



CARLOW  
**FOOD &  
DRINK**  
STRATEGY

“The Taste of County Carlow 2020-2025”





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In partnership with Carlow Chamber, Carlow Tourism,  
Carlow County Development Project and Fáilte Ireland

# Foreword

Carlow may be a small county, but, when it comes to the quality and range of food and drink both produced and grown here, it punches above its weight. With its undulating countryside and rich tapestry of family farms you can just sense it's the perfect place to produce food. Whether it is free range produce fresh from the farm, artisan cheese, local apples or home bakery, Carlow has it all.

A county's Food and Drink sector has long been recognised as having the potential to unlock a differentiated county identity that can offer sustainable enterprise and employment development, whilst supporting a thriving local food and drink landscape.

The Carlow Food and Drink Strategy will provide a blueprint for growth for food and drink stakeholders in the county. The main goal of our Food and Drink Industry Strategy will encourage the production, processing, promotion and consumption of locally produced food and drink so that Carlow can reach its full potential.

However, in order to foster and expand the impact of locally produced food and drink within Carlow it was necessary to get an in-depth understanding of what is happening in this area across all platforms including primary

producers, retail shops, foodservice outlets, cafes, bars and restaurants, heritage food offerings, alternative food experiences etc.

The Carlow Food and Drink Strategy, delivered by Carlow County Council and its Local Enterprise Office, aims to engage with these stakeholders and deliver this first strategy of its kind in partnership with Carlow Tourism, Carlow County Development Partnership, IT Carlow, Carlow Local Community Development Committee, and private industry interests. The coverage is for Carlow county, and includes recommendations on cross border opportunities and challenges.

Carlow has the potential to become a real foodie destination with a wide range of food and drink producers. However, Carlow has been somewhat overlooked for its food production story and this strategy aims to address the gaps in provision to enable effective delivery of this strategy. There is strong sentiment that Carlow food and drink businesses must work together to deliver the promotion and awareness of a cohesive, consistent and engaging food and drink culture. This initial research project is laying the foundations for a local food and drink strategy which will benefit Carlow county for many years.

This document was published during the Covid-19 period, and responses to the crisis will be accounted for in the delivery of the Carlow Food and Drink Strategy – A Taste of Carlow 2020-2025.

03



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# Executive Summary

'The Taste of Carlow County 2020-2025' strategy focuses on the development of production, processing, promotion and consumption of locally sourced food in the Carlow County Council area while also exploring cross boundary opportunities for collaborations.

Prior to the production of conclusions and recommendations, the study undertook research work to understand food production in Carlow, the business community and business environment as well as food experiences and activities for visitors to the county. Information was gathered through national and international interviews, visits, a business survey and through existing statistical datasets and business and tourism reports.

An initial review and analysis of the research uncovered many insights and learnings that lead to the sculpting of this Carlow Food and Drink strategy document 'The Taste of Carlow County – 2020-2025'.

## Key Findings Revealed:

Carlow has a significant food story and heritage, but this is not being effectively told

- 1) Business networking and communication is low, as is the level of joint working
- 2) Carlow is often overlooked for its food and drink offering
- 3) Carlow is not seen as an ideal place in which to start or run a food business
- 4) Carlow food and drink tourism events are often poorly marketed and communicated
- 5) Carlow is often overlooked as a tourism destination

Following consultation with stakeholders, **five core development pillars** were identified which will form the basis of future development work.



## The Five Pillars are:

- **The development of a Communications and Marketing strategy for Carlow Food and Drink**

Build a cohesive and exciting narrative that is supported by an effective and integrated marketing and communications strategy that will promote the consumption of locally produced food, as well as stimulating uptake in food tourism and agri-tourism experiences. Extend the “In Carlow” brand to tell the Carlow food and drink story and create a new ‘one stop shop’ Carlow Food and Drink website, relevant to its stakeholders.

- **The creation of a stakeholder forum, steering group and subgroups to oversee and assist with Carlow Food and Drink activity**

Establish a stakeholder forum to drive the delivery of the strategy recommendations. Build on the established appetite for a stakeholder forum that will support the profile development of food and drink in Carlow.

- **Support and develop tourism and agri-tourism**

Support the tourism strategy through developing food and drink tourism and Agri-tourism experiences. Work collaboratively with tourism organisations, namely Fáilte Ireland to put Carlow on the Foodie Map.

- **Develop and provide appropriate business development and training supports**

Identify the necessary training and business support needed start up, scaling and established food and drink stakeholders. Supported by the website where various agency supports will be sign posted and updated regularly. Case studies of successful In Carlow food and drink business development success stories could be included here.

- **Develop regional partnerships to benefit food and drink businesses**

Where future opportunities arise, work collaboratively in County Carlow and on a regional basis.

## Covid 19 Update

In light of the Covid19 pandemic, March 2020, it is anticipated that this strategy will be further developed to delivers supports to the food and drink industry, particularly in the areas of business development and training.



# Introduction

In July 2019, Carlow County Council engaged Birnie & Associates to deliver a Food & Drink Strategy for County Carlow.

'The Taste of Carlow County 2020–2025' strategy focuses on the production, processing, promotion and consumption of locally sourced food in the Carlow County Council area while also exploring cross boundary opportunities for collaborations.

This is a five-year vision, that has been determined by analysis of the current food and drink landscape in Carlow, and identification of the opportunities and challenges that a small sized

county can navigate to punch above its weight in promoting the county's varied food and drink assets.

'The Taste of Carlow County 2020–2025' is a vision which will assist in developing an integrated approach to the overall progression of the food and drink sector. This will be sustainable over the longer term by positioning the sector within council business supports as well as telling the story of visitor experience led collaborations and initiatives.

Thriving and successful food and drink businesses are essential to Carlow's economic prosperity and it's a key sector in Ireland's economy.



## This strategy aims to

- Extend the In Carlow brand to cover food and drink in Carlow. This should be supported by a strong narrative so the county's food and drink story can be communicated by those working in the sector using multiple publishing platforms to attract more visitors, and repeat visitors to the area supported by 'In Carlow' brand. A marketing and communications campaign for Carlow's food and drink narrative should be reviewed on an annual basis in September each year, and refined for the following year's marketing activities

- Create a new **'one stop shop'** **Carlow Food and Drink website**, relevant to its stakeholders including producers, owners, visitors, government bodies, students etc. that outlines the Carlow food and drink strategy vision, and includes pillars such as Food Heroes, Farmers' Market, Experiences and Trails, Events Calendar, In Carlow food and drink brand, Business Development, and Stakeholder forum (members only). Develop a managed database of food and drink suppliers, in a searchable format, with owned contact information used for business development, marketing and communications and research functions for food and drink stakeholders – this should be funded to maintain accuracy of information.
- **Develop a forum** for food and drink stakeholders that creates a food and drink 'voice' for Carlow and motivates the promotion of food and drink in Carlow in line with this five-year strategy. The forum should steer marketing and brand development strategy with the Local Enterprise Office, and other stakeholders who have a sense of pride and ownership of the forum
- **Tourism and Agri-tourism** have untapped potential for Carlow. It is recommended that through the development of a food and drink

Ambassador's forum stronger links between agri-food/drink or local food/artisan markets experiences with existing tourism initiatives are developed. This could build for instance on the development of the pilot project to create Food and Drink experiences as part of the new Bog Houses and Garden Festival, aligned with Taste the Island programme.

- Develop a cohesive framework for food and drink company **business development supports** on a tiered basis for Start-up, Scaling and Established businesses
- The benefits of entering into **regional partnerships** is acknowledged where the opportunity offers mutual synergies

For this food and drink strategy to succeed it needs to be clearly crafted and communicated, while the collaboration of stakeholders will drive its success. The creation of a forum should allow ownership of the strategy under the guidance and support of a wide range of stakeholders. This strategy is the beginning of an exciting chapter for County Carlow as it explores what will make 'The Taste of Carlow County 2020-2025' a recipe for success.



# Methodology

Understanding the current food and drink landscape in County Carlow is key to identifying the gaps which are preventing development.

The methodology used to understand and evaluate the current food and drink scene in County Carlow is shown below:

**1: Research to Understand the Business Eco-System in Carlow**

**2: Undertaking of a SWOT analysis of the consultation outcomes**

**3: Collation of the outcomes and commentary on research insights by pillar**

**4: Conducting of a business survey powered by Survey Monkey**

**5: Analysis of business survey responses**

Research was carried out online, at meetings and through telephone discussions with key business people.

Consultation with businesses revealed there is a strong appetite among businesses to think together, work together and act together. The lack of collaboration and the lack

of knowledge, communication and referrals from business to business in the county is limiting the growth potential but therein lies a fantastic opportunity to embrace the enthusiasm which exists.

There is some great work ongoing but business owners who are not directly involved in this work feel a disconnection.

Feedback from meetings and telephone interviews with the business community revealed they believe Carlow has the potential to become a real foodie destination. Feedback from interviews revealed:

- 1) Individuals from businesses and other organisations in Carlow were interviewed to understand the business environment
- 2) A business survey was circulated, and responses analysed
- 3) Online research was conducted
- 4) Information was obtained from a range of government and private organisations
- 5) Information was analysed, interpreted and recommendations made





# Research Findings

Research was carried out online, at meetings and through telephone discussions with key business people.

## Their feedback revealed:

- Carlow has a wide range of food and drink 'Assets' from which to tell its story
- The need for a strong story, clear messaging and holistic support for business.
- Correct framework and structures need to be developed and put in place in order to deliver the strategy
- A range of messages and structures are necessary to underpin communications
- A long-term strategy is needed to address this
- Carlow is overlooked for its food and drink production story
- Carlow produces much more than it needs – it needs to export

and therefore awareness of the Carlow brand/Carlow products is essential

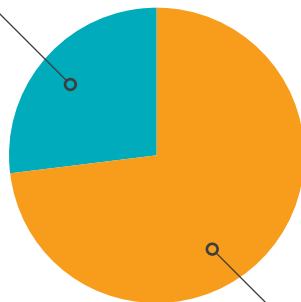
- Tourism and visitors do not consider Carlow as a first option
- Carlow is not seen as an ideal place to start a food business

This is further evidenced by a recent Fáilte Ireland Online Mystery Shop Report, June 2019, that commented:

'I feel that Carlow has a strong food personality with several producers and food experiences. I am particularly attracted to the Carlow Farmers' Market because if I go there on a short break, I envision visiting the market and bringing some fresh produce home!'

Do you believe Carlow is overlooked for its food and drink offering?

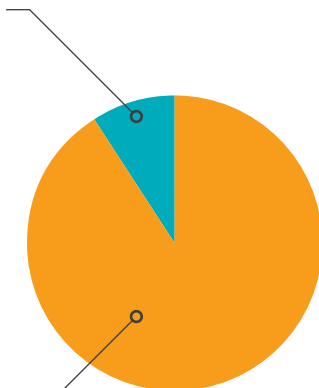
No  
26.79% (15)



Yes  
73.21% (41)

Do you think Carlow has a food and drink story?

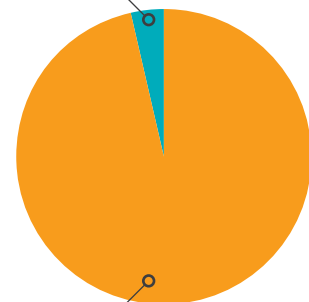
No  
8.93% (5)



Yes  
91.07% (51)

Do you think Carlow will benefit from the implementation of a Food and Drink Strategy in terms of increasing sales through networking and collaboration, attracting more visitors and accessing additional business support

No  
3.57% (2)



Yes  
96.43% (54)



# The Business Eco-System in Carlow

## Statistics

Research was undertaken to understand the importance of food production to the Carlow economy. The basic statistics are shown below. Some figures are best estimates.

- **Food Retail:** 980 (Birnie Consulting estimates)

- **Restaurants/Cafes:** 520 (Birnie Consulting estimates)

## Employment

- **Farm:** Number of Full-Time-Equivalent roles on-farm in Carlow: 2,353 (IFA)
- **Food Processing:** Number of food and drink processing jobs based in the local region (South East Region – Carlow, Kilkenny, South Tipperary, Waterford, Wexford) – 8,164 (CSO)
- **Food Processing:** Estimated number of food and drink processing jobs based in the Carlow: 900-910 (IFA estimate) vs 869 in 2014: 7.6% increase
- **Accommodation:** 130 FTE across hotels and B&B (Birnie Consulting estimates)

## Agricultural/Food based production value (IFA)

- Value of Primary Agricultural Output from Carlow: €128 million
- Value of Agricultural Exports arising from agricultural output in the county €188.0 million exports from Carlow in 2017 vs €169.4 million in 2015 (IFA), a 9.9% increase
- Carlow has a wide range of agricultural output including dairy products, beef, lamb, pork, chicken, turkey, eggs, cereals, mushrooms, vegetables, potatoes, fruit, strawberries, gooseberries, redcurrant, blackcurrant, blackberries, rhubarb, raspberries, honey.



## Food Businesses in Carlow

Business mapping in Carlow reveals a very wide range of primary and secondary food production.

Carlow has a range of food production and resale businesses. Research has identified:

- 34 food production businesses.
- 16 butchers
- 10 food hall/delis
- 19 mid-sized to large food retail outlets

### Food businesses in Carlow offer the following range of products:

- Dairy products
- Beef, organic beef
- Lamb, organic lamb
- Chicken, organic chicken, turkey
- Free Range Sausages: traditional, pork and apple, Italian
- Organic beef, pork, bacon, lamb, sausages, organic chickens, and black and white pudding
- Snails
- Free-range eggs, organic eggs, free range pork and bacon
- Jams, marmalade, chutney
- Fruit, fresh and frozen
- Fruit and vegetable juices, beer, cider, whiskey, gin,
- Mushrooms
- Potatoes
- Chocolate
- Desert products, bakery products, commercial bakery product
- Vegan Seasonings for meat and vegetables, gluten free, onion bhajis.



# The Business Eco-System in Carlow (ctd.)

## Hospitality businesses

Research into the hospitality sector has identified the following businesses:

- 18 Hotels, 5 Guesthouse/Pubs, 24 separate self-catering facilities.
- 47 Restaurants
- 18 Cafes
- 92 Pubs

## Farmers / Food Market

Listing under the MAST website indicates that Carlow farmer's Market, Barrow Markets and Borris market as well as the country market in Askea are the main markets operating in Carlow: [www.mast.ie/Carlow.html](http://www.mast.ie/Carlow.html)

Insight from the Carlow farmer's Market Customer and Stallholder survey 2019 indicated:

### Customer survey insight:

- 17 stall holders in total (13 responded)
- Average number of customers per stall 61

- Estimated that there are up to 350 customers per day

### Positive:

- 57% shop there once a week
- 42% come only for the market as a destination shop
- Quality, freshness and atmosphere currently drive footfall
- 66% come from within 10 miles of the market
- 66% feel that the market is an important asset to Carlow.

### Could do better:

- Lacking a place to sit and eat, lacking shelter from the rain
- Would like more product choice
- Parking scored lowest in satisfaction, followed by signage and opening hours
- Would like to see better layout, free parking, on more days, provision of hot food and gluten free food, wrapped products

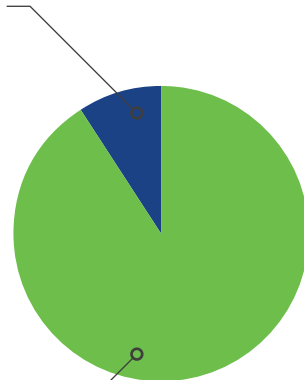
## When creating your product(s) do you source local ingredients?





**Do you feel you could improve your food and drink experience at your establishment?**

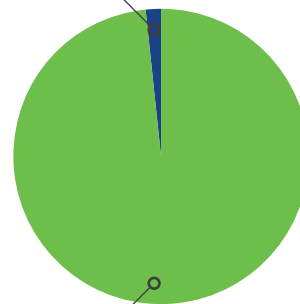
**No**



**Yes**  
90.91% (10)

**Is there an enthusiasm in the Carlow food and drink sector to boost Carlow's reputation as a food and drink destination?**

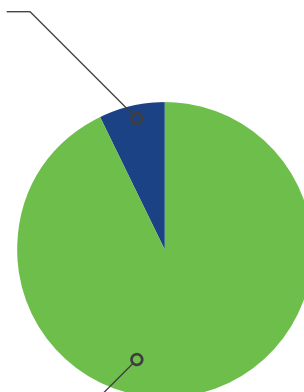
**No**



**Yes**

**Do you believe a collaborative approach between businesses will enhance Carlow's food and drink offering?**

**No**  
7.14% (4)



**Yes**  
92.86% (52)

# SWOT Analysis

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## Strengths

- **People** There's a great thirst among people in the food and drink sector to work together in promoting Carlow as an experiential tourism and foodie destination.
- **Events** There are some fantastic tourism led events which can be used to showcase what the county has to offer in terms of food and drink.
- **Location** Carlow borders five other counties: Laois, Kildare, Wicklow, Wexford and Kilkenny, and is close to Dublin, boosting its accessibility
- **Infrastructure** there are good road and rail links to urban areas (although rural access is more difficult).
- **Landscape** With mountains, glorious countryside and river valleys all close at hand, Carlow is a county worth discovering and exploring.
- **Heritage** It's known as 'The Dolmen County' because of the number of ancient monuments, Stone Age artefacts, monasteries, medieval castles, large country houses and estates
- **Food Market** in a recent study 82% of respondents stated that the Carlow Farmers' market was very important to Carlow.

