



27<sup>th</sup>

# Annual Dinner

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> October  
Hilton Hotel, Belfast



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In partnership with:





# Supporting Quality Northern Irish Beef & Lamb.

At ABP, we consider it our responsibility to showcase Northern Ireland's finest Beef and Lamb.

We've created a supply chain that begins with the expertise of our supplier farmers, and ends with outstanding meat on dinner plates across the land.

**Together we can make the difference.**

NIFDA is a voluntary organisation committed to helping Northern Ireland food and beverage companies compete successfully, representing and promoting their interests. It was established to provide services to enhance, promote, inform, educate and develop member businesses.

## PAST CHAIRPERSONS

- 1996 - 1998**     **Dr Trefor Campbell CBE, F.R.Ag.S**  
Managing Director of Moy Park Ltd
- 1998 - 2000**     **Arthur Anderson**  
General Manager, Tayto NI Ltd
- 2000 - 2002**     **Alan Gibson**  
Purchasing Director, Moy Park Ltd
- 2002 - 2003**     **Michael Moreland**  
Managing Director, Andrews Holdings
- 2004 - 2006**     **John Barrett**  
Executive Director, Coca-Cola Bottlers (Ulster) Ltd
- 2006 - 2008**     **David H Malseed**  
Managing Director, United Molasses (Ireland) Ltd
- 2008 - 2010**     **Richard Moore**  
Joint Managing Director, Linden Foods
- 2010 - 2014**     **Tony O'Neill OBE**  
Marketing & Business Development Director, Moy Park Ltd
- 2014 - 2016**     **Dr David Dobbin CBE**  
Chief Executive, United Dairy Farmers
- 2016 - 2018**     **Declan Billington MBE**  
Managing Director, John Thompson & Sons
- 2018 - 2020**     **Brian Irwin**  
Chairman, Irwin's Bakery
- 2020 - 2022**     **Nick Whelan**  
Group Chief Executive, Dale Farm
- 2022 - Present**     **George Mullan**  
Managing Director-Northern Ireland, ABP

## NIFDA ANNUAL DINNER SPEAKERS

|      |                        |      |                        |      |                          |
|------|------------------------|------|------------------------|------|--------------------------|
| 1997 | <b>Terry Leahy</b>     | 2006 | <b>Guy Farrant</b>     | 2015 | <b>Jason Tarry</b>       |
| 1998 | <b>Dino Adriano</b>    | 2007 | <b>Sir Terry Leahy</b> | 2016 | <b>George Eustice MP</b> |
| 1999 | <b>Malcolm Walker</b>  | 2008 | <b>Justin King</b>     | 2017 | <b>Andy Adcock</b>       |
| 2000 | <b>Allan Leighton</b>  | 2009 | <b>Peter Robinson</b>  | 2018 | <b>John Paul Scally</b>  |
| 2001 | <b>Feargal Quinn</b>   | 2010 | <b>Andy Clarke</b>     | 2019 | <b>Jo Whitfield</b>      |
| 2002 | <b>Eoin McGettigan</b> | 2011 | <b>Mark Price</b>      | 2020 | <b>Roger Burnley</b>     |
| 2003 | <b>Sir Peter Davis</b> | 2012 | <b>Martin Agnew</b>    | 2021 | <b>Jason Tarry</b>       |
| 2004 | <b>Dr Jon Bell</b>     | 2013 | <b>Justin King</b>     | 2022 | <b>Martin Agnew</b>      |
| 2005 | <b>Ewan Venters</b>    | 2014 | <b>Malcolm Walker</b>  | 2023 | <b>Simon Roberts</b>     |

## 27<sup>TH</sup> NIFDA ANNUAL DINNER

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| <b>6:00 pm</b>  | <b>Drinks Reception with Industry</b><br>Drinks proudly sponsored by Coca-Cola HBC Ireland and Northern Ireland |
| <b>7:10 pm</b>  | <b>Introduction &amp; Welcome: Michael Bell OBE, NIFDA Executive Director</b>                                   |
| <b>7:15 pm</b>  | <b>Sponsor Address – Russell Smyth, Head of Sustainable Futures, KPMG Ireland</b>                               |
| <b>7:25 pm</b>  | <b>Address – George Mullan, NIFDA Chair</b>   |
| <b>7:35 pm</b>  | <b>Keynote Speaker – Simon Roberts, Chief Executive Officer, Sainsbury’s</b>                                    |
| <b>7:55 pm</b>  | <b>Thank You: Ursula Lavery MBE, NIFDA Vice-Chair</b>   |
| <b>8:00 pm</b>  | <b>Dinner</b>   |
| <b>10:30 pm</b> | <b>Event Close</b>  |



