

# **Food Tourism**

## **It's potential use as an Educational Tool to shorten the gap between the Consumer and Producer**

**A report for**



**NUFFIELD IRELAND  
Farming Scholarships**

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2019 Scholar

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# Executive Summary

*“Food Tourism is not a new concept, it can be defined as tourism in which the opportunity for unique and memorable food related experiences contributes significantly to the reason for travel” (WTO 2012).*

In recent years, due to the increase in development of food trails, meet the maker /producer experiences, a rise in agri-tourism, and chefs pinpointing the source of their food, a definite “buzz” has been created around the whole aspect of Food Tourism. Food tourism in itself can be the umbrella term for many connotations; gastro-tourism; culinary tourism; agri-tourism; and pesca tourism.

For my research my main objective was to explore the concept and types of Food Tourism, Agri-tourism and Pesca- tourism, with a particular focus on Niche experiences. I wanted to identify how Food Tourism can be used as a platform to address knowledge gaps and reconnect the consumer to where their food directly comes from. I wanted to address if Food Tourism has a role in business diversification which can facilitate smaller scale production while adding value to their product both domestically and for the export market. Ultimately, I wanted to question whether Food Tourism can be used as the mechanism to tell your food story, educate the consumer while at the same time creating brand awareness.

I explored ‘food experiences’ and visited aquaculture and agriculture farms operating tourism and educational experience in the United States, United Kingdom and New Zealand. I examined the role of state agencies and governments in supporting these businesses. Throughout my scholarship I took the opportunity to attend Food Tourism and Farm Diversification conferences and attend the Committee of Global Food Security in Rome. Here I gained insight into where and how policies were formed, became more aware of growing trends within the industry and got the unique opportunity to engage in discussion with leaders in aquaculture, food and food tourism.

In recent years, the introduction of online booking platforms has enabled tourists to book their own itinerary. Bespoke tour companies have led the change in how tourists and

consumers globally can engage with food in a country through food activities. At the same time, these opportunities have empowered those living in rural areas with a stage to introduce our local area and our industry.

We must take this opportunity to educate consumers on where food actually comes from, how it is produced and cared for. We must inform consumers of our story; this is now more important than ever. Ireland has a reputation on the global export market for exceptionally high-quality seafood, meat and dairy. It is now time to bring that global reputation back home to attract and encourage tourists to taste that quality food at source. Instead of exporting large volumes globally with tight margins, is it not an appropriate alternative to promote our produce closer to home, while keeping the profits to spend more in our own localities? The positive knock on effect of Food Tourism Experiences provides us with an opportunity to support local accommodation providers, local restaurants while allowing us to be in control of our own marketing, branding and story while still operating on a global level. This will protect the sustainability of the industry while also enabling older generations within the family business to pass on their knowledge, skills and experience.

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# Acknowledgements:

I wish to thank Nuffield Ireland and in particular my mentor Aisling Meehan and The National Executive John Tyrrell.

I wish to thank my sponsor BIM - the Irish Seafood Development Agency. This has been a wonderful opportunity to bring the connection between land and sea a little closer together. I look forward to seeing this relationship flourish over the coming years.

A huge appreciation to all the businesses, Nuffield scholars and individuals who assisted me on my research, travelled with me on my GFP, hosted me and came to visit. This led to many inquisitive, engaging and informative conversations. Thank you for assisting my learning and growth.

I wish to thank friends and family for listening to me tell my stories of travel as well as all my new theories and ideas and encourage me in discovering my true self.

To my fellow 2019 Irish Nuffield scholars, Ailish Morriarty, Karina Pearce, Pat O'Meara, and Alison Holmes for motivation and support and to which I am delighted to say now fit into both the friends and family category.

Lastly, I wish to say a huge and special thank you to my father for keeping the ship afloat while I was off doing my gallivanting, as he would say. It's your turn now Dad!

