



BALANCE
green and stable

**GREEN PRACTICES INTEGRATED
IN BUSINESS OPERATIONS**
NATIONAL REPORT

IRELAND



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CONTEXT

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About the Project

The need for climate action and sustainable resources management is more important than ever. The Green Deal presented by the European Commission on 11th of December 2019, sets the goal, Europe to be a climate-neutral continent by 2050. The Green Deal addresses the immediate need for specific actions that support Circular Economy, helping to reduce CO2 emissions, transform the energy industry, move the production to a more environmental-friendly stage and many more.

The way to becoming Climate-Neutral continent will put in front of us new types of challenges. One of them lay in front of small and mid-sized enterprises (SMEs) which have an essential role in achieving a greener economy as it is indicated by the Green Action Plan.

The upcoming regulations based on the Green Deal are extremely needed, but also, they put many of the traditional business models in a transitional situation. The small business struggled in the past decay to recover from a financial crisis and now is facing new challenges operating in COVID-19 world. This business finds it hard to adapt quickly to the needed.

The most sensitive are the SMEs, where change management is challenged by the lack of present financial or human resources, sustainability and knowledge, especially for micro-SMEs.

BALANCE is a project that steps on the key learning points from the Green Action Plan for SMEs, to combine best practices around EU and back them up with financial knowledge in order to create a valuable and training program which curriculum is based on ECVET for the transformation of the small business into greener without having to sacrifice the financial sustainability of the enterprises and allow them to keep their employees.



The Balance project aims to develop and provide SMEs decision makers with an innovative program that will help them transform into greener operations while improving their financial literacy and enhancing their environmental awareness. The project addresses a key priority of the EU related to environmental and climate goals. Supporting individuals in acquiring and developing basic skills and key competencies is the horizontal priority underpinning this project.



Objectives and Conduction of the research

The current research offers an overview of the present status of SMEs in Ireland. Its purpose is to show 5 successfully implemented examples of companies which have changed their operations into more environmentally friendly ones.

The research was undertaken mainly over a desk research since contacts with the SMEs themselves were difficult to make, as a result of the COVID-19 situation and imposed restrictions.

National Context for SMEs: Ireland

The economy of (the Republic of) Ireland is an open, highly developed knowledge economy, focused on services in high-tech, life sciences, financial services, and agribusiness, including agri-food. Even though the country's economy is considerably directed towards the multi-national sector and ranks high in foreign direct investment, the SME sector is of substantial significance to the Irish economy.

At 12.5%, Ireland one of the lowest corporate taxation rates attracting numerous foreign companies to locate there and set up an operation. More than 1000 multinational companies have strategically chosen Ireland as their European base due to its low corporation tax rate.

Latest data (2017) on Gross Value Added (GVA) generated by foreign-owned enterprises shows that Ireland had the highest percentage in the EU28 at 62.8%, way above the EU-28 average at 26.1%, followed by Hungary, Slovakia, and Romania.

SMEs (below 250 employees) dominate the Irish economy, thus consisting a critical pillar of the Irish economy; 2018 data from Central Statistics Office in Ireland¹ demonstrate that 99.8% of total number of enterprises in Ireland in were considered SMEs (containing micro-, small, and medium SMEs). – or 70.1% of total employment in the 'non-financial business economy'. In addition, SMEs in Ireland engage 67.5% of all persons in employment.

Corporate VAT cuts in Ireland was a measure to deal with the five-year economic crisis that hit the country in 2008. The attraction of large multinational corporations—like Google, Microsoft, or Pfizer—who used Dublin as a base for their European activities, was the main reason behind the economy's recovery in 2013.

In the latest years, Ireland resembles more of a mature² – economically speaking – country in the EU, and remaining a small open economy makes the Irish economy highly vulnerable to global crises such as the coronavirus pandemic. Next Generation EU is the largest package ever financed through the EU budget to help Europe recover the latest crisis. Reflecting the Commission's European Green Deal roadmap for a sustainable economy, it aims to help Post-COVID-19 Europe be greener, more digital, more resilient, and better fit for the current and forthcoming challenges.

The development of the green economy can make a significant contribution to restoring Ireland's economy to growth by creating employment and export opportunities in green enterprises. It can also help existing companies in all sectors to improve their competitive position through adopting innovative environmental goods and services.

¹ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-bii/businessinireland2018/smallandmediumenterprises/>

² <https://journals.openedition.org/etudesirlandaises/4730>

Sustainable development has been a priority in Ireland long before the 2008 financial crisis and the 2020 coronavirus epidemic; *Sustainable Development: A Strategy for Ireland* was published in 1997. Towards this direction, **Enterprise Ireland**, the government agency responsible for the development and growth of Irish enterprises in world markets, has produced a very useful document, *First Steps to Green Competitiveness Guidebook*, which aims to help companies understand how managing environmental impacts and producing an Environmental Policy Statement can be beneficial to them. The guidebook includes practical and easy to use assessment tools for water, energy, noise, air, storage and wastes. Enterprise Ireland has also initiated a Green Business Offer, made up of three levels of support for the Irish companies³, so as they incorporate sustainable practices into the day-to-day running of their business. The benefit is expected to be multi-level towards improved resource efficiency and direct cost savings but also towards an increased access to customers who are increasingly demanding more environmentally friendly products and services. Through the Green Start assignment, companies can apply for grant support towards the cost of hiring a Green consultant/trainer to undertake a short in-company assignment, whereas the GreenPlus is a medium-scale training project facilitated/supported by an external environmental expert. Enterprise Ireland also acts as an information point, so as Irish companies can find useful links to other supports, training, and information in

- Energy
- Water
- Waste / Circular Economy
- Climate Action & Sustainability
- Construction sector
- Food sector
- Free Carbon/Environmental Footprint Calculators and Tools
- Recent Guidelines/Standards
- Investors / Stakeholder disclosure platforms
- Irish Associations/Organisations/Platforms
- EU, UN & International Agencies/Organisations.

In addition, the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Enterprise Ireland (EI) all offer a variety of environmental supports to Irish businesses. These supports include everything from guidance documents and tools to free one-on-one consultancy, nationwide workshops, and financial grants. In more detail⁴,

- **SEAI** runs a dedicated service for small, medium, and micro business in Ireland. This includes the following key offers:
 - Free Advice and Mentoring to help you reduce energy usage, cut costs, and benefit the environment.
 - Small Business Training for companies with an annual energy spend of less than €100,000.
 - Energy MAP Training for companies with an annual energy spends of more than €100,000. Energy MAP is an online tool which provides a step-by-step guide to creating a best practice action plan for your business.
 - Case Studies to see what other companies are doing to save energy and reduce costs.