### Weaknesses

- The uncertainty surrounding Carlow's food and drink story
- There is no coordinated communication around exciting food stories and activities
- The absence of a brand around which the industry can rally
- Lack of storytelling, PR and marketing to promote the county's food and drink offering
- Events are taking place in Carlow but not enough is being done to incorporate food and drink, or indeed showcase to large audiences, what Carlow's capability is in terms of food and drink
- A lack of vision and action to date
- Every man for themselves – there's a lack of collaboration and joined up thinking between businesses working in the sector
- There is limited business networking in the county
- Businesses identify a lack of business / commercial support to enable them to grow. There is limited availability of commercial development advice
- Businesses are not aware of products and activities of other businesses in the county
- There is a limited amount of coordinated selling, marketing or technical support
- The Institute of Technology at Carlow is not as fully utilised as it should be
- Lack of awareness of potential funding opportunities to help small businesses including manufacturers
- There's no clear definition of 'local'
- A 'small county' mentality to date
- Restaurant provision in Carlow is insufficient
- Restaurants are not in ideal locations
- Public transport to restaurants in rural areas is difficult
- It's difficult to book itineraries for short or longer stays
- The overall image and appearance of Carlow town is poor



# SWOT Analysis

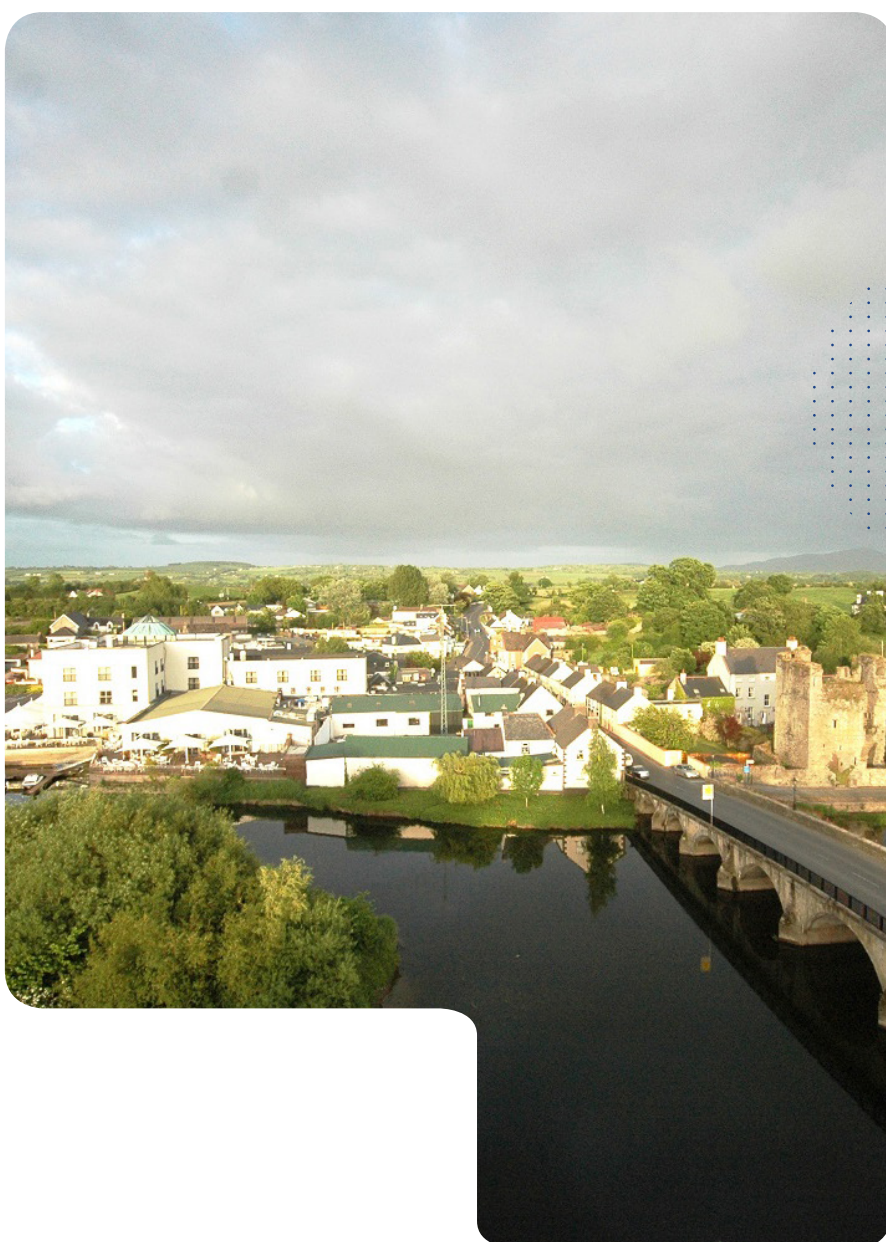
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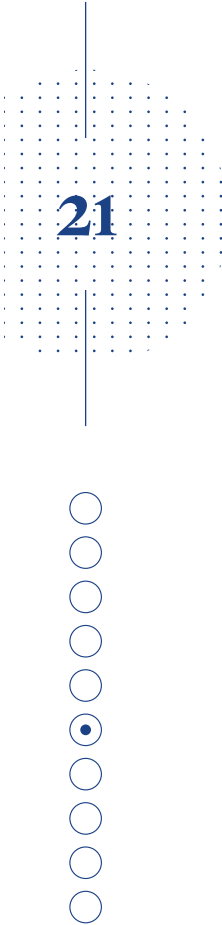
## Opportunities

- Creation of the story of County Carlow's food and drink scene and communicate that story through local, national and international media platforms including print, broadcast and digital
- Establishing effective business networking, enabling the development of supply chain relationships to share knowledge, suppliers and customers
- Business collaborations to create world class tourism experiences among businesses in the food, drink and tourism sectors
- Food and drink tourism/ agri-tourism – the creation of unique food and drink offerings for visitors
- Ensuring local food is on local menus and on menus further afield
- Development of the farmers market so that people can spend more 'dwell' time there if seating and shelter were
- Targeting of large events to showcase Carlow's food and drink story
- Telling the stories of ancient Carlow to tie in with Ireland's Ancient East while connecting people to 'The Dolmen County' – capitalising on Carlow's food history
- Identifying and using the skills and talents of unsung food heroes / food & drink ambassadors to better communicate the Carlow food and drink story
- The creation and promotion of county wide food and drink events through food activity calendars
- Combining food with appropriate non-food events to increase awareness
- The establishment of new food and drink businesses to address emerging consumer trends
- Attracting new visitors to the area through the creation of bookable experiences
- Joint working with food colleges to drive food innovation and create a world class reputation
- Changing the image of the food industry, presenting it as dynamic and forward looking to attract young people into the

### Threats

- Failure to secure funding for the implementation of the food and drink strategy to ensure Carlow becomes competitive with surrounding counties already implementing their strategies
- Failure to implement the development strategy
- Brexit and its unknown impact
- A lack of visibility of Carlow food and drink on local menus
- A lack of visibility of Carlow food and drink on menus outside the county
- A lack of understanding by producers around meeting the requirements of hoteliers in terms of quantity and consistency of quality and amounts
- Staff skills shortages and recruitment into the sector
- Poor perception of the industry by graduates





# Research Insights

## 1: Business Collaboration

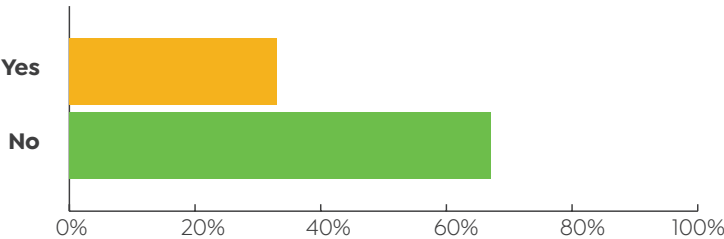
An analysis of the sector reveals that there is very little collaboration between businesses in Carlow. In fact, Carlow seems to be characterised by the independence of its food and drink businesses. Few businesses appeared to be aware of the activities and output of more than a handful of other businesses in the region.

Research reveals that businesses acknowledge that there is very limited joint working within and across business and tourism sectors, and that there is a clear willingness across all businesses to work together to create and communicate a Carlow Food Story. This collaboration does, however, need to be initiated and facilitated. The methods by which this is done must be

effective, commercial and deliver real change. Businesses will only benefit in something that has clear aims and a real chance of making a difference.

One of the most effective methods of driving change in business is the creation of a forum and through coordinated and facilitated networking events that stimulate peer to peer exchanges and learnings. This stakeholder platform can drive the profile of Carlow food and drink and enable the delivery of new food experiences and events. There are many examples of successful forum across the world, including the Food and Drink Forum UK that is a not for profit organisation that stimulates competitiveness in the food and drink industry.

### Do you run “meet the producer” or host other food provenance events?





2: Growth Barriers and Opportunities

Determining exact barriers to growth within Carlow is challenging because each business is unique. However, a range of common themes emerged from the research undertaken:

- Ineffective communication and marketing of the food and drink story in Carlow
- Ineffective business networking and collaboration
- Difficulty in obtaining commercial advice
- Attracting, training and retaining staff
- Difficulty obtaining finance for expansion
- Failure of Eco-system to work together effectively to create special events
- Failure to capitalise on events (including farmers markets) to drive visitors to the town

- Ineffective chamber of commerce – little impact, businesses frustrated
- Inadequate exposure to retail/ business customers
- Inadequate footfall through local towns

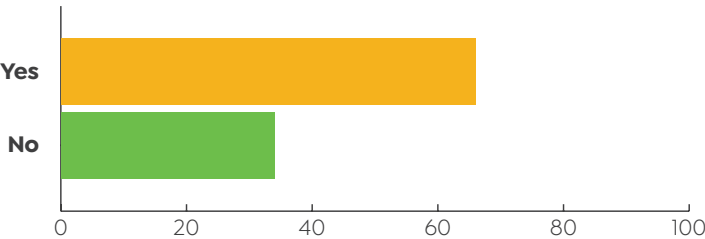
Of significant note was the lack of a specific food and drink story embedded in the story of Carlow. This should be underpinned by annual funded marketing and communications campaigns.

In addition, whilst the tourism partners actively promote some events/organisations, there is little true, targeted story creation and communication on which to base a focused food tourism programme. Marketing and communication collaboration need to be addressed in order to make progress.

It is also clear that the absence of a Carlow food and drink brand or brand

logo means that there is nothing for businesses to coalesce around and promote. Carlow food needs a brand around which stories can be built and told, and key messages promoted. This brand should be usable in various communications and marketing platforms as well as on pack / menu to support food provenance messaging. The In Carlow brand has demonstrated its success to date in the promotion of Carlow, and this brand could be extended to have a clear and defined remit for the promotion of food and drink in Carlow.

Would you be interested in participating in such events?



# Research Insights (ctd.)

## 3: Food Tourism and Agri-tourism

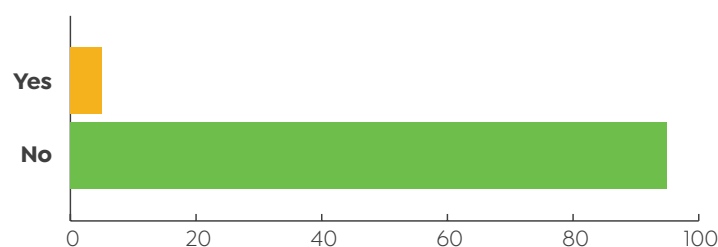
The strategy also explores examples locally and nationally of how food and drink play a major role in attracting visitors to places around the world.

Food tourism is defined as 'the pursuit of unique and memorable eating and drinking experiences. Agri-tourism refers to any tourism experience in which one learns about, appreciates, and/or consumes food and drink which reflects the local, regional, national agricultural heritage and on-farm experiences. The concept suggests people pursue a memorable food or drink experience by developing a better understanding of local food and drink and/or consuming local food or drink while immersed in the essence of agricultural surroundings. It is considered a first-hand cultural experience and it is on top of the tourist attraction list.

The agri-food industry in Ireland currently provides employment for 163,000 people, with food and beverage manufacturing enterprises accounting for €26 billion of total turnover, comprising 26 per cent of all manufacturing turnover and generating 12.7 per cent of total merchandise exports. The sector accounts for 7.2 per cent of Gross Value Added (GVA) at factor cost and 8.4 per cent of total employment.

The latest CSO figures (published December 12, 2019) confirm that Ireland welcomed almost 8.4 million overseas tourists to Ireland during January – September 2019 – Up 1 % to 10.8m people on the same period in 2018. Revenue from overseas tourists in the same period was almost €4.1 billion – this was flat on 2018.

**Are you involved in any collaborations with other tourism led businesses eg: guided companies, destination management companies etc?**



## Carlow

Food Wise 2025 highlights the natural synergy between Agri-food and local tourism. Agri-food tourism is of great importance for rural areas in order to showcase their people, landscape, history and culture through agricultural produce, food and drink and local cuisine. In addition, it provides opportunities for rural businesses, including farmers, producers and artisans, to develop their products and services, connect with the community and visitors to an area and improve skills and best practice.

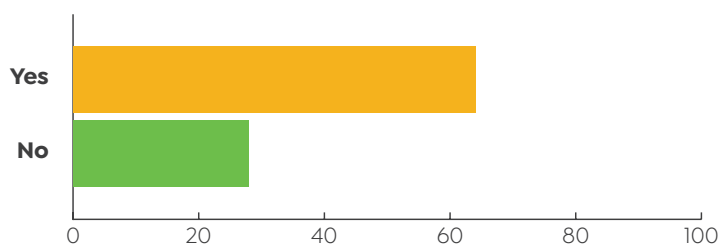
Agri-tourism in Ireland is growing rapidly with Destination Management Companies seeking out new experiences for incoming visitors in rural Ireland.

There are many opportunities for Carlow in terms of Agri-tourism. Carlow has the landscapes, the production, the people, the products and the talent for people to reap



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### Do businesses want to work collaboratively to achieve success?





# Research Insights (ctd.)

the rewards of Agri-tourism. The opportunities are endless with popular choices elsewhere including:

- Combining food and farm experiences where visitors experience a unique combination of seeing how a product is made, and simultaneously where it was produced. Direct contact with producers and hearing their story face to face is a scalable promotional tool for the industry
- "Meet the producer" events
- Calendar of Farm tours – dairy, beef, sheep, pork, fruit & veg, nursery stock, horticulture, arable tours
- Set up on-farm holiday accommodation, in the form of bed and breakfast or self-catering cottages as a means of farm diversification. E.g. glamping, pods, shepherd's huts and yurts
- there are opportunities for farmers to complement existing accommodation providers by developing complementary activity businesses such as kayaking, fishing boats, gillie services, cycling, heritage talks, walking tours, artisan food shops etc.

As referred to earlier in the strategy, agriculture, food and tourism are key drivers of rural economies, but these

are areas which remain undeveloped in Carlow. Carlow has a strong agricultural base, beautiful landscapes, rich heritage and culture and has a warmth from its people which should be used to provide huge opportunities to build experiences which will attract international visitors to rural Ireland.

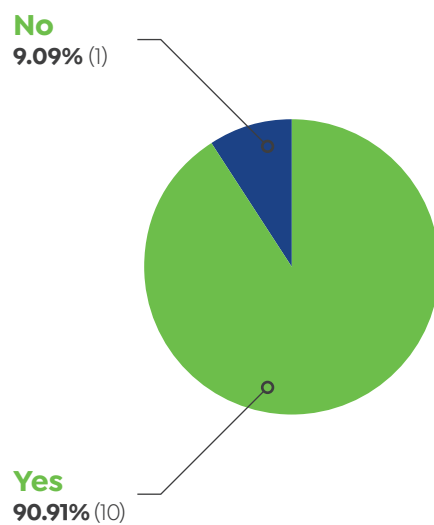
Carlow's food and drink narrative should leverage its existing tourism and heritage narrative to create a communications message that builds on the theme of discovery and 'Off the Beaten Track' experiences currently to be enjoyed by visitors to the county.

Another insight from the Fáilte Ireland Online Mystery Shop Report, June 2019, was, 'I feel I do want to visit Carlow. I feel that I now know more about the county now than I ever knew before, it has a rich history and an exciting present. It also has a motorway through it and I believe that I could get there and back easily.'

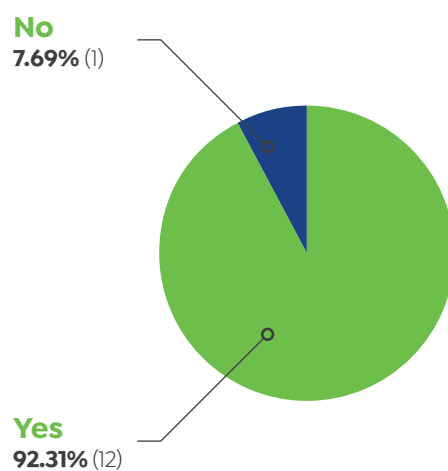
Promotion of the Food and Agri tourism industry in Carlow could be led through the Carlow Food and Drink website, working in partnership with Fáilte Ireland, and as an extension of the In Carlow brand.

