

# Do suckler cows emit more methane per head than dairy?

An Taisce Climate Committee, 25 August 2019

An article authored by the An Taisce Climate Committee, entitled 'Are Teagasc's industry-friendly climate projections credible?' appeared on [agriland.ie](http://agriland.ie) on 25 Aug 2019 [1]. This was a shortened version of a more complete analysis already published, with sources, on the An Taisce website [2].

Shortly after publication, queries were raised in regard to one specific statistic quoted in the agriland article, namely that "Dairy cows emit 50% more methane per head than suckler cows". An Taisce is happy to provide this clarification of the source of that figure. It is extracted from the data provided by the [EPA](http://epa.ie), in the most recent National Inventory Report (NIR) submitted to the UNFCCC [3].

The specific data referenced, and the calculation made, is shown in the table below. As can be seen, for 2017, the reported per head methane emission factor (kg/head/year) for dairy cows was in fact 55% above that for suckler cows. Hence the figure quoted in the agriland article is a very conservative value that, if anything, understates the excess emissions factor of dairy over suckler cows.

Comparing methane per head per year (kg/head/year) using EPA emission factors	Dairy cows	Suckler cows
Enteric fermentation	115.2	74.4
Manure management	10.4	6.6
TOTAL methane per head =	125.6	81
Therefore kg dairy methane per head excess, per head per year, relative to suckler <b>in kg/head/year</b>	44.6	
Therefore <b>per cent</b> dairy methane per head excess relative to suckler in kg/head/year	55%	
Data from EPA NIR 2019: Per head methane emission factors from Table 3.3.B (enteric fermentation) and Table 3.3.C (manure management)		

[1] <https://www.agriland.ie/farming-news/are-teagasc-industry-friendly-projections-credible/>

[2] <http://www.antisce.org/TeagascClimateCredibility>

[3] [https://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/air/airemissions/ghg/nir2019/Ireland%20NIR%202019\\_Final.pdf](https://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/air/airemissions/ghg/nir2019/Ireland%20NIR%202019_Final.pdf)