

**BETTER** RETURNS



# Marketing prime beef cattle for Better Returns

# Who are the customers?

- The consumer – the person who eats the meat
- The retailer – supermarkets, retail and food service outlets
- The meat processor – the cattle buyer at a livestock market or abattoir

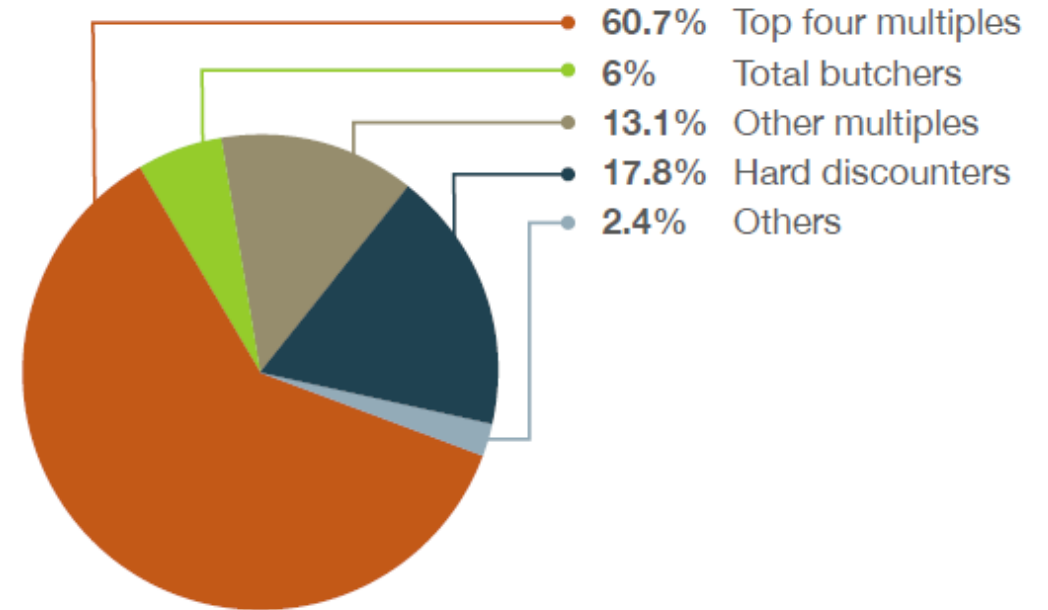


Figure 1. English prime beef – Retail volume share 2017 (% tonnes)

Source: AHDB

# Typical specifications

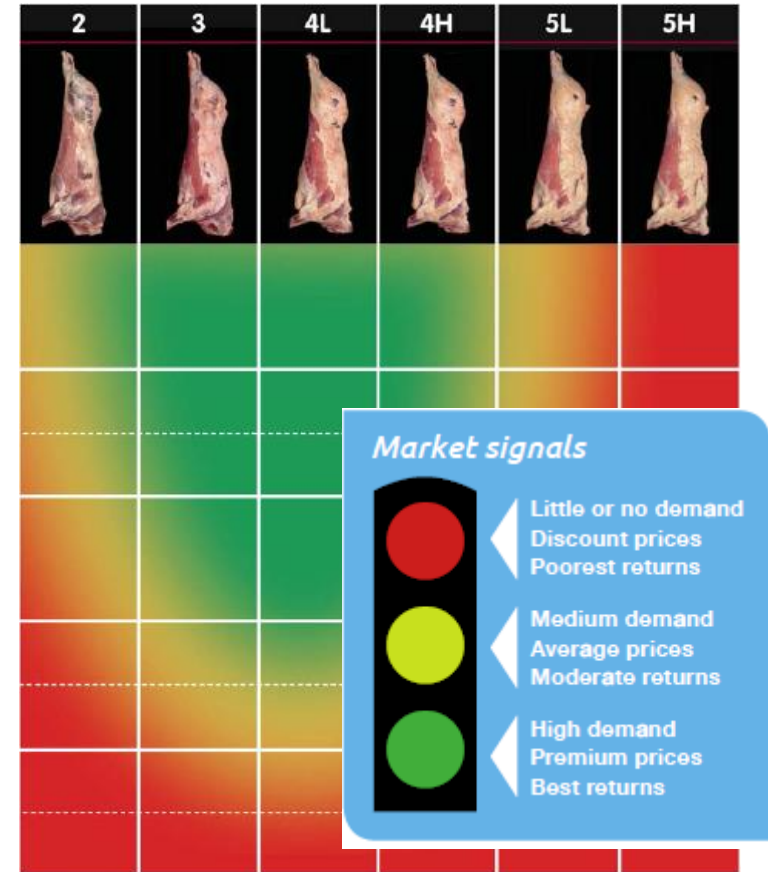
## 49% of prime beef fails to meet ideal target market specifications

