Dry Age Matured

All John Stone beef is matured using traditional dry ageing. Three decades of experience has taught us that this produces the best results.

Dry ageing is a slow process, achieved by putting beef into a cold environment for extended periods. Over this time, a series of biochemical reactions occur, resulting in a more tender and flavorful product.

So next time you see a piece of beef from John Stone, ask for it to be cut and aged before being cooked. This ensures you get the full benefit of the dry ageing process, delivering a meat that is both tender and juicy.

John Stone uses the highest quality beef, slow-aged to perfection, ensuring each piece that leaves their butcher is a true delight for the palate.

For more information or to place an order, please contact us directly.
There is great excitement and energy in the Irish food and drinks sector right now. With exports almost reaching €10 billion for the first time, in 2013, and the end of dairy quotas rapidly approaching, there is a lot to be excited about. Irish food and drink exports enjoyed several confidence boosts in 2013 with several announcements that new trade routes had opened, as well as the re-opening of others.

Most recently, the Lebanon fully re-opened its market to Irish meat. This follows the recent re-opening of Japan to Irish beef exports, as well as the announcement that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) market had opened to exports of sheepmeat from Ireland in January 2013. The UAE announcement came ahead of a very significant trade mission to the region, led by Ireland’s Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Simon Coveney. The trade mission included over 60 representatives from the food and drinks industry in Ireland, with several announcements made during the visit, including the opening of a new office in Dubai for Bord Bia (see page 18) and another for the Kerry Group (see page 28). Meanwhile, the Irish Dairy Board announced it is investing €20 million in its operations in Saudi Arabia and launched a new cheese product in that market (see page 24).

The region’s primary production base is challenged by extreme climatic conditions, arid soil and lack of water. Ireland, in contrast, exports 90 per cent of its food and drinks outputs. Furthermore, Ireland has a positive reputation as a country supremely well-suited to sustainability. With 299 companies signed up for the Bord Bia Origin Green sustainability programme to date, Ireland is viewed by many as an ideal trade partner for the Middle East.

This year, 18 Irish food and drinks exhibitors, the largest number to date, will attend Gulfood in Dubai under the Bord Bia Origin Green stand (see page 18). This reflects the confidence within Ireland’s food and drinks export sector and its positive outlook for the future of exports to the Middle East.

As always, we also have the latest news on Irish food and drinks exports, as well as Bord Bia trend reports and more.

Enjoy!

Oonagh O’Mahony
Editor
7 NEWS
New owner for Cooley distillery

8 NEWS
Japan opens market to Irish beef

10 INTERVIEW
Allan Morris, Managing Director, John Stone talks to Irishfood about the company’s recent re-brand and its business in the Middle East.

12 INDUSTRY
Irishfood reports on the latest export figures released by Bord Bia.
16 EASTERN PROMISE
Bord Bia sets target to double exports of Irish food and drink to the Middle East by 2020.

18 GULFOOD 2014
Irishfood profiles the 18 Irish companies exhibiting at this year’s Gulfood.

26 GROWING DEMAND FOR IRISH POTATOES
‘The Middle East is a great location to showcase food products’ says Tom Keogh, Managing Director, Keogh’s Farm.

24 INNOVATIVE COLLABORATION
A collaborative project between Teagasc and the Irish Dairy Board (IDB) has developed over 300 new varieties of cheese. In 2013, the first of these was brought to market in Saudi Arabia.

28 KERRY OPENS MIDDLE EAST OFFICE
Kerry Group has opened a new regional development and application centre in Dubai to serve its global and regional customer base in the Middle East, North Africa and Turkey.

34 ORIGIN GREEN
Bord Bia’s sustainability programme, Origin Green aims to protect and enhance Ireland’s ‘green’ reputation.

36 MEAT
Ireland’s meat and livestock exports accounted for one-third of total food and drink exports, with positive prospects for 2014.

41 INDUSTRY
Irishfood reports on some of the highlights from Milestones For Success 2013, the third annual progress report on the implementation of Food Harvest 2020.

43 TRENDS
Investigation finds that 84% of food and beverage adverts seen by children are for products high in fats, sugars and sodium.

44 TRENDS
What’s for lunch? An overview of Bord Bia’s Lunchtime Occasion report.

46 SPOTLIGHT ON...
Keohane Seafoods
HUNGER FOR GROWTH

According to Grant Thornton’s Hunger for Growth study 2013, executives in Ireland’s food and beverage companies are largely positive in their outlook for the future. Businesses plan to focus on innovation as a differentiator, and to mitigate margin pressure. According to the study the vast majority (84 per cent) of Irish food and beverage companies expect to grow both revenue and profit next year. The Irish responses were matched by similar positive forecasts across all countries surveyed, which included: Australia, Canada, France, Ireland, New Zealand, the UK and the US. Overall, expectations are that revenue will increase by 90 per cent and profit will grow by 82 per cent. This, Grant Thornton said, suggests that the wider global economic recovery is benefiting food producers.

The report says that, having gone through a period of significant internal re-alignment, Irish food and beverage organisations have streamlined their operations to become more fit for purpose. Businesses that embrace a lean culture are now ready to invest in sustainable growth, leveraging technology, new product development, brand, infrastructure and human capital, to successfully navigate the challenges and opportunities presented from global supply chain and demand chain innovation.

With this in mind, companies are embracing technology, identifying it as a lever for growth and risk management, opening up new routes to markets and creating alternative revenue streams for those businesses that can leverage both the product and the technology behind it.

Some 84 per cent of Irish firms expect to increase investment in IT in the next 12 months, while 60 per cent of companies surveyed expect to increase their investment in plants and facilities in the same period.

Furthermore, Irish respondents showed overwhelming support (92 per cent) for the introduction of a clear, defined and licensed consumer brand to help Irish food and drink products differentiate themselves in international markets. Meanwhile, 76 per cent of Irish respondents surveyed believe that the robustness of the Irish food and beverage supply chain in its ability to trace goods and ensure product integrity, can provide a unique selling point for Irish produce on an international stage.

Respondents to the study said they are continuing to look abroad for growth opportunities with the Middle East, Africa and China all cited as potential markets for Irish food and drinks products.

“As the economy in Europe improves, it is expected that Irish exporters will also benefit with acquisitive growth in Western Europe,” wrote Ciara Jackson, Head of Food and Beverage, Grant Thornton Ireland in a foreword to the report. She continued: “This strategy facilitates market penetration and also may provide a platform to launch further exports into emerging markets such as Russia, North Africa and the Middle East.”

BORD BIA LAUNCHES NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DAIRY ASSURANCE SCHEME

Bord Bia recently launched its national ‘Sustainable Dairy Assurance Scheme’ (SDAS), which it describes as fundamental to its overall plan to invest almost €3.5 million in 2014 in a new, targeted marketing campaign, under the Origin Green banner. Origin Green aims to promote Ireland as a source of world-class sustainably produced food and drink. The launch of the SDAS follows 18 months of planning by Bord Bia, in conjunction with a stakeholder group, comprising of producers, milk processors and regulatory authorities, appointed to develop the scheme on behalf of milk producers nationwide.

Speaking at the launch of the SDAS, Ireland’s Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Simon Coveney, said it was not just about maintaining high standards and improving the environment. “It also makes good business sense. It is about driving the development of an industry, worth almost €3 billion in exports, and maximising the contribution of dramatically expanding dairy production to the Irish economy. This programme positions Irish producers and processors as ‘best in class’ and is a perfect fit with the corporate responsibility strategies that inform procurement policies in multi-national purchasers of Irish dairy products and ingredients across the globe.”

The new scheme has been designed to provide a uniform mechanism of recording and monitoring the sustainability of Irish dairying at farm level. According to Bord Bia, it is the first national dairy scheme of its type anywhere in the world – a rigorous, independently verified and internationally-accredited programme (European Standard for Product Certification – ISO 17065: 2012) that not only sets out the requirements for best practice in Irish dairy farms but provides a means of measuring and improving the performance of every participating farmer. Bord Bia’s goal is for all dairy farms in Ireland to be signed up and participating in SDAS by 2016.

“Sustainability continues to grow in importance as a strategic business issue among leading customers for dairy products globally. The majority of leading multinational customers, including Unilever, Nestlé, Danone and Kraft, have set out long-term targets to enhance the sustainability of their supply chain. Critically, many are still seeking solutions to help them achieve these targets and increasingly recognise the role that their suppliers will play in their delivery,” Bord Bia Chairman, Michael Carey added.

The Irish dairy sector currently accounts for almost 30 per cent of Ireland’s total food and drink exports. Ireland has a supply base of almost 18,000 farmers who produce more than five billion litres of milk annually. With the ending of dairy quotas in 2015, an increase of 50 per cent is anticipated in milk output in Ireland by 2020.
€12.5 BILLION IN SUPPORTS ANNOUNCED FOR IRISH AGRICULTURE SECTOR

The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Simon Coveney recently announced the allocation of more than €12.5 billion in Common Agricultural Policy and exchequer funding to the agriculture sector in the period to 2020.

Speaking at the announcement, the Minister said the funding was a landmark moment in what he described as “an unprecedentedly exciting period for the agriculture sector and the agri-food industry in Ireland”. The Minister explained that, in addition to €8.5 billion in EU funding that will be given in direct payments to farmers in the period up to 2020, a further €1.9 billion in national funding will be added to €2.2 billion EU funding, already secured, for expenditure on rural development. It brings the total funding for the sector over the period to more than €12.5 billion. “This represents a very significant, strategic financial investment in the agri-food sector. Significantly it also comes on top of the large commercial investments that have been made by major players in the sector in recent times and the very positive news from Bord Bia on the continuing rise in the value of agri-food exports in 2013.”

The Minister added that the focus for him and his Department is to achieve smart, green growth. “We need to be smart about what we do so that we can become more efficient and more competitive, and we need to do it in a way that is sustainable from an environmental and climate viewpoint. The package of measures I am announcing today provides practical, targeted support that will help the sector to achieve its ambitions while meeting its climate change responsibilities.”

NEW OWNER FOR COOLEY DISTILLERY

Cooley Distillery is set to have a new owner as Suntory Holdings finalises the acquisition of Cooley’s parent company Beam. The deal is valued at $16 billion, including debt. Beam bought the Cooley Distillery, which manufactures a range of Irish whiskey brands, including Greenore, Kilbeggan, Tyrconnell and Connemara Irish, in December 2011 for an estimated €74 million. Beam also acquired the 2 Gingers whiskey brand, which was founded by Mayo man Kieran Folliard.

Through the deal, Suntory will create the world’s third-largest premium spirits company. Beam is the third major acquisition in recent years for Suntory. It bought soft drinks brands Lucozade and Ribena for £1.35 billion from GlaxoSmithKline last year and acquired France’s Orangina Schweppes in 2009.

Suntory said Beam’s chief executive Matt Shattock and the Beam management team would continue to lead the business. The deal will close in the second quarter of the year, subject to shareholder approval.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

| February 5-7 | Fruit Logistica | Berlin |
| February 6-8 | Alltech International Craft Brews and Food Fair | Dublin |
| February 12-15 | Biofach | Nuremberg |
| February 10-14 | Prodexpo | Moscow |
| February 23-27 | Gulfood | Dubai |

See Irishfood’s extensive coverage of the Middle East region, along with profiles of Irish companies exhibiting at this year’s show.

| March 16-18 | Tavola | Belgium |
| March 17 | St Patrick’s Day | Worldwide |

Celebrating Ireland’s patron saint, events will be held worldwide. Bord Bia offices will be hosting special events for the occasion to highlight Irish food and drink exports.

| March 23-25 | Prowein | Dusseldorf |
| May 6-8 | Seafood Expo Global | Brussels |

Formerly ESE, this is the largest seafood trade event in the world. The event attracts more than 25,000 buyers and suppliers of fresh, frozen, packaged and value-added seafood products, equipment and services from over 145 countries. Irishfood will be available at the show, profiling Irish companies in attendance.

www.irishfoodmagazine.com
‘LANDMARK’ DECISION AS JAPAN OPENS MARKET TO IRISH BEEF

Taoiseach, Enda Kenny has welcomed the recent announcement by Japan that it is re-opening its beef market to Irish exports.

The decision means that Japan is open to Irish beef for the first time since 2001, and marks Ireland as one of a select group of countries allowed to export beef there.