The 2023 NIFDA Annual Dinner is sponsored by KPMG Ireland

NIFDA wishes to thank KPMG Ireland for their ongoing commitment as well as the NIFDA member companies featured in this brochure for helping to make this event happen.



## GUEST SPEAKER

**Sainsbury's**



**Simon Roberts,**  
Chief Executive Officer, Sainsbury's

Simon was appointed Chief Executive Officer on 1 June 2020, having joined Sainsbury's and the Operating Board in July 2017 as Retail & Operations Director, with responsibility for Stores, Central Operations and Logistics. He is a member of the Corporate Responsibility & Governance Committee.

Simon is leading Sainsbury's plan to put food back at the heart of the business. Under his stewardship, Sainsbury's has launched its Plan for Better, which is integrated into our strategy and includes a bold commitment to become Net Zero across our own operations by 2035. Simon has led significant investments into colleague pay, most recently leading the industry in paying the Living Wage across the whole country as part of a cost of living support package. Simon is a dedicated, determined and enthusiastic champion for our customers and colleagues and for inclusion and diversity across our company.

Simon has worked in retail for over 30 years, having started at Marks and Spencer. He joined Sainsbury's from Boots where he was most recently Executive Vice President of Walgreens Boots Alliance and President of Boots UK and Ireland. He sits on the Government's Retail Sector Council and is on the advisory board of Diversity in Retail.

## NORTHERN IRELAND FOOD AND DRINK ASSOCIATION LTD BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2023

### CHAIR

**George Mullan**  
Managing Director  
ABP Food Group

### OFFICE BEARERS

**Vice-Chair (Incoming)**  
**Ursula Lavery MBE**  
Technical Director, Europe  
Moy Park Ltd

**Vice-Chair (Outgoing)**  
**Nick Whelan**  
Group Chief Executive  
Dale Farm

**Hon Treasurer**  
**Peter Henry**  
General Manager  
Allied Bakeries Ltd

**Executive Director**  
**Michael Bell OBE**  
Northern Ireland Food and Drink  
Association Ltd (NIFDA)

### BOARD MEMBERS 2023

**Tim Acheson**  
General Manager,  
Lakeland Dairies

**Tracy Hamilton MBE**  
Brand Director  
Mash Direct

**Arthur Richmond**  
Chief Executive Officer  
SHS Group

**Declan Billington MBE**  
Chief Executive  
John Thompson & Sons Ltd

**Brian Irwin**  
Chairman  
Irwin's Bakery

**Simon Fitzpatrick**  
Group Commercial Director  
Coca-Cola HBC Northern Ireland & Ireland

## NIFDA MEMBERS 2023

A.N Irwin & Sons

AB Vista

ABP Lurgan

ABP Newry

Agri-research (Ireland) Ltd

Allied Bakeries Ireland

Alltech Northern Ireland

Andrews Flour

Ardboe Coldstore Ltd

Ballinaskeagh Grains Ltd

Ballyrashane

Barnett-Hall

Burke Shipping Services

Cargill

Cavanagh Free Range Eggs

Cefetra Ltd

Chestnutt Animal Feeds

Coca-Cola HBC Ireland  
and Northern Ireland

Cranswick Country  
Foods (Ballymena)

