

# Agri Aware's Dig in!

## MODULE 4



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,  
Bia agus Mara  
Department of Agriculture,  
Food and the Marine



Learning about life on the farm and in the countryside



# Teacher guidelines

## How to use this pack

*Dig In! Learning about life on the farm and in the countryside* is linked to the primary school curriculum or strands of it. It is divided into four modules. The modules are divided according to levels of ability.

**Module 1** corresponds with the Junior and Senior Infants Curriculum

**Module 2** corresponds with the First and Second Class Curriculum

**Module 3** corresponds with the Third and Fourth Class Curriculum

**Module 4** corresponds with the Fifth and Sixth Class Curriculum

The modules have been named Modules 1-4 in order to cater for students with **special needs, learning difficulties** and **foreign language students**. Should a teacher feel that a module is too advanced/basic for a particular class, a lower/higher module should be used.

Each module contains **twenty lesson plans**, each dealing with a different aspect of farming, the countryside, farm and electrical safety and the environment. The lesson plans are:

The Irish farmer	Poultry	Electrical safety	Soil
Healthy eating	Cereals and grasses	Farm animal safety	CAP
Cattle	Fruit and vegetables	The hedgerow	Sustainability
Sheep	Farm and countryside safety	Air and trees	Food security
Pigs	Machinery safety	Water	Agriculture in Africa

Each lesson plan is linked to strands of the **Science, Geography and SPHE curricula**. The suggested activities sections at the end of each lesson also allow for aspects of English, Maths, Art and Drama to be incorporated into the lesson.

As farming in Ireland has intensified and transitioned so much in recent years, there are many hazards that need to be highlighted and reinforced consistently. Therefore, the importance of education regarding farm safety cannot be taken lightly. As such, it is recommended that the four modules, namely, farm and countryside safety, machinery safety, electrical safety and farm animal safety, are prioritised by teachers and incorporated into every lesson plan herein. It is also recommended to revise the key messages therein very regularly.

For **Gaelscoileanna** or those wishing to teach the lesson through Irish, activity sheets *as Gaeilge* are available to download from [www.agriaware.ie](http://www.agriaware.ie). All lessons and activity sheets in English can also be downloaded from [www.agriaware.ie](http://www.agriaware.ie)



Teachers, sign your class up to participate in the Farm Safe Schools programme! You can find out more information about this programme and how to register here: [www.farmsafeschools.ie](http://www.farmsafeschools.ie)

## About Agri Aware

**Agri Aware** is Ireland's independent agri-food educational body. The mission statement of Agri Aware is 'To create a national awareness of the value of modern agriculture and farming, the stewardship of the rural environment, animal welfare and the benefits of nutritious Irish food'. Agri Aware delivers educational programmes for students at primary, second and third level and for the general public.

### Irish agriculture – The story of farming and food production in Ireland

On an Irish farm, you will find many different types of animals, including cattle, sheep, pigs, poultry and goats. All of these farm animals are cared for by the farmer. The farmer also looks after the beautiful green landscape and our rivers, ensuring that they are kept clean and safe, for both people and animals to enjoy. The food we enjoy each day for our breakfast, lunch and dinner comes from farms across Ireland. Our meat, milk, eggs, butter, bread and fruits and vegetables all started on the farm.

Almost all food produced on Irish farms is sent to shops and markets to be sold.

**Beef** is the name given to the meat that we get from cattle, for example roast beef, steak and minced beef. Irish beef is famous all over the world for being of very high quality.

**Milk** traditionally comes from cows and is used to make butter, cheese and yogurt. However, goats and sheep milk can also be used to make cheese.

**Grain** is grown in fields and is used to produce bread and breakfast cereals.

**Eggs** we usually eat are laid by hens and ducks and are used for baking. They are also enjoyed during meal times.

**Fruit** grown on the farm is enjoyed during various meals and is also used to make jams and fruit juices.

**Vegetables** are enjoyed as snacks or eaten with our dinner and they are also used in sauces.

### A very busy job

Farming life is go-go-go! A farmer has lots of important work to do each day, such as caring for the animals, ensuring that they are healthy and happy and have enough food, water and shelter. In winter, when it gets colder, animals are housed in sheds. Farmers harvest grass and crops during the year to feed the animals during the winter.

