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Rural Tourism & Artisan Food  
Conference  
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Irish Farmers Markets – a Technical Survey



Carol Griffin  
Ashtown Food Research Centre

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# Teagasc – Supports for Artisan / Speciality Producers

## ■ Ashtown

- ❑ Artisan Meat Technologist
- ❑ Meat Research Departments
- ❑ Innovation Centre / SME Support

## ■ Advisory

- ❑ Artisan Food Specialist
- ❑ Options Programme
  - Artisan Food Option

## ■ Moorepark

- ❑ Artisan Dairy Technologist
- ❑ Dairy Research Departments
- ❑ Moorepark Technologies Ltd – pilot plant
- ❑ SME Technologist

## ■ Training / Education

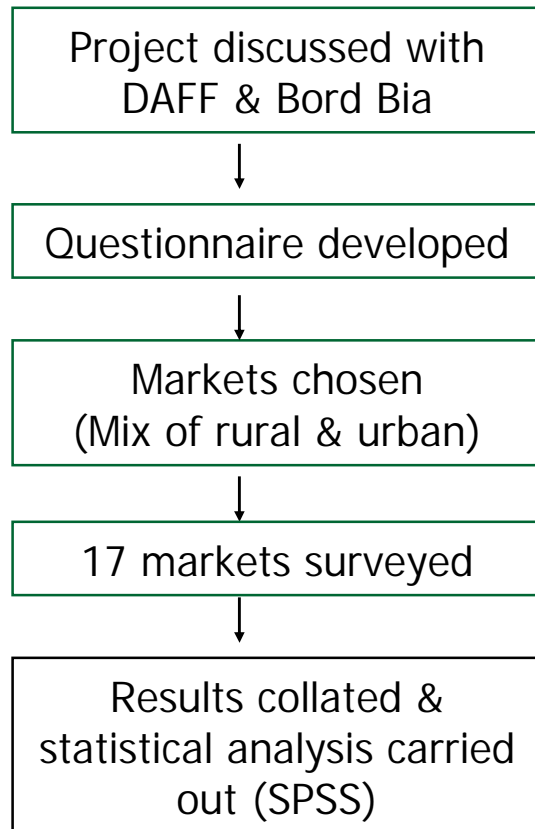
- ❑ Rural Diversification
  - Alternative Enterprise Modules

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# Why carry out the survey?

- Identify technology development needs of artisan / speciality food producers
- Consequently decide how best to focus Teagasc technology support programmes
- Identify the factors sustaining / hindering stallholders' success

# Methodology



88 respondents

## The farmers markets chosen were:

Dublin city	4
Mayo	3
Tipperary	3
Midlands	2
Galway	1
Cork City	1
Cork county	1
Kerry	1
Waterford	1

48% response rate

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# Survey headings used

- General product & stall information
- Stallholder profile
- Sales channels / routes to market
- Supports given to stallholders by the agencies
- Advice / training needs identified by stallholders
- Advice for new comers

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# Conclusions (1)

- Respondents extremely positive regarding long term viability of markets
- Stallholders identified need for continued support from Local Authorities
- Businesses continue to need advice and training in the areas of food safety, legislation and process technology
  - Teagasc SME Support Services
- Businesses consider non-technical areas extremely important for them:
  - Identification of market potential
  - Supply chain management
  - Financial management
- Stakeholder agencies with responsibilities in above areas should continue to work together to provide an integrated package of supports

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# Conclusions (2)

- Respondents need direction in sales / selling techniques at set up and ongoing
  - Teagasc Direct selling / Routes to Market (18 hr course)
  - Teagasc Artisan Food Business (36 hr course)
- Speciality producers should consider:
  - Using smaller markets to hone sales skills / perfect product range
  - Identifying gaps in the product range in the markets they hope to target

# General Product & Stall Information

## Predominant categories of foods on sale

Food Products	No's	%
	28	32
	19	22
	19	22

Food Products	No's	%
	11	12
	8	9
	3	3

# General Product & Stall Information

- Novel products – Gluten free & sprouted seeds
- Conventional V's Organic:
  - 62% conventional
  - 21% organic
  - 14% - both
- Irish / non Irish:
  - 82% Irish
  - 4% imported only
  - 14% both
- No game on sale



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# General Product & Stall Information

- **Dairy:**
  - Mainly cheese  
(Gap identified by stall manager – liquid milk)
- **Seafood:**
  - Most markets had seafood stalls  
(Very few value added seafood products)
- **Bakery / confectionary:**
  - Mainly breads & cakes
  - Majority producing goods themselves
- **Meat & Poultry:**
  - Mostly fresh meat & meat products
  - Poultry – mainly chicken
  - 5 / 19 selling cooked ready meals & charcuterie

