



Case study for measuring food loss

Meat and Dairy sector case study (meat)

This case study aims to address food loss in meat products from cattle in Ireland. This case of study is led by the University of Limerick.

Food Loss information	
Commodity	Beef meat
Quantification	The use of registries and interviews
Timing	Primary production: pre-harvest and harvesting losses

General information	
Policies	No policy for food loss in Ireland.
Challenges	One of the main challenges of this case study has been aligning it with the general food loss framework, as certain specificities required an adjustment to the ending point of the food loss definition but the most significant challenge is data collection, as direct in situ measurement is not feasible and must instead be carried out through farmers, using their records or interviews.
Technology	It was not necessary to use technology for the current collection of data through interviews or records.
Destination	Mainly incinerated.
Benefits	At this stage, the key objective is to make a problem visible that is primarily borne by them.

Food Loss results

Table 1 below summarises the information presented above, highlighting each stage and the associated losses. An additional initial row is also included, which falls under production losses.

Table 1. Main food loss results for Irish meat across the main stages
(Mean results from 2018-2025)

Stage	Loss Category	Magnitude	Sub-Components / Notes
Pre-Harvest (production losses)	—	Minimal losses observed	Mainly handling/transport effects rather than quantifiable losses
Ready for Slaughter	Carcass Rejection & Downgrades	2–4% of carcasses	- Bruising: 45% of rejections - Residues: 25% - Export spec failures: 20% - Other quality issues: 10%
Slaughtering 1	Offal Oversupply / Market Limits	8–12% of edible offal	15–20 kg per animal diverted (peak season)
Slaughtering 2	Specification Mismatches	3–6% of production	Weight, fat class, age-related penalties
TOTAL		13–22%	Cumulative effect