The announcement was made during a week-long trade mission to Japan by the Taoiseach and the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Simon Coveney.

Bord Bia (the Irish food board) estimates the short- to medium-term opportunity for Irish beef in Japan is worth between €12 million and €15 million, with potential for significant expansion beyond that over time.

Simon Coveney said that the decision to allow access for Irish beef to Japan was very significant, and reflected Japanese confidence in the integrity of Irish food safety systems and in the quality of Irish beef. “Japan is a sophisticated market with sophisticated consumer, who are seeking beef product, which Ireland can provide. Japan also sets a benchmark for food safety standards, and for that reason access for Irish beef is very significant from a reputation point of view. The landmark decision is the fruit of detailed technical negotiations between my Department and its counterpart in Tokyo over the last two years, and is true testament to the quality of our beef output. This announcement proves, yet again, the value of investing in our sustainability and traceability systems and, more importantly, being able to verify these claims to global customers.”

HIGH GLOBAL BEEF PRICES TO CONTINUE IN 2014

According to the Rabobank Global Cattle Price Index cattle prices have risen by 6 per cent since June 2013, driven by lower-than-expected beef supply in the main exporting countries and strong Asian demand. According to a report from Rabobank, supply will remain tight, especially in the first half of 2014, driven by lower feed costs, induced herd rebuilding in the US and the strong demand for Brazilian and Argentine beef, which will continue to support strong prices.

In 2014, Rabobank forecasts continued high prices, while global beef supply is expected to rise only slightly, meanwhile China’s demand for imports are expected to increase. Rabobank analyst Albert Vernooij says: “The Rabobank Global Cattle Price Index improved further in the second half of 2013, supported by both continuing strong Chinese import growth and lower-than-expected supply in the main export markets making cattle prices mainly positive.” However, the market has been unable to reach its full potential due to consumers’ resistance against high prices in the US and the EU, still two of the main beef markets. Exchange rate movements have impacted the competitive position of exporters, according to the report, resulting a surge in beef exports from Brazil and Argentina which have become increasingly attractive on a price point.

For the first half of 2014, Rabobank expects further positive developments for the global beef market, with cattle prices remaining elevated in most regions. The main question in many regions remains where to source sufficient beef supplies. With herd rebuilding as the first priority globally, supported by improving climate conditions and moderating feed costs, global beef production will increase only slightly and is expected to decline sharply in key markets like the US. The main demand wildcard will be consumer resistance to high beef prices and the growing availability of competing animal proteins due to the improved margin outlook as feed prices tumble.

A number of recently announced trade deals will also come to bear in the beef market over the coming months and years, including commitments to reopen closed or impeded markets for beef imports and the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which set goals to improve trade between the Five Nations Beef Alliance (FNBA), which includes the national organisations representing beef cattle producers in Australia, Canada, Mexico, New Zealand and the US. The removal of trade barriers will be positive for global beef trade and, combined with lower feed costs, should support renewed investment in the global beef industry.
KERRY EXPERTISE TO HELP GROW YOUR BUSINESS

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“DIFFERENT NAME, SAME QUALITY” IS THE MESSAGE FROM ALLAN MORRIS, MANAGING DIRECTOR, JOHN STONE, WHO TELLS Irishfood ABOUT THE COMPANY’S RECENT RE-BRAND.


Allan Morris, Managing Director at John Stone, says it was a natural choice for the company since he was the founder of the company and his name is synonymous with quality and expertise. “John Stone has an MBE for his services to the UK meat industry, he co-wrote The Meat Buyers Guide, and was the founder member of the National Catering Butchers Association in the UK and Chairman of numerous PLC companies. In terms of a re-brand, with that background, we felt that the name of the founder John Stone was a brand name that carried heritage and strength.”

While customers have been introduced to the new brand over the past year, Gulfood 2014 will be the first official event for John Stone. The company worked closely with its clients during the re-brand and Allan says it was important to maintain strong relationships so customers would know that although the name had changed the product had not. “Our message is simple: different name, same quality.”

HIGH-END CUSTOMERS
The company only sells Irish meat products – beef and lamb – to leading foodservice customers around the world, targeting 4- and 5-star hotels and Michelin Star restaurants, as well as high-end steakhouses. The company’s top five markets are Sweden, Switzerland, Germany, Denmark and Holland. However, it has customers as far away as Hong Kong, Singapore and Moscow, as well as the Middle East. Its fastest growing markets currently include the Middle East and Asia. In its Middle East markets, John Stone has seen month-on-month growth over the past two years. It recently recorded a coup for Irish beef when it became the only beef supplier to Zuma Restaurant in Dubai. “It is the busiest and trendiest restaurant in Dubai and we have completely dislodged Australian beef from the menu,” says Allan. The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Simon Coveney enjoyed a meal at the restaurant during his trade mission to the region in the latter half of 2013. On the back of its continued success in the region, John Stone is hoping to double the amount it supplies this year. Allan says the company also intends exploring markets in other GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries, such as Bahrain and Qatar. Allan adds that the company’s success in the Middle East is contributing
to growing success in Asia. He cites prestigious clients, such as Raffles Hotel in Singapore as an example of its success in the region.

**Supply base**

Allan says that John Stone uses several Irish beef producers to service its clients internationally. Within the Middle East and Asian markets, John Stone has established strategic relationships to source beef from key Irish producers Kepak Group and Ashbourne Meats. The company has recently begun exporting lamb to the region, which will also be supplied by their partner Kepak Group.

Allan says there are a number of factors contributing to its growing success in the region, which includes the fully-certified and stringent halal processes of John Stone’s suppliers.

Up to now, Allan explains, the Middle East beef market has been dominated by supplies from Australia and the US.

As a result, Allan says consumers in the region have become used to the taste of grain-fed beef. However, he believes attitudes are changing and sees great opportunity for Irish beef exports to the Middle East. “Value for money is a big factor in the region. But Irish beef overcomes this with a different eating experience that takes price out of the equation.” He adds that the health benefits of grass-fed beef compared to grain-fed, will also resonate strongly in the UAE, which he says, has high levels of diabetes and obesity.

Allan points out that grass-fed beef is:
- higher in minerals calcium, magnesium and potassium;
- higher in Vitamin E;
- higher in Vitamin B and riboflavin;
- higher in Omega 3; and lower in saturated fats. For flavour, John Stone selects its beef loins from selected processors based on weight and fat conformation, along with natural marbling. Using the MSA (Meat Standards Australia) beef grading standard, which Allan says customers are used to, John Stone selects animals that are rated between three and four on a fat marbling score. According to Allan, the company looks for animals with a high fat score, which, he says, adds flavour and contributes to marbling, which is “greatly prized in the Middle East with the added benefit of being naturally grass-fed”.

**Origin Green**

Allan says sustainability is also a key factor for clients in the Middle East and is big on the agenda of governments in the UAE. “Ireland’s approach is on trend with what they are thinking.”

He explains that Bord Bia’s Origin Green sustainability programme is an additional USP for Irish beef. The initiative, he adds, is garnering a lot of interest from John Stone’s clients in both the UAE and Asia. “When we talk to customers there about it, there is fantastic interest in the programme.”
Irish food and drink exports were valued at almost €10 billion for the first time in 2013, according to new figures released by Bord Bia. This represents an increase of 9 per cent on the previous year.

The strongest performing sectors were dairy, meat and livestock, and prepared foods. Seafood saw a levelling off in exports following a rise of almost 65 per cent between 2009 and 2012.

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Simon Coveney, said: “Export values of almost €10 billion are really impressive, and demonstrate the clear opportunity and benefit of investing in a sector with proven resilience, a significant domestic economic footprint and strong ability to grow. With increasing demand from more affluent consumers in key world markets, there is little doubt that the €12 billion export target set out in the industry-led strategy for the agri-sector Food Harvest 2020 is well in sight.”

Echoing the Minister’s sentiments, Aidan Cotter, Chief Executive, Bord Bia said the Irish food and drink sector needs to consolidate this growth in 2014. He continued, saying, the €12 billion export target set by Food Harvest 2020
looks to be an easy target and cited that the potential growth of Ireland’s dairy industry post-quotas in 2015 could, alone, contribute almost €1.7 billion more to exports, which, he said, puts the 2020 target well in Ireland’s reach. Commenting on the figures for 2013, Aidan outlined some of the highlights including: double-digit growth in dairy and beef export values; the strong recovery in sales to eurozone destinations; and the strong performance of the industry in China, which is now Ireland’s second-largest dairy and third-largest pork market. Bord Bia Chairman, Michael Carey, said: “The significant export growth achieved by the Irish food and drink industry, in the face of an increasingly competitive environment for exporters, confirms the dedication, ambition and resilience that is abundant in the sector. This impressive growth in exports by our largest indigenous industry reflects its persistent focus on innovation and differentiation as it seeks, successfully, to boost its position across key markets.”

Key markets
According to Bord Bia’s Export Performance and Prospects 2014 report, the market distribution of Irish food and drink exports settled down during 2013 following the rise in the share of trade going to international markets over recent years. Currently, some 70 per cent of Irish food and drink exports are to countries outside the eurozone. The UK, however, remains the largest export destination for Irish food and drink with 42 per cent of exports, worth an estimated €4.1 billion, reaching that market in 2013. Aidan Cotter said the UK, with a projected growth in population of 10 million people over the next 25 years, will continue to be an important export destination for the Irish food and drinks industry. Exports to other EU markets increased by 11 per cent in 2013 reaching €3.2 billion with the key markets of Germany, France and the Netherlands all recording double-digit growth. Strong exports to Asia, and, to a lesser extent, Russia contributed positively toward an increase of 6 per cent in the value of trade to international markets, which exceeded €2.6 billion in the period. Exports to China grew by over 40 per cent, with values trebling over the last three years to reach €390 million in 2013. It is now Ireland’s sixth-largest market overall, driven in particular by strong dairy and pork exports. Seafood and beverage exports are also growing solidly, albeit from a lower base. Bord Bia is confident about ongoing discussions with Chinese authorities on the opening of that market to Irish beef exports and says that eventual access to the beef market will act to further broaden the industry’s presence in the world’s fastest growing market. The inclusion of hide exports from the beef industry would bring the market’s value overall for the sector to €432 million. The Minister said opening the Chinese market was a huge priority for his Department and said Ireland was providing all the reassurances to China that it could to satisfy its requirements. He added that negotiations are also ongoing with the US to reopen that market to Irish beef exports. Furthermore, he said he was pleased with the progress of negotiations with Japan, which opened to Irish beef at the end of 2013.

Industry sentiment
A Bord Bia industry survey carried out among Irish food and drink manufacturers has revealed that exporters remain positive about prospects for their business. In total more than 8 out of 10 reported higher or similar turnover in the last 12 months. Innovation remains important for many food and drink companies with 91 per cent of exporters reporting that they had introduced new products in the last three years. Looking ahead to 2014, some 75 per cent of exporters expect their export sales to grow.

Meat and livestock
It is estimated that the combined value of meat and livestock exports increased by 8 per cent or almost €245 million to reach €3.3 billion in 2013. This leaves the sector accounting for one third of food and drink exports. A combination of higher output in some categories, most notably beef and sheepmeat, together with stronger prices for cattle and pigs, helped boost the value of trade. The value of beef exports increased by almost 10 per cent reflecting a rise of 5 per cent in output and 4 per cent in average prices. As a result, exports were valued at just under €2.1 billion. Despite a drop of around 2 per cent in pigmeat production, a rise of almost 6 per cent in prices helped to boost the value of Irish pigmeat exports by 3 per cent to €525 million. The competitive market environment for poultry persisted in 2013, although higher export volumes combined with some improvement in prices led to the value of poultry exports rising by 4 per cent to an estimated €230 million. A rise of 7 per cent in sheep output helped offset lower carcass weights and a marginal drop in prices to leave the value of Irish sheepmeat exports 4 per cent higher at €220 million.
A jump of a third in cattle exports and a doubling in sheep shipments helped drive a rise of 11 per cent in the value of livestock exports to an estimated €240 million.

According to Bord Bia, the prospects for the meat and livestock sector in 2014 remain broadly positive with relatively tight supplies persisting across the EU for most species. While slow consumer demand is likely to continue, the overall trading environment is expected to be broadly positive, helped by strong global prices.

