SRG

STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2030
SUSTAINABLE RUMINANT GENETICS LTD

Contents

UNLOCKING GENETIC POTENTIAL

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to present Sustainable Ruminant Genetics Ltd. Strategic Plan for the period 2026-2030.

1.2   Chairmans foreword

On behalf of Sustainable Ruminant Genetics (SRG), I am pleased to present the SRG strategic plan, which sets out a clear, ambitious and exciting framework to transform livestock breeding and genetic improvement in Northern Ireland. SRG has been developed with a defined purpose: to improve on-farm profitability through the breeding of more efficient, resilient and sustainable livestock, underpinned by robust data and genomic technologies.

SRG is driving a transformation in livestock breeding across Northern Ireland to deliver its Vision of World Class Ruminant Genetics. It focuses on delivering industry-led genetic improvement programmes that en-

hance productivity, sustainability, and animal health. These programmes also support farmer development through knowledge transfer, benchmarking, and the widespread adoption of genetic technologies to ensure continuous improvement in livestock performance.

As Chairman, it is a privilege to help guide the strategic direction of this long term project that I believe will transform how breeding decisions are made across our beef, dairy and in time, sheep sectors. While this strategy marks the formal launch of the bovine element of SRG, it has been designed with a long-term vision. Work is already underway with the Sheep Industry Task Force and SRG to support genetic improvement across all ruminant species.

The SRG strategy is centered on making better use of data to drive meaningful genetic progress within the farm gate and deliver tangible benefits accross the wider supply chain. By integrating information from NIFAIS meat processing plants, livestock marts, dairy processors and on-farm records such as calving and performance data, farmers will be enabled to make more informed breeding decisions. Genomic technologies will complement traditional sire and dam selection, providing an additional tool to enhance breeding decisions. This will help identify beneficial or disruptive genes, and deliver measurable improvements in animal health, efficiency and productivity.

This project is founded on strong collaboration across the agri-food sector and close engagement with government. There is a shared recognition that improved livestock performance and environmental sustainability are complementary objectives. More efficient profitable animals reduce GHG emissions, improve resilience at farm level and contribute directly to the long-term competitiveness of the industry.

Northern Ireland is uniquely positioned to lead in this area. We have approximately 26,000 farm businesses many of them small or part time, producing food for

over 10 million people. Our farmers' stockmanship skills are already world class. SRG provides the opportunity to match those skills with world leading data driven breeding decisions, allowing our industry to punch well above its weight both within the UK and internationally.

The SRG strategy is long term and ambitious. It represents the beginning of a generational shift in how livestock genetics are managed and improved. Over time, the use of genomic data and coordinated information flows across the supply chain will become the norm, delivering healthier animals, more efficient production systems and greater resilience for farm businesses.

We are at the beginning of something genuinely exciting. I have no doubt that Northern Ireland farmers will grasp the opportunities presented by SRG and help drive this project forward. By working together, and by making informed, data-led breeding decisions, we can build a more efficient, profitable and sustainable future for our livestock industry.

Victor Chestnutt
Chairperson
Sustainable Ruminant Genetics Ltd

2.0 Overview of Sustainable Ruminant Genetics

Sustainable Ruminant Genetics Ltd. (SRG), established in 2022, is a not-for-profit company, and was set up as a strategic partnership between the Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU), Dairy Council for Northern Ireland (DCNI), Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) and Northern Ireland Meat Exporters Association (NIMEA). It was created to give Northern Ireland's farmers and agri-food industry a unique opportunity to become global leaders in livestock genetics. Representing both farmers and industry, SRG's core purpose is to lead a long-term strategy of genetic improvement across Northern Ireland's cattle and sheep sectors, that delivers on the needs of farmers, processors, and the wider agri-food industry in Northern Ireland and aligns with Government policy.

SRG's Strategy sets out clearly its Vision, Mission, Core Values, Leadership, Governance, Strategic Pillars and Goals.

Initially SRG will focus on genetic improvement in the bovine sector where it has played a central leadership role in securing the successful launch of the Bovine Genetics Project (BGP), having developed and submitted proposals to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). This approach led to DAERA formally awarding the BGP service provider contract to Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF) in January 2025, to deliver genetic and genomic evaluations, benchmarking services, and customer support across Northern Ireland's beef and dairy sectors. SRG will ensure the project is designed around the needs of farmers, processors, and the wider agri-food industry, and is positioned to lead industry engagement,

knowledge transfer, and farmer participation. The BGP is a longterm initiative focused on accelerating genetic gain and improving the economic and environmental performance of the cattle sector through genotyping, benchmarking, and data-driven decision making. Phase one of the project will focus on the genetic improvement of dairy and beef cattle, but it is also intended to advance genetic improvement in the sheep sector. To that end, SRG will work with DAERA and industry to incorporate any sheep genetic improvement project which may emerge from DAERA's consideration of the Northern Ireland Sheep Industry Task Force report.

SRG's longterm strategy is to expand its remit to support the sheep sector, ensuring sheep farmers benefit from the same data driven genetic improvement tools and performance insights being developed for the bovine industry. Within this context, we will explore ovine (sheep) genetic developments across other jurisdictions to identify and benchmark best practice approaches.

3.0 Strategic Context for Genetic Improvement in Northern Ireland's Livestock Sector

The agricultural production sector is one of Northern Ireland's most important indigenous industries, employing around 52,000 people across approximately 26,000 farms and generating £3.2 billion in gross output in 2024 (NISRA Statistical Review of NI Agriculture 2024). The sector is overwhelmingly livestock based, with dairy and beef together accounting for almost 55% of all farm-gate output, underscoring the strategic importance of the bovine sectors to the rural economy.

