

Comhairle Contae  
Fhine Gall  
Fingal County  
Council



# FINGAL

FOOD AND DRINK POLICY  
2024-2029



Comhairle Contae  
Fhine Gall  
Fingal County  
Council



Oifig Fiontair Áitiúil  
Local Enterprise Office  
Fine Gall Fingal





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## Foreword

As Mayor of Fingal, I would like to congratulate everyone involved in developing the Fingal Food and Drink Policy. It is a valuable document which will help steer our growth over the next six years.

This is an important and positive first step for Fingal in reaching our economic and food tourism potential. Food and drink are significant sectors within the County, and it is vital to have a co-ordinated and proactive approach to their development with businesses and the community.

It is increasingly evident that we must change the way we produce, consume, and think about food and drink. You will see at the core of our strategy lies the imperative to support sustainable techniques that not only protect the integrity of our ecosystems but also cultivate and promote our food tourism sector.

By adopting an innovative piece of work like this, Fingal will continue be a national forerunner in the agri-food sector and also how it supports sustainable businesses. Together, let us embrace a sustainable culinary future, transforming our industry, our communities, and our County - one bite and sip at a time.

**Cllr Adrian Henchy, Mayor of Fingal**



Fingal's food and drink sector has played a significant role in the local economy for many years. Recently it has weathered the combined storms of Brexit and the COVID19 pandemic and shown resilience and grit throughout. Now the County is well placed to develop the sector in a strategic manner making this policy both timely and essential.

Fingal's historical assets remain significant factors - a prime location with ready access to markets and rich soils and seas for exceptional horticulture and fishing industries. Excellent connectivity, well-developed food production and a surge in food tourism all add to Fingal's strengths. The challenge is to foster and encourage development along strategic pathways and this is why a collaborative Food and Drink Policy is of key importance.

In recognition of these factors, this Policy has become a reality and will form the basis for sustainable growth and development, boosting tourism, generating employment, and securing the future of the sector.

**AnnMarie Farrelly, Chief Executive, Fingal County Council**



In response to the need for comprehensive food-related economic growth strategy and food tourism development in Fingal, the Department of Economic, Enterprise, Tourism and Cultural Development commissioned a review of the Agri Food Strategy 2019-2021 and the development of a new Food and Drink Policy for Fingal.

## Introduction

The Fingal region of County Dublin is renowned for vibrant communities, villages, rich history and picturesque landscapes. With a significant 88km coastline and incomparably fertile soil, Fingal boasts a thriving food and drink sector encompassing diverse culinary traditions, local producers and a flourishing hospitality sector. Recognising the importance of fostering a longer term, sustainable and thriving food sector, Fingal County Council has introduced a Fingal Food and Drink Policy to replace the Agri Food Strategy 2019-2021.

## The aim of the Policy

This comprehensive Policy has been developed with the aim of promoting and enhancing various aspects of the food and drink sector in Fingal. It includes supporting businesses and economic growth, developing food tourism experiences, engaging the community on the benefits of their local food provenance, and celebrating their horticultural history.

The Policy seeks to create a supportive framework that nurtures local businesses, celebrate culinary excellence and diversity, support sustainable agriculture and create a vibrant food tourism industry. Through this Policy, we envision a future where Fingal becomes renowned not only for its natural beauty but showcases its vibrant food scene and food provenance. By embracing the Policy, we can lay the foundation for a sustainable, inclusive and prosperous food and drink sector that benefits businesses, residents and visitors alike, thereby creating a future where food and drink are not only nourishment but also a source of pride, economic growth and cultural celebration.



## 2. Strategic Context

National and EU food policies play a crucial role in shaping the growth and future of the Irish food and beverage industry and food tourism in Ireland. Agriculture, horticulture and tourism are significant contributors to the economy and employment.

The Fingal Food and Drink Policy has been informed by and aligns with a number of policies and strategies developed by the EU, Government and relevant agencies\* including:

- Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029 and new Economic Development Strategy
- Food Vision 2030
- EU Farm to Fork Strategy
- EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030
- Bord Bia's 2022, ten year and three-year Strategy
- Teagasc Climate Action Strategy 2022-2030
- Fáilte Ireland's Food and Drink Strategy 2018-2023 and Dublin Regional Tourism Development Strategy

Fingal is a thriving region showing a population increase of 11% in the 2022 census, almost the highest in the country. The importance of agriculture cannot be underestimated with around 600 farmers producing 47% of field vegetables, 14.5% of potatoes and 37% of covered fruit, vegetables and nursery plants. The horticultural sector contributes more than €320m to the economy. <sup>1</sup>

### **Economic Development**

Economic development is central to building a flourishing food and drink sector in Fingal and Fingal County Council has commissioned an Economic Development Strategy aligning with the Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029 in which food plays a significant part. It advocates strategies promoting sustainability, economic growth and community engagement. These include initiatives to reduce food waste, encourage usage of digesters for organic waste management, support farm diversification, enhance rural tourism, stimulate employment opportunities in the agri-food sector, endorse the Flavours of Fingal initiative, establish a new food industry park, encourage agri-food clusters, safeguard the agricultural identity in North Fingal and promote organic and regenerative farming practices.

### **Food Tourism Development**

As yet, relatively undeveloped in Fingal, food tourism has substantial potential for growth. According to Fáilte Ireland's Food and Drink Strategy 2018-2023, food and beverage consumption is an intrinsic part of the tourist experience. It can play a strong role in affecting destination choice, it's an important channel for tourists to experience the local culture and spending on food comprises of one-third of tourists' total expenditure. In Ireland, food and beverage expenditure accounts for 35% of overall visitor spend, equating to €2 billion. (2017) <sup>2</sup>

Food Vision commits to developing linkages between local food and tourism offerings, including support for business development and marketing initiatives to support and promote food and drink visitor attractions. EUREGA (European Regions of Gastronomy) identifies gastronomy and local and regional food heritage as both cultural and economic assets, while UNWTO Global Food Tourism emphasises the importance of food tourism for rural communities.

By leveraging both Irish and EU policies and strategies, Fingal can grow its Food and Drink Sector, both in terms of sustainable economic development and tourism growth.

\* Itemised in the Consultation Phase.



## 3. Executive Summary

Fingal County Council, in response to the need for a comprehensive stimulus for economic growth in the food and drink sector and to advance food tourism in the County, has commissioned an extensive process of consultation and research. This has resulted in the formulation of a new six-year Food and Drink Policy that is aligned with the Fingal County Development Plan, the Economic Development Strategy and Fingal Food Strategy. The primary objective of this Policy is to bolster the existing robust agri and hospitality sectors while safeguarding food heritage, facilitating the growth of food businesses and establishing a premier food tourism experience to attract visitors to the region. Sustainability emerged as a key focus, with stakeholders\* emphasising the importance of sustainable practices, profitability, staff retention and environmental responsibility. The evidence-based research and stakeholder input shaped the core theme of sustainability within the Policy, addressing sustainable business growth, carbon footprint and climate change concerns.

\*See page 26 for list of stakeholders.

### Three Policy Strands

The Policy has been developed under three strands.



**Economic Growth**



**Food Tourism Development**



**Community Engagement**

### Opportunities

**1. Economic Growth:** The Policy aims to drive economic growth by leveraging Fingal's agri producers, providing support to businesses throughout each phase of their development and fostering a vibrant food system. Fingal's food and drink sector possesses untapped economic growth potential in farmers markets, innovation and product development, and in potential cross-sector engagement with the expanding local population as well as visitors to the region. Promoting Fingal's role as a significant national producer through a comprehensive marketing campaign is crucial to raising awareness of the region as Ireland's breadbasket. This will showcase innovation and sustainability from producers such as Flynn's and Morning Fresh. Synergy and expansion of Enterprise Centres, food hubs and food parks, along with support from the Local Enterprise Office, will advance strategic growth. The Policy will continue to encourage linkage with Enterprise Ireland and Bord Bia for business growth. Inclusion of the food and drink sector in the Fingal Skills Strategy working group enhances collaboration and skills development.

**2. Food Tourism Development:** To enhance food tourism in Fingal, initiatives include developing Fingal Food Network, promoting existing coastal food destinations, creating new food experiences with a wider geographical spread and enhancing networking between tourism-related businesses. The development of Fingal Food Network into a leading food network can attract year-round visitors, facilitate collaborative projects, promote networking, maximise marketing and food provenance opportunities and encourage the establishment of a new food series. Council owned Heritage properties, for example Ardgillan Castle, can embrace opportunities to incorporate new food offerings and immersive experiences in keeping with their food heritage and history. Development of food tourism training resources can support economic growth at a grassroots level. Communicating Fingal's food story and maximising the opportunities with Fingal Tourism, Visit Dublin, Fáilte Ireland, the Dublin Coastal Trail, Greenway and Fingal Coastal Way are key for raising brand awareness.



**3. Community Engagement:** Community engagement promotes economic growth and encourages food provenance and sustainable practices. Capturing the knowledge and expertise of food leaders and growers is essential in safeguarding the food heritage. Encouraging community gardens, allotments, farm shops, markets and supporting kitchen gardens through the Fingal Food Network strengthens the local food system, provides access to local produce and opportunities to meet the maker. The Sustainable Fingal initiative can be utilised to promote sustainable food production, waste reduction and environmentally-friendly practices across community events. Engaging the business and social community promotes local food provenance and economic growth by encouraging food tourism, shopping seasonally and a shop local practice.

### **Challenges**

Naturally, challenges also exist and adhering to this Policy will assist in overcoming them. Currently there is an absence of dedicated resourcing or a central point of contact for food in the County, such as a food development coordinator or a centralised mechanism for showcasing all the food experiences on offer.

Several gaps exist in marketing and promotion. A brand awareness campaign would position Fingal as the premier agri producer in the country. The absence of consistent and coherent food tourism marketing strategies was also noted.

In terms of supporting business growth, the roadmap is unclear and there are insufficient step-up facilities for business growth, support and expansion in the food sector. Increased legislation related to farming practices and a decline in the price of agricultural produce pose a challenge, as does the impact of climate change. Many agricultural businesses in Fingal are family enterprises and there is a danger of loss of knowledge and reduced succession opportunities for farm families and local producers.

Fingal does not have a coordinated food provenance programme or a comprehensive producer's directory and there are notable gaps in farmers and destination markets. For the tourist, the County has a very limited choice of farm tours and an uneven distribution of existing saleable experience, with the majority concentrated in Howth.

### **Threats**

Lack of sufficient resourcing of the Policy and projects without a clear implementation plan, budget and timeframes were seen as a key threat to the success of the Policy. Another potential threat for businesses was providing their time and resources to the policy and seeing minimum return due to lack of progress on the Agri Food Strategy. The need to mitigate external issues such as inflation, COVID19 and Brexit was also highlighted by businesses in the focus groups. Additional threats identified mirror national issues such as staff shortages, rising energy prices and rural transport connectivity.

### **Guiding Principles**

This Policy defines six guiding principles which take into consideration the urgent need to address sustainability and climate change as well as business growth and tourism development. It highlights key opportunities that centre around encouraging greater collaboration among food businesses, the council and agencies, proactively seeking and maximising sustainable opportunities, embracing innovation and diversity and providing businesses with the necessary support for sustainable growth.

The Policy sets out a clear strategy and action plan for the effective implementation of the proposed actions in the first year. Fingal County Council has committed to providing both governance and resources as well as committing to developing the necessary plans to ensure its successful execution.

## 4. The Policy

### 4.1 Vision for Fingal Food and Drink Industry

To create a sustainable and vibrant food community that celebrates local food provenance, supports the growth of food and drink businesses and positions Fingal as a premier food tourism destination.

### 4.2 Mission Statement

To develop and implement a comprehensive framework that fosters engagement amongst businesses and agencies, promotes sustainable agriculture and food production practices, enhances the competitiveness of the food sector, supports food tourism initiatives, ensures quality food product and educates and empowers the community to make healthy and sustainable food choices while embracing their rich food heritage. Through strategic partnerships, innovative programmes and effective communication, the Policy aims to create a thriving and resilient food community that contributes to the economic, social and cultural well-being of Fingal.

### 4.3 Policy Format

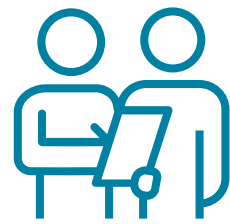
This Policy has been developed under three strands.



**Economic Growth**



**Food Tourism Development**



**Community Engagement**

Each individual aspect necessitates its own approach, along with a comprehensive plan and budget for implementation. The strands intersect and contribute to the overarching food and drink policy and strategy for the Fingal region.

Please view section 7, for the year one action plan.

#### 4.3.1 Economic Growth

The Policy aims to drive economic growth by leveraging the region's rich culinary heritage, supporting food and drink businesses and developing a vibrant food system. This Policy recognises the potential of the food and drink sector as a significant contributor to the local economy, for creating employment opportunities, for attracting visitors and to promote innovating and stimulating entrepreneurship. By providing a strategic framework and targeted initiatives - through the Department of Economic, Enterprise, Tourism and Cultural Development in conjunction with Local Enterprise Office, Enterprise Centres, Fingal Tourism and Fingal Food Network and relevant agencies - the Policy seeks to unlock the economic potential of the region's food industry, thereby positioning Fingal as a thriving hub for culinary excellence and sustainable economic growth.

### 4.3.2 Food Tourism Development

Food tourism development involves the strategic promotion and enhancement of Fingal’s culinary offerings and food-related experiences to attract visitors. The goal is to showcase the destination as a unique food destination, highlighting local food culture, artisan produce, signature dishes and food experiences.

Initiatives and experiences include festivals – Flavours of Fingal, Howth Maritime and Seafood Festival, food themed events and days like Spud Fest, markets, tours and trails, craft beer and whiskey tasting, catch and cook, cookery school, foraging workshops, farm tours, farms shops, chefs and a range of farm-to-table experiences. The focus is on growing immersive, authentic events and food experiences, highlighting food heritage, local seafood and highlighting local ingredients. There is potential for farms, farm shops and kitchen gardens to expand into food tourism experiences with an authentic farm-to-fork experience onsite. Farm shops should be encouraged where it can be clearly demonstrated that the majority of products sold are grown on the farm holding, there is no displacement of nearby existing retail offerings and the shop is operated by the owner of farm to support farm diversification and increase sustainability of the farm. The farm shop is an ideal accompaniment to farm tour and can offer tasting opportunities.

Fingal can embrace its proximity to Dublin City and population, visitor numbers through Dublin Airport and location on the Belfast-Dublin economic corridor. Fingal hosts impressive and significant heritage attractions both council and privately owned, which include Malahide Castle & Gardens, Ardgillan Castle, Newbridge House and Farm, and Howth Castle. Food is of paramount important in these locations, as it may be the visitors only taste of Fingal. Marketing efforts emphasise the distinct flavours and ingredients of the destination, leveraging digital platforms, social media and partnerships with local businesses to promote and attract food-focused travellers.

Engaging local businesses, from cafes, restaurants and hoteliers to the community, local farmers, Fingal Tourism, Visit Dublin and Failte Ireland, grows a sustainable food tourism community. By nurturing its food assets, the tourism product in the region will be enhanced. This will support local businesses and showcase Fingal’s unique food culture to visitors.

### 4.3.3 Community Engagement

This Policy places a strong emphasis on community engagement, both from the business community and the local community perspective. Recognising that participation and working together are vital for success, it actively involves local businesses, producers and residents in shaping and implementing initiatives. Strong partnerships provide platforms for knowledge sharing and supporting community-led initiatives like allotments, community supported agriculture, community gardens and events, which encourages seasonality and reduce food miles. This mindset begins on a personal level, ultimately shaping the Chef’s menu creation and the dining experience. The Policy aims to empower the local community to actively contribute to the development of the sector. From nourishing entrepreneurship and supporting local businesses to promoting food-related events and initiatives that bring the community together, the Policy aims to create a sense of ownership, pride and shared benefit among all interested parties, driving social cohesion and community development.