**Dairy products and ingredients**

Irish dairy exports reached an all-time high in 2013 with a value in excess of €3 billion. Strong global dairy prices and tight global supplies, combined with increased Irish availability as the year progressed, helped boost the value of dairy product and ingredients exports by an estimated 15 per cent.

The strongest performing product categories were butter, cheese, infant formula, milk and cream, whole milk powder and whey. Strong double-digit growth was evident across most European markets for Irish dairy products in 2013. In terms of international markets significant increases to China and parts of South East Asia offset reduced exports to the US, Saudi Arabia and South Africa. The prospects for Irish dairy exports in 2014 remain broadly positive with global demand likely to help clear any increase in output to keep prices well ahead of historical averages. Global stock levels and the relative strength of the euro will largely determine price prospects. Some further growth in Irish output is likely as producers prepare for the removal of quotas in 2015.

Commenting on Ireland’s dairy sector, The Minister said the future was very exciting and he was encouraged to see a move, within the sector, away from commodity products to produce more added-value offerings that appeal to international market demands. He added that global trends are seeing a shift towards protein-based diets, which ties in with Ireland's biggest exports.

**Prepared foods**

Although trends varied in 2013, overall, exports of products covered under the prepared foods category increased by 15 per cent to an estimated €1.65 billion. If value-added meats and poultry are included, exports were in excess of €2 billion.

The strongest performing categories during the year were fat-filled milk powders, which accounted for 80 per cent of the export growth in the category, cooked meats, pizza, sauces, bakery and to a lesser extent confectionery. These helped to largely offset a slower trade in the frozen, ready-meal category.

While the UK continues to account for almost 40 per cent of exports, ongoing diversification to markets across the rest of Europe and niche opportunities across international markets help improve the market diversification of the sector.

According to Bord Bia, the strong focus by the sector on new product development, innovation and the identification of new customers means it is well positioned to identify and develop market opportunities as they emerge.

**Beverages**

The Irish beverage sector put in a solid performance in 2013 as ongoing growth in whiskey, combined with stronger exports of non-alcoholic beverages, helped to offset reduced trade in cider, beer and cream liqueurs. Overall, exports are estimated to have declined marginally in 2013 to reach €1.25 billion.

The UK remains the largest single market for Irish beverage exports, accounting for around 32 per cent of the total. Lower beer, cream liqueur and cider exports were offset by increased shipment of whiskey and mineral water and exports to the UK were largely unchanged at just under €400 million.

The outlook for Irish beverage exports in 2014 continues to be broadly positive, helped by an anticipated further rise in whiskey sales, the ongoing development of emerging markets and an anticipated return to growth for some key categories.

Aidan Cotter said there was confidence in the potential of the market, as evidenced by the investment, in particular, in Ireland’s whiskey category. Although, he pointed out, it will be several years before these investments begin to see outputs.

**Seafood**

Seafood exports recorded a slight decline in 2013. However, this follows growth of almost 65 per cent in the value of exports over the 2009 to 2012 period. The main factor behind this easing was production and raw material limitations as unit prices were around 7 per cent higher in the 10 months to the end of October.

Overall for the year, the value of seafood exports is estimated to have eased by 3 per cent to an estimated €520 million. Bord Bia says that any increase in seafood exports in 2014 will be driven by price increases. Demand levels seem set to remain strong for most species in emerging markets and a number of European markets. On balance, there is potential for modest growth in export values.

**Edible horticulture and cereals**

Stronger mushroom exports were offset by lower grain prices as the year progressed to put some pressure on the value of edible horticulture and cereal exports in 2013. Overall, exports of edible horticulture and cereals are estimated to have been marginally lower at €225 million.
focus
The Middle East Market
BORD BIA SETS TARGET TO DOUBLE EXPORTS OF IRISH FOOD AND DRINK TO THE MIDDLE EAST BY 2020.

At present, it is estimated that as much as 80-90 per cent of food consumed in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is imported. With Ireland exporting approximately 80 per cent of its food and drink outputs, Bord Bia (the Irish food board) believes Ireland is well positioned to satisfy the growing demand for food and drink imports to the Middle East region.

In 2013, food and drink exports from Ireland to the Middle East were estimated at €312 million. The GCC members accounted for €190 million, or 61 per cent of exports to the region. During a trade mission, led by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Simon Coveney, to the region at the end of last year, Bord Bia announced a target of doubling exports to the region by 2020. Speaking during the trade mission, Minister Coveney commented: “As the Irish food and drink industry seeks to grow exports to €12 billion by 2020, the Middle East is set to become an increasingly important export market.”

This is reflected in the high turn out of Irish food and drink companies attending Gulfood 2014. With 17 exhibitors, it is the largest Irish contingent to travel to the Dubai show.

Opportunities for growth

Irish food products sold in the region include: beef; dairy ingredients; farmhouse cheeses; poultry; oysters; salmon; potatoes; eggs; chocolate; sugar candy; herbs; tea; relishes; preserves; and bakery products. In 2013, exports to GCC countries were dominated by infant formula exports at €124 million; dairy and dairy ingredients, €34 million; followed by prepared foods, €20 million; beverages, €10 million; and beef at €2 million. Dairy and dairy ingredients, including infant formula, currently account for the largest share of exports to the region. As the Irish dairy industry plans for growth following the end of dairy quotas in 2015, the Middle East is setting out to become an increasingly important market, particularly for milk powders and dairy ingredients. The Irish dairy industry is set to seek to increase sales and marketing resources, to increase activity in product innovation to meet customer
requirements; and to seek out strategic opportunities in the Middle East. Evidence of the commitment of Irish dairy companies to the Middle East was seen during the Minister’s trade mission with the announcement of several significant investments, such as Kerry Group opening an office in Dubai and the Irish Dairy Board’s €20 million investment in Saudi Arabia. Following the decision by the GCC earlier this year to formally lift longstanding bans on exports of Irish beef and sheepmeat from Ireland to the GCC region, Bord Bia believes exports of Irish food in the Middle East will be enhanced. It describes this as a milestone in delivering on the potential that the region offers the Irish meat industry.

Bord Bia says Irish premium and speciality foods have enjoyed growing success, particularly in the UAE in recent years. Building on events such as Marketplace International, the Global Sustainability Conference, as well as access to direct flights and the opportunity to consolidate through Irish entrepreneurs based in the market, Irish food companies have secured listings with leading retailers and high-end foodservice operators.

**Sustainable production**

The region’s agricultural base is severely challenged by extreme climatic conditions, arid soil and lack of water. The scope to expand primary production is limited, therefore governments in the region are focusing on securing primary products through investments overseas, reliance on and managing food imports and developing and encouraging investment in food processing and added value food production. These limitations mean sustainability is an important factor for both governments and customers in the region. With that in mind, Bord Bia’s Origin Green sustainability programme resonates strongly. Ireland’s natural, grass-fed production systems for meat and dairy offer Irish manufacturers an important USP in the Middle East. Ireland’s natural grass-based production system for both meat and dairy is an important selling factor for Irish food and drink exports to the region, according to Bord Bia.

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**BORD BIA OPENS DUBAI OFFICE**

Reflecting the expected market opportunities in the region, Bord Bia has opened a new Middle East regional office in Dubai. Michael Hussey will be the Middle East Manager for Bord Bia Dubai and he is confident that Irish companies can take advantage of the demand for food in the region. “I think there is a lot more potential in the region for Irish exports. It’s a very affluent market with a very young population.

Bord Bia expects population growth will play a significant role in the surge in demand for food and food imports in the GCC region. At the turn of the century there were 28.5 million people living in the GCC member states according to UN statistics. By 2010, this had increased to 44.5 million people, a 56 per cent increase in population in one decade. By 2020 it is forecast the population in GCC members will exceed 50 million people. “It’s a very young, vibrant population.” Michael explains that Bord Bia will support the development of exports to the region by engaging with the relevant governments, ensuring the “pathway is clear for Irish exports”. Furthermore, it will engage with retailer and foodservice businesses to drive exports of food and beverages into the market and also support trade links for Irish companies exporting to the Middle East.

Michael will also be getting involved with such organisations as Green Box, a voluntary group of like-minded foodies working in the UAE, which raises awareness of Irish food and drink products in the region. The highlight of these efforts is the annual Green Box competition, which sees teams showcase creative recipes based on a selection of high-end Irish produce. The 2013 event was attended by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Simon Coveney during his trade mission to the Middle East.
Ireland will be well represented at Gulfood this year, with 18 companies exhibiting. The companies represent a variety of products categories, including: meat; consumer foods; fruit and vegetables; dairy; and dairy ingredients.

Gulfood is the Middle East’s leading dedicated exhibition for the foodservice and hospitality sectors. The event provides industry suppliers with the region’s largest central business hub, ultimately delivering a world-class product and service showcase and the opportunity to meet serious international buyers face-to-face.

Visit Bord Bia’s (the Irish food board) stand to meet some of Ireland’s leading food suppliers – Sheikh Saeed Hall

AGRAKEPAK INTERNATIONAL
AgraKepak International was incorporated in 1975. It produces and supplies beef, lamb, poultry, fish and pork to the Middle East, North Africa, Asia and Russian markets. AgraKepak International is a market leader in the Irish, European and South American food industry, with a strong presence throughout the world. The group comprises of 10 factories. AgraKepak International is active globally and has developed partnerships with suppliers in order to supply its customers with their required products. The group’s mission is to provide a consistent risk-managed service through professional relationships that link suppliers and customers of meat protein worldwide.

ASHBOURNE MEAT PROCESSORS
Established in 1985, Ashbourne Meat Processors is a privately owned company that supplies high-quality beef to both domestic and worldwide markets. The company operates its own slaughterhouse, cutting plants and modern processing facilities in Ireland under the strictest quality control and management supervision. Ashbourne Meat Processors holds higher level EFSIS Approved ISO9001 status. The company offers full traceability from farm to fork. According to the company, this offer of full traceability is coupled with a commitment to service, which gives Ashbourne Meat Processors an edge in a competitive marketplace.

DAIRYGOLD CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY LIMITED
Dairygold Food Ingredients Ltd (DFI) is Ireland’s second largest milk producer, processing about 960 million litres of milk annually into top quality cheese and dairy ingredients. Based in the heart of Ireland’s fertile milk producing region, it sources its milk solely from shareholder’s grass-fed herds based in the temperate climate of southwest Ireland.
Operating from four Irish-based processing facilities it produces a broad range of dairy ingredients with two plants concentrating on cheese production and two others on dairy powders. Products are supplied worldwide either through its own sales offices in Germany, Spain or alternatively through its established partnerships in Asia. At the French manufacturing facility, Dairygold produce a range of high-quality cheese powders and dairy-based flavours. Complementing these sites are two UK-based facilities. One specialises in cheese formatting and the other in the manufacture of soft and liquid cheese. The UK operations are market leaders specifically focused on supplying cheese ingredients into UK food manufacturers and foodservice operators.
DAWN FARMS

Dawn Farms is one of the leading cooked, fermented and dried-meat companies in Europe. Dawn Farms offers a one-stop-shop in B2B-customised cooked proteins for use in pizza, sandwich and ready meal applications and is the preferred supplier to many of the world’s top QSR brands and food manufacturers.

The Dawn Farms group of companies includes two state-of-the-art production facilities in Ireland, incorporating International Meat Ingredients (IMI) and TMI Foods in the UK producing cooked bacon, protein-based snacks and roasted vegetables.

Food innovation is one of the essential building blocks of Dawn Farms’ business. It is why every Dawn Farms facility operates a best-in-class Meat Science and Innovation Centre to develop winning ideas.

Two key consumer trends Dawn Farms has identified in the market place through its NECTAR stage-gate innovation process are the ‘quest for health and wellness’ and ‘sustainable lives’. These are incorporated in all new product developments and include: using only natural flavours and colours; developing new products in line with UK Food Standards Agency 2012 salt targets; allergen-minimisation programme, using alternatives where available (nut-free site); and, no palm oil used in product specifications.

Dawn Farms is export-focused and prides itself on growth through long-term sustainable investment and strategic partnerships. Through its membership of Bord Bia’s Origin Green sustainability programme, it is committed to doing business in ways that are good for its customers, staff, the environment and the community. Dawn Farms was awarded the Food and Drink Exporter of the Year in 2012/13 and the Sustainable Exporter of the Year in 2013/14 by the Irish Exporters Association.

