CHARACTERIZING IRISH BEEF AND SHEEP FARMING SYSTEMS TO TAILOR SUSTAINABILITY INTERVENTIONS

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BACKGROUND

- The Irish beef and sheep sectors are key for Ireland's agriculture
- They also face major challenges:
  - Low farm economic viability and profitability
  - Negative environmental impacts (i.e., GHG emissions)

POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS

HOW TO FACE THE CHALLENGES

Several organizations and policies have addressed these main challenges the beef and sheep sector is facing:

- Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)
- Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC)
- Food Vision Beef Group (FVBG)

THE ISSUE OF HETEROGENEITY

The high heterogeneity of the sector makes the design and implementation of policies and interventions difficult, as they are not tailored to specific systems

CHARACTERIZING THE IRISH BEEF AND SHEEP FARMING SECTORS

GOAL

Gain understanding of the diversity of the Irish beef and sheep sectors, to aid in more tailored approaches for interventions and guide the design of future policies.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

- National database: National Farm Survey
  - 381 farms
  - 47 variables
- Cluster analysis

RESULTS

- Six clusters of farms

CLUSTERS
Types of farms

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CLUSTER 1	CLUSTER 2	CLUSTER 3	CLUSTER 4	CLUSTER 5	CLUSTER 6
Small cattle farms	Extensive farms	Medium farms (sheep)	Medium farms (cattle)	Medium mixed farms	Large cattle farms
19%	5%	8%	17%	44%	7%
• Part-time • Cattle rearing • Low input • Low impact	• Part-time • Sheep or cattle finishing • Large nature areas • Low input • Low impact	• Mixed farms • Mainly sheep • High reliance on external labor	• Mixed farm • Mainly cattle • High reliance on external inputs	• Mixed farms • Balanced sheep to cattle ratio • Most efficient	• Cattle finishing • High intensity

CLUSTERS

Are there average farms?

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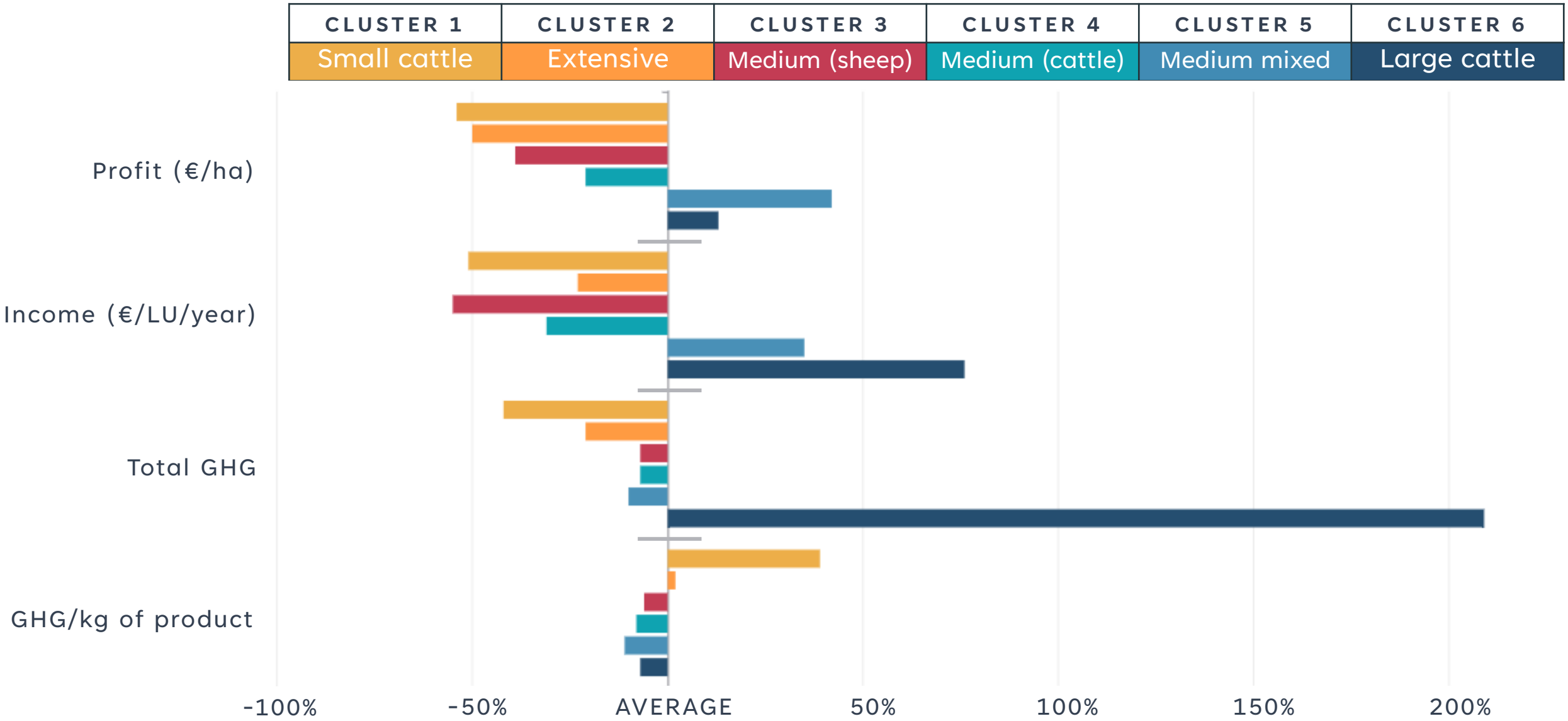