# 4. The Policy

## 4.4 Six Policy Principles

This Policy is based on six key principles:



The Policy acknowledges the interconnectedness and mutual reliance of each of these six principles and strives to ensure equal priority is given to each. This framework will serve as a focal point for sustainable endeavours within each of the three strands: Economic Growth, Food Tourism Development and Community Engagement.

The overarching principle is one of sustainability, from job retention and supporting business and tourism development to embracing sustainable best practices initiatives for enhancing our environmental and climate change impact.

Principle	In terms of Fingal Food and Drink Policy	Mechanisms
1. Stakeholder* Collaborations	Ensure stakeholders are linked together and collaborating towards the shared objectives and actions of this Policy. This includes the Fingal County Council, Fingal Food Network, elected representatives, community groups, businesses, agencies and Enterprise Centres.	The establishing of a formal working group led by the Council with industry partners, community and agency representation. The working group facilitates the sharing of resources, expertise and overseeing the implementation of the Policy.
2. Developing Thriving Food Businesses	Ensure food and drink businesses in Fingal not only survive but thrive economically, that they have the capacity to endure, to re-invest, embrace opportunities, flourish and to provide quality, consistent employment.	Seek to move businesses from survival mode to investing in key business supports such as business management, planning, product and service innovation, competitor analysis, messaging, positioning and marketing.

\* See page 26 for list of stakeholders.

## Principle

## In terms of Fingal Food and Drink Policy Mechanisms

### 3. Collective Climate Action

Ensure Climate Action Targets for the Fingal food and drink sector are in line with national targets. All stakeholders in the sector should work together to achieve a 50% reduction in emissions by 2030 and to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. The Policy will further align with Fingal Climate Change Action Plan 2019-2024 and Bord Bia actions for implementing the EU Farm to Fork Strategy.

Ensure mechanisms are in place nationally or locally to track carbon emissions, train businesses on carbon footprints, reduce food waste and conserve resources, promote local sourcing, minimise packaging, engage in corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, support organic farming and sustainable food production methods.

### 4. Engaging Food Communities

Ensure food serves as a unifying force within the community, strengthening connections and facilitating collaboration among businesses and the wider food and drink community.

Define the Fingal food and drink experience and its USPs. The Fingal food story is a key component in the region's communication plan.

Facilitating the connection of local community through avenues such as farmers markets, farm shops, community supported agriculture, food innovation hubs, hospitality, as well as through the growth of allotments, community gardens, kitchen gardens and community kitchens.

### 5. Food and Drink Innovation

Fingal must embrace its culinary and horticultural heritage as a catalyst for innovation. By harnessing this rich legacy, the region actively seeks innovative approaches to rejuvenate and invigorate its surroundings, benefiting present and future businesses, residents, and visitors.

Cultivate food and drink innovation. Key approaches include working with stakeholders, promoting food provenance, farm diversification, supporting research and development initiatives, establishing dedicated incubation spaces and clustering, reducing food poverty, promoting entrepreneurship and education, showcasing successful examples, engaging stakeholders, and embracing sustainability principles.

### 6. Inclusive and Diverse Society

Fostering an inclusive and diverse society entails promoting equality, embracing diversity, and ensuring equal access to opportunities for all ages. This involves creating inclusive policies, creating a welcoming environment, encouraging diversity and promoting social integration. By prioritising inclusivity and diversity, Fingal can build a thriving community that celebrates different food cultures.

Facilitate education and awareness-raising initiatives to create inclusive and diverse events. Instigate projects to promote diversity in leadership and decision-making roles, creating platforms for working together and event creation among diverse communities. Expand awareness-raising initiatives to include youth groups, older and elderly people, the business community and diverse groups. Engage with HSE health promotion team.

## 5. Food and Drink Strategy

It is imperative to develop a comprehensive strategy document to ensure the effective implementation of this Policy. The strategy will centre around the three strands: Economic Development, Food Tourism Development and Community Engagement, guided by the six policy principles.

The strategy will be implemented by the Department of Economic, Enterprise, Tourism and Cultural Development within Fingal County Council in conjunction with the working group.

Key areas in the new Strategy to be developed should include:

1. Vision and goals
2. Priorities and focus areas
3. Strategic actions with key performance indicators and timeframes
4. Collaboration and partnerships
5. Monitoring and evaluation
6. Resources and implementation
7. Policy review and adaptation

The following areas will guide the strategy implementation:

- a) Current Landscape
- b) Potential for Growth
- c) Challenges to Growth
- d) Recommendations

## 6. Timeframe

The Fingal Food and Drink Policy will be effective from 2024 to 2029, structured into two distinct implementation phases. The initial phase, spanning the years 2024 to 2025, will be followed by a comprehensive review that considers advancements within the action plan, shifts in the business landscape, evolving government policies related to food and funding opportunities. The subsequent phase will commence in 2026 and continue until the conclusion of the Policy in 2029.



## 7. High Level Year One Action Plan

The following table presents a comprehensive list of actions that should be commenced and/or completed during the initial year, following the establishment of a dedicated working group and resourcing to oversee the project.

The outlined actions are categorised under the three strands: Economic Development, Food Tourism Development and Community Engagement beneath the overarching theme of sustainability. Each strand encompasses specific actions aimed at nourishing growth and development within the respective areas.

### 7.1 Overall Policy Actions

Policy Actions	
Area of Focus	Action
Fingal County Council/ Working Group	Establish a policy implementation working group and resourcing to oversee and manage the execution of the Policy.
Department of Economic, Enterprise, Tourism and Cultural Development/ Communication Plan	Create an integrated communications plan that seeks to define and shape the identity of food and drink in Fingal including both the business and wider community. Include areas such as innovation, food heritage, local food provenance and farming families' stories.
Department of Economic, Enterprise, Tourism and Cultural Development/ Signposting	Develop pathways and signposting to encourage business growth. These mechanisms should provide guidance and resources to support entrepreneurs at different stages of development. Responding to changes in the workplace post COVID19, businesses should be able to easily navigate supports outside of business hours, utilising technology to effectively seize opportunities.
Department of Economic, Enterprise, Tourism and Cultural Development/ Food Provenance Programme	Convene pertinent stakeholders to develop a Food Provenance Programme tailored to the Fingal region including Fingal County Council Tourism Department, Fingal Tourism, the LEO, Enterprise Centres, Fingal Food Network, Fingal Farmers, Fingal LEADER Partnership, representation from Farmers Markets and relevant agencies to meet the requirements of the programme.





## 7.2 Sustainability

To implement climate change initiatives in the food and drink sector, the following actions should be taken. The actions will overlap across the three strands of Economic Growth, Food Tourism Development and Community Engagement. By their implementation, Fingal can actively address climate change in the food and drink sector and promote sustainable practices throughout the value chain during the life of the Policy and beyond.

Sustainability Actions For the Department of Economic, Enterprise, Tourism and Cultural Development.	
a)	Create a charter to build a common base of good practice within the County which could be evolved into a mark of quality for businesses. This can become a clear articulation of what Fingal stands for in terms of sustainable food and drink.
b)	Encourage businesses to obtain sustainability credentials to enhance their competitiveness in the marketplace and ensure compliance with climate change regulations. Clearly identify the pathways to certifications (Origin Green, Green Hospitality) or validations that build credibility.
c)	Engage large scale producers to highlight their innovation, sustainability programmes and best practice.
d)	Design an Awareness Programme around sustainable food and drink innovation in Fingal.
e)	Create Fingal Sustainability Awards to showcase best practice.
f)	Promote a mechanism to calculate and track carbon footprints and engage businesses in the process of tracking their emissions. Provide training to support food and drink businesses in determining their primary and secondary carbon footprints.
g)	Encourage collaboration between the Council, businesses and communities to identify innovative strategies for reducing food waste, conserving energy and conserving water. Seek to minimise costs through training, mentoring and financial supports.
h)	Ensure sustainability initiatives - for example packaging reduction, elimination of plastics and carbon footprint reduction - are applicable to all businesses in the value chain. Establish a strong County-wide focus on minimising food waste and packaging. Encourage intentional and tangible actions to minimise the carbon footprint at festivals and events, including the reduction of single-use plastics.
i)	Promote local sourcing to minimise food miles.
j)	Provide support and incentives to help businesses participate in the circular economy and reduce food waste through Sustainable Fingal initiative.
k)	Leverage the corporate social responsibility (CSR) targets of local large-scale producers and companies to support sustainability initiatives.
l)	Encourage and support initiatives for a holistic approach to sustainable methods of food production, consumption and sustainability such as community supported agriculture and organic farming.
m)	Run a series of community and business focus groups and events on sustainability. Brainstorm new ideas and showcase best practice at the events.
n)	Support businesses in each stage of their development and mitigate challenges where possible. Encourage planned succession in businesses, especially in family farms, to safeguard Fingal's agricultural and horticultural heritage with supports, training and where possible funding.

## 7. High Level Year One Action Plan

### 7.3 Strand: Economic Growth

Responsible Body	Action
Economic Development Department/ Food Innovation Hub	a) Liaise with the Enterprise Centres on their strategy plan for the clustering of food businesses, development of community kitchens and step-up facilities for business growth and decide on the feasibility of a new dedicated food innovation hub.
Local Enterprise Office	b) Set up a dedicated mechanism for engaging food and drink businesses on an ongoing basis within the Enterprise Centres at BASE Enterprise Centre, Balbriggan Enterprise and Training Centre (BEaT) and Drinan Enterprise Centre*.  *Drinan Enterprise Centre currently has no food businesses leasing units.
Local Enterprise Office	c) Fingal Food Network will provide the LEO with details of training requirements, who in turn will provide solutions where possible. The Food Network and Dublin Food Chain will engage with the Fingal Skills Strategy where relevant.
Local Enterprise Office	d) LEO has run highly effective peer to peer learning and mentoring specific to the food sector. The LEO will continue to look at future initiatives in this area primarily within the context of Dublin Food Chain training and networking events.
Economic Development Department/ Fingal Skills Strategy	e) Expand Fingal Skills Strategy to include food and beverages businesses and agencies representatives.
Economic Development Department/ Local Enterprise Office	f) Achieve healthy collaboration and include the LEO at Fingal Food Network events to promote Dublin Food Chain events, management development programmes, networking events and enterprise promotion activities.
Economic Development Department/ Tourism Development Department/ Food Markets	g) Conduct a comprehensive analysis of the existing gaps in farmers markets within the Fingal region, exploring the feasibility of establishing or facilitating a new food destination market or markets. Devise a tiered support system specifically designed to enhance the functionality and viability of markets. Liaise with the Tourism Development Team on the creation of new immersive food experiences at markets and greater promotion of farm shops.
Economic Development Department/ Healthy Fingal	h) Support Healthy Fingal initiatives to tackle health inequalities and the promotion of healthy eating and active living.



## 7.4 Strand: Food Tourism Development

Responsible Body	Action
Tourism Development Department/ Co-ordinator	a) Appoint a Food Development Co-ordinator or Consultant to implement the Fingal Food and Drink Policy.
Tourism Development Department/ Fingal Food Network	b) Seek funding for the Fingal Food Network
Tourism Development Department/ Fingal Food Network	c) Support industry in building the Fingal Food Network and aligning with the broader Fingal Tourism Strategy.
Tourism Development Department/ Fingal Food Network	d) Evaluate the current brand – Dublin’s Coast and Fields - and create a marketing toolkit.
Tourism Development Department/ Communication Plan	e) Develop Fingal Food Story. Tell the story of Fingal, its producers and the passionate chefs and entrepreneurs who are showcasing Fingal. Bring their story to the forefront of all marketing campaigns from product launches to new experiences and innovative practices.
Tourism Development Department/ Fingal Food Network	f) Create a marketing and PR strategy and an updated implementation food network action plan i.e. website redevelopment, social media strategy, content creation plan, PR plan, media visit, familiarisation visits, advertising, and experience development.
Tourism Development Department/ Saleable Experiences	g) Support the growth of existing saleable experiences. Develop new immersive saleable experiences and encourage a greater regional spread across Fingal for the target audience. Encourage businesses to engage with Fáilte Ireland programmes on the development of saleable experiences from the Business of Tourism programme to the UltraLuxe programme.
Tourism Development Department/ Food Markets	h) Liaise with the Economic Development Department on the creation of a new destination food market and supports for markets.
Tourism Development Department/ Heritage Properties	i) Embrace food heritage. Develop a best-in-class food offering at Council owned heritage properties i.e. Ardgillan Castle, an immersive food and drink experience an increased food provenance while enhancing the properties unique food opportunities and history. Engage with heritage and tourism attractions in Fingal such as Howth Castle.
Tourism Development Department/ Economic Development Department/ Training	j) Engage LEO, Dublin Food Chain and Fingal Skills Strategy and Fingal Food Network to collaborate on the developing of skills in the food and drink sector based on a needs analysis.
Tourism Development Department/ Fingal Food Network	k) Continue to invest in food and drink themed festivals and expand to an annual calendar of events in collaboration with Fingal Food Network. Run fringe food events at existing festivals i.e. foraging walks, pop-up restaurants and encourage local provenance at Fingal events and conferences. Bring personalities to the fore with meet the maker events, workshops and demonstrations.

## 7. High Level Year One Action Plan

### 7.5 Strand: Community Engagement

Responsible Body	Action
Community Engagement/ Heritage Officer	a) Develop an oral history project to capture generational knowledge and stories from producers on the history of Fingal horticultural and agricultural heritage.
Community Engagement/ Business Community	b) Host informative meetings inviting the business community, food networks, Chambers of Commerce and community tourism groups to collaborate and advance the initiatives outlined in the Policy.
Community Engagement/ Economic Development Department	c) Create a directory of community gardens and allotments in Fingal. Include the locations in an awareness campaign to support the development and growth of community initiatives.
Community Engagement/ Fingal Food Network	d) Create case study and best practice on kitchen gardens in Ireland and internationally. Through the Fingal Food Network support businesses who wish to create kitchen gardens.
Community Engagement/ Sustainable Fingal	e) Engage and work with Sustainable Fingal to educate both the community and business community on sustainable food and drink practices.
Community Engagement/ Sustainable Fingal	f) Develop culinary competitions aimed at highlighting the skills of local Chefs and fostering connections within the ethnic food community.
Community Engagement/ Economic Development Department	g) Develop a range of initiatives to actively involve the broader community in Fingal's food and drink narrative, encompassing activities such as the Student Enterprise Awards and the Age-Friendly Packaging initiative. Capitalise on the rich cultural diversity within the region by showcasing it at markets, festivals and events i.e. Africa Day. Support educational initiatives in schools by Bord Bia and Agri Aware programmes.
Fingal Libraries	h) The libraries can further expand their food focused, healthy eating and recipe based collection of books and multimedia materials.



## 8. Governance, Funding, Implementation and Monitoring

### 8.1 Governance

Governance of the Policy will involve the implementation of effective and transparent processes to ensure the Policy's development, implementation and evaluation are conducted in a fair, inclusive and accountable manner. Under the following principles of participation and inclusivity, transparency, evidence-based decision making, accountability and responsibility, coherence and integration, flexibility and adaptability, working together and partnerships.

By incorporating these principles of good governance, the Policy can ensure that it is inclusive, transparent, evidence-based, accountable, coherent, adaptable and collaborative. This can lead to more effective and sustainable outcomes for the Fingal County Council, businesses and the wider community.

### 8.2 Funding

Fingal County Council will develop a strategy and action plan to implement the Policy over its lifecycle and resource in partnership with local stakeholders and national and international food and drink agencies such as Bord Bia, Fáilte Ireland, and Teagasc.

