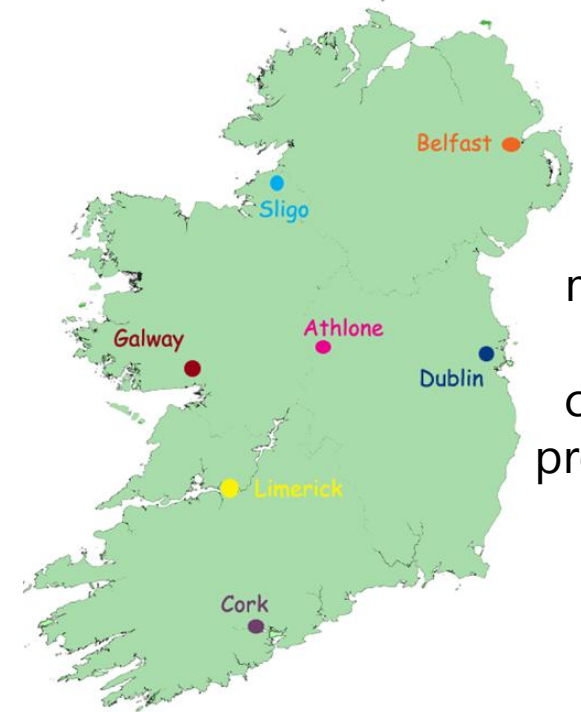
Irish Pigmeat Industry

In Ireland we produce 3.5 million pigs per year. 50% of pig meat is consumed on the home market. The remainder is exported mainly to the UK, Asia and now Australia.

Ireland exported almost 20,000 tons to Russia before the Russian ban on imports.

The cost of feed in Ireland is approximately 15c kg dead weight more expensive than the main exporting countries in Europe.

Irish farmers produce 2.5 million tons of cereals per year. Total usage of animal feed is 5 million tons per year. Of that 5 million tons, pig producers use 1 million tons.



2.5
million
tons
cereals
produced



2.5
million
tons
cereals
imported

Pigmeat Prices From 2006 to 2016

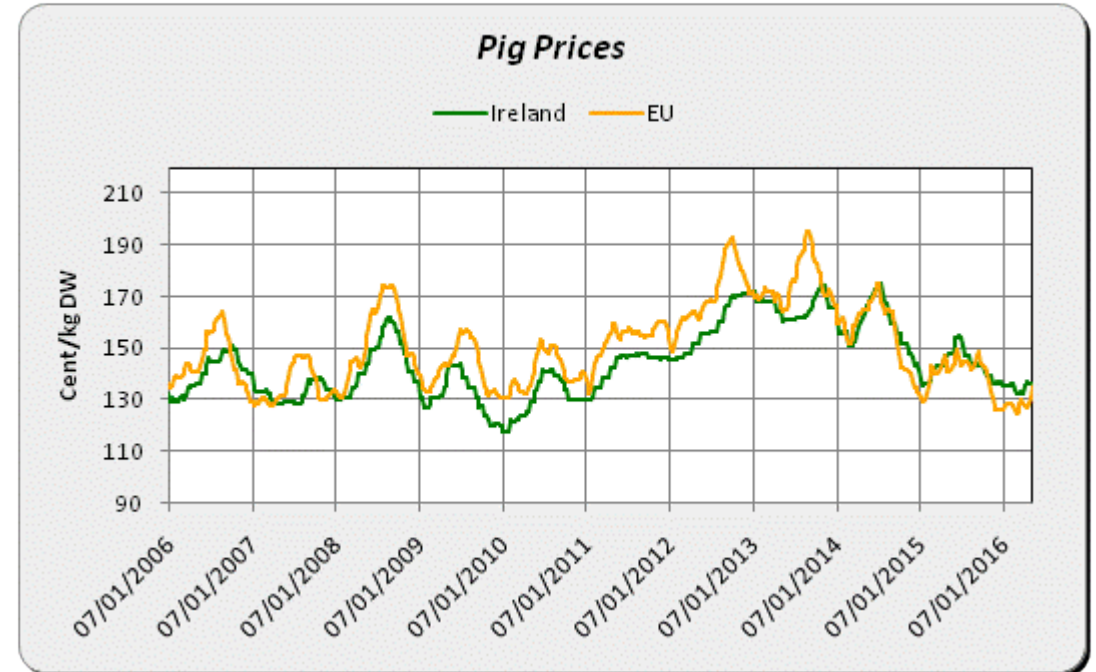
In 2016 the price of Irish pigmeat is similar to the European average pigmeat price
This was not always the case.

