

29th

Annual Dinner

Thursday 16th October
Hilton Hotel, Belfast



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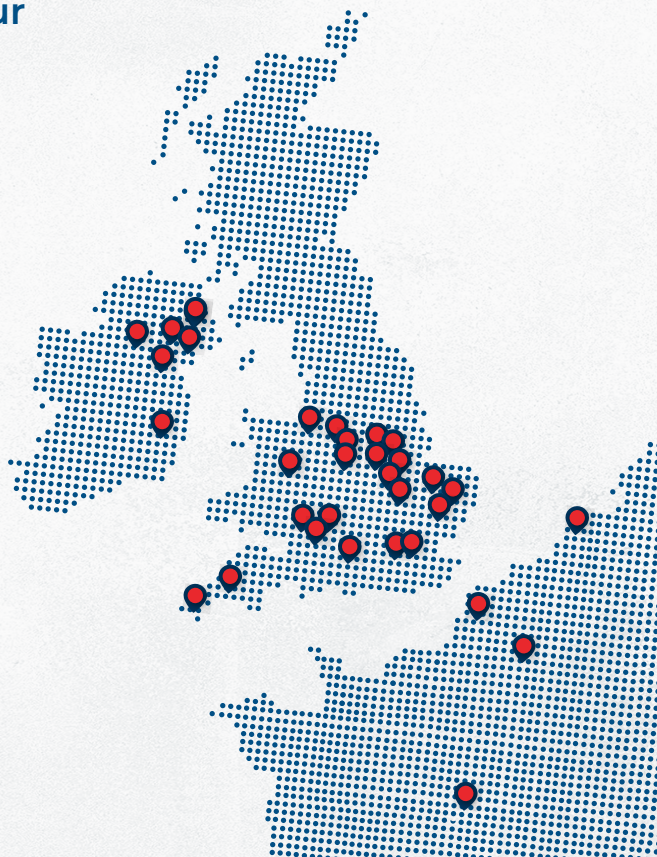
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NIFDA is a voluntary organisation committed to helping Northern Ireland food and beverage companies compete successfully, representing and promoting their interests. It was established to provide services to enhance, promote, inform, educate and develop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

PAST CHAIRPERSONS

1996 – 1998 Dr Trefor Campbell CBE, F.R.Ag.S Managing Director of Moy Park Ltd	2010 – 2014 Tony O'Neill OBE Marketing & Business Development Director, Moy Park Ltd
1998 – 2000 Arthur Anderson General Manager, Tayto NI Ltd	2014 – 2016 Dr David Dobbin CBE Chief Executive, United Dairy Farmers
2000 – 2002 Alan Gibson Purchasing Director, Moy Park Ltd	2016 – 2018 Declan Billington MBE Managing Director, John Thompson & Sons
2002 – 2003 Michael Moreland Managing Director, Andrews Holdings	2018 – 2020 Brian Irwin Chairman, Irwin's Bakery
2004 – 2006 John Barrett Executive Director, Coca-Cola Bottlers (Ulster) Ltd	2020 – 2022 Nick Whelan Group Chief Executive, Dale Farm
2006 – 2008 David H Malseed Managing Director, United Molasses (Ireland) Ltd	2022 – 2024 George Mullan Managing Director-Northern Ireland, ABP
2008 – 2010 Richard Moore Joint Managing Director, Linden Foods	2024 - Present Professor Ursula Lavery MBE Technical and R&D Director, Pilgrim's Europe

NIFDA ANNUAL DINNER SPEAKERS

1997 Terry Leahy	2007 Sir Terry Leahy	2017 Andy Adcock
1998 Dino Adriano	2008 Justin King	2018 John Paul Scally
1999 Malcolm Walker	2009 Peter Robinson	2019 Jo Whitfield
2000 Allan Leighton	2010 Andy Clarke	2020 Roger Burnley
2001 Feargal Quinn	2011 Mark Price	2021 Jason Tarry
2002 Eoin McGettigan	2012 Martin Agnew	2022 Martin Agnew
2003 Sir Peter Davis	2013 Justin King	2023 Simon Roberts
2004 Dr Jon Bell	2014 Malcolm Walker	2024 Ivan Ryan
2005 Ewan Venters	2015 Jason Tarry	2025 Stuart Machin
2006 Guy Farrant	2016 George Eustice MP	



The 2025 NIFDA Annual Dinner
is sponsored by Ortus Energy.