When the wider NI food and drink processing sector is considered, which is the region's largest manufacturing industry, it generated over £6.5 billion in turnover in 2022. Beef and sheep meat, along with milk & dairy products, collectively represent over 50% of the entire food and drink processing sector's gross

turnover (NISRA NI Food & Drinks Processing Report, 2022), demonstrating the deep economic interdependence between primary production and processing. This integrated supply chain not only supports tens of thousands of jobs in farming, processing, logistics, retail, and rural services, but also drives export performance, with nearly half of agri-food output sold into Great Britain and additional significant volumes exported to Ireland, the EU and global markets.

In this context, improving the genetic potential, productivity, efficiency, and environmental performance of livestock is not just a farm-level opportunity, it is a strategic economic imperative for Northern Ireland's overall competitiveness, sustainability and longterm agri-food prosperity.

3.1 Why investment in genetic improvement is essential

Genetic improvement is a critical priority for the dairy and beef supply chains because it enables farmers to breed more profitable animals with higher productivity. Beyond economic gains, genetic improvement also delivers environmental benefits, reduced carbon footprints, and improved health and welfare.

At its core, an animal's genetic potential, or genetic merit, sets the upper limit of what is achievable within any herd. While good management can optimise performance, it cannot surpass the boundaries defined by an animal's genes. This means that sustainably improving herd performance requires identifying and breeding from the best stock. Genetic improvement is also unique in that it is permanent and cumulative, with each generation benefiting from the gains achieved in the last.

To identify the most suitable animals for breeding or finishing, farmers need accurate, timely, and comprehensive performance data on desired traits. The Bovine Genetics Project will integrate the essential data sources required to generate reliable genetic merit evaluations and enterprise level performance insights. This robust information base will empower farmers to make more informed breeding and purchasing decisions, drive long-term herd improvement, and enhance overall enterprise profitability and sustainability.

3.2 Challenges to genetic improvement in Northern Ireland

A relatively small proportion of Northern Ireland farms currently engage in performance benchmarking, meaning many producers are missing opportunities to identify weaknesses in management practices or in the performance of individual animals. At the same time, very few farms hold genetic information on their livestock, and where such information does exist, it is typically limited to sire data only. For ex-

ample, genetic merit information is available for only around 12% of dairy cows and as little as 3% of suckler cows, are involved in physical or financial benchmark reporting, leaving most of the national herd without any genetic insights.

As a result, most breeding decisions are still made without the benefit of genetic data. Instead, selections are largely based on visual assessment and stock person intuition rather than on objective, evidence-based indicators. This means that opportunities to breed more efficient, healthier, higher yielding animals, with lower emissions and better lifetime performance, are frequently being overlooked.

To unlock meaningful, sustained improvements, Northern Ireland must adopt the innovations already common place in leading livestock countries. This requires a shift away from "look" and "intuition" towards measuring and predicting, using tools such as Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs) and associated genetic indexes, which provide science based estimates of an animal's future performance and allow for far more accurate selection decisions.

Achieving this depends on access to accurate, up-to-date performance data for individual animals, such as milk yield, growth rates, and other measurable traits, linked reliably to both sire and dam. The introduction of widespread genotyping (DNA analysis) is key to this. Genotyping ensures accurate parentage, provides insight into traits that are difficult or impossible to measure directly (e.g. feed efficiency, methane output), and accelerates the rate of genetic gain by reducing the guesswork in breeding decisions.

The Bovine Genetics Project will bring these elements together, integrating essential data sources to generate reliable genetic merit and enterprise performance information. This will provide farmers with the tools they need to make informed, future-focused breeding and purchasing decisions that drive longterm improvements in productivity, sustainability, and herd health.

3.3 Building a platform to enable world class breeding technologies

One of the most significant recent advances in livestock genetics is the ability to generate genomic evaluations (gEBVs) for cattle. gEBVs are produced by modelling the relationship between an animal's DNA profile and its physical performance, allowing much earlier and more accurate prediction of how that animal, and its offspring, will perform.

Through the Bovine Genetics Project, SRG will provide both pedigree and commercial herd owners with comprehensive management reports that include genomic selection indexes for animals where both the sire and dam are identified.

To achieve this, the genetic evaluation system will initially integrate data from multiple industry and government sources, including NIFAIS (Northern Ireland Food Animal Information System), livestock markets, abattoirs, dairy processors, and farmers submitted on farm performance records. As data integration matures, the accuracy and usefulness of genetic evaluations will continue to strengthen.

SRG's longterm ambition is clear, every calf genotyped at birth. To support this transition, SRG has collaborated closely with DAERA to design a genotyping scheme that encourages uptake and embeds genotyping as a standard part of herd management.

This new platform, which has been funded by DAERA through the Bovine Genetics Project, will create a national genetics database capable of:

- Establishing a baseline of herd and animal performance
- Identifying opportunities for targeted improvement
- Measuring progress at animal, herd, sector, and regional levels
- Informing strategic direction and future agricultural policy
- Highlighting research needs to support continued genetic advancement

Accurate data flowing into this secure database from participating farmers and their supply chain partners is critical to the success of the BGP and robust data sharing and security protocols have been developed and enacted to underpin the entire project.

Whilst ICBF has been awarded the contract for service provision of the Bovine Genetics Project, it will deliver this work in collaboration with the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB). AHDB currently delivers genetic and genomic evaluations for the dairy sector. All selection indexes provided by AHDB will be available for all dairy producers engaging with the Bovine Genetics Project.

3.4 The Benefits of Adopting Advanced Genetic and Genomic Technologies

Advancing the use of modern breeding technologies offers Northern Ireland's livestock sector a transformational opportunity to improve productivity, profitability, animal health, and environmental performance.