TAILORING INTERVENTIONS TO SPECIFIC CLUSTERS

Example: Measures proposed by the FVBG to reduce GHG

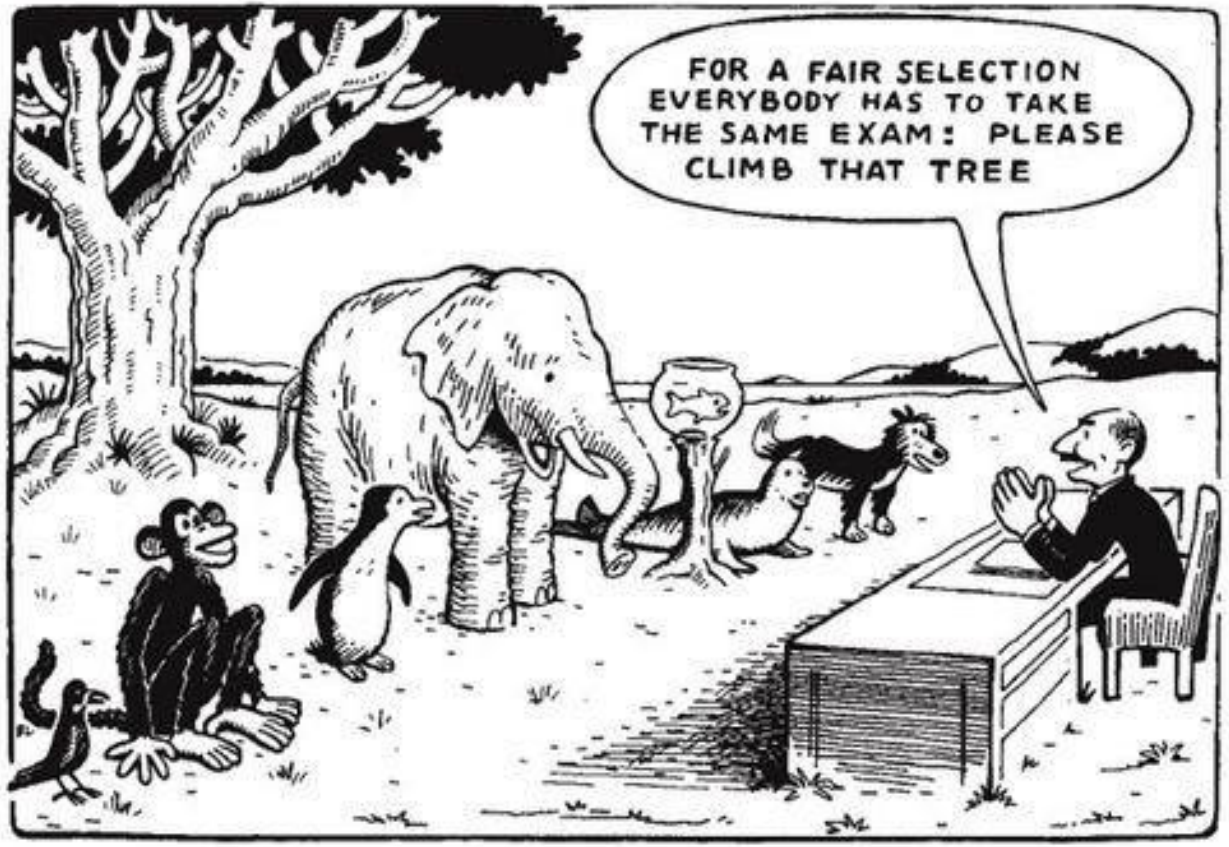
CLUSTER 1	CLUSTER 2	CLUSTER 3	CLUSTER 4	CLUSTER 5	CLUSTER 6
Small cattle	Extensive	Medium (sheep)	Medium (cattle)	Medium mixed	Large cattle

20% OF CLOVER OR MULTISPECIES IN ALL FARMS

INCREASE AREA UNDER ORGANIC PRODUCTION

THE IMPORTANCE OF TAILORING POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS

All farms should strive to reduce GHG emissions and be economically viable. However, it is important to consider their differences



THE IMPORTANCE OF TAILORING POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS

All farms should strive to reduce GHG emissions and be economically viable. However, it is important to consider their differences

- There is no one-size fits all solution
- Not all farms will be able to provide the same performance regarding both economic and environmental aspects
- Farms have different capacities and tools, and these should guide their goals
- Efforts should be concentrated where they would have the most positive impact towards common goals

THANK YOU

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