The ROI pigmeat price in 2006 = 133c per kg dw

The EU pigmeat price in 2006 = 136c per kg dw

The ROI pigmeat price in 2016 = 137c per kg dw

The EU pigmeat price in 2016 = 136c per kg dw



Before DNA Scheme

For a number of years the only way to identify if pig meat was Irish was if it was carrying the Bord Bia Quality Assurance logo.

We were basically following the logo and not the actual meat.

There was a substantial volume of pig meat that was not Quality Assured i.e. produced in Ireland

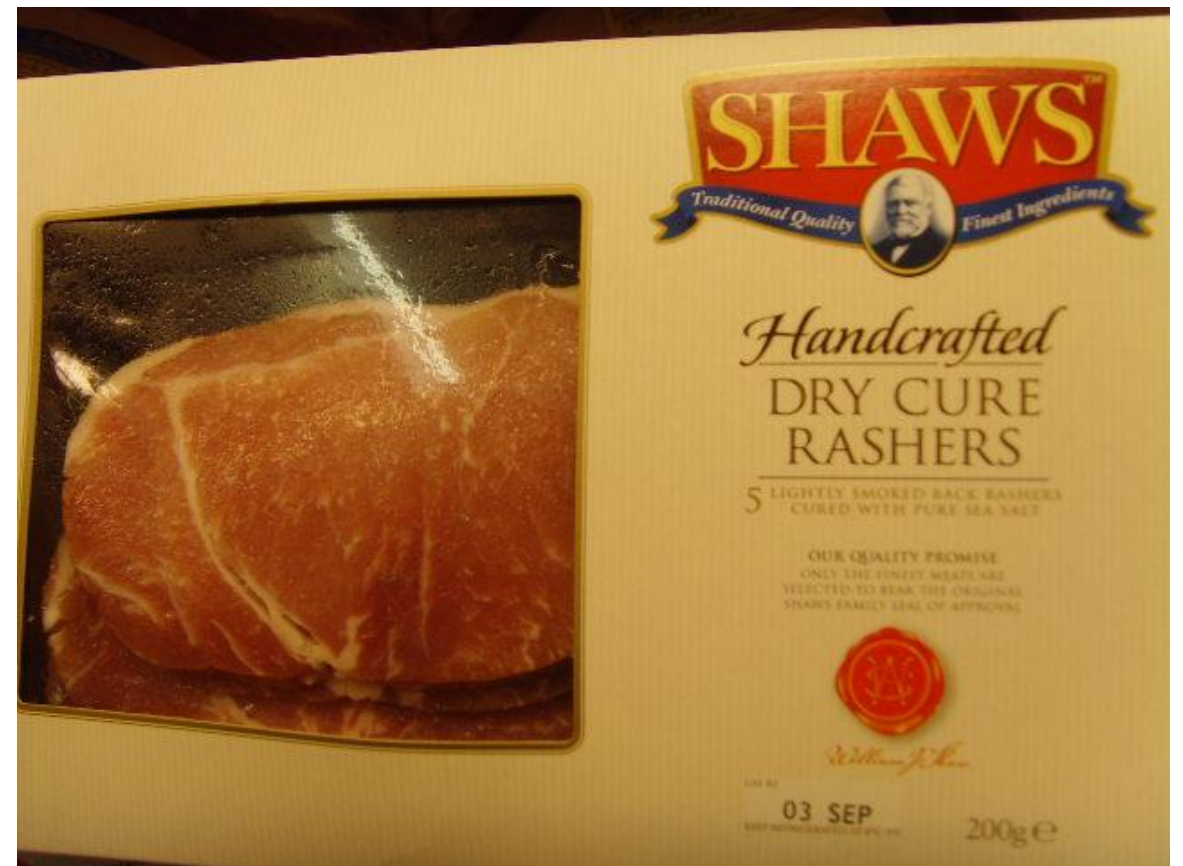


Packets Of Rashers Before DNA Scheme

With Logo



Without Logo



Protests

From 2007 to 2010 IFA's pig committee ran a substantial campaign to convince retailers to use more Irish pig meat.