DONALD RUSSELL INTERNATIONAL LTD

Donald Russell is an international beef company supplying high-quality beef produce globally from Co. Longford. All beef produce is dry matured and cut to a kitchen-ready standard as set by Meat Buyers Guide. The selection of cuts includes: 5 bone rib (carvery) and 5 bone rib (French trimmed); rib eye roll; fillet ex chain; striploin special trim; striploin larder trim; swiss cut rump; and, tafelspitz (Rump Cap).

Donald Russell is committed to providing a product with total traceability, from cows that have had a natural diet in a natural environment. Consistency in its produce is also something on which Donald Russell prides itself, ensuring that beef is to a high standard every time. The company offers a dedicated team of experts, who carefully select the product, as well as an EFSIS- and BRC-approved plant to ensure quality.

DONNELLY

Established in 1979, Donnelly is a producer of deli salads; ready-to-eat salad leaves; and prepared vegetables. Based in north county Dublin, the company packs, prepares and delivers products that have been sourced through the company’s network of Irish growers and specially selected growers worldwide. The company also has its own-label brand, selling fruit, vegetables and salads.

Employing approximately 200 people, the company supplies all retail channels in the Republic of Ireland (SuperValu, Superquinn, Aldi, Eurospar, Spar, Centra, Costcutter, Londis etc.) as well as independent stores and wholesale outlets. Donnelly is 100 per cent Irish-owned.
Glanbia plc is a global performance nutrition and ingredients group with leading market positions in whey proteins, sports nutrition, micronutrient premixes and cheese. Glanbia products are sold in 130 countries and the group employs 4,900 people in over 20 countries. Glanbia shares are listed on the Irish and London stock exchanges (symbol: GLB).

Glanbia is made up of four business segments: Global Performance Nutrition; Global Ingredients; Dairy Ireland; and, Joint Ventures and Associates.

Glanbia Ingredients Ireland Limited (GIIL) is Ireland’s leading dairy ingredients company. It processes 1.6 billion litres of milk or 30 per cent of Ireland’s milk pool. The business produces 250,000 tonnes of dairy ingredients and exports into more than 60 countries. GIIL has six core markets: infant milk formula; clinical nutrition; affordable nutrition; cream liqueurs; retail; and processed cheese.

GIIL’s product portfolio consists of skimmed milk powder; butter milk powder; whole milk powder; cheddar cheese variants; cagliata cheese variants; butterfat variants; whey protein concentrates and isolates; and milk protein concentrates and isolates. It also produces a full portfolio of enriched milk powders, liquid creams, and a range of lactose and caseins (acid and rennet).

The business currently employs 530 employees and has market bases in UAE (Dubai), Ireland, Germany, Italy, the US and Senegal. It is currently gearing up for the increase in milk production expected after 2015, with significant investment (€180 million in total) between the new Belview facility in Co. Kilkenny and the expansion of existing facilities at Ballyragget, Co. Kilkenny and Virginia, Co. Cavan.

From Killeigh, Co. Offaly, Glenisk is a family-run producer of organic dairy and goats’ milk products. Established in 1987, the company switched to organic production in 1995 and now works with 50 small, family farms across Ireland. Pioneers of the organic dairy sector, Glenisk has actively encouraged dairy farmers to convert and created a value-added proposition for consumers with major work undertaken to communicate the benefits of organic in terms of taste, nutritional values, animal welfare and the proven benefits of organic for the environment.

Glenisk’s product range includes goats’ yogurt, Greek-style yogurt and a range of no added-sugar yogurts created specifically for babies and young children. Committed to fair trade and ensuring that organic production is sustainable, Glenisk pays farmers a premium for their organic milk and procures most of the organic milk produced on the island of Ireland. Glenisk has tripled its market share since 2008 and now holds more than 12 per cent of the total yogurt market. Glenisk is one of Ireland’s fastest growing brands and is the recipient of multiple awards for its products, business and for its commitment to sustainability. The Irish Organic Farmers and Growers Association (IOFGA) and the British Retail Consortium (BRC) have certified Glenisk. The company’s products are available in the UK, Portugal, Spain and the UAE.
GREEN ISLE FOODS

Green Isle Foods Ltd is the leading Irish frozen food company, and a fast-growing supplier to major European retailers. Established in 1982, the company employs over 700 people in Ireland and is part of the 2 Sisters Food Group, which has a total turnover of in excess of €3 billion. It produces a range of pizzas and pastry products under the San Marco, Goodfella’s, and Green Isle brands, as well as EU retailers’ own labels, which have been found to deliver high repeat-purchase rates. Now, the producer has launched, with two specialist frozen pizza sites in Ireland, under its San Marco brand, a pan-European pack in 10 languages for the EU market. Key customers in the EU include Tesco, Sainsbury’s, Co-op, Fakta, Morrisons, Asda, SuperGros and Somerfield. New product development and innovation are key and the company boasts quality manufacturing sites, including BRC highest-level accreditation, customer service, flexibility and professional sales and marketing support.

IRISH DAIRY BOARD CO-OPERATIVE LIMITED (IDB)

The IDB is Ireland’s largest exporter of premium dairy products and a leading international food company with a global footprint that extends to over 90 countries. The IDB has annualised sales in the region of €2 billion. Headquartered in Dublin, the business employs some 3,100 people globally. Over the past 50 years, the IDB has established vital routes to market for Irish dairy produce and is a leader in product innovation.

The IDB owns the internationally-renowned Kerrygold brand along with other brands including Pilgrims Choice, Dubliner and Beo. The IDB’s food ingredients arm develops bespoke food ingredient solutions for many of the world’s major food manufacturing corporations. A co-operative enterprise, the IDB is owned by Irish dairy processing co-operatives and dairy companies and, through these, by Irish dairy farmers. The IDB’s business is structured on three core platforms; consumer foods; dairy trading and ingredients; and DPI, a specialty food distribution company in the US.

Group subsidiaries, in the UK, Germany and the US, pack, distribute and market a wide selection of branded products, dairy ingredients, grocery, delicatessen and gourmet food items of both Irish and non-Irish origin.
INA’S KITCHEN DESSERTS

Ina’s Kitchen Desserts was set up by Ina Broderick in Dublin in 1983, and is now run by her sons, Barry and Bernard. Barry and Bernard are behind the Broderick’s brand of wrapped bars and cakes, which are hand produced in the family-run bakery in Co. Dublin. The company uses high-quality ingredients including real Irish butter, Belgian chocolate, homemade caramel and Irish oats for its products.

The current range of products includes Road Rocking Choc Choc Bloc (Rocky Road), Tiff Toff in the Tuffen (Tiffin) and Caramental (Belgian chocolate caramel shortbread) bars.

The company is also launching a new range of mini-bites this year with the new packs containing 36 individually-wrapped mini versions of the Broderick’s bars. A mixed bag of 75 mini-bites will also be available for the foodservice sector.

The company serves retail and foodservice sectors in Ireland, the UK, France, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Switzerland, Russia and Japan.

PAN EURO FOODS

Established in 2000, Pan Euro Foods is an importer and brand builder for food companies developing business in the Gulf region. Pan Euro Foods has developed sales for leading Irish food brands such as Glanbia and Glenisk with major retailers in the region. The company has an office in Dubai with customers throughout the Gulf including in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. This on-the-ground expertise has allowed Pan Euro to successfully develop networks across a number of food categories in the East.

PETER KEOGH & SONS LTD

Keogh’s Farm is a family-owned Irish producer of fresh potatoes and hand-cooked crisps. Based in north county Dublin, generations of the Keogh’s family have farmed the land for over 200 years.

Keogh’s Farm is the only on-farm producer of hand-cooked artisan potato crisps in Ireland and the only potato grower that offers fresh potatoes and potato crisps from the same farm side by side in stores, both around Ireland, and the rest of the world.

As pioneers of National Potato Day, Keogh’s specialise in Rooster, Maris Piper and Kerr’s Pink potatoes, as well as products such as the selenium-enriched Selena potatoes and an Easy Cook range that includes baby, jacket and roast potato meal packs.

Over the years, Keoghs has worked with several carefully selected food producers to create distinct but uniquely Irish flavours for its crisps. As well as the primary flavours, Keogh’s created the world’s first-ever shamrock flavoured food, Keogh’s hand-cooked Shamrock and Sour Cream Irish potato crisps, to celebrate St. Patrick’s Day. It also produced festive Roast Turkey and Secret Stuffing crisps in 2012. Recently, the company introduced the first-ever Irish gluten-free, cheese and onion flavoured crisp, Keogh’s gluten-free Dubliner Irish Cheese and Onion crisp.
**SEERYS HEATHERFIELD LTD**

Seerys is a family-run bakery based in Co. Carlow. The business began as an artisan producer of cakes and puddings for the local market in the 1980s. The company now employs 50 people and operates on a large scale, providing quality cakes and puddings to retail customers across Ireland and the UK. The company is looking forward to further expansion in the coming years. The company operates to BRC grade A level, and is committed to maintaining this level of quality. Seerys’ current product list ranges from fruitcakes and Christmas puddings to Madeira cakes.

**THE JELLY BEAN FACTORY**

Established in 1998 by Dublin-based father and son team – Peter and Richard Cullen – The Jelly Bean Factory is Europe’s leading producer of gourmet jellybeans. Each gourmet bean is free from artificial colours and flavours and is gluten free, nut free, gelatine free, GMO free, kosher certified, and halal compliant; as well as being suitable for vegetarians and coeliacs. The company produces around 12 million gourmet jellybeans daily in 36 different flavours ranging from passion fruit to pina colada, liquorice to cinnamon in various innovative pack formats. Over 97 per cent of all production is exported to over 50 countries worldwide and The Jelly Bean Factory is the fastest-growing brand of gourmet jellybeans in leading confectionery markets such as the UK.

**THE NEST BOX EGG COMPANY**

The Nest Box Egg Company is a second-generation family-owned business with over 40 years’ experience in egg production and marketing. The company employs 35 employees who grade, pack and distribute over two million eggs per week, successfully delivering a complete range of private label and branded solutions to key multiple and foodservice players within the Irish market. Its market reach increased in 2013 with the commencement of supplying retailers in the Middle East. Resulting from our passion for eggs, the company’s ‘Golden Irish’ brand has grown to be one of the most recognisable egg brands in Ireland and has consistently driven category growth through branded innovation. Its range includes Free Range, Corn-Fed, Omega 3 and Organic eggs, which are produced by hens that have the very highest standards of welfare. For these reasons, the company believes its hens lay the tastiest eggs. The company is Bord Bia approved and BRC approved, as well as being a proud members of Organic Trust, IOFGA and Love Irish Food.
In 2011, Teagasc and the IDB announced the creation of a new Dairy Innovation Centre based in Moorepark, Co. Cork. It was established to develop market-led product concepts that can be manufactured by IDB members, which would be then marketed internationally by the IDB.

The first success of that collaboration was revealed in 2013 when the IDB announced that it was investing €20 million in its operations in Saudi Arabia to facilitate the production of a new cheese product for that market.

Saudi Arabia

From white cheese is the first new product to emerge from the Teagasc/IDB collaboration. It is a white cheese variety that Professor Paul Ross, Head of Teagasc Food Programme says has a huge market in Saudi Arabia. “It’s a fresh cheese, originating from the Lebanon. It’s commonly served on a bread or pizza.”

To create Labneh, Teagasc and the IDB developed patented technology that allows innovative milk protein ingredients to be exported to the region and recombined at a local facility to create the fresh white cheese product. The IDB’s €20 million investment in Saudi Arabia includes the acquisition of a 75 per cent interest in Al Wazeen Trading LLC (Al Wazeen) and the development of a new state-of-the-art cheese manufacturing plant at the Al Wazeen facility in Riyadh, which will be responsible for production of the final product.

Corporate Communications Manager for the IDB, Jeanne Kelly says the IDB worked with its partners at Al Wazeen to trial the products in the region. She adds that the collaborative approach and on-
the-ground experience of the company really helped to expedite the process. Furthermore, Jeanne says, the Irish product will benefit competitively in the Saudi Arabian market because it will be produced locally at an IDB facility in Riyadh. Initially, the facility will supply dairy products to the Saudi Arabian market. However, it is anticipated that IDB will use Saudi Arabia as a manufacturing hub for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, supplying the Islamic Halal market segment. Saudi Arabia already imports more than 400,000 tonnes of dairy produce per year. Domestic milk self sufficiency is relatively low, and milk production is under stress, due to the lack of water for crop growing as animal feed. Despite this, consumption of cheese and other dairy products is growing steadily throughout the region, offering an excellent platform for future growth for the IDB.