NIFDA wishes to thank Ortus Energy for its support as well as the NIFDA member companies featured in this brochure for helping make this event happen.

29TH NIFDA ANNUAL DINNER

5:30 pm	Drinks Reception with Industry
7:10 pm	Introduction & Welcome Michael Bell OBE, NIFDA Executive Director
7:15 pm	Sponsor Address Neil Davidson CBE, Chairman, Ortus Energy
7:20 pm	Address Professor Ursula Lavery MBE, NIFDA Chair
7:35 pm	Keynote Speaker Stuart Machin, CEO, Marks and Spencer
7:55 pm	Thank You Simon Fitzpatrick, NIFDA Vice-Chair
8:00 pm	Dinner
10:30 pm	Event Close

NIFDA would like to thank Pilgrim's Europe, Johnsons Coffee, Thompson's Tea, Coca Cola HBC Ireland and Northern Ireland and Dale Farm for their contribution to this event.

GUEST SPEAKER



Stuart Machin
Chief Executive Officer,
Marks and Spencer

Stuart became M&S Chief Executive in May 2022, having previously served as Joint Chief Operating Officer and Managing Director of the Food business.

Prior to joining M&S in 2018, Stuart held senior operational and commercial roles both in the UK and internationally. His career began at Sainsbury's and British Home Stores, followed by leadership positions at Tesco and Asda. He then spent a decade in Australia with Wesfarmers, where he served as COO of Coles supermarkets and CEO of Target department stores. Upon returning to the UK, he briefly led Steinhoff UK as CEO.

Stuart has a strong track record in retail transformation and possesses deep expertise in operations, trading, marketing, and online. Stuart was named Retail Leader of the Year in 2023 by The Grocer, and in 2025 by Retail Week.

NORTHERN IRELAND FOOD AND DRINK ASSOCIATION LTD BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2025

CHAIR

Professor Ursula Lavery MBE - Technical and R&D Director, Pilgrim's Europe

OFFICE BEARERS

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Simon Fitzpatrick

Group Commercial Director
Coca-Cola HBC Northern Ireland
& Ireland

Vice-Chair (Outgoing)

George Mullan

Managing Director
ABP Food Group

Hon Treasurer

Peter Henry

Managing Director
Allied Bakeries Ltd

Executive Director

Michael Bell OBE

Northern Ireland Food and Drink
Association Ltd (NIFDA)

