



"You are using less inputs, your animals are significantly healthier, you should be getting more production from your animals and their weight gain is better"
Kim McCall
Beef & Sheep Farmer

"The Third Agricultural Revolution" Professor Marcel Mazoyer

Kim McCall, a beef and sheep farmer in Co. Kildare hosted a SOBAC farm walk on Saturday 19th March. Eoin McCarthy of Grassroots Farm Magazine attended the event and reports.

SOBAC was developed by French farmer Marcel MEZY thirty years ago, who described his invention as "The Third Agricultural Revolution". SOBAC's company's products are marketed under the brands Bactériosol and Bactériolit, which are organic amendments and litter products composed of vegetal and mineral matter along with a variety of natural composted plants.

These organic amendments and litter products replicate the natural occurring biology within the soil structure.

In recent years, SOBAC's popularity has been evident by the increased number of farmers using their products. Three years ago 13,000 farmers were using SOBAC's Bactériosol and Bactériolit in France, which has now increased to 30,000 farmers. Initially, when SOBAC came to Ireland four years ago, they were operating in three different countries (Ireland, Germany and Hungary), today they are operating in nine different countries.

Tom Stapleton, of P & T Stapleton Ltd Distributor of Sobac Products Bactériosol and Bactériolit, the concept behind these products "is to unlock the potential of your soil, to help prevent compaction, to help aerate the soil and then the most important aspect is to create humus."

Tom further claimed that it is a process that is quickly able "to create humus in any type of soil and under any type of climatic condition".

Using Bactériosol and Bactériolit improves soil's structure and fertility, which avoids any additional supply of fertilizers, trace elements and amendments. Many users have drastically reduced their nitrogen supply, which has helped them to keep within the legislative limits of the EU nitrates directive.

Kim McCall has been using SOBAC's Bactériosol and Bactériolit for the last four years and since he has started to use these products, he has seen significant improvements on his farm. His cows are grazing paddocks "literally from fence to fence", while areas that used to be half grazed under the branches of trees are now grazed out in full, which was not the case before he used SOBAC products.

It was not until the beginning of the second year that Kim noticed a difference in his land. Although there was a small difference in the first year, there was a significant difference in the second year, while in the third year he was getting an extra day or day and a half grazing out of his paddocks. He claims that the quality of grass has improved, his turnout this year is 12/13 March and is planning on bringing his livestock in the middle of November, which is well made or better than the Origin Green guidelines.

Nitrogen

Kim used to use limited amounts of nitrogen and some of the N P and Ks, but he gave up using them because he wasn't seeing any significant improvement in his pastures. This is illustrated by the fact that in 2015, Kim applied zero nitrogen. He emphasised that his pastures were actually "going the wrong way" with the use chemical fertilisers. Since using SOBAC, he might use nitrogen to increase the yield of silage, but he will not be applying any nitrogen on the grazing ground.

Livestock

Kim uses limited amounts of nitrogen he actually has a higher stocking rate. His current stocking rate is 2 stocking units per hectare (or just over two), which is probably half a unit higher compared to the average going by official figures of 1.5 units.

The Aubrac calves appear to be heavier, while their daily live weight gain is 1.5 to 1.6 kilos



GRASS ROOTS April / May 2016 11

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a day on the cow with no supplement – the bull calves are averaging 1.2 to 1.3, while the heifer calves are averaging 1.1 to 1.2 kilos live weight gain a day.

Kim is selling his Rouge x Beltex lambs at 40 to 42 kilo live weight, which are killing out at the correct weight of 20 to 21 kilos. These lambs are fed a grass diet and are slaughtered at an average 14 to 16 weeks.

Independence

Kim claims that SOBAC has helped him to regain his financial independence and to engage in a more profitable method of farming.

Kim strongly believes that farmers should be able to make money and have it in their pocket and should be able to work out afterwards who they want to give their money to, rather than being beholden to meat companies, to bank managers or to the big multinational companies.

Once farmers are beholden to external factors, they will always be in debt and once farmers are in debt there is nothing they can do about it.

Kim believes that by using SOBAC, farmers will be reducing their dependence on external factors to increase profitability on their farms.

Kim would definitely recommend SOBAC to anyone with an open mind who feels that they are not really going in the right direction with their present form of agriculture and who would like to change their method of farming. "I'm sure that SOBAC products have significant advantages over other types of agriculture because it's an natural product and it's well suited to organic, but it's well suited to you commercial farming".