



Comhairle Contae Chill Dara  
Kildare County Council



# KILDARE FOOD, BEVERAGE + HOSPITALITY STRATEGY

2021 - 2023



The focus of **Kildare Food, Beverage and Hospitality Strategy 2021 - 2023** is a smart and green recovery based on digitisation, climate action and exploiting new opportunities. This strategy will play to our local strengths while also seeking to align with EU, national, and regional best practices and policies.

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# Foreword

When Kildare County Council commissioned the county's first Food and Beverage Strategy development in 2019, initially the enormous upheaval that 2020 would bring could not have been anticipated. COVID-19 has significantly disrupted the performance of Irish businesses. While some challenges will be relatively short-lived, others may pose longer term threats. In consultation with industry, this strategy has been reframed to rebuild our food, beverage and hospitality sector from 2021. **The focus of this Kildare Food, Beverage and Hospitality Strategy 2021 - 2023 is smart and green recovery based on digitisation, climate action and exploiting new opportunities.** This strategy will play to local strengths while also seeking to align with EU, national, and regional best practices and policies.

Grant Thornton issued a COVID 19: Impact on the Food Industry in Ireland report <sup>1</sup> in June 2020, which highlighted that

“the pandemic is generating many challenges for food businesses, from protecting human health to adjusting and adapting to the shift in the marketplace from food service to retail”.

The report cited specific challenges:

- 01 Industry supplier and buyer relationships being impacted.
- 02 Overall financial performance impact likely to be a medium-term challenge.
- 03 Industry planning to reduce investment in New Product Development (NPD).
- 04 Restricted market access considered a long-term implication of COVID-19.

The pandemic has also seen marked changes in consumer behaviour. Producers have had to understand and adjust to panic buying and demand spikes to supply chain disruption. Retail grocery stores show strong year-on-year performance across multiple food and beverage categories; Ireland's grocery market is on track to surpass €13bn in 2020. Irish consumers will have spent an extra €1.85bn on food groceries in 2020 compared with 'normal' years

By contrast, food service revenues have fallen by up to 95%, and rapid adaption has been essential to survive. New operating models are emerging with many hospitality outlets supplying straight to retail or direct to consumer. Given the importance of food tourism in Kildare, we have brought the hospitality sector into our strategic plan process. While the hospitality sector (restaurants, hotels and food-focused bars) has been hit particularly hard with most businesses shuttered and staff laid off, post-pandemic Ireland needs more sustainable restaurants not less. With a lot of uncertainty about the 'bounce back' from COVID-19, it is clear hospitality outlets will need to continue to be innovative to survive.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.grantthornton.ie/globalassets/1.-member-firms/ireland/insights/publications/covid-19-impact-on-the-food-industry-in-ireland\\_final-030620.-pptx.pdf](https://www.grantthornton.ie/globalassets/1.-member-firms/ireland/insights/publications/covid-19-impact-on-the-food-industry-in-ireland_final-030620.-pptx.pdf)

Logistics and supply chain costs for the food sector have risen significantly during this period. The agri-food industry has also faced much uncertainty due to trade discussions and in particular, Brexit. While there is a cautious welcome to the December 2020 Free-Trade agreement, the agri-food industry is steadying itself for change. In the all encompassing approach taken with this strategy, we adopt a Farm to Fork strategic view, taking in the impact of agri-food production and seeking to build on the Mid-East status as a top 10 global activation ecosystem for food innovation AgTech. In positive news, consumer trends in favour of reconnecting with food represent a significant opportunity. This strategy takes the opportunity to highlight and respond to the key trends emerging that will impact Kildare food, beverage and hospitality businesses in the challenging years to come.

A survey of Kildare food and beverage businesses undertaken in November 2020 gives insight into businesses' outlook going into 2021. 62% of respondents expect to see trading growth in 2021, while 38% anticipate a business decline. Hence, this strategy is based on fast-tracked actions to future proof Kildare's food, beverage and hospitality sectors, working towards a smart and green recovery. Key commitments of this strategy include tackling our infrastructure deficit with the development of the Food, Beverage and Skills Innovation Hub in Athy and forming Kildare's first food and beverage network.

We would like to thank all of the stakeholders involved in the giving of their time and expertise in developing and guiding this strategy. **By working in partnership with the industry, the community and stakeholder agencies, we can deliver upon our ambitious targets by the end of 2023:-**

## **JOB CREATION**

**1,100 NEW JOBS IN THE FOOD,  
BEVERAGE AND HOSPITALITY  
SECTORS IN KILDARE**

## **DEVELOPING TALENT**

**1,000+ UPSKILLED BUSINESSES,  
EMPLOYERS, YOUNG PEOPLE  
AND COMMUNITIES**

We look forward to making great strides to realise these ambitions and position Kildare at the forefront of the recovery and growth in the food, beverage and hospitality sectors.



**Peter Carey**  
Chief Executive

*Peter Carey*



**Cllr. Mark Stafford**  
Cathoirleach

*Mark Stafford*

# 01

## INTRODUCTION

Kildare is a county with a **rich tapestry and heritage in the agriculture and food sector**. It is home to international food and beverage processors, award-winning artisan producers, and a hospitality sector that, pre-COVID-19, was renowned throughout the country.

Kildare County Council has identified the food, beverage, and hospitality industry as a strategic growth priority, which justifies a dedicated strategy to guide the sector's recovery and development. In the first strategy of its kind for Kildare, we set out the roadmap to a strong localised food system. We seek to promote economic progress and environmental sustainability, food security, community regeneration, upskilling, social equity, and build linkages with other key sectors such as FoodTech, AgTech and tourism.

The food sector is recognised as a key area in local policy. One of Kildare County Council's Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) objectives is to support a programme of Agri- Innovation – Agri- Tech, Agri-Green, Food Innovation, and Niche Food for GDA (Greater Dublin Area) consumers. Another objective of this plan, relevant to the Kildare Food and Beverage Strategy, is to maximise the ability of communities to be self-sufficient in food production, energy savings and production, waste disposal etc.



## OBJECTIVES OF

# KILDARE FOOD, BEVERAGE + HOSPITALITY STRATEGY

2021 - 2023



The **objectives of this Strategy** are firmly focused on **40** **Actions** which will realise:

- An acceleration of the economic transformation, revitalisation and sustainable development of the food, beverage and hospitality sectors in County Kildare.
- Broaden Kildare's economic base by growing employment share taken up FoodTech, AgTech and the broader bioeconomy orientated activities.
  - Increase employment growth through the creation of at least 400 new jobs by the end of 2023
  - Attract 6 new FDI investments in Kildare creating at least 500 new jobs by the end of 2023
  - Increase the number of Kildare food and beverage start-ups by 10% year on year
  - Support 10 first time export food and beverage SME's expand their market.
- Rooted in primary production, this strategy will fast-track to expand agri-diversification, adding value to primary produce and strengthen local food supply systems.
- Secure funding investment for the capital development of the Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub to be fully operational by end 2022. This will position Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub as a hub of recovery in the hospitality sector through economic stimulus, education and innovation.
- Launch and upskill Kildare's first food trade network in 2021 and source funding to resource Kildare Food and Drink Network for a three-year cluster building programme.
- Increase innovation capacity building of 60 businesses by securing funding for the employment of an experienced Food Innovation Specialist.
- Assist 30 food and beverage SMEs and hospitality businesses to digitise their business models and increase online sales.
- Rebuild our hospitality sector through training and retraining and collaborative marketing through Taste of Kildare food trails and events.
- Establish food showcase opportunities in prominent retail, equine and tourism facilities.
- Conduct an analysis of food employment and skills gaps in Kildare and prepare a needs responsive training plan.
- Instigate tailored programmes for youth and long term unemployed. Build the local culinary and hospitality talent pool with 450 learners progressing their skills within 3 years.

- Develop the Discovery Centre at the Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub to provide community and schools with an outreach education programme in healthy eating, career pathways (emphasis on non-formal routes) and sustainable living. Provide experiential learning for 400 children and young people and 10 communities.
- Cross cutting focus on sustainability and climate action. Focus on business opportunities driven by Climate Action and Sustainability. Collaborate with Kildare County Council in the delivery of their Climate Adaptation Strategy (2019-2024) as pertains to the food and hospitality sector.
- Increase knowledge of EU funding opportunities, build EU partners network, upskill in application development.

## 1.1 Sector Overview

The manufacture of food and drink products is Ireland's most important indigenous industry with a turnover of €27.5 billion. It is deeply integrated into the wider economy spending €18 billion per year on intermediate consumption in other sectors plus a further €2.1 billion on employing 7.1% of the entire workforce<sup>2</sup>. It accounts for 7.6% of Ireland's economy wide GVA, and over 10% of total exports. Irish food and drink exports were valued at €13bn in 2020 despite COVID-19 disruption, representing a drop of 2% on 2019 performance. Bord Bia, however, warns of extra costs and complexities of trade with the UK post-Brexit. Ireland is the UK's second-largest food and drinks supplier with the UK export market worth €4.4 billion. The sector forms the backbone of many communities across Ireland and accounts for 94% of the agricultural sector's total external product flows.

Kildare has the 5th highest population in the State (222,504 people), as a result of significant growth over the past two decades. Kildare is a young county with the highest rate of young people under 25 in the State (81,517 young people 36.6%). The SME and the micro-enterprise sector represent approximately 92% of all active business in Kildare. To date, LEO Kildare has supported over 52 food start-up companies and provides Food Starter and Food Academy programmes on an annual basis.

The food system across Kildare offers significant opportunities for creating jobs, increasing economic prosperity and improving the entire community's wellbeing. The ambition of this strategy is to harness the many strengths of the food landscape in the county and assist the industry in Kildare to position itself in a manner that will allow it to capitalise on the growth of the food, beverage and hospitality sector over the next number of years.

## 1.2 SWOT Analysis of Kildare's food, beverage and hospitality sector

Extensive consultation was undertaken with local food, beverage and hospitality stakeholders in 2020 (James Burke and Associates earlier in 2020 and Momentum Consulting in November 2020) to ascertain key strengths and opportunities while recognising weaknesses and threats which will be mitigated through the Kildare Food, Beverage and Hospitality Strategy 2021 – 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Food Industry | Food Drink Ireland



## Strengths

- ✓ Population density is a key strength and opportunity in Co. Kildare within the Greater Dublin Area, with close proximity to Dublin. This population wealth = the right consumer for local food
- ✓ Youngest County in Ireland with a rapidly growing population.
- ✓ A good base of micro and SME's.
- ✓ Established agricultural and horticultural sectors.
- ✓ The County's AgTech and FoodTech sector is boosted with the €3 million investment in establishing the Nova UCD Lyons Farm AgTech Connector Innovation Hub.
- ✓ A growing reputation of Kildare food eateries.
- ✓ High labour force participation rate.
- ✓ High Quality Accommodation = Local Food Potential
- ✓ Proposed Athy Food, Beverage and Skills Innovation Hub = Cutting Edge Food Infrastructure
- ✓ Support for the food sector from local government agencies
- ✓ Diversification strength of Taste of Kildare embracing digital events
- ✓ Some of the largest retailer central warehouses are located within the County

## Weaknesses

- ✗ Kildare is at an earlier stage of evolving its food landscape; It has a limited number of small to medium producers.
- ✗ There are no food incubation units in the county.
- ✗ Lack of a food business cluster network and activity programme.
- ✗ A Bord Bia survey revealed that Irish companies' performance generally in terms of New Product Development is "quite poor and indeed short-sighted".
- ✗ An underperforming tourism sector. Many food activities are yet to be "joined-up" under one banner, resulting in county Kildare not yet naturally being seen as a destination food county.
- ✗ Challenged and weakened farmer's markets network
- ✗ Some Kildare customers interviewed contended that Kildare cafés/restaurants are not supporting local food producers
- ✗ Limited marketing of Kildare food story


## Opportunities

- ✓ Athy Food, Beverages & Skills Innovation Hub as a key innovation and infrastructure enabler.
- ✓ Coca Cola is committed to a new stimulus project that creates opportunities for this workforce and their families.
- ✓ The potential to engage racegoers and other visitors to the county, with the local food landscape.
- ✓ Employment options growing – Kerry Foods and multiplier effect.
- ✓ Expanding educational opportunities, Maynooth University and Kildare Wicklow ETB.
- ✓ Good potential food tourism is linked to recreation and the natural environment and leisure amenities - The Blueway Canals Project, the Royal Canal and the Greenway Project.
- ✓ The opening of the AgTech Connector Innovation Hub at the UCD Lyons Farm in Co. Kildare

## Threats

- ✗ Business closures and relocations, e.g. in 2018, Coca Cola, announced the closure of its Athy production facility with the loss of 85 jobs.
- ✗ Brexit impacts include Irish exporters to the UK face bearing the costs of customs and higher transport overheads.
- ✗ Climate change is one of the most significant challenges of our times.
- ✗ Kildare is the second most affected county in terms of job loss impact as a result of the imminent ending of peat harvesting for power generation in the Midlands region.

It is important that we frame this SWOT in the context of COVID-19 impact and recovery. The consultees shared the specific opportunities and challenges that are unfolding. We have been careful to reflect these opportunities and threats in our actions.

Opportunities arising from COVID-19	Threats arising from COVID-19
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Digitisation - Digital technologies are helping food companies eliminate waste, engage in better forecasting and improve customers connections.</li> <li>✓ Focus on local - people are shopping more consciously, buying local and are embracing digital commerce.</li> <li>✓ Health and wellbeing a priority – from a food and tourism sector perspective, our sharpened focus on health and wellbeing sets the scene for new sectoral opportunities.</li> <li>✓ Logistics and supply chain – not only impacted as a result of COVID-19 but also Brexit, Kildare can build on our strength as a location of choice for logistics and supply chain businesses.</li> <li>✓ Climate action as an opportunity - food and drink companies recognise the need to lead by example and are working to reduce food wastage in their operations and along their supply chains.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Business closures and staff layoffs</li> <li>✗ Digitisation – the pandemic has altered the shopping habits of many customers. Business has had to acceleration digitisation of their businesses or lose out.</li> </ul> 

### 1.3 Impact of COVID -19 and the Trends Arising

In August 2020, the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation published a document focusing on the impact of Covid-19 on the agri-food and beverage sector. This document highlights key issues and opportunities in the agri-food and beverage sector.

- Majority of the sector has remained open and functioning over the period, albeit reliant on the Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme. The whole agri-food sector is critical to maintaining food supply chains and food security overall. This extends from farm inputs to retail distribution.
- There are significant trends towards renationalisation of food and drink purchasing amongst consumers. Consumers are seeking out local food.
- Supermarket purchases have increased. There have also been shifts in the supply chain with the capacity to deliver directly to store, rather than relying on central distribution, winning out.
- The availability of specialised labour is also an issue. In horticulture, there are concerns regarding the lack of international seasonal workers due to travel restrictions.