# Abbreviations and Agencies

BIM	Bord Iascaigh Mhara (Irish Seafood Development Agency)
Bord Bia	Irish Food Board
CSF	Committee on global food security
EMFF	European maritime and fisheries fund
Faite Ireland	Ireland's tourism development agency (translating as Welcome to Ireland)
FAO	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation
FARNET	The European Fisheries Area Network
FLAGS	Fisheries Local Action Groups
Tourism Ireland	State agency responsible for marketing Ireland outside of Ireland
SDG's	Sustainable Development Goals
UNWTO:	United Nations World Tourism Organization
SLO	Social Licence to Operate

# Foreword

This report took on a new meaning in light of Covid-19, which surfaced around the time that the report was being compiled. Overnight, the tourism industry disappeared with flights being cancelled, restaurant bookings ceased, quickly impacting on all industries, but particularly the fishing and aquaculture industry. These products are more often sold into the export market and food service rather than domestic retail.

2020 has been a year that has affected the tourism industry globally. For many countries, the opportunity of an international tourism industry ceased, with countries having to rely on domestic tourism. One hopes that eventually our “New Normal” will contain elements of our “Old Normal” that allows international travel and experiences. When and In what capacity this happens has yet to be determined and with that the overall effect on the food service industry.

The data for this report was gathered far before the threat of Covid-19, therefore this report continues as if Covid 19 never happened and the information still stands as industries come back to life. However we now are more aware of another threat to society and industry, one that we hope we will not see again but if we do we will be ready.

The lesson - farm and business diversification is needed more than ever to sustain livelihoods so that we are prepared for any eventuality.



# Sustainable Development Goals

This report looks at how Food tourism can be used as an educational tool in closing the gap between the consumer and producer and in turn can act as a revenue stream for the producer in rural areas.

Due to the nature of the Industry the author is involved in, i.e. the marine sector, many of the case studies, and examples are marine and aquaculture based. Therefore, this report links with SDG 14 Life below water. By supporting diversification, it Increases the economic benefits from sustainable use of marine resources, while also supporting Small scale fishers (14.7, 14.b) it also can be involved, through education, in targets 14.2 protecting and restoring marine ecosystems, and 14.4 Sustainable fishing.



This report also contributes and supports the SDG's 15, 12, 8 and 11.



*Fellow Nuffield Scholars attending CFS Rome in October 2019.*

# Personal Introduction

My Name is Ciara O'Halloran and I am the Director of The Redbank Food Company.

I grew up around the Seafood industry. My father, a marine biologist, had been involved in breeding, farming and exporting oysters along with live crustaceans (lobsters and crabs) for many years. As a child, unlike my brothers who were involved in the packing and production side, I was more involved in the hosting side of the business, feeding and cleaning up after the many chefs and business contacts that came to visit from around the world. The entertaining mainly took place in our family home. Without me realising it at the time, this experience heavily influenced my eventual journey and transition into Food Tourism.



My third level qualification is in Outdoor Education and Leisure. Initially I gained experience working in outdoor education centres before working in youth and community development for ten years. I then moved to Zambia to work for an Irish NGO involved in the design and implementation of UNESCO programmes, mostly in the area of international youth and community development with a particular focus on youth leadership programmes. During this time, my father's business fell victim to the recession in Ireland and subsequently closed.

Although my work in Zambia was life-changing, the ocean and fresh seafood called me back to the West of Ireland, and consequently restarting the family business in 2014.

I established The Redbank Food Company in 2015. The company initially focussed primarily on export of oysters, mussels and clams, in 2015/2016 we were 100% export, to our main markets Dubai and China. As we are no longer farming oysters, we work with small shellfish farmers and fishermen locally.

In 2017, we realised that we were growing at a rate (particularly in China) that outstripped the supply of the farmers we were working with. We needed to look at another market that would support our business and work with theirs.

We started to trade in the domestic market following the establishment and promotion of our new brand "Flaggy Shore Oysters", participating in farmers markets, food festivals and

even music festivals. Soon we gained a reputation and developed a niche market for our smaller, petite oysters named "Flaggy Shore Dainty Oysters". Word got out, chefs started calling and suddenly there was a demand for these oysters in high-end restaurants in Ireland, London, Malta and Germany.

The Tours and Experiences for us started quite organically. A friend that was a tour guide asked if he could bring a group of Americans that were on an exclusive tour of Ireland for an impromptu tour into the building to see the oysters, as they were passing and the weather was bad. Shortly after, we received a number of enquiries from people providing food tours in nearby Galway City who were developing producer tours.