**Routes to market**

This investment is a key part in the IDB’s strategy to grow routes to market and added value to Irish dairy produce in the run up to the abolition of milk quotas in 2015. It is expected the IDB will capitalise on its foothold in the region to introduce its existing range of products to market in the Middle East. As Ireland prepares for the end of dairy quotas in 2015, the IDB believes the investment in the region will provide a key route to market for Ireland’s excess dairy output. Commenting on the announcement Kevin Lane, CEO, IDB said: “This announcement represents a major route to market and value for Irish dairy in the post quota environment. This investment is strategically very important as it allows us to expand our business throughout the MENA region. With innovation and new product development being critical to growth, our partnership with Teagasc is an excellent example of how with innovative technologies we can create new ways of producing and selling dairy products for a global audience.”

**Future varieties**

IDB plan to develop new cheese varieties in the future identified through the Teagasc partnership. IDB has plans to commercialise some of the varieties. “We will be launching a German cheese in the summertime,” explains Jeanne. In addition to the IDB/Teagasc relationship, she adds that IDB’s internal R&D department has also been working on expanding its range of butter and cheese products for core markets in Germany, the UK and the US, as well as a new cheese product for the Russian and Chinese markets.

**A shared agenda**

Teagasc had been carrying out research into cheese diversification for over 20 years, funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine’s Food Institutional Research Measure (FIRM) and Enterprise Ireland. Paul says Teagasc’s research into the area of cheese diversification ties in well with the NPD agenda at the IDB and its plans to maximise the expansion opportunities which will be created for the Irish dairy sector in post quota 2015 and the Government’s Food Harvest 2020 Report. This partnership is a vital part of the IDB’s strategy to increase the added value element of Irish dairy exports, and Teagasc’s strategy to support innovative research by commercial Irish food companies.

“The IDB has an excellent network around the world selling Irish products. What was really attractive was that it could provide a real market pull for new products that we would develop.”

**Previous success**

Teagasc has had previous success in the field of cheese development. The well-established Dubliner Cheese brand is an example of a successful new cheese variety developed by Moorepark researchers. Dubliner Cheese was developed as an alternative to cheddar cheese. However, the ambition was to create a cheese that could be manufactured using existing cheddar equipment, to eliminate the need for capital investment. It also has a unique flavour. The product was licensed and brought to market by Carbery in 1996. Teagasc followed this success with the launch of a probiotic-containing cheese by the IDB brand, Pilgrim’s Choice.

*Teagasc – the Agriculture and Food Development Authority – is the national body providing integrated research, advisory and training services to the agriculture and food industry and rural communities in Ireland.*
The Keogh Family has been farming the lands of north county Dublin for the past 200 years. Maintaining the family's heritage, Keogh's Farm continues to grow and export potatoes from its Dublin base to customers worldwide, including popular American gourmet chain Dean & DeLuca.

Keogh's specialise in rooster, maris piper and kerr's pink potatoes, as well as products such as the selenium enriched Selena potatoes and its Easy Cook range which includes baby, jacket and rooster meal-packs.

The company recently announced a deal with Spinneys, the leading premium supermarket retailer in the Middle East. The deal will see Keogh's Farm supply 2,000kg per week of its Easy Cook range to the retailer. The deal is worth €100,000 per annum to the Irish company and Tom Keogh, Managing Director, Keogh's Farm says the company's product appeals to a "very aspirational market in which consumers are willing to pay a premium for superior quality, sustainably produced goods".

He adds that, following the successful trade mission to the Middle East by Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Simon Coveney, the company has made further progress in the region through deals with other retailers in the region. Tom says that demand for potatoes is on the rise in the region as diets become more westernised.

Alongside its potato division, Keogh's Farm has expanded its business offering and, since 2011, Keogh's Farm has been producing its own brand of hand-cooked crisps. As well as the primary flavours – cheese and onion, and salt and vinegar – Keogh’s likes to experiment with tastes. This resulted in the creation of the world’s first-ever shamrock-flavoured crisp, Keogh’s hand cooked Shamrock and Sour Cream Irish potato crisps, which were launched to celebrate St. Patrick’s Day. In 2012, Keogh’s launched its festive Roast Turkey and Secret Stuffing crisps. Most recently, the company introduced the first ever Irish gluten-free Cheese and Onion flavoured crisp, Keogh’s gluten-free Dubliner Irish Cheese and Onion crisp.

Commenting on the importance of the deal, Tom says it is an important time to break into the Middle East. “The market is in such growth at the moment that it’s very important to get in at this stage. Globally it’s a great location to showcase your product because it is so multi-cultural and there are so many people travelling to the area and visiting those stores.” Keogh’s will be exhibiting at this year’s Gulfood. Tom says this year’s show will be a good opportunity to exhibit the company’s fresh potato and crisp range with a view to increasing sales and distribution in the region.

Growing demand for Irish potatoes

‘THE MIDDLE EAST IS A GREAT LOCATION TO SHOWCASE FOOD PRODUCTS’ SAYS TOM KEOGH, MANAGING DIRECTOR, KEOGH’S FARM.

Keogh’s Farm recently launched its newest creation, Keogh’s Gluten-Free Dubliner Irish Cheese and Onion flavour crisp, created for those with gluten sensitivities in mind. According to Keogh’s, this is the first Irish gluten-free cheese and onion potato crisp.

According to Tom Keogh, Managing Director of Keogh’s Crisps, it took the company just under a year to perfect the recipe.

“We are delighted to bring to market the first-ever Irish gluten-free cheese and onion flavour crisp. We understand the sacrifices made by people who need to follow a strict gluten-free diet and who sometimes miss out on enjoying their favourite snacks so that’s why we have created Ireland’s unique flavour – gluten free. Using Irish potatoes and rice flour, we spent just under a year perfecting the taste, so that it still tastes as delicious as it always did, but now this flavour so synonymous with Ireland can be enjoyed by even more people.”

Made using Irish potatoes, Keogh’s Gluten-Free Dubliner Irish Cheese and Onion crisps can be identified by the heart-shaped gluten-free logo on the front of the pack. Each pack will also feature ‘Spud Nav’, Keogh’s online potato-tracking device. Consumers can trace each bag of crisps back to the field it came from, by entering the field name - which is printed on each bag into the ‘Spud Nav’ page on the Keogh’s web site, www.keoghs.ie

Growing demand for Irish potatoes

‘THE MIDDLE EAST IS A GREAT LOCATION TO SHOWCASE FOOD PRODUCTS’ SAYS TOM KEOGH, MANAGING DIRECTOR, KEOGH’S FARM.
The natural choice.

Made in Ireland

Europe’s No. 1 Producer of Gourmet Jelly Beans
- Gluten Free
- Gelatine Free
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- 36 Amazingly Tasty Flavours
- 100% Natural Flavours
- No Artificial Colours
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See us at Gulfood ’14 Hall Sheikha Saeed 2, Stand: S3-D40

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Kerry Group, the global ingredients, flavours, and consumer foods group, recently opened a new Kerry Group Regional Development and Application Centre in Dubai, UAE. The new Kerry Centre, located at the Jumeriah Lakes Towers, Dubai will serve Kerry’s global and regional customer base in the Middle East, North Africa and Turkey. The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Simon Coveney, officially opened the Centre during his a five-day trade mission to the Middle East in late 2013.

The new Regional Development and Application Centre in Dubai will support the day-to-day development needs of Kerry customers across The Middle East, North Africa territories (MENAT) developing markets. It will work closely with Kerry Group’s new, €1 million Global Technology and Innovation Centre for Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA) markets, which is currently under construction in Ireland and on scheduled to open in 2015. While the Dubai Centre will support day-to-day business in the region, the EMEA Centre will provide key research and tech development support.

The Minister commented: “I am delighted to be here to mark the opening of this Centre for Kerry Group as one of Ireland’s leading agri-food companies. “The opening of this office is an important development for the Group”
Innovation Partner for the Agriculture and Food Sector

Sustainable Agriculture
- Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Maintaining Clean Water
- Green Island Livestock Systems

New Technologies
- Breeding New Potato Varieties
- Satellite Imaging for Precision Farming
- Testing Systems for Animal Breeding

Technology for the Food Sector
- High Quality Cheese Free Bread
- Antimicrobial Therapy for Controlling BSE
- New Food Product Development
as it will serve the Middle East, North Africa and Turkey region as a customer-focused development and application centre. It is also an important element in the development of Kerry’s new Global Technology and Innovation Centre, which is under construction in Naas, Co. Kildare for which it will provide support services.

Market opportunities
This investment represents Kerry’s first investment in the MENAT region and, according to the Group, Dubai was chosen due to its geographic location and strong trade links. The Group believes the move is a key measure in meeting global, regional and local customers in MENAT markets. Furthermore, Kerry Group says it will be better able to support its global customers who are also experiencing growth in the region. Kerry Group predicts that the investment in Dubai will open up market opportunities for the increased food production planned in Ireland over the next decade. Consequently, the Group says it will support Irish exports of dairy ingredients, snack ingredients and nutritional systems and Ireland’s Origin Green programme will assist in that development.

“The Kerry investment in the Dubai based Centre is testament to the Group’s determination to service customer requirements in this important developing region,” said Gerry Behan, President and CEO Kerry Ingredients and Flavours, speaking at the official opening. “Here we will align our Kerry Taste and Nutritional offerings with local market trends and consumer demand – working in conjunction with our Global Centre to drive innovation across the beverage, dairy, meat, snack, confectionery and bakery industries. “This Centre will support our global customers who are expanding their footprint in the region, while bringing the benefits of our global technologies to local food and beverage producers – supporting indigenous industry development.”

He added: “The Centre will allow our commercial teams to better collaborate with customers in the region and we are confident that it will be a key differentiator in meeting the product development needs of our customers.” Kerry Group also hopes to continue its growth through acquisitions in the region. A Group spokesperson added that Kerry Group’s presence in Dubai supports the regions aspirations to develop its own food and beverage industry. He adds that the assistance offered by a global network such as Kerry Group is highly valued in the region.

Sustainable growth
Headquartered in Tralee, Ireland, Kerry Group is now the largest player in the ingredients and flavours market and has revenues of approximately €5.8 billion. The company employs 24,000 people globally, with 150 manufacturing facilities worldwide and with sales to 140 countries. Kerry Group’s interim management statement for 2013 showed that the Group has also continued to expand its platforms for growth in EMEA developing markets which, it says, is delivering encouraging business development and good growth. In the relatively flat overall industry growth environment in EMEA markets in the period, Kerry’s continuing business volumes grew by 1.6 per cent. Good progress was achieved through global accounts in the sweet and cereal sectors and an encouraging product-development pipeline is expected to lead to further new product launches in 2014. The acquisition of South African based Orley Foods, a leading supplier of sweet ingredients solutions to food manufacturers and foodservice providers in South Africa, was completed in March and performed well, providing a strong boost to Kerry in meeting customer requirements for sweet ingredients solutions in regional developing markets.
Silver Hill Foods is Ireland’s only family-run, fully integrated duck company. Based in Emyvale, Co. Monaghan, the company is dedicated to ensuring that the highest commercially applicable standards are achieved in its duck production from breeding, hatching and growing through to processing, cooking, feather and duvet production. “We joke that we use every part of the duck except the quack, but we even use that now as a ringtone,” says Barry Cullen, Head of Sales at Silver Hill Foods.

Silver Hill exports its duck feet, heads and necks to Hong Kong, where they are sold as delicacies; its duck liver and fat is sold to Belgium to make pâté; it sells its duck feathers to Poland; and its cooked duck products are sold all over Europe and South Africa.

Halal certified
For the past two years, Silver Hill Foods has been producing halal-certified duck products for the UK market. As part of its five-year business strategy to double the size of the company by 2016, the company decided to focus on a wider halal market. “We are one of only four companies in Europe that can supply a cooked-halal product to the market,” Barry says.