³ <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Productivity/Build-a-green-sustainable-Business/>

⁴ *SMEs Resources and Tools: Environment* in <https://www.bitc.ie/resources/smes-resources-and-tools/smes-resources-and-tools-environment/>

- Quick Wins by sector and technology to help you start saving money straight away.
- **Green Business** is a free and confidential resource efficiency service for all types of SMEs in Ireland, funded by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the National Waste Prevention Programme, with the objective of delivering substantive resource efficiency improvements and cost savings, through waste prevention and reductions in water and energy consumption. Enterprises can request a free site visit carried out by experienced Green Business advisors. A customised recommendations report for resource efficiency savings is then produced. Green Business also runs free events and workshops all over the country and, in its resources section, offers a wealth of guides, reports, videos and case studies on everything from resource efficiency to eco-design to life cycle management to green procurement. They are also connected to the Green Hospitality programme, which is focussed on the travel and tourism sector.
- **SMILE Resource Exchange** is a free service for businesses that encourages the exchanging of resources between its members to save money, reduce waste going to landfill and to develop new business opportunities. Potential exchanges are identified through free networking events, a free online exchange facility and a support team to assist throughout. At SMILE networking exchange events and through the website, businesses can identify resources they would like to exchange such as reusable items, by-products, and surplus products. All resources offered are either free of charge or below market value.
- **GreenStart:** The GreenStart programme is designed for SME companies only. It aims to increase the level of environmental awareness relating to regulatory compliance and help with the development of a basic management system in companies which do not have in-house expertise or have conducted limited environmental activities to date. An increase in environmental performance can help companies reach a level where they can achieve competitive advantage through greater resource efficiency (energy/water/waste costs) and greater market share through enhanced credentials.
- **Envirocentre:** This website offers several free-to-access databases and tools, such as the one of environmental legislation.

National and other initiatives

The *National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship (NPSE)* was launched in 2014 and was designed to cover the five years up to 2019. It set out the Government's strategic objectives as a facilitator within the Irish entrepreneurship ecosystem. Its ambition was to double the jobs impact of start-ups on the Irish economy over the 5 years by:

- Increasing the number of start-ups by 25% (3,000 more start-ups per annum)
- Increasing the survival rate in the first five years by 25% (1,800 more survivors per annum), and
- Improving the capacity of start-ups to grow to scale by 25%.

The Entrepreneurship and Small Business Policy Unit within the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation has responsibility to ensure the goals and objectives set out in the Policy Statement are completed and review the progress made in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Both the **Chambers Ireland**, as the largest business organisation in the State, and **Small Firms Association (SFA)**, called the "Voice of Small Business" in Ireland, for businesses with less than 50 employees, have welcome the opportunity to input to the consultation on the national entrepreneurship policy statement for Ireland; according to SFA, the policy should drive

entrepreneurship in a determined and coherent manner, similar to those that characterised the drive for foreign direct investment in Ireland, so as to harness the necessary resources – both public and private – at national, regional and local level.

However, what really was innovative in the Irish State was the first-ever **Government Policy for Social Enterprise** that came in public in July 2019⁵, which focuses on the social dimension of the enterprises; whose core objective is to achieve a social, societal, or environmental impact. These enterprises are just like any other enterprise, but any surplus they record is re-invested into achieving a social impact or improving the environment, rather than towards maximising their profits. Corporate sustainability and social entrepreneurship have become a solid component of the overall entrepreneurship ecosystem.

Organisations in Ireland such as **Social Entrepreneurs Ireland** and **Social Innovation Fund Ireland** provide support to social entrepreneurs and innovators through funding and other measures such as advice, mentoring, training, and networking opportunities. The wider community and voluntary sector is also highly appreciated in Ireland and continuously offer synergies and support to all organisation seeking to deliver on social/societal/environmental objectives for a better society/environment in Ireland.

Local authorities (Local Community Development Committees) also play a key role in supporting enterprises through initiatives, such as the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme. For example, Dublin City Council, through its Economic Development Office, its partnerships, and the Dublin City Social Enterprise Committee, seeks to encourage and support sustainable and strategic social enterprise and social innovation development in the city, in the form of training, mentoring, awards, resources and promotion of social enterprises.

49 Local Development Companies across the country deliver community and rural development, social inclusion, and social enterprise services, playing a valuable role in supporting enterprises in their communities through in-house expertise and external funding.

31 Local Enterprise Offices all over the country deliver a range of services offering ‘soft’ support, such as training or mentoring (for example: Start Your Own Business course).

⁵ *National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022* (2019) available in: <https://assets.gov.ie/19332/2fae274a44904593abba864427718a46.pdf>

List of references, web links:

Business in the Community Ireland, “SMEs Resources and Tools: Environment” in

<https://www.bitc.ie/resources/smes-resources-and-tools/smes-resources-and-tools-environment/>

Central Statistics Office, 2018, “Business in Ireland 2018: Small and Medium Enterprises”,

<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-bii/businessinireland2018/smallandmediumenterprises/>

Enterprise Ireland, “Productivity – Green Offer”, <https://www.enterpriseireland.com/en/Productivity/Build-a-green-sustainable-Business/>

EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2019, “Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs - Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs – SBA Fact Sheet for Ireland,

[file:///C:/Users/vkout/Downloads/Ireland%20-%20SBA%20Fact%20Sheet%202019%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/vkout/Downloads/Ireland%20-%20SBA%20Fact%20Sheet%202019%20(2).pdf)

Government of Ireland, 2019, “National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022” in

<https://assets.gov.ie/19332/2fae274a44904593abba864427718a46.pdf>

Vanessa Boulet, 2015, “The Irish Economic Crisis: The Expiry of a Development Model?”, Études Irlandaises, 40-2, pages 17-30, <https://journals.openedition.org/etudesirlandaises/4730>

Green Practise 1: Managing environmental footprint

Managing own environmental footprint – Internal (teams) and external (providers) cooperation on the basis of sustainability – Tracking & Reporting company progress in line with the Sustainable Development Goals for Business.

Company name: **Brown Thomas Arnotts Ltd.**

Size: **Over 3500 people employed across all company's business** (according to the sustainability report)

Industry: **Department (and Lifestyle) Store**

Years of Existence: **Since 1849**

Description of the green practices involved:

- **Elimination of single use plastic packaging (under Ireland's REPAK Plastics Pledge)**
Brown Thomas managed to ban plastic microbeads in beauty products as well as plastic containing cotton buds and wet wipes from their beauty halls. Similarly, the company have removed single use plastic straws, water bottles and coffee cups from their restaurants. All employees have been offered a reusable cup, at their induction. Plastic shopping bags have also been eliminated, in favour of paper and cardboard - certified to Forest Stewardship Council or Programme for Environmental Forest Certification).
- **Reduction of carbon footprint (under the Science Based Targets initiative)**
With the company (and the world) transitioning to a zero-carbon economy, BROWN THOMAS are working with the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) to reduce their emissions in line with climate science; the company has committed to reduce their carbon emissions across their estate (scope 1 & 2) by 50% and in their supply chain (scope 3) by 15%, from a baseline of 2018, by year 2030.
Launch of first Sustainable Products edits (vegan, cruelty free and organic beauty to sustainable fashion, food, homewares, and Irish sourced products that have a light footprint) in May 2019.
- **Zero waste to landfill**
The target of achieving "Zero Waste to Landfill" across all company's stores was set in January 2019. The year under study started at 22% waste going to landfill and this has been reduced to 2% so far. This has been achieved by working in partnership with Thornton's, waste contractor company by (1) reducing waste generated (2) segregating recyclables (Dry Mixed Recyclables, Cardboard, Plastic, Glass, Hangers), composting the food and sending the remaining General Waste for Waste to Energy Incineration. Reduction in the use of packaging where possible, as well as shift to lower impact options in line with the sustainable packaging requirements of the company's Ethical Trading Requirements were also applied.