Kerry Group is the world’s leading taste and nutrition company. Establishing their Global Technology and Innovation Centre (GTIC) in Naas in 2015 represented the single largest investment in food innovation in Ireland, putting Ireland firmly at the forefront of global food innovation. The Global Technology & Innovation Centre has a floor area of 26,210m<sup>2</sup> that includes 5,000m<sup>2</sup> of pilot plant production facilities, 8,500m<sup>2</sup> of laboratories and 3,500m<sup>2</sup> customer experience building.

The Kerry Consumer First data service highlights the **5 Food and Beverage Trends in Europe During COVID-19** which has relevance to all food, beverage and hospitality businesses in Kildare.

**TREND 1: A FOCUS ON 'SELF-PROTECTION'.**

From immunity-boosting products to comfort food, consumers are looking for ways to protect their bodies and minds during this time. A 2019 survey by Kerry Consumer First found that some 30% of European consumers claimed to change their diets to help their immune system, so this trend has been at play since before COVID-19. However this has accelerated according to internet searches for 'food' and 'immune system', which rose 670% globally in the first 2 weeks of March 2020, according to Google Trends data.

**TREND 2: A NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH COOKING AND DRINKING.**

Over 50% of European consumers are now cooking more at home and attempting new cuisines and recipes, according to Kerry ConsumerFirst data.

**TREND 3: SNACKIFICATION IS ON THE RISE.**

Consumers turn to snacks for comfort, but the nature of snacking has shifted from a quick fix on the go to an at-home occasion. Prior to COVID-19, shared snacking fuelled a number of markets. A survey by Mondelez found that 71% of adults say snacking gives them time to connect with themselves and 53% look forward to snacks more than meals. Due to the current environment, consumers are looking for snack products that are functional, such as from an immunity perspective, and even from snacks that provide relaxation and mental benefits. For those who are looking for a treat, snacks that prompt a sense of nostalgia seem to be delighting consumers. Creating a new twist on old favourites could be an option for some manufacturers.

**TREND 4: IMPORTANCE OF E-COMMERCE.**

Digital technology has been embraced by all sectors of society, from staying in touch with loved ones to ordering food online. This trend is set to grow and strengthen, with foodservice outlets pivoting to online delivery and engaging with consumers via mediums such as Instagram and carrying out cookalongs on Facebook Live and Zoom.

**TREND 5: INCREASED APPETITE FOR TRANSPARENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY.**

A transparent food and beverage supply chain was important to consumers before COVID-19, and this will continue to be the case. People are likely to be more invested in food safety and where their food comes from, with consumers already more interested in clean labels. One potential effect of this can be seen in the sales of plant-based products, which have grown in recent weeks, possibly mirroring a response seen in China. Consumers are warier of animal products, which many people believe to be the origin of COVID-19. According to Mintel, before COVID-19, 41% of UK processed meat eaters said health concerns led them to reduce consumption.

The pandemic has had a positive impact on the environment due to a fall in industrial activity. According to Kerry Group, some 45% of European consumers claim ethical production and sustainable sourcing are vital to them, so we can expect that trend to grow in the post-COVID-19 world.

According to an international survey<sup>3</sup> led by Queen's University Belfast and National University of Ireland Galway, Irish people are cooking more at home, and from scratch with fresh ingredients, since the beginning of Covid19, and how we shop for food, cook and eat has changed significantly,

For the hospitality/food tourism industry, hopes of recovery from the devastating challenges of 2020 rest on cautious hope from 2021 with vaccine roll-out combined with pent-up consumer demand. 1 in 9 jobs nationally are in tourism & hospitality sector, however by the end of 2020, it was estimated that 150,000 jobs within the industry had been lost. In a recent survey, members of ITIC Irish Tourism Industry Confederation<sup>4</sup> scoping hotels, airlines, attractions, ferry companies, and hospitality businesses are hopeful for recovering tourism numbers by Q2 2021. Still, next year is likely to deliver only 50% of 2019 numbers. ITIC stated that full recovery would not materialise until 2024 or 2025.

## 1.4 Impact of BREXIT

Brexit is a once in a generation challenge for SMEs with the consequence that Irish SMEs need to make significant productivity gains if they are to survive the fallout from Brexit. The December 2020 EU-UK Agreement on Future Relationship outlines the agreed establishment of a trading relationship based on zero tariffs and quota restrictions. This is a favourable agreement for Ireland's agri-food sector, avoiding what would have been very damaging tariffs in the event of 'No Deal'.

The choices facing Irish companies are stark: try to absorb the cost increases through reduced margins or find new customers. The former may simply not be possible in particular for Irish commodity producers and low margin businesses. Companies forced out of the UK market could look for new outlets for their products here on the home market but finding new markets, either in the EU or further afield, is the better option for all concerned. This, of course, maybe easier said than done.

The Irish Government has launched a new €100 million Scheme for the food processing sector to recognise the sector's unique exposure to the impact of Brexit. Enterprise Ireland will manage the new Capital Investment Scheme for the Processing and Marketing of Agricultural Products.

In addition to COVID-19 concerns, Brexit continues to be a dominant concern for Irish tourism and hospitality businesses. Tourism is a leading job creator, and in normal circumstances can help provide diverse employment opportunities across all skill levels. As Kildare positions itself as a compelling tourism destination, we can respond to trends and place health and wellbeing as a priority for new food tourism and hospitality opportunities. As proposed by the World Travel and Tourism Council, we must build our capacity to prepare for, respond to, manage and recover quickly from crises, establish trust with travellers, improve and manage our reputation. 'You can't just tell the world you are open for business you have to show travellers you are', Justin Reid, Trip Advisor. The "good news" from past economic and financial crises is that people did not stop travelling; however, they did change their habits and behaviour towards travelling, such as staying in their own country.

<sup>3</sup> Nutrients | Free Full-Text | Changes in Consumers' Food Practices during the COVID-19 Lockdown, Implications for Diet Quality and the Food System: A Cross-Continental Comparison (mdpi.com)

<sup>4</sup> Tourism\_industry\_review\_2020\_outlook\_2021.pdf (itic.ie)

A Bord Bia report: Navigating Change, Bord Bia's Covid-19 Response Plan<sup>5</sup> noted that our food industry could only bounce back after any recession if primary producers continue to produce quality basic foodstuffs. Our strategy must be rooted in primary production. Beef and dairy farming are the two largest farming sectors in County Kildare. Beef farmers face several challenges, the most prevalent being downward pressures on the price of beef and consumers seeking cheaper cuts of meat. The average age of a beef farmer is 63 nationwide, and this is typical in County Kildare. There are issues with farm succession, and due to lower incomes or even losses, there is no capital available for reinvestment in the farm or farm diversification. More than 25% of farms disappeared in the EU in the last decade, while farmers' value share dropped from 31% to less than 24%.<sup>6</sup>

The OECD report: OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2019-2028<sup>7</sup> notes that the demand for agricultural and food products will grow by 15% over the coming decade. However, rising food production and processing comes with higher greenhouse gas emissions. There are now mounting pressures on agriculture and food producers to reduce their carbon footprint to mitigate climate change.



<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bordbia.ie/globalassets/bordbia.ie/industry/covid/covid-pdfs/navigating-change-covid-19.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Towards a Common Food Policy for the European Union | Knowledge for policy (europa.eu)

<sup>7</sup> [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/agriculture-and-food/oecd-fao-agricultural-outlook-2019-2028\\_agr\\_outlook-2019-en](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/agriculture-and-food/oecd-fao-agricultural-outlook-2019-2028_agr_outlook-2019-en)

## 2.1 Kildare Farming Landscape

According to the IFA's report Importance of Farming and the Agri-food Industry KILDARE, 2016, the farm structure of County Kildare was as follows:

- Numbers employed at farm level (FTE) – 3,302
- Number of Farms – 2,618
- Average Farm Size – 44.1 Hectares

Kildare has a very diverse farming landscape:

- The Athy area is based on grain and horticulture
- The Ballytore area is dairy focused
- Beef and sheep are reared throughout the county
- Hill sheep are reared on the West Wicklow border
- There are several large pork food processors in the County

A Craft Brewing and Distilling cluster is emerging in Kildare with a number of breweries gaining national and international significance, including Kildare Brewing Company, Rye River Brewing, Trouble Brewing, etc.



## 2.2 Beef and dairy



Beef farming is a cornerstone of many rural communities in Kildare. Dairy and dry stock farming are more prevalent in North Kildare. It supports more than 120,000 farmers generating total sales of €4.5bn with 2018 exports amounting to €4bn. Approximately 15,000 jobs are directly provided by meat processing across rural Ireland with additional associated jobs in distribution, transport and services. In 2020, 505 Kildare farmers were supported under the 2020 Beef Finisher Payment (BFP), a payment to support those farmers who finished cattle when prices were under pressure due to COVID-19 in 2020. The Irish Farmers Association has acknowledged that the deal reached between the EU and the UK is a “relief, but that it will pose significant difficulties for the Irish agri-food sector”. While tariffs have been avoided, customs declarations, health certificates and other processes will add additional costs and complexities to supply chains.

The sector has a significant impact on the regional economy spend and rural economic activity. In many rural areas where processing facilities have been established, the meat processing plant is often the largest local employer, e.g. O'Brien Fine Foods employs over 300 people across two plants. Others include Moyvalley Meats and a large cohort of processing companies in Naas. Teagasc gives us insight into the potential size and shape of the dairy sector by 2027<sup>9</sup>. The envisaged cow numbers will rise to 1.65million by 2027, with milk output increasing to 9.5 billion litres. There will be 17,000 dairy farms in the country, and the average herd size will increase to approximately 100 cows. If COVID-19 is to teach us anything, it is that food systems cannot be resilient to crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic if they are not sustainable. Both beef and dairy farmers are entering a new era with a greater focus placed on the environment. Furthermore, national Government and EU policies are asking more of farmers in the sustainability area. Even though Ireland has the reputation of having one of the more carbon-efficient farming methods globally, there is a requirement to improve sustainability. Actions anticipated at farm level include a reduction in nutrient loss to water, a reduction in both greenhouse gases (GHG) and ammonia emissions and improvements in habitats for biodiversity.

The Irish Government has launched a new €100 million Scheme for the food processing sector to recognise the sector's unique exposure to the impact of Brexit. Enterprise Ireland will manage the new Capital Investment Scheme for the Processing and Marketing of Agricultural Products. Successful projects will be focused on the production of new and/or improved higher value add products, and/or production processes, required for new markets, and not principally focused on the processing of increased volumes of raw materials. Applicants will need to demonstrate that the investment underpins sustainable food production at both the farm and processor level and contributes to balanced, sustainable regional development. Given eligible projects must have a total eligible capital expenditure of at least €1 million, up to a maximum of €25 million, this scheme is relevant to the larger players.

<sup>9</sup> Goalposts\_Changing\_for\_Dairy\_Farmers.pdf (teagasc.ie)

## 2.3 Horticulture

Whilst there is increasing consumer demand for locally grown fruit and vegetables, the number of vegetable growers in Ireland has fallen over the last 15 years. Grower numbers have decreased from 1652 to 377 growers nationally. This has also been reflected in Kildare. The downward pressure on the retail prices of fruit and vegetables, a lack of investment to scale up, the weather vagaries, and the lack of interest in the next generation to take up growing are just some of the roadblocks to successful commercial growing.

In North Kildare, the ground is very hard and is not amenable to fruit and vegetable growing but in South Kildare the land is much softer, lighter and drains better, meaning less flooding and making it more amenable to vegetable growing. A handful of Kildare growers are pioneering hemp cultivation, heritage crops, and other higher-value horticulture projects.

Adding value to primary products is a longstanding priority for many in, and supporting, the agricultural sector. The key programme to enable farm families to consider and progress agri-diversification is the Teagasc Options for Farm Families Programme<sup>10</sup>. It is designed to provide new thinking, generate new ideas and generate additional income on and off farm. The programme consists of a series of workshops.



<sup>10</sup> Options Programme - Teagasc | Agriculture and Food Development Authority



## 2.4 Smallholders



The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations defines smallholders as small-scale farmers who manage areas of less than 10 hectares. Smallholder farms are characterised by family-focused motives. In 2013, smallholdings accounted for 37% of farms in Ireland. Advocates of smallholders make a strong case for the positive contribution that smallholdings make to rural life and the countryside. As suppliers of local food, often deploying a deliberate strategy of connecting with consumers, smallholders are well placed to contribute to their communities. Smallholders are vital contributors to promoting social equity and community wellbeing and have advantages in environmental sustainability and addressing climate change. This in part derives from their greater attachment to local communities and landscapes, which foster a higher level of interest and care for the natural environment and climate upon which they rely for agricultural production.

The main challenges facing smallholder farms reflect issues that are common for all types of small food businesses: access to resources and markets (particularly concerning small farms' bargaining power in the food chain). The small producers' bargaining power is especially low since they have poor access to market information and limited access to financial markets, which prevent them from selling their products in the most profitable period. Their lack of bargaining power may lead them to under-value their production and obtain a smaller share of the commodity chain's added value.

With consumer trends to seek out local foods, the role of farmer's markets and new local food distribution systems has come to the fore. After 15 years of trading, Naas Farmer's Market closed in 2020. Similarly, Athy Farmers Market is no longer running. However, a new online business model is gaining excellent traction in Kildare, NeighbourFood<sup>11</sup>. The Kildare NeighbourFood market (<https://www.neighbourfood.ie/kildare>) is a weekly online market hosted by Judith and Susan Boyle in Boyle's Pub and off-licence in Market Square. It is a simple way to buy food directly from local farmers/smallholder and food producers, including vegetables, fruit, meat, eggs, dairy products, baked goods, ready meals etc. On a contact-free basis, the market goes live each Friday as customers receive an email with suppliers' offerings for that week. The customer preorders and pays through the online platform with a collection slot advised each Thursday. The market organiser consolidates a basket of produce from different suppliers into one transaction. It eliminates waste as preorders allow for stock planning and 80% of the spend goes directly to the producer from a producer viewpoint.

Other notable outlets for selling local food include Fallon's of Kilcullen online shop and home order menu and Kildare Farm Foods Open Farm & Shop. Based in Rathmuck, it was the winner of the Irish Times Best Shop for a Day Out and the Farmers Journal National Farm Yard Awards. Castlefarm Shop, set on a 170-acre organic farm near Athy is also a strong example of agri diversification and a commitment to local food.