This helped secure Irish jobs in the Irish pig industry and protected the Irish pig farmers from going out of business at a time when substantial losses were being incurred.

All means were exhausted to convince retailers to make the move to Irish pig meat.



Protests

Throughout the years IFA organized protests to highlight the mislabeling of pig meat products. These protests took place in supermarkets across Ireland where pig meat was being mislabeled as Irish.



Protests



DNA Scheme

In 2010 we explored the possibility of using science to trace the origin of pig meat being sold in retailers.

The objectives of the scheme at its initiation were to increase the sales of Irish pig meat by preventing mislabeling and misleading labelling and to deliver a price premium for Irish pig meat.

Irish consumers want Irish pig meat and supermarkets are attempting to provide them with what they want. However consumers can be misled by having Irish imagery on the labels of imported product or by deliberate substitution of Irish with imported product and falsely labeling it as Irish.

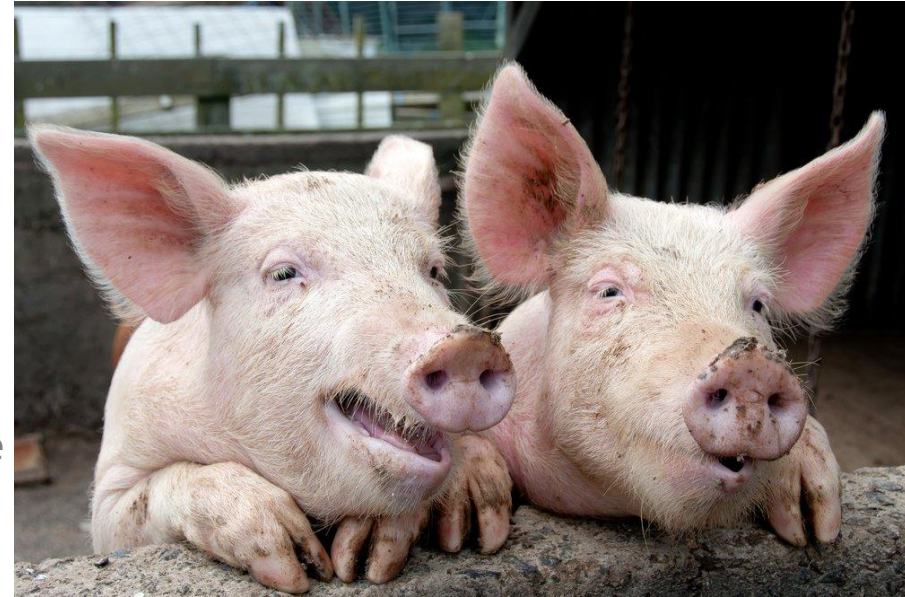
DNA Database

A database of all boars in Ireland was established. Identigen was contracted to create this database by IFA. A tissue sample was taken from all boars on farm and all AI stations. The tissue samples were then inserted into the database and in the process all boars were tagged.

For a farmer to complete his quality assurance all boars on the farm has to have a tissue sample taken and also tagged.

It is a critical non compliance if all boars on the farm or AI station are not part of the database.

Before startup at retail level a validation process was carried out at all slaughtering plants. This was repeated in 2015 to ensure that the scheme is robust.



Sampling Of Meat Products

Bord Bia takes samples of branded quality assured product and an IFA person takes samples of other products as well as those carried the Bord Bia logo.

A probing exercise is carried out at retail level where each private label brand and own label brand are tested.