- **Support Irish biodiversity - local bee pollination (in association with the Limerick Urban Beekeeping Society initiative)**

The Brown Thomas Limerick store hosts two healthy beehives on the roof to support urban bee pollination. The store Champions are working in association with the Limerick Urban Beekeeping Society initiative who have trained the three Champions to tend the hives.

Main goals of the practises

The sustainability vision of the company is to achieve **Positive Change** and support their customers to **Buy Better**. This is seen by the company as **Doing the Right Thing**, a core business value. The company's principal aim is to manage own environmental footprint, responsibly source products and support our people and communities. Consequently, three pillars of action have been established; Work responsibly, Buy & Sell Responsibly and Support Community through charity and volunteering. Annual sustainability targets and policy are published on our website for all to see.

Procedures, Activities, Phases

According to the Sustainability Progress Overview covering the period from 01 Feb 2019 to 31 Jan 2020, BROWN THOMAS ARNOTTS have joined several **sustainability leadership initiatives in Ireland and internationally** (such as Repak Plastics Pledge, G7 Fashion Pact, Voice Ireland and Refill.ie).

In an internal phase, the company has established a **dedicated sustainability team** to lead their programme with oversight from their **Sustainability Executive Group** and over 40 **"Champions"** (employees passionate about delivering the company's vision by cascading and implementing environmental improvements, charity fundraising and volunteering) to support implementation across the business.

Description of the implementation:

- **Challenges**
The company's teams raise charity for partners local to their stores, and the company matches the team funds raised up to €100,000/annum.
- **Results of implementation**
Although at an early stage, the company declares committed to placing sustainability very high on their business agenda; the company has been leading the Irish retail for over 175 years and the sustainable way of working is the road ahead in the years to come. The company has achieved in the under-study period milestone targets, and as a result are very satisfied with their results so far.

Description of the communication:

- **Internally (towards the employees)**
Internally, the company has established a **dedicated sustainability team** to lead their programme which is overseen by their **Sustainability Executive Group** and over the **"Champions"** to support implementation of sustainability goals across the business. Every member of the sustainability team that the company employs has one paid volunteering day

per year. Through the activities they select the sustainability teams engage and walk the sustainability talk in practice.

Training for employees starts in Induction, through to function specific training such as for buyers/brands on responsible sourcing, green procurement (suppliers), waste and sustainable food in our restaurants.

- **Externally**

The so-called **“Champions” raise charity** for local partners the company’s stores. The business matches the team funds raised up to €100,000/annum. The company also work with own brands on charity products such as MAC Viva Glam for AIDS and the annual Brown Thomas ISPPC fashion show. During the under-study year the company raised over €205,000 for charity. From customer surveys the company run, it has been known that most of their customers are influenced by sustainability when shopping, therefore raising awareness is a key point, to enable customers buy better. The company published the **1st Brown Thomas digital magazine devoted to sustainability** in June 2019 to break the news about their sustainability activities to the public, which was followed by regular publications, along with articles on the company’s websites to inspire change. Several **campaigns to raise awareness** on Single Use Plastic coffee cups, water bottles and sustainable products. Water fill stations have been installed in company’s restaurants for the customers, whereas a reusable cup and GOTS certified Organic tote makes part of **each employee’s induction pack**.

- **Alignment with the company’s CSR**

Yes, it is. According to Lawler Sustainability, a multi-disciplinary team of highly qualified Building Services and Green Energy Engineers, Brown Thomas have committed to a carbon roadmap to save up to circa 3,000 Tonnes of CO₂. Lawler Sustainability worked closely with Brown Thomas Arnotts Sustainability Team in analysing the building’s energy load, engineering systems and energy bills as well as looking at the companies Science Based Targets. From there, Lawler Sustainability could devise an energy roadmap that the company can follow. This Carbon Roadmap devised by Lawler Sustainability outlines how the company can save up to circa 3,000 Tonnes of CO₂.

Lessons Learnt

Sustainability principles have been integrated in every aspect of the business and entails all sectors and employees, from the top management to the “Champion” employees. The company believes that this is the way forward in the years to come if they are to continue leading the retail industry.

Visual materials and links



SUSTAINABILITY PROGRESS OVERVIEW - 01 FEB 19 – 31 JAN 2020

1. INTRODUCTION

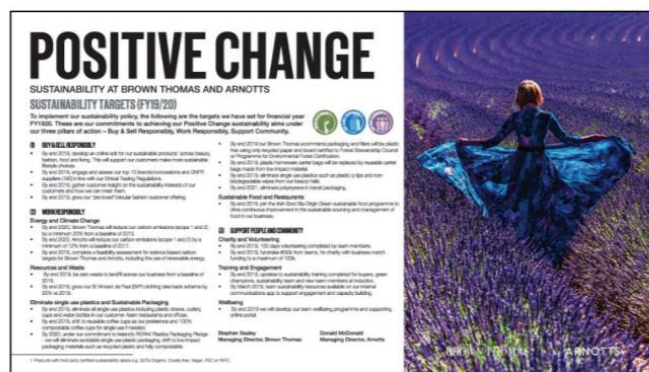
At Brown Thomas Arnotts, we are dedicated to our sustainability commitments, from working, buying and selling responsibly to supporting our communities. Over the last year we have achieved milestone targets in these areas. We launched our Sustainable and Irish Products Edits, introduced take back and circular fashion initiatives, achieved our 20% carbon emission reduction target, switched to 100% verified green electricity, set our Science Based Targets for 2020-2030, reduced our waste by 20% and achieved



2. SUSTAINABILITY MANAGEMENT – VISION, AIMS, ACTIONS, KPIs

Our sustainability **vision** is to achieve [Positive Change](#) and support our customers to **Buy Better**. We see this as *Doing the Right Thing*, one of our core business values. We're at an early stage, but committed to placing sustainability at the heart of how we work, what we buy and sell.

Our **aim** is to manage our environmental footprint, responsibly source our products and support our people and communities. To deliver our aim, our sustainability programme has three pillars of **action – Work responsibly, Buy & Sell Responsibly and Support Community through charity and volunteering**. Our [Sustainability Policy](#), annual [Targets](#) and programme to drive continuous improvement are published on our [website](#) for all to see. Over the last year we have achieved ambitious targets across our three pillars. Our sustainability strategy is integrated in all parts of the business, management objectives and monthly Key Performance Indicators.



3. ORGANISATION, GOVERNANCE AND OUR TEAMS

USEFUL LINKS

All requested is available at the following 2 websites:

<https://brownthomas.a.bigcontent.io/v1/static/BTA%20SUSTAINABILITY%20PROGRESS%20REPORT%20FY1920>

<https://www.brownthomas.com/about-brown-thomas/brown-thomas-sustainability.html>

Green Practise 2: Turning to renewable energy

Turn to renewable energy sources – reduction of CO₂ emissions in company's manufacturing plant – public awareness through the support of academia and research institutions.