- Producers should identify markets for cattle that can be finished efficiently on their system
- Identify a few key target markets, find out what buyers want and try and meet those requirements

Main market	Target age (months)	Gender	Carcase weight (kg)	Classification	
				Conformation	Fat
Butchers	16–24	Heifers, Steers	240–320	R or better	4L (poss 4H)
Supermarket	16–30	Heifers, Steers	270–400	O+ or better	3 or 4L
Manufacturing Beef	12–30	Bulls, Heifers, Steers	260+	-O or better	3 or leaner

# Beef carcass classification

- The EUROP grid is used for classification of conformation and a numeric assessment for fatness (classes 1-5)
- Confirmation is determined by visual assessment of shape
- Fatness is determined by visual assessment of external fat cover
- There is five fat classes subdivided into L (leaner) and H (fatter)



# Markets and exports

- Export markets for English beef have increased dramatically over past few years
- Markets are specific in what they want
- In 2016 – 16% of beef produced in the UK was exported

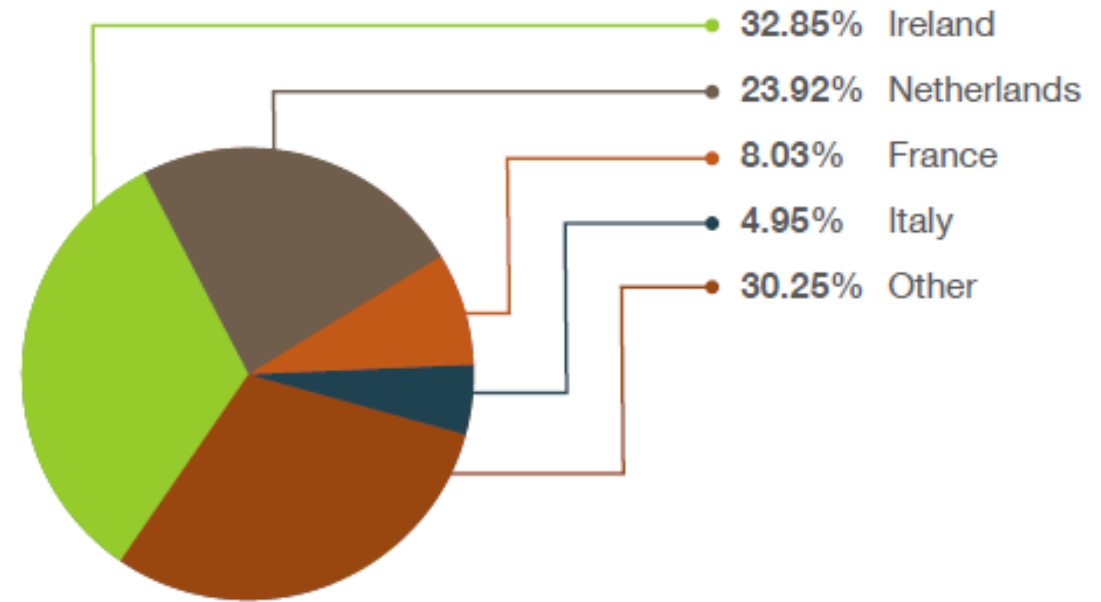


Figure 3. Beef exports (fresh/frozen) by percentage share (2016)

Source: AHDB

# Maximising financial returns



## **Good husbandry and management**

- Tailor management to ensure animals hit target spec
- Weigh and handle animals regularly

## **Feeding for short, sharp gain**

- Key to profitable finishing is Feed Conversion Efficiency (FCE) – how efficient animals are at converting feed into growth

## **Minimising growth checks**

- Minimise stress to limit growth checks

# Maximising financial returns



## Handle with care

- Bruising and abscesses lead to wasteful trimming and carcass rejection
- Inject correctly, handle carefully, limit overcrowding and risks of animals slipping or falling

## Present clean animals

- Dirty hides can contaminate carcasses
- Ensure animals are clean on the belly, brisket, tail end, knees and hocks
- Clip if necessary