<sup>11</sup> How It Works — NeighbourFood

## 2.5 FoodTech and AgTech

By 2050, global food systems will need to sustainably and nutritiously feed more than 9 billion people. This strategy seeks to go further than a standalone food and beverage plan. We are ambitious to maximise the potential in the Farm to Fork continuum and be Ireland's first integrated strategy to integrate FoodTech and AgTech in response to the EU FARM TO FORK STRATEGY launched in 2020. Through every aspect of the strategy, we are keen to reflect the ambition of farm to fork through encouraging greener food production objectives, healthier and more sustainable diets, and less food waste.

Kildare is well poised to draw on its emerging strengths in FoodTech, AgTech and the broader bioeconomy. The Nova UCD Lyons Farm, located between Celbridge and Newcastle, has access to 250 hectares of land comprising dairy, beef, sheep, equine, crop and environmental research, teaching, and commercial facilities vital asset. The opportunity for AgTech in Kildare was accelerated in January 2020 as NOVAUCD was awarded €3 million for a collaborative project to develop an AgTech Connector Innovation Hub at the UCD Lyons Farm in Co. Kildare. The goal of the AgTech Connector Innovation Hub is to bring together the AgTech ecosystem in Ireland to accelerate the launch and scaling of AgTech companies by providing them with access to on-farm research collaboration opportunities, a location to test and trial their products and services in a real-world environment; along with access to dedicated acceleration programmes and incubation facilities. The building will commence construction in 2021 and open in 2022. A Centre Director has been appointed, and the launch of a nationwide challenge programme and an accelerator programme will begin in 2021. This Hub is dedicated to AgTech and the broader bioeconomy and will help FoodTech and AgTech companies launch and scale. It will also bring together the AgTech community (academics, investors, start-ups, corporates, farmers) to create an international focal point for AgTech and FoodTech innovation.

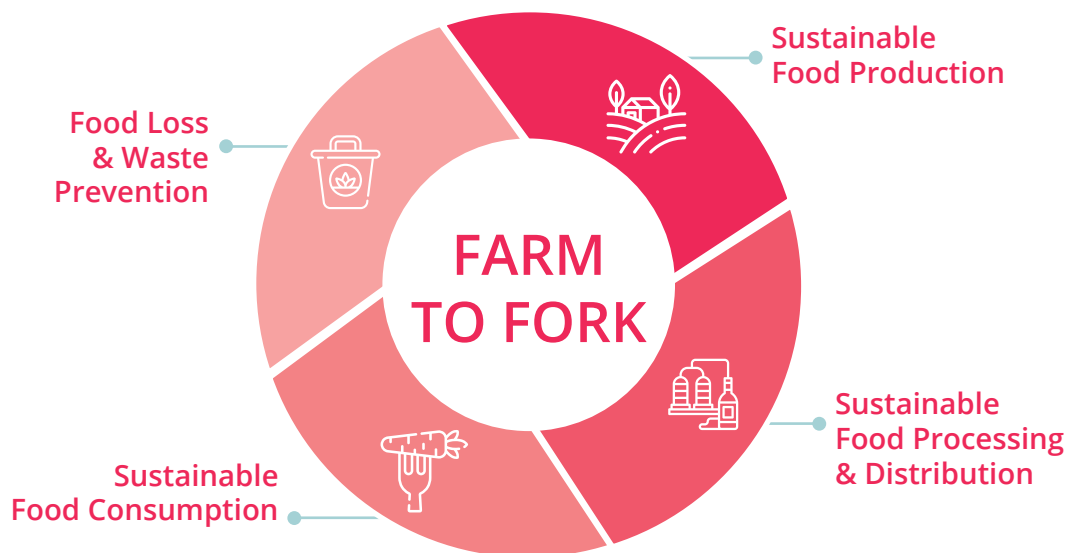
The planned Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub (see Section 4) will dedicate a first-floor facility to act as a 'spoke' or satellite hub to the Nova UCD Lyons Innovation Hub. It will facilitate emerging FoodTech and AgTech entrepreneurs to access specialist resources and connect with their peers and mentors through UCDNova. This support will provide co-working space, and the business skills and practices for growing businesses from seed stage, into profitable multinational organisations. Subject to grant securement for capital investment, it is anticipated that 61 jobs will be created through this facility within three years.

## 2.6 EU Farm to Fork Strategy

The EU contends that the agriculture sector can deliver sustainable solutions to current and future challenges such as assuring a safe and sustainable provision of quality food, fostering resource efficiency, developing the circular economy and combating climate change. The Farm to Fork Strategy<sup>12</sup> and the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030<sup>13</sup> include key policy developments for sustainable agriculture. The Farm to Fork Strategy aims to enable food systems that stimulate dietary changes beneficial for health, decrease the impacts on the environment and climate, while leaving no one behind. At the heart of the European Green Deal, it seeks to make food systems fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly with four central themes as illustrated.

<sup>12</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/safety/docs/f2f\\_action-plan\\_2020\\_strategy-info\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/safety/docs/f2f_action-plan_2020_strategy-info_en.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Biodiversity Strategy - Environment - European Commission (europa.eu)



The EU Commission encourages the Member States to integrate food sustainability (including food waste prevention) in National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) to support climate targets' achievement. Each member state will be required to implement some of these actions from the Farm to Fork strategy individually. Jonathan English of Bord Bia, presents the national consideration of the Farm to Fork Strategy's implications<sup>14</sup> for Ireland with the following considerations:-



### FOOD SECURITY

Food security is the cornerstone of the Farm to Fork Strategy, and it is now of even greater significance because of the COVID-19 crisis. The European Commission has published a specific action plan to negate challenges to the functioning of food systems. It recognises that any challenges may slow production and limit distribution. Biodiversity is also crucial for safeguarding EU and global food security. Biodiversity loss threatens our food systems, putting our food security and nutrition at risk. Investing in nature protection and restoration will also be critical for Europe's economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 will be fundamental to food security moving forward.



### SUSTAINABLE FOOD PRODUCTION

The Farm to Fork strategy's objectives focuses on reducing dependency on pesticides and antimicrobials by 50%, reducing fertiliser use by 20%, increasing organic farming practices by 25%, improving animal welfare, and reversing biodiversity loss. The strategy also proposes new green business models that aim to reward sustainable farming practices that remove CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere with either CAP payments or public or private initiatives. In line with the Circular Economic Action Plan<sup>15</sup>, the Commission will develop a regulatory framework for carbon removals certification. The CAP will be essential to achieving these strategic targets on the farm and further down the value chain by introducing healthy, sustainable diets. Bord Bia supports sustainable agriculture production through their Quality Assurance schemes Sustainable Beef and Lamb Assurance Scheme (SBLAS)<sup>16</sup> and Sustainable Dairy Assurance Scheme (SDAS)<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> EU Commission Farm to Fork Strategy (bordbia.ie)

<sup>15</sup> New Circular Economy Strategy - Environment - European Commission (europa.eu)

<sup>16</sup> Sustainable Beef and Lamb Assurance Scheme (SBLAS) - Bord Bia

<sup>17</sup> Sustainable Dairy Assurance Scheme (SDAS) - Bord Bia



## RESEARCH AND INNOVATION INVESTMENTS

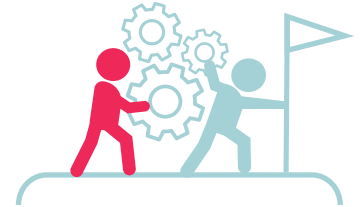
The Commission is committed to creating several streams of Research and Innovation Investment programmes and other funding mechanisms that support the Green Deal's objectives. Through the Invest EU fund, investments in the agri-food sector will also be fostered, especially for SME's. Kildare food SME's and educators must be equipped to avail of these supports.



## GLOBALTRANSITION

The EU will support a global transition to sustainable agri-food systems to export its trade partners' good practices. Therefore, the Commission will develop Green Alliances on sustainable agri-food systems based on each country's specificities. The new Green Alliances will also play an essential part in the EU's partnerships. New plans on labelling and Geographical Indications will benefit Irish food, drinks, and horticulture products in export markets moving forward.

The Farm to Fork Strategy has set targets covering sustainability across the entire food chain. There are targets for sustainable marketing, a sustainable food logo, origin indication for milk and milk and meat as an ingredient, and commitments for sustainable food processing and retail practices. Bord Bia is well-positioned to align with some of these actions through Origin Green<sup>18</sup>, Ireland's pioneering national food and drink sustainability programme, which unites government, the private sector and the full supply chain from farmers to food producers and right through to the foodservice and retail sectors. The programme is the worlds' only national food and drink sustainability programme. The Origin Green Charter seek commitments for sustainable food processing and retail practices outlined under this strategy's action plan.



## ACTION

A	Detail of the Action	Delivery stakeholders	Outcome 2021- 2023	How?
A1	Deliver Teagasc's 'Options' Programme, tailored training for farm families in artisan food production to improve their economic viability.	Teagasc & Skills Innovation Hub.	Assist 20 farm families in assessing opportunities and diversification ideas through the facilities and expertise in Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub.	Annual programme
A2	Incorporate a strong FoodTech/ AgTech component in the Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub with linkage to Nova UCD Lyons Farm Innovation Hub	Nova UCD Lyons Farm Innovation Hub Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub LEO Kildare	61 new jobs created by 2023	Infrastructure development and spin out landing space for Nova UCD Lyons Farm Innovation Hub clients

<sup>18</sup> Origin Green

A	Detail of the Action	Delivery stakeholders	Outcome 2021- 2023	How?
A3	Strengthen the local food system through training and mentoring supports for the organisers and members of Neighbourhood Food Kildare and any Kildare farmers markets that wish to re-establish	LEO Kildare Neighbourhood Food Kildare	Enable 3 markets and local food distribution model to increase sustainability	Training and mentoring programme
A4	Increase numbers of Kildare agri-food SMEs to participate in Bord Bia Origin Green programme	LEO Kildare Neighbourhood Food Kildare	Assist 8 Kildare agri-food SMEs to participate in Bord Bia Origin Green programme	Access to specialist sustainability mentoring

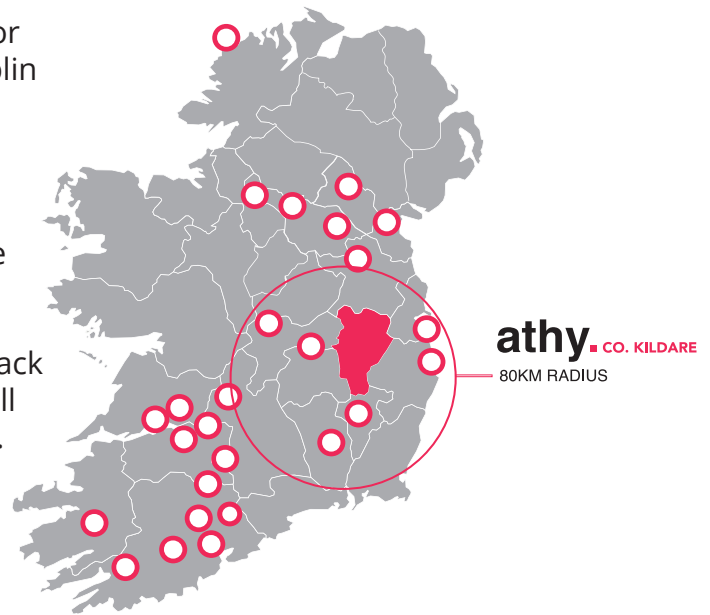


# 03

## INFRASTRUCTURE TO ENABLE INNOVATION

The development of a **Food Innovation and Incubation Hub** for Kildare has been a priority of Kildare County Council for some time. It is a specific action in the Kildare's Local Economic and Community Plan (2016- 2021) and Kildare's 2025 Economic Development Strategy (prepared as a longer-term vision for County Kildare) sets a clear intent to capitalise on compelling opportunities to enhance the county's food and beverage landscape.

The national mapping of food incubators clearly highlights an acute gap in infrastructural facilities for food entrepreneurship in the Mid-East and the Dublin area with a marked undersupply of facilities. Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub addresses the fact that Ireland does not have enough food incubators. There is no food incubation space or commercial kitchens for rent in Co. Kildare or at the regional level in the Mid-East and Carlow. The stark reality is that LEO Kildare food clients are forced to set up production facilities in other areas due to a lack of facilities in Kildare. Research <sup>19</sup> shows people will travel up to 60- 80km to a centre dedicated to food.



<sup>19</sup> Conducted by regeneration development advisors and food sector specialists, Momentum

### 3.1 The Components of Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub

The Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub will unlock the potential of a vacant, distinguished resource (Old Model School) to provide a state-of-the-art place to work, connect and train. Led by Kildare County Council, the Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub project brings together a multi-focused alliance of 14 contributors<sup>20</sup> with local and national specialist knowledge, skills and connections across rural development, food and innovation, AgTech, education and learning and community. By collaborating, partners can achieve results that could not be achieved by a single partner operating alone and reducing duplication of effort.

Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub will be home to 250 new jobs within three years realising economic activity (+€8.5 million per annum) back to the local economy. It will apply the lessons from the response to COVID-19 and help the food and drink sector to become more digitised and sustainable and be ready to tackle climate change as one of the most significant challenges of our times. We are also mindful that Kildare is the second most affected county in terms of job loss impact due to the ending of peat harvesting for power generation in the Midlands region.

It will encompass:

- A series of **timeshare co-working kitchens** offering budding small food businesses space to prep, cook, hold events and classes at cost-effective rates. Entrepreneurship in the food sector provides people with limited resources with an independent path to income generation, integration and growth. Timeshare community kitchens are proven to act as a very tangible incubator of emerging small food producers in an area. The community kitchen concept first appeared in the US as a unique way to provide aspiring entrepreneurs with timeshare access to value-added production facilities and the opportunity to start and expand speciality food and catering businesses without the prohibitive cost. Also called a Culinary Incubator, the Athy Food & Skills Incubator will incorporate a well-equipped kitchen space available to rent by the day or block of time to commercially produce food products with little or no risk (all the equipment they need is provided).
- **Three high specification food production units** will act as a step up from the shared space for the growing food entrepreneur. Food grade production space is non-existent in Kildare. This facility will provide more than just space. LEO Kildare is committed at present to providing a critical package of wraparound business supports, including mentoring.
- A building on its own can only do so much, the knowledge that is created in that building is key. The SWOT analysis identified a weakness (highlighted by Bord Bia survey) that Irish companies' performance generally in terms of New Product Development is "quite poor and indeed short-sighted". This weakness will be addressed by the provision of expertise through an **inhouse Food Innovation Specialist in new product development**, food packaging/ labelling, production planning and equipment, food nutrition advice, tasting panels and routes to market supports. Recent consumer and retail trends indicate that companies that can successfully capitalise on their products' healthy nutritional or environmental features are very likely to increase their revenue.