BOARD MEMBERS 2025

Nick Whelan

Group Chief Executive,
Dale Farm

Brian Irwin

Chairman
Irwin's Bakery

Tracy Hamilton MBE

Brand Director
Mash Direct

Bernie Orr

Chief Financial Officer
SHS Group

Gordon Donaldson

Chief Executive Officer
John Thompson & Sons Ltd

NIFDA MEMBERS 2025

ABP	Elliott's Tradition	Irwin's Bakery
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Allied Bakeries Ireland	Fane Valley Co-Op Society Ltd	James Tolland & Co Ltd
Alltech Northern Ireland	Fane Valley Feeds Ltd	Johnsons Coffee
Andrew Flour	Fane Valley Stores	Kerry Dairy Consumer Foods
Ballinaskeagh Grains Ltd	FarmGate Nutrition Ltd	Lakeland Dairies
Ballyrashane Creamery	Finnebrogue Artisan	Leprino
Barnett-Hall	Food Fortress	Linden Foods Ltd
Bfree	Foyle Food Group	Linwoods
Burke Shipping Services	Frylite	Mash Direct Ltd
Cargill	Genesis Bakery	Mason's Animal Feeds
Carson Haulage	Gilfresh Produce	McColgan's
Cavanagh Free Range Eggs	Glastry Farm Ice Cream	MM Agriculture
Cefetra Ltd	Golden Cow Dairies Ltd	Moore's Animal Feeds
Chestnutt Animal Feeds	Gortavoy Feeds & Farm Supplies Ltd	Morelli Ice Cream
Coca-Cola HBC Ireland and Northern Ireland	Goulding Soil Nutrition NI	Morrow Foods
Cranswick Country Foods	Granville Food Care Ltd	Neill's Flour
Dale Farm Dairies Limited	Hinch Distillery	Norbev Ltd
Doherty's	Hovis Ireland Bakeries Ltd	Northern Ireland Grain Trade Association (NIGTA)
dsm-firmenich	Hutchinsons Feeds	Northern Ireland Meat Exporters Association (NIMEA)
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Precision Liquids Ltd	TJ Booth & Sons Ltd
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R&H Hall	Thompson's Tea
Rich Sauces	Thompsons Feeding Innovation
SHS Group Ltd	Trouw Nutrition
Stone Bakery	Tullyherron Farm Feeds Ltd
Strabane Mills Ltd	United Feeds Ltd

United Molasses Group (Ireland) Ltd
W&R Barnett Ltd
White's Oats
Wilson's Country Ltd
Yara UK Ltd

NIFDA ASSOCIATE MEMBERS 2025

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APC Proteins (Regal Processors)	Diamond Corrugated	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council
Ards & North Down Borough Council	Digital Trader Services (Fujitsu)	Northern Ireland Water
Armagh City Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council	Ecolab Ltd	Re-Gen Waste Management
Bank of Ireland	Fermanagh & Omagh District Council	Senergy
Belfast City Council	Food & Drink Training & Education Council	Stena Line Freight
Biopax Ltd	Foods Connected	Sysco Wholesale Restaurant Food Distribution
Byrson Recycling	HSBC Bank Plc	Sysco Software Ltd
Carson McDowell	KPMG	Tecman
Cottagequinn Enterprises	Lynas Foodservice	Vickerstock Recruitment
Danske Bank	Manfreight Ltd	Wavey Ice
	McCulla Ireland Ltd	

CHAIR'S FOREWORD

A very warm welcome for you all to the Hilton Hotel for the 29th NIFDA annual dinner. This event is unique in the Northern Ireland business calendar in that it brings together leaders from across our industry for an opportunity to network, reflect on the past year, discuss the issues we collectively face, and hear from the leadership of a major UK retailer.

I am delighted to welcome as our speaker this year Stuart Machin, Chief Executive at Marks & Spencer. Stuart joins us at what is a pivotal moment for the food and drink sector in Northern Ireland, and across the UK, as we embrace the challenge of feeding a growing population, in the most sustainable way, delivering value and quality for customers.

Our industry plays a vital role in keeping the Northern Ireland economy moving. Together with partners across the food and drink supply chain we support over 113,000 jobs. We are at the heart of the rural economy and local communities across Northern Ireland. We are an £8bn industry, and have opportunity to grow further given the right support.

We are growing sustainably, and NIFDA members have been ahead of the curve in implementing new technologies and processes across farms, factories, transport and storage, to improve our environmental impact and reduce emissions. It is a point of frustration however that industry continues to navigate obstacles to further progress.

Investment is key to building a more sustainable society, and economic growth is essential to unlock the resources we need for sustainability and advanced innovation.



Professor Ursula Lavery MBE,
Technical and R&D Director, Pilgrim's Europe

As Northern Ireland's largest manufacturing industry, food and drink plays a key role in driving that growth, and we are equally committed to being part of the solution on environmental challenges. In this context there is a need for a much more joined up approach from Ministers and Departments locally. A siloed approach with differing, sometimes contradictory, aims between Economy and Agriculture and Environment leads to stagnation and weakens progress on the sustainable change we all want to see.