By integrating genomic tools and accurate genetic data farmers can unlock the true genetic potential of their animals and make decisions that deliver permanent, cumulative improvements across their herds. Widespread adoption of these advanced genetic and genomic technologies will position Northern Ireland as a leader in genetic improvement and deliver major improvements across herd performance, animal health, and farm efficiency by enabling more accurate parentage verification, reliable genomic evaluations, enabling farmers to select and breed animals with superior genetic merit. These tools help identify both high-value animals and poor genetic outliers, screen for lethal recessive genes and provide trusted indexes such as Commercial Beef Value (CBV). Integrated data systems streamline herd management, enhance traceability and milk segregation for high-value traits, while also contributing to improved TB resistance.
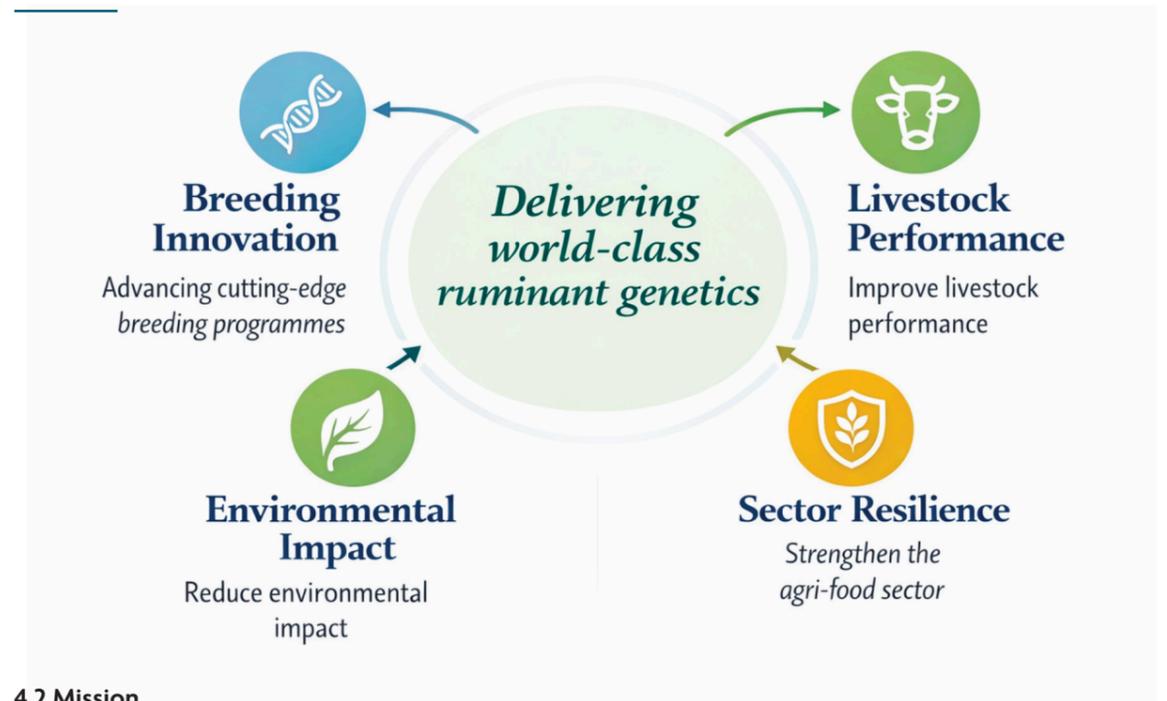
4.0 Vision, Mission and Values

Our strategy is built on a clear Vision, a focused Mission, and strong Core Values that guide every decision and action. Together, these principles define how SRG will lead genetic improvement to deliver profitable, sustainable outcomes for farmers and the wider agri-food industry.

4.1 Vision

Delivering world-class ruminant genetics

Breeding Innovation — Advancing cutting-edge breeding programmes

Livestock Performance — Improve livestock performance

Environmental Impact — Reduce environmental impact

Sector Resilience — Strengthen the agri-food sector

4.2 Mission

SRG's mission is to lead the delivery of industry focused genetic improvement projects that drive economic and environmental sustainability.

We are committed to promoting on-farm knowledge and adoption of genetic improvement technologies and innovations including benchmarking services empowering farmers to make informed breeding decisions that enhance productivity, environmental sustainability and improved animal health and welfare.

The collection, analysis, and application of genetic data, will deliver measurable benefits for the wider ruminant livestock sectors.

Through collaboration with research and development partners, we will ensure continuous genetic innovation and measurable progress in livestock performance, supporting a resilient and profitable agri-food industry.

To turn the mission into action, SRG has defined four Strategic Pillars, see section 6.1 that provide a focused framework for delivery, ensuring our objectives are achieved and aligned with our vision and core values.

4.3 Values

Our core values represent the foundation of SRG's identity and approach. They reflect our commitment to being industry-led, maintaining independence, keeping complex science simple and accessible, grounding decisions in evidence-based science, and acting as a valued partner across the supply chain. Together, these values ensure that SRG delivers world-class ruminant genetics with integrity, transparency, and a focus on practical benefits for Northern Ireland's livestock sector.

Industry Led 》》	Our strategies are built around the ambitions and needs of farmers and stakeholders across the ruminant livestock supply chain, ensuring every decision reflects real world priorities.
Independent 》》	We pride ourselves on delivering honest, consistent, and impartial advice, always acting in the best long term interests of the industry to maintain credibility and trust.
Keep it Simple 》》	We simplify complex genetic science, making it clear, practical and accessible so farmers can confidently apply solutions that improve herd performance.
Science Based 》》	Every recommendation we make is grounded in robust data and scientific evidence, ensuring our plans deliver measurable results and optimal outcomes for farmers.
Valued Partner 》》	We work hand in hand with stakeholders across the supply chain, fostering partnerships that drive innovation and achieve shared goals for a sustainable future.

By staying true to these principles, SRG ensures that every action we take reflects a shared ambition to build a sustainable, profitable future for Northern Ireland's ruminant livestock sector.

5.0 Governance, Leadership & Stakeholder Framework

Effective governance is central to SRG's ability to deliver on its strategic objectives and maintain trust across the agri-food sector. Our governance framework promotes transparency, accountability, and balanced representation from key industry stakeholders.