Company name: **Astellas Pharma Co. Ltd. (APCL) – IRELAND leg**

Size: **400 people in Ireland across three locations (Dublin 24 – Co. Dublin, Killorglin - Co. Kerry, and Mulhuddart - Co. Dublin)**

Industry: **Pharmaceuticals**

Years of Existence: **Since 1923 (for the mother company) - Since 2005 the Irish company has the present format (following the merger of Fujisawa and Yamanouchi)**

Description of the green practices involved:

- **Support on academia and health care institution, as well as on patient organisations (Marie Keating Foundation)**

The company support several Marie Keating Foundation projects such as Get Men Talking, Survive & Thrive, Heroes of Hope & Stand up for your Prostate. All these projects aim to positively affect the lives of men & their families touched by prostate cancer. For example, the "Stand up for your Prostate" project encourages men across Ireland to 'stand up' for their prostate. The Marie Keating Foundation's Stand Up for Your Prostate' campaign is aimed at empowering Irish men to be more open and comfortable discussing their health. Sponsored by Astellas, the integrated campaign hopes to increase awareness of what is the most common cancer in men, after non-melanoma skin cancer, in Ireland during Blue September and raise vital funds to support the 3,550 men diagnosed with the disease every year. This campaign is based around three simple principles that aim to increase awareness of prostate cancer (WATCH for any symptoms, TALK with family and friends and ACT by going to see the GP). Such campaigns have been backed by broadcasting videos where well-known Irishmen (politicians, journalists) talk openly about the prostate problem they faced in the past (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uitgekCkYd8&feature=emb_title)

Another similar campaign is the "Heroes of Hope"; Astellas Ireland supports the Marie Keating Foundation by exhibiting the stories of 15 men (Heroes of Hope) who have survived prostate cancer. These men are from different counties, do different jobs, are of all ages and each has travelled their own individual cancer journey.

- **Reduction of CO₂ emissions in Kerry manufacturing plant**

On the company's effort to reduce Green House Gases (GHG), renewable energy is actively used in Kerry plant. This was achieved by introducing photovoltaic panels and wind power, and equipment as biomass boilers to the plant facilities. All energy generated through these means is consumed at these facilities. In addition, the company purchases electricity generated by renewable energy sources, so both directly and indirectly the company is suppressing GHG emissions. In more detail, the following measures have led to 98% reduction in CO₂ emissions, at Kerry plant since 2005.

- 691 m² solar panels on new building roof area
- 35% reduction in energy use from baseline through optimal Building Fabric, Mechanical Design, HVAC considerations and Renewable aspects
- Leading Energy Efficiency Design (LEED) Gold achieved

(https://www.astellas.com/system/files/ehs-report2020_en_final.pdf)

- **Enhancement of sustainability of society**

Two aspects are considered here.

- Value creation: Astellas company is creating value for society by addressing social issues such as unmet medical needs, and by rewarding stakeholders. By reinvesting the gained profit, the company gain through business activities, strengthen their capabilities in research and development. In addition, by winning trust from government and business partners, they create new business opportunities, and this is how value is created and company's sustainability is enhanced.
- Value Protection: Astellas company seek to reduce its environmental burden and preserve biodiversity, ensures compliance, and takes measures to prevent corruption. In addition to the social value of these activities, they contribute to mitigating reputation risk and elevating Astellas' corporate brand, thereby protecting their enterprise value.

Description of the implementation:

- **Role of digital technologies**

Although non-exclusively mentioned at all resources, it is obvious that digital technologies have been used extensively in the use of alternative sources of energy for the Kerry plant (at least).

- **Results of implementation**

For the Astellas company, fulfilling their social responsibility means the realization of their business philosophy (in their words).

Description of the communication:

- **Internally (towards the employees)**

The Astellas Policies and Position Statements, establishing the important rules, principles, and management responsibility, including the sustainability principles and commitments, of the overall Astellas group worldwide, apply to all full-time directors and full-time and part-time officers, employees, and other temporary staff of the Astellas. They may also apply, in whole or in part, to agents, consultants, contractors, or other individuals who act on behalf of Astellas, if so stipulated in relevant contracts.

- **Externally**

Broadcasting and testimonials of people that have survived cancer and are speaking openly about it, extensive information on the company's website about CSR (company social responsibility),

awards and recognition in national and international level (“Green Large Organisation of the Year” in Green Awards 2019 in Ireland)

- Possible alignment with the company’s CSR

The company’s green practices are very closely connected with the company’s CSR policy.

Lessons Learnt

This is at the same time the company’s mission: the company will seek to be the company of choice, and gain the trust of all its stakeholders, including its customers, shareholders, employees, and the global community by, at the same time, enhancing its enterprise value in a sustainable manner.

Visual materials and links

USEFUL LINKS

Illustrative examples of the activity and its results, like text, photo, link to online publication of the results, company logo, brochure etc. etc. can be found at the following links:

<https://www.astellas.com/ie/>

<https://www.astellas.com/ie/responsibility>

<https://www.astellas.com/ie/responsibility/kerry-manufacturing>

https://www.astellas.com/system/files/news/2018-06/110307_en.pdf

<https://www.agriland.ie/farming-news/kildare-company-using-anaerobic-digestion-wins-at-seai-energy-awards/>

Green Practise 3: Reducing carbon footprint

Reduction of the carbon footprint of the hotel – Development of the park into sustainable tourism destination

Company name: **Hotel Doolin**

Size: **120 full and part time employees in 2019**

Industry: **HO.RE.CA (Hotel)**

Years of Existence: **2006**

Description of the green practices involved:

- The **Green Hospitality Programme**, which is a national resource for sustainable and responsible tourism in Ireland recognised by governmental authorities including Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, Discover Ireland and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), aims to reduce the **carbon footprint** of the hotel by reducing waste, water and energy use throughout the hotel. Hotel Doolin is the only hotel in Ireland recognised as having achieved a 'Carbon Neutral12 GREENMark' award. The carbon/energy reduction programme focused on minimising energy consumption, creating an active energy management and reduction plan, a substantial investment in green electricity and a viable, long-term solution to offsetting carbon emissions by planting native Irish woodland trees in a controlled location close to the hotel. In more detail, some of the transformations included this of the oil-based heating system to an ambient air to water system and the replacement of an events marquee with an Eco-Barn for weddings and events. Plastic bottles and single-use items are completely banned in the hotel with all napkins reusable and toilet paper made from recycled materials. Rainwater is harvested and in addition, 75% of food supplied to the hotel is sourced within 50km.
- The development of the Geopark as a **sustainable tourism destination**. To achieve this, the hotel teams participate in conserving the natural and cultural heritage by taking part on clean ups, adopting a hedgerow scheme and the "Leave No Trace" principles, and by informing the hotel guests of existing schemes and programmes. For the latter, Hotel Doolin has a tourist information office on site with Geopark maps and booklets of information, and they also include a Heritage paragraph of info on the Geopark on the guest bedrooms booklets. In a more systematic way, and to make the community benefit from the hotel enterprise, they have ensured that 70% of their suppliers are based in The Burren, and they make sure to promote Doolin as a destination and not the Hotel itself, they organize 3 festivals every year (The Doolin Folk Festival, The Doolin Surfest and the Doolin Writers' Weekend) which bring more than 3000 clients staying overnight to the area.

The contribution to the local economy is also ensured by maintaining and supporting local employment, by sourcing services and produce locally wherever possible, and by engaging with other businesses in promoting the region as a sustainable tourism destination. Hotel Doolin has increased its staff from 20 Full time employees in 2013 to 120 full and part time employees in 2019. A rough estimation shows that The Barn at Hotel Doolin brought in €2.5 million to the local economy last year.

Description of the implementation:**- Results of implementation**

Hotel Doolin has become **the first Irish hotel to be awarded carbon neutral status** (Green Medium Sized Organisation of the Year at the Green Awards 2019 – Ireland).