Our priority at NIFDA therefore is to encourage a new, truly collaborative relationship across government and with industry. Together we can grow the economy, reduce emissions and deliver change.

Finally, on behalf of the entire Board and leadership team at NIFDA, I want to thank all of you for your support over the past year. I hope you enjoy the conversations that lie ahead this evening, and of course some of the very best of Northern Ireland Food and Drink.

Professor Ursula Lavery MBE

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 info@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



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MESSAGE FROM NIFDA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It has been a year defined by challenge and change, but our food and drink firms continue to prove their resilience, agility and critical importance to our economy, as well as supporting jobs and communities across the region.

And yet our story is not just one of regional success. We aren't just a local economic driver, but an essential national necessity. Northern Ireland feeds 10 million people, contributing approximately 25% of the UK's overall food supply – despite representing just 3% of the UK population. With population projected to rise by a further 2.5 million by 2030, our contribution will only become more vital in the coming years.

While the industry's future looks bright, we are not without significant challenge, particularly conflicting policy signals on around sustainability. Businesses are encouraged to invest in modernisation, yet simultaneously urged to scale back. The will to evolve is strong, but the path forward is fraught with practical and financial barriers. Legacy systems have left environmental impacts that must be addressed, but ambition alone won't deliver progress: it requires consistency and clarity at the policy level, as well as investment.

The reality is that government funding is limited, meaning private investment must drive change. Yet without long-term policy certainty, the confidence to invest at scale is lacking. Nevertheless, we are still moving forward. Initiatives like the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) show



Michael Bell OBE
NIFDA Executive Director

how impactful industry-led innovation can be when supported properly.

We must reframe the narrative: this is not about choosing between agri-food and the environment. It's about building smarter, more sustainable systems to feed a growing population. That requires true partnership between government and industry. Not just consultation, but policy co-designed by those who understand the realities of food and drink production.

Our industry has people with the talent, innovation, and determination to lead. In fact, people are at the heart of our success. But we need a policy environment that enables progress, rather than being an obstacle to it. At NIFDA we will continue to be your voice in the corridors of power, to encourage a new collaborative relationship with government, to highlight our role as a cornerstone of UK food security, and support the continued growth of our members.

Michael Bell OBE

PACKAGING FORUM

In 2025, NIFDA kickstarted its new Packaging Forum, working collaboratively with members and external partners to discuss challenges, share best practice and map our solutions.

Chaired by Ron Gardiner from Diamond Corrugated, the forum discusses current legislation such as EPR, DRS and EUDR. Our first event of the year took place at Coca Cola HBC in Lisburn, with expert presentations from Dr. Bronagh Millar from Queen's University Belfast's Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre and Paddy Duggan from

WRAP, lively discussions on the future of sustainable packaging and a behind the scenes tour of the manufacturing plant.

Through NIFDA Forums and other initiatives, we will continue to work with the government at all levels to help deliver practical, workable solutions that are sustainable environmentally and economically.

To get involved or find out when our next Packaging Forum is taking place, please get in touch at info@nifda.co.uk



Supporting Northern Ireland's finest.

At ABP, we believe that Northern Irish beef and lamb is some of the very best in the world.

That's why we're so proud to work with local Northern Irish farming communities; showcasing quality beef and lamb to customers and consumers across the UK.

Making the Difference

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UK DMO BEGINS WORK TO DELIVER DEPOSIT RETURN SCHEMES

Earlier this year the UK Deposit Management Organisation Ltd (UK DMO) was announced as the operator of the new Deposit Return Scheme for single-use plastic and metal drinks containers in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland. The appointment has been made by the UK Government and DAERA. In Scotland, Scottish Ministers have also decided that UK DMO should be designated as the DRS scheme administrator.

