Navigating DBX (Dairy Beef Cross) Production: Motivations and Decision-Making in Integrated and Open Market Systems.

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Introduction and methods

Dairy beef cross (DBX) production has become increasingly important in the UK cattle industry, driven by the increased use of sexed semen in dairy herds and the need to improve the economic value of dairy calves (Berry 2021).

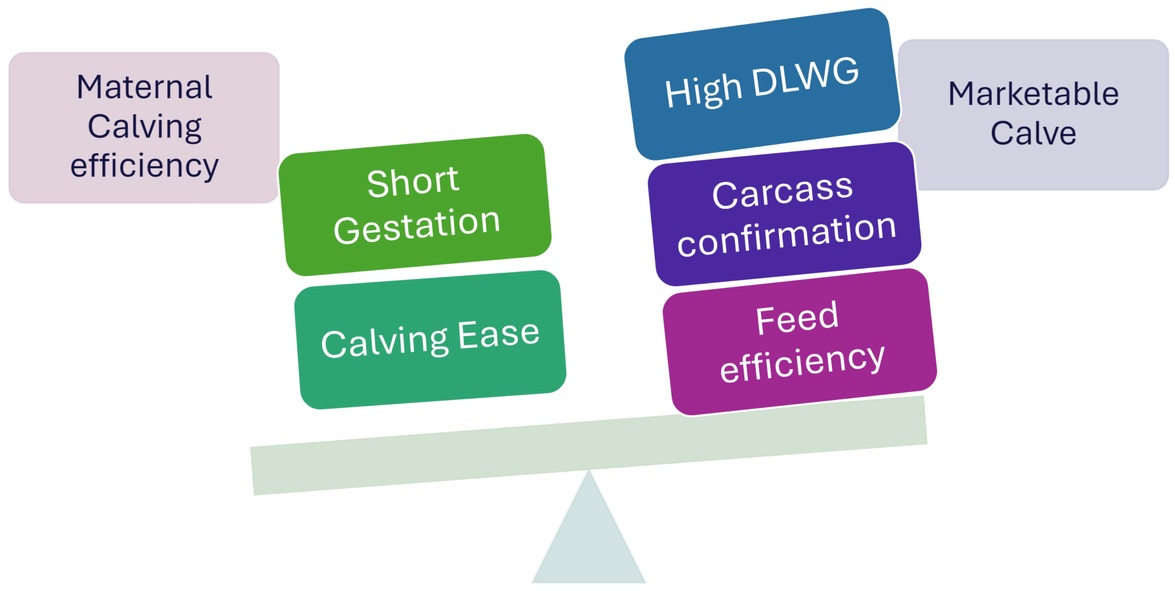
Specifically, this research investigates the production motivations, breeding objectives, farm decision making units and breed preferences that drive the UK DBX sector.

This work was completed as part of a systematic mixed methods project. Firstly, the cattle tracing system database was analyzed between 2010-2020, then 47 Semi structured interviews were conducted (21 walking interviews 26 telephone interviews).