Silver Hill Foods exports to the Middle East are valued at approximately €500,000. Its current exports to the region include: crispy roast half duck with Chinese pancakes and hoi sin sauce; confit of duck legs; whole, aromatic roast duck; and a boneless, aromatic half-roast duck.

Barry says the company is working on building its distribution to the region and has partnered with an agent there. “We formed a partnership with Conor Ryan at Pan Euro, who is our agent into the United Arab Emirates. We are predominantly dealing with Spinneys at the moment but there are plans to progress that,” says Brian. He explains that partnering with Pan Euro helped Silver Hill Foods in developing its market in the region and it keeps them abreast of changes in the market. “Local knowledge is very important in any market we go into and we always try to get a person on the ground who knows the market and its nuances.”

Traceability
The company boasts a unique type of hybrid duck, which has evolved through its breeding programme. With approximately two million ducks on the ground at any one time, breeding, processing and packaging all take place within a 30-mile radius. Barry explains that the company has maintained a traditional processing system. “We haven’t interfered with nature, so the duck now is pretty much the same as it was 50 years ago when Mr and Mrs Steele started the company.” He adds that many competitors have embraced efficiency over quality but, he adds: “We do everything by hand so the quality is the best.”

During the entire growing period no additives or antibiotics are used. The ducks are fed on a special all-natural formula, which contains only certified non-GM ingredients, to promote healthy growth.
Cracking the market

A second generation, family-owned company, the Nest Box Egg Company is a business with over 40 years’ experience in egg production and marketing. Producing some two million eggs per week, the company delivers both private label and branded solutions to key multiple and foodservice players within the Irish and international markets.

A strong brand

The company has one of the most recognisable brands in Ireland with its Golden Irish label and, in 2013, the company decided to take that brand to a bigger audience through expansion into the Middle East.

“We’re supplying a number of retailers in the Middle East,” says Brian Eivers, Sales Director, the Nest Box Egg Company. He adds that there are plans to expand its customer base there.

Brian believes the Middle East holds exciting possibilities for the company. “The Middle East is, potentially, a huge market, as it is home to about 300 million people.”

The opportunity to export to the region was down to fortuitous timing according to Brian. Nest Box had been reviewing the Middle East as a potential export market when it was contacted by retailers in the region. “We had been exploring the options of exporting to the Middle East and in a case of right place, right time, we had several companies come to us to enquire about exporting.” He says things progressed in the market from there.

Brian believes the Nest Box brand has something unique to offer retailers in the region. “We feel the passion that we have for quality is our unique selling point in the Middle East.

“It is this passion that, when it is effectively communicated, makes us so compelling to retailers of the region. We also have a strong brand with Golden Irish and we are competitive in our pricing, which puts us at an advantage over our European competitors.”

Brian says that the range of products produced by the Nest Box range includes standard free range eggs, omega-3 eggs, and cornfed varieties, which, according to Brian, is an attractive package for retailers in the market.

Overcoming challenges

Brian explains the company had to overcome certain difficulties in branching out into this new export market. However, he says, through the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine in Ireland, and the equivalent department in the United Arab Emerites (UAE), the company was able to tackle these challenges.

One such challenge is the legislation around packaging, which has to include Arabic. To overcome this, Arabic was incorporated into the pre-existing design for The Nest Box’s branding.

Brian is confident that there is a place for the company in the Middle East market in the future and has ambitions for expansion. “The progress made so far is only the beginning for the Nest Box Egg Company in the Middle East.”
Entering the food industry two decades ago, Mileeven Fine Foods has built a reputation as one of Ireland’s leading artisan food and innovative product suppliers. Established in 1988, Mileeven Fine Foods began as a concept to make use of excess honey that was produced by the company’s founders Éilis Gough and her husband. Initially available from farmers’ markets and local stores, the brand has gone from strength to strength, and has been bestowed numerous accreditations over the years including 13 Great Taste Awards, as well as several Blas na hEireann awards. It was also a Gulfood finalist in the Best New Functional Food and Best New Brand or Company categories in 2011. In 2013, it was in the Gulfood Highly Commended category. “Our deals in the East have come about through our presence at trade shows, through directly meeting with the relevant buyers and from meetings set up through our distributor,” says Sarah Gough, for whom the honey is named, and who now runs the business with her mother Éilis.

A successful export base
Mileeven supply retailers in 16 countries worldwide, including the Middle East. “This year will be our third supplying to the Middle East,” says Sarah. “We currently supply to major retailers in the East such as Spinney’s, Tamimi, Waitrose and Carrefour, as well as speciality stores like Dean & DeLuca, and independent stores also.” Sarah says the company has plans for expansion in the region. “This year, we want to expand the current market that we have in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and also branch to the surrounding area into other Middle Eastern countries that we haven’t dealt with yet, such as Qatar and Kuwait. We feel that our product has the strength for us to do that.”

A competitive edge
Sarah is confident that the company’s range of flavoured honeys can increase market share in the Middle East because it is unique in its offering. “Our company offers both a flavoured honey and a honey with fruit and nuts range and this gives us an edge in the marketplace in the Middle East.”

In exporting to the Middle East, Sarah says the company faced new challenges, particularly the heat. The temperature, she explains, is so high, and dramatically different to the weather in Ireland where the honey is produced, that the product has to be shipped in reflective foil wrapping in order to regulate the temperature during transport. As the product is shipped by sea, which can take four weeks, and has to go through customs, Sarah says all products that Mileeven supplies to the Middle East are made to order to ensure the best quality possible.

An asset in the region
Commenting on the new Bord Bia office opening in the Middle East, Sarah says that the office is going to be a hugely important asset to Irish companies that are already working there and to those looking to get into the market in the future.
IRISH AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PRODUCTION HAS BENEFITED FROM A REPUTATION FOR BEING ‘GREEN’. BORD BIA’S SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMME, ORIGIN GREEN, AIMS TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE THAT REPUTATION.

A defining element of Ireland’s agri-food industry is the country’s natural production system. Ireland’s temperate climate, combined with its annual rainfall, means its yearly grass production exceeds the European average by more than one-third, ensuring the continued availability of permanent pasture in Ireland. This is referred to as Ireland’s ‘natural advantage’ and, in 2012, Bord Bia launched its sustainability programme, Origin Green, to internationally demonstrate the commitment of Irish food and drink producers to operate sustainably – in terms of greenhouse gas emission, energy conservation, water management, biodiversity, community initiatives, and health and nutrition.

A voluntary programme

According to recent research conducted by the EU Commission, Ireland has amongst the lowest carbon footprints for dairy and beef production in the EU. Cranfield University in the UK also conducted studies on water footprint for Irish beef and dairy with findings proving that Ireland has one of the lowest water stress measurements in the world. In addition, a pioneering move by Bord Bia saw the organisation put into place sustainability audits within its Beef Quality Assurance Scheme, which has seen more than 35,000 Irish farms participate.

In 2012, Bord Bia went one step further when it launched a first-of-its kind sustainability programme that operates at both farm and national level. Origin Green is a voluntary programme, which sees food manufacturers develop a sustainability plan that sets out clear targets in key areas such as emissions, water and CSR activities. Once approved, verified members are entitled to use an Origin Green logo as part of their trade marketing and communications.

To date, there has been a strong response to the initiative with a total of
ORIGIN GREEN

299 companies signed up for the Origin Green Programme. This includes 37 verified members; 49 companies who have submitted their plans; and another 213 companies at the workshop/planning development stage. It is Bord Bia’s intention that, by the end of 2014, 75 per cent of Ireland’s food and drinks exports will be from Origin Green verified members.

Industry commitment
The Origin Green Sustainability Charter is the basis for member companies to structure the strategic direction of their sustainability agenda. A third party, the SGS Group, one of the world’s leading inspection, verification, testing and certification companies, independently verifies the Charter. Origin Green operates with an understanding that there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution and allows companies to design their own measures around sustainability. With that in mind, participating companies must decide on target areas to address and then agree a baseline period to work towards. Each company must also set out timelines and targets to achieve and then report on progress annually.

Global challenges
The Origin Green sustainability programme was developed against a backdrop of climate change and a growing scarcity of both land and water. Furthermore, the United Nations predicts that the world’s population will reach over nine billion by 2050. Within that expanding population there is a growing middle class, which today numbers 1.8 billion. According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), three billion more people will join the middle classes in just this decade and the next – that’s 150 million people a year, double the rate of growth in the population itself. This is creating a market, every three years, that is, in buying power terms, the size of the European Union. The current rate of population growth is placing unprecedented pressure on the world’s resources and questions have been raised about how the earth’s resources will cope with an extra two billion people in less than 40 years.

Origin Green aims to establish Ireland as a world leader in sustainably produced food and drink, making Ireland an active world partner in addressing the global food challenges ahead and, consequentially, enhancing export performance.

Global Sustainability Conference
In September 2013, Bord Bia held its inaugural Global Sustainability Conference, which welcomed 800 international delegates to witness, first-hand, Ireland’s sustainability agenda. This included 280 international food buyers from 25 countries – representing some of the world’s key retail and foodservice operators including Carrefour, the world’s largest food retailer; Marks & Spencer; Chinese dairy company Whahaha and Spinneys, the leading premium supermarket in the Middle East and North Africa. Those taking part included international high-profile speakers from leading edge companies and organisations such as the World Wildlife Fund, the World Bank, PepsiCo, McDonald’s, Mars, Kerry Foods, Tesco and Nestlé.

A supply chain solution
As well as demonstrating the commitment of Irish food and drink producers to operate sustainably, Bord Bia says the Origin Green initiative will also help establish Ireland as a realistic solution to the supply-chain needs of companies in the sustainability conversation. Generating new business opportunities for Irish companies was also a key feature of the sustainability conference. With that target in mind, Bord Bia invited 80 conference delegates, who were identified as operating with a sustainability agenda, to participate in an extended three-day visit that included visits to Irish producers and food and drink export companies. Fourteen itineraries were planned for sectors including drinks, dairy, meat and livestock, seafood, and prepared foods. Each itinerary was structured to give an overview of the specific sector and included visits to plants and factories, allowing the export companies an opportunity to articulate the work they have done with Origin Green.

Simon Coveney, Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine says: “Our vision of sustainable growth is achievable.”
Positive outlook for meat exports

IRELAND’S MEAT AND LIVESTOCK EXPORTS ACCOUNTED FOR ONE THIRD OF TOTAL FOOD AND DRINK EXPORTS, WITH POSITIVE PROSPECTS FOR 2014.

Tom Moran, General Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine described the recent export figures for Irish food and drinks, announced recently by Bord Bia, as “astounding”. Speaking at the Bord Bia Meat Prospects conference in January, he also said that the investment by food processors across the industry, but especially by dairy processors of late, is enormous.

The driving force behind this, he said, is Food Harvest 2020, which has been fundamental to how things have developed.

In 2013, Ireland’s meat and livestock industry put in a strong performance, reaching an export value of €3.3 billion and the prospects for the sector in 2014 remain broadly positive for most species.

**Pigs**

According to Peter Duggan, Strategic Information Services, Bord Bia, the value of Irish pig meat exports increased by 3 per cent in 2013. Most of this product is going to Russia, he said. China is, in volume terms, the second most important market for Irish pig meat exports, he said. “Compared to 2010 we have grown the export rate significantly.” However, exports to Japan slowed down in 2013.

**Sheep**

At home, there has been a 22 per cent increase in the sheep breeding flock, but overall flock numbers are down. This is due to the difficult autumn and a cold spring in 2013, which led to a high level of culling within the breeding flock. Fodder supplies, the cost of meal, the weather and pressure on cashflow were all affected at farm level.

From an export point of view, Irish sheepmeat performed well in 2013, the conference was told. Over 70 per cent of produce is exported, with the UK and France our key markets.

**Beef**

Joe Burke of Bord Bia told the conference that beef cattle supplies for 2014 should be strong. “The supply pattern during the year will be impacted by live exports, producer decisions and culling rates. The trend, overall, for the past four years has been positive for beef in Irish factories.” EU production, he said, looks set to increase by 1 per cent in 2014, but that won’t impact too negatively on Irish supplies.

**Beef consumption**

The consumption of beef in Europe is mixed, Mark Zeig, Bord Bia, told the conference, but he predicted it will continue to grow in the future. “Imports into the UK look like they will increase by 10,000 tonne this year.” Consumption in the US, which per
head of capita is the largest beef consuming nation, is declining. EU consumption is stable, he said, while Brazilian and Chinese consumption of beef is increasing. However, he said, when it comes to expenditure, it is Asia and Latin America consumers who are spending more on beef. He said Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC) will increase their consumption by 8kg/head towards 2022, which, he said, will make a huge difference.