The research in this section was used to inform the development of the recommendations and actions under Pillar 1,3 and 5.

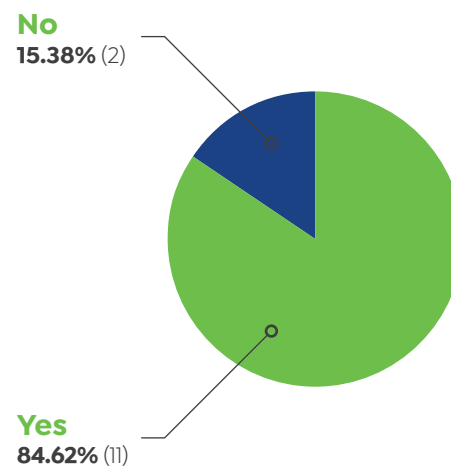
### Is food provenance important to you?



### Do you believe your customers value local produce?



### Do you believe that County Carlow should aspire to entering the Foodie Destinations Awards and / or other food awards?



# Research Insights (ctd.)

## 4: Funding Support for Businesses

There are regular changes in availability of funding support for business from a range of sectors. Local Enterprise Office, Enterprise Ireland, Fáilte Ireland and Bord Bia all provide support to the food and drink industry. Broad outlines are shown below:

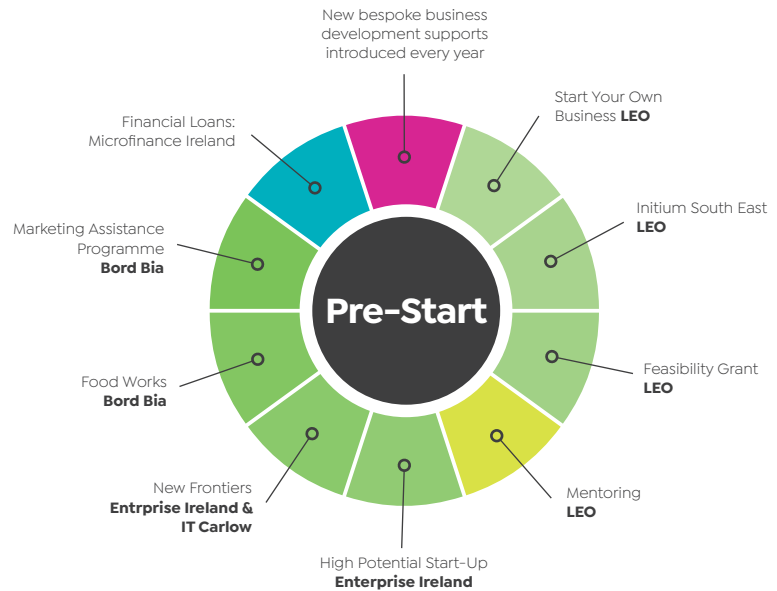
### Local Enterprise Office

- **TAME** Technical Assistance for Micro Exporters: enables clients to explore and develop new market opportunities.
- **Priming Grants** for businesses trading less than 18 months, supports their business start-up costs.
- **Feasibility Study Grant** Assists with researching market demand for a product or service and can help with innovation costs.
- **Trading Online Voucher** Assists businesses with little or no trading online presence to increase their online trading capability.

### Enterprise Ireland

- **Regional Technology Cluster Fund:** Under Project Ireland 2040 Government identified an ambition to build sectoral clusters of Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) at regional level.
- **Regional Enterprise Development Fund:** The Scheme will support major new collaborative and innovative initiatives that can make a significant impact on enterprise development in the region/across regions or nationally to build the unique USP capabilities to grow the regions,
- **Online Retail Scheme:** The purpose of this fund is to enable retailers to increase their customer base and build a more resilient business in the domestic and global marketplace both online and offline.





### Bord Bia

- Bord Bia provides financial support to Irish food, drink and horticulture companies through their Marketing Assistance and Step Change programmes.

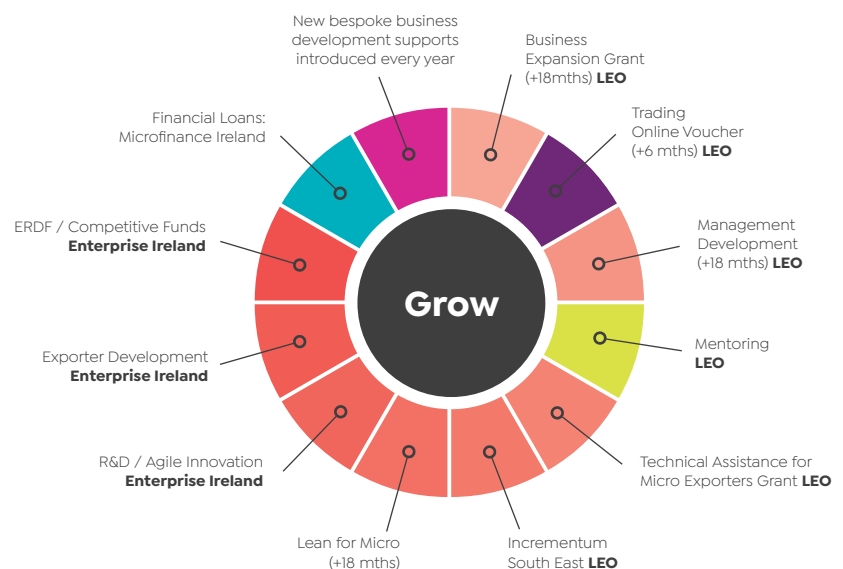
### Fáilte Ireland

- Fáilte Ireland operate a grant scheme as part of their tourism development and innovation strategy for investment (2016-2022). There will be large grant schemes (greater than €200,000) and small grant schemes (less than €200,000).

### Summary

The most common requirement from food processing businesses is around funding for capital investment, but this is not easily available. Signposting of suitable funding sources should be communicated to Carlow's food and drink network, and available in an easily navigable form on the Carlow Food and Drink website.

The research in this section identified the need for additional funding for expansion. The research was used to formulate the recommendations in Pillar 4 and the actions which flow from this.





# Research Insights (ctd.)

## 5: Business Skills Development

The 2019 report entitled "A Sector with A Lot on Its Plate" examines labour challenges in the prepared consumer food sector. It identifies several key challenges.

The "Short-term and unclear career paths make it difficult for the sector to attract graduates and retain existing staff... The food sector needs better branding to be attractive to potential employees".

It also notes that whilst a job in the food industry was an aspiration for many skilled graduates in the past, competition from the technology, pharmaceutical and financial services industries has intensified in recent years and in many cases, graduates also prioritise short-term pay and/or benefits over the long-term rewards of working in the prepared consumer food sector.

These challenges are also recognised in Food Wise 2025, which states that the agri-food sector as a whole should: "Promote itself as a career path of choice among school leavers and university graduates, as a modern sector with exciting opportunities in agri-food sector business expansion, innovation, marketing, consumer insights, research and technological development and nutritional product development."

Our research in Carlow identified a similar pattern. Most businesses reported difficulty in obtaining and keeping staff as well as challenges around staff skill levels and training. The proximity of Dublin to Carlow means that people have a range of employment options and often the food industry is not first choice.

Within Carlow, a wide range of support is available to develop business skills. Support is available from a range of providers, including Food and Drink Ireland, Institute of Technology Carlow, LEO and Teagasc.

**Food and Drink Ireland** offer a range of supports and events

- Postgraduate Certificate in Regulatory Affairs
- Graduate and Executive Development Programme for Professionals in the Food and Drink Sector
- IT Skills
- Lean Six Sigma
- People management
- Sales and marketing
- Soft skills (presentation skills, time management)

**The Institute of Technology**

**Carlow** offers a range of support and events, but the majority are undergraduate and postgraduate courses, including (but not limited to);

- Accounting
- Business
- Management
- Human resource management
- International business
- Supply chain management
- Business administration
- Logistics
- Office Management
- Payroll

**The Local Enterprise Centre**

offers a range of courses designed to support business. These are listed b

- Business training
- Enterprise week
- IT training
- Social Media
- Mentoring programme
- Start your own business
- Accelerate Management Development



# Research Insights (ctd.)

## Other skills programmes aimed at food and drink businesses include

### The Digital School of Food

This is an online learning hub that has been designed to support the development of food manufacturing businesses from start-up to the growth phase. Certain modules of this learning hub are mandatory to allow access the second level course "The Food Starter Programme"

### The Food Starter Programme

This is a short two-day programme designed to help those with a food idea or those at an early of starting up a food business. The content is designed to provide participants with information which will allow them to avoid pitfalls normally associated with this journey. It is a pre-requisite for those considering the food academy programme.

## Teagasc

Teagasc offer a range of courses aimed at the primary production industry. These include:

- Discussion Groups/ Knowledge Transfer Groups
- Managing Labour on Farms
- Grass10 Grazing Management course
- Forestry Courses
- Talking Money - Farm Finance Explained
- Business Strategy for Farmers Course (Teagasc / Smurfit Business School)
- Options Workshops (aimed at providing new thinking and generate new ideas both on and off farm).

## Summary

The options around skills training and support for training in Carlow are, with one or two exceptions, adequate. Business awareness of the accessibility of training is not as strong and a focused approach is needed to ensure that all businesses are aware of all training support which is available. This could potentially form part of the Carlow Food and Drink website.

An additional training requirement requested was around commercial mentorship, specifically around testing marketability and commercial value of potential food products before significant finance and effort is put into either product or business development. Scaling of companies should be addressed in

the supports offered as part of the 2020-2025 strategy.

The Institute of Technology Carlow is a leading institution for Innovation and Design Plus Thinking. Investigation as to how this could be leveraged in relation to Carlow's food and drink strategy should take place and partnership evolution should be considered.





# Survey Findings and Insights

## Findings from business survey powered by Survey Monkey

The team established key questions to create a survey which was distributed to over 100 businesses working in Carlow's food and drink sector. 56 businesses responded to that survey and our key findings are based on their responses. The business survey was created by Birnie Consultancy and approved by Carlow County Council and the Local Enterprise Office and Carlow Tourism. This survey was distributed to businesses namely:

- Food and Drink Producers
- Accommodation Providers
- Retailers
- Restaurants/Chefs/Pubs and Cookery Schools

### Analysis of the business survey:

**1. Out of the 56 businesses which responded to the survey, businesses identified themselves as working in the following sectors, with 47 full time employers and 46 part time employers and nine others which includes casual staff during busier periods:**

- 33.93 per cent (19) of businesses are food producers / farmers
- 23.21 per cent (13) are accommodation providers
- 21.43 per cent (12) are restaurants / pubs



- 7.14 per cent (4) are drink producers (alcohol and no
- 7.14 per cent (4) identified as chefs / cookery schools
- 7.14 per cent (4) identified as retailers

**2. Businesses were surveyed on whether they think Carlow will benefit from the implementation of a Food and Drink Strategy in terms of increasing sales through networking and collaboration, attracting more visitors and accessing additional business support.**

- 96.43 per cent (54) of businesses surveyed said yes
- 3.57 per cent (2) said no

### Insight

Many businesses surveyed also made comments to say they believed if a strategy is implemented it will bring great success to Carlow in terms of food tourism and agri-tourism. Many commented on the hidden gems of Carlow which need to be explored, a need for more accommodation providers bringing foodie experiences to the table, an increased need for businesses to network among themselves, the need for Carlow's profile to be raised and the need for Carlow to recognise growing trends and work together to maximise those.

# Survey Findings and Insights (ctd.)

## 3. Of the 56 businesses which responded they were asked if they think Carlow has a food and drink story:

- 91.07 per cent (51) said yes
- 8.93 per cent (5) answered no

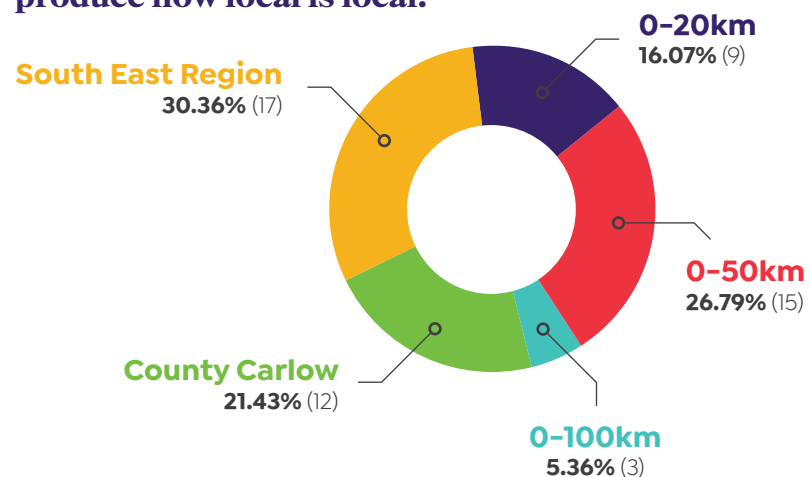
## 4. The survey asked businesses their thoughts on when they think of local produce how local is local to them:

- 30.36 per cent responded to say the South East Region
- 26.79 per cent responded to say 0-50km
- 21.43 per cent responded to say County Carlow
- 16.07 per cent responded to say 0-20km
- 5.36 per cent responded to say 0-100km

## Insight

People's opinions varied on this subject with many stating that they wanted to use produce as local in Carlow as possible. Other comments included having unique branding to Carlow which they believed would 'pack a big punch'. Comments were made about consistency and quality with further comments that tourists don't recognise borders of counties as such so why claim local as just Carlow?

## When you think of local produce how local is local?



**5. The survey asked – Is there an enthusiasm in the Carlow food and drink sector to boost Carlow’s reputation as a food and drink destination?**

- 99 per cent of the 56 businesses responded to say yes
- One per cent responded to say no

**Insight**

The majority said yes but businesses flagged up areas of concern such as one business who responded by saying that there are people who try providing quality products locally but traceability is an issue, – i.e. too much red tape. That business said they are creating their own meat products and smoking their own meats but highlighted that they feel there is not enough support. They believed what they are doing is being discouraged by HSE and other food bodies.

Others commented they believe Carlow has an excellent food and drink story, but the story is not narrated so they believe this needs to happen in order to ensure supermarkets, restaurants and pubs use what’s on their doorstep. Marketing and PR appears to be a downfall according to respondents.





# Survey Findings and Insights (ctd)

**6. Businesses were asked if they believe Carlow is overlooked for its food and drink offering:**

- 73.21 per cent (41) responded yes
- 26.79 (15) responded no

**Insight**

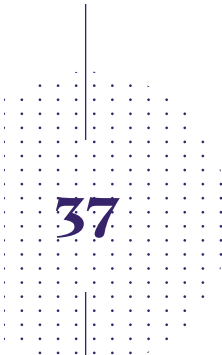
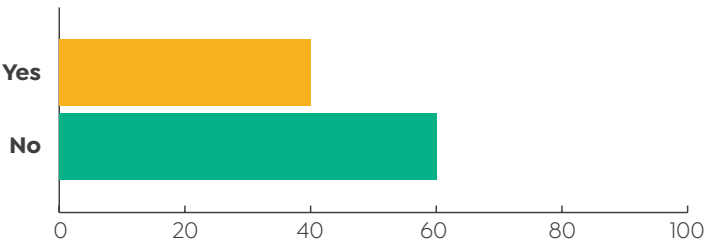
Respondents commented that there are some fantastic stories to be told. There are distillers like Silver Spear, and even though they are from Carlow, no-one outside of Carlow identifies with them as a Carlow producer. Others mentioned how other counties are telling their story but there has been no narration surrounding Carlow's food and drink scene. Kilkenny and Wexford are two counties highlighted as doing a good job in terms of telling their story, but respondents believe that Carlow is far behind and lacks a sense of place. Others remarked that people from Carlow travel out of the county in order to get a 'special meal'. Overall, the consensus is that there is a lack of awareness about Carlow's food and drink story despite the majority believing there is a good story to tell.

**7. The survey asked businesses what needs to be done to better communicate Carlow's Food and Drink story:**

**All 56 businesses responded to this question. Most comments made highlighted:**

- the lack of PR, marketing and storytelling
- the lack of an all-inclusive brand of Carlow's food and drink offering
- the need for a food story narrative
- the need for collaboration among businesses
- better awareness of where Carlow produce can be purchased
- a lack of an effective network / directory of food and drink producers
- a lack of events which incorporate food and drink
- a lack of Carlow food and drink on menus
- a lack of the general public knowing what's on offer in Carlow

**Do you believe your customers would pay more for local produce?**



- an unawareness of signature dishes and whether there are any or not
- the need for more collaboration with Fáilte Ireland and incoming tour operators and DMCs (Destination Management Companies)

**8. Businesses were surveyed on whether they believe a collaborative approach between businesses will enhance Carlow's food and drink offering?**

- 93 per cent (52) responded to say yes
- 7 per cent (4) responded to say no

## Insight

There is a strong belief that the lack of a marketing and communications campaign under a Carlow food and drink brand is undermining the value that Carlow food and drink promotion could realise for the county. The promotion of Carlow food and drink in a holistic, collaborative and progressive fashion would deliver multiple benefits to the county.