<sup>20</sup> Kildare Community Network Co Ltd, Coca-Cola, Local Enterprise Office Kildare, with the support and involvement of counterparts in Meath, Wicklow, Carlow and Laois, Kildare & Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB), Athy Enterprise Company, Kildare Chamber of Commerce, Kildare Leader Partnership, Mid- East Skills Forum, Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, Enterprise Ireland, County Kildare Food Network, UCD Nova- AgTech Connector Innovation Hub at the UCD Lyons Farm, Institute of Technology Carlow and NUI Maynooth

- **Skills Hub** - A professionally presented 20 station learning and demonstration kitchen will be completed as a learning and nurturing environment. Kildare & Wicklow Education and Training Board, as the education and training anchor of this facility will deliver a pathway of Culinary Skills and Hospitality programmes from QQI Level 3 Award to QQI Level 8 Award. The QQI Award is a quality assured award for further and higher education and training in Ireland.. Commis Chef apprenticeships and traineeships will be developed in consultation with industry groups. The Skills Hub will also provide programmes for those with fewer opportunities or learning challenges. For example, embedding EU best practice from the outset, taster courses and projects such as Street Food Entrepreneurship for Youth <sup>21</sup> and world cuisine as a source of employment can offer young people with scarce resources an independent route to income generation, integration and fulfilment. Because it is edgy, it appeals to hard-to-reach youth. See more in Section 6 Developing our Talent.
- **A Community Food Discovery Centre and Kildare's first zero-waste café** will fulfil five important roles-
  - It will act as an engagement room and discovery centre where chefs and nutritionists will work to educate key target groups in the community about healthy food. It will also work with national and secondary schools throughout Kildare, with senior citizens groups, men and women Sheds, mother and toddler groups, youth clubs and many other groups in the community through regular food themed events, workshops, and other community-building opportunities.
  - The Discovery Centre will also work to educate food companies, retailers and restaurateurs about the science of taste and nutrition.
  - It will act as a permanent showcase of the new products arising in the Hub and a central point for group activities.
  - As Kildare's first zero-waste café, operated as a social enterprise with a Fairtrade, sustainability and zero waste theme, it will act as an exemplar case study to help other hospitality businesses to implement more sustainable, less wasteful practices in a bid to reduce their carbon footprint.
  - As a working commercial café space, it will provide public access to the project and the great food created in the Hub. It will be an essential work experience and placement unit for the trainees, ensuring their learning is truly practical and transferable.
- **Cluster FoodTech and AgTech companies**, in a dedicated Innovation Lab on the first floor for research and development in agri-food, AgTech and the broader bioeconomy. As a satellite/spoke to the Nova UCD Lyons Farm, located between Celbridge and Newcastle, with access to 250 hectare of land comprising of dairy, beef, sheep, equine, crop and environmental research, teaching and commercial facilities. The facility will allow emerging FoodTech and AgTech entrepreneurs to access specialist resources and connect with their peers and mentors through UCDNova. This partnership support will be in the form of co-working space, financial capital required to impart the necessary business skills and practices for growing businesses from seed stage, into profitable multinational organisations.
- **Co-working Space** - 40% of Kildare's workforce commute for work purposes outside the county. The Athy Hub can play a key role in providing Remote Working /Future of Work Opportunities. A 20 workstation co-working space will be offered to remote workers, start-ups, freelancers, and SME's remote teams. It will also work as a soft-landing space for EI or IDA clients with Athy as a relocation option. The workspaces will provide desk and office space, a co-working community, with the supports and networks that entrepreneurs and businesses need to start and grow their businesses.

<sup>21</sup> [www.sfofy.eu](http://www.sfofy.eu)

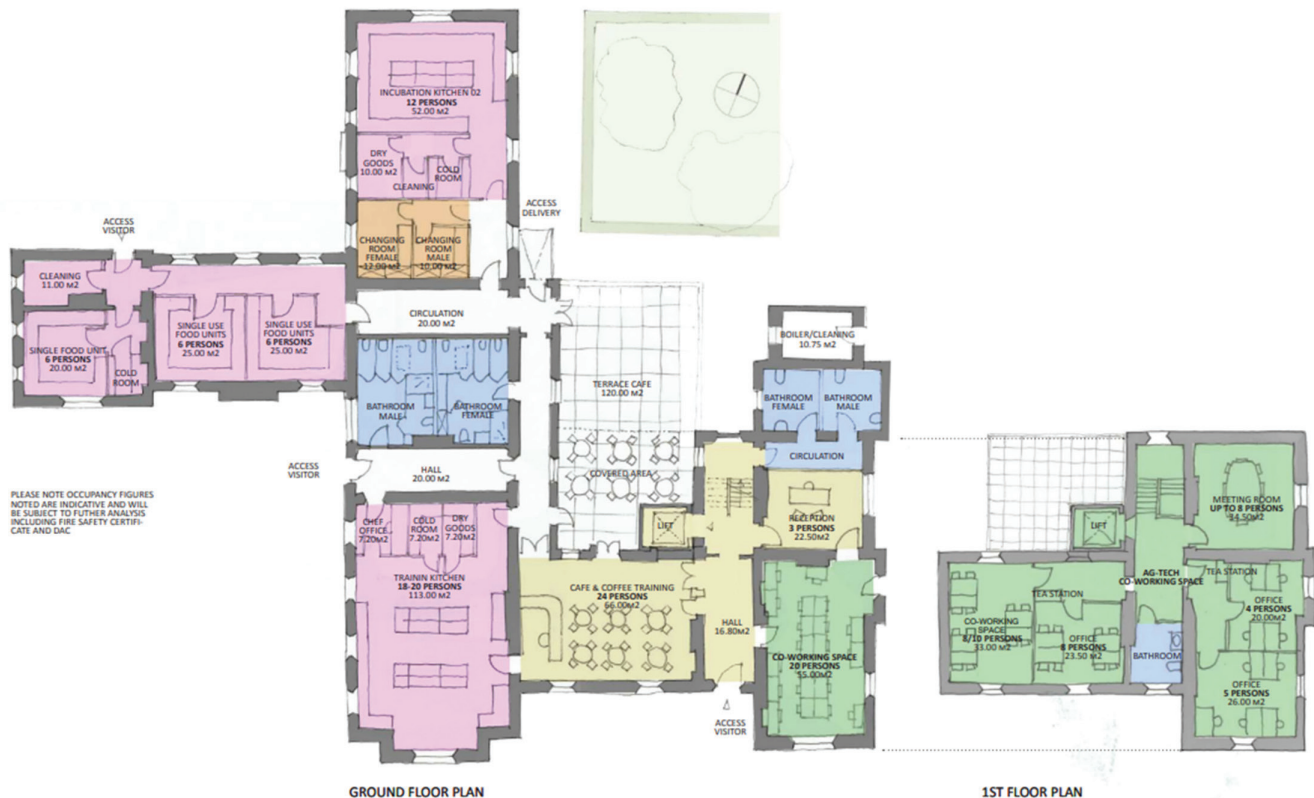


## 3.2 Transforming Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub



The Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub will repurpose The Model School, prominently located on the Dublin Road, Athy. The former primary school was closed in 2010, and to date, Kildare County Council has invested €500,000 in preparing and repurposing it for economic regeneration.

Thanks to Rural Regeneration Development Fund Category 2 grant support, a Design Team was appointed in September 2020. A Part 8 planning application was launched to realise a food incubation and skills centre, with 10,500 sq. Ft of food, hospitality and FoodTech/AgTech specific commercial space dedicated to the growth of young food companies and the training and retraining of future sector employees.



A series of grant applications have been submitted to  secure further investment for the capital development of the project.

### 3.3 Inward Investment

Kildare has the second-highest rate of Foreign Direct Investment nationally. Our ability to attract and retain FDI is central to our economic stability and success. The Kildare 2025 Economic Development Strategy has a strong commitment to facilitating the county to be more attractive to inward investors (FDI and indigenous). It seeks to ensure needs-based infrastructure and services around the county with a new focus on our skilled talent pool (see Section 7 Development of Talent). It has set the ambition to create an average of 300 gross new jobs a year up to 2025. This strategy needs to be equally ambitious and feed into this target. Recent significant wins include the development of a manufacturing facility for Dr Pepper and 7Up. They have committed to creating 50 jobs by transforming Lidl's former distribution centre in Newbridge into a 30,658sq m (330,000sq ft) facility as a second manufacturing source for the company's beverage concentrate business in North America



## ACTION

A	Detail of the Action	Delivery stakeholders	Outcome 2021- 2023	How?
A5	Secure funding investment for the capital development of the Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub.	Kildare County Council Kildare Community Network Co Ltd, Coca Cola	Funding secured and capital development programme progressed for Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub to be operational by end 2022.	Create 250 jobs delivering €8.75 million per annum back to the local economy and the wider region.
A6	Secure funding for the employment of an experienced Food Innovation Specialist to work with clients of Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub and all Kildare food and beverage SME's to accelerate innovation.	Local Enterprise Office Kildare	Food Innovation Specialist appointed to accelerate innovation in 20 Kildare food and beverage SME's per annum	Innovation capacity building of 60 businesses within 3 years
A7	Provide a start-up support model to existing and potential food and AgTech/FoodTech entrepreneurs in Kildare, supporting new start-ups and accelerating/scaling existing firms in the region.	Local Enterprise Office Kildare Enterprise Ireland Kildare LEADER Partnership UDC Nova Ag-tech Innovation Hub Coca Cola	Tenants and users of Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub provided with startup supports including access to financial supports, mentoring	Strategically grow 60 businesses to work in, or progress from the Hub. 10 of these will progress to HPSU status and internationalisation and growth.
A8	Position Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub as a hub of recovery in the hospitality sector through economic stimulus, education and innovation	Local Enterprise Office Kildare KWETB Kildare LEADER Partnership	Deliver mentoring and training supports to assist hospitality businesses to rebuild post Covid 19	Assist 20 hospitality businesses to become more resilient.

A	Detail of the Action	Delivery stakeholders	Outcome 2021- 2023	How?
A9	Instigate tailored programmes for youth and long term unemployed	Local Enterprise Office Kildare KWETB Kildare LEADER Partnership	Provide learning opportunities to enable youth and long term unemployed to either enter the workforce for the first time or return to the workforce after a lengthy absence, in the food and hospitality sector.	50 youth and long term unemployed per annum will engage in learning opportunities
A10	Develop Kildare's first social enterprise zero-waste café	Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub	Launch an exemplar climate action hospitality hub to be operational by end 2022.	Kildare's first zero-waste café operated as a social enterprise is launched.
A11	Develop the Discovery Centre at the Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub to provide community and schools outreach education in healthy eating, career pathways (emphasis on non-formal routes) and sustainable living.	Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub KWETB Kildare LEADER Partnership Kildare Food and Drink Network	Deliver a community and schools facing outreach programme. Combine education bodies with industry champions to motivate healthier communities and families.	Engage 10 communities and schools by end 2023. Skills attainment and job paths for at least 450 learners.
A12	Provide enhanced quality of life opportunities for commuters	Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub	Provide coworking / remote working facilities in Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub	At least 20 fewer commuters per day will cease their commute, saving in the region of 103 tonnes less CO2 per year

To support the progression of food and beverage inward investment, we will

A	Detail of the Action	Delivery stakeholders	Outcome 2021- 2023	How?
A13	Develop a specific food and beverage investment value proposition backed by a series of case studies from existing food and beverage FDI companies outlining why Kildare is an outstanding area to establish and develop a multinational food and beverage business.	Kildare County Council Enterprise Ireland	6 new FDI investments in Kildare by the end of 2023 creating at least 500 new jobs	Food FDI value proposition backed by marketing campaign.
A14	Compile, update and publish information on the supply of marketable commercial buildings and zoned sites with development potential for food and beverage businesses.	Local Enterprise Office Kildare Enterprise Ireland	Database commercial buildings and zoned sites with development potential for food and beverage businesses.	Share database with interested parties. Update on a regular basis.

# 04

## SUPPORTING FOOD AND BEVERAGE SME'S



It is the ambition of the Kildare Food, Beverage and Hospitality Strategy 2021-2023 to support the development ambitions of scalable indigenous food companies. Small and Medium Enterprises constitute the vast majority of food businesses in Kildare. Economic activity in the agriculture and food sector produces a far more significant return than equivalent activity in other traded sectors of the economy. That is because agri-food companies' source 74% of raw materials and services from Irish suppliers, compared to 43% for all manufacturing companies. Current best available figures show the agri-food sector making a significant contribution to employment providing between 10% and 14% of total jobs highlighting the agri-food sector's importance to the economy.

The agri-food sector's unique position within the Irish economy is reflected in the Food Wise 2025 Strategy, a ten-year plan for the sector. Food Wise 2025 tells us this requires vision and commitment, a tangible long-term strategy, and a mechanism for collaborative cross-discipline support for food businesses to grow and develop. Preparations have begun for an Agri-food Strategy to 2030.

Coming into 2021, Local Enterprise Office Kildare had supported over 52 Kildare food start-up companies through initiatives such as Food Starter and Food Academy<sup>22</sup> programmes delivered annually. Other supports provided to food entrepreneurs in Kildare include business feasibility, priming and business expansion grants, Trading Online Vouchers, assistance with the application process for Micro Finance Ireland loans, technical assistance for micro exporters, business mentoring and business training. Supports are also forthcoming to cluster marketing activities including the Taste of Kildare, the Athy County Show and The National Ploughing Championships.

The Rural Development Programme/LEADER 2013- 2020 delivered through County Kildare LEADER Partnership had a dedicated funding stream for food producers. The LEADER Food Initiative provided funding support for new and existing artisan, micro and small food producers. Artisan foods are products created with a greater focus on each ingredient's uniqueness, offering freshness, novelty and a sense of being close to the producer. The programme will continue in 2021-2022 during the CAP transition period, ensuring that continued funding will be available to assist small food producers in developing new food offerings, new routes to sell their produce, and supporting the rural economy at this critical time.

<sup>22</sup> To help develop Ireland's artisan food industry, the Local Enterprise Offices, SuperValu and Bord Bia joined forces in 2013 to create 'Food Academy' – a tailored programme for early to mid-stage food business owners.