The SRG Board of Directors comprises experienced leaders from farming, processing, and industry bodies providing oversight and guiding strategic decision-making.
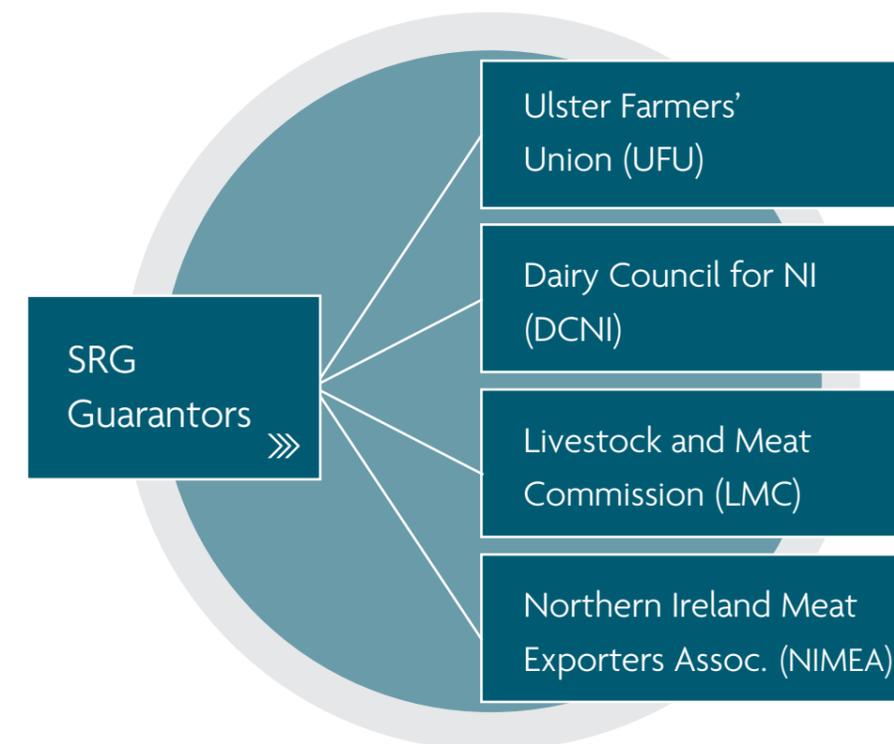
As a company limited by guarantee and a not-for-profit organisation, SRG is supported by guarantor organisations that underpin its financial stability and long-term resilience. This structure ensures inclusive leadership and robust governance, enabling SRG to deliver sustainable growth.
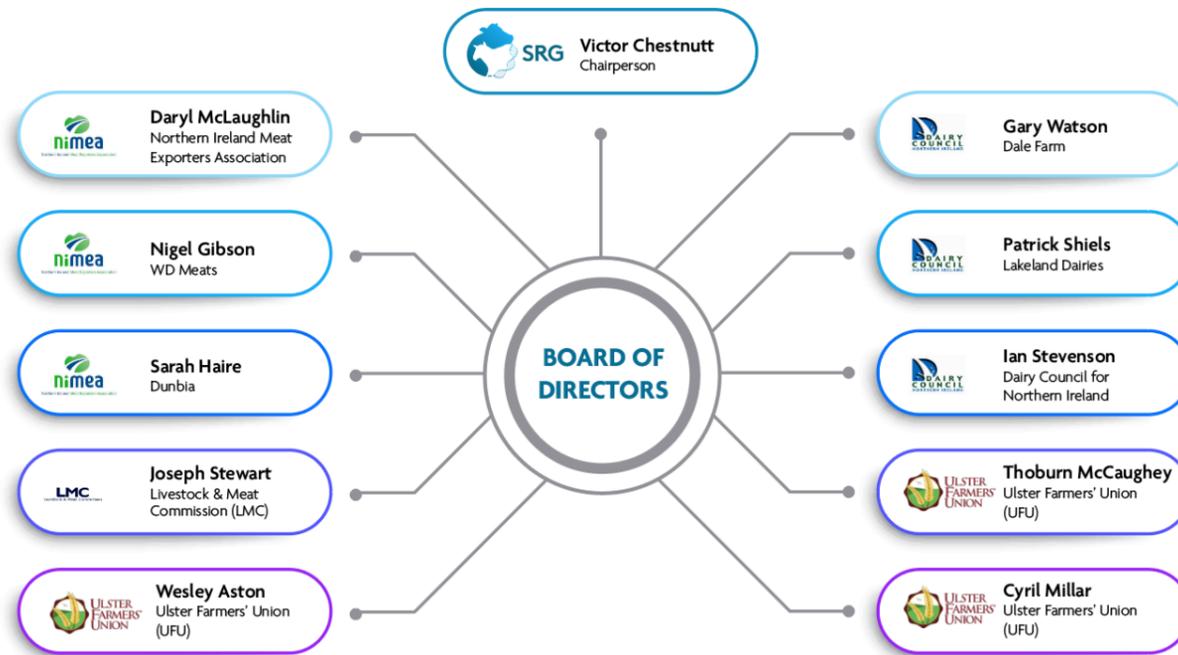
5.1 Guarantors

SRG operates as a company limited by guarantee, which means it does not have shareholders but is supported by guarantor organisations. These guarantors play a vital role in underpinning SRG's financial stability and reinforcing its not-for-profit status. Their involvement ensures that SRG remains independent, sustainable, and focused on delivering value to the agri-food sector rather than generating profit.