## Accommodation

Accommodation providers in Carlow were surveyed to identify development needs. The questions focused on identifying business/ tourism collaborations, promotion of other businesses, attitudes to use of local food, and food provenance and quality as well as the interest in making changes to the status quo.

**9. Businesses were asked if they were involved in any collaborations with other tourism led businesses e.g. guided tour companies, Destination Management Companies etc.**

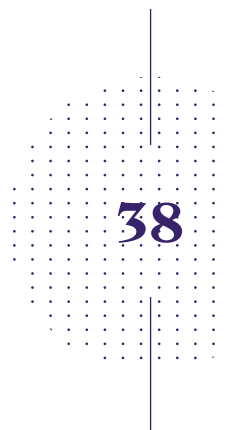
- 5 per cent of companies indicated that they were involved in a collaboration.

**10. They were asked if they felt they could improve their food and drink experience.**

- 91 per cent indicated that they believed there was room for improvement.

**11. The businesses were asked if food provenance was important to them, and to their customers.**

- In both cases, 91 per cent of businesses indicated that food provenance was important.



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# Survey Findings and Insights (ctd)

### Insight

The answers from the accommodation businesses gave good direction around the likely needs from a food strategy. Some accommodation providers are currently engaging with tourism led companies, but many are not and much more can be done to capitalise on the opportunity. There is also an obvious need to develop the quality and communicate provenance of the food and drink offering experienced by those staying in Carlow. Almost all providers identified this need.

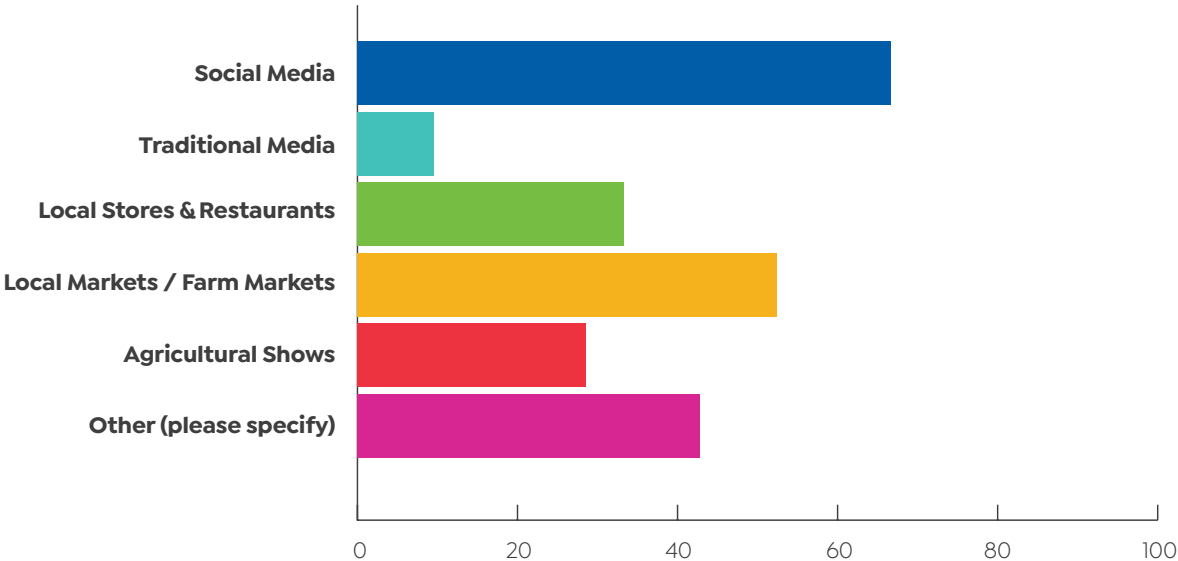
### Restaurants, Pubs, Chefs & Cookery Schools

This section focused on identifying the use of local food (and reasons behind it), the development and execution of food events, the desired output from a food strategy and business to business promotion.

Sourcing of local food was examined.

The vast majority (92 per cent) of food providers who responded currently use at least some Carlow food. The use of local eggs, cheeses, meat and fruit is relatively common and some also use local drinks. Some companies also use product from neighbouring counties as well as from Carlow.

### Where do you promote your products?



## 12. Businesses were asked if they believed their customers valued local produce.

- 92 per cent said yes. However, when restaurants were asked if their customers would pay more for local produce, only 42 per cent said yes, showing that deriving financial value from the use of local food ingredients is difficult. This suggests that, unless local products are significantly better or different to alternative options, they need to be at least price competitive with products from other areas.
- 85 per cent of respondents indicated that they do promote local food and drink producers on menus or supply boards, indicating that the presence of local food does have drawing power.
- 73 per cent actively promote other businesses within Carlow and just over 30 per cent indicated that they hosted food provenance or 'meet the producer' events, although almost 67 per cent would be interested in running them. A minority of restaurants (38 per cent) reported that they employed a chef who would be prepared to undertake cookery demonstrations. Only 15 per cent reported taking part in undertaking cookery

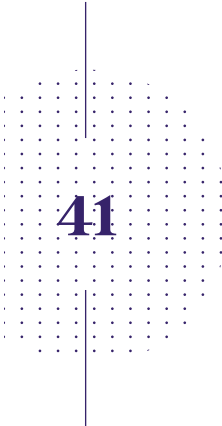
demonstrations to promote themselves at external events.

- 44 per cent stated that they would be interested in becoming part of a chef's forum and the responses indicated a clear line of thought around the need to develop the quality, provenance and story of the Carlow food and drink experience.
- 85 per cent indicated that one desired outcome from the food and drink strategy was to see Carlow recognised as a food and drink destination and there is overwhelming support (90 per cent+) around entering County Carlow into national food and drink awards.

### Insight

Local produce is important to food providers and there is a real interest in developing and delivering an effective food strategy to promote the Carlow story and increase visitor traffic. There is also genuine (although not universal) interest in the development of a Chef's forum which would promote new food ideas and activities, develop new supply chains and contribute to the Carlow Food Story. Food providers are also quite active in promoting other businesses within Carlow and this is something which can be built on as part of the strategy.





# Survey Findings and Insights (ctd)

## Retail

**13. Carlow retailers were surveyed to identify attitudes to local food, value of local food and challenges their businesses face. Only four retailers completed this section, although the information has been augmented by face to face interviews with other businesses.**

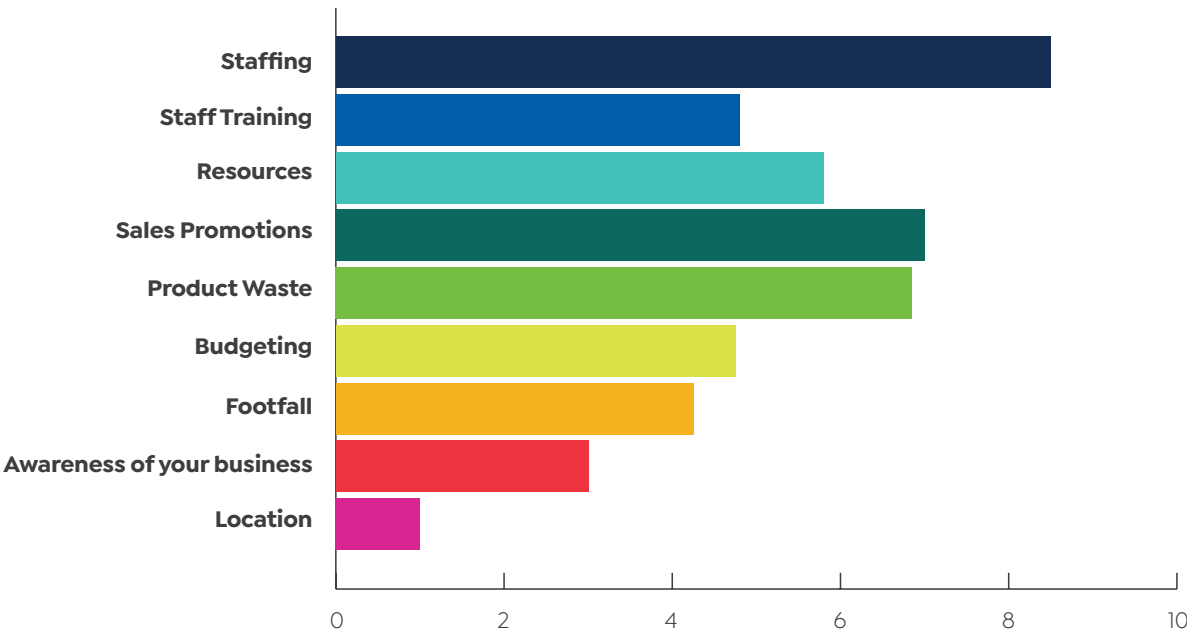
- Businesses ranked their greatest operational challenges. These were mainly focused around staff recruitment and retention, sales promotions and product waste.

- All retail respondents indicated that they would be willing to promote the sale of local Carlow products and may be willing to financially contribute to this for the right story.

## Food And Drink Producers

Food and drink producers were asked a series of questions around the value of local food and food stories to identify business challenges, sales outlets, use of colleges/universities in product development and the presence of food and drink/tourism experiences.

**Retailers were asked to rank out of 10 the following challenges their business faces (10 being the greatest)**



#### 14. When asked if they sourced local products when creating their own products

- 72 per cent said yes, 4 per cent said no, with the remaining 22 per cent stating that this was not applicable to their business. There is a desire to support local producers, although many of the comments also indicated that there were challenges around sourcing suitable local products.

#### The companies asked about their sales channels and indicated the following

- Most sales are made through local and national retailers, with food service also significant. Within the comment section it became clear that many small producers are also selling through farmer's markets, highlighting the importance of this channel. A relatively large number of producers also sell internationally (just over 27 per cent).
- Businesses were questioned over their involvement in collaborations with other tourism led businesses

(e.g. guided tour companies, destination management companies). Only one company out of the 22 which answered this question indicated any collaboration, highlighting an urgent development need. Almost 64 per cent indicated an interest in addressing this. About 20 per cent of food producers offer a food and drink experience, providing a solid base for initial interaction as a county with tourism and destination management companies.

- Over 63 per cent of businesses are interested in working collaboratively with other tourism led businesses to develop their own businesses. Comments around this indicated that there was an interest in cross-promotion, joint planning and in some cases, the creation of a destination event.
- Almost 73 per cent of food businesses attend both local and international food events and festivals to promote their businesses and about 41 per cent of food businesses work in

some way with local or national food colleges or organisations to develop their production.

- Food and drink producers indicated that they felt it was important for the strategy to deliver a permanent marketplace, possibly through a focus on artisan products and very high-quality food.

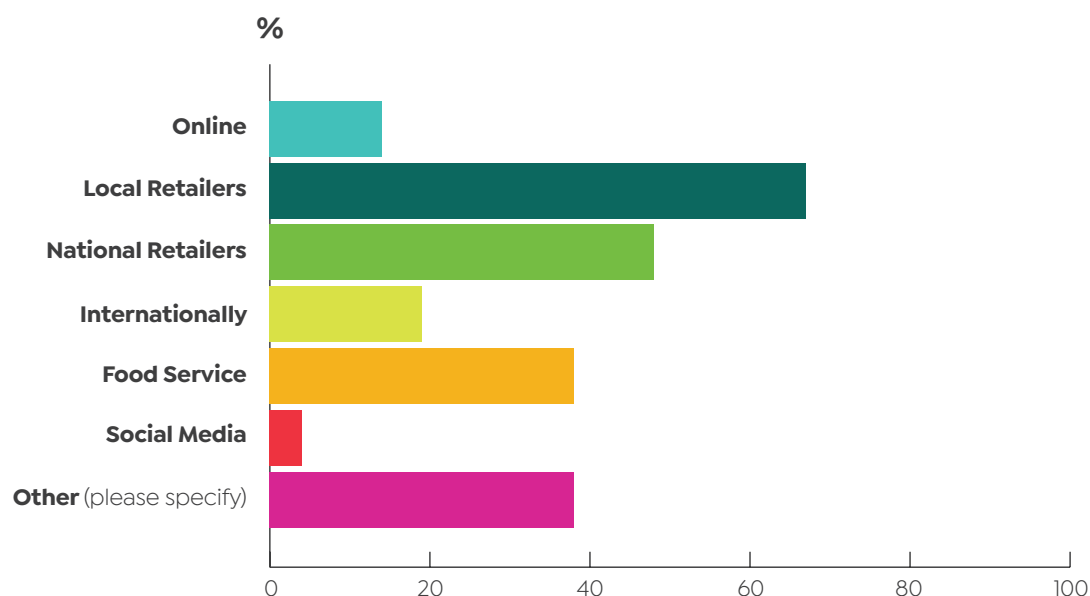
#### Insight

The research in this section revealed several development opportunities and an appetite to address them. The clearest need is to increase business to business collaboration to develop premium supply chains and to deliver tourism events and experiences.

There is support for the delivery of an effective Food Strategy to focus on the delivery of new and regular business and tourism custom.

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#### The Proportion of sales through different channels is indicated on the graph below



# Recommendations: Five Strategic Pillars

This strategy identifies five strategic pillars on which to focus development. Individual recommendations/actions are provided under each pillar, along with the key targets and intended outputs.

Prior to implementation of the pillars, we recommend that some months should be spent in a 'Development Stage' which is intended to enable the creation of a strong foundation on which the Food and Drink Strategy recommendations can be actioned.

Once this development stage is complete, implementation of the recommendations which have been identified under each pillar will encourage growth of the county's food and drink sector.

## Development Stage

Effective delivery of the Food and Drink strategy requires Carlow County Council, the Local Enterprise Office and Fáilte Ireland to undertake preparatory foundational work prior to the main project launch.

This will allow time for Carlow County Council, the Local Enterprise Office and Fáilte Ireland to establish internal processes for funding, management systems and practical activity required to prepare for the implementation of the Food and Drink Strategy.

It will also permit the identification of potential members of the proposed stakeholders forum which should comprise key business people working in the food and drink sector as well as key council departments and public stakeholders.

The overall outcome of the development stage is the confidence that all systems and processes are in place to enable the official launch of the Carlow Food and Drink Strategy.



## **Pillar 1: Development of a Communication Strategy**

**Develop an effective and integrated communications strategy which will promote the consumption of locally produced food and drink enable the Carlow food and drink story to be told**

### **Pillar 1: Research**

The main supporting research is discussed in detail earlier in this document, but in summary, County Carlow lacks narrative. It has talented people, fantastic food and drink produce; it is well positioned geographically but it falls behind other regions because no story has been developed. Business leaders in the county have identified the need for Carlow to develop a food and drink story. They want a county narrative which food and drink producers, accommodation providers, chefs and cookery schools and retail will all be proud to talk about, display and market.

Existing resources can be maximized to fully integrate Carlow's food and drink offering into the wider delivery and communications plans.

The feedback from research reveals that Carlow has a potentially

significant food and drink story to tell but the narrative has not yet been established. Until it is established the food and drink scene remains fragmented and the story remains untold.

- The ambition and enthusiasm to develop a Carlow Food and Drink story, to put Carlow on the map, exists among those working in the sector.
- A great opportunity exists for everyone to come together to work collaboratively to develop the Carlow food and drink story, shape the narrative and deliver that narrative through storytelling on multiple publishing platforms.
- There needs to be better interaction between local food and drink producers, retail, food outlets and Carlow County Council and the Local Enterprise office.



# Recommendations:

## Five Strategic Pillars (ctd.)

### Pillar 1: Recommendations

Carlow currently does not have a food and drink story, but it very much needs to develop its own narrative which will be unique to Carlow, authentic and meaningful for everyone working in the food and drink sector. If Carlow does not do this, it will continue to fall behind other regions which have developed their stories and are now extremely well positioned on Ireland's food map e.g. Boyne Valley Food Series, the Burren Food Trail, A Taste of West Cork, Sligo Food Trail, Food on the Edge, Ballymaloe LitFest, Dublin Food Chain and A Taste of Lough Derg.

Carlow's narrative will support key messaging in the county's tourism strategy.

#### The main targets for Pillar 1

- Carlow to recognise and develop a true sense of pride of place and work forwards, with confidence, to tell the Carlow food and drink story effectively by 2025
- Carlow to recognise the value of the county's food culture and package it under a new brand by the end of 2021 for display on products, in hospitality businesses, on menus, on promotional literature / advertising
- Identification of five key elements of Carlow's culture and the integration of a food experience with each one, focusing on seasonality and value
- A focus on People, Produce and Place with farmers, chefs, hoteliers, restaurants, pubs, retailers and tourism operators collectively telling the Carlow story.

The creation of a sustainable and commercially viable food and

drink sector is dependent on the establishment of fully integrated delivery structures working collaboratively at a strategic and operational level to an agreed strategy and action plan.