### 8.3 Implementation

The creation of a working group made up of Fingal County Council employees, industry and community representatives will oversee the implementation of the policy, guided by the six principles. The working group provides for the sharing of resources and expertise, fostering a collective approach to problem solving and promoting growth and success. The mechanism for businesses working together is through collaboration and partnership. The working group will engage consultants and professional expertise as required.

The working group will ensure alignment with national and EU food and drink policies by Bord Bia, Fáilte Ireland, Teagasc and relevant agencies.

#### Structure of the Working Group

1. Industry Chair (Annual Rotation)
2. Members are made up of businesses, agencies, community groups and Fingal County Council.
3. Secretarial and support services provided by Fingal County Council
4. Subgroup per strand (Chair of subgroup, sits on main group)

Meetings for the main group will be held on a quarterly basis, while the subgroup will convene as needed, depending on the ongoing projects and their requirements.

### 8.4 Monitoring

A robust, consistent monitoring system is essential to ensure the success of the Policy and timely completion of the action plan.

Monitoring includes regular reporting to the working group and subgroups as required, key performance indicators, data collection and evaluation methodologies to assess the effectiveness of the Policy in achieving its objectives.





## Consultation Phase

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## 1. Introduction

The Food and Drink Policy for Fingal is a collaborative effort, considering the voices and expertise of stakeholders from across the food and beverage sector, including farmers, food producers, restaurateurs, retailers, food tourism experts, agencies and council departments. By understanding the unique needs and aspirations of the Fingal community, the policy can create a clear pathway for the future.

## 2. Rationale Behind the Policy

The reasoning behind developing a food and drink policy for Fingal is to consolidate the sector, poising it for strategic growth and development. It will be beneficial in many different ways:

1. **Supporting local businesses:** A food and drink policy promotes the use of locally sourced ingredients, which in turn supports local farmers and businesses. This helps boost the local economy, create food hubs/clustering of businesses and create jobs in the food and beverage industry. A policy provides a roadmap for businesses to grow from ideation to establishment, generating employment and accelerated growth.
2. **Improving sustainability:** A policy raises awareness of sustainability and makes it part of general business practice. It addresses the issue of food waste by encouraging the use of sustainable practices in food preparation and disposal. This includes composting and recycling, as well as reducing the use of single-use plastics and packaging. It encourages the use of environmentally friendly practices in the food and beverage industry, such as reducing food miles, promoting energy-efficient equipment and use of sustainable packaging at festivals. The policy promotes sustainable agricultural practices such as organic farming and regenerative agriculture, that can improve soil health, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase biodiversity. This supports local food businesses and contributes to the overall sustainability of the region's food system.
3. **Promoting Food Tourism:** A policy to promote food tourism involves developing unique culinary experiences, organising a year-round calendar of events and immersive experiences, collaborating with local producers, implementing targeted marketing campaigns and investing in infrastructure that supports food tourism activities. The policy includes a roadmap for the development of local food and drink network.
4. **Celebrating local food culture:** Fingal has a unique food culture shaped by its history, geography and diverse communities. A food and drink policy celebrates this culture by promoting local food festivals, food markets, culinary events and food-related activities that showcase the region's food heritage and traditions.
5. **The collaborative approach involves engaging various sectors, including government agencies, businesses, farmers and community organisations.** Through partnerships and collective decision-making, this approach aims to address food-related challenges, promote sustainable practices, support local food systems and maximise opportunities available in food tourism. The policy will foster cooperation, knowledge exchange and shared responsibility in shaping and implementing an effective policy and initiatives that positively impact Fingal.

In summary, a food and drink policy can facilitate the advancement of local enterprises as well as enhance sustainability initiatives and visitor experiences, thereby generating a net benefit for all involved.



### 3. Food and Drink Policies and Agencies

During the research phase we consulted widely with relevant agencies and organisations to ensure the policy was comprehensively informed. We considered existing policies and strategies to ensure a broad knowledge base.

<sup>1</sup> [Lessons in Resilience and Success & Snapshot of multigenerational family business in Fingal, Dublin](#) (2016)

<sup>2</sup> [Fáilte Ireland's Food and Drink Strategy 2018-2023](#)

This Policy is cognisant of Food Vision 2030, the strategic plan aiming to establish a sustainable and equitable food system tailored to Ireland's unique context. By 2030 it seeks to ensure a resilient and thriving food system that benefits the people, environment and economy of Ireland. Key pillars include promoting sustainable agriculture and food production through the adoption of regenerative farming practices, the development of local food systems to enhance food security and the support of sustainable food tourism and local economies. It prioritises reducing food waste, embracing circular economy principles and promoting sustainable food consumption patterns for environmental and health benefits. Furthermore, it recognises the importance of supporting livelihoods and fostering economic prosperity within the food sector. A particular focus is placed on the horticulture sector, with efforts underway to develop a National Horticulture Strategy. Through the implementation of the Food Vision 2030 strategies, Ireland can ensure food security, protect natural resources, support local economies and improve overall well-being. The draft National Horticulture Strategy has recently undergone public consultation, indicating a commitment to furthering the goals of the vision.

In May 2020 the EU Commission released the Farm to Fork Strategy and the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 which share some targets and are at the heart of the Green Deal. The EU Farm to Fork is a strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system. The strategy addresses priorities and challenges relating to every step in the food chain. It concludes that the transition to sustainable food systems requires a collective approach involving a broad range of stakeholders. Each Member State, including Ireland, is required to implement specific actions. Bord Bia, the Irish Food Board, is well-positioned to align with these actions through its pioneering Origin Green programme, which encourages sustainable agriculture production through sustainable assurance schemes and equips food businesses to meet evolving sustainability needs. As a marketing agency, Bord Bia already successfully promotes sustainable agricultural production. Bord Bia's three-year strategy aligns closely with both the EU Farm to Fork and Food Vision 2030. Teagasc have embraced the food systems approach and are embedding it in all their major initiatives including their new Climate Action Strategy.

Fáilte Ireland identifies a trend of global growth in culinary tourism and food experiences in their draft regional development strategy documents and notes that 'the provenance and offering is steeped in the same tradition as its music, crafts and culture'. Food tourism provides the visitor with more reasons to stay, increasing the economic impact of tourism. Fáilte Ireland intend to provide strategy support and cluster platforms for the development of food tourism networks and trails across the region. The potential of food tourism is widely recognised and is included in Fáilte Ireland Regional Development Strategies.

## Reference Material

- [Fingal County Development Plan 2023-29](#)
- [Food Vision 2030](#)
- [Draft National Horticulture Strategy](#)
- [EU Farm to Fork Strategy](#)
- [EU Biodiversity Strategy](#)
- [The Green Deal \(EU\)](#)
- [Origin Green](#)
- [Teagasc Climate Action Strategy](#)
- [Fáilte Ireland's Food and Drink Strategy 2018-2023](#)
- [EUREGA \(European Regions of Gastronomy\)](#)
- [UNWTO Global Food Tourism](#)
- Fingal Economic Development Strategy (in progress)



Referenced in the Executive Summary:

- Fingal population projection is taken from Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

## 4. Approach, Scope, and Methodology

The consultation phase of this project involved extensive discovery, research, and engagement by consultants Brouder Marketing. This comprised an audit of existing programmes and experiences, one-to-one meetings, site and research visits, focus groups, a sustainability workshop, and a survey. Additionally, in-depth desk research on the current food landscape, strategies, and policies at both the local and national level was undertaken. The process involved site visits and consultations during the discovery and research phase. The evidence-based research informed the development of the new Fingal Food and Drink Policy.

The scope of the policy was broad, encompassing economic development and supports from agri producers to hospitality and food tourism providers. Areas of research included the Enterprise Centres, Local Enterprise Office, Food Markets and initiatives within the Council on sustainability, training, healthy eating, food poverty and climate action. In the food tourism sector, areas researched included the Fingal Food Network, heritage properties, saleable experience development, food festivals and events, training and resourcing. This research led to the investigation and addition of the third strand of Community Engagement.

Throughout the research, a significant common theme emerged: sustainability. The businesses stressed the significance of keeping their businesses open, adopting sustainable practices for profitable growth and staff retention, and developing environmentally friendly products or services that consider their carbon footprint and minimize their impact on climate change. As a result, sustainability has become a core theme within our policy.

## Stakeholder Engagement

36 meetings were conducted with: Fingal Food Network, Crowe Tourism Consultants, Fingal Local Enterprise Office, James Burke Consultants, TASCQ CLG, Empower and Fingal Farmers.

In addition to agency meeting and desk research covering:

- Fingal Tourism
- Fáilte Ireland

- Fingal Skills Strategy
- Bord Bia
- Teagasc
- Dublin Regional Skills Forum
- Fingal LEADER Partnership
- UNESCO Dublin Bay Biosphere
- Bord Iascaigh Mhara

Additionally, we held online meetings with large scale producers Keelings, Country Crest, Oceanpath and Total Produce.

### **Research visits**

We visited heritage properties, food tourism businesses, enterprise centres and markets.

- We made visits to the following heritage properties: Malahide Castle & Gardens, Ardgillan Castle, Newbridge House, Skerries Mills, the Seamus Ennis Arts Centre, Bremore Castle and Howth Castle. We conducted desk research on the Casino Model Railway Museum.
- We made two food tourism research visits to McNally's Organic Farm and Doran's School of Fish in Howth. In both cases we examined the existing food tourism offering and potential opportunities.
- At the three enterprise centres (Base Enterprise Centre, BEaT Enterprise Centre and Drinan Enterprise) we met the managers to ensure alignment with their strategic development plan. We also meet food businesses: Take the Cake, Butter Cream Dream, Java The Hut, Feisty Ferments onsite and conducted an online meeting with Le Pâtissier.

### **Markets and Potential New Markets**

We reviewed existing markets and visited Skerries Mills Farmers Market and Howth Market. We visited the existing Country Crest Farm Shop and Beechpark Farm Shop beside Shackleton Gardens and Coolmine Industrial Estate (organic growth of food trucks). We also visited the Sport Ireland Campus to consider opportunities of a food court with local provenance and walled garden. We conducted desk research of existing markets and considered their potential for development. We also considered potential new destination market locations.

**Focus Groups:** We conducted two facilitated tourism focus groups for food and drink businesses. The findings and feedback are included in the Food Tourism research.

**Sustainability Workshop:** We ran a sustainability workshop with a specialist sustainability consultant.

## Survey

Findings from the Food Tourism Focus Group and survey revealed mixed sentiments regarding establishing Fingal as a best-in-class food and drink destination. Among food and beverage businesses, 40% of those surveyed expressed a negative or uncertain outlook, limited vision for a positive future and would require a shift in mindset towards collaboration. There was eagerness to learn from other destinations through research visits. Businesses were not used to thinking as a network with shared vision. The Fingal Food Network was launched in November 2022 and not all members of the focus group were members.

The survey elicited a limited response of twenty businesses but indicated a belief among respondents that Fingal offers a high-quality food and drink experience, while also recognising areas for improvement such as sustainability, provenance, food markets and events. 20% of respondents are regular visitors to farmers markets. 50% expressed uncertainty about the available supports in the area and signposting for experience development and creating new products. For example, if creating a new farm tour, farmers mentioned they were uncertain where to start, for example where to start researching farm tours, examine the viability, where to access training, insurance, how to engage tour operator and if they will receive grant support from LEO, Teagasc or LEADER.

These findings highlight the need for strategic planning, collaboration and support to enhance Fingal's food and drink offerings and establish its reputation as a top destination in this regard.

## Recommendations

- Significant tourism and food tourism database management is required. This will increase engagement at focus groups, events and surveys.
- Run networking events to promote collaboration and working together.
- Support the Fingal Food Network development.
- Plan familiarisation visits to other destinations with an established food network i.e., Burren Food Trail, Boyne Valley Flavours and Food the Waterford Way.



### 5. SOAR Analysis

Fingal was evaluated using the SOAR analysis method. It uses Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results. Aspirations centre on Fingal's objectives, target audience, and operational scope, while the Results section enables monitoring and adherence to the plan for attaining goals. The advantage of a SOAR analysis is that it is action oriented and suitable for a destination that are developing their food identity and brand.

#### Strengths

- 88k of coastline with beautiful, picturesque villages and a wide variety of cafés, restaurants and hotels.
- Strong food festivals such as Flavours of Fingal and the Howth Maritime and Seafood Festival.
- Fertile soil which has given rise to Ireland's largest vegetable growing region, a large number of food producers and processors, food leaders and innovators.
- Location: access to the motorway network, partial access to DART service, InterCity service and proximity to Belfast and the Northern Ireland market. Access to the greater Dublin consumer area. Proximity to Dublin airport, Dublin Port, international tourists and global markets. Ability to service the national retail and foodservice providers, which has created Ireland's largest Food Distribution Centres.
- Multi-million-euro enterprises among the larger food producers who work with Enterprise Ireland and have focused strategic growth plans, sustainability programmes and marketing intelligence.
- Mix of quality agricultural and sea opportunities with ports for business and tourism. This is further strengthened by the unique mix of rural, suburban, urban and village settings.
- A diverse range of outdoor recreational sea and land-based activities and attractions.
- A strong track record of business growth, development and innovation and a range of supports from the Local Enterprise Office.
- Michelin Guide Restaurants, Mamó in Howth, Bon Appetit in Malahide and Potager in Skerries.
- Town teams and tourism focused groups, in Howth for example.
- Proximity of Teagasc Ashtown Food Research Centre, easily accessible for Fingal local businesses.
- Excellent heritage attractions and properties both Council and privately owned.
- High quality, though limited, number of saleable experiences.

#### Opportunities

- Develop a strategic plan for clustering of food businesses in the Enterprise Centres and potential to develop a dedicated food hub.
- Establish an online presence for start-ups to showcase new products and reach a wide audience through a collaborative approach by Enterprise Centres, LEO and Fingal Food Network.
- Develop and support farmers markets and a new destination market.
- Encourage producers to participate in farmers markets and organise pop-up events to showcase and sell products directly to consumers, fostering community engagement and promoting local food businesses.
- Create a series of sustainability programmes around food and beverage best practices.
- Engage different cultures and age demographic in campaigns and programmes.
- Develop the Fingal Food Network and consumer brand for food tourism development and growth.
- Create a cross sector food provenance programme building on existing strengths. This would also assist in capturing knowledge and highlighting food heritage.
- Excellent opportunities for the development of local food provenance and food experiences through the development of the Fingal Food Network members and Heritage properties.
- The Council can continue to support and expand on the food festivals and events calendar, introducing local provenance into existing festivals, encouraging fringe experiences, therefore gaining exposure and attracting visitors interested in local cuisine and beverages.

### Opportunities for Fingal Food Networks and its members:

- Collaborate with local farmers and producers to create farm-to-table dining experiences, highlighting the freshness and quality of locally sourced ingredients.
- Increase food tours and culinary experiences by developing and offering guided food tours showcasing local culinary traditions, food production processes and unique dining experiences. Development of a food trail focused on a destination (like Galway Food Tour) or a geographical area (such as Slane Food Circle, Food the Waterford Way or Sligo Food Trail).
- Partner with hotels and accommodation providers to offer exclusive menus featuring locally sourced ingredients, creating a distinctive culinary experience for guests.
- Develop and promote specialty food products unique to Fingal, such as craft beers, whiskey or organic produce, capitalising on the growing demand for local and sustainable food.
- Partner with local tourism organisations Fingal Tourism and Visit Dublin to promote Fingal as a food destination, collaborate on marketing initiatives and participate in promotional campaigns.
- Offer culinary workshops, cooking classes and tastings to educate and engage both locals and tourists, providing immersive experiences and showcasing local flavours.
- Businesses can collaborate with tourist attractions, such as heritage sites, gardens, or museums, to offer food and beverage services, enhancing the visitor experiences and creating additional revenue streams.