So we started dipping our toes, as it were, into the area of welcoming groups or individuals into the holding facility and dispatch centre. What started as an informal introduction to what we do and opening some oysters and entertaining, soon became provision of education on the local geology and history, the biology of oysters and how they are farmed and an overview of the industry. A significant barrier to consumers buying oysters in a fishmongers or supermarket is the inability to open them, a skill that we in the industry take for granted. Hence, the teaching of the skill of shucking (opening) oysters became key to the experience. The Shucking workshop involves the experience of consumers shucking their own oysters at big rustic tables in the factory and pairing the oysters with wine. All throughout the experience we are telling our story or finding out about theirs. We enjoy sharing our knowledge, but more importantly, the visitors enjoy hearing it.

Before long we realised that we had created an additional product within the business, food experiences. We approached a number of high-end tour companies that wish to show their guests a 'behind the scene' experience in a working Irish seafood business. We were also approached to join a developing Irish Seafood Trail "Taste the Atlantic" which enabled us to avail of Tourism industry insights and training. As our Experiences got more popular we started to promote them on various other platforms such as Travelling Spoon, Find Your Food Adventures, Viator, Tripadvisor and Airbnb Experiences.

Our "Shuck Off" Oyster Experience comprised 10% of our overall business in its first year in 2018, in 2019 it grew to 25% of our business, and was on target this year to grow between 40-50% prior to Covid 19.

In comparison to export, this Oyster experience allows us to operate on a much smaller production volume with a much higher profit margin. It requires little capital investment although a wealth of human capital and knowledge investment. There are fewer costs involved, aside from our time and experience. It works well side by side with the wholesale market and acts as a buffer to when the wholesale market fluctuates as it inevitably does.

Along with running the family business and meeting visitors, I am the secretary for the local Burren Food Trail, under the umbrella of the local Burren Ecotourism Network. This role involves working and collaborating with a number of local food producers, farmers and restaurants in promoting the region and its gastronomy.

I am also involved in the community organisation “Cuan Beo” (Irish for “Living Bay”), whose mission is about reconnecting the land and sea in the catchment area of Galway Bay through education and community programmes, as well as the restoration of the famous native oyster beds in the bay.

Through engaging in Food Tourism Experiences, I have seen it benefit our business on many levels. Together with my involvement in the aforementioned organisations, this ignited my interest in my Nuffield topic, allowing me to delve deeper into how Food Tourism and Experiences can further benefit both our industry and other similar local rural industries.

My Nuffield Journey started with the CSC conference in Iowa, March 2019. My Global Focus Programme brought me to Washington DC, Florida, Mexico, Brazil, Netherlands and New Zealand.

Additionally, my personal travels brought me to the US, Scotland, Cornwall, Wales and Italy and around Ireland.

Although this report is a culmination of thoughts from all my travels and more in depth conversations with industry personnel and leaders in both tourism and aquaculture, I feel in many ways my Nuffield journey is only beginning. The last two years have not only been about investigating food tourism, but also looking at all food production and indeed the world with fresher eyes and an inquisitive mind. A frequent question posed on our GFP was, “What am I seeing and hearing, and perhaps more importantly, what am I not seeing and hearing?”

The reflecting and questioning continues...

# GFP\_ Global Focus Programme or Global Food Perspective?



If using the Halls and Sharples (2003) definition of Food tourism as “Visitation to primary and secondary producers...experiencing the attributes of specialist Food Production region are the primary motivating factor for travel” then perhaps one could argue that the entire GFP

and Nuffield programme encapsulates “Food Tourism”. By visiting other producers globally to learn of their production methods, challenges and successes. To gain an understanding on the global production of food, regardless of the specification.

What was interesting along my travels was that although there was wide interest in the topic of food tourism, the perceptions of food tourism was simply a concept of a destination known for its food, whereas agritourism is often seen as something different. Food tourism, promoted and fronted primarily by chefs and food trails, using local products and promoted by tourism agencies, looking from the visitors point of view, whereas agritourism was a way of diversifying and seen as an income generator by industry. The term pesca tourism did not come up in many places, suggesting that it is still a relatively recent term and not widely practised.