#### The Recommendations are:

1. Use the relevant subgroup to steer activity within this pillar.
2. Implementers to work closely with the forum, steering committee and subgroups to establish the narrative for Carlow
  - This will involve developing an authentic brand which will champion Carlow's food and drink sector. This work will sit within an overall PR and marketing strategy based on communicating Carlow's food and drink story
3. As part of an overall PR and marketing strategy the implementers should define key messages and food and drink ambassadors, identify publishing platforms, establish audiences and consider all aspects of the branding
4. Develop a PR and Marketing Strategy which includes:
  - The creation of a food activity calendar
  - The appointment of food ambassadors to help tell the Carlow story
  - The creation and regular maintenance of an online food and drink directory
  - Storytelling
  - Familiarisation trips to present the county to key influencers

## Pillar 1: Outputs

1. Agreement on “The Carlow Food Story”.
2. Creation of a key messaging plan which directs communication and marketing of Carlow food and drink as well as food tourism.
3. A brand (logo) which provides a focus around the communication of Carlow’s food and drink story and which producers, the business community and the public are proud to support and use to promote the consumption of locally produced food
4. The creation of a coordinated activity calendar which incorporates key events in the county (food and non-food related events) and which is key to developing blogs / stories surrounding each of these events
5. Development of an overall PR / marketing plan which also supports the Council’s new development strategy
6. Website creation which includes profiles on chefs, stories of heritage, food tourism, what’s on offer in Carlow and a maintained food and drink directory.
7. The appointment of food ambassadors who tell the Carlow food and drink story and promote the consumption of locally produced food and drink
8. Ongoing engagement with Fáilte Ireland to regularly bring journalists / influencers to County Carlow as well as Destination Management Companies to raise awareness of what the county has to offer



# Recommendations:

## Five Strategic Pillars (ctd.)



### Pillar 2: Create a Stakeholder Forum

Create a Stakeholder Forum with a steering group and subgroups to work with government, Council and other business support organisations to identify and address food & drink business challenges within County Carlow.

### Pillar 2: Research Feedback

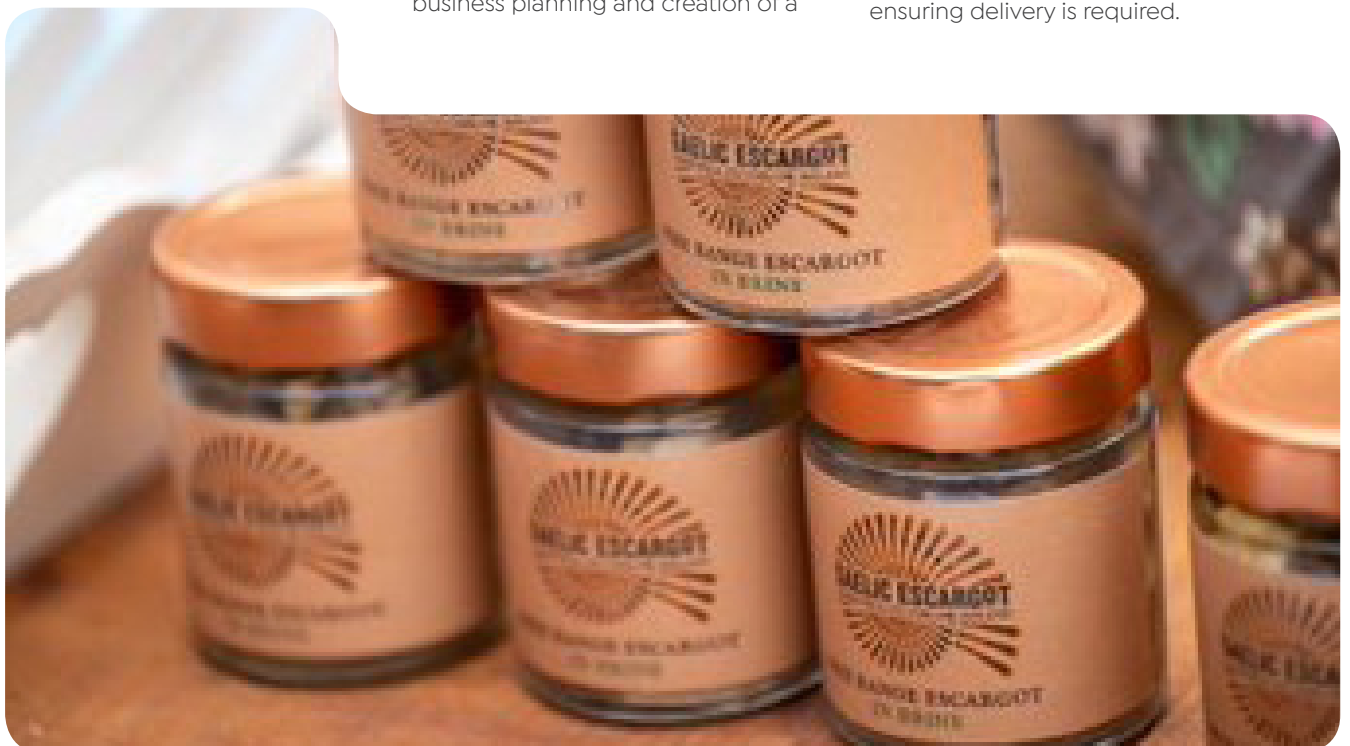
Feedback from the local business community revealed a disconnect between their needs and what the Council and others are delivering. Many business people would welcome a close connection with the Council and business support organisations but felt that no effective method of interacting currently exists. There was also concern that business strategies, reports and development plans are produced, but the findings are either not acted upon, or started and then quietly shelved.

Several businesses indicated their willingness to get involved in joint business planning and creation of a

structured, long-term development plan which benefits food and drink businesses and the county. They are not, however, interested in a 'talking shop'.

Research conducted during the production of this research shows that a complex range of actions are needed to deliver substantial improvement across the Carlow Food and Drink sector. The work required involves all sectors of food and drink production and needs input from a range of businesses, government and support organisations.

An organised and structured method of interacting, planning and ensuring delivery is required.



## Pillar 2: Recommendations

The formation of a Stakeholder Forum which includes a Steering Committee and sub-groups is crucial to the delivery of the strategy. Specifically, their purpose is to ensure that all works carried out align with the objectives of the agreed food and drink strategy and ensuring that those implementing the strategy adhere to the agreed delivery schedule.

The involvement of industry representatives and partnership working with the LEO, the Council and other support organisations is crucial. It drives horizontal and vertical integration and the strategy will not succeed without widespread commercial uptake. Businesses must see that there is a genuine partnership where decisions are made and acted upon by both the business and the non-commercial stakeholders.

### The main targets for Pillar 2 are:

- To develop a forum which provides effective guidance on business needs and development and enables short, medium and long-term strategies to be rapidly developed and implemented.
- To develop a very strong working relationship between food & drink businesses, the local Council and other support organisations within the county.
- To provide a forum whose members are responsible for overseeing the delivery of agreed actions and in some cases, delivering those actions.

### The Recommendations are:

1. Agree and establish a Stakeholders Forum which will enable action focused engagement between government, Council, business support organisations and local food and drink businesses.
2. Define and agree the remit of the forum to ensure that it delivers benefit to Food and Drink businesses within the country.
3. Create a steering group from the members within the Forum. This steering group will oversee the management of the group and will agree key targets and overall direction. The steering group will oversee the creation of subgroups to address key business challenges and will define the remit of the activity of each subgroup. The steering group should include representation from:
  - 4-6 key food and drink businesses
  - Carlow County Council
  - The Local Enterprise Office
  - Tourism organisations
4. Create sub-groups which report to the main Steering Committee and are responsible for driving delivery of individual components of the Food and Drink Strategy. The sub-group members will be drawn from the whole membership of the forum. Sub-groups should include a focus on the following areas:
  - Business supports
  - Creation of business collaborations
  - Regional working
  - Creation of food and tourism events and activities to attract visitors



# Structure of Steering Group and Subgroups



## Pillar 2: Outputs

- 1. Representation:** The creation of a functioning Stakeholder Forum with members drawn from a range of businesses and organizations. The Forum membership will contain at least 50% business people.
- 2. Expertise:** The creation of a Stakeholder Forum, Steering Group and Sub-Groups with a wide range of expertise including food and drink production, legislation, funding, finance & law.
- 3. Challenge identification:** The forum will identify existing and upcoming challenges to business in Carlow.
- 4. Target setting & Planning:** The Forum will identify methods of addressing the challenges identified and will put plans in place.
- 5. Delivery:** The Forum will oversee delivery of the agreed plans through a range of subgroups drawn from the overall Forum membership.

# Recommendations:

## Five Strategic Pillars (ctd.)



### **Pillar 3: Develop Food and Agri-Tourism**

**Support the tourism strategy through developing business clusters which deliver unique, bookable, world-class food experiences, whilst working with tourism organisations to put Carlow on the Map.**

#### **Pillar 3: Research**

The lack of business interaction in Carlow has been highlighted earlier in this study. This results in reduced learning opportunities and the ability to jointly develop either supply chains or tourism experiences. This means that Carlow does not offer many truly world-class, bookable visitor experiences. The absence of a clearly defined Carlow food story also reduces the ability of the county to attract visitors.

Business Clustering has been successfully used in many other regions to address areas of weakness and develop robust supply chains and visitor experiences. Although some Carlow businesses offer visitor and food experiences, successful clustering would enable the development of many more, helping to develop the Carlow food and drink story, providing the material for marketing whilst attracting new visitors to the area.

Businesses in Carlow recognise that the potential for a strong food

culture exists but there is a real need to anchor that culture in the stories and history of the county. Storytelling is seen as essential, and key messages must be built and communicated. Currently the county's businesses and food venues are not effectively represented, and a joined-up approach is required.

Business clusters are geographic concentrations of interconnected companies and institutions in a particular field. They can include businesses producing similar products, or businesses which are in some way linked. Business clusters could be transformational for the Carlow food sector. Successful clusters would focus on two main areas.

- 1.** Business improvement and development of high integrity supply chains
- 2.** The development of food and tourism experiences

Businesses believe that food and drink experiences need to be

# Recommendations:

## Five Strategic Pillars (ctd.)

created to showcase provenance through storytelling. Local produce should be championed through these stories, through retail displays, hospitality menus, food ambassadors and by entering awards. This will help connect Carlow's food culture while establishing a sense of place.

There is considerable enthusiasm among the business community for the development of the Carlow food and drink story through a communications strategy. This will promote local chefs and restaurants, events and business clusters. Such stories would be communicated to Fáilte Ireland and used within a promotion and marketing strategy. Everyone recognises the Carlow food and drink story has not yet been established and they understand how vital this is in order to grow businesses working in the sector while attracting new visitors to the area. Fáilte Ireland will be key to providing support and advice in terms of marketing visitor experiences to a global audience. Food and tourism are inextricably linked; however, this is not yet evident in Carlow. There is a clear need for additional, coordinated food and drink led events in Carlow. The opportunity to involve food in non-food events needs to be explored and developed.

Fáilte Ireland's Food and Drink Strategy states that in 2017, an estimated €2billion was spent by overseas tourists and domestic holiday makers on food and drink. By investing in food and drink as part of Ireland's tourism offering, and increasing the overall number of

visitors to Ireland, Fáilte Ireland aims to grow the value of this spend by €400 million to €2.4 billion by 2023. It states that by continuing to support and enable local and regional food tourism offerings to visitors, Fáilte Ireland will facilitate growth multipliers and economic retention across local communities.

Research indicates that over a third of tourist spending is devoted to food. Even though culinary tourists spend more on food and beverage, there are many more non-culinary tourists to tap into. For culinary tourists, food is the primary motivation for travelling to a destination. Visitors want to try new foods, taste foods in their traditional context, or dine at celebrated restaurants. For most tourists to Ireland, good food experiences are not the primary reason for visiting, but they help to determine destination choice and contribute greatly to enhancing a holiday and creating good memories– in the way that, for example, visitors experience food as part of the culture of a destination such as Italy. To secure strong advocacy for food in Ireland and to improve revenue, Fáilte Ireland says Ireland needs to create compelling food and drink experiences that appeal not just to culinary tourists but to most visitors.

Carlow needs to tap into these ambitions in order to place the county as a foodie destination in Ireland. Carlow needs to build on its offering and tell the story of what this county can offer visitors. Working collaboratively with Fáilte Ireland will help attract Destination Management

Companies (DMCs) to bring their guests to the county.

### **Pillar 3 Recommendations**

#### **The targets for Pillar 3 include:**

- The identification of potential new food and drink experiences for Carlow
- To develop a food trail for food and drink experiences
- The building of business chains to deliver the food and drink experiences.
- The delivery of an additional 10 world-class food and drink experiences in Carlow by 2025
- The interweaving of Carlow food and drink experiences into national tourism strategies and publicity material.
- An increase in overseas visitor numbers for Carlow from 79,000 to 110,000+ by 2025
- An increase in domestic trips from 228,000 to 300,000 by 2025

- An increase in revenue generated from overseas visitors to over 60million euros
- An increase in revenue generated from domestic trips to over 45million euros

#### **The Recommendations are:**

1. Use the relevant subgroup and tourism expert to steer the development of business clusters.
  - Identify potential food and drink experiences which could be used to attract visitors to Carlow.
  - Identify potential development of food & drink quality and stories to offer unique products to visitors to County Carlow.
  - Identify key people and organisations who can cluster to create a range of authentic food and drink experiences which will demonstrate food culture and a sense of place.





# Recommendations: Five Strategic Pillars (ctd.)

**2.** Build business clusters to increase food tourism to Carlow

- The subgroup must agree the final areas to be addressed, but should include the following:

- 1.** Development of food culture
- 2.** Development of world class visitor food experiences
- 3.** Product development/food innovation

- Clusters should be goal-oriented and time-bound

**3.** Create a subgroup to oversee and develop close links with Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, The Irish Restaurant Association's Foodie Destination award, Blas na hEireann, Irish Food Awards and Origin Green. The subgroup will also encourage and engage with the Taste the Island initiative

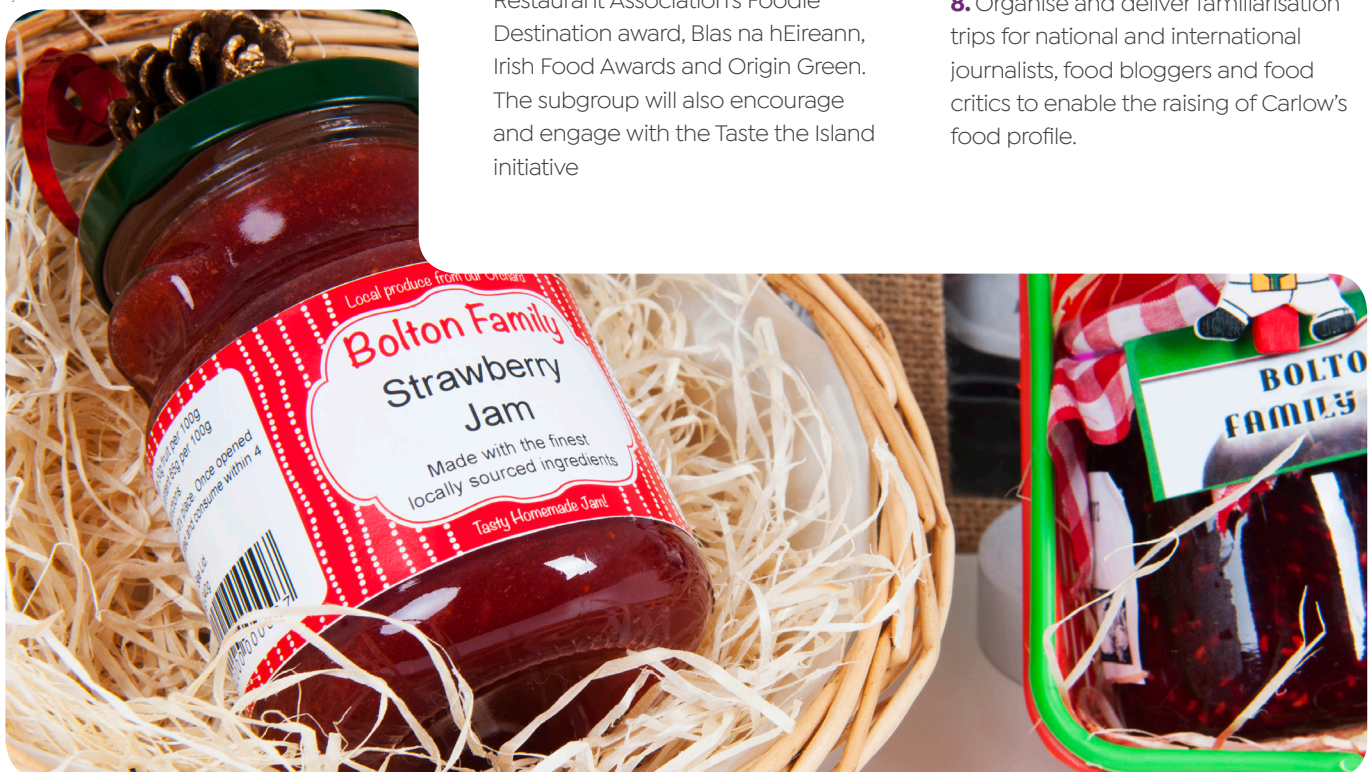
**4.** Engage with tourism bodies to raise awareness of the Carlow food scene and increase the number of tourists to the area

**5.** Identify local foodies and experts who are aware of and enthused about Carlow's food and drink story to act as ambassadors in tourism and business contexts

**6.** Create a comprehensive programme of food and drink led events in Carlow and represent Carlow food at selected non-food events

**7.** Pro-actively enter national and international awards to promote Carlow as a food and drink destination

**8.** Organise and deliver familiarisation trips for national and international journalists, food bloggers and food critics to enable the raising of Carlow's food profile.