## 4.1 Supporting New Food Entrepreneurs

Early indicators suggest that the Covid-19 pandemic will result in more food start-ups, with an increasing number of skilled foodservice professionals losing their jobs and seeking new ways to earn a living. The COVID-19 global pandemic will shape businesses for decades to come and fuel the next wave of innovation. Importantly, food is an interest that transcends social classes and is a permeable industry, i.e. success is less related to academic qualifications than in other sectors. This strategy is keen to apply equally to those with lower formal educational attainment and the potential offered through social entrepreneurship.



Through the cross-agency collaboration of Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Incubator, there will be an opportunity to introduce many different facets of food entrepreneurship to diverse target groups:

- **Start-up micro food enterprises.** Many start-up food entrepreneurs who may not have the initial seed capital to invest in a start-up production facility of their own can be served in a low-risk way through Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Incubator's community food incubator through low commitment access to food production facilities.
- **Nascent food businesses** established at the kitchen table require increasing production capacity and business development as their sales volumes increase.
- **Youth and long term unemployed.** Many Kildare youth are locked into a cycle of unemployment and frustration. There is a mismatch between the numerous food sector jobs available for young people in Kildare and young people's awareness and readiness for those jobs. Skills shortages are especially pronounced among young people living in poverty, who confront an array of interlocking barriers that begin to shape their job prospects long before they reach working age.
- **Farming community** - Teagasc highlights the need for support and training for artisan food production to improve farm families' economic viability.

## 4.2 Supporting Growth Focused Food & Beverage Entrepreneurs



The development of successful innovative food products is challenging. Mintel tells us that 80,000 new products are launched each year, but 30% of new food brands fail within one year. The failure rate becomes more acute in years 2 and 3 to the extent that only one-third of products survive. Why is the failure rate so high? Over 75% are copycats/ me-too products, and less than 3% are classically innovative or breakthrough products.

Kildare benefits from ambitious indigenous entrepreneurs with many national and international brands choosing to grow their businesses. Examples include.

- Leading Irish chocolatier Lily O'Brien's, Newbridge who in 2018 employed over 100 people, exporting 85% of annual turnover
- Green Isle Foods, headquartered in Naas, is Ireland's largest frozen food producer, employing more than 430 people in two manufacturing sites in Kildare and Longford and a logistics team based in Naas.

Other emerging companies include Rye River Brewing, an independent brewery, set up in 2013. The company employs 20 staff, producing over 20 craft beers under the Solas, McGargles, Crafty Brewing Company and Grafters brands. In 2020, the Rye River Brewing team had a plan to expand internationally just as Covid-19 hit Ireland.

They participated in the Thrive Project, an initiative spearheaded by Coca-Cola and Enterprise Ireland, to give start-ups the tools essential to scaling in a globalised world. First established in 2016, the Thrive Project is a six-month leadership programme created by Coca-Cola and Enterprise Ireland, in partnership with Dublin City University (DCU).



Supplier development programmes are a vital conduit for food and beverage companies to grow their market distribution. Our strategy is keen to unlock all potential opportunities for retail growth by supporting Kildare businesses to participate in

- In partnership with the Local Enterprise Offices and Bord Bia, the Supervalu Food Academy <sup>23</sup> programme commenced in 2014. There are currently over 300 Food Academy small producers in SuperValu stores. To date, LEO Kildare has supported over 52 food start-up companies and provided Food Starter and Food Academy programmes annually.
- In partnership with Bord Bia, the Grow with Aldi <sup>24</sup> programme aims to support up-and-coming artisan Irish food and drink companies by offering them the chance to list their product in all 145 Aldi Ireland stores. A Kildare success story emanating from the Grow with Aldi 2020 programme is Barry Flanagan & Rob Rainsford and their ProKulture Organic Kombucha (fermented tea) product. ProKulture Organic Kombucha was one of five companies to win a 12 month contract to supply 145 Aldi stores nationwide.
- In conjunction with Bord Bia, the Lidl Kick Start supplier development programme <sup>25</sup> gives Irish food & drink suppliers the chance to showcase their products and grow their business through Lidl stores across the country. In 2019, they kickstarted over 80 products from over 60 suppliers.
- The Tesco Taste Bud <sup>26</sup> programme consists of three levels to cater for suppliers at various stages of their development, from local, to national and finally export levels. Local equips the programme participants with a placement in up to nine stores, whereas the final stage, export level, can help the brand secure a listing in Tesco global markets.



Over the lifetime of this strategy, we have set out a series of actions to assist food and beverage companies to

- **Increase innovation in our SME'S** - A recent Bord Bia survey revealed that Irish companies' performance generally in New Product Development is "quite poor and indeed short-sighted".
- **Digitise** - Contrary to popular belief; digital transformation is less about technology and more about people. Our ability to adapt to an ever more digital future depends on developing the next generation of skills, closing the gap between talent supply and demand, and future-proofing your own and others' potential.
- **Internationalise** - Irish food and beverage businesses are typically weak in terms of scaling and internationalisation. This is borne out by international data that shows that promising food companies struggle to grow domestically and expand internationally. Scale-ups are typically companies growing at 20% per annum over the past three years. However, they have distinct development needs; less than 4% of companies worldwide make it past its \$1 million in revenue.

<sup>23</sup> Food Academy - SuperValu

<sup>24</sup> Grow with Aldi - ALDI IE

<sup>25</sup> Kick Start Supplier Development Programme - Lidl Ireland - [www.lidl.ie](http://www.lidl.ie)

<sup>26</sup> Taste Bud » Food & Community ([tesco.ie](http://tesco.ie))

## 4.3 Social Enterprises

Social (or For Impact) enterprises operate in all economic sectors, including the food sector, and represent an emerging part of the economic landscape. More than 10% of all EU businesses are social enterprises. Social enterprises are for-profit companies, but they also tackle Ireland's social problems. The following are examples of well-known food enterprises operating in Ireland: FoodCloud <sup>27</sup>, which makes the redistribution of surplus food as easy as possible, matching businesses with too much food, with charities in their community that have too little, tackling food waste and food poverty in the process, GIY (Grow it Yourself) Ireland <sup>28</sup> who encourage people to grow their own food and provide them with the practical skills they need to do so successfully.

The Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub will develop Kildare's first zero-waste café, operated as a social enterprise with a Fairtrade, sustainability and zero waste theme. It will act as an exemplar case study to help other hospitality businesses implement more sustainable, less wasteful practices to reduce their carbon footprint.

County Kildare LEADER Partnership runs the Kildare Social Enterprise Supports Initiative <sup>29</sup> which seeks to support new and existing social enterprises in County Kildare. This exciting new initiative focuses on support, mentoring, and training for established social enterprises in governance, business and financial planning, marketing, and measuring social impact. We will work to create a new generation of food social enterprises in Kildare.

## 4.4 Building a Cluster and a Network Community

According to Harvard Business Review <sup>30</sup>, collaboration is the new competitive advantage. Economic advantages can accrue by encouraging cooperation and increasing linkages between different participants within a food, beverage, and hospitality cluster. The Expert Group on Future Skill Needs report for the Food and Drink Sector <sup>31</sup> in 2017 encourages networks to harness competencies and facilitate knowledge transfer from large to small businesses or new starts in the industry.

Clusters will play a crucial role helping with recovery, boosting competitiveness and the internationalisation of businesses. Why? The European Observatory for Clusters <sup>32</sup> tell us that clusters yield the following impact in specialised clusters than in other locations:-



<sup>27</sup> FoodCloud

<sup>28</sup> <https://giy.ie>

<sup>29</sup> Social Enterprise - County Kildare Leadership Partnership ([countykildarelp.ie](http://countykildarelp.ie))

<sup>30</sup> Why The Ability To Collaborate Is The New Competitive Advantage ([forbes.com](http://forbes.com))

<sup>31</sup> Introduction to the NCC ([skillsireland.ie](http://skillsireland.ie))

<sup>32</sup> Europe's growth Newsroom ([europa.eu](http://europa.eu))

The formation of the network is an essential first step in unlocking the benefits of a cluster. The development of the Kildare Food and Drink Network was announced at the end of 2020 as a concerted effort to harness 'collective' power and to ensure that Kildare's unique food heritage benefits from the attention it deserves. Local Enterprise Office Kildare, County Kildare LEADER Partnership and collaborating partners are supporting the network, ensuring better industry linkages and cross-promotion when formed. Network members will benefit from food training and food marketing initiatives, networking and export-driven opportunities.

Jacqui McNabb,  
Head of Enterprise  
Kildare explains,

“With the support of local consumers, trade buyers and food producers, combined with sponsorship and support from Bord Bia, we are working to continuously champion and encourage the flourishing Kildare food sector.”

The network is open to

- Food and drink producers, retailers and distributors
- Food service, cafes, delis, restaurants and bars keen to support and use locally sourced Kildare food ingredients.
- Food sector suppliers: ingredients, packaging, services, equipment etc.
- Anyone in Kildare food sector that is passionate about supporting and developing a local food business.



Resourcing the network will be a vital feature of this strategy. The Network will develop a full Marketing Strategy with a strong emphasis on digital channels. There are key funding opportunities that we will explore:-

- The LEADER Food Initiative transition programme. Open from April 2021 and can be used for collaborative marketing and training. Funding of up to €200,000 can be accessed based on a robust application.
- The Rural Innovation and Development Fund for Agri-Food Tourism projects <sup>33</sup> run by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine in conjunction with Fáilte Ireland. This is an annual funding scheme of up to €25,000 at a 70% grant rate.

<sup>33</sup> Funding announced for agri-food tourism projects - Farming Independent



# ACTION



A	Detail of the Action	Delivery stakeholders	Outcome 2021- 2023	How?
A15	Put in place a food and beverage specific expert advisory panel to support stabilisation in the SME sector	Local Enterprise Office Kildare Enterprise Ireland	At least 15 food and beverage SME's access the mentor panel per annum.	Panel of cross disciplined food and beverage mentor specialised available to guide SME's
A16	Equip food and beverage SMEs to increase online sales	Local Enterprise Office Kildare Enterprise Ireland MERITS UCD Nova AgTech Connector Innovation Hub	At least 15 food and beverage SME's increase their online sales capability.	Provide access to Trading Online Vouchers and a pipeline of digitisation supports
A17	Deliver Food Starter and other food enterprise start-up programmes	Local Enterprise Office Kildare Kildare LEADER Partnership	Increase the number of Kildare food and beverage start-ups by 10% year on year	Annual programme delivery
A18	Apply for LEO Competitive Fund supports for the mid-East region to develop and fund a First Time Food Exporters Programme	Local Enterprise Offices Kildare, Wicklow and Meath	Deliver a First Time Food Exporters Programme To progress food and beverage SME's internationalisation	By the end of 2022, 10 first time export food and beverage SME's expand their market.
A19	Increase innovation in our food and beverage SME'S by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assisting food SME's access the agile and innovation funds available from the Local Enterprise Office and Enterprise Ireland</li> <li>Signposting high potential and global orientated food companies to the Food Works programme</li> </ul>	Local Enterprise Office Kildare Enterprise Ireland, Carlow IT, MUI, Kildare LEADER Partnership, Kildare County Council Economic Development Department and Bord Bia	Increase Kildare's food and beverage SME prevalence in national innovation programmes	Annual programme delivery
A20	Host "meet the buyer" occasions with distributors, specialist retailers, and other retail and foodservice buyers on the domestic and international markets	Local Enterprise Office Kildare Kildare Food and Drink Network	Deliver one event per annum	Annual programme delivery

A	Detail of the Action	Delivery stakeholders	Outcome 2021- 2023	How?
A21	Seek funding to facilitate a number of food and drink producer visits to other regions, either online or physical depending on restrictions	Local Enterprise Office Kildare Kildare Food and Drink Network	Organise one producer visit per annum	Annual programme delivery
A22	Increase the number of food for good social economy businesses in Kildare	County Kildare LEADER Partnership	Support one food related social enterprise per annum	Annual programme delivery
A23	Launch and upskill Kildare's first food trade network in 2021	Local Enterprise Office Kildare Kildare Food and Drink Network	Kildare Food and Drink Network established	Currently being delivered
A24	Source funding to resource Kildare Food and Drink Network for a three-year network building programme.	Local Enterprise Office Kildare County Kildare LEADER Partnership Kildare Food and Drink Network	Strong and resourced activity programme to guide Kildare Food and Drink Network	Secure funding for three-year cluster building programme



# 05

## FOOD TOURISM - REBUILDING OUR HOSPITALITY SECTOR



Pre COVID-19, County Kildare’s tourism and hospitality sectors were experiencing an upsurge, due, in part to county Kildare’s growing reputation as a hospitality and foodie destination. In 2015, work was instigated under the ‘Foodscape’ initiative, supported by County Kildare Fáilte and Kildare County Council. It was established to showcase the variety of high-quality restaurants and artisan food producers in County Kildare as a collective initiative.

In 2019, Irish Food & Drink Tourism was valued at €2.6b representing 35% of total tourism sector revenue and employing 260,000 people<sup>34</sup>. 1 in 9 jobs nationally was in the tourism & hospitality sector, while the industry’s direct spend with suppliers was €3.2 bn. The Tourism sector in the Mid-East region had been showing steady increases in numbers from 2018 through to 2020 with a sharp decline in Q2 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The employment numbers for the Mid-East region are as follows:

<b>2018 Q3</b>	<b>2019 Q3</b>	<b>2019 Q3</b>	<b>2020 Q1</b>	<b>2020 Q2</b>
<b>19,300</b>	<b>23,900</b>	<b>26,100</b>	<b>22,000</b>	<b>14,900</b>

The impact of COVID-19 has been devastating. The Tourism Recovery Plan 2020 - 2023 prepared by the Tourism Recovery Taskforce tell us that 180,000 jobs have been lost or/are vulnerable. There has been an unprecedented level of business closures (albeit we hope temporarily) and corresponding layoffs of an enormous scale. Reflecting the devastation experienced by the hospitality sector, the Bord Bia foodservice White Paper published in May 2020, projected a best-case scenario for the foodservice sector of a -45% fall in consumer spending, and a worst-case scenario of -57% drop.