### Aspirations

- To maintain an accurate food and drink business directory.
- To gather annual statistics from businesses as a foundation for evidence-based decision making.
- To have a local food provenance programme in place
- Extend the calendar for conference visitors to the region to embrace local food experiences.
- To have clear pathways for business development from maker space and community kitchens, markets to enterprise centres and step-up units.
- To reduce businesses carbon footprint and promotion of sustainability practices.
- To be a best-in-class food destination.
- To have a wide variety of quality saleable experiences in a greater geographical spread.
- To have a year-round calendar of food themed events and festivals.
- To have food courts with a focus on local provenance at non-food related festivals.
- To have themed weekends with food and adventure providers and structures for collaboration in place.
- To have significant engagement with Failte Ireland Local Expert Programme and a referral programme in place between businesses.
- To have collaborations between food tourism businesses across Fingal and a referral scheme in place.
- To have an established food trail and food tours.

### Results

- Establishment of an active working group to oversee the policy implementation.
- Resourcing and funding in place.
- Quarterly working group meetings.
- Dedicated programmes in place for sustainability, innovation food hub for food business growth, local food provenance programme and food tourism development.
- Sustainability quality mark for Fingal food and drink businesses.
- Increased local food provenance and food experiences in Fingal Council owned heritage properties.
- Local provenance in all hotels, with at least three suppliers named on the menu. Expansion of their conference package to incorporate food and heritage experiences.
- Increase in farmers markets and an established destination market.
- Establishment of a food innovation hub and step-up facilities to enable business to grow and keep jobs in Fingal.

### 6. Research & Discovery: Detailed Findings and Recommendations

The project brief outlined two areas of focus: economic development and food tourism development. A third area of focus, community engagement, evolved during the research. In addition, an overarching theme of sustainability came through.

The research explored linkage and collaboration opportunities within the Council for the benefit of food and drink development:

- Economic Development
- Tourism Development
- Fingal Skills Strategy
- Sustainable Fingal
- Festivals and Events Team
- Heritage Properties
- Climate Action Team

Collaboration opportunities with Fingal Tourism, Fingal Food Network and Dublin's Coast and Fields brand were identified.

#### 6.1 Review of the Agri Food Strategy

The Fingal Agri-Food Strategy for 2019-2021 focused on enhancing and growing the food sector within the region. It identified strengths such as a prominent vegetable growing region, proximity to a large consumer base and a thriving food community. The strategy highlighted weaknesses including limited collaboration, lack of centralised food information and insufficient marketing. Opportunities included promoting collaboration, showcasing the region's food story and establishing an agri-food hub. Threats included Brexit, rising business costs and lack of support for strategy implementation. The strategy aimed to foster collaboration, innovation and business management, support talent attraction, develop food and drink tourism and explore the establishment of an agri-food hub.

Due to insufficient resourcing, COVID19 and external factors, several actions were not undertaken. After evaluation and discussions, the following areas were deemed still relevant and included in the new policy:

- Dedicated co-ordinator.
- Creation of a Fingal Food Producers Directory (linkage with business food and drink directory).
- Promotion of sustainability and the circular economy.
- Engagement: promotion of peer-to-peer learning, networking and clustering.
- Marketing of Fingal as a great place (to live) and work.
- Creating a Fingal food and drink tourism destination
- Expand on saleable experiences/ host additional food themed events.
- Explore feasibility of a food hub

The feedback received on the strategy indicated that it had a limited scope and did not adequately address the needs of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). It was deemed to be more of an aspirational document rather than offering concrete support and guidance for SMEs in the agri-food sector. The suggestions put forth emphasised the necessity of broadening the scope and creating a policy document as the first step, ensuring it encompasses a comprehensive range of measures and resources to assist SMEs across the business spectrum from agriculture to tourism. It was recommended that significant resourcing for the implementation of a future policy and strategy under the oversight of a dedicated working group



should be included.

Furthermore, it was agreed that tangible support mechanisms tailored to the specific needs and challenges faced by SMEs should be included in further plans, thereby enhancing their ability to thrive and contribute to the overall growth and development of the food industry.

## 6.2 COVID19 Effect on the Industry

The COVID19 pandemic hit food and beverage businesses in Ireland suddenly and without warning. The effect was catastrophic for many – customers couldn't travel, supply chains were interrupted or cut entirely and the future was instantly and alarmingly uncertain. Bord Bia's early assertion that "the COVID19 global crisis presents unprecedented challenges to the Irish food and drinks industry, both in the immediate and longer term" was accurate.

The response had to be rapid and the food sector displayed a remarkable ability to pivot, changing their business models inventively to suit the new circumstances. Those with less digital technology in place scrambled to implement it as cash was instantly replaced with card transactions and online purchases surged. By the end of Q2 2020 one third of internet users made purchases of ready-made food which was delivered ([CSO](#)). This increased to 50% over the [next year](#) and the trend has continued post COVID.

The reaction from Government and agencies was equally swift. [The Government](#) immediately introduced the Pandemic Unemployment Payment followed by the Wage Subsidy Scheme to help maintain employer-employee relationships. Other stimuli included a revamped Enterprise Support Grant and the Stay and Spend Scheme. The Credit Guarantee Scheme was the largest state-backed loan guarantee for businesses in the history of the country. Local Enterprise Offices also offered significant supports and moved all training and mentoring online. Fáilte Ireland introduced the Keep Discovering campaigns to activate the domestic market. Recognising that Irish tourism sector websites compared poorly to European competitors in functionality, usability and design, they introduced the Digital that Delivers scheme to help businesses capitalise on the digital revolution sparked by the pandemic.

There were positives from the pandemic, including a dramatic focus on shopping local and an unprecedented awareness of food provenance and quality. This has remained post-COVID and has created opportunities to engage new customers and develop attractive food experiences. Fingal is well positioned to benefit from the new normal, given the proximity to a large urban population and to the main airport which offers the opportunity to capture international business as visitors return.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has jeopardised food security globally, with heightened threats for the most vulnerable including smaller farmers. Added to the challenges of BREXIT this has put greater pressure on Irish producers and hospitality businesses.

## 6.3 Current Landscape

Ireland's most important indigenous agricultural industry, horticulture, is based in Fingal and playing a vital role in Ireland's economy. Food is produced in Fingal by farmers, fishers and agri-food companies. While Fingal food experiences are currently not strong compared to some other regions in Ireland, it still offers excellent dining experiences that showcase local produce and traditional Irish cuisine. Here are a few notable aspects of the food scene in Fingal:

1. Fingal boasts large-scale producers of vegetables and fruit, supplying major Irish retailers and implementing innovative food practices.

2. It is home to the largest food park in Ireland and offers a range of supports for business growth from the Council, Enterprise Centres and LEO.
3. Fingal's agricultural heritage is reflected in the farm-to-table movement embraced by several restaurants and Chefs in the region who prioritise local produce. The restaurants are concentrated in pockets in Howth, Malahide and Skerries. Fingal also boasts three Michelin Guide Restaurants. Notwithstanding this, there is still significant room for increased engagement of local food provenance across the region.
4. Coastal restaurants and eateries often feature a range of seafood options, including fish, shellfish and crustaceans.
5. Fingal hosts two food themed festivals - Flavours of Fingal and the Howth Maritime and Seafood Festival. There are a limited number of farmers' markets and farm shops, where visitors can sample local artisan products. These festivals and events offer a chance to meet the makers, try regional specialties and experience the vibrant food culture of the area.
6. Fingal is home to one craft brewery and distillery, producing a range of beers and spirits. Visitors can enjoy tours and tastings, learning about the brewing and distilling processes on their visit. The tasting experiences range from cookery classes to foraging and tasting experiences. The experiences are primarily focused in Howth and there are excellent opportunities for expansion into farm tours, food tours and wider range of immersive experiences.

### 6.4 Community Perspective

#### Current Landscape

Community engagement in Fingal encompasses various elements aiming to strengthen the connection between the community, business sector and the wider region. One prominent aspect is the presence of community gardens, both Council owned and private, which not only promote a sense of pride but also offer opportunities for residents to engage with local growers.

#### Findings

- Businesses, such as Aqua Restaurant in Howth previously had a kitchen garden supplying their restaurant.
- Fingal is rich in horticultural history and stories.
- There are four Fingal owned and managed allotment sites: Powerstown, Turvey, Skerries and Balbriggan and at least two private sites: Malahide, Belmayne and beside Shackleton Gardens.
- Currently Fingal has only one community garden: Broadmeadow Community Garden.

#### Recommendations

Supporting initiatives such as allotments, farm shops, farmers markets and family farmed products, encourages the reduction of food miles and fosters closer ties between producers and consumers.

- Include Community Engagement as a key strand in the policy.
- Celebrating and embracing Fingal's rich food heritage involves capturing stories and preserving knowledge but also establishing connections with the business community. Recognising farm families and sustainability through awards and championing initiatives not only showcases their contributions but also promotes collaboration and pride among local businesses.
- Celebrate the pride in local produce with events.
- Capture the rich horticultural heritage and the stories and the characters through a joint project with the Heritage Officer. It could be the Fields of Fingal - Oral History Project with video and image gallery.

- Promotes the reduction of Food Miles by supporting allotments, farm shops, farmers markets and family farmed products.
- Embrace kitchen gardens as a source of ingredients for restaurants or collaborations between restaurants. Through Fingal Food Network encourage kitchen gardens.
- Connect youth to experienced growers through an initiative like Community Roots, with a shared garden, shared experience approach.
- Celebrate farm families and sustainability with awards and champions.
- Engage the business community and highlight new products which are created from raw ingredients from Fingal.
- Encourage and grow Community Gardens.
  - Engage with [Broadmeadow Community Garden](#) and [Sustainable Skerries](#)
  - Visit community gardens like Knocknaheeny's in Cork, a NICHE HSE Community Health Initiative who grow vegetables, herbs and flowers and fruit and UCC who has a community garden since 2007 and engages students.
- Connect this policy with the Heritage Officer and the new heritage plan to investigate bringing education, heritage properties and the community together.
- Engage the business community and foster greater linkage between producers, consumers and the wider region, Fingal's community engagement efforts in food and horticulture create a stronger sense of community, support local businesses and enhance the overall sustainability and cultural identity of the area.
- Engage with Airfield Estate on their education programme for school children and investigate the possibility of cross collaboration.
- Liaise with Bord Bia Food Dudes Programme and Incredible Edibles from Agri Aware to reach youth growers.
- Consider case studies for growing the number of community gardens in Fingal region. Nationally: review [Community Gardens Ireland](#), which operates on a voluntary basis and is currently a free resource for community gardeners. Internationally: review Neighborhood Farms USA™, which is a national non-profit organisation promoting the benefits of establishing and maintaining community gardens that provide access to fresh, nutrient-rich produce and educating through practical community-building programmes, newsletters and on-line workshops.

## Community Roots

Connects garden owners with garden-less, budding growers living nearby and looking for a patch to grow their own food. Advantages include creating a bond over a shared experience while nurturing community connection. Learn how to grow food, sharing any previous knowledge and experience. Enjoy mini harvests together. Visit the [website](#).



### 6.5 Economic Growth and Development

In our research and discovery this area covered sustainability, SME supports, large scale producers, local enterprise office supports and programmes, farmers markets, supports in the Enterprise Centres, agency programmes and supports, opportunities for growth and new resources required. The objective was to evaluate the current supports, linkages and collaborations in the Council departments, programmes and stakeholders.\* We reviewed opportunities for new programmes, linkage and initiatives to promote business growth and sustainability in the sector.

\* See page 26 for list of stakeholders.

One aspect researched was the Belfast-Dublin economic corridor, which refers to the economic region and connectivity between the cities of Belfast and Dublin. It represents the collaborative efforts to promote economic development, trade, investment and infrastructure along this corridor, recognising the potential for growth and cooperation between the two cities and the surrounding regions. Fingal has an opportunity, on both an economic and tourism level, to maximise trade, logistical links and capture visitors on this route.

#### The Role of Agri Food Producers in the Food and Drink Policy Landscape

The agri sector in Fingal is an extremely important employer and supplier of raw ingredients (strawberries, potatoes, lettuce, tomatoes, carrots etc), which is important for the development of farmers markets, farm shops, events and to provide an authentic culinary and food tourism experience. The raw ingredients are used in food processing and manufacturing to create added value products such as sauces and ready meals for example.

##### 6.5.1 Large Scale Producers

The agricultural community in Fingal consists of large-scale producers like Keelings, Country Crest, Total Produce, Donnelly's Fresh Food, Keogh's and seafood producer Oceanpath, who have become very well-established brands, significant employers in the region and suppliers to national retailers. With a number also operating farm shops. These businesses have outgrown the support provided by the Council for their day-to-day operations, although they engage on matters such as planning, waste management, water resources, energy and lobbying. Many of these businesses started as family ventures and have a strong desire to support regeneration initiatives, small family farms and greater food provenance in markets, restaurants and heritage properties. These innovative industry leaders are committed to sustainability programmes and tackling the issue of food waste. There is disappointment regarding the lack of implementation of the Agri Food Strategy. During the course of the research, we also spoke to Fingal Farmers about the challenges they face and opportunities for greater engagement.

These agricultural businesses actively participate in events such as Flavours of Fingal, showcasing their products and engaging with the community. Keogh's and Country Crest, for example, has demonstrated its capacity to create festivals and pop-up events, such as Spud Fest.

#### Challenges

Challenges exist for seafood producers related to local food provenance and supply. Food fraud is not a significant problem in Ireland but is increasing in the EU. Therefore, it is worth being aware of this issue over the course of the policy.

Labour and skills shortages are prevalent within the agricultural industry. In response to these challenges, businesses have implemented corporate social responsibility policies and funding to support various

projects.

There is a growing worry among farmers about the direction of the industry, as food prices are often too low and customer over purchase, resulting in significant food waste. Farmers and producers emphasised the need for support and incentives to protect rural vegetable growers, citing the example of vegetables being sold for as little as 49 cents in supermarkets.

They feel it is crucial to safeguard the heritage of Fingal and prevent farmers, especially the younger generation, from exiting the business.

## **Opportunities**

Education and training requirements are seen as essential components for treating agriculture as a business. Both SME and largescale producers should be represented on the new policy implementation plan. To streamline support and guidance, the agricultural community seeks a single point of contact for accessing various resources and assistance.

## **Recommendations**

- Create a central point of contact for support and guidance.
- Encourage peer-to-peer learning, utilise their expertise to grow the SME farm sector.
- Champion largescale producers' sector and showcase their innovation and success.
- Promote food provenance programme and include heritage properties.
- Encourage the creation of new events and engagement with Fingal Food Network.
- Engage on sustainability programmes and initiatives.
- Understand the challenges faced and engage with relevant agencies and work with the sector.
- Safeguard the future of farm families with supports, training and funding.

## **6.5.2 Fingal Skills Strategy**

The Fingal Skills Strategy is a framework developed by Fingal County Council to align workforce skills with industry needs, promoting economic growth and employability through targeted initiatives and collaboration with educational institutions and employers.

Currently the skills strategy is not focused on the food and beverage sector. The Council's aim is to foster



further development through engagement in the sector between producers and the hospitality sector on their requirements and engagement through Fingal Food Network and Dublin Food Chain.

There is potential to create a new subgroup under the working group and new sub-categories on food and beverages, specifically focusing on the agri and hospitality sectors. However, the formation of these sub-categories will depend on businesses voluntarily engaging and clustering based on their areas of expertise and interests.

Fingal Skills Strategy is an example of best practice in structure and framework. This framework can replicate effectively to implement this policy and drive collaboration and skill development within the food and drink sector.

### Recommendations

- Invite food and beverage businesses and agencies to join the Fingal Skills Strategy working group.
- Promote findings on skills shortages to Fingal Skills Strategy working group.
- Our research highlighted opportunities in cheese and chocolate making, which merits investigation.

### 6.5.3 Sustainability

Stemming from the feedback from one-to-one discovery meetings with the Council, businesses and agencies, the sustainability workshop, focus groups and desk research, sustainability was a key focus for all parties. Therefore, sustainability runs through the three strands in the policy in addition to having its own dedicated list of actions.