Guarantors play a critical role in SRG's governance framework by providing initial and on-going financial support to SRG. They represent key sectors within the agri-food supply chain, ensuring that SRG's decisions reflect the interests of farmers, processors, and industry bodies.
The guarantors are set out below:

SRG Guarantors 》》

Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU)

Dairy Council for NI (DCNI)

Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC)

Northern Ireland Meat Exporters Assoc. (NIMEA)

5.2 Board of Directors

Victor Chestnutt — Chairperson

Daryl McLaughlin — Northern Ireland Meat Exporters Association

Nigel Gibson — WD Meats

Sarah Haire — Dunbia

Joseph Stewart — Livestock & Meat Commission (LMC)

Wesley Aston — Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Gary Watson — Dale Farm

Patrick Shiels — Lakeland Dairies

Ian Stevenson — Dairy Council for Northern Ireland

Thoburn McCaughey — Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU)

Cyril Millar — Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU)

5.3 Management Structure

SRG's Chief Executive Officer (CEO), management and staff are responsible for implementing the organisation's strategic objectives, overseeing day-to-day operations, industry engagement and ensuring effective delivery of programmes and initiatives.

The CEO leads the implementation of the strategic plan including delivery of genotyping and the Northern Ireland Bovine Genetics Project. The CEO is also responsible for driving genetic improvement, managing stakeholder relationships, ensuring governance and financial compliance. They will represent SRG at industry events to promote genetic improvement and engagement in Northern Ireland.

The CEO is assisted by Business Support Specialists and SRG will continue to recruit additional resources as the organisation rolls out the Bovine Genetics Project and the genotyping scheme.

Details of the Chairperson, CEO and team members are set out in Appendix A (Page 28).

5.4 Stakeholders

The success of SRG depends on strong partnerships across the agri-food sector and collaboration with a range of stakeholders to deliver its Vision.

Details of key stakeholders are set out in Appendix B.

As this project develops these stakeholders will be represented through both beef and dairy stakeholder groups helping to inform breeding objectives and BGP priorities for these sectors. A sheep stakeholder group will be formed when the sector is incorporated into the project.

6.0 Strategic Pillars & Goals

To turn SRG's Mission into action, SRG has defined four Strategic Pillars, set out below, that provide a focused framework for delivery, ensuring our objectives are achieved and aligned with our vision and core values.

6.1 Strategic Pillars

SRG's strategic pillars, goals and objectives for 2026 – 2030 are set out below:

Pillar	Description
Leadership in Genetic Improvement ≫	SRG will take the lead in delivering an industry-focused Bovine Genetics Project. This includes managing governance, ensuring alignment with government priorities, and driving engagement across the supply chain. Our leadership role guarantees that the project remains focused on delivering practical genetic benefits for farmers and the wider agricultural industry in Northern Ireland.
Promote On-Farm Knowledge & Adoption ≫	We will champion education and knowledge transfer to ensure farmers understand and adopt genetic improvement technologies and enterprise benchmarking. By simplifying complex genetic concepts and providing clear, actionable insights, SRG will empower farmers to engage with the Bovine Genetics Project, including the genotyping scheme to make better informed breeding decisions that improve herd performance, animal health, and profitability.
Generate Data & Insights ≫	SRG will facilitate the collection, analysis, application and protection of genetic data to deliver measurable improvements for the Northern Ireland agricultural sector. Leveraging advanced genomic technologies and advanced data systems, we will provide farmers and stakeholders with accurate, evidence-based tools to optimise breeding strategies and enhance sustainability outcomes.
Research Innovation Partnerships ≫	We will work in partnership with leading genetic organisations to drive continuous investment and innovation in livestock genetic improvement. By fostering collaboration between industry, academia, and government, SRG will accelerate the development of new genetic solutions that improve productivity, reduce environmental impact, and strengthen the resilience of Northern Ireland's agri-food sector.

6.2 Strategic Goals & Objectives

Seven Strategic Goals have been defined to ensure alignment with SRG's vision, mission and values. These Strategic Goals provide a clear framework across strategy, governance, stakeholder engagement, communication, customer support, financial sustainability, innovation and data stewardship.

To ensure delivery of these goals a 5-year business plan, annual budgets and a Strategic Implementation Plan have been developed including Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) to measure progress and ensure accountability.

1

Strategic Goal
Strategic Oversight and Project Governance

Objectives

SRG will provide strong strategic leadership and governance through:
1. Developing and regularly reviewing SRG's Strategy & Business Plan.
2. Internal SRG governance framework structures.
3. Representing industry interests within BGP governance structures.
4. Ensuring adequate resources, staff and capacity to implement the strategic and operational plan.
5. A risk management framework and business continuity plan to safeguard the organisation.

2

Strategic Goal
Stakeholder Engagement

Objectives

SRG will build strong, collaborative relationships across the agri-food sector to drive participation and support for genetic improvement through:
1. Acting as the primary interface with farmers, processors, breed societies, livestock marts, and other industry sectors.
2. Establishing sectoral stakeholder engagement groups across beef, dairy and sheep sectors (when required).
3. Maintaining active industry engagement at major agricultural events to promote SRG's role and initiatives.
4. Securing farmer engagement and sign up to the Bovine Genetics Project.

3

Strategic Goal
Communications, Marketing and Promotion

Objectives

SRG will enhance visibility, engagement, communication and consistent branding across the agri-food sector through:
1. Clearly communicating SRG's vision to Delivering world-class ruminant genetics for the Northern Ireland agri-sector.
2. Developing a communications strategy and delivery plan.
3. Collaborating with CAFRE and training delivery partners to assist with the design and delivery of knowledge transfer and innovation programmes.
4. Creating and publishing newsletters, press releases, and social media content supported by focused promotional campaigns to engage stakeholders.
5. Ensuring SRG'S branding is consistently represented across channels reinforcing its lead role in driving genetic improvement.

4

Strategic Goal
Customer Support

Objectives

SRG will deliver exceptional, locally based, support services through:
1. Locally based Genetic Business Support Specialist Services staffed by qualified professionals.
2. A dedicated locally based customer support team in respect of the:
   - Bovine Genetics Project
   - Delivery of value for money genotyping services.