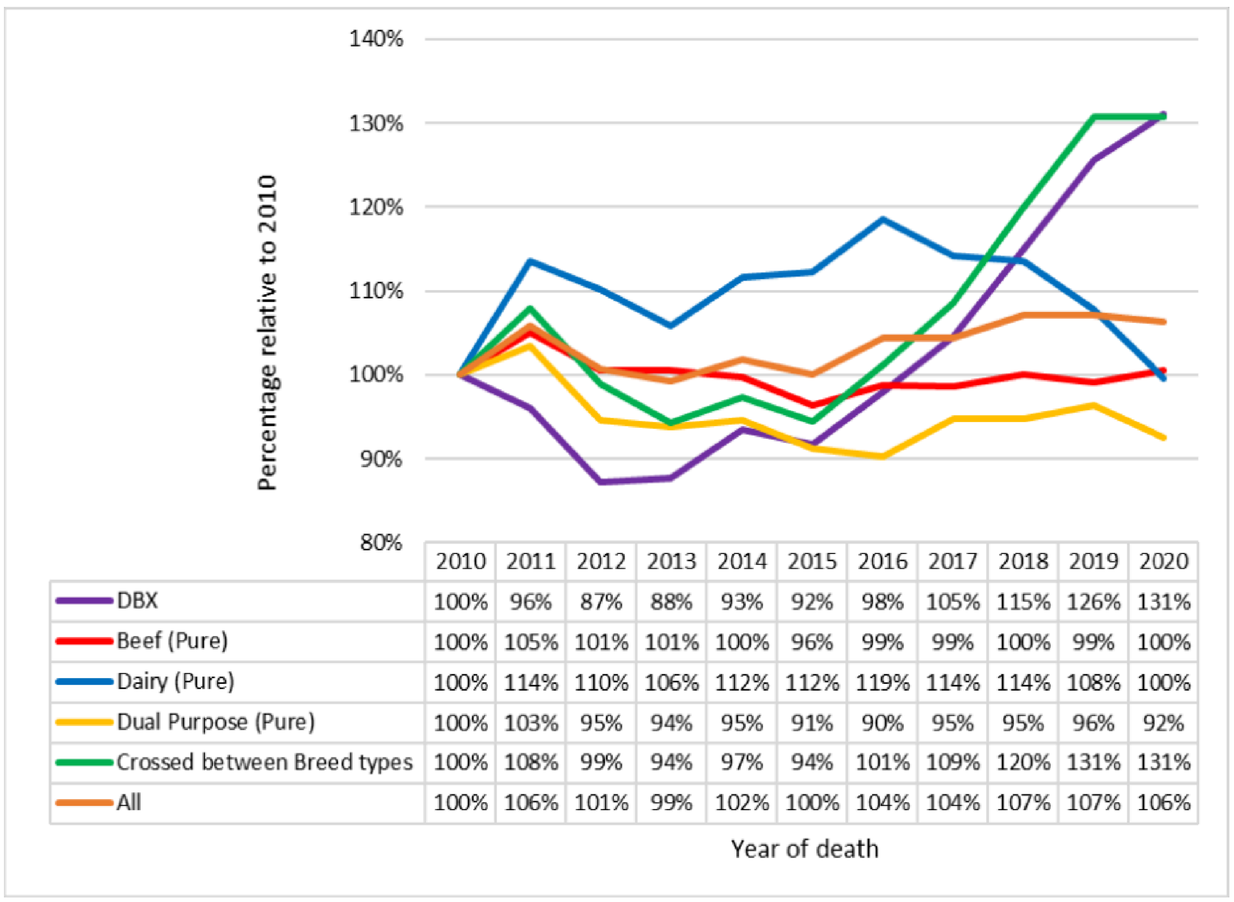
These interviews were with diary and beef farmers, AI technicians, meat processors and industry stakeholders.

This information was then collated to provide an overarching understanding of what is happening in the DBX sector and why farmers are making these production decisions.

What are the breeding objectives within DBX production



The Growth of DBX production



	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
DBX	100%	96%	87%	88%	93%	92%	98%	105%	115%	126%	131%
Beef (Pure)	100%	105%	101%	101%	100%	96%	99%	99%	100%	99%	100%
Dairy (Pure)	100%	114%	110%	106%	112%	112%	119%	114%	114%	108%	100%
Dual Purpose (Pure)	100%	103%	95%	94%	95%	91%	90%	95%	95%	96%	92%
Crossed between Breed types	100%	108%	99%	94%	97%	94%	101%	109%	120%	131%	131%
All	100%	106%	101%	99%	102%	100%	104%	104%	107%	107%	106%