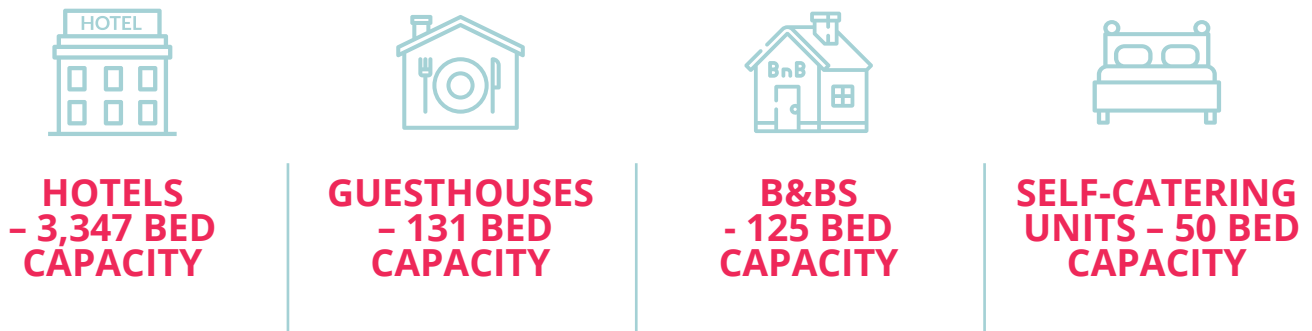
2020 was a rollercoaster for all in the hospitality and foodservice sector, with uncertainty continuing into the foreseeable future. The theme of our efforts in this 2021- 2023 strategy will be rebuilding our hospitality sector. But we must plan for recovery with international tourism experts citing the tourism and hospitality recovery starts in late 2021 with recovery accelerated by pent-up demand. ITIC Irish Tourism Industry Confederation estimate 2021 is likely to deliver only 50% of 2019 numbers. It has highlighted that full recovery will not materialise until 2024 or 2025.

<sup>34</sup> The Failte Ireland Food Tourism Building World-Class Networks 2019 – 2020 programme

## 5.1 Kildare tourism and food

Kildare is part of the Mid-East/Midlands Failte Ireland region, which in 2018<sup>35</sup> received 1.03 million overseas visitors generating €393 million revenue. There were 34,900 people employed in the sector at that time. Within this regional total, Kildare attracted 192,180 overseas visitors (2% of national overseas visitors) and 309,000 domestic trips (3% of national domestic trips).

In 2019, the Kildare accommodation profile showed supply capacity across approved accommodation types: -



Sixty-three places to eat are listed on the Into Kildare tourism website<sup>36</sup>, which also features the establishments providing innovative takeaway services.

An area's hospitality and food/gastro tourism sector is the very foundation of an excellent visitor experience. Culinary tourism includes any tourism experience in which

- one learns about
- appreciates
- and/or consumes food and drink that reflects the local, regional, or national cuisine, heritage, culture, tradition or culinary techniques.

The interconnected components can be presented as:-



Importantly, culinary tourism is about much more than the product itself. Research tells us that visitors to an area want to feel part of that community and to engage with the community during their stay in the area.

<sup>35</sup> Key Tourism Facts 2018

<sup>36</sup> Listing Category: Dine | IntoKildare.ie

Kildare has seen examples of both foodservice operators, and food and beverage producers completely re-inventing their food and beverage offer and its consumer proposition with some early successes showing. Central to these is digitisation and finding new ways to connect with consumers. The 2020 collaboration in developing and marketing Taste of Kildare hampers and gift sets <sup>37</sup> from Kildare food producers and businesses is also really significant as a proactive sales-focused undertaking. Thus, the increasing awareness and reputation of Kildare restaurants' when matched with the county's availability of high-quality accommodation is a strong base from which to rebuild.

Considering the post-COVID-19 consumer trends, and their sharpened focus on health and wellbeing, there is potential to develop a series of trails in the county based on new recreation investments. Development work is underway/complete on three Canal Greenway Projects which have strong linkages to food:

- The Grand Canal Greenway will be very beneficial to the Sallins area. Opened in Q1 2021, 40km of this Greenway lies within Co. Kildare, extending from Hazelhatch on the Kildare / Dublin border to the border with Offaly.
- The Royal Canal Greenway runs along the Royal Canal route through counties Longford, Westmeath, Meath, Kildare and Dublin. Works have already commenced along the Kildare sections. Complete and open - 130km long (longest in Ireland)
- The Barrow Blueway Project is a development of a 46km stretch of Blueway along the Grand Canal Barrow line from Lowtown to Athy, going on to Vicarstown in Co Laois.



<sup>37</sup> Taste of Kildare - Christmas Hampers | IntoKildare.ie

## 5.2 Hospitality is about people

The very foundation of a strong food tourism economy is a supply of qualified hospitality and food service staff. At the front line of a region's food tourist offering, they are fundamental to the success of the food sector. On the other hand, high numbers of our young unemployed population lack opportunities. Before 2020, the majority of hospitality stakeholders faced the challenge of recruitment and retention of staff. One thousand eight hundred chefs were qualifying each year from certified culinary training programmes. Back in 2015, the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) report on the Hospitality sector identified a deficit of 5,000 trainees chef annually. Earlier in 2020 and before Covid-19, the combined deficit was estimated at almost 7,500 chefs. The reasons for the skills shortage identified as:

- Lack of appropriate training centres and courses
- Insufficient numbers with appropriate training & experience
- Perception of careers in the sector
- Seen as a casual labour sector with no career advancement where the opposite is true
- The reputation of the sector/lack of Continuous Professional Development
- Colleges unable to provide a sufficient amount of on-the-job training hours

As hospitality business owners look to an uncertain future, employers tell us that retaining staff, maintaining their skill sets and retraining them for work in the post COVID era is a priority. With significant change comes great opportunity. Those who adapt successfully to the new reality fastest are likely to define the sector's future. From a food and tourism sector perspective, our sharpened focus on health and wellbeing sets the scene for new sectoral opportunities.

The timing of the Athy Food, Beverage and Skills Innovation Hub is essential. A sectoral weakness will be addressed by creating a learning and nurturing environment and consolidating the key training organisations to deliver industry responsive training. See more in Section 6 Developing our Talent



## 5.3 Fáilte Ireland, Food and Drink Strategy 2018 – 2023

Fáilte Ireland's Food and Drink Strategy 2018 – 2023<sup>38</sup> aims to increase the availability of great Irish food and drink experiences across the country, to improve the capability of Irish food and beverage operators to deliver a world-class offering that is consistent and profitable. It seeks to intensify efforts to ensure Irish food and drink features more prominently in Ireland's tourism industry's collective marketing and sales efforts. Fáilte Ireland recognise that to secure strong advocacy for food in Ireland and improve revenue, we need to create compelling food and drink experiences that appeal to culinary tourists and most visitors.

While the Taste the Island initiative was developed in 2019 it did not proceed in 2020, it should be a key target for Taste of Kildare when reinstated. It promotes the island of Ireland's extensive catalogue of food and drink experiences to domestic and international visitors, creating opportunities for Irish businesses to attract higher numbers of visitors outside of the already busy summer months.

## 5.4 Food Festivals and Events

Pre COVID-19, County Kildare hosted several food festivals throughout the year, some on a bi-annual basis. These include Taste of Kildare, Athy County Show, Naas Wild Food and Kildare Village's 'Food: From the Isle'. Food festivals and events are proven and effective tools for urban regeneration and rural connectivity and can make our towns and villages come alive. Over the years, Foodscape hosted some very successful food exhibitions at racing events and festivals in the county. The county's hospitality sector showed resilience and innovation in running the Taste of Kildare<sup>39</sup> event in December 2020 as a new virtual food festival.



<sup>38</sup><https://www.failteireland.ie/Failteireland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/Publications/FI-Food-Strategy-Document.pdf>

<sup>39</sup> Taste of Kildare at Christmas | IntoKildare.ie

# ACTION



A	Detail of the Action	Delivery stakeholders	Outcome 2021- 2023	How?
A25	Put in place a hospitality and food tourism specific expert advisory panel to support stabilisation in the sector	Local Enterprise Office Kildare County Kildare Fáilte	At least 15 hospitality and food tourism access the mentor panel per annum.	Panel of cross disciplined hospitality and food tourism mentors
A26	Equip hospitality and food tourism businesses to increase online sales	Local Enterprise Office Kildare County Kildare Fáilte	At least 15 hospitality and food tourism businesses increase their online sales capability.	Provide access to Trading Online Vouchers and a pipeline of digitisation supports
A27	Publish a Kildare food and beverage sourcing guide for trade distribution.	Local Enterprise Office Kildare Kildare Food and Drink Network	Build links between food and beverage producers and hospitality and food tourism businesses	Publish a Kildare food and beverage sourcing guide annually
A28	Assess potential and secure funding for virtual food trails and re-establishing key seasonal food events.	County Kildare Fáilte Kildare County Council Kildare Food and Drink Network Kildare LEADER Partnership	Support the work of County Kildare Fáilte and Kildare County Council on the Taste of Kildare initiative and secure funding for food trails and events	Funding secured for food trails and events
A29	Establish food showcase opportunities in prominent retail, equine and tourism facilities	Kildare Food and Drink Network County Kildare Fáilte Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub	Increase public awareness and access to Kildare's food and drink produce	Annual programme of showcase opportunities
A30	Create a 12-month calendar of food and beverage events (online and physical)	Kildare Food and Drink Network County Kildare Fáilte	Provide sales opportunities for Kildare producers and increase public awareness and access to Kildare's food and drink produce	Annual programme of food and beverage events
A31	Assist the hospitality sector to avail of opportunities that will arise from the infrastructural developments in tourism in the County e.g., Grand Canal Green Way, Royal Canal Green Way and Barrow Blue Way	County Kildare Fáilte	Engage with hospitality and food tourism businesses on each of the greenways and blueways to maximise opportunities from increased visitor footfall	Hospitality businesses benefit from visitors of recreation trails



A	Detail of the Action	Delivery stakeholders	Outcome 2021- 2023	How?
A32	Provide a best practice exemplar to demonstrate sustainability and reduction of food waste through the Community Food Discovery Centre and zero- waste Café at Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub.	Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub	Provide proof of concept and educational opportunities in sustainability and food waste measures	Operational from 2023
A33	Invite hospitality and food tourism businesses to engage in the Kildare Food and Drink Network	Kildare Food and Drink Network	Host workshop for hospitality and food tourism businesses highlighting reasons to be involved	Strong representation of hospitality and food tourism businesses in the Kildare Food and Drink Network



Future-proofing food, food tourism, culinary and hospitality skills is a priority of our Kildare Food, Beverage and Hospitality Strategy 2021 - 2023. Each of the preceding strategy areas has interwoven skills development actions from farm to fork. This strategy also underlines the commitment to the importance of diversity and gender representation in the industry. Our talent development focus is purposely an inclusive approach.

## 6.1 Those with fewer opportunities

Through the Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub, there will be a focus on reaching underserved groups challenged by access barriers to learning and employment. Importantly, the co-location of education and workspace will create very tangible job pathways and impact. With imaginative community-based learning pathways, we will focus on those in our community with fewer opportunities and typified by low participation rates in the job market. From pre-employment training to workplace training, we will foster a progressive culture of learning accessible and beneficial to all. Understanding the barriers that cause the low participation is the first step in removing these barriers. Through a multiagency approach with the inclusion of educators in the region, specialists in their field – KWETB in further and adult education, Maynooth, UCD and IT Carlow specialists in social innovation and entrepreneurship, Local Enterprise Office in entrepreneurship and management, Skillnets for SME led training and Kildare Community Network, we will reach marginalised group targets including youth and migrant communities. Collectively, we believe that increasing the number and quality experiential learning opportunities through the Athy skills hub we prepare our learners for full-time employment in future-proofed roles and expand the talent pool for regional employers.



By basing the Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub in Athy, we can be close to a community experiencing low levels of third level educational attainment. The third level attendee level for Athy is 24.9% compared to 36.3% in Kildare and 33.4% nationally. There is precedence of community-based hospitality training - examples below:

## LIMERICK

A leading example of catering/ hospitality making an impact on a disadvantaged area with direct relevance to Athy. After the closure of the Krupps factory in 1999, Limerick Enterprise Development Partnership (LEDP) was founded as a charitable trust company to progress economic, social and educational development of the region and the city. A key part of the offering is the Hospitality Education & Training Centre, Roxboro offering skills development in the catering/hospitality sector.

Since opening in 2014, the Hospitality Education and Training Centre Roxboro has provided over 240 job placements in the hospitality and catering industry. Courses have a high completion rate at 81%, with 66% of graduates going on to full time employment, and others staying on for further training.

## LEITRIM

Since 2010, 250 unemployed people have graduated from the 42-week Hospitality Operations QQI accredited course at The Food Hub, Drumshanbo, funded jointly by Department of Social Protection, SOLAS & Leitrim Development Company. Last year 90% of the course participants used this professional development to progress a career in the culinary sector, both as employees or as new food entrepreneurs. 5% have progressed to further education.

Over 20 Leitrim and regional food and hospitality businesses provide valuable work experience for the participants and have proven to be excellent employers.

## 6.2 Engaging youth

Much of Kildare's youth is locked into a cycle of unemployment and frustration in line with national trends. There is a mismatch between the numerous good jobs available for young people throughout the food sector, and young people's awareness of those jobs and their readiness. Skills shortages are especially pronounced among young people with less opportunities, who confront an array of interlocking barriers that begin to shape their job prospects long before they reach working age. On the other hand, throughout Kildare, food producers are finding it difficult to attract skilled workers to production positions.



Farmers are increasingly seeking non-EU work permits for workers on the farm as recruitment is difficult. Food producers find it difficult to attract workers in production units and factories. Most food stakeholders report a high level of staff turnover. Therefore training and providing traineeships and learning path progression is key to attract young people and those seeking employment.

Encouraging youth entrepreneurship in food is a key opportunity for Kildare and we will develop youth specific programmes e.g. Streetfood for Youth. Street food is one of the fastest growing areas within the food sector. Likewise, food entrepreneurship is an opportunity for our migrant community, and we will develop a programme to encourage migrant entrepreneurship through world cuisine. It is encouraging that the Peter McVerry Trust hopes to establish a new social enterprise in Kildare. The project will see participants engage in a catering and culinary training programme with a view to securing employment in the catering and hospitality industries.

## 6.3 Gender diversity

There are four key business reasons for the industry to act to address gender diversity in the food sector. McKinsey published a Women in the Food Industry Study in 2017<sup>40</sup>. The US study has relevance globally. It sets out a clear business case for encouraging greater gender diversity in the food sector, and the business case is clear.