UK DMO is a business-led, not-for-profit organisation created to deliver one of the most significant environmental infrastructure programmes in a generation across England, Northern Ireland and Scotland. Once launched, the Deposit Return Schemes will cut litter, boost recycling and reduce carbon emissions.

According to a recent report from The Countryside Charity, introducing DRS is expected to create up to 4,000 jobs across the UK and will bring significant investment in infrastructure required to deliver the scheme including storage, logistics, and reprocessing.

UK DMO will now begin engaging with partners including the three governments, business, consumer and environmental groups to design and operate a scheme which works for everyone. Producers, retailers and other

interested parties are encouraged to visit the UK DMO website and register their interest in getting updates at www.ukdmo.co.uk.

Built by business, working for everyone

UK DMO is governed by a Board that brings together voices from across the drinks and retail sector across all three nations. Members have been nominated by trade associations representing both large and small producers, major supermarkets, small convenience stores and wholesalers from across England, Northern Ireland and Scotland. Recruitment is also underway for an independent Chair and non-executive directors.

The Board includes highly experienced figures from companies including Shepley Spring, Radnor Hills, Coca-Cola Europacific Partners, Heineken UK, Lidl, Tesco and Co-op. Many of the Board members bring experience working in international markets where deposit return schemes are already in place.

UK DMO is responsible for designing and operating the systems that make the scheme work - from producer registration to logistics, finance, fraud prevention and public communications.



A landmark scheme

The DMO has been tasked by the three governments with delivering a Deposit Return Scheme to go live in October 2027. From that date, when people buy drinks containers made from PET plastic, steel and aluminium between 150ml and 3 litres, they will pay a small deposit - which they will get back in full when they return the empty container for recycling.

Every year, 6.5 billion drinks containers are discarded across England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, contributing to 43% of all litter. The scheme aims to reduce this significantly while increasing recycling rates and reducing emissions.

In a joint statement, the UK DMO Board said:

"DRS is an opportunity to deliver a transformational step forward in the circular economy in the UK and the appointment of the DMO is a major

milestone in that journey. We don't underestimate the scale of the challenge, but our aim is simple - to build a system that's fair, efficient and easy to use. Our work is already underway, and we'll be working closely with governments, businesses of all sizes, environmental groups and consumer bodies to move forward as quickly as possible."

Michael Bell OBE, Executive Director, Northern Ireland Food and Drink Association (NIFDA) said:

"Food and drink manufacturers want to see the smoothest possible operation for consumers, for industry, and for delivering for the environment. In Northern Ireland we have seen how DRS has developed in the Republic of Ireland and we have been working with government and industry colleagues on the development of a similar scheme for the UK. We look forward to working with the Deposit Management Organisation as the delivery of the scheme progresses."

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Ross Reed OBE
Chairman, Interfrigo

Grace Dodds
Company Director

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 enables food and drink manufacturers to work collaboratively, improving productivity by sharing knowledge and best practice.

Advanced Development Japanese Unique Study Tour (ADJUST)

In June 2025, the network facilitated the first of a series of planned visits to Japan. The aim of this initial trip was to examine technology and practices that could potentially be employed within Northern Ireland Food and Drink manufacturing. This trip was the first of its kind, and to some degree was also a pathfinding expedition intended to enable smooth delivery of future, larger trips.

The trip investigated the importance of the FOOMA show, the need for factory

visits, and the usefulness of visiting manufacturers of robotic technology. It also tested the type of itinerary which could work for future trips. Finally, it identified a range of key contacts which can be used when planning future visits.

The FOOMA show is operated by the Japanese Food Equipment Manufacturers Association and presents a range of cutting-edge food processing technology which could be considered for implementation in Northern Ireland.

Other visits were fitted around the show, including: a robotic producer's facility in Tokyo; a food manufacturer; retail outlets; a robotic café; and to a business innovation centre. The trip tested how many days should be allocated to attending the show, and how many visits are feasible each day.