5

Strategic Goal
Financial Sustainability

Objectives

SRG will ensure long term financial stability through:
1. A 5-year financial plan to ensure financial stability.
2. Financial support of SRG's guarantors.
3. Securing a value for money genotyping service through effective negotiation, ensuring both affordability for farmers and the longterm financial sustainability of SRG.
4. Collaborating with agricultural training providers to support knowledge transfer & training programme.
5. Identifying additional income streams through grant funding opportunities, consultancy & sponsorships opportunities.
6. Establishing an appropriate reserves policy and financial risk management framework to mitigate funding volatility.

6

Strategic Goal
Strategic Innovation and Sectoral Expansion

Objectives

SRG will lead innovation in genetic improvement through:
1. Incorporating any recommended sheep genetic improvement project into SRG's activities in line with DAERA consideration and support of the Northern Ireland Sheep Industry taskforce recommendations.
2. Deliver breed-specific genetic evaluation tools and pilot benchmarking initiatives.
3. Ensuring SRG's activities contribute to climate action plan and green growth objectives.
4. Promoting sustainable low-carbon breeding strategies integrating carbon footprint metrics into genetic reporting.
5. Leading innovation in genetic improvement by fostering partnerships with research Institutes, Breeding Companies, and Technology Providers.

7

Strategic Goal
Securing data inputs, access, reporting and governance.

Objectives

SRG will establish itself as a trusted steward of genetic and farm data by implementing data governance frameworks and secure data sharing practices through:
1. Formalised data sharing agreements with industry contributors and external service providers.
2. Facilitating data integration partnerships with DAERA and key industry contributors.
3. Controlling access to SRG's data through data sharing agreements.
4. Compliance with applicable data protection and privacy legislation.

7.0 Delivery Timelines & Communications

Since SRG's establishment in 2022, the organisation has evolved from initial incorporation and governance formation to becoming a central partner in the delivery of the Bovine Genetics Project.

7.1 Key SRG Milestones

2022 – 2023	Sustainable Ruminant Genetics Ltd (SRG) incorporated and Board appointed. SRG Guarantors and Funders - Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU), Dairy Council for Northern Ireland (DCNI), Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) and Northern Ireland Meat Exporters Association (NIMEA). Launch of SRG at Thoburn McCaughey's farm Co Antrim.
2024	Funding secured from DAERA for the delivery of a service provider (ICBF) and a genotyping scheme for the Bovine Genetics Project. Service contract awarded to ICBF. Data Sharing Agreements secured by SRG from key data providers. Memorandum of Understanding agreed between SRG and DAERA
January 2025	Commencement of service provider contract. Establishment of BGP Governance structures
June 2025	Integration of NIFAIS data to BGP platform. Recruitment of 35 pilot farms for delivering proof of concept service delivery
September 2025	Commencement of genotyping laboratory and genotyping tag supplier approval processes. Integration of red meat and dairy processor data
November 2025	BGP pilot farms reports and evaluations. Recruitment of two Business Support Specialists by SRG
December 2025	Delivery of benchmarking reports for pilot farms, CAFRE herds and Knowledge Transfer Themed Groups
January 2026	Approval of laboratories to provide genotyping services. Commencement of industry professional training events delivered by SRG and CAFRE. Ongoing stakeholder engagement events
February – March 2026	Establishment of sectoral stakeholder engagement groups. Launch of SRG Strategy. Ongoing stakeholder engagement events and industry professional training
April – June 2026	Launch of BGP user portal and genotyping scheme. Ongoing stakeholder engagement events and industry professional training
September 2026	Opening of Bovine Genetics Project (registration and training) genotyping scheme and associated services. Publication of enterprise benchmarking reports (e.g calving report, dairy co-op report)
2027	Publication of genomic evaluations for dairy and beef animals
2028	Automation of calf registration details including breed, sex and parentage. Continued roll out of genomic evaluation and benchmarking services

7.2 Communication Strategy & Plan

SRG's has developed a Communication Strategy and Plan which sets out how the organisation will deliver clear, consistent, and effective messaging to support its activities including the Bovine Genetics Project (BGP) and Genotyping Scheme. Our aim is to ensure stakeholders are informed, engaged, and motivated to participate in genetic improvement initiatives that drive sustainability and profitability in Northern Ireland's agri-food sector.

This project will provide a database to:

- Establish baseline performance
- Identify opportunities for improvement
- Measure progress
- Inform policy development
- Determine research needs

8.0 Bovine Genetics Project

The Bovine Genetics Project is being delivered as a long-term strategic partnership between SRG and DAERA.

SRG will ensure this project meets the needs of farmers, processors and the wider agri-food industry and is positioned to lead industry engagement, marketing and promotion of the project to drive farmer participation.

SRG takes the lead in the delivery of genotyping and the BGP in Northern Ireland, having secured DAERA funding to implement core functions such as advancing genetic improvement in bovine livestock, supplying industry data, and promoting the project to farmers,

producers, and stakeholders. To ensure high technical standards, DAERA has appointed the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF) as the service provider. As a recognised not-for-profit with expertise in genetic evaluation and data management, ICBF will supply the technical infrastructure and genetic services, while SRG focuses on industry engagement, genotype testing, education, and knowledge transfer to maximise participation.

DAERA funding under the BGP subsidises the farmers cost of genotyping their entire breeding herd in the first year of the scheme. Ongoing success relies on industry support for policy changes and farmer compliance with conditionality under the Farm Sustain-

ability Payment (FSP) scheme. Farmers must register for the BGP and complete mandatory training within the Sustainable Agricultural Policy (SAP) framework between September 2026 and May 2028. Noncompliance may result in a FSP reduction. Registration and training secures access to the DAERA funded genotyping scheme, ensuring subsidised genotyping in the first year and maintaining full FSP payments.

Key project outputs include benchmarking tools and genomic reports accessed via a dedicated user portal on the SRGNI.com website, linking policy compliance with participation in SRG led genetic improvement initiatives.

Key project outputs include benchmarking tools and genomic reports accessed via a dedicated user portal on the SRGNI.com website, linking policy compliance with participation in SRG led genetic improvement initiatives.