The sustainability workshop led to the development of climate change actions and overall theme of sustainability in the policy.

### Findings

- Sustainability means something different to a business depending on their resources and current stage of development.

Additional findings have been outlined under the following headings: Climate Action Plan, Sustainability Fingal, food waste, food production and consumption.

### Recommendations

- Develop guiding principles on climate change and a set of actions focused on sustainability in the food and drink sector in Fingal.
- Continue to support job creation and growth in the sector by enhancing supports and opportunities in clustering in the Enterprise Centres.
- Create a common base of good practices in Fingal, evolving it into a mark of quality or charter for businesses.
- Encourage businesses to obtain sustainability credentials and comply with climate change regulations for enhanced competitiveness.
- Raise awareness about sustainable food and drink innovation.
- Establish the Fingal Sustainability Awards to showcase and recognise best practices.
- Promote tracking of businesses carbon footprints.
- Empower the working group to identify innovative strategies for reducing food waste, packaging,

conserving energy, conserving water and reducing their carbon footprint.

- Promote the circular economy and engage with Sustainable Fingal initiatives.
- Encourage organic farming, holistic methods of farm production and work with Bord Bia on the implementation of the EU Farm to Fork Strategy.
- Promote campaigns and projects to minimise food miles and support the local economy.
- Work with businesses to support their sustainability initiatives like marketing campaigns, case studies, training and funding.
- Support programmes to encourage the continuation of farm family businesses and succession planning with support for farm diversification where desired.

#### 6.5.4 Climate Action Plan 2019-2024

The Fingal Climate Action Plan includes a section on food resilience as part of five key areas of focus.

Fingal is actively working towards supporting sustainable farming practices through engagement with the agrifood sector. The collaboration aims to understand and enhance support for sustainable farming methods. In partnership with local farmers, it has developed climate change initiatives to address the impact of climate change on agriculture. Strategic agricultural land is being mapped and protected to ensure national food security. Additionally, the Council supports the use of allotments as a means for communities to grow their own food, thereby reducing food miles and minimising food waste. These ongoing efforts demonstrate the Council's commitment to agriculture, conservation and community engagement through the Climate Change Action Plan.

#### Recommendations

- Engage with the agrifood sector to gain an understanding of how the Council might better support more sustainable farming practices.
- Develop climate change initiatives in partnership with local farmers.
- Support the use of allotments as a way communities can grow their own food and lower food miles and food waste.

#### 6.5.5 Sustainable Fingal Initiative

##### Encourage Sustainable Waste Reduction and Promotion of Circular Economy through Sustainable Fingal Initiative

Sustainability: Rethink, Reduce, Reuse, Buy to Last, Recycle.

Waste prevention involves rethinking how we do things to avoid producing waste.

#### Findings

- Businesses see food waste as a cost to their business.
- There is little understanding of the circular economy. Nice idea but unsure how their business could get involved.
- Businesses mentioned engaging with #KeepHowthGreen
- Audience is more environmentally aware, conscious of buying habits.
- Create Sustainability Champions – showcase best practice, benefits to the business, consumer and the environment.
- There is a demand for Food Waste Calculators.

### Recommendations

- Create case studies and promotion of food waste initiatives.
- Organise awards for sustainability.
- Provide additional marketing for Food Waste Prevention Week.
- Support group Biodigestor programmes such as Howth.
- Review Guardians of Grub in UK. Originally developed by WRAP - Courtauld Commitment 2030 for the 'Your Business is Food; don't throw it away' campaign. Excellent resources and case studies. Reproduced content from Love Food Hate Waste New South Wales and FoodSave London.

### 6.5.6 Food Waste

Further areas to mention in relation to reducing food waste include:

- The Food Waste Charter is a public commitment by companies and organisations in Ireland to fundamentally change how they think and respond to food waste. The Food Waste Charter is a partnership between Environmental Protection Agency and Government of Ireland. The signatories are pledging to take positive actions – through measuring, reducing and reporting their food waste. For the first three years, the charter is asking all companies to commit to the monitoring and tracking of their food waste and report on progress and achievements.
- Stop Food Waste Initiative in 2021: Mayor of Fingal Eoghan O'Brien awarded certificates to 30 Master Composter course participants at Skerries Mills on Saturday November 2nd. This initiative was funded by Fingal County Council as part of the Stop Food Waste and Waste Prevention initiatives.
- FoodCloud is a social enterprise with a mission to transform surplus food into opportunities to make the world a kinder place. FoodCloud works with a network of more than 600 Irish Charities and Community Groups. They received Charity of the Year 2022. They work with large retailers and community organisations. Opportunity exists for partnerships with councils to meet the objective of reducing food waste with practical solutions. In 2022 they launched their FoodCloud Kitchen Trailor, which is suitable for events and festivals.
- Programme: A Climate Friendly Kitchen with the Sustainable Life School. A four-week programme engaging the community on reducing food waste, run by Blanchardstown library.

### Recommendations

- Fingal County Council should engage with the Food Waste Charter.
- The Council should ensure internal communication on programmes run by different sectors in relation to food and beverage industry to avoid duplication, including Community Food Initiative, Healthy Fingal and Food Poverty Programme.
- Linkage and partnership opportunities with FoodCloud, should be investigated by the Council.

### 6.5.7 Food Production & Consumption

Fingal County Council wishes to inspire a holistic approach to food production, consumption and sustainability. The Council will work with Bord Bia on aligning and implementing the EU Farm to Fork Strategy.

Bord Bia report in September 2022, [“Supporting the Development of Irish Family Farm Producers”](#) is an excellent source of information on the current position of farm family in Ireland. This report was the centre of a webinar “Supports for Local, Small and Micro Food Businesses/Producers” for Department Agriculture, Food and the Marina Webinar.



Takeaways from the Bord Bia report on “Supporting the Development of Irish Family Farm Producers”.

- Single entry point to support Family Farm Producers
- Ideation to scale up i.e., requirement for maker space/ community kitchen space in the Enterprise Centres.
- New website to assist farmers on their journey, also available for consumers (nationwide)
- Encourage farm diversification.
- Series of events with marketing celebrating producers/farmers markets underpinned by the local community.
- Learn from Farmers Markets in France, US & UK, set up and operational processes.
- Support farm diversification supports to farmers and showcase and give priority to family farm producers at events and markets.

The agri food sector in Fingal can engage with the Policy in the following ways:

- Engage with the sustainability programmes to reduction food waste and food miles.
- Become a member of Fingal Food Network
- Investigate farm diversification for added value products and services eg farm tours
- Embrace and education their business on the advantages of the circular economy
- Supply farmers markets
- Join Dublin Food Chain
- Engage and support the festivals and events calendar.

Fingal agri food sector are leaders and innovators in the industry. Business such as Flynn’s in Swords and Morning Fresh are changing the agri sector in sustainability and innovation best practice for productivity.

### **Flynns - “Red tomatoes go green with biomethane”**

- Tomato grower MF Nurseries or Flynn’s Irish Tomatoes has switched to the renewable gas biomethane in a new trial project with Gas Networks Ireland. In 2020, they completed a significant investment in automation of their business.

#### **Recommendations**

- Showcase businesses such as Flynns and Morning Fresh. Create a catalogue of innovation in Fingal.
- Create sustainability awards and utilise peer to peer learning.
- Lack of added value dairy businesses, for example, there are no cheese producers in Dublin. Introduce training courses for cheese making.



### 6.5.8 Local Enterprise Office

Offers a wide range of supports and programmes for food businesses.

- Trading online voucher for eligible businesses.
- Business Feasibility, Priming & Expansion Grants for eligible businesses. Mentorship & Advice Clinics.
- Start Your Own Business Programme is used as a recruitment workshop for emerging talent.

#### Current Food Programmes

1. Dublin Food Chain (online and in person events) [www.dublinfoodchain.ie](http://www.dublinfoodchain.ie)
2. Digital School of Food (online programme) [www.digitalschooloffood.ie](http://www.digitalschooloffood.ie)
3. Food Starter Programme (moved to online due to COVID19)
4. Food Academy
5. Management Development Programmes (Green for Micro / Lean/ Enterprise Promotion)

Green for Micro is a FREE programme that helps small businesses take the first step towards becoming more sustainable, giving them access to a green consultant who will highlight the small changes that can have a big impact on a company. The programme commenced in 2021. 24% of business who took part in 2021-2022 were Food businesses. Two businesses engaged in the Lean for Micro programme in 2021.

Online Trading Voucher 2019-2021

- Approx. 40 Trading Online Voucher (TOV) were successfully granted in the food sector: 10 in food production, 4 butchers/fishmongers and 26 across Cafe/Restaurants/Takeaways.

Grant Funding/ Management Supports

- Feasibility, priming or business expansion grants: 25 Fingal food businesses took part, 2019 to 2022.



#### Digital School of Food

The Digital School of Food is an initiative of the Local Enterprise Offices led by Local Enterprise Office Fingal. Partner agencies include Bord Bia, Enterprise Ireland and DIT. It involves an online eLearning platform containing 20 courses targeted at producers from start up to growth stages. As well as delivering key learnings, the eLearning platform contains video of real producers giving advice on each topic and downloadable resources and templates.

- 112\* Fingal food and drink businesses completed the programme since its launch.

\*Feedback from consultant: In the case of a small number of producers who self-select Fingal as their region, this is not supported by their address. This data may be inaccurate.

### **Food Starter Programme**

Promoted by each LEO nationwide with different contractors in each location. It is targeted at pre-start up producers within the first 24 months of trading. LEO in Dublin rotate management, with the host LEO tending to have more participants.

It is a prerequisite for anyone undertaking the Food Academy Programme. There are four intakes per year with a total of 60 businesses per annum. The Food Starter programme is an online 4 x 1/2-day programme designed to help those with a food idea, or those at a very early stage of a food business. A business would ideally complete the LEO Start your Own Business Programme, the Digital School of Food and progress to the Food Starter Programme.

- There was an average of 1-2 business on each programme from Fingal, with a spike in Jan 2021 and April 2022 of 4 participants from Fingal region out of an average of 15 from the whole county.
- Reviewed annually. The review takes places in Q4 each year when date specific changes are made. Major content review and updates take every two years, with the last review in 2022.

### **Food Academy Advance Programme**

Food Academy is a business development programme supported by Bord Bia, SuperValu and Local Enterprise Offices. The aim of Food Academy is to help small businesses through the journey from their early start-up phase to getting their products on SuperValu shelves. Programme participants receive training through workshops and mentoring in topics such as food safety, market research, branding, marketing, finance, sustainability and business development. The programme is for high potential producers and has one annual intake in April. It was last reviewed in 2022.

- There are currently over 270 Food Academy producers in SuperValu stores with eight businesses have taking part over the last three years.
- This programme is reviewed annually after that year's programme is complete. Immediate updates or changes based on participant feedback are made annually.
- Major content review and updates take every two years to reflect changes in the FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods) sector.

### **Dublin Food Chain Initiative**

Established in 2010, Dublin Food Chain is a marketing and B2B networking forum which represents producers, retailers, foodservice operators and distributors based throughout Dublin.

The initiative is jointly supported by the four Local Enterprise Offices in the Dublin region (Dublin City, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown, Fingal, and South Dublin). Bord Bia and Teagasc play an active role in the Dublin Food Chain.

- Local Enterprise Office Fingal lead two Dublin Food Chain events per year (35%).
- In addition, LEO Fingal supports an on-line producer directory (self-administered) and digital platforms targeted at the food community. Due to the self-administration, several profiles in the directory are incomplete, and some businesses are out of date. Currently 218 businesses are registered (26 are not fully registered, with just a name inputted). There is no way of knowing if businesses are still trading.

### Pilot Farm Business Options Programme

Teagasc ran a pilot programme with Roscommon LEO in 2022

- It ran over six consecutive weeks for three hours per week. The training is a modified version of the Start Your Own Business course and the purpose was to provide individuals with a good understanding of how to turn an idea into a viable business. The programme provided a mentor to each individual and assisted in the completion of a business plan and to introduce individuals to other agencies/parties who may be able to offer tangible assistance. The programme consisted of a series of workshops and farmers who have successfully diversified were invited as guest speakers. Participants also had the opportunity to network.
- Roscommon LEO funded 50% of the costs. There were eight participants and a follow up two-day in-service training was provided to all Farm Business Options coordinators. This training template will be rolled out within the Teagasc regions during 2023.

### Recommendations

- Liaise on the training calendar with Fingal Food Network to prevent duplication.
- Increase collaboration with enterprise centres and a central point for food innovation, networking and marketing upskilling or supports.
- Farmers: liaise with Teagasc on supports such as the Pilot Farm Business Options Programme
- Directory of food and drink business in the region to include business and tourism businesses and statistics on employment. There is potential for the Dublin Producers Directory and the Fingal Food Network Producers Directory to co-ordinate on the directory and training calendar.
- Create a procedure for following a business through the training and support funnel.
- Extend a mentoring programme similar to Green Micro for festivals funded by the Council.

### 6.5.9 Review of Farmers Markets

Upon review of the farmers markets in Fingal we found there are a limited number of farmers markets and local artisan experiences for residents. There is one tourist focused food market in Howth. Fingal County Council are involved in markets by way of parking, traffic management, signage, waste disposal, permits and licences. The Council currently doesn't operate any markets except for Christmas markets.

The following markets are active:

1. Skerries Mills Farmers Market: On Saturdays year-round, this usually features three non-food stalls, generally one of those is music/records, and two are local handmade crafts/toys/jewellery.
2. Donabate Dexter Farmers Market is a collection point for Neighbourfood at Donabate Dexter Farm, Turvey Ave. It runs on Saturday afternoons.
3. The Seamus Ennis Arts Centre hosts two food fairs in May and Autumn each year. They also offer a year-round covered outside space which is ideal for markets or events.
4. Mixed markets include: Bremore Castle Food & Craft Market every Sat 11-4 pm, Howth Market and annual Christmas Markets, which have taken place in various locations including Swords and Blanchardstown.
5. Only one market is mentioned in Google Search - Howth Market appears under the "Best Food Markets in Dublin" by Visit Dublin for visitors.

## Findings

- There is a desire to shop local.
- Producers use markets for testing their products.
- Few or no market experiences are on offer (demonstrations, workshops, talks etc).
- A lack of enthusiasm for growth or development was noted. Markets rely heavily on volunteers for marketing and operational requirements.
- We found a lack of understanding about business models from stall holders who don't take insurance, staffing etc. into consideration
- Lack of linkage with business supports to grow business.
- No destination or tourism focused market with the exception of Howth Market.
- No central online database of stall holders
- Sporadic posting on social media with unsecure or non-existent websites. Balbriggan Fish and Farmers' Market hasn't posted online since 2012 on Facebook but is live on Discover Ireland and Visit Dublin sites.

## Locations investigated

- Shackleton Gardens, Skerries Mills, Seamus Ennis Arts Centre, Coolmine Industrial Estate.
- Opportunities for engagement with the National Sports Campus.

## Nationwide Established Markets to Review

- Milk Market in Limerick: Developed from Saturday market to expand to three day market from Friday to Sunday. During COVID the market survived and thrived by embracing Neighbourfood programme.
- Strandhill People's Market, Sligo is a well-established commercial market, based in an airport hangar. It runs every Sunday from March to December. It combines a local food and craft market with a destination market for tourists.
- The English Market in Cork has been trading since 1788. Traders sell organic and locally produced food in a beautiful 18th-century covered market. One of the oldest and best covered markets in Europe, it tells the story of the businesses, front and centre in its marketing.

## Types of Markets

The operational structure is key to longevity and success of the market. Advice from TASCQ CLG who oversee markets in Dublin and internationally is the market must be innovative, unique to place, and the right location is vital.