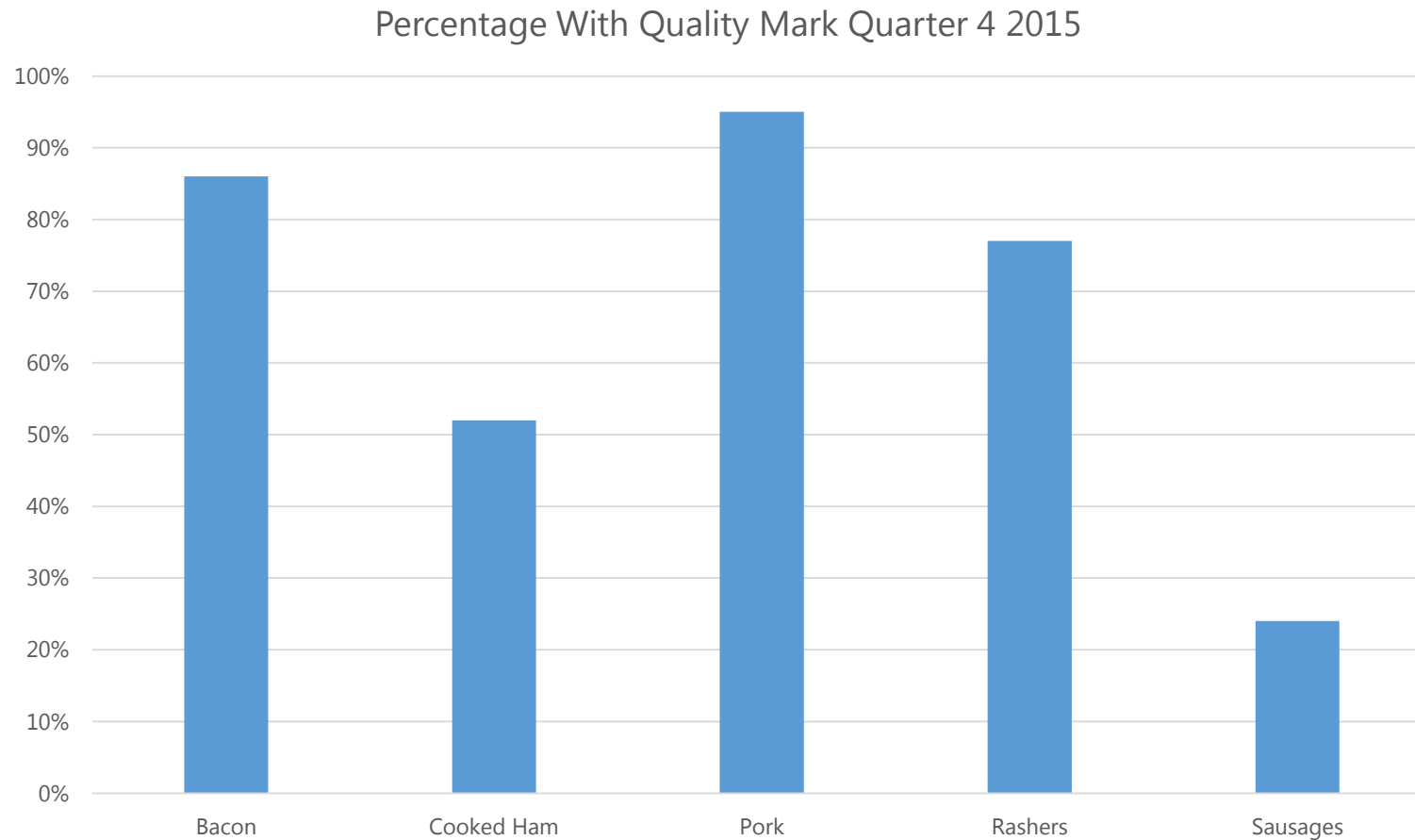
If a brand fails to match the database a deep dive of testing takes place on this particular brand.

At this point if the brand does not match the database action has to take place by IFA.

1. Meeting with retailer or secondary processors to discuss origin of meat.
2. If an agreement is not reached, IFA Pigs Committee takes further action.



