20 minutes with Padraig Hennessy

Cows drink anywhere between 35l and 60l of water per day

What does Terra Nutritech do?
We've developed a system which regulates and accurately measures the dosage of minerals into a water system for animals on a farm, be that pig, poultry or cattle farms. Our system is a plug-and-play model where you simply connect the technology into the existing water infrastructure on the farm.

How did you develop the technology?
In our previous business, my brother Tom and I were laying pipes on farms. Farmers kept asking us did we have a way to accurately measure mineral rates in the water. Enough farmers were asking us about it that we could see there was clearly a market for this type of technology. We looked around in New Zealand and Australia to see if there was a product we could import and distribute here in Ireland. But we didn't see anything that was good enough so we developed our own system.

How has the business grown since?
In the first three months, we installed our new system on three farms in Ireland just to ensure the product worked. Since we first started in 2012, we've doubled the size of the business every year. We really bootstrapped along the way but we're now self-funding our expansion. In the last two years, we've invested over €1m in new offices and a manufacturing site. Having outsourced our IT and software development at the start, we've now brought all that expertise in-house.

Where do you see the opportunities for the company?
When we were exhibiting at the Eurotier trade show this year, roughly two-thirds of the enquiries we got were potential customers asking if our system could be used in pig and poultry systems. The focus on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is huge right now and farmers have to be way more targeted in their antibiotic usage. Farming is becoming all about precision. So we think poultry will be really big for us in the years ahead.

How are farmers responding to AMR?
Effectively what pig and poultry farmers are doing now is using acidifiers to get the gut health right in animals. If you get that gut health right you can really reduce antibiotics usage. We talk to all the mineral companies who supply these acidifiers. These companies have spent millions developing really good products to boost animal gut health but none of them really thought about how the farmer would administer these products at the correct dosage. That's where our technology comes in to regulate the mineral dosage accurately in the water system.

Your system collects a lot of data on herds. What has stood out to you in this data?
The standout for me in all the data we're collecting is that nobody in this country had any idea how much water a cow drinks. Everyone was quoting US figures that a cow drinks 120 litres of water per day. The reality is the cow drinks nowhere near this. During the drought last year was the first time I ever saw cows in Ireland get anywhere near drinking 100 litres of water per day. Typically, cows drink anywhere between 35 and 60 litres of water per day, depending on the diet and the time of year.

Profile

- **Title:** CEO.
- **Company:** Terra Nutritech.
- **Location:** Athy, Co Kildare.
- **Founded:** 2012.

Brothers Padraig and Tom Hennessy of Terra Nutritech.