In most countries visited while on My Global Focus Programme, I questioned as to what the thoughts were on food tourism or agritourism. In most cases, the answer was yes there is potential to explore that more, but in most cases there were no such policies in place, only examples of where businesses and farms had somewhat diversified into tourism and an interest from governments as to whether it is something they should be exploring. The conversation often arose around the disconnection between consumers and primary producers.

Long before it was called agritourism, many farms would offer B&B in one of their guest rooms or in a converted shed or stables. Produce would be sold in farmers markets, and in both incidences the farmer, wife or whoever was greeting guests would answer questions by the inquisitive customer or visitors as to how the food was produced, or the locality or the farm, educating the consumer, giving them a behind the scenes look and shortening the gap for them between production and consumption. By opening their doors, it added to another form of sometimes sporadic revenue when things were quieter or leaner. Also, in some particular tourist areas, a spare room or converted shed could provide as much an income as the farm itself.

At a conference on farm diversification in Wales in September 2019, a lot of the presentations or stands were offering information on glamping ideas, of pitching a yurt or placing a log cabin or small dwelling in the corner of a field to obtain additional revenue. Discussions were had regarding how much of an investment there would be and how long it would take to make the investment back and turn it into a profit making revenue stream. However, there can be a risk of over flooding the market and reducing profit or revenue when everyone is looking at doing the same form of diversification.

However, one of the interesting presentations was from the Red Shepherdess, an Instagram sensation for documenting her life on a sheep farm, who has developed a business with her family whereby the farm is used as a place for team building and communication programmes for executive and business leaders. Although the programmes are not so much covering how the food is produced directly, participants do gain an insight to this. More so, the family are using the farm as a landscape to facilitate participants to process and discover their leadership styles. It showcases that the farm can be an educational landscape for personal development and discovery as well as learning of food production. I would question if the same could be done on oyster farms as well as sheep farms?

# A Glance at the Irish Oyster Industry and its market proposition



The history of Oysters in Ireland goes back thousands of years. The original native species (*Ostrea edulis*) grew in the shallow bays all around the coast of Ireland and at various times provided a nutritious food source as well as a lucrative commercial crop.

As the years went by this species died out in many areas around the coast for a variety of reasons – overfishing; pollution; and disease, with the result that nowadays there are only some small pockets of these oysters left in bays along the west coast of Ireland. There is still a commercial bed in Tralee Bay, but for all others the populations are sporadic.

Thankfully there are some active programmes going ahead, with good success, to restore these native beds, particularly in Galway Bay.

In the 1950s the French, who were the largest producers and consumers in the world, introduced a new Oyster from Japan – *Crassostrea gigas* – to their waters. This species proved to be highly resilient and grew there, over time more or less replacing the original native oyster. It also had the advantage of being a faster grower and while not as valuable as the native oyster, it quickly gained popularity.

In the 1970s this oyster was introduced to Ireland and oyster industry changed from being a wild caught fishery to a farmed one. The initial take up was slow, with only a few small farms around the coast. However by the 1990s the industry had grown considerably, and the oyster farms became larger and production grew.

With a relatively short life of farming oysters, the Irish oyster industry has changed dramatically over the last 15-20 years. Not so much in production, although there has been the introduction of new technologies, but more in the access to more markets and in how the industry markets the product has changed. Between 2014 and 2018, the industry grew by

60% by value but only 29% in volume (Bord Bia research on Irish Oyster Exports). This has been assisted and promoted by BIM, Bord Bia, and also the farmers by getting behind the marketing of their product and refusing external factors to dictate the price.

This was not always the case. Up until recent years, the majority of Irish oysters farmed were harvested and shipped in bulk to France to be sold on as “French Oysters” to the markets there and throughout Europe. The problem with this was if the French needed them there was a steady market with a reasonable price, but if they had enough of their own production there was little or no market for the Irish ones. The Irish oyster growers were at the mercy of the French in terms of market price and although the French still bought Irish oysters it was at very low prices, essentially they were dumped onto the market.

Because of the quality of the water they were grown in the quality of the oysters was regarded as being of very good quality, so this was more frustrating on farmers that had little say on price.

In a report highlighted by Renwick 2015 “the industry needs to focus on adding value within Ireland. This will improve the viability of the sector, reduce the reliance on French markets and ensure the sector contributes more to the Irish economy”. The report also highlighted that in terms of growth, producers individually and the industry collectively were facing the choice between focussing on higher value production or simply increasing production more along ‘bulk commodity’ lines. Whilst there is a place for both systems in Ireland it is clear that the greater proportion of the value added that can be kept in Ireland, the greater the positive impact the sector will have on the Irish economy.