Examples:

1. Council-owned, with the day-to-day running of the market outsourced to a management company. Predominantly in city urban markets, e.g. the English Market in Cork.
2. Run by a private business/owner e.g. Strandhill Peoples Market
3. Committee run (volunteer led) or co-op.

## Bord Bia Research Documents

Bord Bia has excellent reports on farmers markets, in addition to creating and managing a market.

- Economic Feasibility: Markets typically take at least three years to become established and so need continual investment during this time, whether from the local authorities who provide facilities for

## Consultation Phase

them or the companies who run them. Goal at the very least is self-sustaining, if not profitable, for those who run them.

- The Bord Bia website has excellent resources and a template on creating a farmers market and also a nationwide location map.

### Location analysis and footfall research is vital to success

- The [2014 Guide to Food Markets](#) in Ireland is still relevant.
- [Recent report](#) in November 2022 has some key findings and recommendations by looking to best practice in France, UK, & US market with a focus on family farm produce.

### Recommendations

- The markets should be encouraged to join the Fingal Food Network.
- Engage with the LEO regarding social media training requirements, assistance on visuals and upgrading their digital presence.
- Upskilling of members attending the markets is needed to promote both the market and their produce.
- Develop ties between the market holders and LEO, Enterprises Centres for product testing.
- Balbriggan in North County Dublin has a plan-led, comprehensive regeneration strategy 'Our Balbriggan Rejuvenation Plan 2019 – 2025'. There is an opportunity to grow the market at Bremore Castle and also the potential to create a new market space. Tying in the market to the Balbriggan Heritage Trail to create a food-themed experience is recommended.
- Review the potential of supporting Beechpark Farm Shop and allotments and the opportunity in nearby Shackleton Gardens. With a glasshouse and walled garden it is an ideal event space and ideal for small intimate long table farm to table experiences or tours.
- Explore the growth of food trucks and multicultural food businesses in Coolmine Industrial Estate.
  - Create a directory of businesses.
  - Trial a pop-up event in this location using greenfield site or explore vacant Fingal County Council owned buildings with a view to creating an outdoor local market space embracing established food culture in the area.
- Utilise Irish Village Markets for pop up events.
- Develop a farmers/food market plan based on regional maturity or regeneration plans with the aims of creating a new destination market, grow existing markets and incorporate food markets into existing



festivals.

- South East: Howth / Portmarnock/ Swords
- North East: Donabate, Balbriggan, Lusk, Rush, Skerries
- South West: D15

Recommendations on supports: tiered level of supports, similar to festivals.

1. Design, Build, Operative (DBO)
2. Funding Scheme
3. Advice and Guidance

Markets should be a member of Fingal Food Network and avail of marketing and training supports.

### Farm Shops

There are seven farm shops\* in Fingal with remaining have online options. The farm shops are an excellent source of encouraging local provenance, offering an array of local artisan produce in addition to their own product.

- McNally's Farm Shop, Naul
- Country Crest Farm Shop, Lusk
- Beechpark Eco Farm, Clonsilla
- Shackleton's Garden, Farm Shop on Sat 10-2p.m. Sun 11-1.30p.m. / with allotments
- Donabate Dexter Farm Shop
- Keelings Farm Shop, FoodCentral, Ireland's National Food Park
- Bare Acre, Skerries

Several businesses moved to online shops including Clonanny Farm Shop and Keogh's Farm Shop with Skerries Organic Farm operating an Honesty Box.

### Recommendations

- The farm shops should be encouraged to join the Fingal Food Network and engage with the Food Provenance Programme and Dublin Food Chain.



### 6.5.10 Enterprise Centre and Food Clustering

Fingal County Council supports three Enterprise Centres in the County:

1. BASE Enterprise Centre in Mulhuddart
  2. Drinan Enterprise Centre in Swords
  3. BEaT Enterprise Centre in Balbriggan
- Offer space for start-up and developing businesses with employment growth potential. The centres are a mix of light industrial and food units and training companies who require training rooms to run courses.
  - Incubator units, office units, shared office space, food units, training facilities, light manufacturing, warehousing and distribution space.

#### Overall Findings

- Aspiration for a dedicated Food Innovation Hub with the potential for a purpose-built space in Stephentown Industrial Estate.
- The three enterprise centres are managed and run independently with their own management structure and board.
  - New structure: there is a new governance plan in progress to create one board with one general manager overseeing the three sites. The intention is to create standard operating procedures across the sites, automated cloud-based systems and management.
- Unit are an excellent opportunity for businesses in startup or early growth stage to minimise the cost of a production unit.
- Business leases a unit for 4 years and 9 months at business rate with no incremental increases. The unit is fitted out by the client specific to their needs, which requires significant investment by the business.
- Business owners are inward focused with little or no interaction between food businesses.
- Current proposals for Community Kitchens in two centres BEaT & BASE.

#### Drinan Enterprise Centre, Swords

Three food businesses with a total space of 1,710 sq. ft.

- Bakery: 570 sq. ft.
- Food Prep, Markets & Catering: 570 sq. ft.
- Food Prep, corporate events, parties, wedding, communions and confirmations: 570 sq. ft.
- Employment: Ten fulltime and two part-time staff.
- No plan to introduce community kitchen.

#### BEaT, Beat Enterprise Centre, Balbriggan

Two food businesses with a total space of 1,500 sq. ft.

- Fermented beverages: small production kitchen 300 sq. ft. (converted office unit)
- Coffee Roasting: Light industrial Unit: 1,200 sq. ft.
- Employing: 5 Whole Time Equivalent

Plan for Vacant Unit 4: 1,300 sq. ft

Board of Directors have approved the following: subject to change.



- Two x 387 sq. ft. production kitchens & one shared kitchen 500 sq. ft. complete with full kit-out.
- Timeframe: design and planning stage in Q2-Q3 2023 with funding options available from Q4 2023.
- This process will be an 18 month to 3-year project.

### **BASE Enterprise Centre, Mulhuddart, Dublin 15**

Nine food businesses with a total space of 11,482.71 sq. ft. The enterprise centres have organically grown a food cluster.

- 1,016.44 sq. ft. Food Production
- 461.13 sq. ft. Irish import and export of agricultural products and trading services
- 402.57 sq. ft. Food Production
- 600.2 sq. ft. Food Production
- 759 sq. ft. (two units) Vegan Bakery
- 1,569.38 sq. ft. Food Production/Meal Delivery
- 4,708.14 sq. ft. (three units) Bakery/Patisserie
- 1,577.52 sq. ft. Food Delivery
- 383.63 (two units) Bakery (Breads)

#### **Current Landscape and Potential for Growth**

- Block C1 4,734.29 sq. ft currently used for storage. Opportunity for maker space, test and develop new product, shared community kitchen and food units.
- Feedback from businesses on security issues and limited bus routes preventing staff retention.

#### **Sustainability**

- BASE Enterprise Centre: Go Vans on site and solar panels on office block, discussion around Solar Farm for the whole site.

#### **Challenges to Growth**

- No opportunity to trial new products without signing a long lease. No facilities for product testing or development for existing businesses i.e., community kitchen and/or maker space.
- Businesses leasing a second or third unit for storage and refrigeration. This limits the number of businesses on site.
- No step-up rental space for business expansion. No opportunity to retain employment for business wishing to expand further and scale.
- After lease period ceases, there is a significant jump to commercial rates.
- Limited structured engagement with support agencies by food businesses.
- Existing businesses: issue on labour shortage, costs of energy, storage of packaging and refrigeration.
- Greater signposting (pathways) for businesses to scale up.
- Route to market, potential for retail space or trial products.

## Key Considerations for Incubator Kitchens

### Target Users

- Start-up micro food and drink enterprises. The needs of start-up food entrepreneurs, who may not have the initial seed capital to invest in a start-up production facility of their own, can be served through a food incubator space which is low commitment and risk.
- The farming community who wishes to add value to their production.
- Training agencies who wish to provide food, hospitality and relevant tourism related training.

To consider, community kitchens/shared space, require significant cleaning between operators and associated storage.



### Example of Innovative Food Hubs and Incubations Space

- Bia Innovator Campus, a campus of scale with three buildings (production, innovation/knowledge and food tourism) specifically resourced to support over 40+ on site food related businesses and hundreds of others through acceleration and collaboration supports. Bia Innovator Campus is due to open later in 2023.
- The Food Hub, Drumshanbo, Leitrim which is more than a hub, it is an investment zone. Leitrim is the first county in Ireland to propose a Food Enterprise Zone, building on the success of The Food Hub. It has had 100% occupancy since 2016. Leitrim County Council and Drumshanbo Community Council commissioned a feasibility study into the potential to develop Ireland's first Food Enterprise Zone (FEZ) in Drumshanbo. A Food Enterprise Zone is a cluster of sites and buildings designated for fast-track relocation of food manufacturing and innovation. A second building will open in 2023.

It is worth reviewing UK-based [Food Works](#) noteworthy for their excellent branding and supports in place for businesses. In Canada, the [Coho Commissary](#) is a good example of business structure and pathways.

### Example of Own Door Units

- SPADE (Dublin 7) offers kitchen spaces with 15 own door kitchen units ranging in size from 380sq

foot to 1500 sq foot with ability to grow. Rates are from €700+ plus VAT monthly, depending on requirements. A shared kitchen is planned. This new space is being supported by Enterprise Ireland. SPADE is due to open summer 2023.

- The Boyne Valley Food Hub is a retro fit of Navan Enterprise Centre into nine individual food units. It will be launched in April 2023 the Boyne Valley Food Hub will deliver nine food grade units in 2023 - Meath Enterprise and a fulltime Food Innovation and Training Specialist (funding via EI REDF). It also includes a state-of-the-art digital lab where SMEs can work on their branding, promotional videos, packaging, food styling, social media and podcasting.
  - University- industry collaborations are also emerging e.g. Meath Enterprise and Maynooth University on a new project called Sandbox Sensory Testing Project.
- In Cork, Ballyhoura Development operates Mitchelstown Food Centre – Taste Ballyhoura (3,000 Sq. Ft. purpose built food production unit) and the Hospital Food Centre – Taste Ballyhoura in Co. Limerick (1,050 Sq. Ft. & 800 Sq. Ft. purpose built Food Production units)
- Kerry Food Hub has 10 units and has trialled a trade platform, Online Portal to Connect Producers, Route to Market. The Kerry Food Hub Trade Platform allows farmers to independently list their products on a web platform to connect them with professional buyers. It was launched for a short period.

### Key Considerations for Business Models for Enterprise Centre/ Food Hub

- Appropriately equipped kitchens.
- Access to a Food Innovation Specialist/Food Technologist which could be accessed by all companies in Fingal.
  - In Bia Innovator Campus these positions are funded by Teagasc.
  - In Boyne Valley Food Hub, this position is funded under REDF.
- Cork County Council appointed The Food Safety Company as operators. They operate food units dispersed in County Cork Enterprise Units, Cork County Council (corkcoco.ie) and food units via Ballyhoura Development, which maximises the potential for business growth. Pricing is also important for incubation price. Cork Incubator Kitchens struggled as it was too expensive and a reduction in price solved the vacancy issues.

The requirements for a new food hub are set out under the following three main areas: scoping and feasibility study, business case/economic appraisal and site selection assessment, design specification and costings.

### Recommendations

- The community shared kitchens proposed should form part of an overall strategic plan for the clustering of food businesses or new food hub, with a satellite structure, similar to county Cork.
- The requirements for a new food hub are set out under the following three main areas: scoping and feasibility study, business case/economic appraisal and site selection assessment, design specification and costings.
- Step up facility to promote economic growth.
- Collaboration with third level universities.
- Consider shared food technologist between the sites.
- Clustered approach to business growth from community kitchen, growth phase to business of scale.
- Fully fitted food grade facilities, which enables shorter leases and businesses to scale faster.
- Business engagement zone, collaboration space, retail, showcase area, with full AV suite for marketing and promotion.
- Route to market, all members of centre to join Dublin Food Chain and be provided with the opportunity of retail space in heritage properties.

- Structured collaboration with Fingal Food Network.
- Engaging EI Innovation Vouchers.
- Innovative and centralised storage and refrigeration.
- Review of the terms of the lease, length and investment for food businesses.
- Greater communicate links with Local Enterprise Office.

Increase signposting (pathways) for development and support and a central point of contact for food and beverage businesses within the county including a business directory. The current [business directory](#) on the website is out of date. Therefore, a business within the enterprise centre systems would also be invited to networking, training and relevant food tourism opportunities for their business.

### 6.5.11 Support Structures & Funding Agencies

#### Teagasc

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.

#### Ashtown Food Research Centre, Teagasc

The Ashtown Food Research Centre is a facility operated by Teagasc. It conducts research and innovation in the field of food, focusing on areas such as food processing, quality, safety, and sustainability. The centre plays a vital role in advancing Ireland’s agricultural and food industry.

#### Findings

- Educate businesses on where research fits in their business development phase.
- Teagasc engages with LEO and Dublin Food Chain by taking a stand at events.

#### Recommendations

- Increase linkage with centre and Fingal Food Network, LEO and Department of Economic, Enterprise, Tourism and Cultural Development..
- Increase communication and engagement with SMEs.

#### Fingal LEADER Programme

Fingal LEADER Partnership is an organisation that works in collaboration with local communities and businesses in the Fingal region of Ireland. It aims to promote rural development through funding and support for various projects in areas such as agriculture, tourism, heritage, and enterprise. The partnership plays a vital role in driving sustainable growth and improving the quality of life in Fingal. The programme cannot fund project, which may displace existing businesses.

#### Findings

- New programme of funding to launch in 2023.
- Local development strategy in progress.

## Recommendations

- Farm diversification (added value, experiences, tourism)
- Investigate feasibility studies and projects for marketing, sustainability during the strategic planning of the Policy.

### Food Park: FoodCentral, National Food Park

FoodCentral is a National Food Park located in St. Margaret's, Co. Dublin. It serves as a hub for the food industry, providing a range of services and facilities to support food businesses. The park offers infrastructure, resources, and networking opportunities, fostering collaboration and innovation in food production, distribution, and research. It plays a significant role in promoting the growth and development of Ireland's food sector. Keelings Retail, Select and Market (Farm Shop) and Donnelly's are based in the food park. The development of a Food Park is mentioned in the Fingal County Development Plan 2023-2029.

### 6.5.12 Development of new resources and programmes in response to business requirement

During the research, we found a need for business development assistance in several different areas.

#### Recommendations

1. Provide resources to create and maintain a Food and Beverage Business Directory.

This would:

- Streamline all communications from the council to the business community.
  - Accessible by LEO for marketing training and supports.
  - Benefit the Fingal Skills Strategy, Fingal Tourism, Sustainable Fingal, Fingal Food Network, Festivals and Events Team and all departments wishing to contact or increase the flow of communications in this sector.
  - Be a mechanism for encouraging businesses to engage with Enterprise Ireland and Bord Bia support and programme on product development and retailing.
2. Provide a central point of contact or co-ordinator of food related projects in Fingal.
  3. Create a new portal with clear pathways and signposting, for business accessible 24/7. An expansion of FAQ section on the website.
- Clear pathways for business development from start up to trading internationally. With opportunities for business to diversify into food tourism or product development.
  - Utilise AI technology, interactive and responsive.
  - Enable cross promotion and engagement from various departments.
  - Useful for all businesses for example food producers navigating LEO food programmes to creating saleable visitor experiences.

## 6.6 Findings on Tourism Research and Discovery

### Introduction

Located north of vibrant Dublin city, Fingal is a well-established and popular tourist area. Stunning beaches and lively fishing ports on the 88km coast combine with a rich heritage and rural history to create an engaging destination dotted with ancient castles and an attractive network of villages.

The food and beverage sector in Fingal is currently represented by Dublin's Coast and Fields brand. This is the consumer-facing brand of Fingal Food Network and is a collaborative forum for producers, cafés, restaurants, accommodation providers, heritage properties and tour guides who showcase the food heritage of the County of Fingal.