Commitment to sustainable practices has definitely paid off; the business has grown by 30% since sustainability code of the hotel was publicly known.

Description of the communication:**- Internally (towards the employees)**

While carbon neutral status can be achieved without a hotel revising its team structure, Hotel Doolin made the decision to put together a **green team** and has appointed a **'Green Team Manager'** whose role is to guide and implement new sustainability and social responsibility initiatives. The Green Team Manager was appointed to the HR manager of the hotel, and this as a choice has proved to be very wise; assuring a sustainable workplace is very **beneficial in attracting and retaining staff**.

- Externally

Hotel Doolin, through its **Environmental Policy Statement**, offers collaboration with all stakeholders to collectively develop the Geopark as a sustainable tourism destination, with the aid of **training and networking events** as possible throughout the year as well as participating with **subgroups** formed from Burren Eco Tourism Network.

Since the Hotel is highly preferred for weddings and other ceremonies, the staff plant ten native trees locally in partnership with **Hometree** for every wedding held at the hotel, with over 1,700 trees planted in the past two years. The hotel staff are **introduced to the program at induction stage** and are encouraged to give their own feedback on any improvements that they can see would help reduce the enterprise's carbon footprint.

- Alignment with the company's CSR

Totally aligned. The numerous awards Hotel Doolin has achieved mark their success in this.

- winner of Chambers Ireland's CSR Awards in the Excellence Environment Category for the project Green Team Work
- winning Green Organisation of the Year at the Green Awards two years in a row in 2018 and 2019
- the Green Tourism & Entertainment Award in 2015, 2016 and 2017, and
- the Green Festivals Award 2017.

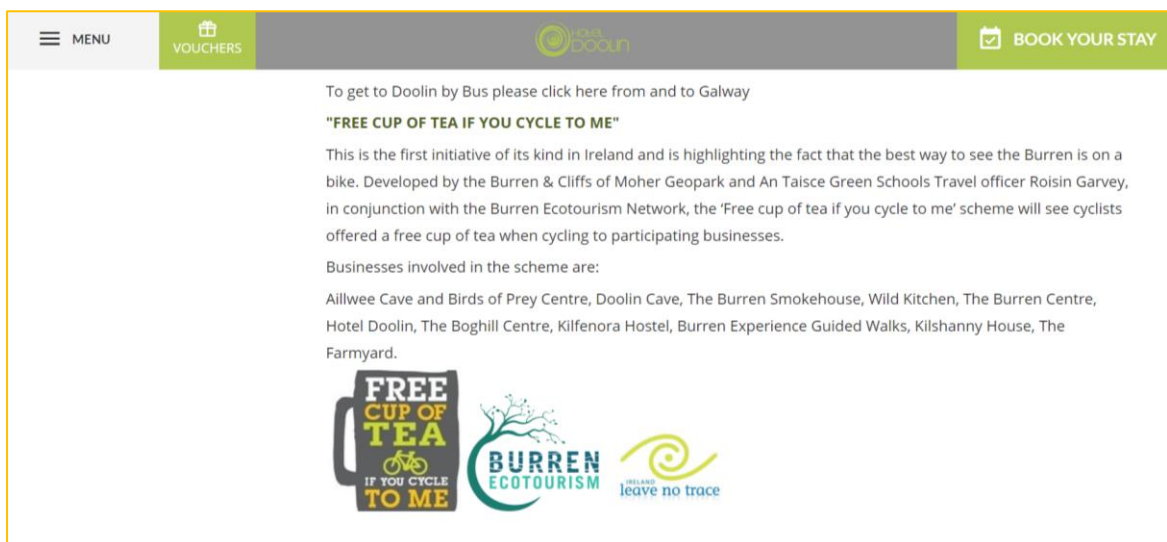
The Social Responsibility team have organised a number of fundraising events with a great success, thanks to the help of the local community, and the hotel customers. Several charities and organisations

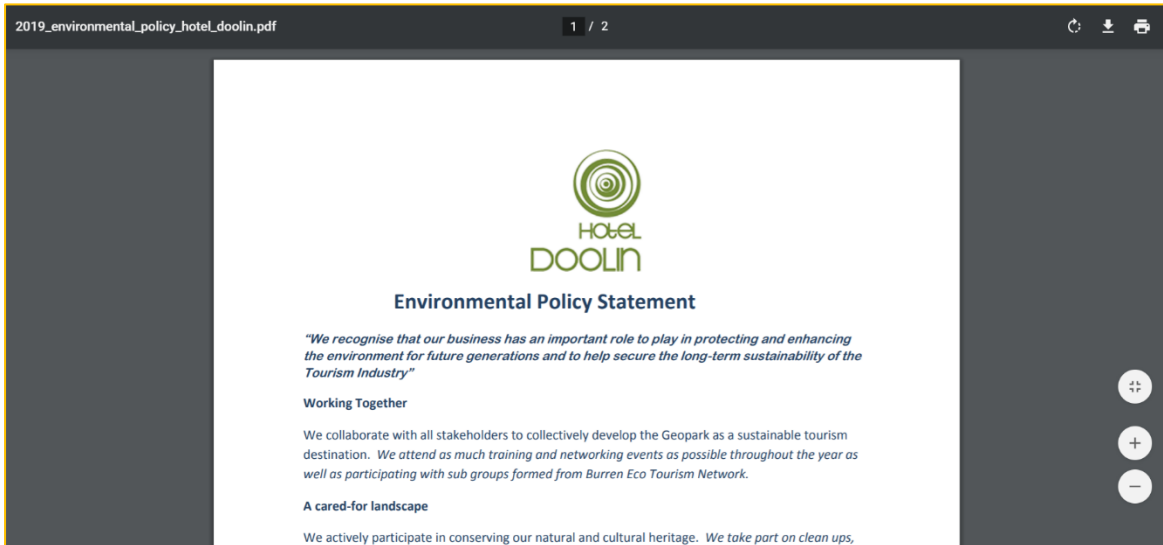
have benefited, namely the Irish Cancer Society, Alzheimer’s Ireland, St. Vincent De Paul charity and many more.

Lessons Learnt

All the electricity used in the hotel comes from green sources and the hotel staff continuously monitor and reduce their energy consumption. The consumption in 2017 was 465 tonnes of carbon compared to a projected 110 tonnes by end of 2019. If a small hotel in the west of Ireland can do this, hopefully, bigger companies can see what is possible to be done (with creativity and teamwork) and be inspired to follow suit.

Visual materials and links





USEFUL LINKS

<https://www.clareecho.ie/hotel-doolin-first-premises-in-ireland-recoqnised-as-carbon-neutral/>

<https://www.hoteldoolin.ie/green-initiatives.html>

<https://www.hoteldoolin.ie/water-efficiency.html>

<https://www.hoteldoolin.ie/leave-no-trace.html>

https://www.hoteldoolin.ie/cmsFiles/2019_environmental_policy_hotel_doolin.pdf



Green Practise 4: Sustainable meat products

Provision of consistent quality meat products from sustainable sources - Support of rural communities, human health and nature's ecosystem - Team-led approach to sustainability

Company name: **DAWN MEATS**

Size: **7250 Employees in 12 countries (as of 31st Dec 2019)**

Industry: **Meat processing – marketing of meat products**

Years of Existence: **Since 1980**

Description of the green practices involved:

Main goals of the practises - Information over Procedures, Activities, Phases

- **Sustainable suckler beef production**, in 4 key priority areas:
 - o **Environment**
 - o **Animal medicines**
 - o **Animal welfare** (Freedom from hunger and thirst, Freedom from discomfort, freedom from pain, injury and disease, freedom to express normal behaviour, freedom from fear and distress)
 - o **Farm management**

Dawn Meats fully supports the collaborative nature of the Origin Green programme, the national sustainability programme for the Irish food and drink industry. There is a holistic approach adopted, from farm to fork, so that the end product supplied to customers is sustainable, healthy & high-quality meat products.