For the wholesale market, Ireland started to look at how the French and US competitors were branding the oysters. They packaged them in wooden baskets like the French, along with putting the farm or bay of origin name on the outside of a box. With this branding and marketing also came the task of telling your story, where the oysters were farmed, whether it is a large farm or small niche farm. Promoting the quality of the water and the landscape that surrounds the bay, which influences the flavour of the oysters. This in some cases progressed onto “tasting notes”, as is done with wine. Anything that could be used in creating Unique Selling Points (USP’s) and could set the business apart from its global competitors (especially the French) and attract a stronger price and stronger margin than the bulk



wholesale. Marketing Irish oysters, apart from the quality, was also able to use overseas perception of Ireland being green, with clean air and waters, piggybacking on the previous work of the tourism industry in marketing to overseas tourists, combined to the marketing strategies of the likes Kerrygold and the dairy industry.

With the support of BIM and Bord Bia, Irish oyster companies were positioned well to embark on emerging export markets like Asia and the Middle East with a brand and a story behind them as individual companies but also collectively creating an awareness for the quality of Irish oysters.

Although still to this day a lot of the product goes in bulk to France with over 74% of production being exported to France up to 2019, a decrease of 6% since 2018.

In more recent years China has become the big market for the Irish oysters and they are regarded there as being of equal if not better quality to any others in the world.

In fact, when the Chinese market for Oysters was developing in the last 10 years, the initial request by many importers was for well-known French oysters. In a part of the world where “imitation can be the highest form of flattery”. Copycat versions of Irish brands of oysters have since been found in the Chinese marketplace, showcasing an increase in a valued reputation of origin and quality. This has also reflected in the market price, with Irish oysters on a similar price point to the top French brands.

Popularity has also greatly increased on the domestic market, encouraging more oyster farmers, both large and small scale to brand their oysters, with the result that there are now many different brands of oysters being sold in Ireland as well globally. Ireland is slowly gaining a reputation for quality oysters as well as beef and dairy.

In more recent years, demand has outstripped supply, as the constraints in market expansion has been more about trying to survive “force majeure” situations (for example mass mortalities caused by extreme weather, disease or algal blooms) resulting in lower volumes.

It requires the industry to adapt and diversify further. As with ourselves and our “Shuck Off Oyster Experiences”, there are a number of oyster farms beginning to diversify into the area of tours or experiences. Food Tourism experiences acts as a way of further building, growing and supporting the reputation for Irish oysters at home and abroad.

# Connecting Food & Tourism

Ireland is situated in the North Atlantic, It is the third largest island in Europe and the twentieth largest on Earth. It is made up of a total of 32 counties, 6 in Northern Ireland with a population of 1.8m, governed by the UK, and 26 in the Republic with a population of 4.8m.

Its total land area mass is 84,421 km<sup>2</sup> which includes both Northern Ireland and the Republic. And 2,797 km of coastline. However, Ireland's marine territory extends approximately 880,000km<sup>2</sup> (220 million acres) beyond our coastline, more than 10 times our land mass.

Due to Ireland's size, it has always been an exporter, both in its people and produce.

In 2019, Irish agri-food and drink exports had increased by an estimated 7% to approximately €13 bn, with seafood exports worth €605 million, a 6% increase on 2018 – (Bord Bia, February 2020)

Of that €605m, aquaculture was worth more than 25% at €172m. Of this, €112m was for finfish and €60m for shellfish

According to Tourism Ireland, over 11.2 million tourists visited Ireland in 2019, similar to 2018, despite disruptions by Brexit. "Tourism is an industry that generates €7.5billion in revenue and supports the employment of 260,000 people" (Failte Ireland, January 2020)

What happens if you combine both industries!

"When combined with tourism, gastronomy has a natural competitive advantage, not easily replicated when specific to both a location and culture" (Mulcahy, 2015) (2)

By its nature the two industries work harmoniously together even if not always recognised in doing so.