8.1 Benefits of the Bovine Genetics Project (BGP)

The BGP delivers major gains for Northern Ireland's bovine sectors through improved genetics, herd management, and market opportunities, including:

Accurate parentage verification	Ensuring accurate pedigree records, reducing misidentification and better-informed breeding decisions.
Genomic evaluations with improved accuracy and reliability	Enabling more precise selection of animals for breeding and finishing.
Improved genetic merit of stock bulls	Helps farmers identify and use bulls with superior genetics, boosting herd performance.
Identification of outliers	Makes it easier to spot animals with poor genetic traits and remove them from the breeding pool.
Screening for major genes	Detects harmful genetic conditions early, reducing the risk of inheriting disorders and improving herd health. Animals can be identified as carriers of major genes responsible for both desirable and detrimental traits (e.g. myostatin, polledness, dwarfism etc.).
Trading confidence	Provides verified genetic merit data e.g. Commercial Beef Value (CBV), giving buyers and sellers greater assurance in livestock transactions.
Labour savings & enhanced traceability	Simplifies herd management through integrated data systems, and aids in theft prevention and carcass tracking.
Market differentiation	Creates opportunities for premium branding based on genetic quality and sustainability credentials, helping farmers access higher-value markets.
Product segregation	Enables separation of milk based on genetic traits, such as A2 beta-casein, allowing producers to target niche markets that demand A2 milk for perceived health benefits.

8.2 Overview of Bovine Genetics Project Delivery

The Bovine Genetics Project (BGP) is delivered through a series of dedicated workstreams which are overseen by the Project Operational Board.

This structured approach ensures that all technical, scientific, and stakeholder priorities are addressed in a logical and coordinated manner;

8.3 Bovine Genetics Project Implementation Workstreams

8.4 Bovine Genetics Project (BGP) Delivery Timeline

The BGP follows a phased rollout to ensure technical readiness, farmer engagement, and alignment with DAERA's Sustainable Agricultural Programme.

The following timeline diagram illustrates the phased rollout of the Bovine Genetics Project (BGP) Programme.

Nov 2025
Pilot Project; Reports and Evaluations

May 2026
BGP launch

Oct 2026
Weekly Genomic Evaluations available for dairy animals

July 2027
Full rollout of all benchmarking reports

Jan 2026
First Genotyping Laboratories approved

Sept 2026
Opening of BGP registration, training and genotyping scheme

Jan 2027
Commencement of calf genotyping

Jan 2028
Automation of Calf registration

8.5 Bovine Genetics Project DAERA: SRG Governance Structure

The governance of the Bovine Genetics Project (BGP) is designed to reflect the partnership between SRG and DAERA to ensure robust strategic oversight, operational effectiveness, scientific integrity, and meaningful stakeholder engagement.

The structure is multi-layered, with clear roles and responsibilities at each level to support the successful delivery of the project's objectives and is set out in

Bovine Genetics Project DAERA: SRG Governance Structure
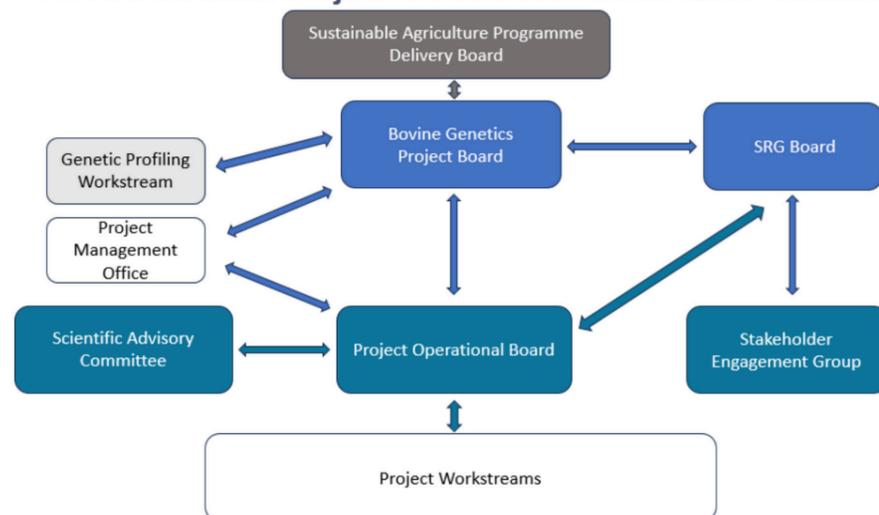
8.6 Bovine Genetics Project Governance Structure Continued

The framework for this partnership operates under the overarching Sustainable Agriculture Programme Delivery Board, which provides strategic oversight and alignment with DAERA's Sustainable Agricultural Policy including integration of key initiatives such as the BGP, Soil Nutrient Health Scheme, and Carbon Footprinting.

The Sustainable Agriculture Programme (SAP), co-designed with Northern Ireland agricultural industry and other key stakeholders, aims to transition to a more sustainable farming sector by seeking to implement policies and strategies that benefit our climate and environment while, supporting our economically and socially significant agri-food sector.

The four strategic outcomes of the SAP are:

1
Improved environmental sustainability

2
Enhanced productivity

3
Stronger resilience

4
Effective functioning supply chains

8.7 SRG's Role

SRG plays a central and integrated role within the governance structure of the Bovine Genetics Project (BGP), contributing to both strategic oversight and operational delivery. As a member of the Bovine Genetics Project Board and the Project Operational Board, SRG ensures that industry perspectives are embedded in decision-making and the shaping of project policy.

SRG also leads the Stakeholder Engagement Group through the SRG CEO, providing a coordinated mechanism for capturing and representing the needs of farmers, end users, processors, advisers, and wider sectoral stakeholders across Northern Ireland.