- 01 — Gender diversity drives better business performance. Companies with more gender diversity perform better. Having a diverse base of talent has been proven to produce teams that function better and make better decisions.
- 02 — Gender diversity allows employers to win the war for talent. A strong focus on recruiting and retaining women increases the size of the talent pool. Women make up almost half the entry-level workforce in the food industry, yet women are underrepresented above this level. We need to highlight the success stories and spread those practices across the food industry.
- 03 — Expanding the talent pool to more actively recruit underrepresented groups, including women, will decrease some of the skill shortages that companies face.
- 04 — Gender diversity increases innovation and provides better customer insights. A diverse workforce provides employers with diverse insights into the general population and their overall customer base. Women are key consumer decision makers:

## 6.4 Future-proofed skills

Within three years, our cross-agency programme of learning offerings will benefit at least 450 learners with a focus on the innovative areas of:

- **Enterprise training with the support of LEO Kildare:** strategic planning, sustainability planning, marketing and branding: sustainable branding for now and the future. Digital marketing is also a priority, so training to support food and beverage stakeholders to upskill in social media communication, develop high quality images and videos, and usage of social media channels.
- **Healthy Food Agenda:** sets the scene for new sectoral opportunities, we will respond by offering courses in food nutrition and food science to build resilience. Innovative training programmes will include Food Service and the Customer, Food Service in the Era of Climate change, improving natural nutrition and the function of ingredients, Maximising local and short food supply chains, Future tech for food servicing & Senior Nutrition.
- **AgTech and FoodTech Enterprise** - Act as a base for enterprise training delivery to tackle declining productivity levels in SMEs and to act as a base for innovative start-ups. Offering programmes for food companies that encourage exchange and innovation and offer accredited career training programmes, continuing education for food entrepreneurs, industry professionals and chefs.

<sup>40</sup> Women-in-the-food-industry-web-final-old.ashx (mckinsey.com)

- **Partnering with the UCD Nova Lyons Research and Teaching Farm (Lyons Farm):** a key enabler for young AgTech companies and linking with Carlow IT & the New Frontiers Programme.
- Linking up with Carlow IT to offer **industry-focused bioscience programmes**, and link with their new four-year Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Brewing & Distilling which will be the first of its kind on the island of Ireland and has been designed to support the brewing and distilling industry, which is a key growth sector in Kildare with Kildare Brewing Company and Rye River Brewing Company which now employs over 50 people.
- **Climate Change Opportunities:** business opportunities driven by Climate Action and Sustainability. This delivers upon the Kildare County Council Climate Change Adaptation Strategy.
- **Linking up** with Bord Bia and Maynooth University to offer an industry programme that aims to enhance the Irish food, drink, and horticultural sector's innovation capabilities

## 6.5 Learning paths for the foodservice sector and hospitality workers

2020 has been a rollercoaster for all in the hospitality and food service sector, with uncertainty continuing into the foreseeable future. Prior to 2020, the majority of hospitality stakeholders faced the challenge of recruitment and retention of staff. There was a shortage of kitchen staff, from kitchen porters to head chefs. Employers tell us that retaining staff, maintaining their skill sets and retraining them for work in the post-COVID era is a must. On a cross agency basis, we will deliver training in this recovery period as follows: -

- **Digital Skills in the Hospitality** - the virus should prove to be the catalyst for the adoption of new technology across the industry.
- **Making Health and Wellbeing a Priority** – from a food and tourism sector perspective, our sharpened focus on health and wellbeing sets the scene for new sectoral opportunities, we will respond by offering courses in food nutrition and food science to build resilience.
- **Logistics and Supply Chain** – not only impacted as a result of covid-19 but also Brexit, Kildare can build on our strength as a location of choice for logistics and supply chain businesses so skills in that area are necessary.

## 6.6 Healthier Communities

While the Community Food Discovery Centre and in-house Café at Athy Food, Beverage and Skills Innovation Hub will work to educate food companies, retailers and restaurateurs about the science of taste and nutrition, creating environments that support healthy eating when linked with physical activity can encourage communities to live more beneficial lifestyles.

At community level, we can provide training and quality of life enhancement through the medium of food. Having a well-equipped culinary kitchen in Athy, we will be able to provide cookery and food health education courses for adults and children. This will involve a collaboration with chefs in the area. Encouraging communities to develop Grow your Own community gardens is also an opportunity.

# ACTION



A	Detail of the Action	Delivery stakeholders	Outcome 2021- 2023	How?
A34	Develop and publish an annual training and development programme for Kildare across all our priority areas.	Local Enterprise Office Kildare KWETB	Within three years, upskill 450 people in the sector.	Annual training calendar published
A35	Conduct an analysis of food employment and skills gaps in Kildare.	Mid-East Regional Skills Forum KWETB Athy Food, Beverage and Skills Innovation Hub	Clear skills profile for Co. Kildare with identified skills gaps. Skills gap used as basis for training planning from 2022.	Profile of roles and skills within the Agri / Agri Food Sector and prepare a needs responsive training plan
A36	Work with training providers to promote education programmes on local food in County Kildare primary/ secondary schools and colleges.	Athy Food, Beverage and Skills Innovation Hub KWETB Kildare Food and Drink Network	A programme to educate children and young people of understanding of where food comes from and its provenance, the importance of good nourishing food and an introduction to artisan food production.	Experiential learning for 400 children and young people
A37	Work with local community-based development organisations to promote education programmes on food cookery skills, meal planning and nutrition	Athy Food, Beverage and Skills Innovation Hub KWETB Kildare Food and Drink Network	A programme to educate communities (typically urban) of understanding of where food comes from, the importance of good nourishing food through cookery skills and an introduction to nutrition and wellbeing.	Experiential learning for 10 communities
A38	Identify and pursue EU training funding opportunities (e.g. ERASMUS+ Strategic Partnerships for Transfer of Innovation) to develop specific programmes in youth and diversity e.g., empowering women in the food sector.	Local Enterprise Office Kildare	Secure funding for one EU programme in innovation in the food sector per annum	Increase knowledge of EU funding opportunities, build EU partners network, upskill in application development



COVID-19 has shown how unprepared we are for some of the biggest risks we face. One of the biggest challenges currently facing European Union is the issue of food waste and the need for more sustainability in our food value chains. The current system of food production, distribution, consumption and managing wastage is under scrutiny, because research has shown that it is unsustainable and has major environmental, social and economic impact. According to the EU, around 88 million tonnes of food waste are generated annually with associated costs estimated at 143 billion euros. Around 8% of greenhouse emissions are generated from food waste alone and around 43 million Europeans are under the baseline for malnutrition, challenged by the affordability of quality food.

Both the UN and EU have set out goals to reduce food waste and develop sustainable food supply chains. In line with Sustainable Development Goals, the focus is on exploring every avenue to prevent food wastage and develop sustainable food chains that minimise environmental and economic impact. Focus is also on how we grow food, how we distribute food, how we eat food and how we manage food waste. As Europe moves towards circular economy and food wastage prevention, our approach can stimulate growth and job creation in a sustainable way. Through this strategy, Kildare will help the food, beverage and hospitality sector to become more sustainable and be ready to tackle climate change as one of the greatest challenges of our times. We are also mindful that Kildare is the second most affected county in terms of job loss impact as a result of the imminent ending of peat harvesting for power generation in the Just Transition region of Ireland.

## 7.1 Commitment to UN's Sustainable Development Goals

This strategy is wholly committed to playing a progressive and leading role in achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals <sup>41</sup> and will actively seek to ensure that all training and learning actions holistically align to National, Regional and European actions regarding Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainability. The SDG's recognise and nurture the food producers' role in:

- promoting healthy nutrition (target 2.2), noting the role they are already playing in enhancing nutritional diversity.
- prioritising sustainable food production systems (target 2.4), noting the role they are already playing as custodians of land and natural resources.
- maintaining agricultural biodiversity (target 2.5), noting the role they are already playing in promoting diversity of food and nutrition production systems.

<sup>41</sup> Sustainable Development Goals | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (fao.org)

Enabling local food producers to start, grow and adapt can act as an accelerator of progress across key elements of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), e.g., the explicit focus of SDG target 2.3, begins: “by 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, family farmers”. Food producers are important actors in taking action on climate change (SDG 13). Their work, by its very nature, is highly dependent on the vagaries of climatic and weather conditions. It will be important, therefore, in the context of SDG 13 implementation (in particular under target 13.1 to “strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity...”), that sufficient investment is committed to enable food producers to adapt to the increasingly damaging impacts on their production systems.

Related to equitable growth, employment and equality goals (SDG 8 and SDG 10), when food producers’ activities are enabled, they can be drivers of equitable and sustainable growth, reducing inequalities and creating employment. Local food production is more labour intensive than larger-scale alternatives and has a key role to play in employment generation, especially in youthful populations. Indeed, the need to engage youth in food related sectors emerges as a priority. At a time of rapid change, young people can bring dynamism, energy and innovation to the sector while the food sector has a key role to play in job creation and tackling youth employment challenges. While unemployment figures for Kildare were dropping pre-COVID-19, the youth unemployment rate was still stubbornly high. Post COVID-19, youth unemployment is a precarious position.

Addressing the gender-based inequalities faced by women food producers and farmers will be key to realising potential benefits related to inclusive growth and is prioritised in the context of SDG 5.

## **7.2 Benefit from Kildare’s Climate Change Leadership**

This strategy will benefit from Kildare County Council’s experience as an active signatory to the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy and is one of the leading Local Authorities in Ireland in meeting its Energy Efficiency targets, having already achieved 46% energy efficiency savings (compared to a target of 33%). Kildare County Council established their Climate Adaptation Strategy (2019-2024) and are firmly committed to their role in building climate resilience in our communities through working with existing networks such as the Public Participation Network, Local Community Development Committees, Tidy Towns and the Chamber of Commerce. Through the Athy Food, Beverage, Skills Innovation Hub, we have a role to play in education and best practice in food waste minimisation. As the host of the Eastern & Midlands Climate Action Regional Office, Kildare County Council is the lead for coordinating the work of 17 Local Authorities in preparing their adaptation strategies and identifying job and business opportunities that may arise. This role fits well with Kildare’s objective of seeking to be an innovative and progressive county.

## **7.3 Community Food Discover Centre**

The Community Food Discovery Centre and zero waste Café, based at the Athy Food, Beverage and Skills Innovation Hub will be the anchor for delivering an ambitious programme of climate change upskilling in Kildare. Specialised training will be delivered to food, beverage community and wider stakeholder groups on Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies for the future of Food and Kildare County Council have committed to actively supporting companies who implement successful and practical actions.

The Café will be focused on a Fairtrade, sustainability and zero waste theme, working as an exemplar case study to help other hospitality businesses to implement more sustainable, less wasteful practices in a bid to reduce their carbon footprint.



# ACTION



A	Detail of the Action	Delivery stakeholders	Outcome 2021- 2023	How?
A39	Collaborate with Kildare County Council in the delivery of their Climate Adaptation Strategy (2019-2024) as pertains to the food and hospitality sector.	Kildare County Council Athy Food, Beverage and Skills Innovation Hub Kildare Food and Drink Network Local Enterprise Office, Kildare	25 businesses in the food and hospitality sector have introduced climate change and sustainability programmes in their businesses	Training and mentoring supports
A40	Collaborate with Athy Food, Beverage and Skills Innovation Hub in the delivery of a dynamic programme of promoting healthy nutrition at production and consumer levels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• acting as exemplar case study to help other hospitality businesses to implement more sustainable, less wasteful practices in a bid to reduce their carbon footprint.</li> <li>• supporting the primary production sector to prioritise sustainable food production systems in their role as custodians of land and natural resources.</li> </ul>	Athy Food, Beverage and Skills Innovation Hub Kildare County Council	25 businesses in the food and hospitality sector implement more sustainable, less wasteful practices in a bid to reduce their carbon footprint. 10 primary producers supported	Demonstrator project at Athy Food, Beverage and Skills Innovation Hub Training and mentoring supports



The actions prioritised in our Kildare Food, Beverage and Hospitality Strategy 2021 - 2023 are backed by policy references at local, regional and national level. Throughout our Strategy, we have been careful to weave EU policies such as Farm to Fork into all our actions. In adopting 40 actions, we deliver in a very tangible way upon:

## 8.1 National Policy

- **Food Wise 2025** ambition to build scalable indigenous agrifood companies. Food Wise 2025 tells us this requires vision and commitment, a tangible long-term strategy and a mechanism for collaborative cross discipline support for agrifood businesses to grow and develop. This strategy highlights the following areas as opportunities within the Food and Beverage sectors:
  - Growth in global demand for nutritious food.
  - Growth in demand for new products associated with latest consumer trends.
  - Green/Sustainable Reputation
  - Expansion in Dairy, Meat and Seafood Sectors
  - Potential for new Foreign Direct Investments
- **National Action Plan for Jobs** through a number of tangible actions across its key themes
  - Preparing for Brexit - Intensifying and Diversifying Trade
  - Stimulating Regional Development Further
  - Realising our Regional Enterprise Potential
  - Strengthening the Rural Economy
  - Investing in Infrastructure for Growth
  - Participation, Employment, and Meeting Skills Needs
  - Removing Barriers and Maximising Participation
  - Facilitating Female Participation in Employment
  - Talent Pool for a Growing Economy
  - Skills Needs for Enterprise
  - Boosting Productivity, Competitiveness and Innovation
  - Increasing Productivity and Capturing Opportunities
  - Enhancing the Business Environment and Competitiveness
  - Research, Development, and Innovation for Smart Growth
- **Project Ireland 2040** - the diversification of rural economies is an important objective of Project Ireland 2040. This rural diversification encompasses the food and beverage sector.
- **Food Harvest 2020** ambition of investing in ideas, knowledge and skills, encouraging innovation and creativity. It recognises and exploits new opportunities for collaboration across the food supply chain.
- **Climate Action Plan 2019** To Tackle Climate Breakdown – Government of Ireland
- **Fáilte Ireland Food and Drink Strategy 2018 – 2023** aims to increase the availability of great Irish food and drink experiences across the country and across every day-part, to increase the capability of Irish food and beverage operators to deliver a world class offering that is consistent and profitable

## 8.2 Local and Regional Policy

- **Kildare 2025 Economic Development Strategy** has been prepared to frame a longer-term vision for County Kildare and to provide a strategic policy framework for the LECP economic actions. As the LECP is due to be reviewed in 2021 the Strategy will also inform the new Local Economic and Community Plan. The Agri food Sector section sets out 5 Strategic Objectives and 9 actions to achieve same:-

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1** Secure funding and realise the establishment of Athy Food, Drink & Skills Innovation Hub

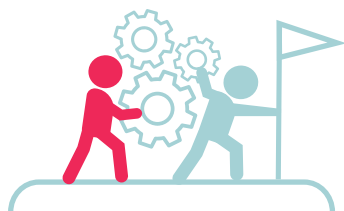
**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2** Become Food Innovation Leaders. Support a cross cutting programme of Food Innovation, Niche Food, Agri- Innovation – Agri-Tech, Agri-Green

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3** Through the Kildare Food and Beverage Strategy, maximise the ability of communities to be self-sufficient in food production, energy savings and production, waste disposal etc.