### Pillar 3: Outputs

**1.** The use of a subgroup from the members of the main steering group and tourism expert to support the delivery of the following:

- a.** Mapping of the key businesses which are appropriate for each business cluster
- b.** Production of guidance around the outputs of each business cluster
- c.** Production of a list of key people and organisations who can cluster to create a range of authentic food and drink tourism-led experiences which will demonstrate food culture and a sense of place
- d.** Production of a list of key people and organisations who can cluster to address key business development challenges

**2.** The creation of 5 business clusters

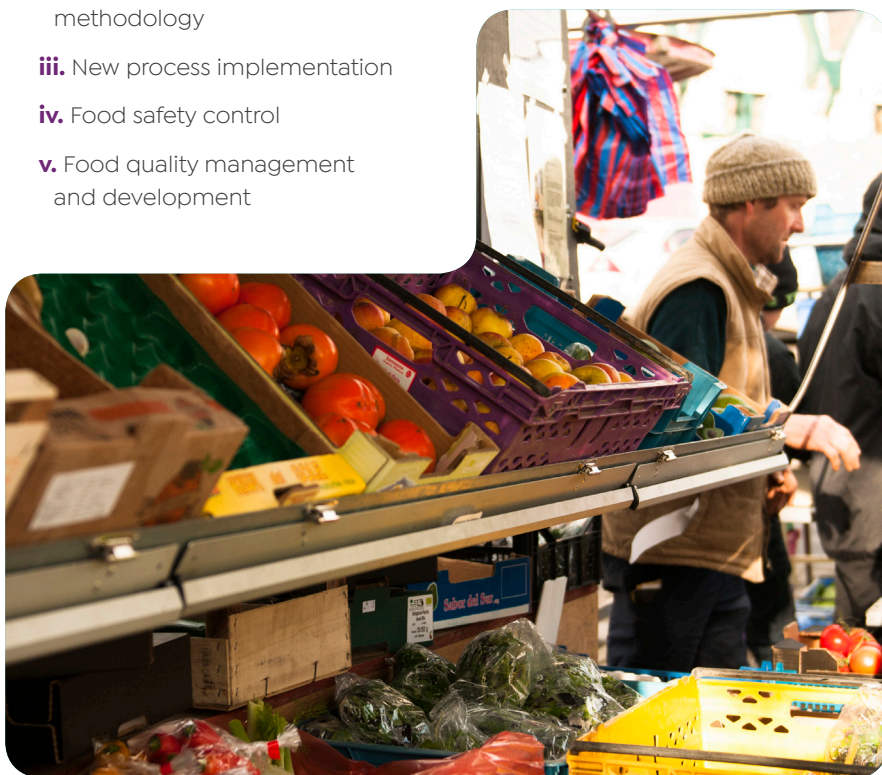
- a. Cluster 1:** Focused on adding significant value to Carlow's food and drink story in terms of creating authentic food and drink experiences for those visiting the county. This group will include chefs, restaurateurs, accommodation providers and a tourism representative.

**b. Cluster 2:** Focused on the development of 2 additional world class visitor food experiences annually

- i.** Identification of existing food experiences which will draw food tourists to County Carlow.
- ii.** The delivery of 10 new, world-class food experiences over a 5-year period.

**c. Cluster 3:** Focused on food product innovation and development

- i.** Exposure of businesses to developing world food trends
- ii.** Craft food development methodology
- iii.** New process implementation
- iv.** Food safety control
- v.** Food quality management and development



# Recommendations: Five Strategic Pillars (ctd.)

**d. Cluster 4:** Focused on creation of conditions to encourage new business and business growth

**i.** Availability of facilities in which to commence new food businesses or expand existing ones.

**ii.** Commercial mentoring to enable development.

**e. Cluster 5:** Focused on the development of environmental, social and economic sustainability in Carlow businesses.

**i.** Identification of the environmental impact of Carlow businesses.

**ii.** Identification of methods of reducing impact and improving sustainability.

**3.** The development and maintenance of strong links with the key tourism bodies – Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland. This is key to raising the bar with Carlow's food and drink businesses in terms of working to high industry standards while tapping into national initiatives such as the Taste the Island campaign

**4.** Joint working with Fáilte Ireland in developing and maintaining relationships with leading Destination Management

Companies who are responsible for creating itineraries for their overseas customers. Telling Carlow's food and drink story, and working with the tourism bodies, will be key to creating authentic experiences in order to attract these high spending visitors

**5.** Use of the appointed food and drink ambassadors to continue to tell Carlow's food and drink story

**6.** Content created around food and non-food related events in the county. The county's story needs to be written and shared across multiple publishing platforms to build on the county's reputation for its food and drink offering

**7.** Preparation work to support businesses in entering national / international awards from 2020-2025. There needs to be an understanding of the requirements for entering key awards e.g.: The Irish Restaurant Association's Foodie Destination award, Blas na hEireann and Irish Food Awards.

**8.** Joint work with Fáilte Ireland from 2020-2025 in terms of getting the county ready to attract journalists, influencers and food critics from UK media and further afield to secure travel features



## Pillar 4: Training and Business Support

Identify and implement the necessary training and business support needed for the industry

### Pillar 4: Research Support

Businesses require support. Financial support, commercial and technical advice and ready access to skilled staff all help business startups or existing businesses to flourish.

As shown earlier in the document, a comprehensive portfolio of business support is available within Carlow from a range of providers including Teagasc, Institute of Technology Carlow, the LEO and independent consultants. However, discussions revealed that this support, while useful, is not ideal for all businesses and is only accessed by a proportion. Feedback suggested that whilst good technical advice is available, it is much more difficult to access commercial help. Feedback has identified the need for this additional commercially led mentoring to cover:

- **Ideation:** Some proposed business ideas have a strong commercial basis and are likely to find success. Other ideas, although creative, are unlikely to be a commercial success.
- **Customer approach and management:** Commercial customer management is a key to underpinning business growth. Good customer service is essential and is a learned skill.
- Training to help small food producers more effectively meet the requirements of the food

service and food retail outlets. Not all food producers fully understand the needs of their customers and this can lead to poor customer service and failed supply chains. Certain business practices and techniques can help food businesses to more effectively meet consumer demand and the provision of advice and training around this can substantially improve business performance.

The research has also identified the need to present the food and drink industry in a much more positive light to schools and colleges to encourage pupils to see it as a positive career path. It also identified the absence of facilities in which small food businesses can either start or expand.

### Networking and Collaborative Working

Businesses can learn from each other even if they aren't operating in exactly the same sector or producing the same product. In addition, businesses which are regularly in contact often develop commercial relationships, providing mutual benefit. Research work demonstrated that Carlow has very few business networking activities, resulting in limited awareness of the activity of other businesses. Few have worked together to develop supply chains or tourist experiences. To address this, there is a need to find a system of joining and networking food businesses to address the obvious gaps.



# Recommendations:

## Five Strategic Pillars (ctd.)

### Pillar 4: Recommendations

#### The main targets for Pillar 4 are:

- The design and delivery of additional training which addresses current gaps and substantially increases business performance.
- Increased business awareness of the support available (increasing uptake)
- Increased business awareness of best practice (improving business performance)
- The creation of at least 4 facilitated business clusters which focus on improving either business financial performance or business environmental performance.

#### The Recommendations are:

- 1.** Create and maintain a directory of food and drink related businesses in Carlow
- 2.** Use the relevant subgroup to steer activity within this pillar
  - a.** A specific focus on the development of business support is essential and the use of an expert sub-group to drive it is necessary.
- 3.** Create a programme of networking events as a key driver of business promotion, business support and collaborative working
  - a.** Development of business to business relationships
  - b.** Buyer/producer events in key markets
- 4.** Expand business training to include the following topics
  - a.** Commercial testing of product ideas
  - b.** Customer management techniques
  - c.** Managing quality and logistics in the supply chain

**5.** Create business clusters to deliver the following

- a.** Commercial mentoring and ongoing exchange of best practice information
- b.** Environmental, social and economic sustainability

**6.** Examine the role of education and development facilities including food kitchens, incubators and nesting units in the delivery of the food strategy

- a.** The provision of facilities to reduce the risks around business start-up

**7.** Explore the development of better links between industry and the Institute of Technology Carlow to:

- a.** Embed the Institute at the centre of food innovation
- b.** Facilitate the flow of skilled graduates into Carlow Food businesses through the expansion of apprenticeship or bursary schemes

**8.** Examine the potential for the creation of stakeholder-owned organisation responsible for expanding sales from artisan or craft Carlow food businesses. The organisation could potentially undertake the following for these businesses:

- a.** Marketing & promotion
- b.** Sales
- c.** Load aggregation and distribution
- d.** Invoicing and payment.
- e.** Signposting for advice and funding



**Pillar 4:**

**1.** Use of existing evidence in conjunction with additional research to provide a basis on which food business networking events will be designed and the frequency with which they need to be run.

**2.** Delivery of a range of business networking events

**a.** Business to business: These will raise awareness between businesses of the output and activities of other businesses in the county with the specific intention of promoting information/advice exchange, joint working and the creation of tourism events.

**b.** Business to customer: Enabling purchasing businesses to understand the range and quality of production in Carlow and to increase business trading between these businesses.

**c.** Business to local market: Enabling micro and craft food businesses to understand what a well organised and located food market can offer their business.

**d.** Business to tourism events: Driving publicity around the range of food and tourism offerings in Carlow to increase local and visitor uptake of Carlow food.

**e.** Business education events:

Using the Institute of Technology Carlow and other educational establishments to provide/ facilitate a range of business events, as identified by the work of the subgroup.

**3.** Delivery of a minimum of 4 business clusters focusing on improved business performance and improved environmental performance of Carlow food businesses.

**4.** Availability of an expanded range of topics under business training and mentoring

**5.** Production of a report which investigates and draws conclusions around the feasibility of creating food kitchens/micro kitchens/ incubation units/nesting units for businesses including start-ups or existing businesses which are wishing to expand.

**6.** Implementation of a programme which engages with the Institute of Technology Carlow and other educational establishments to create:

**a.** 20 student work placements in food organisations annually.

**b.** 10 Student apprenticeship programmes annually.

**c.** 3 bursary schemes where promising students are sponsored through college or university by a local business.

**7.** Development of a programme which engages with the Institute of Technology Carlow and other educational establishments to substantially increase ongoing contact and support between food businesses and these institutes, driving an increase in food innovation.

**8.** Production of a report which outlines and defines the following:

**a.** Precedent for the development of small producer organisations to represent and develop small regional food businesses.

**b.** Rules around the establishment of such organisations.

**c.** Governance structures

**d.** Funding and support

**e.** Staffing and support

**f.** Services rendered

**g.** Business benefit delivered



# Recommendations:



## Pillar 5: Develop Collaborative Regional Partnerships

Identify and implement the necessary training and business support needed for the industry

### Pillar 5: Research

Discussions with stakeholders indicated a lack of collaboration both inside and outside the county. Most of those interviewed agreed that Carlow has a good story to tell and that there are many successful food businesses within the county. However, the majority also stated that Carlow's small size made it difficult to do many things unilaterally and that there could be a significant benefit from working with other counties in the South East to create an environment in which food businesses are enabled to grow. The key collaborations would need to be developed in conjunction with other counties, but the initial partnership work could include the following:

- Development of food trails and bookable food experiences
- Development of joint promotional programmes
- Investigation of joint work to encourage food business start-up or expansion

- Provision of detailed technical support.
- Access to business support services.
- Ongoing evaluation of potential mutually beneficial regional projects

### Pillar 5: Recommendations

The targets for Pillar 5 include:

- Identification of two to five potential collaborations between food and drink producers in Carlow and other counties.
- Identification of three to six potential collaborations between food and drink producers and other businesses in Carlow and other counties including accommodation providers, restaurants, cafes and tourist attractions.
- Identification of up to five projects or initiatives which can be developed alongside other counties with a key focus on delivering benefit to food and drink businesses.

- 1.** Establish a sub-group of the Stakeholder forum to work on establishing cross county working practices, including joint planning, joint delivery, shared events etc.
- 2.** Approach other counties to investigate the potential of establishing a joint working group to identify opportunities for working together.
- 3.** Approach food and drink businesses in Carlow and other counties to establish joint working across a range of small-scale projects to develop food attractions.
- 4.** Jointly identify key business needs and opportunities at county level and design projects and initiatives to address these.
- 5.** Create and deliver networking events across the South East Region which are specifically designed to assist food and drink businesses develop products, create attractions and deliver food experiences.

### Pillar 5: Outputs

- The establishment of formal working relationships with individual businesses and on a collective level with South Eastern Counties in order to develop and deliver projects which benefit food and drink businesses in the area.
- The design and execution of a minimum of five joint projects or initiatives over the 5-year period of the strategy.
- The creation of a range of food experiences and trails which cut across county boundaries and draw people to the region.
- The creation of joint training and business supports.

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# Key Actions flowing from the recommendations

The following tables are drawn from the 5 recommendation pillars. The Underpinning work table outlines the general actions necessary to enable delivery under each pillar. The five tables after this outline actions required under each pillar.

## Underpinning Work

2020 Actions	2021 Actions	2022 Actions	2023 Actions	2024 Actions
Identification of potential members of the Stakeholder Forum/Steering group	Review membership of Stakeholder Forum/Steering group	Review membership of Steering Group/ Forum	Review membership of Steering Group/ Forum	Review membership of Steering Group/ Forum
<b>Action:</b> Local Enterprise Office	<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum, Council	<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum, Council	<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum, Council	<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum, Council
Forum framework and terms of reference agreed Forum committee and members appointed	Establishment of database for communications for all food, drink, hospitality, foodservice, bars and markets stakeholders PR campaign profiling the forum and their work	Brand management and communications training for forum members Events management training for forum members PR campaign profiling the forum and their work Strategic mid-term review of forum and strategy, including recommendation for change	PR campaign profiling the forum and their work	PR campaign profiling the forum and their work
<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum	<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum, Project Manager, PR Company	<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum, Project Manager, PR company	<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum, Project Manager, PR company	<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum, Project Manager, PR company
Agree resource to act as principle implementer of the strategy recommendations. Appoint either an employee or Consultancy Firm. Appoint firm with PR/Press capability				

2020 Actions	2021 Actions	2022 Actions	2023 Actions	2024 Actions
<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum, Local Enterprise Office				
Stakeholder survey to agree key needs and aims Forum 5-year strategy agreed (reviewed and evaluated annually)	Review of strategy. Suggested changes.	Review of strategy. Suggested changes.	Review of strategy. Suggested changes.	Review 5-year strategy to date and compile published finding on success and learnings Review success and learning of the forum and agree changes to structure and strategy if required
<b>Action:</b> Local Enterprise Office	<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum, Local Enterprise Office	<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum, Local Enterprise Office	<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum, Local Enterprise Office	<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum, Local Enterprise Office
Determine budget required for future In Carlow Activities.	Budget secured and allocation agreed	Manage budget against spending plan	Manage budget against spending plan	Manage budget against spending plan
<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum, Local Enterprise Office	<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum, Local Enterprise Office	<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum, Local Enterprise Office	<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum, Local Enterprise Office	<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum, Local Enterprise Office
Agree method of increasing membership of Forum	Target 25 members by year end	Target 30 members by year end	Target 35 members by 2025	Target 50 members by year end
<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum	<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum	<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum	<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum	<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum
Scope the potential for joint working with other counties. Identify potential areas of co-opetition	Meeting with potential agency and regional partners to discuss co-opetition Agree ways of working Agree three potential projects to scope out	Appoint steering committee Agree which projects to pursue and identify funding sources Deliver strategic action plan for projects Apply for funding for 2023	Forum steering group to meet with potential partners to identify potential for co-opetition projects Agree 2 co-opetition projects and secure funding for both Scope out marketing and communications framework Agree budget and secure same for 2024	Funding secured and allocated by project. Project lead, deliverables, resources and timelines agreed.
<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum, Local Enterprise Office, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum, Local Enterprise Office, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum, Local Enterprise Office, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum, Local Enterprise Office, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum, Local Enterprise Office, Implementer
Funding sources identified and applied for 2021	Funding sources identified and applied for 2022	Funding sources identified and applied for 2023	Funding sources identified and applied for 2024	Funding sources identified and applied for 2025
<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum, Local Enterprise Office, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum, Local Enterprise Office, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum, Local Enterprise Office, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum, Local Enterprise Office, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Stakeholder Forum, Local Enterprise Office, Implementer





**Pillar 1: Develop an effective and integrated communications strategy which will promote the consumption of locally produced food and enable telling of the Carlow story**

- Carlow to recognise and develop a true sense of pride of place and work forwards, with confidence, to tell the Carlow food and drink story effectively by 2025
- Carlow to recognise the value of the county's food culture and package it under a new brand by the end of 2021 for display on products, in hospitality businesses, on menus, on promotional literature / advertising
- Identification of five key elements of Carlow's culture and the integration of a food experience with each one, focusing on seasonality and value
- A focus on People, Produce and Place with farmers, chefs, hoteliers, restaurants, pubs, retailers and tourism operators collectively telling the Carlow story.