Findings and learnings for future study tours

- The FOOMA show was judged to be very useful, particularly for small to medium manufacturers, but it is not enough in itself to justify the visit. The travelling commitment to visit Japan is significant, both in time and cost, and the visit to the show should be augmented by different events to maximise the value add of the trip. We attempted to do this through a robotic manufacture visit, food manufacture visit, a British trade event and retail visits.
- Overall attending the show was a valuable experience, with the opportunity to observe many manufacturers with demonstrations of food production lines. At least 867 different stands showcased equipment from over 1,000 manufacturers, including complete production lines demonstrating latest innovations.





- Production systems often utilise equipment from several manufacturers and these tend to be compiled and installed in Japan by aggregators. Several of these aggregators were present at the show, and are clearly an important component of the Japanese food manufacturing sector.
- From the visit, it became clear that there are three elements necessary for successful integration of equipment into food and drink manufacturing facilities:
 - Capable robots
 - Subsystems to enable the robot to perform appropriate functions in the factory (e.g. vision systems, gripper/head adaptations for the robot; buffer conveying into the robot station).
 - Integrators to stand over the components chosen and the provision of a turnkey installation and staff training.
- There is a need to build relationships to facilitate future visits. This includes contact with:
 - Manufacturers of Robots, Cobots, vision and AI guided technology, and other advanced automation technology in Japan. Many of these have been identified and engaged with at FOOMA which should make it easier to engage within them for future visits. In particular FANUC, Yaskawa and Universal Robots are important organisations.
 - Manufacturers of robot attachments. The functionality of robots and cobots is heavily influenced by the technology that is connected to it, and a number of key manufacturers were also identified at the show.
- Food production factories. This is challenging and is likely to require in-market support.
- Japanese agencies that support the marketing of Japanese technology to the UK.
- Local representatives from NI or GB to facilitate engagement.
- Invest NI staff in Japan have a key part to play in assisting future visits. Their involvement facilitated site visits and their local knowledge was extremely helpful. Local staff were able to organise visits where this proved to be difficult to arrange from Northern Ireland. It would be extremely beneficial to secure support from Invest NI for companies attending next year, to allow them to complete market research and best practice in relation to productivity.
- Food factory visits should play key role in future study tours. The visit to the S&B factory not only demonstrated that they faced similar challenges to NI businesses, but also that they have invested more heavily in advanced technology and robots, leading to improvements in productivity.
- The mixed approach of factory visits, in-market visits and trade activity and the FOOMA show offers the maximum attractiveness to small, medium and large companies. Individual organisations would place different emphasis on the importance of each.

A detailed report of the trip can be found on the NIFDA website. To find out more about the AFDM network, get in touch via the project website www.afdmnetwork.com.

NIFDA CONFERENCE 2025



The 2025 NI Food and Drink Conference took place on Tuesday 4th March at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Shaw's Bridge, Belfast. Held in partnership with Invest Northern Ireland and the Food Standards Agency, the conference saw over 150 delegates from across the food and drink supply chain, as well as government and academia in attendance as the event explored latest market and regulatory megatrends, industry innovation and opportunities for sustainable growth.

The conference was opened by Andrew Muir MLA, Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

Speaking at the event, Minister Muir said: "The food and drink processing sector is our largest manufacturing

sector in Northern Ireland. But food delivers so much more beyond the economy and has a direct role to play in tackling a range of societal issues, such as obesity, food poverty, waste, climate change and biodiversity loss.

"I was proud to launch the NI Food Strategy Framework last year, which sets out a long term-vision for an innovative food systems approach and recognises the interconnectedness between food, health, the economy and the environment. An environmentally sustainable approach that protects and enhances our natural resources for future generations, whilst being economically ambitious for providing safe nutritionally balance, accessible food to all."