Breiffini Kennedy, Bord Bia, told the conference that, by 2020, Asia will be consuming 140 million tonnes of meat annually, which will be 40 per cent of global meat consumption.

Sustainability
The growing global demand for meat is expected to increase by 60 per cent over the coming years, according to Rogier Schulte, Teagasc, who said this leads to the challenge of sustainability. He said issues around the availability of water, greenhouse gases, and the loss of biodiversity are all growing concerns and the challenge, he said, is to increase production while being sustainable.

Opportunities
The opportunities for Ireland are based around developing strategic relationships about good quality and consistent supply of product, according to Breiffini Kennedy. He said that the opening of the Japanese market for Irish beef is an endorsement of our beef. “The aspiration of the Irish beef industry (in Japan) is focused on offal, which is used in the foodservice sector in there. There is a clear link between market requirements and our ambitions. “The offal category is dominated by Australia and the US, but Irish food companies will be looking to move into these markets in Japan. The Japanese meat trade association accounts for 80 per cent of meat coming into Japan, so Irish exporters need to develop relations with these trading houses (which make up the Japanese meat trade association).”

STATESIDE DEMAND
Irish exports to the US have grown since 2009 to €523 million, making the US the fifth largest market for Irish food and beverages, according to Karen Coyle, Bord Bia.

Karen said, while demand is mainly driven by the beverage category, which accounts for 70 per cent of exports, 25 per cent is dairy, cheese, butter and ingredients. All are operating at the premium end, she said.

She explained the US market for beef sees 60 per cent sold through foodservice and 40 per cent through retail, which is the opposite to Europe. It is trending towards a fall in consumption of 1-2 per cent per year per capita, which is being driven by tough economic times in the US, the price of beef going up, a decrease in restaurant footfall and the availability of cheaper protein (chicken). Despite this, overall consumption is still significant at 57.2lb per capita.

Some 92 per cent of beef consumed in the US is of US origin, she said. The 8 per cent, which is imported, equates to approximately 1 million tonnes and 70 per cent of that is used in manufacturing. These imports, she said, are coming from Canada, Australia and New Zealand, with the latter two accounting for more than 50 per cent of beef imports.

One very significant difference between Irish beef and US beef, she said, is that only 3 per cent of beef in the US is grass fed. According to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) grass fed means cattle raised on a lifetime diet of 100 per cent grass and forage, with the exemption of milk prior to weaning.

Whether there will be a taste issue, as US customers are used to marbling from grain-fed beef, remains to be seen, she noted.

Grass-fed beef in the US sells at a premium, over organic and grain-fed. However, she warned that cattle prices in Ireland, compared to the US, are significantly higher (23 per cent). Furthermore, Irish beef is 77 per cent more expensive than Australian beef – which is our competition within the US grass-fed beef category. However, Irish beef could, she said, find a niche area for itself, especially along the east coast, which is where Bord Bia is focusing its efforts. The east coast, according to Karen, is the optimum market entry strategy for Irish beef, where the population has a higher percentage of Americans with Irish heritage, have higher disposable incomes, travel more frequently and are more educated around food.

Furthermore, the demand for grass-fed beef is growing in the US and Karen says Ireland’s green environment is a real point of difference, with research indicating that US consumers are willing to pay more for Irish beef if its attributes are communicated clearly.
A shared solution

THE MIDDLE EAST IMPORTS 80-90 PER CENT OF ITS FOOD WHILE IRELAND EXPORTS THE SAME AMOUNT, A FACT THAT DAVID BUTLER, ENTERPRISE IRELAND, BELIEVES CAN BENEFIT BOTH REGIONS.

The Irish agri-food sector is the largest export category for Ireland, with 90 per cent of outputs destined for consumption internationally. Ireland’s temperate climate, along with its annual rainfall makes it an ideal location for sustainable food production, which David Butler, FDI Manager, Food Division, Enterprise Ireland believes can benefit the markets in the Middle East. He explains that a sustainable food supply is an essential factor for the Middle East, which faces many environmental challenges to domestic food production.

"Ireland presents an opportunity to address some of the food security challenges that the region has. The Middle East imports 90 per cent of the food it needs and Ireland exports 90 per cent of the food we produce." So, says David, there is a lot of potential for partnerships to develop between companies in both regions that will be mutually beneficial.
Celebrating 30 years in business

Ashbourne Meat Processors supply premium chilled and frozen beef products to leading retailers, manufacturers and distributors throughout Europe, Russia, Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

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A two-way street

“It works both ways,” says David. He highlights the recent announcement from the Irish Dairy Board (IDB) that it is investing €20 million in its operations in Saudi Arabia. The investment will see the IDB acquire a 75 per cent interest in Al Wazeen Trading LLC (Al Wazeen) and the development of a new state-of-the-art cheese manufacturing plant at the Al Wazeen facility in Riyadh. Through this investment, the IDB’s locally based partner will produce a cheese product, which is popular with and in demand from the local consumer, but which also uses Irish-based technology and Irish ingredients. David says there are many more opportunities for similar partnerships in creating products based on Irish ingredients in either Ireland or the local market.

“This meets our interest in producing higher value products from our milk supply chain and guarantees the Gulf partner a long-term supply.” This is the kind of opportunity that Enterprise Ireland is trying to pursue with food companies in the region. David adds that there are ongoing discussions with businesses in the Middle East to develop similar partnerships in the future. As well as guaranteeing its supply base, David believes that co-investing is an attractive option for companies in the Gulf region. He says joint ventures are appealing because both parties share the risk and the rewards. “There are benefits on both sides because it reduces the risk. The Irish side can share the investment and has a guaranteed customer, while the Gulf business has a guaranteed long-term supply, as opposed to a time-specific supply agreement.”

Culturally, David explains, involvement in the food industry is not unusual for businesses in the Gulf region, irrespective of their primary business focus. “We’ve seen manufacturing, trading and technology companies from the area with an involvement in the food industry. They want to provide a solution to the national food security challenge – it’s seen as a benefit to wider society as well as good business.”

Sustainability

In terms of food security, Ireland is an attractive partner for governments and companies in the Middle East because of its predominantly pasture-led agricultural practices. “The high quality of our agricultural output is another positive attribute for Ireland,” says David. “We have strong food production systems, as well as a good reputation for food safety and traceability.”

Future access to water is a critical need for the Gulf region. David explains that Ireland’s annual rainfall means it is not challenged in the production of agricultural products that are water intense. “So, having a partner in one of the least water-stressed countries in the world makes sense for companies in the Middle East.”

Ireland’s commitment

Ireland’s agri-food industry has set significant targets for future growth, which are outlined in the Government’s Food Harvest 2020 report. In order to achieve those goals, there has been ongoing investment by the state to support company development. “Our investment in R&D as a State is helping Irish companies to produce the right kind of products – turnkey products that can be localised for specific markets. The new cheese launched in Saudi Arabia by the IDB, which was developed through research at Teagasc (the Agriculture and Food Development Authority) is a perfect example of that.”

David also highlights the industry-led food research consortium Food for Health Ireland (FHI) as an example of ongoing R&D work in Ireland that can deliver benefits to international markets in the future. Co-funded by Enterprise Ireland, FHI’s objective is to identify milk-derived food ingredients with potential health benefits – thus creating new intellectual capital and enabling the industry members to develop new products for sale globally.

“Given the investment in FHI, we would be hoping to see more ingredients, compounds, etc., which have health benefits, being commercialised.” David believes the results emerging from the research of FHI will play an important role in food production globally in the future.

Strong potential

Ireland’s dairy industry holds the greatest potential for growth, according to David, followed by other sectors like meat and meat products, seafood and consumer foods. “We would also see potential in agri-services and food processing technologies, areas where Irish companies and organisations have a lot to offer partners in the Gulf region.”

In 2015, European-wide dairy quotas will come to an end and the Irish Government predicts a 50 per cent increase in Irish dairy outputs by 2020. David believes the Middle East will be an important customer for this extra produce in the coming years.

*Enterprise Ireland is the Government agency that partners with entrepreneurs, Irish business, food foreign direct investment and the research and investment communities to develop Ireland’s international trade, innovation, leadership and competitiveness with the ultimate objective of increasing exports, employment and prosperity in Ireland.
Launched in 2011, Food Harvest 2020 set out targets for Ireland’s agri-food and fisheries industry for the subsequent 10 years. In the report, it was predicted that Irish food and drink exports would grow by 42 per cent over that period. The report’s vision is based around three key themes for the Irish agri-food industry: smart, green and growth. Within that, its action areas come under four key headings: a focus on the customer and the consumer; industry growth and competitiveness; farm level growth and competitiveness; and environmental sustainability.

In 2013, Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Simon Coveney launched the third annual progress report to assess Ireland’s progress in achieving the goals set out in Food Harvest 2020. In his foreword to the report, the Minister wrote: “I am delighted to report that the sector continues to make excellent progress and already we have achieved growth rates in excess of 25 per cent (primary production), 20 per cent (value-added) and 13 per cent (exports) on the respective 33 per cent, 40 per cent and 42 per cent growth targets to be achieved by 2020.”

On target

In January 2014, Bord Bia released figures that show exports of Irish food and drink products grew by 9 per cent in 2013 to reach almost €10 billion in value (see page 12 for more). This exceeded the 2013 goal of Food Harvest 2020 to achieve an export target of €9 billion. Speaking at the launch of these figures, the Minister said that there was little doubt that the overall €12 billion export target set in Food Harvest 2020 is well in sight.

As part of its overall export target, a target to reach 5.5 per cent exports to Asia was also set. This was surpassed in the first half of 2013 when exports to the region reached 6.1 per cent. The progress report also highlights that Ireland is on target to increase the share of exports to other euro economies by 3 percentage points.

Food Harvest 2020 also exceeded its 2013 target for the uptake of Enterprise Ireland’s Lean programme, with 21 large companies and 121 SMEs completing the programme during the year. Furthermore, the take up of Enterprise Ireland Leadership programmes has exceeded the target with 68 companies having participated at the time the report was issued, which is almost 20 more than initially hoped for. A further 17 companies took part in the International Selling programme.

Success was also seen in Bord Bia’s annual grants programme – the Marketing Assistance Programme (MAP) – which aims to help companies improve their marketing techniques and capabilities. Since 2010, MAP recipients have collectively projected an increase in turnover of €95 million, which is a €5 million excess of targets set.

Bord Bia’s Marketing Fellows also enjoyed success, completing 468 commercial assignments on behalf of 95 companies in 14 overseas markets by mid-2013. Some 63 per cent of the three Fellowship cohorts (76 participants) have secured jobs in the food and drink or associated industries. This represents a 3 per cent increase in target figures. The fourth Fellowship cohort will graduate this year.

A further success for Food Harvest 2020 was the progress of its ‘brand Ireland’ concept – Origin Green – which is a voluntary programme that sees food producers develop individual sustainability plans with clear targets in key areas such as emissions, energy, waste, water, biodiversity and CSR activities. Established in 2012, the programme now encompasses 37,000 farms and more than 290 companies, accounting for some 85 per cent of Ireland’s food and drink exports.
2013 highlights

The Milestones for Success report highlights a number of key initiatives and events that took place during 2013 that will contribute to Ireland achieving its Food Harvest 2020 goals. These achievements were across the board and covered areas such as: research and development; trade; employment; and environment, to name a few.

Some highlights from the report include:

**Investment**

In excess of €181 million was invested in projects in the drinks sector, including the expansion of the Midleton distillery in Cork; a new brewery at St. James’s Gate, Dublin; and expanded tourist facilities, which were supported by Enterprise Ireland.

**Trade missions**

A successful trade mission was undertaken to Switzerland in July to expand investment relationships with key Swiss-based players. In October, following publication of the progress report, the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine led a diverse trade mission to the Gulf States involving companies in the dairy, meat, seafood, equine and agri services. The mission also included major investment announcements from the Kerry Group and the Irish Dairy Board.

**Markets**

Access to 15 new market areas was achieved through the work of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine’s Meat Market Access Unit and the cross-divisional Trade Team. Annual business to the value of €31.8 million was generated from Marketplace 2012 with significant new buyer relationships fostered.