Dale Farm Dairies Limited

Devenish Nutrition Limited

DSM Nutritional  
Products (UK) Ltd

Dunbia

Echlinville Distillery

Elliott's Tradition

Fane Valley Co-Op Society Ltd

Fane Valley Feeds Ltd

Fane Valley Stores

Farmgate Nutrition

Finnebrogue Artisan

Food Fortress

Foyle Food Group

Frylite

F S Herron Ltd

Genesis Bakery

Glastry Farm Ice-cream

Golden Cow Dairies Ltd

Gortavoy Feeds &  
Farm Supplies Ltd

Goulding NI

Granville Food Care Ltd

Hinch Distillery

Hovis Ireland Bakeries Ltd

Hughes Mushrooms

Interfrigo Ltd

James Doherty (Meats) Ltd

James Neill Ltd

James Tolland & Co Ltd

John Thompson & Sons Ltd

Johnson Brothers (Belfast) Ltd

Kerry Dairy Consumer Foods

LacPatrick Dairies

Linden Foods Ltd

Linwoods

Mackle Pet Foods

Mash Direct Ltd

Mason's Animal Feeds

McGuikian Milling

Moore's Animal Feeds

Morelli Ice Cream

Morrow Foods

Moy Park

Norbev Ltd

Northern Ireland Grain  
Trade Association (NIGTA)

Northern Ireland Meat  
Exporters Association (NIMEA)

Pilgrim's Food Masters

Precision Liquids Ltd

Premier Nutrition (Ireland) Ltd

Pritchitts (Lakeland Dairies)

Punjana Tea Co Ltd

Rademon Estate Distillery Ltd

Rich Sauces

SHS Group Ltd

Strabane Mills Ltd

Tayto (NI) Ltd

Thomas Hutchinson & Sons Ltd

T J Booth and Sons Ltd

Trouw Nutrition

Tullyherron Farm Feeds Ltd

United Feeds Ltd

United Molasses (Ireland) Ltd

W & R Barnett Ltd

W. D. Irwin & Sons Ltd

White's Speedicook Ltd

Wilson's Country Ltd

Yara UK Ltd

## NIFDA ASSOCIATE MEMBERS 2023

Andrews Ingredients Ltd

APC (Regal Processors)

Ards & North Down  
Borough Council

Armagh City, Banbridge and  
Craigavon Borough Council

Bank of Ireland

Belfast City Council

Biopax Ltd

Braxton Consulting

Carson McDowell

Cottagequinn Enterprises

Danske Bank

Deloitte LLP

Derry Bros Customs  
Clearance Ltd

Digital Trader Services (Fujitsu)

Ecolab Ltd

Eva-Tec

Fermanagh & Omagh  
District Council

Foods Connected

Fujitsu (Digital Trader Services)

HSBC Bank Plc

KPMG

Manfreight Ltd

McCulla Ireland Ltd

Mid & East Antrim  
Borough Council

Morrow Communications

Northern Ireland Water

Newry, Mourne and  
Down District Council

Re-Gen Waste Management

Stena Line Freight

Sysco Software Ltd

Sysco Wholesale  
Restaurant Food Dist

Tughans

Ulster Bank Ltd

## CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all back to the Hilton Hotel for the 27th NIFDA annual dinner. The event has grown from strength to strength, and is arguably the key date in our industry's calendar. It is a great opportunity for us to come together as an industry and discuss what is on the horizon for Northern Ireland food and drink.

The past year has had its challenges, with inflation remaining high, impacting businesses and consumers everywhere. The major long term challenge is of course addressing our carbon footprint, and ensuring we continue to feed a growing world population in the most sustainable way. Achieving Net Zero emissions will require effort from all parts of society, and the food and drink industry wants to play its part, delivering workable, practical solutions.

For our customers and consumers, sustainability is no longer something that is nice to have, it is a must have. Environmental concerns will play a key part in food policy going forward. As an industry we are always ahead of the curve, and NIFDA members are adapting to these consumer trends and the evolving regulatory environment, finding the opportunities for growth while reducing emissions. We have commissioned a sustainability report from KPMG to give a full picture of the work our members are doing on improving our carbon footprint and how we can do better. We look forward to releasing this report in due course.



**George Mullan**, Managing Director-Northern Ireland, ABP

Brexit has been a challenge since the UK's vote to leave the European Union in 2016. Over the past seven years industry has engaged with government to encourage solutions that minimise disruption in cross-border trade and take advantage of Northern Ireland's unique position. Our priority throughout has been to find solutions that deliver affordability, certainty, simplicity and stability.

Our industry also needs political stability more generally. We need ministers in place that will champion Northern Ireland food and drink, and level the playing field with our neighbouring jurisdictions. For example, we are currently the only region on these islands without a capital investment support scheme. Investment is key to meeting our sustainability goals, improving productivity and driving innovation. It is past time for this competitive disadvantage to be addressed.