This collaborative work is exemplified at the Newford Farm. A standalone suckler herd has been established by Dawn Meats and Teagasc, supported by McDonald's and The Irish Farmers Journal at Athenry, Co Galway to demonstrate best practice in sustainable suckler beef production. The herd, which is known as the **Newford Herd**, is run on a fully commercial basis and demonstrates the potential of a moderately large suckler beef farm to generate a viable family farm income when operated to the highest level of technical efficiency and best practice. The farm acts as a shop window for the technologies that drive profitability in a suckler herd and operates in a transparent manner, with all measurements and data available to visiting groups, other interested parties and the farming public through the farm's blog for example (<http://www.newfordsucklerbeef.ie/blog/herd-update-09-11-20>).

- **Wastewater treatment**

Dawn Meats identified a cost-effective solution to treat wastewater at its Carroll's Cross site (Co. Waterford), which was producing 80m³ of wastewater per day from its process and administrative facilities. The conventional mechanical wastewater process was both financially and environmentally demanding (in terms of carbon emissions), so the idea of a more sustainable, low-cost option appealed to the organisation; The company installed a seven-acre **integrated constructed wetland (ICW)** over two phases at its facility in order to treat wastewater, the first phase in 2004 and the second in 2012. This constructed wetland relies on natural

processes to remove microbial, chemical and sedimentary contaminants from the water. As the receiving environment is a low flow stream, the wastewater is treated to a high standard as laid out in the discharge licence. The ICW is reducing the biological and solid load by 95% and the nitrogen and phosphorous loads by 90%. The ICW succeeded in avoiding the high carbon emissions associated with energy-intensive mechanical water treatment, as well as the high operating costs. The ICW has also enhanced the wildlife on the site, which was an important consideration for the company. As well as being valuable in terms of providing a home and food source for various species of bird, animal, plant, insect and fungi, the creation of this biodiverse habitat has brought with it a positive social outcome that complements the environmental and economic aspects of the project. The ICW has assisted in forging strong community connections, specifically between Dawn Meats and Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) and its students, who have conducted initial baseline and biennial biodiversity surveys in order to monitor the health of the habitat over time.

- **Biodiversity protection** at all levels:

- **Site**
- **Supply chain**
- **Industry**
- **Nationally**

The company has constructed wetlands, at sites in Ireland and the UK. On another site there have been installed beehives. The company manage water ways proximate to their sites. To support biodiversity, the company plant trees and areas are permitted to 'go wild' supporting pollinators. The importance of biodiversity is communicated through the Dawn Direct newsletter and during the company's environmental week. Dawn Meats has signed up to support the Irish Business and Biodiversity Platform by (1) facilitating constructive dialogue, engagement and collaboration between businesses, academia, NGOs and all levels of Government, (2) raising awareness of national and international biodiversity issues among the business community, (3) promoting the business benefits of voluntary engagement and build business support for Irish biodiversity objectives and initiatives, (4) promoting the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the National Biodiversity Action Plan, (5) sharing best practice between companies and sectors, promoting tools, share international case studies and research, (6) contributing Irish business perspectives on biodiversity to the UN CBD's Global Business Partnership and the European Business@ Biodiversity Platform.

- **Support on certain UN Sustainable Development Goals**

- Goal 1 – No Poverty
- Goal 2 – Zero Hunger
- Goal 3 – Good Health and Well-being
- Goal 5 – Gender Equality
- Goal 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation
- Goal 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy
- Goal 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth
- Goal 10 – Reduced Inequalities
- Goal 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production
- Goal 13 – Climate Action
- Goal 14 – Life Below Water
- Goal 15 – Life on Land
- Goal 17 – Partnerships for the Goals

Description of the implementation:

- Investments and running costs.

Training - Aiming to address IT business systems training.

During 2018 the company implemented LMS365, a software application that is used to administer, track, report and deliver IT business systems training in an area that had previously lacked a dedicated training resource. Through LMS365, training can be accessed online, internally within the company and is flexible to suit the scheduling of individual team members. The three main programmes are:

- Apprenticeship Scheme
- Butchery Academy
- Management Trainee Programme

- Challenges

It is a great challenge to have all teams of such a big enterprise serve the sustainability principles; All teams (from the CEO and the engineering/ environmental team which recently achieved ISO 50001 certification; the operations; agriculture; procurement; HR and the community and charity teams) drive the sustainability agenda across multiple platforms and via participation in a range of initiatives, including the Newford Suckler Beef Demonstration Farm; the Better Farm Programme; the Young Beef Farmer Sustainability Programme; the European Round Table for Beef Sustainability; the Government CSR Forum; the SDG Forum; Bord Bia's Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce; and BITC's Low Carbon and Social Inclusion working groups.

As the Head of CSR at Dawn Meats has put it, at the Green Awards 2019: "We published our first sustainability plan 10 years ago this year, so it has been a key theme for us for some time. We have ambitious 2025 targets to reduce water and energy intensity by 40% and CO2 emission intensity by 50%. **None of this would be possible without the commitment of the whole team** and this award is even more appreciated because it recognises the Group wide effort. 2025 is fast approaching, and we will continue to keep a close eye on our targets to ensure that we meet and exceed them where possible".

As regards challenges for sustainable working within Agri-Food sector, the truth is that, from a resource perspective, Irish livestock production has a natural advantage over most other countries, as it has been studied and recognised by the EU commission and the UN's FAO as one of the most efficient systems in the world already.

As regards emissions, the company export 90% of the beef produced in the country so the percentage of national emissions arising from agriculture is high due to the **way in which emissions are attributed**.

In carbon accounting terms, agriculture does not get credit for the carbon sequestered in grasslands nor from the relative performance of methane emissions compared to carbon emissions from other industries. One solution to this challenge is given by the company itself;

policymakers should **account for emissions from food production in net terms**. This, of course, does not absolve the company of their responsibility to be more carbon efficient.

- **Role of digital technologies**

Since the company prioritise resource use efficiency, they typically pilot new technologies on one site before roll-out across the entire estate. They have rolled out **Lean Six Sigma** across their business over a five-year period following a successful pilot in 2013/2014.

- **Results of implementation.**

By following a holistic approach, the company has compromised on initial implementation to optimise for business impact over the medium term. This has enabled the company to **fast-track projects** on heat recovery, heat exchange, fossil fuel elimination and ISO50001 achievement which have **delivered in excess of 66% of our 2025 Scope 1 and 2 emissions reduction targets**.