John Healy, Chair, Invest NI said:

"Driving up productivity is central to increasing Northern Ireland's competitiveness, and the competitiveness of every business in the region. However, productivity amongst food and drink processing businesses in Northern Ireland lags behind that of our closest competitors in Ireland and Great Britain.

"We believe that digitalisation will be key to tackling this issue, and we want to help businesses identify opportunities for digitalisation in their operations. Not only will investments like this deliver sustainable productivity improvements in the sector, but they also have a positive impact on the bottom line for businesses."

Emphasising the importance of partnership working, Food Standards Agency Chief Executive, Katie Pettifer, said:

"At the FSA we work with businesses and regulatory partners to keep food standards high in Northern Ireland, making sure people have food they can trust and supporting businesses to thrive.

"We're rolling out a new approach to food standards inspections in food businesses across all district councils here. This will not just ensure a more effective, sustainable food regulation system but will also reduce the burden on businesses who are doing the right thing. Through our Making Food Better Programme, we're also working with government and businesses to create a healthier food environment."





NIFDA AGM

NIFDA held its 29th Annual General Meeting on the 4th June 2025 at Craigavon Civic Centre with Alan Ramsey, Director of Trade, Innovation and Priority Sectors, Department for the Economy as guest speaker.

The AGM gave members and guests the opportunity to engage directly with Alan, sharing perspectives from their businesses, alongside the current industry challenges, policy developments and opportunities for growth, with a strong focus on collaboration, sustainability and innovation.

The meeting also saw the appointment of Bernie Orr to the NIFDA Board. Bernie is Chief Financial Officer at SHS Group and joins the board with extensive experience in fast moving consumer goods, further strengthening NIFDA's representation across the food and drink supply chain.

Speaking after the meeting, NIFDA Chair Professor Ursula Lavery MBE highlighted the importance of closer collaboration between government and industry:

"Food and drink is the heartbeat of the Northern Ireland economy, NIFDA members and the wider food and drink supply chain collectively support some 113,000 jobs across Northern Ireland and we remain the largest manufacturing sector locally. But there are significant challenges ahead, from sustainability to legislative challenges to enhancing food security in the context of a growing population.

"Our industry has the resilience and ingenuity to navigate these challenges, but key to delivering further success for food and drink, and for the economy as a whole, is a more unified approach across government departments and stronger collaboration with industry. A greater level of constructive collaboration on policy can help unlock the solutions needed across planning,



infrastructure and the environment to allow our industry to grow sustainably.

"We are grateful to Alan for joining us at our AGM today to explore some of these issues and NIFDA stands ready to work with policymakers and other stakeholders as we collectively take Northern Ireland food and drink forward.

Welcoming Bernie to the NIFDA Board, Ursula Lavery added: "Bernie Orr will bring expertise and fresh perspective to NIFDA which will enrich our discussions and enhance our collective decision making as we continue to navigate and drive forward the sustainable growth of Northern Ireland's agri-food and drink sector. On behalf of NIFDA members I want to welcome Bernie to the Board."