On behalf of the NIFDA board I want to thank all members for their support over the past year, and I hope you enjoy the best of Northern Ireland food and drink we have on offer this evening.

**George Mullan**

## NIFDA'S ROLE

NIFDA's role is to work in partnership with existing providers, associations, government and companies to promote the competitiveness of the industry. We adopt a '**One Voice**' approach to industry matters including:



**Exporting**



**Research & Development**



**Regulation**



**Technology & Innovation**



**Marketing & Promotion**



**Sector Attractiveness & Skills Development**



**Food & Drink Sector Strategy**

Join the discussion with peers and colleagues by becoming a NIFDA member. To find out more please contact [jill@nifda.co.uk](mailto:jill@nifda.co.uk)

## MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

- **Keep up to date** with the latest industry news and developments
- **Access relevant grants and support** programmes for your business
- **Lobbying of government** on key issues affecting the industry
- Understand the retail environment with **specialised training and reports**
- **Network and build relationships** with industry colleagues, hear from expert speakers and share best practice
- **Help** with challenging media issues and crisis management
- **Develop your business** with insights and trends, member discounts on relevant events and training courses



## NIFDA MEMBERSHIP

We are passionate about Northern Ireland Food and Drink and are committed with our members to growing a sustainable, internationally competitive food and drink industry. NIFDA currently represents 119 companies of all sizes from across the sector, and this number continues to grow. This year, we were delighted to welcome new members and associate members, including Biopax Ltd, Braxton Consulting, and Sysco Wholesale Restaurant Food Distribution. Further new associate members include Ards & North Down Borough Council and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, who join Belfast City Council, Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon

Borough Council, Mid & East Antrim Borough Council and Fermanagh & Omagh Borough Council. Our members are based across the geographical spread of Northern Ireland, playing a key role in regional development, and we value our close relationships with local government. It makes sense for us to work together and we look forward to further developing our relationships with the councils to unleash the potential of Northern Ireland Food and Drink.

If you would like to find out more about becoming a NIFDA member, please contact [jill@nifda.co.uk](mailto:jill@nifda.co.uk).

**dale farm**  
YOUR DAIRY COOPERATIVE

**WITH QUALITY PRODUCTS AND BRANDS  
SPANNING 80 YEARS, WE ARE BUILDING A  
STRONG, SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR NI DAIRY.**

PROUD TO BE PART OF NI FOOD AND DRINK.

**dale farm**  
sharing goodness everyday

ESTABLISHED  
1958  
**Dromona**

**MULLIN'S**  
PREMIUM IRISH ICE CREAM





## MESSAGE FROM NIFDA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Food and drink is the jewel in the crown of Northern Ireland's economy. We are the largest single manufacturing industry here, and a key driver of economic growth. Our NIFDA members are world renowned for quality, innovation, and commercial success – and we have the awards to prove it. Together with what I call the wider "eating ecosystem" – farming, transport, cold stores, packaging, retail – we are a £4.9 billion industry, supporting 113,000 jobs. We feed 10 million people. We punch well above our weight.

Over the past year, our members have continued to succeed through a challenging environment. Inflation – hyperinflation – continues to be an issue. At the turn of the year, prices of feed, fertiliser, and energy remained high, driving the price of food at a rate not seen in two generations. Sadly, while we are now seeing prices in some commodities begin to retreat, many of the factors driving inflation have not yet abated.

The supply chain is still shouldering the bulk of this increased cost. Inflation is not going away any time soon. Equally, industry and government are rightly focused on improving sustainability, but, while this work is vital, we cannot ignore the potential cost impact, as many of the steps we need to take to address our carbon footprint are also inflationary.

Of course while we are all aware of the challenges faced by industry, there are also many opportunities for growth.

I am delighted that we were able to explore these opportunities at our inaugural NI Food and Drink Conference this year. With the generous support of the Department for Business and Trade, the Food Standards Agency and Invest NI, and expert speakers, it was an opportunity to network, learn from each other, and take a deep dive into the latest market trends. We're already making arrangements for the next conference, which will take place in 2025.