2020 Actions	2021 Actions	2022 Actions	2023 Actions	2024 Actions
Identify a design organisation and work with them to develop a Carlow Food and Drink Brand. This must consider eligibility of businesses, eligibility of food, membership types and membership requirements. Key 'brand attributes and values' which underpin the development of a brand to be agreed.	Launch InCarlow Food and Drink Brand in conjunction with member businesses. Plan large Carlow publicity events to be delivered from 2022-2024	Maintain the promotion of In Carlow Food and Drink anchored on a new Carlow food and drink celebration... "A month of Food and Drink In Carlow"	Review and maintain Carlow Food and Drink Brand. Explore option to extend the "Month of Food and Drink" to other counties on partnership basis. Scope out marketing and communications framework. Agree budget and secure same for 2024	Review and maintain Carlow Food and Drink Brand. Organise and hold "In Carlow Food and Drink Festival" (possibly in partnership with other regional offices). Review success of strategy and draft proposal for 20205
<b>Action:</b> Local Enterprise Office and Forum	<b>Action:</b> Local Enterprise Office, Forum and Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Local Enterprise Office and Forum	<b>Action:</b> Local Enterprise Office and Forum
Use Forum to identify and agree key Carlow Food and Drink narrative and messaging around the 'Carlow Food and Drink' story	Continue to collect information on existing and new aspects of the Carlow Food Scene and use it in the messaging around Carlow Food.	Continue to collect information on existing and new aspects of the Carlow Food Scene and use it in the messaging around Carlow Food.	Continue to collect information on existing and new aspects of the Carlow Food Scene and use it in the messaging around Carlow Food.	Continue to collect information on existing and new aspects of the Carlow Food Scene and use it in the messaging around Carlow Food.
<b>Action:</b> Local Enterprise Office, Forum & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum and Implementer /PR	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR
Create key messaging plan (KMP) for communication of Carlow Food and Drink attributes. Use KMP to deliver promotion of the Carlow Food and Drink attributes	Updating and ongoing use of the KMP	Updating and ongoing use of the KMP	Updating and ongoing use of the KMP	Updating and ongoing use of the KMP
<b>Action:</b> Local Enterprise Office, Forum and Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR

2020 Actions	2021 Actions	2022 Actions	2023 Actions	2024 Actions
Identify publishing platforms, establish audiences and consider all aspects of the branding	Review of existing publishing platforms and ongoing use of platforms to publicise Carlow Food and Drink Stories	Review of existing publishing platforms and ongoing use of platforms to publicise Carlow Food and Drink Stories	Review of existing publishing platforms and ongoing use of platforms to publicise Carlow Food and Drink Stories	Review of existing publishing platforms and ongoing use of platforms to publicise Carlow Food and Drink Stories
<b>Action:</b> Local Enterprise Office and Forum	<b>Action:</b> Forum and Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR
Identify key food activity taking place in the County	Review food activity and use it to update Food Activity Calendar.	Review food activity and use it to update Food Activity Calendar.	Review food activity and use it to update Food Activity Calendar.	Review food activity and use it to update Food Activity Calendar.
<b>Action:</b> Local Enterprise Office, Forum and Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum and Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR
Create a coordinated activity calendar which incorporates the key food and drink events & use calendar for publicity purposes	Use activity calendar to publicise Carlow Food and Drink activities and businesses.	Use activity calendar to publicise Carlow Food and Drink activities and businesses.	Use activity calendar to publicise Carlow Food and Drink activities and businesses.	Use activity calendar to publicise Carlow Food and Drink activities and businesses.
<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR
Engage with Fáilte Ireland and other tourism organisations (including DMCs) throughout the delivery of pillar 1 activity to enable national and international promotion of Carlow.	Update and use the PR/Marketing plan	Update and use the PR/Marketing plan	Update and use the PR/Marketing plan	Update and use the PR/Marketing plan
<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR
Develop an overall PR / marketing plan which also supports the council's tourism strategy.	Publish Website. Ensure website is constantly updated through changing and adding of stories.	Ensure website is constantly updated through changing and adding of stories.	Ensure website is constantly updated through changing and adding of stories.	Ensure website is constantly updated through changing and adding of stories.
<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR
Create a website to raise the profile of Carlow Food and Drink, including profiles on chefs, stories of heritage, food tourism, what's on offer in Carlow and a maintained food and drink directory.	Create additional stories and information to add to the website. Constantly update website.	Use food ambassadors to tell the Carlow Food and Drink story. Constantly update website.	Review the ambassadors & add/change as required. Use food ambassadors to tell the Carlow Food and Drink story. Constantly update website.	Review the ambassadors & add/change as required. Use food ambassadors to tell the Carlow Food and Drink story. Constantly update website.
<b>Action:</b> Forum & Implementer/PR & web company	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Forum & Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR

2020 Actions	2021 Actions	2022 Actions	2023 Actions	2024 Actions
Forum website development (members only) on the In Carlow food and drink website	Ongoing liaison with tourism organisations. Update website.	Ongoing liaison with tourism organisations. Update website.	Ongoing liaison with tourism organisations. Update website.	Ongoing liaison with tourism organisations. Update website.
<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Forum & Implementer/PR & Council	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR
Tender extension of the In Carlow brand to include food and drink Tender for the marketing and communications strategy development of the Carlow food and drink brand. Agency should deliver a clear county Carlow food and drink narrative that supports the Carlow brand identity Creation and publishing of Carlow food and drink brand guidelines				
<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR				
Identify and appoint food ambassadors who can represent the Food and Drink strategy from 2021 onwards.	Review the ambassadors & add/change as required. Utilise Food Ambassadors within the overall communications plan.	Review the ambassadors & add/change as required. Utilise Food Ambassadors within the overall communications plan.	Review the ambassadors & add/change as required. Utilise Food Ambassadors within the overall communications plan.	Review the ambassadors & add/change as required. Utilise Food Ambassadors within the overall communications plan.
<b>Action:</b> Forum & Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Forum & Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Forum & Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Forum & Implementer/PR	<b>Action:</b> Forum & Implementer/PR
Funding sources identified and applied for 2021	Funding sources identified and applied for 2022	Funding sources identified and applied for 2023	Funding sources identified and applied for 2024	Funding sources identified and applied for 2025
<b>Action:</b> Local Enterprise Office, Forum	<b>Action:</b> Local Enterprise Office, Forum	<b>Action:</b> Local Enterprise Office, Forum	<b>Action:</b> Local Enterprise Office, Forum	<b>Action:</b> Local Enterprise Office



**Pillar 2: Create a Stakeholder Forum with a Steering Group and Subgroups to work with government, Council and other business support organisations to identify and address food & drink business challenges within County Carlow.**

- To develop a forum which provides effective guidance on business needs and development and enables short, medium and long-term strategies to be rapidly developed and implemented.
- To develop a very strong working relationship between food & drink businesses, Carlow County Council and other support organisations within the county.
- To provide a forum whose members are responsible for overseeing the delivery of agreed actions and in some cases, delivering those actions.

2020 Actions	2021 Actions	2022 Actions	2023 Actions	2024 Actions
Identify key businesses and organisations which can become members of the forum.	Ensure that full forum meets on a quarterly basis.  Forum meeting to recognise business challenges and the steps being taken to address them	Ensure that full forum meets on a quarterly basis.  Forum meeting to recognise business challenges and the steps being taken to address them	Ensure that full forum meets on a quarterly basis.  Forum meeting to recognise business challenges and the steps being taken to address them	Ensure that full forum meets on a quarterly basis.  Forum meeting to recognise business challenges and the steps being taken to address them
<b>Action:</b> Local Enterprise Office	<b>Action:</b> Forum	<b>Action:</b> Forum	<b>Action:</b> Forum	<b>Action:</b> Forum
Identify key individuals for membership of the Forum Steering Committee	Operate steering committee	Operate steering committee	Operate steering committee	Operate steering committee
<b>Action:</b> Local Enterprise Office	<b>Action:</b> Forum	<b>Action:</b> Forum	<b>Action:</b> Forum	<b>Action:</b> Forum
Agree the necessary subgroups. Agree the members of each of the subgroup.	Operate subgroups	Operate subgroups	Operate subgroups	Operate subgroups
<b>Action:</b> Forum	<b>Action:</b> Forum	<b>Action:</b> Forum	<b>Action:</b> Forum	<b>Action:</b> Forum
Agree delivery targets Agree delivery programme	Agree delivery targets Agree delivery programme	Agree delivery targets Agree delivery programme	Agree delivery targets Agree delivery programme	Agree delivery targets Agree delivery programme
<b>Action:</b> Forum	<b>Action:</b> Forum	<b>Action:</b> Forum	<b>Action:</b> Forum	<b>Action:</b> Forum



**Pillar 3: Support the tourism strategy through developing business clusters which deliver unique, bookable, world-class food experiences, whilst working with tourism organisations to put Carlow on the map.**

- Identification of potential new food and drink experiences for Carlow
- The building of business chains to deliver the food and drink experiences.
- The delivery of an additional 10 world-class food and drink experiences in Carlow by 2025
- The interweaving of Carlow food and drink experiences into national tourism strategies and publicity material.
- An increase in overseas visitor numbers for Carlow from 79,000 to 110,000+ by 2025
- An increase in domestic trips from 228,000 to 300,000 by 2025
- An increase in revenue generated from overseas visitors to over 60million euros
- An increase in revenue generated from domestic trips to over 45million euros

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2020 Actions	2021 Actions	2022 Actions	2023 Actions	2024 Actions
Development of In Carlow food tourism / agri-tourism / markets initiatives Development of action plan to build on opportunities, and remedy challenges Funding secured for action plan Project manager appointed Customer and stallholder survey to identify market challenges and opportunities	Identify potential regional and agency partners  Forum steering group to meet with potential partners to identify potential for co-opetition projects	Run A Month of Food and Drink with partnership counties/agencies	Agree 2 co-opetition projects and secure funding for both Scope out marketing and communications framework Agree budget and secure same for 2024	Deliver 2 co-opetition projects in partnership with counties and agencies  Explore option to extend the In Carlow Month of Food and Drink to other counties on partnership basis
<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer
Profile all food tourism, Agri-tourism and market experiences In Carlow  Development of In Carlow food tourism, Agri-tourism and market trails and experiences	Co-opetition with agencies to partner on promotional initiatives for In Carlow food tourism, Agri-tourism and markets	Profile all food tourism, Agri-tourism and market experiences In Carlow Development of In Carlow food tourism, Agri-tourism and market trails and experiences	Identify potential food and drink experiences which could be used to attract visitors to Carlow.  Identify key people and organisations who can cluster to create a range of authentic food and drink experiences which will demonstrate food culture and a sense of place.	Build business clusters to increase food activity within and food tourists to Carlow. The clusters should:  <b>1.</b> Develop of food culture <b>2.</b> Develop of world class visitor food experiences <b>3.</b> Accelerate product development and food innovation
<b>Action:</b> Forum Subgroup, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum Subgroup, Implementer, Council	<b>Action:</b> Forum Subgroup, Implementer, Council	<b>Action:</b> Forum Subgroup, Implementer, Council	<b>Action:</b> Forum Subgroup, Implementer, Council



2020 Actions	2021 Actions	2022 Actions	2023 Actions	2024 Actions
Utilise business mapping to contact all food businesses in Carlow which could potentially become involved in the Carlow Food and Drink Programme. Contact food businesses to create a database of businesses who want to become members of the Carlow Food Strategy Initiative.	Ongoing updating of Carlow Food Producers Database Adding of members to the database.	Ongoing updating of Carlow Food Producers Database Adding of members to the database.	Ongoing updating of Carlow Food Producers Database Adding of members to the database.	Ongoing updating of Carlow Food Producers Database Adding of members to the database.
<b>Action:</b> Forum Subgroup, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum Subgroup, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum Subgroup, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum Subgroup, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum Subgroup, Implementer
<b>Organise Business Cluster 1:</b> Food and Drink Experiences. Include businesses which are able to create multiple high-quality food and drink experiences. Recruit and sign-up businesses to Cluster 1 Recruit chefs, restaurateurs and innovative businesses to this group.	<b>Commence delivery of Cluster 1</b> Research all food and drink experiences available in Carlow. Create a directory of food events. Determine range and availability of experiences. Determine any gaps within the provision of experiences.	<b>Ongoing delivery of Cluster 1</b> Update the directory of food events and experiences. Deliver two additional food and drink experiences in Carlow	<b>Ongoing delivery of Cluster 1</b> Update the directory of food events and experiences. Deliver a further two additional food and drink experiences in Carlow	<b>Ongoing delivery of Cluster 1</b> Update the directory of food events and experiences. Deliver a further two additional food and drink experiences in Carlow
<b>Action:</b> Forum, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Implementer
<b>Organise Business Cluster 2:</b> Cluster focused on the development of 2 world class food experiences. Recruit and sign-up businesses to Cluster 2 Define what a world class food experience is.	<b>Commence delivery of Cluster 2</b> Define a world-class food and drink experience Research examples of world-class food experiences Profile all food tourism, Agri-tourism and market experiences in Carlow Determine which experiences could be created in Carlow. Determine plan to develop 1 world class food experience in 2021	<b>Ongoing delivery of Cluster 2</b> Assist with delivery of the first world class food experience. Determine plan to develop a second world class food experience in 2021 Promote the first world class experience as part of the activity and promotional plan.	<b>Ongoing delivery of Cluster 2</b> Assess effectiveness of delivery of World-Class experience 1 Assist with delivery of the second world class food experience. Promote the two world class experiences as part of the activity and promotional plan.	<b>Ongoing delivery of Cluster 2</b> Assess effectiveness of delivery of World-Class experiences 1 and 2. Examine potential for third world class food experience Promote the two world class experiences as part of the activity and promotional plan. Assess effectiveness of cluster 2 activity Decision making around extension or cessation of the programme.
<b>Action:</b> Forum, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Implementer, Local Enterprise Office	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Implementer, Local Enterprise Office

2020 Actions	2021 Actions	2022 Actions	2023 Actions	2024 Actions
<b>Organise Business Cluster 3:</b> Cluster focused on exposure to new food trends, food types and methods of developing world-leading food in Carlow. Recruit and sign-up businesses to Cluster 3.	<b>Commence delivery of Cluster 3.</b> Carry out visits to key food conferences. Produce reports on key food trends and types which could be used in Carlow. Create workshops designed to introduce the concepts to a range of appropriate business.	<b>Ongoing Delivery of Cluster 3</b> Operate workshops to introduce the concepts to a range of appropriate business. Provide supports to assist businesses in product development and addressing new trends. Hold 2 development workshops to transfer knowledge to other Carlow Businesses.	<b>Ongoing Delivery of Cluster 3</b> Assess uptake of new practice from previous workshops Provide ongoing supports to assist businesses in product development and addressing new trends. Hold 2 development workshops to transfer knowledge to other Carlow Businesses.	<b>Review of Cluster 3</b> Assess effectiveness of cluster 3 activity Decision making around extension or cessation of the programme.
<b>Action:</b> Forum, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Local Enterprise Office/Implementer
Ensure flow of information on food experiences to the Implementer/ PR firm managing publicity.	Ensure flow of information on food experiences to the Implementer/ PR firm managing publicity.	Ensure flow of information on food experiences to the Implementer/ PR firm managing publicity.	Ensure flow of information on food experiences to the Implementer/ PR firm managing publicity.	Ensure flow of information on food experiences to the Implementer/ PR firm managing publicity.
<b>Action:</b> Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Implementer
Update mapping of Carlow food, Agri tourism and market assets Deliver a profile of all food and drink markets in Carlow	Initiate a strong brand presence at local In Carlow Food Tourism, Agri-tourism and market events	Attendance at regional and national trade event with clear objective to increase profile of market ready in Carlow food and drink stakeholders delivered under the In Carlow food and drink brand.	Attendance at regional and national trade event with clear objective to increase profile of market ready in Carlow food and drink stakeholders delivered under the In Carlow food and drink brand.	Deliver 2 co-opetition projects in partnership with counties and agencies Strategic review of food tourism, Agri-tourism and markets project conducted and shared with stakeholders Recommendations presented, and actions agreed for future co-opetition
<b>Action:</b> Forum, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Implementer, Local Enterprise Office	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Implementer, Local Enterprise Office	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Implementer, Local Enterprise Office	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Implementer, Local Enterprise Office
Identify potential developments in food & drink quality, products, events and stories to offer unique products to visitors to County Carlow.	Establish three food tourism / Agri-tourism 1 or 2 day itineraries	Create three key events that raise the In Carlow food and drink brand awareness. E.g. Long Table event, Food or Agri-tourism event, schools food and drink event	Run A Month of Food and Drink in Carlow, to focus on the promotion of 1 and 2 day food and agri-tourism itineraries, markets and producers	A month of Food and Drink in Carlow festival re-run, taking strategic recommendations in account
<b>Action:</b> Local Enterprise Office, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Implementer, Local Enterprise Office	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Implementer, Local Enterprise Office	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Implementer, Local Enterprise Office	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Implementer, Local Enterprise Office