Tourists coming to visit Ireland and sampling some of the food and drink on offer or participating in food based experiences, can be inclined to purchase products to bring home and better still, order online from the producer directly, all from the comfort of their own kitchen table. As a consumer, they know exactly where this food has come from, they have the connection or memories as to where they first tasted it and have experiences to tell. For the producer, it is often sold for a better margin than the wholesale bulk price, they also know

where their food is going and have the added benefit of receiving the appreciation and credibility for the hard work involved in producing.

Now more than ever, we are positioning our businesses for this. There has been a development and push by governmental agencies for ecommerce platforms, with the use of social media and with many businesses creating a brand around their provenance and family story, the gap between producer and consumer has been and continues to be shortened. Food tourism can act as a vehicle for this.

Likewise, through the promotion of the likes of Kerrygold, or through promotion of the food and drink industries by Bord Bia, whose function is to provide market insights and promote Ireland's food and drink in overseas markets. This helps create an awareness about a clean and green Ireland that consumers may wish to visit. To come to the direct source of this delicious food that has been marketed to them in styled images through Instagram, bloggers, vloggers and other forms of social media and print publications.

The Oyster industry is in the unique position of regularly marketing ourselves overseas using the green fields and clean waters image to give us competitive advantage over the oysters and shellfish of other countries. This is not always important to the bulk importers that are price conscious and not concerned with provenance or point of differences. However, where chefs include the place of origin on menus it is important to differentiate Irish oysters from oysters from France, Holland, Australia, Namibia, US and China.

As businesses scale to the export of produce with a growing reputation for quality, so do the costs associated with export; costs such as packaging, freight, trade tariffs and importing costs and distribution costs. Factors that are constantly reducing the bottom line margin for the producer, fisherman and farmer. The only way to compete with this reducing margin is through economy of scale.

By engaging in food tourism, be that supporting the restaurants and chefs that are involved in portraying Ireland with a more diverse food culture and a powerful provenance story, or indeed by us as producers opening our doors on some level to tourists, we are no longer sending the value with airlines to distributors in international markets, but keeping it in our local communities in food service, accommodation providers and in our businesses.

At a World Food Travel Association presentation on food tourism, a presentation was given on Icelandic cod, and how by marketing the fish that is landed on and associated with the history of this small island, has recreated an international reputation that now ensures it is marketed as “Icelandic Cod” globally. By the Icelandic fishing industry engaging in the telling of its history and the story with this fish, this has impacted on the economic value of the cod, which has helped in creating a sustainable industry that is attracting younger generations.

What if, the reputation for quality Irish oysters or seafood that is appreciated by chefs and wholesale importers as a point of difference around the world, was readily known to by the visitors coming to Ireland? That our reputation was not just for Guinness. Imagine if the global perception was, that if you want good quality seafood, go to that small island in the North West Atlantic, where its marine territory is 10 times greater than its land mass and it has over 2,500 km of coastline.

“Food Tourism is one of the prime examples of a (supposed) niche product that allows visitors to take in all the relevant aspects of a destination; product, process, place and people” (Mason & Mahoney, 2007)

# Food Tourism Support and Policy

The attractions of Ireland and Scotland are often compared. They have a similar climate, rugged breath-taking scenery and strong culture and characters! In fact, some tour companies focus solely on these markets. Both countries are trying to promote food tourism cultures, but have approached it differently.

Scotland has worked strongly on policy and has an industry led action plan that promotes food tourism throughout Scotland, bringing together the Scottish government, industry and agencies - Scotland Food and Drink and Scottish Tourism Alliance. They have set up a food tourism leadership board comprising all stakeholders working together to promote and increase spend on Scottish food and drink within Scotland as well as supporting the current agri sector diversify into tourism through a framework of the agri-tourism monitor farms.

Ireland, leans more towards vision led through communities on the ground such as food trails and farmers markets with the support from the state agencies such as Failte Ireland.

“We are 10 years into a 30 year plan to create Ireland as a food tourism destination whereby people will travel to Ireland for the food”. (In discussions with Mulcahy, January 2020)

In 2010, a representative working group formed, led by Failte Ireland, and comprised of industry stakeholders and government agencies, developed a national food tourism implementation framework where the overall vision for food tourism was that “Ireland is recognised by visitors for the availability, quality and value of our local and regional food experiences which evokes a unique sense of place, culture and hospitality” (Failte Ireland, 2010, 16).