To further strengthen sector specific engagement, SRG will establish and chair dedicated Dairy and Beef sectoral groups ensuring that technical, commercial, and practical considerations from each sector are fully integrated into the project. Through these structures, SRG acts as a vital conduit between DAERA, ICBF, and the wider industry, supporting the effective delivery, adoption, and longterm impact of the BGP.

9.0 Summary

Sustainable Ruminant Genetics Ltd. enters the next strategic period with a clear vision, strong governance, and an unwavering commitment to delivering world-class genetic improvement for Northern Ireland's livestock sector.

Through the Bovine Genetics Project, the genotyping scheme and our wider programme of work, we are creating the data, infrastructure, and partnerships needed to transform breeding practices, enhance productivity, and support long-term environmental and economic improvement in the Northern Ireland agri-sector.

By working collaboratively with farmers, processors, industry bodies, and government, SRG will continue to champion innovation, build trust, and empower the industry to realise the full potential of genetic technologies.

This strategic plan sets the course for meaningful progress over the next five years, progress that strengthens the agri-food sector, supports farm businesses, and delivers sustainable benefits for generations to come.

Appendix A – SRG's Chairperson, CEO and Team

Victor Chestnutt OBE – Chairperson

Victor Chestnutt is a Co Antrim livestock farmer and a former President of the Ulster Farmers Union (UFU). He runs a mixed enterprise farm with pedigree suckler cows and a dairy herd, pedigree texel sheep and hill sheep. Victor has held leadership roles including president and chairman of the British Texel Sheep Society. Awarded an OBE for services to agriculture, Victor brings extensive experience in the agri-sector and a strong commitment to sustainable farming, bringing benefits to Northern Ireland farmers.

As Chairperson of SRG, Victor leads the Board in setting strategic priorities, oversees governance and financial security and drives initiatives such as the Northern Ireland Bovine Genetics Project (BGP) to improve genetic performance and sustainability across the ruminant sector.

John Moore - Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

John Moore brings decades of experience in agriculture, including advisory roles with CAFRE and expertise in farm business development and sustainability.

John leads the organisation's strategic direction and operational implementation of the strategic plan including delivery of Genotyping and the Northern Ireland Bovine Genetics Project. He is responsible for driving genetic improvement, managing stakeholder relationships, ensuring governance and financial compliance, and representing SRG at industry events to promote genetic improvement and engagement in Northern Ireland. John also operates a pedigree Simmental herd from his farm in Co. Tyrone.

Senior Business Support Specialist - Hannah Martin

Dr Hannah Martin brings expertise in veterinary science and antimicrobial research. She previously worked as a Technical Officer at UCD School of Veterinary Medicine and holds a PhD as a Teagasc Walsh Scholar, focusing on antimicrobial use in veterinary contexts.

At SRG, Hannah is a Senior Business Support Specialist, supporting programme delivery, operational processes, genetic improvement, sustainable farming and assisting with the delivery of Genotyping and the Bovine Genetics Project.

Business Support Specialist - Lois McConaghy

Lois McConaghy holds a BSc in Agricultural Technology with Professional Studies from Queen's University Belfast and brings a strong foundation in agriculture and applied technology to support operations and delivery of projects.

At SRG, Lois is a Business Support Specialist, where she assists with programme delivery, operational processes, and supports initiatives including the Bovine Genetics Project that drive genetic improvement and sustainable farming.

Appendix B - Stakeholders

The Key Stakeholders are:

Individual Farmers and Producer Groups – Direct beneficiaries and key data contributors, providing herd information and participating in genotyping, the BGP and benchmarking initiatives.

Livestock Markets, Meat and Dairy Processors – Important data providers and influencer's within the supply chain, supporting integration of genetic merit information at point of sale and processing.

Breed Societies, Livestock Tag Providers and Artificial Insemination Companies – Supplying breed-specific data, artificial insemination strategies, and tagging systems essential for accurate genetic evaluations.

Agricultural Consultants and Societies – Facilitating farmer engagement, advising farmers, providing training, knowledge transfer and assisting with the uptake of the genotyping scheme.

Technical & Advisory Contributors – AFBI (Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute) and AgriSearch together with a range of other research and development organisations will provide research-based input, scientific advice, and support for Research & Development and benchmarking.

Veterinary and Animal Health Stakeholders – Including NIVA (North of Ireland Veterinary Association), AVSPNI (Association of Veterinary Surgeons Practicing in Northern Ireland) and AHWNI (Animal Health and Welfare Northern Ireland) offering expertise in animal health and welfare.

Additional stakeholders are:

DAERA (Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs)

DAERA is the primary funder behind the Bovine Genetics Project (BGP) a £50m investment by the Northern Ireland Executive to deliver genetic and genomic evaluations across Northern Ireland's cattle sector, an initiative lead by SRG. DAERA provides strategic oversight, sets policy frameworks, and awarded the service delivery of the BGP contract to ICBF. Within DAERA, the College of Agriculture Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) works in close partnership with SRG to ensure the BGP is successfully operationalised and to monitor performance against contract milestones and targets.

ICBF (Irish Cattle Breeding Federation)

DAERA formally awarding the BGP service provider contract to ICBF Limited on January 2025. ICBF's role includes data collection from laboratories, genetic and genomic evaluations, benchmarking services, and provision of technical infrastructure. ICBF also collaborates with SRG to support farmer engagement and training, genotyping and the delivery of the BGP to the NI farmers and agriculture industry.

Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB)

The AHDB was established in 2008, and helps to make the dairy and agriculture sectors more successful, providing market information to improve supply chain transparency and stimulating demand in the UK and export markets. Whilst ICBF has been awarded the contract for service provision of the Bovine Genetics Project, it will deliver this work in collaboration with AHDB, who are the existing service provider to the Northern Ireland dairy sector. AHDB use the Profitable Lifetime Index (£PLI) which provides an economic breeding index for UK herds. Dairy participants in the Bovine Genetics Project will be able to use it to inform the selection of dams and sires for breeding dairy replacements.

SRG

UNLOCKING GENETIC POTENTIAL

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