

'Huge Potential'

(Continued from Page E1)

York to learn about grazing potential in the area.

"There is a huge potential along the northeastern seaboard, and a lot more money can be made," John said of the opportunities for producing milk on grass-based systems.

However, farmers interested in grazing here need to make sure they don't lean too hard on grazing models from other countries such as Ireland or New Zealand, warned the Roches. The unique set of factors involved in each location call for different approaches.

"The key to profitable pasture systems is maximizing production and utilization of pasture that is, maximizing the milk produced from pasture," the Roches pointed out.



Tom Roche, Irish dairy farmer, discusses grazing with a PFGC conference participant.

"This is not the same as producing milk solely from pasture.

"The most profitable system will probably combine high stocking rates with pur-

chased feeds and will have moderate-yielding cows which calve seasonally. If Ireland wasn't limited by quota and if New Zealand wasn't limited by milk price and grain price, this is probably the system they would use."

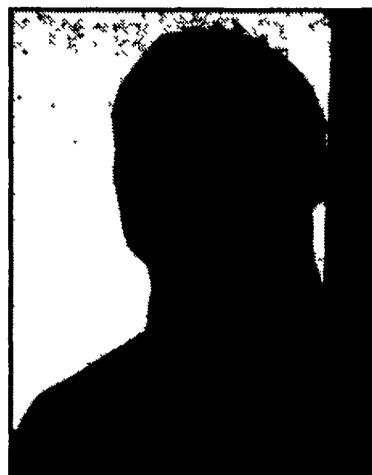
According to the Roches, however, these systems that rely heavily or almost entirely on grass might not be most appropriate in the U.S. where supplementary feeds are readily available and milk quotas do not exist.

"All systems have their limitations, and it is for this reason that each system must be assessed within the context it is being used and the positive attributes can then be extended to other systems," they noted.

The Roches outlined key areas where they believe Northeast dairy farmers can improve grazing profitability. These include

- applying adequate nitrogen and other fertilizers to grasslands;
- offering supplements during periods of grass deficit;
- considering buying grain supplements rather than producing — this may be more cost-effective;
- developing a simple feeding system, particularly for providing energy in the diet of the milking cows;
- avoiding unnecessary capital costs; and
- researching appropriate pasture management strategies.

"Don't believe confinement system operators or feed merchants when they tell you that pasture is a poor quality, unbalanced feed and that you therefore need to complement it," John said. "Pasture will not result in the same milk yields as high-input systems because of the difference in dry matter intake and energy



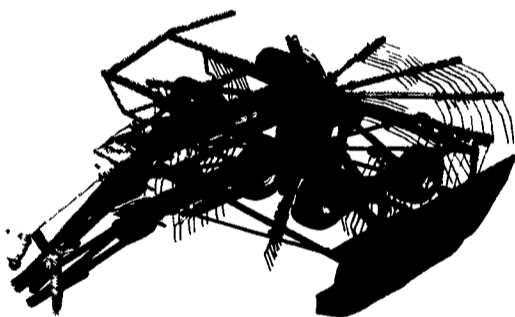
"There's a lot more money to be made." John Roche, dairy nutrition scientist with Dexcel New Zealand speaks at the PFGC conference.

expended in grazing and walking.

"However, high quality spring pasture is every bit as nutritious as a TMR and only a fraction of the cost."

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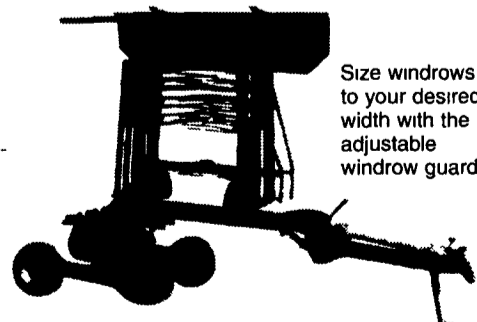
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