The Fingal Food Network is a new and growing network of businesses who have come together collectively with the support of Fingal County Council, Fingal Tourism and Fáilte Ireland to promote the unique experiences and hospitality of the area. The findings from the 1-1 meetings, focus groups and site visits has been incorporated into the following relevant areas.

### 6.6.1 Digital Audit on Food and Drink Experience

#### Findings

- In keeping with our findings under Economic Development, it is clear that Fingal's position as the 'breadbasket of Ireland' is not widely recognised.
- The overall branding of Fingal Tourism requires significant investment in branding, marketing, PR and digital presence to enhance Fingal as a tourism destination and therefore support the food and drink experience.
- The launch date of Dublin's Coast and Fields in March 2020 was unfortunate as it was immediately followed by COVID19 and the website has received little resourcing since the launch. Consequently, the content is out of date and the site requires extensive work to align it with the objectives of the new Fingal Food Network. There are additional food and drink listings under [Fingal.ie](https://www.fingal.ie) website.
- Dublin's Coast and Fields social media should be incorporated into an over marketing plan.
- Very little online information is available on markets suitable for visitors, except for Howth Market.
- A dedicated and up to date website for Flavours of Fingal is needed. Social media accounts are needed for the renamed Howth Maritime and Seafood Festival which was previously Dublin Bay Prawn Festival.
- Search Engine Optimisation (SEO):
  - A search for 'Fingal Food and Drink' returns the previous Agri Food Strategy on the Council's website and CRO listings for a range of businesses.
  - A search for 'Fingal Food and Drink' experiences returns a directory of businesses on Council's website which requires updating and has a Christmas focus. It also returns a link to Dublin's Coast and Fields [website](#).
  - A search for 'food tourism in Fingal' returns a link to the Dublin's Coast and Fields website.
  - Using the search term Fingal is problematic as it is a relatively unknown brand in tourism terms both domestically and internationally. Visitors will search for Dublin or specific villages such as Howth and Malahide or an experience they have heard about. Significant investment will be required to compete successfully online. Further brand research is required on the consumer facing brand Dublin's Coast and Fields including the word Dublin in terms of reducing confusion and optimisation. This finding was backed up by feedback received in the one-to-one meetings and from focus group.

Recommendations to combat some of the issues raised in the digital audit are listed under the appropriate heading.



### 6.6.2 Fingal Tourism Strategy

Fingal County Council in conjunction with Fingal Tourism have commissioned a Fingal Tourism Strategy. The Food and Drink Policy will align with the new Tourism Strategy.

#### Findings from Tourism Strategy Research

- Research showed food was not a key pillar but was a focus.
- Certain areas are strong for restaurants and have a very good reputation for quality such as Malahide and Howth. Skerries and Swords were mentioned in the research.
- Strong visitor attractions in Malahide and Howth Castle
- Improvement required in saleable experiences. This is in line with our audit.

#### Growth of the Fingal Food Network with Dublin's Coast & Fields

Dublin's Coast and Fields launched in March 2020 with a new brand and logo, website, producer directory, social media platforms and marketing collateral. Unfortunately, due to COVID19, the set up of the Fingal Food Network was delayed until November 2022. Dublin's Coast and Fields is the consumer brand for the network. There are currently 30 network members ranging from producers to cafés, restaurants and those offering saleable experiences. The network has an action plan, membership pack, criteria and governance in place developed under support provided by Fáilte Ireland. The network hosted its first internal familiarisation visit in April 2023 and is hosting food demonstration and member showcases at the Flavours of Fingal festival in July 2023. This will be followed by an autumn series of events and a media visit from Food on the Edge in October.

#### Fingal Food Network Mission

The mission is to safeguard the rich food heritage of the county and to grow the sustainable messaging, local food provenance, food tourism experience and hospitality in Fingal, creating a best-in-class food destination.

#### Findings

- Proud of their region (produce, landscape, heritage villages and coast).
- Great potential for local food and drink provenance with a wide variety of produce.
- No mention of opportunities around Dublin Airport or Dublin/Belfast economic corridor re: saleable experience in the tourism focus group, the feedback was mainly concentrated on the hospitality offering.
- Fingal Food Network: Action plan created in 2021, that requires updating. There is no marketing and PR strategy in place. A marketing agency currently look after posting on social media accounts. There is a committee in place supported by Fingal Council County, Fingal Tourism and Fáilte Ireland and food tourism mentoring in place.
- Dublin's Coast and Fields website is not fit for purpose. The information is out of date and not accurate. Experiences are missing from the site.
  - Dublin's Coast and Fields social media platforms will cause alienation of businesses as one business is chosen over another. Social should be linked to the Fingal Food Network members as their consumer-facing marketing brand.
- The network is supported by Fingal County Council and membership fees have been waived for 2023 and 2024.
- Membership pack, criteria, benefits of joining and application process can be accessed through their [website](#).



- Businesses wish to create sustainable practices in their business and gain Origin Green and Green Hospitality certification. As an example, Doran's on the Pier hired consultants to successfully reduce their energy and waste costs.

Note: Areas of concern in relation to Dublin's Coast and Fields website and social media platforms (February 2023) are noted and currently in progress to rectify in Q2.

## Recommendations

- Find the food networks unique selling points and promote them in all campaigns and marketing.
- Create marketing campaign(s) and continue to tell the story of producers and local food provenance to raise the profile of Fingal as Ireland's breadbasket.
- Embrace food trail, tours and food destination marketing.
- Engage further with Fáilte Ireland on the creation of saleable experiences and the network's vision and also with Visit Dublin.
- Review the original Fáilte Ireland workbook and guide on how to run a food network.
- Develop a strategy and detailed action plan.
- Explore the potential for new festivals and events and create a year-round calendar of events.
- Take up opportunities to celebrate food at all festivals in the region such as Malahide Castle events.
- Fingal Food Network should have a presence at key national events like Bloom and the National Ploughing Championships.
- Celebrate success stories like McNally Farm Shop and Café, Howth Cookery School.
- Engage with Dublin Bay Biosphere and encourage members of the network to sign up to the charter.
- Update the action plan which was created in 2021. In addition, a marketing and PR strategy should be developed and a training plan implemented in conjunction with LEO and agencies. The committee plan to meet in September 2023 and divide the actions into short, medium and long term.
- Tie in with the creation of sustainability awards, champions and case studies under Economic Development. As an example, Doran's on the Pier would be ideal as a case study on embracing sustainability practices to reduce costs.

### 6.6.3 Networking and Training

#### Training Requirements

To meet the training requirements within the food and drink industry several initiatives are needed.

#### Findings

- A series of touch points with visitors require optimisation in terms of content, for example website, merchandising, social media content, liaising with the media and visual content.
- Businesses have engaged with LEO courses through their own business and the Dublin Food Chain network.
- Fingal Food Network hosted one internal familiarisation visit in April 2023. Additional visits are planned for the autumn.
- LEO through Dublin Food Chain organises international market familiarisation visits i.e., Anugal/SIAL/SFFF.

#### Recommendations

- Create a list of autumn training requirements based on feedback from members.

## Consultation Phase

- Discuss Fingal Food Network training requirements with LEO.
- Promote collaboration and linkage between the LEO, Dublin Food Chain and Fingal Food Network to maximise the benefit of the various management development, business networking initiatives and enterprise promotion opportunities provided by LEO Fingal.
- Run a series of networking events (Fingal Food Network members only and open to the public).
- Encourage peer-to-peer learning.
- Invest in running a series of events and hire speakers to energise the Fingal Food Network in collaboration with the LEO and Dublin Food Chain programme.
- Host brainstorming networking events, where the objectives are to engage participants to create 1-3-5-day visitor packages combining various saleable food experiences, attractions and accommodation providers to help them see the bigger picture in relation to food tourism and tourism in the region. These packages can include culinary tours, immersive food experiences, opportunities to engage with local producers, amenities and activity providers.
- Link chefs with local producers through networking events, directories, and programmes centred around food provenance is essential for fostering collaboration and strengthening the local food ecosystem. It is also important to tie in with the offerings from the Local Enterprise Office to provide comprehensive support for businesses.
- Discuss with the LEO the training opportunities and requirements in areas such as food photography, social media marketing, branding, storytelling, and public relations to enhance businesses' visibility and marketing capabilities. Furthermore, training programmes should focus on equipping individuals with the skills to effectively run media visits, allowing them to showcase the region's gastronomic offerings to a wider audience. Additionally, training staff to engage effectively with customers and providing support to chefs and business owners in pursuing larger catering contracts, particularly at heritage sites, can further drive growth and success within the industry.
- Collaboration and planning between agencies and bodies responsible for training in the sector targeting food and drink businesses in Fingal.
- It is recommended to run a series of familiarisation visits (both internal and external) for the Fingal Food Network members. The familiarisation visits should include domestic and international locations for best practice. LEO can lead out internationally trading/research activities and expand this further for Fingal food producers, as it aligns with their strategic objectives.
  - Focus on networking and building the relationships between the businesses.
  - Encourage people to get to know each other and their product by way of internal familiarisation visits to each other's businesses.
    - Organise site visits which play a crucial role in facilitating internal and external knowledge sharing among industry peers. These visits allow professionals to learn from each other's experiences and gain insights into best practices. This in turn allows engagement with businesses and assists them in becoming local experts in Fingal and referring businesses. Brainstorming combined with site visits, could create an initiative such as the 'Tastes of Fingal,' to showcase the diverse and exceptional local food and drink offerings to those in business in Fingal. Excellent examples of local business referrals working in practice are in Westport and Killarney, where businesses collectively work together. Additionally, a coordinated familiarisation visit to an established food tourism or business network such as Boyne Valley Flavours or Kinsale Good Food Circle would provide practical example of knowledge sharing and working together.
    - Plan research visits for saleable experience development.

## 6.6.4 Food Experiences in Fingal

### Sample of Sales Experiences in Fingal

Activity	Company	Activity	Company
Producer/ Tour Guide	The Herb Garden	Tours	Howth School of Fish
Craft Brewery	Hope Beer	Tours	Howth Foraging
Whiskey Distiller	Lambay Whiskey	Activity, Craft Beer & Seafood Trail	Hidden Howth
Cookery School	Howth Cookery School	Activity and Food Tour	Shane's Howth Adventures
Restaurant	Wrights Findlater Howth		

### Findings

- The existing experiences are well established and of a high quality but limited in number.
- Unequal regional distribution with the majority focused in the Howth region (6 of the 9 businesses).
- No agri farm tour or food trail is available.
- Limited tourist experiences at farmers markets or markets such as Howth market.
- Lack of central database or point of contact for visitors to book an experience.
- Limited number of experiences i.e., tours and tastings, difficult to find online. See digital audit findings.
- Some confusion over the similarity of names Dublin Coastal Trail and Dublin's Coast and Fields, which has led to businesses in Fingal querying if Dublin's Coast and Fields covers all the county.
- A new Fingal Coastal Way is being developed. This 32km amenity will offer a route for relaxation, exercise and commuting and will connect the communities of Donabate, Rush, Loughshinny, Skerries and Balbriggan, showcasing the beauty of the Fingal coastline to visitors and local people.

### Recommendations

- Engage with Fáilte Ireland on building scalable and saleable food experiences.
- Brainstorm with network members on the opportunities open to them.
- Plan familiarisation visits to an established network for learnings and inspiration.
- Engage with a wide local food provenance programme, encompassing not only food tourism but wider aspects under economic development to truly support producers from the ground up.
- Using a holistic and collaborative approach taking all touchpoints with the consumer (retailing, menus, tourist offices promotion) and visitor in consideration will assist SEO, brand recognition and leads to a true authentic experience for visitors.
- Brainstorm around businesses opportunities from the Dublin Coastal Trail. It aims to entice visitors beyond the city centre, unveiling the wonders of nearby coastal towns. Boasting beaches, golf links, adventure sports, castles, culture, heritage, and local cuisine, the trail offers unexpected experiences at Dublin's doorstep. Starting in Skerries and stretching to Killiney, with plans for expansion, each location features informative signage, welcoming and guiding visitors to explore various attractions by rail, foot, or bicycle.
- Maximise the proximity to tourists arriving at Dublin Airport and train transport links.
- Create new experiences at heritage properties like a tea rooms at Ardgillan Castle.
- Cross promote and create new packages with adventure tourism providers.
- Embrace the Fingal Coastal Way, cease opportunities for food and drink businesses and to be ready to engage along the route.
  - Incorporate the opportunities available for businesses along the Fingal Coastal Route in a Fingal Food Network workshop. By brainstorming ideas and viewing best practice nationally and internationally for maximising return, the businesses can be ready to engage. Examples are the Gourmet Greenway in Westport, Food the Waterford Way.

### Opportunities for Collaboration

- Christmas Hampers: two examples are Taste Wexford Hampers and Sligo Food Trail who successfully sold hampers online for Christmas and as corporate gifts.
- Internationally, look to greenways for exciting projects such as Bicycle Basket on the Dutch Waterline, which includes offering visitors a basket for their bike, picnic blanket and vouchers for visitors to use along the waterway.
- Establishing a Food Series i.e., Boyne Valley Flavours are celebrating their 10th Food Series in 2023. The Boyne Food Series is a culinary event showcasing the rich and diverse flavours of the Boyne Valley region through a series of curated dining experiences and local food collaborations.
- Specific events for campaigns like Boxty Without Borders which ran as a Taste the Island event in 2019. The event highlighted that food has no boundaries and the benefits of cross border tourism and food tourism collaborations.

### Opportunities for Farm Diversification

- Farm and fishing businesses can incorporate food tourism into their offering in various ways such as farm tours, seafood experiences or fishing catch and cook experiences. This can lead to wider collaboration, with farming joining together into a trail i.e., Slane Food Circle.
  - Support required for farm diversification as farmers need to consider farm insurance and restructure of farmyards for public access (safety), in addition to research on their target audience and marketing.
  - Added Value Produce examples include Cheese, Yogurt, Chocolate, Flavoured Milk (eg McGrane's Milk Barn)
- Holiday lets or glamping with local farm shop or farm tours.
- Diversification supports from Teagasc are available such as the Opt In Programme
- Educational programmes can also assist in farm diversification such as The Tipperary Food Tour.

### 6.6.5 Fingal Food Provenance

The findings are from one-to-one meetings, tourism focus groups and relevant agencies in addition to site visits.

#### Findings

- Several Chefs are very engaged and promote local producers, for example Potager travels to McNally's Farm to collect produce.
- Linking of producers and Chefs is sporadic and naming producers on the menus in restaurants is not widespread across the region.
- It is currently difficult to contact every café, restaurant and producer as the database requires maintenance.
- It is more difficult for smaller producers to supply volume and manage delivery.

#### Recommendations

- Invite all relevant Fingal County Council departments, activity providers and tourism agencies to engage.
- Provide consultation on the best method for engagement, find out what the barriers are and offer solutions to increase local food provenance.
- Investigate a co-op for small producers to engage as a unit with restaurants and hotels.

- Publish a Producers Directory and keep it updated (liaise with Dublin Food Chain).
- Educate residents and businesses on local food provenance including youth groups, school children, diverse groups, older people and businesses.
- Build in sustainability practices into the programme.
- Linking with Community Engagement Programme and Capturing Heritage

### 6.6.6 Investment in Food and Drink Festivals and Events

#### Festivals and Events Team

#### Findings

Three methods of support:

1. Design, Build, Operative (DBO), the festival works with a concession manager.
2. Funding Scheme: includes 1-day events, conferences and the completion of feasibility studies. Currently there are approximately 100 events funded by the Council.
3. Advice and Guidance
  - The team would like to see greater engagement from businesses and a focus on provenance. Businesses need to be festival ready and understand the parameters of selling food at a large festival.
  - Events are asked to follow the Green Festival Guide
  - Fingal Food Network to have a presence at Flavours of Fingal
  - It is difficult for businesses at festivals as the parameters change with different Environmental Health Officers.