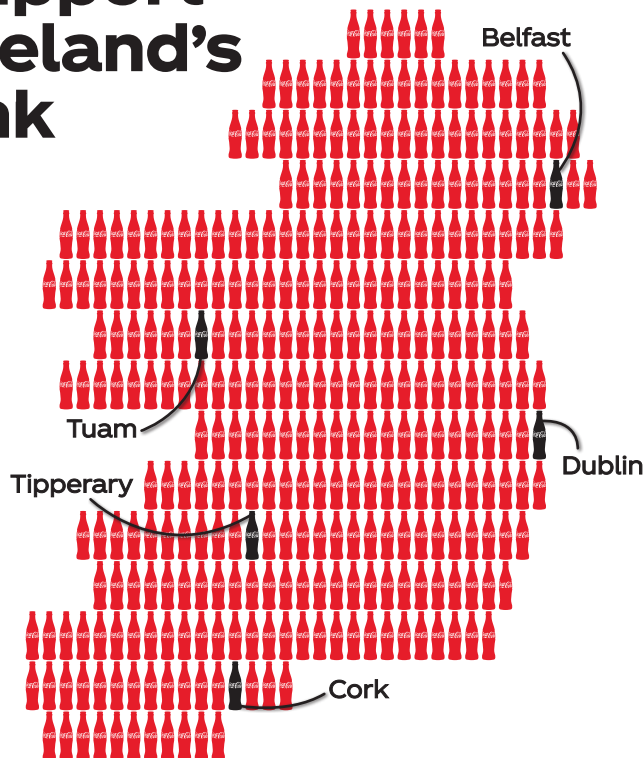


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NEW APPOINTMENT AT NIFDA

Earlier this year NIFDA strengthened its team with a new key appointment, aimed at driving the long-term growth and enhancing operational excellence in the organisation.

Dr Anna Monaghan has been appointed Business Development Executive. In her new role, Anna is supporting NIFDA on member relations, stakeholder engagement, communications and managing the organisation's day-to-day operations.

Anna was recently STEM Network lead for Northern Ireland, collaborating with companies across the UK with a



particular focus on the food industry and youth outreach. She completed her Doctorate, focused on maternal nutrition during pregnancy, in 2021, graduating from Ulster University. A long-standing member of the Institute of Food Science & Technology (IFST), Anna formerly held the role of UK Student Chair and currently acts as Secretary of the organisation's Northern Ireland Committee.

2025 MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS





FEED NETWORK

The FEED Network (Food, Employment & Education) serves as a vital link between educational institutions and the dynamic field of food and drink manufacturing and production. FEED collaborates with schools, universities, careers teachers, HR professionals, industry experts and government bodies.

The food and drink sector is a core employer in the Northern Ireland economy, with over 15,000 job opportunities set to open over the next five years, and is the largest manufacturing industry in the region, our aim is to empower students with practical knowledge and career opportunities for a successful future.

Here's a review of what the FEED Network has been up to:

- Running a sector-wide survey to audit workforce demographics across member companies.
- Surveying members to assess how well current apprenticeships align with industry needs.

- Launching the second year of the Food and Drink Academy with CAFRE, helping create a strong pipeline of industry-ready talent.
- Engaging with CCEA as part of the Review of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, ensuring the sector's voice is included.
- Continuing outreach with schools and universities to inspire the next generation of talent.
- Developing a FEED-branded Northern Ireland careers map to give pupils a clearer view of opportunities in the sector.
- Attending key events such as the Northern Ireland Schools and Colleges Careers Association (NISCA) Conference.



To get involved, please contact Harry Hamilton, NIFDA Project Manager at harry@nifda.co.uk

NIFDA ANNUAL DINNER 2024

Over 250 industry leaders, stakeholders and government gathered for the 28th NIFDA Annual Dinner in 2024. Held in partnership with KPMG Ireland, the event took place at the Hilton Hotel, Belfast on Thursday 3rd October, where Lidl Northern Ireland's Regional Managing Director, Ivan Ryan, was keynote speaker.





GSCOP TRAINING

NIFDA provides specialist training on the Groceries Supply Code of Practice (GSCOP), helping businesses strengthen their approach to trading with grocery retailers.

The programme ensures members understand why GSCOP was introduced, what it covers, and its real-world implications for day-to-day negotiations.

From the 7 golden rules on cost price increase to the designation



of Amazon, participants gain practical insights on resisting unfair trading practices while maintaining strong retailer relationships.

With the support of the Groceries Code Adjudicator (GCA) framework, this training equips companies to negotiate with confidence and stay compliant in an evolving retail landscape.

To find out more or take part in the training, please get in touch at info@nifda.co.uk

UPCOMING NIFDA MEETINGS AND EVENTS

NIFDA Awards: 27th February 2026

30 Years of NIFDA Dinner: October 2026

NIFDA Conference: 2027



NOTES


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