The next major event in our industry's calendar is of course the Northern Ireland Food and Drink Awards, which will take place in March 2024. Stay tuned to the usual NIFDA channels for further details.

Our industry's success comes down to the hard work, innovative spirit and passion of our people. NIFDA members are some of Northern Ireland's most forward-thinking, tenacious companies. That resilience and ingenuity means we continue to find solutions to the problems we face, and embrace the opportunities to grow even further.



**Michael Bell OBE**, Executive Director, NIFDA

**Moy  
park**



**80 YEARS OF  
EXCELLENCE**



**PEOPLE ARE AT THE HEART OF OUR BUSINESS, WITH A PASSION FOR PRODUCING QUALITY FOOD, SUSTAINABLY. WE'RE PROUD TO WORK WITH OUR FARMING PARTNERS, TEAM MEMBERS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES, AS WE HAVE DONE FOR THE LAST 80 YEARS.**

**YOU MAKE THE DIFFERENCE**



**WWW.MOYPARK.COM**



## NIFDA AGM 2023

The 27th AGM of the Northern Ireland Food and Drink Association took place on 24th May 2023, where members were joined by Mike Brennan, Permanent Secretary for the Department for the Economy. The meeting gave NIFDA members the opportunity to engage with Mike and share their perspectives on the challenges facing the sector as well as the opportunities for growth.

The meeting also saw Simon Fitzpatrick, currently Group Commercial Director at Coca-Cola HBC Northern Ireland, formally elected to the NIFDA board. Since starting his career at Coca-Cola HBC in 2002, Simon has held several roles within the business and in March 2020 was appointed to the position of Commercial Director, with responsibility for driving sustainable revenue growth, leading a commercial team of 330 people.

Simon Fitzpatrick said:

"I'm delighted to take on this role to represent the interests of the drinks sector in Northern Ireland. NIFDA plays a valuable role for companies here and through its Packaging Forum and other initiatives, colleagues from across the industry are developing innovative, collaborative solutions to the challenges we face at present.

"I look forward to working with the board as we continue to engage with government and stakeholders to ensure the industry can capitalise on the opportunities that lie ahead, and promote sustainable, export-led growth for the industry."

George Mullan, NIFDA Chair said:

"We're delighted to welcome Simon Fitzpatrick to the NIFDA board. Simon brings with him a depth of expertise on the drinks sector, as we continue to promote the interests of Northern Ireland food and drink, and the 113,000 jobs our industry supports."



## NIFDA REPRESENTATION ON NEW UK FOOD AND DRINK EXPORT COUNCIL

Earlier this year, NIFDA Executive Director Michael Bell OBE was appointed to the new Food and Drink Export Council. Co-Chaired by the Department for Business and Trade, the FDEC is a collaborative export committee focused on boosting the UK's food and drink exports.

Michael joins industry representatives from the rest of the UK, as well as officials from DBT, DEFRA and the devolved administrations, and the group's pan-UK collaborative approach will harness collective expertise to improve exports.

The FDEC will use a collaborative approach. It will harness expertise and resource from the UK government and devolved administrations and industry in a collective endeavour to increase UK agriculture, food, and drink exports.

Commenting on the establishment of the Council, Michael said: "Northern Ireland food and drink has a global reputation for quality, sustainability and innovation. We are export driven - already Northern Ireland's second largest goods exporter, with 77% of total food and drink produced in Northern Ireland being consumed elsewhere.

"The FDEC provides a great opportunity for industry in Northern Ireland to collaborate with industry and government partners from across the UK to share knowledge, build capability and raise our collective ambition."

The group will not set government policy or make decisions on behalf of government. It is not a lobbying body. The group has no remit to discuss strategic trade policy, negotiations of free trade agreements, or areas of devolved or reserved competence.

The FDEC will meet at least on a quarterly basis. The FDEC has an initial 18-month term, with periodic reviews to ensure it delivers in line with its terms of reference.

The Council is co-chaired by the Lord Offord of Garvel, Minister for Exports and Ian Wright CBE.



## NIFDA CONFERENCE

The inaugural Northern Ireland Food and Drink Conference took place on 25th April 2023, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. Held by NIFDA in partnership with the Department for Business and Trade, the Food Standards Agency and Invest Northern Ireland, the event saw 150 delegates from across industry and government come together to discuss market megatrends, the regulatory environment and the opportunities for growth.