Along with caring for their animals and looking after their crops, farmers also have a responsibility to care for and protect the Irish landscape. They act as caretakers of the countryside, working to keep our environment

safe, clean and green and to conserve the natural habitats that exist in Irish fields, hedgerows and rivers.

Farms in Ireland are very important to the community as food produced on the farm goes to the shops and markets for local people to buy. Bigger farms provide jobs for people living in the local community as there is often too much work for one farmer to do. Visitors to a farm include vets who check on the animals and delivery people who transport the fruit, vegetables and milk from the farm to factories and supermarkets.

### How do farmers know what to do each day on the farm?

The main role of the farmer is to care for the animals and to produce quality food. To do so, he/she must draw on a wide range of knowledge and skills, for example using science, machinery and technology. Rules and guidelines set out by the Department of Agriculture help Irish farmers with this work, in order to produce quality, traceable and safe food to very high standards for people in Ireland and across the world to enjoy each day.

All farmers in Ireland follow a 'Code of good farming practice' which makes sure that farmers do their work the right way. This helps the farmer to follow the rules about how best to protect rivers and waterways, archaeological sites and wildlife habitats.

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine inspects farms in Ireland to make sure that they are kept clean, that fences and walls are securely in place and that any chemicals or medicines used on the farm are handled with care.

Traceability of food is very important for the people that buy it. In Ireland, all sheep, cattle and pigs must wear a special tag in their ears. This tag acts like a passport for the animal, allowing the movement of animals from farm to farm to be monitored. It is important to know how and when meat moves from one place to another, especially when it is being exported to lots of countries across the world.



## Farm = Food! What would we do without it?

Some 40% of all the land on earth is farming land. There are approximately 7 billion people in the world today, and this is expected to grow to 9.8 billion people by 2050. As a result, food security is more important than ever and farmers have a really important role to play in feeding a growing population, whilst also caring for the land, animals, rivers and wildlife.

Ireland has long been a very important producer of world food with 81% of Irish land used for agriculture. The Irish countryside is green due to the high level of rainfall and mild temperatures experienced in Ireland. This makes Ireland a perfect place for growing green grass, which is very healthy for the animals to eat. Food produced from the animals that eat this healthy green grass is also very healthy for us.

## Farming thousands of years ago and now – what has changed?

Farming methods were very different in Ireland many years ago when compared with farming today. Years ago, farmers only needed enough food for their own families and because of this they had a small number of animals and a few different crops growing on a small patch of land. It was also a time when much work was done by hand as there were no machines. This meant that farming was physically very hard work and required many hours and lots of people to complete tasks that are now considered quick and simple.

Much of the work previously done by hand has now been modernised to make life easier for farmers. Cows are now milked in a milking parlour with an electronic milking machine, while vehicles like tractors and other machinery remove the need for so much hard physical work by the farmer, which can be especially difficult as he/she gets older.

Education plays a key role in farming today as many farmers have learned about farming through school and

third level education. All these changes mean that a farmer's purpose is no longer just to feed their own family; they now produce food for people across the world in a sustainable way, to meet today's needs without compromising those of tomorrow.

The long tradition of farming in Ireland means our animal population is much larger than our human population. There are 4.9 million people in Ireland but many more farm animals! As a result, we produce much more food than we need for our home population, particularly foods such as meat and dairy produce.

In Ireland there are: 6.5 million cattle (beef and dairy), 1.6 million pigs, 3.9 million sheep and 106 million poultry (chickens, roosters, ducks, geese and turkeys).

## Food for thought:

- Farming plays a key role in Irish life
- The farmer is a **primary producer** i.e. the first link in the 'farm to fork' pathway of food
- There are **137,500** family fun farms, with the average farm size at **43 hectares** (ha) in Ireland
- In Ireland, 4.9 million ha of land is devoted to agriculture and food production
- Beef and dairy farms are the two largest sectors in Irish agriculture at present
- 1 in every 8 jobs in Ireland is farming related
- Farms in the south and east of Ireland are typically lowland, with rich fertile soil suitable for dairy or tillage farming
- Farms in the north and west of Ireland are less fertile, more rugged hilly grounds, which are more suitable for sheep and beef cattle
- Irish dairy farmers produce enough milk and dairy product each year to feed 52 million people in the world
- In 2019 agri-food exports were estimated to be a worth of **€14.5 billion**