Description of the communication:

- **Internally (towards the employees)**

The company place great emphasis on supporting their employees at both pre-boarding and at the on-boarding stage. The goal is to provide an interactive experience using a blended learning approach, allowing them to integrate smoothly into the company by:

- Learning about the corporate culture and values
- Obtaining skills that can be used within their daily work
- Building a network across departments, sites, and countries

All teams in the company are committed to the sustainability principles and drive the sustainability agenda to even greater commitment and results (please see the answer above on challenges for more information).

The adoption of Lean Six Sigma focuses on the **contribution each team member can make** towards the elimination of waste streams and the achievement of the company's broader sustainability goals.

The progress towards becoming 'Europe's most sustainable meat company' for the company was the result of the input from both the sustainability executive in updating policy and with the **cross-functional teams** involved in implementing new practices and demonstrating performance. The sustainability executive may decide policy and set targets, but it is the cross-functional teams and departmental leads that manage delivery and performance.

- **Externally**

One of the 3 pieces of advice that company give to other companies in the industry that would wish to excel in sustainability for their business is to **communicate success** to all stakeholders.

In addition, through program CONNECT, the company engage with primary, secondary and third-level schools and agricultural colleges to create a greater awareness of what they do.

- **Alignment with the company's CSR**

Definitely yes; the company's increased focus on sustainability has also changed the company's hiring needs; In 2015, the first **CSR Manager** was recruited, whereas, in 2019 a **Group Head of CSR & Sustainability** was appointed to co-ordinate policy, practice and performance across the business in the area of sustainability. This has streamlined the company's approach and focused resources in the areas of greatest impact which in turn help to deliver on the so-called Science Based Targets.

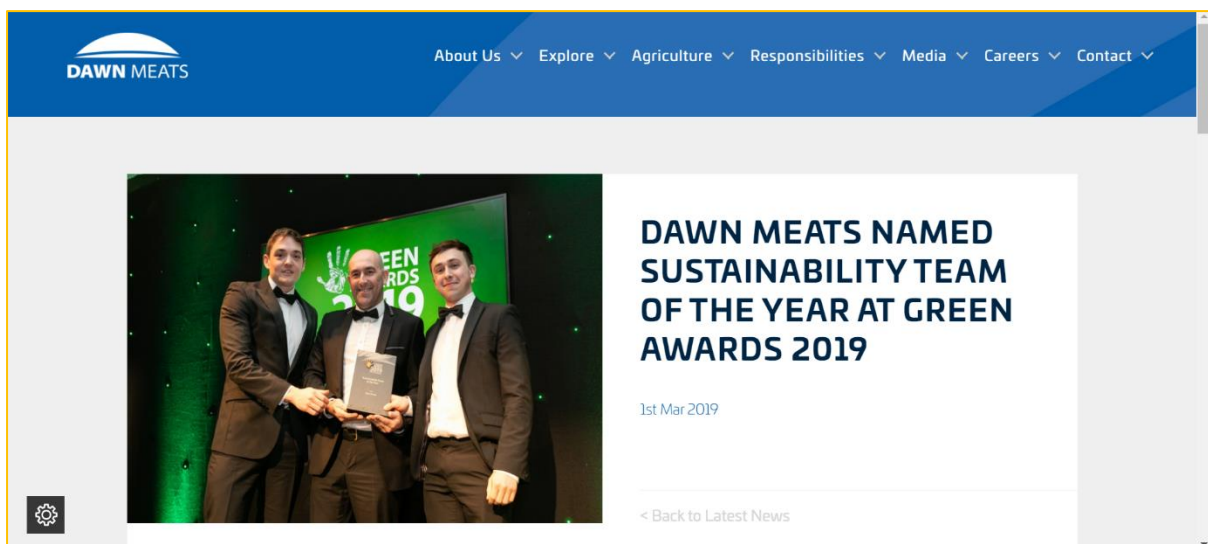
Financial details explanation:

The integrated constructed wetland (ICW) which was installed by the company in 2004 and was later extended in 2012 (which more than doubled the size of the wetland), it has **saved Dawn Meats approximately €200,000 and at present is saving around €25,000 a year** in reduced energy, chemical, maintenance and labour expenditure. Over the two phases, **the project itself cost approximately €215,000**, so the calculations speak for themselves.

Lessons Learnt

The main lesson learned was that **green infrastructure can save money, reduce emissions, promote biodiversity, and enhance community relationships.**

Visual materials and links





USEFUL LINKS:

<https://www.dawnmeats.com/dawn-meats-named-sustainability-team-of-the-year-at-green-awards-2019/>

<https://www.bitc.ie/csccasestudies/dawn-meats-how-a-green-infrastructure-project-saved-money-and-conserved-biodiversity/>

<https://2i2cqz41qq7hduf8z2mmxm8c-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/csreport.pdf>

<https://2i2cqz41qq7hduf8z2mmxm8c-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/2019-CSR-Report.pdf>

<https://www.dawnmeats.com/responsibilities/origin-green/>

<https://www.cpl.com/blog/2020/02/dawn-meats-q-and-a-the-impact-of-sustainability-on-the-agri-food-industry>

Green Practise 5: Reducing waste in food

Waste reduction (food redistribution) - Reduction in CO2 emissions - Social sustainability

Company name: **FoodCloud**

Size: **52 full-time employees and 1056 volunteers (2019 data)**

Industry: **Non-profit social enterprise (registered as Charity)**

Years of Existence: **Since 2013 (2018 the merger)**

Description of the green practices involved:

FoodCloud is a non-profit social enterprise that connects Irish businesses that have surplus food with charities and community groups that need it to make sure that no good food goes to waste.

- *Main goals of the practises*

To reduce the environmental, social, and economic impact of food waste by redistributing surplus food to their network of Charity and Community Group partners.

- *Please provide information over Procedures, Activities, Phases.*

The Charity acts in 2 ways/practices:

- FoodCloud retail solution, where a store with food surplus uploads a description of it using the in-store scanner or the charity's smartphone application. The notification is received by a charity which belongs to the network, which accepts the food and collects it. A win-win situation for all; Charities have access to a supply of fresh food and benefit through making savings on their food costs, while businesses can contribute to their community in a meaningful way.
- FoodCloud Hubs located in Dublin, Galway and Cork work with farmers, distributors, and manufacturers to rescue large volumes of surplus food and redistribute to charities and community groups across Ireland. Once surplus food reaches the Hubs, is uploaded onto the IT warehouse system and goes to storage, in safe condition. Charity partners place an order for delivery by paying a nominal contribution towards the storage and transport of the food.

Other initiatives in place:

- The Gleaning program, an ancient act of collecting leftover crops from farmers' fields after they have been commercially harvested. Partners that took place in 2019 were Meade Potato Company and Ballymakenny Farm, and crops included tonnes of potatoes, onions and broccoli.
- Innovative product
FoodCloud works in cooperation with Falling Fruit Ireland, who harvest the seasonal glut of apples, pears, plums, nuts, and other fruit that would otherwise not be picked throughout the Dublin area. They then partnered with The Apple Farm in Tipperary, who

pressed almost 3,000 kg of apples over the last two years to make FoodCloud's Cloudy Apple Juice, the first product made from food that would otherwise go to waste.

Description of the implementation:

- **Investments and running costs.**

FoodCloud has been supported to date through award funding, government funding and via two start up incubator programmes. However, FoodCloud has reached financial sustainability since 2015 by charging donating businesses an annual subscription fee per store; in this way, pricing is comparative with the cost of waste disposal but also incorporates the CSR value for a business of working with FoodCloud to connect to a network of local charities.