Delegates heard from retail market expert Dr Clive Black and Louise Robinson, Commercial Excellence and Client Impact Director at Kantar who shared insights on food economics and future consumer trends, while Groceries Code Adjudicator Mark White discussed supply chain relationships and Food Standards Agency Chief Executive Emily Miles addressed the conference on the agency's work with industry.

Current and future exporting opportunities were shared by both Rachel Gywon, Director for Agriculture, Food and Drink, and Nations, Department for Business and Trade and Ian Wright CBE, Co-Chair of the new UK Food & Drink Exports Council.

Speaking after the conference, Michael Bell OBE, NIFDA Executive Director, said:

"This is a key moment for Northern Ireland food and drink as we adapt to new trading arrangements, the need to make sustainability gains and ever-evolving regulatory and consumer market trends.

"As an industry that feeds over 10 million people across these islands and beyond, we want to identify the opportunity in these challenges and grow further. That has been the focus of our first Northern Ireland Food and Drink Conference – a unique new forum for industry and government to come together, learn from each other and share the insights to make us even more sustainable, export-driven and commercially successful.

"We were delighted to have such a strong line up of speakers for this inaugural conference to explore topics spanning consumer and market megatrends, the 'green growth' potential of sustainability, the benefits of integrating new advanced manufacturing technologies and how we can boost our exports.

"This collaboration between industry and government is critical both to taking Northern Ireland food and drink to the next level and growing the economy. Ours is the largest single manufacturing sector in Northern Ireland, with a key role to play in improving the security, sustainability, and integrity of the UK food system."





## GROCERIES SUPPLY CODE OF PRACTICE TRAINING

Since the office of Groceries Code Adjudicator (GCA) was established in 2013, it has played an important role in ensuring farmers and manufacturers are treated lawfully and fairly by retailers. The GCA encourages and enforces compliance with the Groceries Supply Code of Practice, arbitrates in disputes and can launch investigations if there are reasonable grounds to suspect the Code has been broken.

NIFDA provides members with training on the Code. Working in collaboration with the British Brands Group, these courses help food and drink firms understand and keep up-to-date with

the Code, and equip them to make a difference in their trade negotiations. If you think your company could benefit from learning more, please get in touch with the NIFDA office who can provide any information on future events.



## 2023 MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



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SERVING THE FOOD & BEVERAGE SECTOR SINCE 1973



Manfreight have been leading the way in the Transport & Logistics Industry in Northern Ireland for over fifty years. Innovation and new technologies are at the heart of our offering, benefiting our partners, customers, and the entire economy.

We work closely with suppliers and customers who share our vision to transform and digitise the supply chain.

Our mission is to provide complete transparency across our operation, giving our customers peace of mind and integrity of product from collection to delivery.

Project Ark, nestled in the heart of Belfast Port, is our latest step in this mission. A masterpiece of intelligent storage and distribution, it sets new standards with unparalleled carbon-neutral logistics solutions.

Through investment in technology and our people, we are changing not only the way we do business but the industry as a whole.





## NIFDA BOARD MEMBERS RECOGNISED IN NEW YEAR HONOURS LIST

Two NIFDA Board members were awarded in the King's New Year honours list. Ursula Lavery, NIFDA Vice Chair, was awarded an MBE for services to the agri-food industry and to the economy in Northern Ireland. Technical and R&D Director Europe at Moy Park since 2013, Ursula is responsible for an integrated Europe-wide technical organisation.

Ursula Lavery MBE said: "I am absolutely delighted and very humbled to receive this honour."

"I am proud to be part of the Northern Ireland agri-food industry, and this award is testament to the talented people I work with and everything we are doing to drive food integrity, animal welfare and provide a sustainable supply chain for our farmers and customers."

NIFDA Executive Director Michael Bell was awarded an OBE for services to the food and drink industry and the economy in Northern Ireland.

Michael Bell OBE said: "I am humbled to receive this honour. Food and drink is my lifelong passion, from watching my late father in the family bakery, to spending decades working in and on behalf of the industry."