2020 Actions	2021 Actions	2022 Actions	2023 Actions	2024 Actions
Identify potential development and publicity events.	Investigate the potential to hold a month long food celebration and promotion. Investigate funding sources. Produce a draft plan.	Agree strategy and delivery of A month of Food and Drink In Carlow for 2023 centred around itineraries	Anchor/Link to food and drink festival in partnership with regional partners or other agencies	Depending on success of inaugural event and strategic review, repeat 'Think In' for 2024 or plan bi-annual event for 2025
<b>Action:</b> Local Enterprise Office, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Implementer, Local Enterprise Office	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Implementer, Local Enterprise Office	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Implementer, Local Enterprise Office	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Implementer, Local Enterprise Office
		Agree partners for the delivery of A Month of Food and Drink In Carlow (may become a regional / inter county partnership initiative)	Tender marketing collateral and communications for A Month of Food and Drink	Strategic review of the regional/ inter county festival partnership initiative
		<b>Action:</b> Local Enterprise Office, Forum	<b>Action:</b> Local Enterprise Office, Forum	<b>Action:</b> Local Enterprise Office, Forum
Funding sources identified and applied for 2021	Funding sources identified and applied for 2022	Funding sources identified and applied for 2023	Funding sources identified and applied for 2024	Funding sources identified and applied for 2025
<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer
The creation of a subgroup to oversee and develop close links with Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, The Irish Restaurant Association's Foodie Destination award, Blas na hEireann, Irish Food Awards and Origin Green. The subgroup will also encourage and engage with the Taste the Island initiative	Operate subgroup to oversee the delivery of the required actions.	Operate subgroup to oversee the delivery of the required actions.	Operate subgroup to oversee the delivery of the required actions.	Operate subgroup to oversee the delivery of the required actions.
<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office	<b>Action:</b> Subgroup	<b>Action:</b> Subgroup	<b>Action:</b> Subgroup	<b>Action:</b> Subgroup
Engage with tourism bodies to raise awareness of the Carlow food scene and increase the number of tourists to the area. Develop a strong relationship with Fáilte Ireland and undertake joint planning with Fáilte Ireland to populate the activity calendar and to publicise the events which are happening.	Meet on 4 occasions with Fáilte Ireland to plan events and deliver publicity for Carlow Food Tourism events	Meet on 4 occasions with Fáilte Ireland to plan events and deliver publicity for Carlow Food Tourism events	Meet on 4 occasions with Fáilte Ireland to plan events and deliver publicity for Carlow Food Tourism events	Meet on 4 occasions with Fáilte Ireland to plan events and deliver publicity for Carlow Food Tourism events
<b>Action:</b> Subgroup Local Enterprise Office, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Subgroup, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Subgroup, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Subgroup, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Subgroup, Implementer

2020 Actions	2021 Actions	2022 Actions	2023 Actions	2024 Actions
Identify local foodies and experts who are aware of and enthused about Carlow's food and drink story to act as ambassadors in tourism and business contexts	Review ambassadors, effectiveness of each ambassador, add or change ambassadors as required.	Review ambassadors, effectiveness of each ambassador, add or change ambassadors as required.	Review ambassadors, effectiveness of each ambassador, add or change ambassadors as required.	Review ambassadors, effectiveness of each ambassador, add or change ambassadors as required.
<b>Action:</b> Local Enterprise Office, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Steering Group and Subgroup	<b>Action:</b> Steering Group and Subgroup	<b>Action:</b> Steering Group and Subgroup	<b>Action:</b> Steering Group and Subgroup
Fit food ambassadors into the overall PR programme Use food ambassadors in a series of timetabled PR events. Create content around food and non-food events in Carlow to be used in promotional material and on the website.	Use food ambassadors in a series of timetabled PR events. Create content around food and non-food events in Carlow to be used in promotional material and on the website.	Use food ambassadors in a series of timetabled PR events. Create content around food and non-food events in Carlow to be used in promotional material and on the website.	Use food ambassadors in a series of timetabled PR events. Create content around food and non-food events in Carlow to be used in promotional material and on the website.	Use food ambassadors in a series of timetabled PR events. Create content around food and non-food events in Carlow to be used in promotional material and on the website.
<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR and Subgroup	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR and Subgroup	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR and Subgroup	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR and Subgroup	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR and Subgroup
Create a comprehensive programme of food and drink led events in Carlow and represent Carlow food at selected non-food events	Review food and drink events Add and change event plan on basis of learnings from the previous year.	Review food and drink events Add and change event plan on basis of learnings from the previous year.	Review food and drink events Add and change event plan on basis of learnings from the previous year.	Review food and drink events Add and change event plan on basis of learnings from the previous year.
<b>Action:</b> Subgroup, Local Enterprise Office Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Subgroup, Local Enterprise Office Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Subgroup, Local Enterprise Office Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Subgroup, Local Enterprise Office Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Subgroup, Local Enterprise Office Implementer
Work with Failte Ireland to organise and deliver familiarisation trips for national and international journalists, food bloggers and food critics to enable the raising of Carlow's food profile.	Work with Failte Ireland to organise and deliver familiarisation trips for national and international journalists, food bloggers and food critics to enable the raising of Carlow's food profile.	Work with Failte Ireland to organise and deliver familiarisation trips for national and international journalists, food bloggers and food critics to enable the raising of Carlow's food profile.	Work with Failte Ireland to organise and deliver familiarisation trips for national and international journalists, food bloggers and food critics to enable the raising of Carlow's food profile.	Work with Failte Ireland to organise and deliver familiarisation trips for national and international journalists, food bloggers and food critics to enable the raising of Carlow's food profile.
<b>Action:</b> PR representative and Project Officer	<b>Action:</b> PR representative and Project Officer	<b>Action:</b> PR representative and Project Officer	<b>Action:</b> PR representative and Project Officer	<b>Action:</b> PR representative and Project Officer
Identify a range of Food Awards which Carlow could enter as a county.	Agree the awards which the County will prepare for and enter in 2022.	Agree the awards which the County will prepare for and enter in 2023.	Agree the awards which the County will prepare for and enter in 2024.	Agree the awards which the County will prepare for and enter in 2025.
<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR and Subgroup	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR and Subgroup	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR and Subgroup	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR and Subgroup	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR and Subgroup

2020 Actions	2021 Actions	2022 Actions	2023 Actions	2024 Actions
Understand what the key criteria are for entry and winning each award. Identify the businesses which need to participate and involve them in planning the entries.	Further develop the structure and food/drink offerings necessary to win awards.	Enter three Food and Drink awards. One award must be a national food award.	Enter three Food and Drink awards. One award must be a national food award.	Enter three Food and Drink awards. One award must be a national food award.
<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR and Subgroup	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR and Subgroup	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR and Subgroup	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR and Subgroup	<b>Action:</b> Implementer/PR and Subgroup
Funding sources identified and applied for 2021	Funding sources identified and applied for 2022	Funding sources identified and applied for 2023	Funding sources identified and applied for 2024	Funding sources identified and applied for 2025
<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer





#### Pillar 4: Identify and implement the necessary training and business support needed for the industry

- The design and delivery of additional training which addresses current gaps and substantially increases business performance.
- Increased business awareness of the support available (increasing uptake)
- Increased business awareness of best practice (improving business performance)
- The creation of at least 4 facilitated business clusters which focus on improving either business financial performance or business environmental performance.

2020 Actions	2021 Actions	2022 Actions	2023 Actions	2024 Actions
Agree In-Carlow mandate and funding for training and education of food and drink stakeholders	Food and Drink Business Development supports and signposts – Start Up, Scaling and Established business	Food and Drink Business training and education framework	Plan an In Carlow national schools' competition about Carlow food and drink that upsills national school children's In Carlow food and drink production	Deliver an In Carlow business and national schools' competition awards
<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer
Identify existing supports for business development Identify businesses which have used the Local Enterprise support system to stimulate engagement with the Local Enterprise office	Training and education website pillar development and training schedule added to In Carlow website business supports pillar. Reviewed and updated on an annual basis Point of contact for queries Establish opportunity to partner with the Institute of Technology or other HEI	Agree training and education framework for In Carlow website training / education pillar Launch of the HEI training partnership Explore opportunity for regional partnership in recruitment fairs that secure talent in food and drink In Carlow	Design the terms of reference for the business and schools awards Secure stakeholder engagement and define requirements for delivery of the competition In Carlow branded awards for Start-Up, Scaling and Established business, as well as national school awards In Carlow schools' project action plan agreed Agree marketing and school network engagement Project manager appointed to delivery awards event	In Carlow Food and Drink business awards delivered Awards presented to winning business award for National School competition PR campaign delivered around the In Carlow food and drink national school awards
<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer

2020 Actions	2021 Actions	2022 Actions	2023 Actions	2024 Actions
Identification of existing business supports and required further support including: <b>1. Funding support</b> <b>2. Training support</b> <b>3. Structural support</b>	Ongoing monitoring of effectiveness of support. Review of support provision to ensure that it remains relevant.	Ongoing monitoring of effectiveness of support. Review of support provision to ensure that it remains relevant.	Ongoing monitoring of effectiveness of support. Review of support provision to ensure that it remains relevant.	Ongoing monitoring of effectiveness of support. Review of support provision to ensure that it remains relevant.
<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer
Develop business supports pillar framework of the In Carlow food and drink website	Keep website updated.	Keep website updated.	Keep website updated.	Keep website updated.
<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office, Implementer & web company	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office, Implementer & web company	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office, Implementer & web company	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office, Implementer & web company	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office, Implementer & web company
Investigate implementation of the range of different business supports.	Review, modify and implement business supports	Review, modify and implement business supports	Review, modify and implement business supports	Review, modify and implement business supports
<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer
Design of a range of business networking events including: Business to business Business to customer Business to local market Business to tourism Business to education events	Design, organisation and running of 4 networking events	Design, organisation and running of 4 networking events	Design, organisation and running of 4 networking events	Design, organisation and running of 4 networking events
<b>Action:</b> Forum & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum & Implementer
Design of a 2021 plan for roll out of networking events.	Implementation of business networking events.	Implementation of business networking events.	Implementation of business networking events.	Implementation of business networking events.
<b>Action:</b> Forum & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum & Implementer

2020 Actions	2021 Actions	2022 Actions	2023 Actions	2024 Actions
Design of Business/Educational programme which engages with Carlow Institute of Technology and other educational establishments to substantially increase ongoing contact and support between food businesses and these institutes, driving an increase in food innovation.	Develop case study of success stories of companies which have effectively worked with Carlow IT and other higher level educational establishments.  Ongoing work with Carlow IT Creation of 5 work placements.	Ongoing work with Carlow IT Creation of 10 work placements.	Ongoing work with Carlow IT Creation of 15 work placements.	Ongoing work with Carlow IT Creation of 20 work placements.
<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office, Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office, Implementer
<b>Organise Business Cluster 4:</b>  Cluster focused on how business support might be developed to encourage new businesses and growth of existing ones.  Map and assess effectiveness of the business supports in Carlow.  Recruit and sign-up businesses to Cluster 4.	Use cluster to identify necessary business supports  Provide recommendations for new/altered support Start implementation  Publicise new packages to member organisations	Implement new support Monitor uptake of new support Monitor effectiveness of support Feedback support	Monitor uptake of new support Monitor effectiveness of support Feedback support	Review effectiveness of support, provide recommendations for further alterations and improvements
<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer
<b>Organise Business Cluster 5:</b>  Cluster focused on how economic, social and environmental sustainability can be achieved in Carlow food businesses. Recruit and sign-up businesses to Cluster 5.	Use Cluster to identify Carlow business environmental performance Identify the key factors affecting this performance Identify the factors which can have most effect on reducing environmental impact.	Design plan to assist businesses in reducing environmental impact. Design workshop events to enable businesses to assist. Identify key individuals who can provide assistance to Carlow businesses.	Provide clear education to businesses on best methods of reducing environmental impact.  Measure uptake of advice and estimate effect.	Provide clear education to businesses on best methods of reducing environmental impact.  Measure uptake of advice and estimate effect.
<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer
Funding sources identified and applied for 2021	Funding sources identified and applied for 2022	Funding sources identified and applied for 2023	Funding sources identified and applied for 2024	Funding sources identified and applied for 2025
<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer	<b>Action:</b> Forum, Local Enterprise Office & Implementer



### Pillar 5: Develop Collaborative Regional Partnerships.

1. Identification of two-five potential collaborations between food and drink producers in Carlow
2. Identification of three-six potential collaborations between food and drink producers and other businesses in Carlow including accommodation providers, restaurants, cafes and tourist attractions.
3. Identification of two projects or initiatives which can be developed alongside other counties with a key focus on delivering benefit to food and drink businesses.

2020 Actions	2021 Actions	2022 Actions	2023 Actions	2024 Actions
Creation of a forum subgroup to identify methods of increasing regional working.	Minimum of four meetings of subgroup	Minimum of four meetings of subgroup	Minimum of four meetings of subgroup	Minimum of four meetings of subgroup
<b>Action:</b> Forum	<b>Action:</b> Sub-group	<b>Action:</b> Sub-group	<b>Action:</b> Sub-group	<b>Action:</b> Sub-group
Approach to other counties in the South East region to gauge interest in a formal joint working relationship	Ongoing interaction with other counties	Ongoing interaction with other counties	Ongoing interaction with other counties	Ongoing interaction with other counties
<b>Action:</b> Subgroup, Council	<b>Action:</b> Subgroup, Council	<b>Action:</b> Subgroup, Council	<b>Action:</b> Subgroup, Council	<b>Action:</b> Subgroup, Council
Identification of 10 potential joint working opportunities and reduction of this to 2 or 3 potentially viable projects	Ongoing identification of emerging challenges and opportunities for joint working.	Ongoing identification of emerging challenges and opportunities for joint working.	Ongoing identification of emerging challenges and opportunities for joint working.	Ongoing identification of emerging challenges and opportunities for joint working.
<b>Action:</b> Subgroup, Council	<b>Action:</b> Subgroup, Council	<b>Action:</b> Subgroup, Council	<b>Action:</b> Subgroup, Council	<b>Action:</b> Subgroup, Council
Design of project 1 and application for funding.	Design of project 2 and application for funding.	Design of project 3 and application for funding.		
<b>Action:</b> Subgroup	<b>Action:</b> Subgroup	<b>Action:</b> Subgroup	<b>Action:</b> Subgroup	<b>Action:</b> Subgroup
Joint delivery of agreed projects	Joint delivery of agreed projects	Joint delivery of agreed projects	Joint delivery of agreed projects	Joint delivery of agreed projects
<b>Action:</b> Subgroup, Council	<b>Action:</b> Subgroup, Council	<b>Action:</b> Subgroup, Council	<b>Action:</b> Subgroup, Council	<b>Action:</b> Subgroup, Council

# What will success look like in 2025?

The Carlow food and drink sector will look different in 2025. A food and drink stakeholder group will have overseen the delivery of the long-term food strategy, beginning with the establishment of a Food and Drink forum. The partnership will oversee the be the creation of:

- A Carlow Food and Drink brand, as an extension of the In Carlow brand. This brand logo will have specific brand guidelines, and its usage will be monitored and promoted
- The delivery of a 'one stop shop' website for Carlow Food and Drink to address and satisfy the needs of all Carlow Food and Drink stakeholders will be developed.
- The establishment of a food and drink forum, which will work with local businesses to develop a wide range of food events, experiences and bookable events. This should be linked to relevant local economic strategies and will be managed against an annual rolling food and drink activity calendar. and Fáilte Ireland strategies and will

be managed against a rolling annual food activity calendar. A range of food and drink business ambassadors will be effectively communicating the Carlow story and tourism will have risen substantially.

- Developed a tiered system of supports targeted at food and drink producers and stakeholders depending on their stage, Start-Up, Scaling, Established and a slip stream process to facilitate the business development growth of food and drink companies, with 10 per cent of business progressing onto the next tier annually
- Regular business networking will ensure much more connection between businesses in Carlow. Awareness of available local food will rise, encouraging commercial collaborations.
- A managed database of stakeholders to ensure targeted communications on the food and drink events and developments in Carlow. To provide a sense of community and co-operation among members.



- Carlow will have entered and won several individual and collective awards for the quality of food and drink created or available in the county.
- Carlow will have established successful regional partnerships on food and drink opportunities where mutual synergies were established
- Carlow will be recognised as a great place to start and run a food business. Focused business advice and commercial mentoring will be combined with existing technical expertise. A range of sizes of food incubation units will be available for new start-up companies, along with pre-approved zoned land for construction of larger units for existing food businesses wishing to expand.
- Institute of Technology Carlow will be increasingly embedded within the Carlow Food and Drink Sector, providing facilities and expertise, as well as a steady supply of qualified workers for food and drink businesses through apprenticeship schemes and bursaries.
- The towns and countryside in Carlow will have benefitted from regeneration work and increased footfall and visitor numbers realising the development of food and drink tourism and agri-tourism businesses.
- Joint project work as part of a South East Region Collaboration. The counties will have worked closely together to identify joint initiatives and projects to attract visitors to the region and to encourage the growth of food and drink businesses.

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CARLOW  
**FOOD &  
DRINK**  
STRATEGY

“The Taste of County Carlow 2020-2025”