- **Challenges**

The two founders quickly realised that the big challenges to the process they visualised through FoodCloud was velocity, as well as efficiency in reaching all parties involved. They therefore identified a mobile technology that was being used in the US that could do exactly that and started to develop this solution for Ireland.

- **Role of digital technologies**

Digital technologies have played a large and significant role in enabling the charity to achieve their scopes. Without this the process could not be realised since the network of registered charities and community groups to benefit from FoodCloud is rather big. There needed to be a process that could be fast and efficient at the same time (please also see previous question).

- **Results of implementation.**

In 2019, and following the merger of FoodCloud with FoodCloud Hubs, both solutions combined had a total impact of redistributing the 1,739 tonnes of food, the equivalent of 4.14 million meals. By preventing this surplus food going to landfill, resulted in an equivalent reduction of approximately 5,565 tonnes of CO₂ emissions.

FoodCloud worked closely with the DEASP as the delivery partner for the FEAD programme nationwide. During the six months ended 31 December 2019, 652 tonnes of procured FEAD product was distributed to a network of over 150 eligible charities across 25 counties, supporting 150,863 individuals, 43% of whom are children.

Description of the communication:

- **Internally (towards the employees)**

None of the charity's success would have been done without the help of the hundreds of volunteers who have donated their time to the mission of FoodCloud.

- **Externally**

This has largely been achieved through cooperation with European Networks, which has enabled FoodCloud to be more visible on a European level.

FoodCloud are the Irish members of the European Food Banks Federation, which has 24 national member organisations that together are supporting more than 45,000 charities across Europe. In addition, FoodCloud work closely with the Global FoodBanking Network, who

support foodbanks in 34 countries. To date, the Network has redistributed 503,000 tonnes of food to over 55,000 charities.

The expansion of their activities in the UK, Europe, and even in Australia has managed to expand their actions even more and make the charity's technology solution widely applicable:

- FoodCloud also works with their UK partner, FareShare, since 2015, which is the largest charity fighting hunger and food waste. The Irish's charity technology was rolled out to the UK in 2018, and that allowed charities to accept donations more easily and access insight on the impact of the donations they receive.
- The successful pilot with Tesco Central Europe in Czechia and Poland, has made the technology super popular across all Tesco stores in both countries, while pilot trials will next take place in Slovakia and Hungary.
- The purpose-built application was piloted with OzHarvest, the organisation that is tackling food waste in Australia.

FoodCloud has a three-year partnership with Allied Irish Bank (AIB) supported by Rethink Ireland (formerly Social Innovation Fund Ireland) on national level.

In 2019, FoodCloud worked with Aldi, Dunnes, Lidl, Musgrave MarketPlace and Tesco to redistribute 1,192 tonnes of surplus food to 584 community groups via their technology platform. Through the last 6 months of 2019 following the merger of FoodCloud with FoodCloud Hubs, 547 tonnes of food were redistributed through the three warehousing hubs to a network of 235 community groups. This was made possible thanks to the generous donations of 107 food partners and further supported by the 3,400 hours provided by 573 volunteers across Dublin, Cork and Galway.

In 2019, members of the FoodCloud teams spoke at over 40 events, speaking to a combined audience of over 10,000. All these people worked as an ambassador for FoodCloud and shared the charity's story.

- **Possible alignment with the company's CSR**


FoodCloud are committed to helping Ireland become a leader in achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals **SDG 12.3** (to halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels), and **SDG 2** (to achieve zero hunger by 2030).

Lessons Learnt


FoodCloud represents a local solution to a global problem; their mission is to become a leader in developing solutions for surplus food redistribution from an ever-growing network of sources. Now, the charity has managed to be in a position to offer an end-to-end solution to surplus from the food industry.

Visual materials and links



 **OUR TEAM AND BOARD**


A huge thank you to the FoodCloud team, who make FoodCloud work. Each and every day, the members of our team work with our donors, volunteers, Community Groups and partners to ensure no good food goes to waste.




In 2019 we had **52** full-time members on our team spanning warehouse operations, our tech development team, partnerships, finance, communications, HR & our charity support team.

FoodCloud is governed by a Board of Directors of ten members (seven men and three women) who are responsible for providing leadership, setting strategy and ensuring control through operational and financial oversight.

ORIGIN GREEN

 **FOODCLOUD HUBS and ORIGIN GREEN**



SUSTAINABILITY PARTNERS

FoodCloud Hubs is a social enterprise that connects businesses with surplus food with charities across Ireland. We offer food businesses the opportunity to meet your Origin Green sustainability targets.

USEFUL LINKS

<https://food.cloud/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/FoodCloud-Annual-Report-2019-Final.pdf>

<https://food.cloud/origingreen/>

Conclusions & recommendations

Accounting for 70% of total employment (in the 'non-financial business economy'), SMEs are particularly important for the labour market in Ireland. In Irish economy that is characterised by the strong presence of foreign firms and their multi-national character, the latter are capitalising the success of the Irish SMEs at a great extent. BREXIT is another critical factor for their sustainability.

Despite the country's good results in most areas of the Small Business Act for Europe, it is a recognised need to facilitate SMEs' access to bank lending with lower interest rates but also to improve transparency and reduce the legal services for smaller companies.⁶

A lot has been made by the Irish Government towards this direction; recent measures for SMEs and entrepreneurs include, for example, funding schemes, tax incentives, and mentoring and accelerator services. One-stop shops have also been set up to inform local SMEs about the government schemes that they can apply for. In an attempt to increase the number and quality of start-ups that can offer employment to more than 10 people, Enterprise Ireland teamed with the National Digital Research Centre have launched a new accelerator programme for tech start-ups in the southeast region. The programme aims to give budding entrepreneurs assistance to help them understand what value their company can offer to customers, their strategy for growth and how to get ready to meet the demands of both investors and the marketplace.

Ireland provides an attractive environment for start-ups and high-growth companies. Businesses can be quickly set up and put into operation. They can benefit from the availability of high-skilled employees, a streamlined visa process for non-European citizens, a favourable tax system, and a supportive business environment. A broad range of grant and loan schemes are also available to help Irish start-ups, high-growth companies and those considering foreign direct investment in Ireland to scale up.

Despite all this which is good news, work remains to be done to structurally improve the provision of entrepreneurial education for students of all ages. Initiatives are ongoing to bring employers and higher-education institutes together to co-create entrepreneurial and vocational pathways, set up support systems and develop skills. However, in primary and secondary education, there is still insufficient focus on entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial skills.

A survey that was conducted by Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, prior to the SEAI Energy Show in Dublin in 2019, showed that the majority of Irish SMEs believe they can do more to tackle climate change funds and time willing, which is really encouraging for the Irish economy and green entrepreneurship, nevertheless it was rather worrying that a quarter of them said that they are simply not interested in or have not investigated the opportunities to be more energy efficient, which brings awareness and education to the fore.

⁶ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2019, "Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs - Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs – SBA Fact Sheet for Ireland, [file:///C:/Users/vkout/Downloads/Ireland%20-%20SBA%20Fact%20Sheet%202019%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/vkout/Downloads/Ireland%20-%20SBA%20Fact%20Sheet%202019%20(2).pdf)



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