## Consultation Phase

- Two high quality food themed festivals: Flavours of Fingal and Howth Maritime and Seafood Festival.
- Cross promotion at Flavours of Fingal - producers with Fingal Farmers.
- Opportunity to expand food-themed calendar of events in partnership with the food network.
- Society is more diverse and this needs to be reflected.
- Busy business owners are wary of the time commitment needed to get involved.

### Obstacles to running events/markets/festivals

- Timing of festivals is often a deterrent to business involvement particularly in the summer months.

### Recommendations

- Opportunity to offer a green mentor/consultant to festivals.
- Investigate the possibility of additional events and festivals across the region, including food themed events in Dublin 15.
- Ensure more local food provenance at festivals organised by the Council.
  - Increase in understanding required by both and businesses organisers (both directions) in relation to their needs.
  - Offer first refusal to network members or work with them to engage with festivals.
- Promote new events in the shoulder seasons.
- Use any opportunities for the network to highlight or get involved in members festivals/events such as Spud Fest (Country Crest)
- Create fringe food events for existing festivals.

## 6.6.7 Food and Drink Experience in Heritage Properties

### Embracing Heritage and Existing Attractions

The heritage properties and castles in Fingal have significant potential for developing food tourism but they require specific supports in relation to expertise, resourcing and funding. The research has focused on a select number of Council owned properties however we also see opportunities for engagement with privately owned properties such as Howth Castle.

### Heritage Plan 2018-2023

#### Heritage and Conservation

The Heritage Plan outlines policies and objectives in relation to the built, natural and cultural heritage. Fingal has a rich heritage dating back thousands of years, visible in the landscape from the passage tombs of Bremore to medieval church settlements such as Swords and Lusk and castles like Malahide and Ardgillan. The county also has a unique natural heritage of coastline, waterways, landscape and wildlife, and a cultural heritage of local history, music and folklore. The Heritage Plan 2018–2023 sets out a range of objectives to protect, manage and promote Fingal's Heritage.

- Four key heritage properties (Malahide Castle, Ardgillan Castle, Newbridge House and Skerries Mills) attract approximately 200,000 paying visitors annually with an estimated economic value of €10.5 million per annum to the wider Fingal economy. However, the combined visitor numbers to Fingal's beaches, parks and heritage properties and to other popular destinations such as Howth Head far exceeds this number. New plan in draft

A new plan is currently in draft form.

- The county has strong traditions of horticulture, agriculture and fishing. Fingal's industrial and agricultural heritage is evident in a range of sites associated with transport, manufacturing and food production, such as the windmill at Skerries and Shackleton's Mill in the Liffey Valley.

2011-2017

- Collaborative initiatives to communicate the value of heritage have been undertaken, such as the project "All Bread is made of Wood" with Fingal Arts Office, which used environmental evidence retrieved from the excavations at Swords Castle combined with methods of baking and food production from North County Dublin's past to explore contemporary and ancient local food culture.

Fingal County Council operates five heritage properties under its ownership as community and tourism attractions. In each case the food and drink offering is run by catering companies.

1. Malahide Castle and Gardens
2. Newbridge House and Farm
3. Skerries Mill
4. Ardgillan Castle
5. Seamus Ennis Arts Centre

Note: There is currently no food offering at Swords Castle and a regular market is held outside Bremore Castle (see markets).



## Overall Findings

At Council owned heritage properties:

- The food offering is based on e-tenders procurement.
  - Feedback from businesses: this excludes smaller café or startups from applying.
- Very little use of local food or provenance highlighted on the menus.
- Malahide Castle partners with Avoca Café for their retail and café offering.
- Similar offerings across the sites due to the contract catering process.
- No food offering in the Seamus Ennis Arts Centre which has an excellent outdoor space for market or small-scale food related events but no parking facilities.
- Skerries Mill are currently expanding their food/tour offering with the Red Barn project. They have a small retail space for local producers. There are opportunities to expand their food experiences with additional events and collaboration with businesses.

## Opportunity

- Training for businesses on how to utilise e-tenders.
- Collaborate with heritage office on food oral history project.
- Proposed changes to the catering contract:
  - Use local food and highlight provenance by naming producers on the menu.
  - Provide retail space/route to market for Fingal Food Network producers and Dublin Food Chain members.
  - Encourage the successfully contracted company to collaborate with food businesses to run experiences, talks and workshops.

## Case Study: Ardgillan Castle

Despite being commonly known as a castle, the domicile located at Ardgillan is, in fact, a sizable house designed in a country style and featuring ornamental battlements. Its original designation was “Prospect House,” and its core structure, erected in 1738 by Robert Taylor, was subsequently expanded with the addition of the west and east wings during the latter part of the 1800s.





The castle offers the following services to visitors:

Tearooms and kiosk for coffee and snacks near the playground which is operated under contract; Castle tours (which are mainly self-guided, although a guided tour may be organised for groups of more than ten) A craft shop and an art gallery.

The grounds include a Gardener's Cottage overlooking the rose garden, which was previously used as a café and also a herb garden.

### **Recommendations**

- Connect the food offering to the heritage property. Link to the castle kitchen on the tour through recipes or stories.
- Connect the kitchen tour with the tea rooms (artefacts).
- Bring the story of the house to life in the tea rooms (the grandeur and lifestyle of the Taylor family)
- Investigate if family recipes could be introduced.
- Lower Courtyard: has potential for a pop up or permanent restaurant. Pilot an evening pop up restaurant, for example Davidson's, Allta pop up restaurant which has run in several different locations.
- Educational Opportunities: to attract students (school trips, active retirements groups, tour operators) utilise the herb garden, café, talks and tie into the heritage plan. The book trail would also be attractive to schools.
- Menu planning: prepare and use as much food as possible from the gardens.

### **The Garden's Cottage**

- The Café is currently closed. It offers excellent potential as a destination café with new proposed car parking nearby.
- Showcase and use artisan producers
- Use as an evening event space
- Use produce from the (herb) gardens and estate.
- Opportunity to market one of the outside spaces and/or inside rooms as dog friendly.
- Excellent outdoor space with views of the gardens

### **National Heritage Week, 12th - 20th August 2023**

- Run pop up events during Heritage Week to test the Gardener's Cottage and pop-up restaurant space. Use local produce and tie back to the history of the property.
- Connect the heritage property to the food offering
- Afternoon tea: with priority given to the food, are local jams used?
- Opportunity to join Fingal Food Network and create saleable experiences
- Embrace the tearoom experience at Ardgillan Castle
- Artwork is nice in the tea rooms

### **Possibility of becoming a destination café:**

- What is the customer experience? Currently there is a canteen feel which needs changing.
- Consider tearoom style floral wall paper, vintage tea service, fresh flowers
- Words which come to mind when describing tea rooms at a castle: stylishness, pretty, floral, vintage, afternoon tea experience, homemade.

### Swords Castle

Situated in the heart of the historic town, Swords Castle stands as a testament to more than 800 years of captivating history. Recent remarkable findings, such as burial sites beneath the gatehouse, further emphasise its significance. Constructed by Archbishop John Comyn of Dublin circa 1200, the castle served as both a dwelling and administrative hub. The expansive compound takes the shape of a rough pentagon and is encompassed by a 260 metre perimeter wall. As a National Monument, it stands as the finest surviving example of an Archbishop's Palace in Ireland. This intricate architectural ensemble showcases various stages of adaptation and transformation, mirroring its extensive past and fluctuating fortunes.

[www.swordscastle.events](http://www.swordscastle.events)



### Findings

- Used for festivals, events and seasonal craft and food markets.
- No food allowed in Great Hall but open to non-food related events such as civil wedding ceremonies.

### Recommendations

- Relaunch the Great Hall with food themed events on the grounds or in the hall itself.
- Add a dedicated food and drink section for saleable experiences and Dublin's Coast and Fields in the tourist office.

### Seamus Ennis Arts Centre

The Séamus Ennis Arts Centre (TSEAC) is a renowned establishment based in The Naul, dedicated to the performing arts. It provides a platform for a rich array of cultural encounters, encompassing live music, cinema, comedy, and cultural events. Additionally, TSEAC actively fosters artistic growth by offering workshops and a flourishing music school to nurture the talents of aspiring artists. The centre is a charity organisation owned and funded by Fingal County Council with additional supports from the Arts Council of Ireland as well as donations. The centre enriches people's lives through art, culture, education and creativity whilst commemorating the work and life of the late Séamus Ennis.

## Findings

- Traditional music and arts focused centre, suitable for festivals, events, markets and workshops.
- Outdoor covered space with stretch tent and bandstand.
  - The outdoor space can hold approximately 600 for a market and 450 people seated/480 people standing for a music/performance event.
- Indoor theatre can hold 90 people seated.
- Offers 45 seated Café and possibility of evening restaurant. There is currently no operator in place and they are actively looking to engage a contractor for summer 2023.
- There is no assigned parking but there is on street parking, or they link in with the local GAA club for larger events. This issue is being investigated for suitable alternative options.

## Recommendations

- Improve available parking.
- Engage an operator for the café, and food operations. Encourage the contractor to join the Fingal Food Network to engage their marketing support and resourcing.
- Explore new experiences, traditional Irish cuisine or baking workshops for tourists for examples visit [Irish Soda Bread Way](#).
- Engage tour operator market for quieter days of the week and shoulder season. The extension, with counter space and seating, lends itself to small cookery classes/demonstrations, foraging tours or food talks for tour operators.
- Excellent opportunities available with the covered outside space for regular markets or a pop-up summer restaurant or food themed evenings.
- Once a contractor for the café is in place, offer to host a Fingal Food Network networking event or meeting.
- Engage with the local producers and sell their products in a small retail space in the café.



## Consultation Phase

### Newbridge House and Farm

Newbridge House and Farm: This is an 18th-century Georgian mansion set in extensive parkland. Visitors can take a tour of the house, explore the walled garden, and visit the working farm, where they can meet various animals. They are currently investigating a partnership with Fingal Food Network and members on a series of food themed events.



### Recommendations

- Opportunity for menus to use local food and highlight provenance or create a connected mural on the back wall behind the counter.
- Utilise the retail space near the counter for local producers from the Fingal Food Network.
- Offer milkshakes or produce in keeping with a farm such as ice cream from a local producer.

### Case Study: Foxford Woollen Mills

Foxford Woollen Mills is a historic Irish textile mill located in Foxford, County Mayo. Established in 1892, it specialises in producing high-quality woven wool products, including blankets, scarves, and throws. Beyond its textile production and tours, the mill boasts a delightful destination café that offers a selection of delicious refreshments, including their own artisan produce for sale. Visitors can indulge in homemade treats while appreciating the cosy ambiance. Additionally, the mill features a well-curated shop where visitors can find a range of artisanal products, including locally sourced food items and unique crafts, providing an opportunity to experience and bring home the distinct offerings of Foxford Woollen Mills. The Mills is privately owned and employs a Chef directly to oversee the Café and production kitchen for their range of produce and artisan food hampers. Their product range was introduced to promote year-round employment and the café was redeveloped to be sustainable and not depend on tour group visitors.

### Current Offering

Established Foxford Food Collection, individual products and food hampers, with destination Café for local and visitors. The café brings visitors for the tour, shop and event space. A second production kitchen opened in 2022 and this creates year-round employment for staff.

## 7. Implementation of the Policy

For the successful implementation of the policy and to avoid previous pitfalls as outlined in the threats to the policy, we reviewed options for implementation.

### Food Policy Council

The Food Policy Council brings together professionals from diverse food-related sectors to examine how the food system is operating and to develop recommendations on how to improve it.

Food Policy Councils are predominately a grassroots effort which have been successful at educating officials and the public, shaping public policy, improving coordination between existing programmes, and starting new programmes. Examples include mapping and publicising local food resources; creating new transit routes to connect underserved areas with full-service grocery stores; persuading government agencies to purchase from local farmers; and organising community gardens and farmers' markets.

Further reference material, Resource Centres on Urban Agriculture and Food Security produced a document on [Food Policy Council in 2019](#)

Based on the original motion, a review of Food Councils in Ghent, Toronto and Bristol was completed.

1. Ghent Food Council, Belgium
2. Toronto Food Council, Canada
3. Bristol Food Council, UK

### Ghent Food Council, Belgium

The food and drink policy implemented by the City of Ghent, known as “Gent en Garde,” aims to create a sustainable food system. The policy is guided by five strategic goals, including promoting shorter food chains, sustainable production and consumption, social value creation, food waste reduction, and optimal reuse of food waste. The policy is supported by a Food Council consisting of representatives from various sectors, providing advice, acting as a sounding board, and allocating a budget for innovative projects. The flexible approach and continuous evaluation have contributed to the success of the policy. Ghent's food policy serves as a model for other cities, emphasising participative governance and collaboration among different interested parties. The city's food policy council meets regularly, chaired by the deputy mayor responsible for climate, environment, housing, and international cooperation. The establishment of the policy was necessary to address food-related challenges comprehensively and foster cooperation, avoiding duplication of efforts and maximising results through collaboration.

### Toronto Food Council, Canada

The Toronto Food Council is no longer active or resourced.

The Toronto Food Policy Council (TFPC) was established in 1991 as a subcommittee of the Board of Health to provide advice on food policy matters to the City of Toronto. The TFPC operates independently and connects individuals from diverse sectors, including food, farming, and the community, to develop innovative policies and projects that promote a health-focused food system. It plays a crucial role in advising Toronto Public Health, advocating for food policy programmes, engaging in dialogue with various city officials, and serving as a reference group for the Toronto Food Strategy. The council have made significant contributions to a wide range of food policy initiatives over the years and successfully

advocated for the inclusion of food in city strategies. Its membership consists of 30 individuals appointed by the Toronto Board of Health, including citizens, City Councillors, representatives from farm and rural communities, and members of the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council. The TFPC holds formal decision-making meetings every two months, supplemented by less formal discussion meetings in alternate months, all of which are open to the public. Toronto Public Health provides staff support, and the council prepares an annual report for the Board of Health. The TFPC's work is guided by the goal of developing a health-focused food system through collaborative efforts and innovative policies.

### **Bristol Food Council, UK**

The Bristol Good Food Alliance aims to bring together various organisations in Bristol that promote “good food.” Currently, the Bristol Food Policy Council, Bristol Food Network, and Bristol Food Producers are part of the alliance, and any organisation sharing the same values and principles can join. The Bristol Good Food Movement and Bristol Gold Food City are also related initiatives. The Bristol Food Policy Council (FPC) was established in 2011 as the first Food Policy Council in the UK. It works towards a vision of a sustainable food city where everyone has access to fresh, local, and affordable food. The FPC has written reports and plans, including the Good Food Plan for Bristol and the Good Food Action Plan. It collaborates closely with Bristol City Council and has achieved notable successes, such as obtaining Silver Sustainable Food City status in 2016 and eventually attaining Gold Sustainable Food City status. The FPC's unique position is an independent body. The council consists of 10 members with expertise in various sectors of the food system. The FPC's work is guided by key strategies, including the Bristol City Council's Food Charter and Climate Change and Energy Security Framework. The new project structure replacing some organisations is Bristol Good Food 2030, which aims to make positive changes across the local food system through the Bristol Good Food Partnership and its six thematic areas.

### **Conclusion**

On review, the two active food councils are city based, with the Bristol Food Council undergoing significant change in 2023 to come under the new entity of Bristol Good Food 2030. The main concern with the creation of a food council for Fingal is resourcing and funding with an organisation needing to be responsible for the implementing and funding of the policy for the duration.

The governance of the policy was based on participation and inclusivity, transparency, evidence-based decision making, accountability and responsibility, coherence and integration, flexibility and adaptability, collaboration and partnerships.

The Fingal Skills Strategy working group has been successful in its governance and implementation and this is the model chosen to implement this policy.

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