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4** Prioritise the area of experiential food tourism and opportunities for Kildare’s new and existing artisan food producers. Build on the inherent event opportunities e.g. at horse racing meetings, the Taste of Kildare, the Athy County Show and The National Ploughing Championships.

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5** Reposition the ‘Foodscape’ initiative to reflect the post COVID-19 challenges for artisan food producers and restaurants.

- **Kildare County Council Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)** which specifically seeks to support a programme of Agri- Innovation – AgTech, Agri-Green, Food Innovation, Niche Food, for GDA (Greater Dublin Area) consumers. Another objective of this plan, relevant to this strategy is to maximise the ability of communities to be self-sufficient in food production, energy savings and production, waste disposal etc.
- **Kildare County Council Corporate Plan 2019-2024** cites a priority to support and promote growth opportunities for the Agri-food & Drinks sector in recognition of its strength as a key economic driver in the county.
- **The Kildare Local Development Strategy**, October 2016 recognised that while there are a number of food incubation centres in surrounding counties, there is a need for an incubation facility that specialises in food processing within the county. Such a unit would help Kildare’s new small food businesses to overcome problems through the provision of approved facilities and intensive business development support. New entrants to the market will need access to approved production units; therefore, development of food hubs/units will benefit this growth. The Kildare Local Development Strategy also references that, as the area of experiential food tourism grows there are opportunities for Kildare’s new and existing artisan food producers to service this market segment however specific mentoring and capacity building will be required.
- **The Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020** commits to the development of the Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub. The Hub has been carefully designed to be a transformational catalyst for community regeneration. This Strategy will be used to influence the develop of the new Regional Enterprise Plan to be published later in 2021.



### ACTION

A	Detail of the Action	Delivery stakeholders	Outcome 2021- 2023	How?
A1	Deliver Teagasc's 'Options' Programme, tailored training for farm families in artisan food production to improve their economic viability.	Teagasc Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub.	Assist 20 farm families in assessing opportunities and diversification ideas through the facilities and expertise in Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub.	Annual programme
A2	Incorporate a strong FoodTech/ AgTech component in the Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub with linkage to Nova UCD Lyons Farm Innovation Hub	Nova UCD Lyons Farm Innovation Hub Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub LEO Kildare	61 new jobs created by 2023	Infrastructure development and spin out landing space for Nova UCD Lyons Farm Innovation Hub clients
A3	Strengthen the local food system through training and mentoring supports for the organisers and members of Neighbourhood Food Kildare and any Kildare farmers markets that wish to re-establish	LEO Kildare Neighbourhood Food Kildare	Enable 3 markets and local food distribution model to increase sustainability	Training and mentoring programme
A4	Increase numbers of Kildare agri-food SMEs to participate in Bord Bia Origin Green programme	LEO Kildare Neighbourhood Food Kildare	Assist 8 Kildare agri-food SMEs to participate in Bord Bia Origin Green programme	Access to specialist sustainability mentoring
A5	Secure funding investment for the capital development of the Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub.	Kildare County Council Kildare Community Network Co Ltd, Coca Cola	Funding secured and capital development programme progressed for Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub to be operational by end 2022.	Create 250 jobs delivering €8.75 million per annum back to the local economy and the wider region.
A6	Secure funding for the employment of an experienced Food Innovation Specialist to work with clients of Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub and all Kildare food and beverage SME's to accelerate innovation.	Local Enterprise Office Kildare	Food Innovation Specialist appointed to accelerate innovation in 20 Kildare food and beverage SME's per annum	Innovation capacity building of 60 businesses within 3 years

A	Detail of the Action	Delivery stakeholders	Outcome 2021- 2023	How?
A7	Provide a start-up support model to existing and potential food and AgTech/FoodTech entrepreneurs in Kildare, supporting new start-ups and accelerating/scaling existing firms in the region.	Local Enterprise Office Kildare Enterprise Ireland Kildare LEADER Partnership UDC Nova Ag-tech Innovation Hub Coca Cola	Tenants and users of Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub provided with startup supports including access to financial supports, mentoring	Strategically grow 60 businesses to work in, or progress from the Hub. 10 of these will progress to HPSU status and internationalisation and growth.
A8	Position Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub as a hub of recovery in the hospitality sector through economic stimulus, education and innovation	Local Enterprise Office Kildare KWETB Kildare LEADER Partnership	Deliver mentoring and training supports to assist hospitality businesses to rebuild post Covid 19	Assist 20 hospitality businesses to become more resilient.
A9	Instigate tailored programmes for youth and long term unemployed	Local Enterprise Office Kildare KWETB Kildare LEADER Partnership	Provide learning opportunities to enable youth and long term unemployed to either enter the workforce for the first time or return to the workforce after a lengthy absence, in the food and hospitality sector.	50 youth and long term unemployed per annum will engage in learning opportunities
A10	Develop Kildare's first social enterprise zero-waste café	Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub	Launch an exemplar climate action hospitality hub to be operational by end 2022.	Kildare's first zero-waste café operated as a social enterprise is launched.
A11	Develop the Discovery Centre at the Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub to provide community and schools outreach education in healthy eating, career pathways (emphasis on non-formal routes) and sustainable living.	Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub KWETB Kildare LEADER Partnership Kildare Food and Drink Network	Deliver a community and schools facing outreach programme. Combine education bodies with industry champions to motivate healthier communities and families.	Engage 10 communities and schools by end 2023. Skills attainment and job paths for at least 450 learners.
A12	Provide enhanced quality of life opportunities for commuters	Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub	Provide coworking / remote working facilities in Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub	At least 20 fewer commuters per day will cease their commute, saving in the region of 103 tonnes less CO2 per year

A	Detail of the Action	Delivery stakeholders	Outcome 2021- 2023	How?
A13	Develop a specific food and beverage investment value proposition backed by a series of case studies from existing food and beverage FDI companies outlining why Kildare is an outstanding area to establish and develop a multinational food and beverage business.	Kildare County Council Enterprise Ireland	6 new FDI investments in Kildare by the end of 2023 creating at least 500 new jobs	Food FDI value proposition back by marketing campaign.
A14	Compile, update and publish information on the supply of marketable commercial buildings and zoned sites with development potential for food and beverage businesses.	Local Enterprise Office Kildare Enterprise Ireland	Database commercial buildings and zoned sites with development potential for food and beverage businesses.	Share database with interested parties. Update on a regular basis.
A15	Put in place a food and beverage specific expert advisory panel to support stabilisation in the SME sector	Local Enterprise Office Kildare Enterprise Ireland	At least 15 food and beverage SME's access the mentor panel per annum.	Panel of cross disciplined food and beverage mentor specialised available to guide SME's
A16	Equip food and beverage SMEs to increase online sales	Local Enterprise Office Kildare Enterprise Ireland MERITS UCD Nova AgTech Connector Innovation Hub	At least 15 food and beverage SME's increase their online sales capability.	Provide access to Trading Online Vouchers and a pipeline of digitisation supports
A17	Deliver Food Starter and other food enterprise start-up programmes	Local Enterprise Office Kildare Kildare LEADER Partnership	Increase the number of Kildare food and beverage start-ups by 10% year on year	Annual programme delivery
A18	Apply for LEO Competitive Fund supports for the mid-East region to develop and fund a First Time Food Exporters Programme	Local Enterprise Offices Kildare, Wicklow and Meath	Deliver a First Time Food Exporters Programme To progress food and beverage SME's internationalisation	By the end of 2022, 10 first time export food and beverage SME's expand their market.
A19	Increase innovation in our food and beverage SME'S by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assisting food SME's access the agile and innovation funds available from the Local Enterprise Office and Enterprise Ireland</li> <li>• Signposting high potential and global orientated food companies to the Food Works programme</li> </ul>	Local Enterprise Office Kildare Enterprise Ireland, Carlow IT, MUI, Kildare LEADER Partnership, Kildare County Council Economic Development Department and Bord Bia	Increase Kildare's food and beverage SME prevalence in national innovation programmes	Annual programme delivery

A	Detail of the Action	Delivery stakeholders	Outcome 2021- 2023	How?
A20	Host “meet the buyer” occasions with distributors, specialist retailers, and other retail and foodservice buyers on the domestic and international markets	Local Enterprise Office Kildare Kildare Food and Drink Network	Deliver one event per annum	Annual programme delivery
A21	Seek funding to facilitate a number of food and drink producer visits to other regions, either online or physical depending on restrictions	Local Enterprise Office Kildare Kildare Food and Drink Network	Organise one producer visit per annum	Annual programme delivery
A22	Increase the number of food for good social economy businesses in Kildare	County Kildare LEADER Partnership	Support one food related social enterprise per annum	Annual programme delivery
A23	Launch and upskill Kildare’s first food trade network in 2021	Local Enterprise Office Kildare Kildare Food and Drink Network	Kildare Food and Drink Network established	Currently being delivered
A24	Source funding to resource Kildare Food and Drink Network for a three-year network building programme.	Local Enterprise Office Kildare County Kildare LEADER Partnership Kildare Food and Drink Network	Strong and resourced activity programme to guide Kildare Food and Drink Network	Secure funding for three-year cluster building programme
A25	Put in place a hospitality and food tourism specific expert advisory panel to support stabilisation in the sector	Local Enterprise Office Kildare County Kildare Fáilte	At least 15 hospitality and food tourism access the mentor panel per annum.	Panel of cross disciplined hospitality and food tourism mentors
A26	Equip hospitality and food tourism businesses to increase online sales	Local Enterprise Office Kildare County Kildare Fáilte	At least 15 hospitality and food tourism businesses increase their online sales capability.	Provide access to Trading Online Vouchers and a pipeline of digitisation supports
A27	Publish a Kildare food and beverage sourcing guide for trade distribution.	Local Enterprise Office Kildare Kildare Food and Drink Network	Build links between food and beverage producers and hospitality and food tourism businesses	Publish a Kildare food and beverage sourcing guide annually
A28	Assess potential and secure funding for virtual food trails and re-establishing key seasonal food events.	County Kildare Fáilte Kildare County Council Kildare Food and Drink Network Kildare LEADER Partnership	Support the work of County Kildare Fáilte and Kildare County Council on the Taste of Kildare initiative and secure funding for food trails and events	Funding secured for food trails and events

A	Detail of the Action	Delivery stakeholders	Outcome 2021- 2023	How?
A29	Establish food showcase opportunities in prominent retail, equine and tourism facilities	Kildare Food and Drink Network County Kildare Fáilte Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub	Increase public awareness and access to Kildare's food and drink produce	Annual programme of showcase opportunities
A30	Create a 12-month calendar of food and beverage events (online and physical)	Kildare Food and Drink Network County Kildare Fáilte	Provide sales opportunities for Kildare producers and increase public awareness and access to Kildare's food and drink produce	Annual programme of food and beverage events
A31	Assist the hospitality sector to avail of opportunities that will arise from the infrastructural developments in tourism in the County e.g., Grand Canal Green Way, Royal Canal Green Way and Barrow Blue Way	County Kildare Fáilte	Engage with hospitality and food tourism businesses on each of the greenways and blueways to maximise opportunities from increased visitor footfall	Hospitality businesses benefit from visitors of recreation trails
A32	Provide a best practice exemplar to demonstrate sustainability and reduction of food waste through the Community Food Discovery Centre and zero- waste Café at Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub.	Athy Food, Beverage & Skills Innovation Hub	Provide proof of concept and educational opportunities in sustainability and food waste measures	Operational from 2023
A33	Invite hospitality and food tourism businesses to engage in the Kildare Food and Drink Network	Kildare Food and Drink Network	Host workshop for hospitality and food tourism businesses highlighting reasons to be involved	Strong representation of hospitality and food tourism businesses in the Kildare Food and Drink Network
A34	Develop and publish an annual training and development programme for Kildare across all our priority areas.	Local Enterprise Office Kildare KWETB	Within three years, upskill 450 people in the sector.	Annual training calendar published
A35	Conduct an analysis of food employment and skills gaps in Kildare.	Mid-East Regional Skills Forum KWETB Athy Food, Beverage and Skills Innovation Hub	Clear skills profile for Co. Kildare with identified skills gaps. Skills gap used as basis for training planning from 2022.	Profile of roles and skills within the Agri / Agri Food Sector and prepare a needs responsive training plan



A	Detail of the Action	Delivery stakeholders	Outcome 2021- 2023	How?
A36	Work with training providers to promote education programmes on local food in County Kildare primary/ secondary schools and colleges.	Athy Food, Beverage and Skills Innovation Hub KWETB Kildare Food and Drink Network	A programme to educate children and young people of understanding of where food comes from and its provenance, the importance of good nourishing food and an introduction to artisan food production.	Experiential learning for 400 children and young people
A37	Work with local community-based development organisations to promote education programmes on food cookery skills, meal planning and nutrition	Athy Food, Beverage and Skills Innovation Hub KWETB Kildare Food and Drink Network	A programme to educate communities (typically urban) of understanding of where food comes from, the importance of good nourishing food through cookery skills and an introduction to nutrition and wellbeing.	Experiential learning for 10 communities
A38	Identify and pursue EU training funding opportunities (e.g. ERASMUS+ Strategic Partnerships for Transfer of Innovation) to develop specific programmes in youth and diversity e.g., empowering women in the food sector.	Local Enterprise Office Kildare	Secure funding for one EU programme in innovation in the food sector per annum	Increase knowledge of EU funding opportunities, build EU partners network, upskill in application development
A39	Collaborate with Kildare County Council in the delivery of their Climate Adaptation Strategy (2019-2024) as pertains to the food and hospitality sector.	Kildare County Council Athy Food, Beverage and Skills Innovation Hub Kildare Food and Drink Network Local Enterprise Office, Kildare	25 businesses in the food and hospitality sector have introduced climate change and sustainability programmes in their businesses	Training and mentoring supports
A40	Collaborate with Athy Food, Beverage and Skills Innovation Hub in the delivery of a dynamic programme of promoting healthy nutrition at production and consumer levels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• acting as exemplar case study to help other hospitality businesses to implement more sustainable, less wasteful practices in a bid to reduce their carbon footprint.</li> <li>• supporting the primary production sector to prioritise sustainable food production systems in their role as custodians of land and natural resources.</li> </ul>	Athy Food, Beverage and Skills Innovation Hub Kildare County Council	25 businesses in the food and hospitality sector implement more sustainable, less wasteful practices in a bid to reduce their carbon footprint. 10 primary producers supported	Demonstrator project at Athy Food, Beverage and Skills Innovation Hub Training and mentoring supports

# NOTES



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Comhairle Contae Chill Dara  
Kildare County Council



Oifig Fiontair Áitiúil  
Local Enterprise Office Kildare