# Maximising financial returns



## Dark cutting meat

- Dark meat is worth less as it is unattractive
- Minimise stress 24-48 hours before slaughter which causes dark cutting meat

## Understanding how each abattoir works

- Abattoirs vary in payment systems – research to avoid out-of-spec and weight penalties



# Maximising financial returns



## Hot weight rebates

- Hot weight is usually reduced by 2% to establish cold carcass weight – which the producer is paid for
- Enquire as to the hot weight rebate used at the abattoir as it can vary

## Dressing specification

- These vary between abattoirs so make sure you enquire
- Payable weight can vary by up 9kg depending on dressing spec

# Selecting animals to market

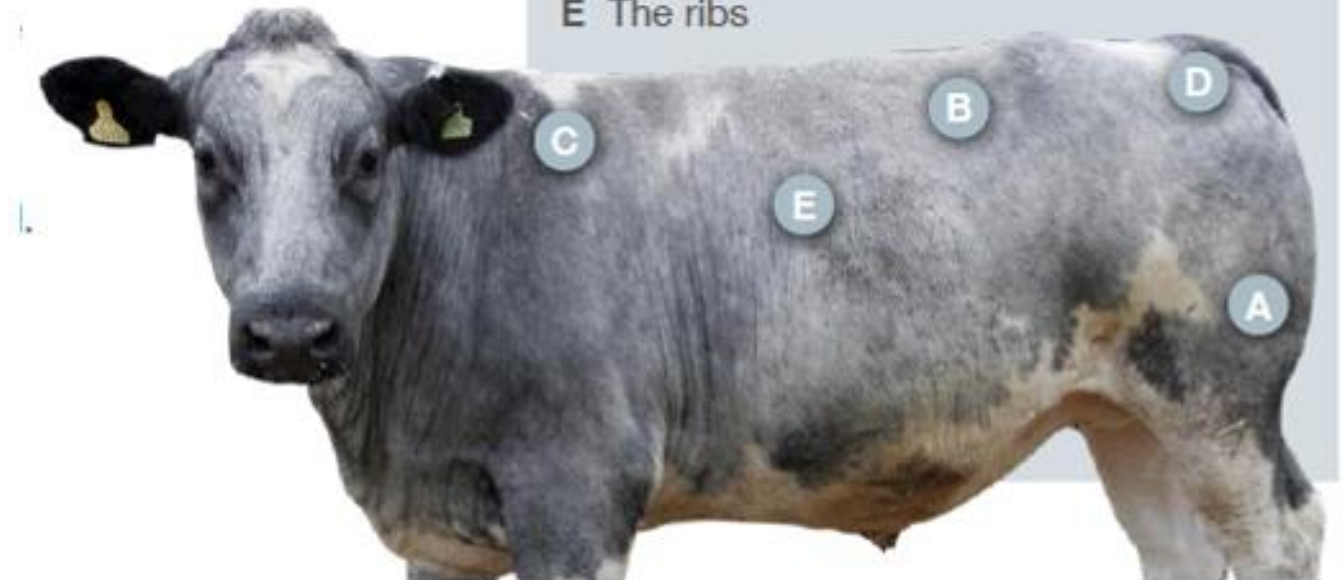
- Handling the live animal is essential for selection
- Feel for conformation and fat
- Conformation is limited by genetics

To assess conformation feel the animal at:

- A The round or hindquarter
- B The loin
- C The shoulder

To assess fat level feel the animal at:

- D The pin bones and either side of the tailhead
- B The loin (transverse process)
- E The ribs



# Selecting animals to market



- **Good conformation** – cattle have thickly fleshed, well-rounded contours and from the rear, stand wide with convex hindquarters wider than their back
- **Poor conformation** – cattle have a relatively straight, or at some points hollow appearance. Often bony and angular
- **Ideal fatness** – a thin layer of fat should be felt when the skin either side of the tail head is pinched. The ends of the transverse processes on the loin and the ribs should be slightly rounded by fat, felt with light pressure

# Selecting animals to market

- **Killing out percentage (KO%)**

KO% is the carcass weight as a percentage of liveweight.

Factors affecting KO% are breed, whether the gut is full or empty, gender, feeding system and whether any of the carcass is condemned (bruising, dirty etc.).

- **Meat yield**

Meat yield is the total saleable meat from a carcass.

Better conformation leads to a greater meat yield. The fatter the carcass, the less meat is available.