Percentage Of Quality Assured Pig Meat In 2015



Brands currently not supporting Irish pig industry



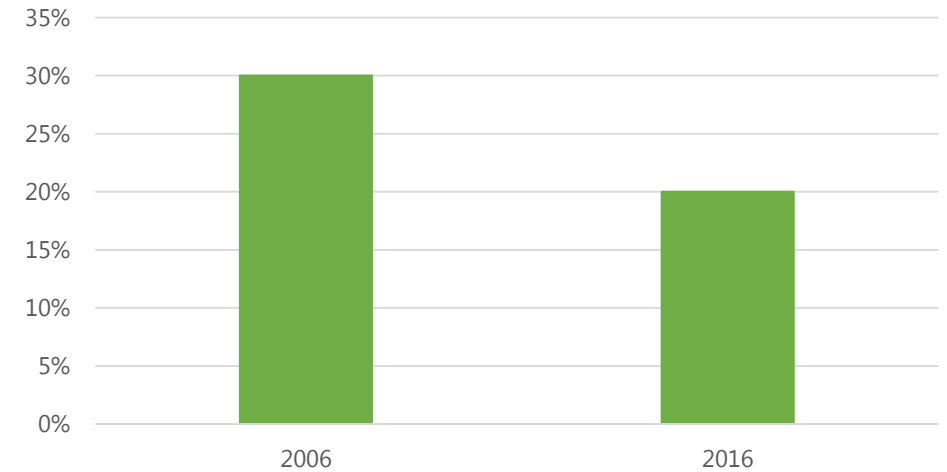
Retailer Dominance

Farmers' incomes across Europe are being constantly squeezed to unsustainable levels. There is a big imbalance of power between the different actors in the food chain. This, combined with perpetual unfair trading practices puts farmers – the weakest link in this chain – in an extremely difficult situation where, quite often, pig meat prices do not even cover farmers' production costs.

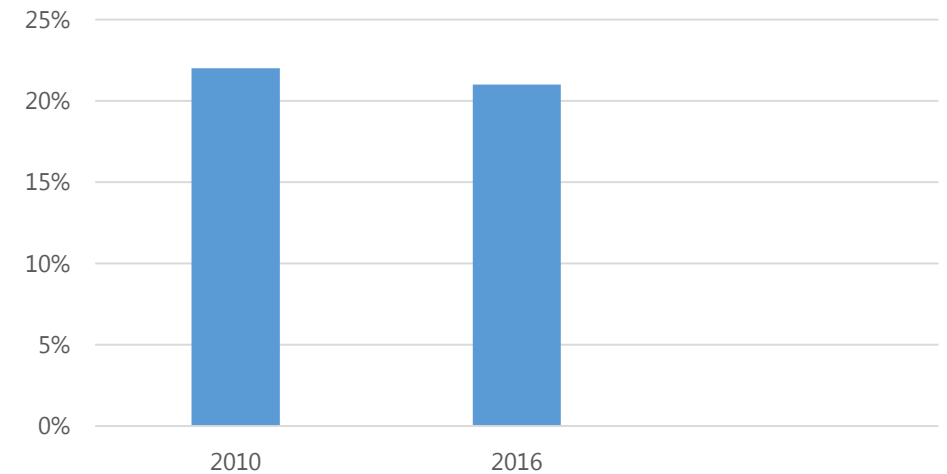
The recent Commission report on unfair trading practices from January failed to recommend action at EU level for problems found in all Member States. We need to have legislation at EU level that combined with voluntary codes of practice can redress the balance and ensure fairness and transparency in the functioning of the food supply chain.

The recent vote in European Parliament's IMCO Committee calls for legislation at EU level to be introduced to curb these unfair trading practices. It is vital to have a change in business ethics. It is not acceptable that people can gain financially from unethical and unfair action.

Farmer Share Of Retail Price In Ireland



Farmer Share Of Retail Price In Germany



Conclusions

By using science DNA has been an excellent tool for identifying misleading labelling in the Irish pig industry.

Pig farmers can spend more time working on their farms and not protesting inside and outside retailers.

DNA has convinced Irish retailers to use more quality assured Irish pig meat.

It has made secondary processors think twice about the origin of pig meat within the pack.

It has helped to sustain the Irish pig meat industry through a number of difficult years.

The introduction of the DNA scheme has helped close the gap between ROI and EU pig price.

All EU pig farmers need to work together to force change at EU level on the dominance of retailers.

Thank you