"While I'm personally delighted, this is also recognition for Northern Ireland food and drink as a whole, and the 113,000 people working in jobs related to the sector. Food and drink is one of Northern Ireland's most dynamic and successful industries, and our NIFDA members are among the most innovative businesses in NI."



## SUSTAINABILITY AND INNOVATION SEMINAR CONCLUDES AHFES PROJECT

AHFES, the EU funded food and drink programme for SMEs hosted its final project event in Galway last February. Since June 2018 the project has collaborated across the sector to improve the overall competitiveness and growth of SMEs in the value chain of healthy food & lifestyles.

Represented locally by the Northern Ireland Food and Drink Association (NIFDA) the programme has provided extensive training and mentoring to food and drink SMEs across the Atlantic Area regions of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Wales, France, Spain, and Portugal. In August 2022 the project received additional funding of over €235,000 to provide training on sustainability and gather research on innovation in sustainable manufacturing.

"One of the biggest challenges and opportunities for the food and drink sector is the need to produce more sustainable products in the most sustainable way," said NIFDA's Michael Bell OBE. "The work AHFES has been doing in this area will prove invaluable for SMEs, highlighting practical ways in which firms can become more sustainable, and deliver for consumers who are increasingly conscious of their environmental footprint."

"AHFES is a valuable resource for food and drink SMEs and I would encourage companies to access the range of project output available on the AHFES website and YouTube channel. The information is available free of charge that includes market analysis and training covering a range of topics from consumer and market insights, product and export development, human nutrition to new concepts and obligations around labels and packaging."

The AHFES project was primarily aimed at food and drink stakeholders including researchers and manufacturers from across eight regions. The project benefited from a pioneering €1.4 million EU INTERREG funded programme which has been helping boost the sector by creating an ecosystem for growth in this crucial area.

Further information on the AHFES project can be found at <https://www.ahfesproject.com/>



## ADVANCED FOOD & DRINK MANUFACTURING NETWORK

The Advanced Food & Drink Manufacturing (AFDM) Network was launched at the 2023 Northern Ireland Food and Drink Conference. Established to enable NI manufacturers to share knowledge and best practice, the network is led by NIFDA, facilitated by Birnie Consultancy and supported by Invest Northern Ireland through its Collaborative Growth Programme.

With members from across Northern Ireland's food and drink sector, the Network will enable food and drink manufacturers to work collaboratively, improving productivity by sharing knowledge and best practice.

Dr Birnie, Birnie Consultancy said:

"The fact is, most food and drink manufacturers are unsure of their exact position on their digital transformation journey. That's why we're offering a free Manufacturing survey to each new member which will help them to identify digital transformational priorities. There will also be various learning opportunities including study tours and site visits to allow manufacturers to investigate new technologies and understand how they may be effective for their business."

"We will also be seeking funding opportunities to allow research into the effectiveness of different automation and digitization technologies in the Northern Irish food and drink manufacturing sector." Niall Casey, Invest NI's Director of Skills and Competitiveness said: "We first supported the AFDM Network in its initial development phase in 2022 and it's great to see it grow into a fully-fledged network with our continued support."

"The Network and the industry collaboration it supports is vital to ensuring the accelerated implementation of Industry 4.0 technology in one of NI's key priority sectors. Through its innovative approach, it has the potential to contribute to an inclusive and sustainable improvement in productivity levels across NI's food & drink sector."

The AFDM Network is a critical step in helping our food and beverage manufacturers stay competitive in the global marketplace," said NIFDA executive director Michael Bell OBE. "By adopting new technologies, manufacturers can improve their productivity, efficiency, and sustainability, and they can also create new jobs and opportunities for our economy.

To find out more about the AFDM network, get in touch via the website <https://www.afdmnetwork.com/>



*With over 30 years UK & US food industry experience, we provide tailored business development support and commercial insight to help our partners successfully grow their business.*







### NIFDA ANNUAL DINNER 2022

The 26th Annual Dinner of the Northern Ireland Food and Drink Association took place on Thursday 20th October. Held in partnership with HSBC UK, the event took place at Belfast's Hilton Hotel, where Henderson Group Joint Managing Director Martin Agnew was keynote speaker.



# Naturally Better



AWARD WINNING

*Sustainably Sourced Beef & Lamb*







Sustainable Futures

# Talk or Action?