Using the co-opetition model, Bord Bia facilitated Dairygold and six farmhouse cheesemakers to enter the German premium market. Dairygold Germany lists six farmhouse cheeses (Cooleeney, Cashel Blue, Cahills, Carrigbyrne, Ardrahan, Carrigaline) under the ‘Irish Land’ brand. Their goal for the next three years is to establish Ireland as a supplier of specialist premium cheese while building ‘Irish Land’ as the preferred brand for Irish cheeses.

**Research and innovation**

Since the establishment of the Irish Dairy Board-Teagasc initiative on new cheese development, 300 different cheese variants have been produced with three new varieties scheduled for market launch.

Following a positive review of Phase 1, the second phase of Food for Health Ireland is now underway focused on further research into and commercialisation of dairy functional ingredients. Following significant engagement between the key dairy companies and Enterprise Ireland, the common research priorities and technological needs of the sector have been agreed in detail and a call for proposals to implement a new Dairy Technology Centre is imminent.

As with dairy, the key players in the meat industry have engaged with each other and with Enterprise Ireland over the last year to establish their common research priorities. Good progress has been made in scoping a new industry-led Meat Technology Centre. Bord Bia completed 37 insight and innovation projects and launched its Branding, Insights and Innovation Workbook series.
Study: 84% of food and beverage adverts seen by children are for products high in fats, sugars and sodium

The nutritional value of food and drinks advertised on children’s television programmes is worse than food shown in adverts during general air-time, according to University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) researchers. Using Nielsen TV ratings data from 2009, UIC researchers examined children’s exposure to food and beverage adverts seen on all – both adult and children’s – programming. It also looked at the nutritional content of products advertised during children’s shows with a child-audience share of 35 per cent or greater.

The researchers assessed the nutritional content of products advertised – cereals, sweets, snacks, beverages and other foods – and whether they fit the proposed voluntary nutrition guidelines recommended by the Interagency Working Group on Food Marketed to Children. The study also noted which ads were from food companies that pledged to promote healthier products to children or to refrain from targeting children in their advertising under the Children’s Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative (CFBAI).

The researchers found that more than 84 per cent of food and beverage adverts seen by children, ages two to 11, on all programming, were for products high in fats, sugars and sodium. On children’s programming, more than 95 per cent of adverts were for products high in those contents.

Can GMO food be labeled ‘natural’?

The US-based Grocery Manufacturers Association (GMA) has asked the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to determine whether foods containing ingredients derived from biotechnology may be labeled ‘natural’. The GMA says the request is in an attempt to subvert a potential patchwork of confusing state-based GMO labeling laws. “GMA believes that FDA should actively address the question through the rulemaking process,” writes Karin Moore, GMA vice president, in a letter directed to FDA Chief Counsel Elizabeth Dickinson. “Federal regulation will bring uniformity and consistency to both consumers and food manufacturers.”

Outside Europe, biotech crops are widely grown on millions of hectares worldwide and declared safe by over 17 internationally acclaimed, science-based agencies. Several of the most common food ingredients derived from biotech come from crops such as soybeans, corn, canola and sugar beets. There are currently 26 state legislatures considering whether foods containing GMO ingredients should be labeled and whether they are permissible in ‘natural’ foods. There are over 60 class-action lawsuits that have been filed against food makers over whether foods with ingredients allegedly derived from biotechnology can be labeled ‘natural’.

“Given the predominant use of crops derived from biotechnology in our economy, as well as consumer and state interest in this issue, whether foods that contain ingredients derived from biotechnology can be labeled ‘natural’ is an important matter to GMA members and is one that warrants FDA’s involvement,” writes Moore.

“Because there is no material difference between foods derived from biotechnology and their traditional counterparts – and they do not differ in any meaningful way – foods derived from biotechnology may be labeled natural if that term would be suitable for their traditional counterparts,” claims GMA. “There is nothing synthetic or artificial about foods derived from biotechnology as that term has been applied by the agency (FDA).”

Groups such as the Organic Consumers Association have protested GMA’s efforts and petitioned the FDA to make it illegal to put a natural label on any food containing GMOs.
When it comes to lunch, it seems consumers are reluctant to vary the menu too much. One-third of respondents to the Lunchtime Occasion in Republic of Ireland and Great Britain (GB)* report, which was carried out on behalf of Bord Bia’s (the Irish food board), said they eat the same lunch every day. Just over half of those surveyed (53 per cent in Ireland and 56 per cent in GB) vary their lunch a little.

In Ireland and GB, consumer’s lunch choices are very alike. Sandwiches are the most popular choice (41 per cent in Ireland and 46 per cent in GB); fruit is the second most popular choice (17 per cent in Ireland compared to 10 per cent in GB); this is followed by soup (12 and 9 per cent in Ireland and GB respectively); meanwhile, yogurt is popular with 11 per cent of consumers in both regions. Salads ranked low among consumer’s preferences and GB was found to have higher trends towards the consumption of crisps (8 per cent of lunches in GB included crisps) when compared to Ireland.

At weekends, while sandwiches remain popular, there is an emerging trend towards roast dinners, which are a popular choice, particularly if dining out. If lunching at home, the favourite drink to accompany food is tea. However, this changes to coffee if lunch is purchased outside the home (regardless of whether it is eat in or takeaway).

Core segments

Bord Bia’s research looked at five core segments in the Irish and British markets using a questionnaire and a seven-day lunch diary. The five core market segments, which make up 88 per cent and 87 per cent of the population in Ireland and GB, respectively, are: singles and pre-families; mums with primary children (who completed the diary for themselves and one child); mums with secondary children (again who completed the diary for themselves and one child); working dads; and empty nesters.

The study found that singles, pre-families and working dads were the most likely to consume lunch in the workplace, while empty nesters and mums dined at home more often.

In Ireland, half of respondents (49 per cent) eat their lunch at home, rising to 68 per cent at the weekend. In GB, the numbers are 57 per cent and 77 per cent respectively, which can be attributed to the percentage breakdown of population, with a higher proportion of empty nesters and mums in GB.

Where lunch is eaten

More than a quarter (29 per cent in Ireland and 27 per cent in GB) of all lunches are consumed in the workplace during the week. However, this drops off substantially to just 7 per cent in Ireland and 5 per cent in GB at the weekend. The majority of those eating lunch at work bring their lunch from home (57 per cent in Ireland and 64 per cent in GB). The study found that value for money

* This research did not include Northern Ireland.
and convenience are the main drivers contributing to this trend. In Ireland, 85 per cent of consumers purchase their lunch during the main grocery shop, which is similar to GB at 90 per cent. Irish consumers, the report found, are most concerned about controlling their budget, as 36 per cent cite this as the number-one reason for choosing what they eat, compared with 27 per cent in GB. Furthermore, the singles/pre-family segments were identified as the most concerned about their budget.

Concerns about the ingredients that are going into lunches, were highlighted as important by 34 and 32 per cent of respondents in Ireland and GB respectively. This is of greatest concern to the empty nesters. One in five people in both markets, go to the shop and buy lunch to bring back and eat at work. The supermarket is the most popular place for purchasing lunch to bring back to the workplace in both markets at 32 per cent in Ireland and 41 per cent in GB. Convenience outlets account for 32 per cent of lunches purchased for consumption in the workplace in Ireland and 30 per cent in GB. Specialist sandwich stores are favoured by 18 per cent and 17 per cent of consumers in Ireland and GB respectively, with forecourts and fast-food outlets making up the remainder.

One in six (17 per cent) of Irish people will eat lunch in a serviced restaurant during the week and this doesn’t change significantly at the weekend; whereas, in GB only 9 per cent will eat out midweek, but this increases to 14 per cent at the weekend. The smallest lunch segment is those that eat ‘on the move’, which stands at 6 per cent in Ireland and 5 per cent in GB midweek, rising to 8 per cent in Ireland and dropping slightly to 4 per cent at the weekend in GB. For consumers who eat on the move, the report found there was a different consideration set. They are less concerned about the budget/costs and more about the value (40 per cent in Ireland and 34 per cent in GB). It is also very important that the food choices are portable and easy to eat (38 per cent in Ireland and 37 per cent in GB). Finally, taste and enjoyment is important (34 and 38 per cent in Ireland and GB respectively), with less concern about diet or the ingredients that goes into their lunch. As a consequence, wraps are consumed much more frequently, as are crisps. Hot deli foods such as chicken wings or sausage rolls are also chosen more often and in GB, especially, sweet treats, such as pastries, are a popular choice.

THE SCHOOL LUNCHBOX

The report found that mums make the decisions when it comes to controlling what is in school lunchboxes. The figure is higher in Ireland with 80 per cent of Irish mums preparing the lunchbox compared with 68 per cent in GB. However, this drops when children reach secondary school age and take a more active role in what they are eating, with a third of children then making the decisions at an older age.

Three quarters of lunchboxes are prepared in the morning. Unlike adult lunches, 68 per cent of mums try to vary the contents a little to ensure it is eaten.

On average, there are 3.44 items in a child’s lunchbox. Ireland is slightly healthier, with sandwiches, fruit, and yogurt, being the key components. In GB, crisps and chocolate feature strongly. Water and juices make up the two favourite drinks in the lunchbox, with own-brand fruit juices being the preferred option over branded.

Brands do have a role to play in the lunchbox and have a greater relevance in British lunchboxes than in Ireland, with a third of British lunchboxes containing brands (30 per cent versus 12 per cent in Ireland). Furthermore, 32 per cent of mums in GB believe brands are important to have in the lunchbox compared with 18 per cent in Ireland.

When it comes to choosing school lunchbox ingredients, the key consideration is to ensure that the child will eat the contents, with 40 per cent in Ireland ranking this as the number-one criteria and even slightly higher in GB at 45 per cent. This is followed by the nutritional value (16 and 12 per cent respectively in Ireland and GB), and also knowing the child will like it (14 per cent in Ireland and 13 per cent in GB).
Bantry-based Keohane Seafoods produces a gourmet range of premium Irish fish and shellfish dishes from its facility on Ireland’s south-west coast.

The company’s selection of fish species includes: plaice; lemon sole; whiting; trout; seafood skewers; smoked haddock; and a seafood mix. Seasonally, Keohane Seafoods also trades in: tuna; sea bass; swordfish; tiger prawns; and shrimp.

The company recently announced a deal to supply two products to Tesco UK. The deal is estimated to be worth €1.3 million a year.

The company will supply Tesco UK with two frozen products from its fresh fillet with butter range: cod with chilli ginger and lime, and haddock with lemon and cracked black pepper butter. Other flavours in the range include: lemon and thyme butter; red chilli and coriander butter; parsley and watercress butter; chive parsley and rosemary butter; and, lemon and dill sauce.

Commenting on the brands’ move into the UK market, Colman Keohane, managing director of the family-run business says: “This deal with Tesco UK is hugely important to us at Keohane Seafoods. It has created new jobs within the company, and helped support 40 more, which we are very happy about.

To have our Keohane Seafoods’ brand on shelves in stores across the water is very exciting.”

Keohane Seafoods says its products are designed to make life easy for today’s time-conscious consumers. “The fact that the products can be microwaved from frozen in nine minutes, and the consumer does not have to handle the product, is a huge advantage.”

The products are steam cooked in their natural juices using an innovative skin-film packing method. Colman says this is a great, natural way to cook fish and it “ensures that all the goodness and flavour are preserved”.

He explains that the skin-film packing method is the first of its kind in Europe. “Skin-film is a technique that works by taking all of the oxygen out of the product thus providing an extra four days shelf life and an improved appearance,” says Colman.

With 30 years’ experience in the industry, Keohane Seafoods says it is committed to excellence and creating a completely natural product range – which is free from preservatives, additives, chemicals, flavourings, stabilisers and GMO ingredients – and ensuring 100 per cent ‘tide-to-table’ traceability.

As demand for the Keohane’s Seafoods brand has increased, the company has invested in the latest production technology to ensure its customers and clients receive a consistent supply of premium-quality seafood produce. It recently constructed a 20,000 sq. ft, state-of-the-art processing facility, where it processes, packs and labels its freshly-caught seafood.

Keohane Seafoods says it is planning to build on its success in Ireland and the UK and has plans to launch product into other European retailers in the coming months.
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