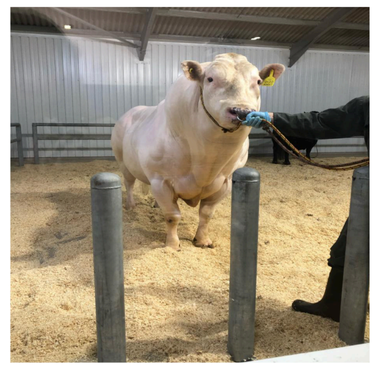
Farm decision making units and breed preferences

Integrated

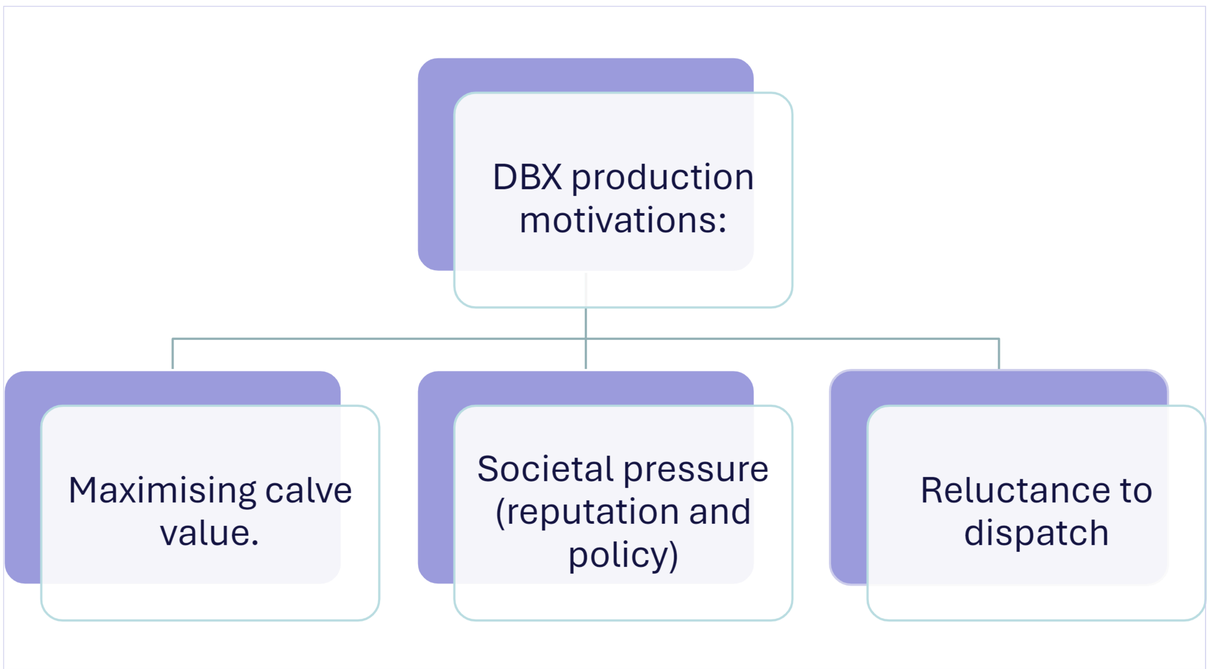
- Less farmer autonomy more business security
- "We are integrated; they pick for us… its always an Angus"

Open Market

- More farmer autonomy less business security
- "The guys who are wanting the Blues are going to sell them as calves at market, so they do not have to raise them"



Why are farmers producing DBX cattle



Conclusion

This study reveals that DBX production involves navigating conflicting breeding objectives and complex decision-making processes influenced by both open and integrated market systems.

The choice between open and integrated systems significantly influences decision-making and stakeholder roles (Crespi and Saitone, 2018), as well as the breed selection.

The findings emphasise the need for greater collaboration and communication across the dairy and beef supply chains to optimise breeding strategies and enhance the long-term sustainability of this evolving sector.

Developing standardised breeding objectives and improving information sources, will be crucial for ensuring the efficiency and economic viability of DBX production.

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