This implementation framework was promoted through communities in contrast to creating policies. It led to the appointment of 22 ‘food champions’ or ambassadors in 2015. “The purpose of Ireland's 22 food ambassadors or food champions is to actively influence food tourism in their areas. To educate, develop, and to connect the dots, thus ensuring that what is promised to the visitor is what is delivered, and that they are an essential local connection to what is happening on the ground” (Mulcahy 2019).

It was a bottom-up approach, not connected with policy but with community interaction.

In contrast, Italy, long renowned for food tourism and established in agritourism, has taken a policy approach. As in Caroline Miller's 2012 Nuffield report "Selling Farm Experiences", she highlights the Italian context and the role of quality assurance, policy and licencing of 'Agriturismo'. Caroline reports all Italian tourism and leisure businesses must have a licence to operate, but that the agriturismos need an additional licence – only awarded if they are also a working farm. Under this licence, the owner can earn up to three quality stars – the first two are for the quality of the facilities and service, but the third can only be attained if the owner has a qualification in agriculture, horticulture or agronomy, is a bona-fide farmer and has passed a test on their ability to teach visitors about their farm practices, the countryside and food production. In return for the level of approved quality, the agrotourismos can receive government tax breaks. This policy ensures quality visitor experiences, but also facilitates diversification for farms in an economic manner.

In a small country like Ireland, the phrase "it's not what you know but who you know" often comes into effect and perhaps helped in the promotion of this bottom up approach. In recent years, through the tourism bodies, Ireland has been divided into a number of tourism market regions; The Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Ancient East, Dublin and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands. Each region with a marketing strategy to welcome and retain visitors. Some of Ireland's 9 established Food Trails feed into these marketing strategies.

These food trails are platforms for food producers to avail and connect with in engaging directly with the public around food. Primarily led by communities of food producers, farmers, fishermen in regions and supported through state agencies and tourism businesses.

A food trail comes in many forms, from a mere listing of producers and experiences to a calendar of local producer led events. These are often bottom led approaches. Scattered throughout the country around rural and urban communities.

Support from government and tourism agencies is vital to these networks because for many of these food producer-led initiatives, the challenge is that tourism is not the primary job of the business, producing food is. However, tourism though often regarded as a secondary part to the business is often the more lucrative.

Failte Ireland's Food and Drink Strategy 2018-2023 highlights its commitment to support experiences in food tourism through its support in developing visitor experience development plans for the country.

One such visitor experience is Taste the Atlantic. Due to the success of the Wild Atlantic Way, in 2017 a collaboration between BIM and Failte Ireland brought about "Taste the Atlantic Seafood Trail". This is a food trail centred on aquaculture production, for the purpose of promotion and education of aquaculture production, as well as the promotion of consumption of seafood in Ireland.

Incorporating 22 aquaculture producers from oyster farmers to mussel farmers, smoked salmon producers to abalone farmers are on a listing. Failte Ireland facilitated training and support, in teaching the business of tourism to an industry centred around production and export.

In 2017, The European Commission through FARNET (fisheries area network) brought out a set of guidelines as to how fisheries and tourism can be linked and developed. The funds for this initiative were provided through the EMFF and were administered through local FLAG Groups (Fisheries Local Action Groups) throughout Europe.

The current programme runs from 2017 – 2020. The purpose of this programme was to support tourism in rural coastal areas by including the fishing community. Throughout Europe, coastal tourism often bypasses the actual fishing community that make their yearly living in the region. With it becoming increasingly difficult to make a decent living, local communities can no longer depend on fishing alone.

The programme intended to look at a way of promoting diversification amongst the fishing communities to provide additional income. A further programme is envisaged to start from 2021/2022. Through the FLAG there have been many great developments in the areas of Pesca Tourism around Europe. The structures and platforms are now in place to support rural coastal communities to make an economic impact in their areas.

It is important to have a bottom up approach in any trail. It requires the producers to market the trail through their stories, product and character. It should require standards and policy,

as in Italy or Scotland, so that the visitors are guaranteed a quality experience ensuring the trails viability and sustainability.