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# Stallholder profile

- 60% male : 40% female
- Majority were Irish
- Mostly in 30 – 40 year & 40 – 50 year age groups
- Financial gain – the main reason given for starting trading
- Majority will continue trading at markets (86%)
- Years trading:
  - 5 – 10 years (28%)
  - 11+ (28%)
  - 2 – 4 years (25%)
  - 0 – 1 year (19%)

# Stallholder profile

- Number of employees:

- 1 (47%)
- 2 (22%)
- 3 – 5 (18%)
- 6+ (13%)

- Numbers of markets attended:

- 2 mkt (30%)
- 1 mkt (24%)
- 3 mkt (15%)

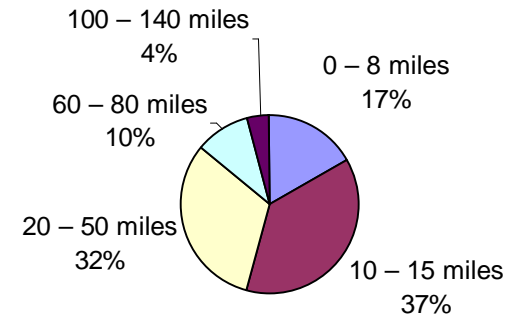
- Total days trading at markets

- 2days (31%)
- 1 day (24%)
- 3 days (21%)

# Stallholder profile



Distance travelled to market (miles)



## ■ Sales / turnover per annum

- ❑ > €10,000 (68%)
- ❑ €7,000 – 10,000 (10%)
- ❑ €3,000 – 5,000 (10%)
- ❑ €0 – 1,000 (4%)
- ❑ €1,000 – 3,000 (4%)
- ❑ €5,000 – 7,000 (4%)

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# Sales channels / routes to markets

## The current situation

- Farm Shops:
  - Most don't sell this way (74%)
- Independent shops & delis: (37%)
  - The majority selling between 10 & 30% of their products
- Hotels / restaurants / caterers: (26%)
  - The majority selling between 10 & 30% of their products
- Wholesalers / multiples / symbol groups: (8%)
- Exports: 3 only (Oysters, Smoked salmon, Pickles / relishes)

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# Sales channels / routes to markets

## Future aspirations

- Most want to expand to other markets (33%)
- Supermarkets / multiples (24%)
  - significant due to the subsequent increase in complexity to the business
- Other direct selling routes (12%)
- Happy to remain selling at markets (12%)

# Supports given to businesses by stakeholder agencies

## The food business

- No support – 60%

### Main agencies involved when help was given

- LEADER (9%)
- Regulatory (8%)
- CEB's (5%)
- Teagasc (2%)

## The stall

- No support – 67%

### Main agencies involved when help was given

- LEADER (8%)
- Regulatory (8%)

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# Areas of difficulty for stallholders

## Areas of difficulty starting out

- Sales / selling / costings (34%)
- Food safety issues (11%)
- “Everything” (10%)

## Areas of difficulty now

- Sales / selling / costings (35%)
- “Nothing” (12%)
- Food safety issues (11%)
- New product development (8%)

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# Advice / training needs identified by the respondents

## Training needs identified

- Food safety / labelling / packaging / legislation (34%)
- Ingredients / NPD / processing / facilities (28%)
- Sales / finance / market stall quality (25%)

## Preferred training methods

- Evenings (32%)
- Days (30%)
- One to one / phone (11%)
- On-line (6%)
- Workshops (4%)

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# Comments from Stallholders

- Keep it simple at the start, avoid too many varieties, give new products a few weeks
- Start small and grow
- It is difficult to start but go for it. Make a connection with the customer
- Be brave, take a chance and work with other stall holders, ask their advice
- Use markets as a vehicle for product development.
- Source machinery & ingredients locally because if / when you have problems, the suppliers are more likely to solve your problem quickly without charging a lot of travel expenses
- Don't use cheap second hand equipment

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# Comments from Stallholders

- Be prepared for hard work
- Always stock quality products
- Markets are not a way to make lots of money but are satisfying
- Don't expect income for the first 3 years
- Use local produce
- Traders need to be trained in how to deal with customers
- Hard to find a suitable abattoir (several meat producers)
- Don't be afraid of the food hygiene aspects
- Difficult to balance production with selling at the market

# Teagasc - SME Technology Support Programme



Joint Initiative with  
Enterprise Ireland

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