

## Introduction

The food and drink manufacturing and processing industry is an important employer in the Northern Ireland economy accounting for just over one quarter of all manufacturing jobs. As a result the Department for Employment and Learning, alongside the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and Invest NI, has established a Future Skills Action Group to bring together key stakeholders to help address skills issues within the sector.

### The group is made up of representatives from:

- Employers from the industry;
- The Department for Employment and Learning;
- The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
- Invest NI;
- The Further and Higher Education sectors;
- The Northern Ireland Food and Drink Association; and
- Improve, the Sector Skills Council.

### The work of the group covers three main areas:

- To coordinate existing resources and activities within the sector to meet current and future skills needs;
- To advise, design, develop, test, trial and evaluate new interventions which are able to meet existing and future skills needs within the sector; and
- To act as a 'Champion' for the sector.

The Group has established a short term, action focused plan which has identified additional actions which will complement the work currently being taken forward aimed at meeting the skills challenges that the sector faces.



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The food and drink manufacturing and processing sector accounts for an estimated 21% of Northern Ireland's total manufacturing sector and is worth over £552 million to the local economy. The industry has continued to grow throughout the difficult economic times we have been facing, and now employs over 19,000 people across the country. This figure encompasses a wide breadth of careers which offer our young people a multitude of exciting options which they may not have considered to date.

This is one of the reasons why my Department has been keen to work with the food and drink sector. We recognise that for growth to continue, the sector needs to attract dynamic people, who in turn need to have the appropriate skills.

Through the Future Skills Action Plan, employers from the sector, education representatives and government have worked together to develop and implement solutions to address the skills gaps of the existing workforce and to raise the skills levels of new entrants. In addition, the group will work with schools, colleges and universities to ensure that our young people are aware of the many career opportunities available within this sector.

I commend the group on their work so far in developing this Action Plan, under the capable leadership of Tony O'Neill, and I wish them well in their efforts in taking forward these actions.

*Stephen Farry*

Dr Stephen Farry MLA

"This Action Plan is an excellent example of what can be achieved by government and industry working in partnership to support growth in the agri-food industry. Each partner has an active role to play in delivering the plan and my Department will continue to play its part in developing future skills through advice and education so that this vital industry continues to flourish."

*Michelle O'Neill, MLA, Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development.*

"The food and drinks manufacturing and processing sector is of vital importance to the wider Northern Ireland economy. In recognising and addressing skills needs within the sector, the work of the Future Skills Action Group for Food and Drink Manufacturing and Processing will help to enhance the quality of our workforce, maximise employment opportunities and give our businesses competitive edge in the global marketplace."

*Arlene Foster, MLA, Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment.*

### To find out more about the training available to your organisation

Telephone

Invest NI: 0800 181 4422

or

CAFRE: 028 8676 8114

This leaflet is available in other formats on request.

## Future Skills Action Plan for Food and Drink Manufacturing and Processing



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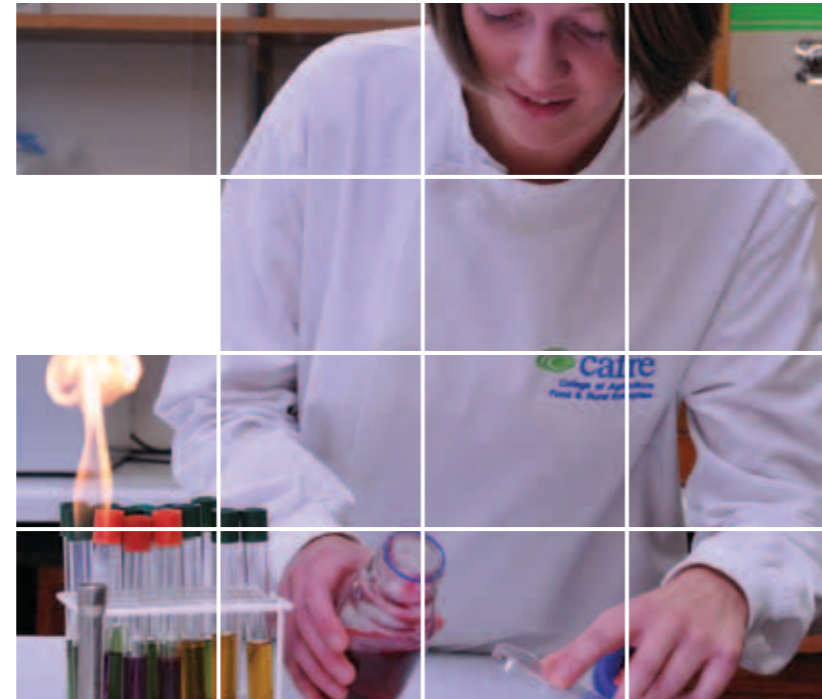
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### Theme 3 Coordination and communication

The Group feel that there is a need to better coordinate new and existing work in the skills arena with stakeholders. They will:

**They will:**

- Work to increase knowledge of the Food and Drink Manufacturing and Processing Action Plan within the sector and to encourage support from employers; and
- Coordinate information regarding available training provision and work to disseminate this throughout the sector.



### Theme 1 Skills provision

The Group will take forward a number of actions which will help to improve the skills of the workforce.

**These will include:**

- Utilising existing training to improve the management and leadership skills of staff at all levels of management;
- Developing a management programme for junior managers with the potential to become future leaders within the food and drink industry;
- Employers and education providers working together to ensure that appropriate levels of science-based technical knowledge are included in degree courses; and
- Employers encouraging their workforce to avail of Essential Skills training.

### Theme 2 Sector attractiveness

With a view to increasing the number of people entering the sector, the Group will:

- Expand upon the Tasty Careers initiative to reach more schools and target Further Education colleges and universities;
- Develop job profiles which will detail key information relating to specific job roles in the sector;
- Develop 'at a glance' maps for key professions in the sector, which will detail career pathways and the qualifications needed to progress; and
- Forge links with local schools and colleges to ensure young people have access to accurate and up to date information about career opportunities within the food and drink manufacturing and processing industry.

"This Action Plan potentially has huge benefits for the food and drink manufacturing sector. For employers to be able to sit down with government officials and education providers and discuss the skills needs of the sector and furthermore develop a plan of action to tackle these, has been encouraging. I am hopeful that this collaborative approach will reap the rewards of a revitalised, enthusiastic and highly skilled workforce in the coming years."

*Tony O'Neill, Director, Moy Park and Chair of the Future Skills Action Group for Food and Drink Manufacturing and Processing*

"As the main driver of the skills agenda for the food and drink manufacturing and processing sector in Northern Ireland, Improve welcomes the Action Plan and the opportunity to take forward work which will inform young people of the range of exciting careers available across this ever-growing industry."

*Geoff Lamb, Northern Ireland Operations Manager, Improve*

"NIFDA endorses this action plan as a good example of collaborative partnership between government and industry. We will encourage our members to avail of the support available."

*Michael Bell, Director, NIFDA*

"As a business, we struggle to get people with the right skills and in the numbers we need, despite the great conditions and career prospects Diageo can offer. The development and delivery of this plan is a welcome and necessary intervention to protect and drive forward the food and drink sector in Northern Ireland."

*Michael Hailles, Plant Manager, Diageo*

