



Press Release

Monday, July 18th 2016

Food Academy to support 1500 jobs in Irish food and drink sector

1,131 people employed by producers from the Food Academy Programme, which is run by the Local Enterprise Offices, Bord Bia and SuperValu with 373 new jobs expected over next 12 months.

A survey by the Local Enterprise Offices shows that 281 small food and drink producers, members of the Food Academy Programme who employ 1,131 people, have made the breakthrough into the retail market. Those same businesses expect to create a further 373 jobs over the next 12 months, bringing the total number of jobs supported to just over 1,500 across the country.

At an event organised in Dublin by the Local Enterprise Offices today, the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Ms. Mary Mitchell O' Connor T.D. met with food producers from eight different regions, who are among the 281 producers to have successfully made the breakthrough into the retail market. Run over a series of workshops, the programme is an initiative of the Local Enterprise Offices, Bord Bia and SuperValu to nurture new start-ups in the food and drink sector and it focuses on areas such as business planning, understanding consumer trends and raising finance.

Minister Mitchell O' Connor met with producers from Cork, Donegal, Limerick, Kildare, Westmeath, Galway, Tipperary and Dublin at a Food Academy Start showcase in Dublin's City Hall, where she encouraged more 'early-stage' food and drink producers to apply for the programme. The Minister said: "The Food Academy Programme has been running very successfully for the last three years by the Local Enterprise Offices in partnership with Bord Bia

and SuperValu. This programme has already enabled almost 300 small food businesses to start and grow, creating valuable jobs across every county and region. One of my priorities as Minister is creating an environment where job growth can thrive, particularly in rural Ireland. I want to thank Bord Bia and SuperValu for their support and I want to thank the LEOs for their endeavours in developing this opportunity”.



Pictured at the “Food Academy Start” showcase in Dublin’s City Hall this morning. Ken O’Connor (Project Manager Food Academy , Supervalu), Mary Michell O’Connor TD (Minister for Jobs Enterprise and Innovation), Paul Reid Chief Executive Fingal County Council and Chair of Local Government Economic, Enterprise and Tourism Committee, Stephanie Roe (Bord Bia).

The businesses receive one to one mentoring and also pitch for a chance to trial their products in a SuperValu store. Since the programme began in 2013, over 1,100 products have been successfully trialled and are now on sale through the Irish supermarket chain. According to SuperValu, consumers in Ireland are expected to spend €25 million on Food Academy products in their stores in 2016.

Start-ups and small businesses in the food and drink sector are supported by Local Enterprise Offices through measures such as financial assistance, mentoring and on-line trading supports.

Oisín Geoghegan of the Local Enterprise Offices said: “By equipping owners and managers of food businesses with industry knowledge and skills, they have a better chance of succeeding in business. The goal of the Food Academy programme is to help more food producers to start selling through supermarkets, as well as through farmers’ markets and to provide them with the supports, information and advice to scale up and achieve this retail break-through.

According to research undertaken by the Local Enterprise Offices, the Food Academy producers already support 1,131 jobs across every region. Over the next 12 months, these producers are planning to create an additional 373 new jobs.”

Aidan Cotter, the CEO of Bord Bia highlighted how the programme helps new food producers understand market positioning and ‘Unique Selling Points.’ He said: “Bord Bia is delighted with the success of the Food Academy programme. The partnership approach with the Local Enterprise Offices and SuperValu has created a real opportunity to cultivate sustainable small food companies by supporting them through the initial challenging phases of growth. These small innovative and dynamic food businesses play an important role in Ireland’s agri-food sector both locally and nationally. The producers receive a combination of commercial and marketing insight from Bord Bia as well as expert advice in branding, market research, distribution and business development, which arms them with the tools to strengthen their chances of future success. The programme has consistently delivered tangible benefits resulting in job creation and sustainable local food businesses.”

Commenting on the announcement, Martin Kelleher, SuperValu Managing Director said: “As the number one supporter of the Irish food industry, we are committed to sourcing from local suppliers and helping to create the next generation of Irish food entrepreneurs. By supporting these Food Academy producers, we are bringing community based start-ups to market and providing them with the potential to grow their business as well as providing employment within the local community. We are proud to nurture the energy and passion of these entrepreneurial producers, which in turn contributes to the prosperity of local economies across Ireland.”

At the Food Academy showcase today, the Minister met with the producers behind eight different Irish brands including Emerald Oils - Tipperary, Kilbeggan Organic Foods - Westmeath, Wellnice Pops - Limerick, The Galway Food Company, Irish Fish Cannery - Donegal, Loughbeg Farm Foods - West Cork, Nutraplenish - Kildare and HiRó by Róisín - Dublin City.

The Food Academy Start programme is delivered through the Local Enterprise Offices in local authorities and details around the next programme are available through

www.localenterprise.ie

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This press release was issued on behalf of the Local Enterprise Offices. For any media queries in relation to this story, please contact Engage Ireland.

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Notes to Editor

Food Academy Start - Facts and Figures:

281* food and drink producers have successfully trialled products in SuperValu, through the Food Academy Start Programme. These food and drink producers currently have 1,111* products on sale in various SuperValu stores. SuperValu/Musgrave Retail Partners estimate that consumers will spend €25 million* on these Food Academy products in SuperValu stores in 2016. *Source: SuperValu/Musgrave Retail Partners

These Food Academy producers collectively employ 1,131 people (full-time equivalent posts), according to research carried out by the Local Enterprise Offices in July 2016. This figure is made up of 915 full-time jobs and 432 part-time jobs (216 full-time equivalents).

When Food Academy producers were asked to project their employment numbers in 12 months' time, in July 2017, the total projected figure is 1,504 full-time equivalent posts. This figure is made up of 1,218 projected full-time jobs and 573 part-time jobs (286 full-time equivalents).

Local Enterprise Offices Research (July 2016): Participants in Food Academy Programme

Food Academy Producers

Current employment figures as of July 1st 2016:

Full-time equivalent jobs: 1, 131 (= 915 + 216)

Projected employment figures on July 1st 2017:

Full-time equivalent jobs: 1, 504 (projected = 1,218 + 286)

Projected increase in employment figures over next twelve months:

373 full-time equivalent jobs (projected)

Full-time Employees on 1st July 2016: **915 (actual)**

Part-time Employees on 1st July 2016: **432 (actual)**

Full-time equivalent of part-time roles on 1st July 2016: **216 (actual)**

Projected full-time Employees on 1st July 2017: **1218 (projected)**

Projected part-time roles on 1st July 2017: **573 (projected)**

Projected full- time equivalent of part time roles on 1st July 2017: **286 (projected)**

Source: Local Enterprise Offices, July 2016

Photography Note:

High resolution images, reproduction free, are available from this announcement in City Hall Dublin from Photocall Ireland on 18/07/16.