

Submission to Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine

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Origin Green

Bord Bia developed and launched Origin Green, Ireland's national sustainability programme for the Irish food and drink industry in 2012. The programme was developed in response to international market research, commissioned by Bord Bia, that confirmed the positive perception of Ireland, internationally, as a green and natural food producing country. However, the market research also showed that, in future, ongoing proof of our sustainability credentials would be required. Origin Green is the programme to provide such proof.

The Origin Green programme is a voluntary programme that operates across the food chain, from farmers to food manufacturing companies to retailers and foodservice businesses.

Farmers are members of Origin Green by being certified members of Bord Bia's Sustainable Farm Assurance Schemes. The two largest schemes – the Sustainable Beef & Lamb Assurance Scheme and the Sustainable Dairy Assurance Scheme - have 51,507 and 15,913 members respectively. This represents over 90% of all beef produced and 90% of dairy farmers. All farms are audited at 18 month intervals and must meet all of the requirements of the schemes before they can be certified. Additional sustainability data is also collected at audit that enables the carbon footprint of each farm to be calculated. To date over 170,000 carbon footprint assessments have been completed. Feedback reports to farmers highlight where improvements can be made. All of Bord Bia's Sustainability Assurance Schemes are independently accredited to the European Standard for Product Certification, ISO 17065. The Carbon Footprint models have been developed in partnership with Teagasc and are also independently accredited by the Carbon Trust to the PAS 2050 Standard. Over 36,000 audits are conducted annually.

At food manufacturing level, producers become members of Origin Green by signing up to the Origin Green Sustainability Charter and developing a multi-annual sustainability plan for their business which must include setting and achieving targets under three key areas:

- Raw Material Sourcing;
- Manufacturing Processes;
- Social Sustainability.

Achieving the sustainability targets helps to reduce a company's environmental impact, makes the daily running of its operations more efficient and positively contributes to its impact on society and the local community.

In order to become a verified member of Origin Green, food and drink manufacturers must undergo a rigorous initial audit process with plans that are verified independently by the SGS Group – a world leading auditing body. Thereafter each annual progress report is verified by SGS, to ensure that timelines and targets, committed to in the plan are being met.

There are currently 282 verified members of the Origin Green programme which represents over 90% of all of Ireland's food and drink exports. Approximately another 300 companies have registered an interest in the programme or are in the process of formulating plans and setting targets.

Membership of Origin Green was extended, on a pilot basis, to the Retail and Foodservice sector in 2016. Participation for these companies is, in a similar way to the food manufacturers, through the development and delivery of ambitious targets as part of a five year plan. To date, 2 retailers and 4 foodservice businesses have become verified members.

The first 5 years of Origin Green have been very successful as outlined above. In addition Origin Green has become firmly established as the brand for Irish food and drink internationally and is now used on all branding of Ireland's stands at international food and drink trade events, of which Bord Bia and Irish companies will attend 24 this year.

Bord Bia will continue to evolve the Origin Green programme. We are currently reviewing the first five years and developing a strategy for the next five. International market insight will again play an important role in informing the strategy. This market research is currently underway.

Climate Change and Sustainability

Climate Change is one of the major challenges of our generation. There is scientific consensus that climate change is happening and that it is largely caused by human activity. Over the past 250 years the burning of fossil fuels, land use change and agriculture has contributed to altered global average temperatures by increasing the concentration of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄) and nitrous oxide (N₂O).

With the global population projected to increase by more than 2.4 billion people by 2050, the world will need to produce up to twice as much food from increasingly limited resources in uncertain climatic conditions. This is leading to long term fears over the security of food supplies in many parts of the world.

Sustained pressure on the world's already strained resources is also being exacerbated by the ongoing challenges presented by climate change and increasing greenhouse gas emissions. In order to meet these challenges, it will require everyone involved in the agri-food industry to produce more from less and decrease the environmental impact of production, which necessitates the adoption of more sustainable practices. The FoodWise 2025 strategy of the DAFM, while setting ambitious targets for the growth of the agrifood sector, acknowledges the importance of balancing production with environmental management and protection and identifies over 70 actions to achieve agricultural sustainability. Collaboration and co-operation from all stakeholders in the industry will be required to achieve this ambition.

Market Diversification

The Irish food and drink industry has shown an impressive ability to diversify its exports over recent years with almost half of the growth in the value of food and drink shipments since 2010 coming from markets outside of Europe. Some notable achievements over the period include a six fold increase in exports to China and more than a doubling to the rest of Asia and North America. The industry now exports to 180 markets annually.

Reflecting the further growth ambitions of the sector and the uncertain backdrop created by Brexit, Bord Bia has adopted a data driven approach to help identify potential opportunities for further growth in new and existing markets. This is being led by a Market Prioritisation study that the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine commissioned Bord Bia to undertake in mid-2017. The study undertakes a detailed assessment of potential growth markets for meat, dairy, prepared consumer foods, beverages and seafood and selects 15 priority markets for further examination.

The findings of this work will help Bord Bia and our client companies make decisions in relation to where we invest our resources with a view to delivering the best return for all involved in the sector. The findings will drive the on-the-ground activities of Bord Bia's international network of 13 offices which work directly with client companies to build market understanding and facilitate business development opportunities.

Our upcoming Marketplace event in April will attract 550 – 600 international buyers to Ireland to engage with up to 200 Irish food and drink companies with a view to identify potential business opportunities and position Ireland as a source of high quality, sustainably produced food and drink products. More than half of the international buyers will come from emerging markets outside of Europe.

Talent Development Programme

The need for the food and drink industry to attract and develop the right talent is critical to its future success, particularly as market demand and consumer needs continue to evolve rapidly. Bord Bia's industry talent programme currently involves over 100 participants taking part in five key programmes that focus on core areas such as Sustainability, Marketing & Sales and Supply Chain.

The success of the programmes to date are highlighted by a few key figures:

- Over 80% of participants are being retained in the food and drink industry once they finish their programme
- Our Market Fellows work with 40 client companies across 13 export markets and, in 2017, the expected value of sales attributable to the programme was almost €60m.
- Our Origin Green Ambassador programme has seen Ambassadors placed in the Sustainability teams of 35 of the world leading food and drink organisations.
- The strength of demand for our programmes is demonstrated by the fact that in 2017 our Marketing Fellowship & Origin Green Ambassador programmes attracted 600 applicants for 30 places.

Bord Bia launched two new programmes in 2017, namely the Market Placement and MSc in Design Innovation. The Market Placement programme sees participants placed in the operations teams of leading retail and foodservice customers in export markets for a period of up to 15 months. The MSc in Design Innovation, in conjunction with NUI Maynooth, involves 10 participants undertaking a two year design thinking led approach to insights and innovation. Participants will be placed with Irish food and drink companies for a period of 20 months to help further embed design thinking into their insight & innovation teams.

Conclusion

Bord Bia is currently planning and developing its next 3 year strategy for the period 2019 -2021. This strategy will be based on extensive stakeholder consultation and will be positioned to support the further growth of Ireland's food and drink industry. Origin Green will continue to be a central pillar in delivery of this strategy. In an increasingly competitive and demanding global marketplace Ireland can continue to grow its exports through the provision of high quality, sustainably produced food and drink products.