A case within Ireland is the Burren Food Trail. In order for a producer or food service business to become a valuable member of the trail, they must become a member of the Burren Ecotourism network and adhere to the Code of Practice for sustainable tourism, which is a common set of core principles that can be adopted by all businesses in the region irrespective of size and activity. The code of practice includes 10 key areas of good practice, in Environment (energy, water, waste-water and waste management), Visitor communications, sustainable transport and conservation.

For food tourism to flourish, state agencies are required as the wrap around support, such as funding for promotion and training, and encouragement for producers to diversify. Ultimately it requires an online presence whereby visitors travelling to Ireland can research ahead and book their experiences. That is the only way it will be seen as a collective experience from the visitors perspective, as opposed to a listing of farmers and fishermen offering experiences.

However if it is bookable online it must be conscious of online reviews and social proofing, once again quality is at the forefront. The food industry has experience in promoting quality Irish food overseas to importers and purchasers, now is an opportunity to promote it to our visitors.



# The role of self-guided visitor centres versus Experience Led.

There are many ways and many examples of how one opens the door and engages with visitors, be it directly or indirectly as part of an experience. The important piece is the pairing of this diversification with your personality, your time and your current business. The author looked at a number of different approaches. From an educational perspective there can be clearly two ways.

A) The experience is self-guided, with examples such as aquariums, zoos, visitor centres, petting zoos. Here you can cater for large numbers, operating on a large scale often requiring large investment over time. Attracting tourism with the largest number of paying visitors becomes the main business. Case examples that I visited for this included many aquariums and the Eden Project in Cornwall as well as the cases below.

B) The bespoke visitor experience, small exclusive tours such as Winery Tours, Fairy walk with a Pig (a real experience with a real pig!), exclusive experiences that give you quality time with the business owner or trained staff. This area has grown more in recent years with travellers looking for a unique, bespoke experience. Attracting lower numbers, but viable through higher prices and often requiring lower investment, apart from time.

Faillte Ireland, in their Food and Drink Strategy 2018-2023, highlighted 4 four main components that almost every tourism experience can be broken down into:

1. The product must be authentic.
2. The service must be of high quality.
3. The story must be distinctive.
4. The narration must have a unique character.

It was on the basis of these components that the author observed and tested the principle of best practice on her travels.

#### CASE STUDY 1. HUKA Prawn Park, Taupo, New Zealand.



*Huka Prawn Park, Taupo , New Zealand. April 2019*

(See prawns! Hug prawns! Fish for prawns! Eat Prawns!)

New Zealand has long been known for its adventure tourism industry. Huka Prawn Park is situated in the middle of the North Island near the adventure town of Taupo. The town itself is situated on Lake Taupo and gets regular visitors for water skiing, paragliding, kayaking and jet skiing. It is a town, one might say, centred around aqua tourism.

Huka Prawn Park can only be described as an aqua activity and theme park centred around...prawns! It has an educational factor and entertainment factor aimed at visitors year round.

It is situated on 6 hectares of parkland by the Waikato River, next to a geothermal power station. It uses the waste geothermal heat from the station, to heat up the fresh water from the Waikato River to 26 degrees that provides the warm habitat for the tropical prawn, the Giant Malaysian River Prawn (*Macrobrachium Rosenbergii*).

It was chosen due to the fact it is a warm water prawn and would not survive outside the park's thermal waters but also for commercial production, as the female spawns up to 5 times a year and can produce up to 50,000 eggs. This breed grows fast and is ready to harvest at about 8 months old.

It was originally set up as a commercial prawn farm in 1987 by Richard Sinclair, of Aquatech Farms Ltd. Starting with a number of ponds before developing a hatchery, within 5 years they had a total of 19 ponds and an ability to produce 5 tonnes of prawns per year.

In 2006 the business expanded in the tourism area to incorporate an activity loop from the hatchery to the ponds. It is now a mix of aquaculture education, and an aqua activity park. The ponds have a series of walking routes around them and boardwalks with covered areas and heated seats so that it can be open year round. For NZ\$75, a family can spend a day there, including a half hour educational tour around the nursery and hatchery, learn how to fish for prawns, and spend the day fishing for prawns or participating in activities.

Once prawns are caught, visitors can bring them to the restaurant on site (which has a seating capacity of 400, to give an idea of the scale) to have them prepared and cooked. Alternatively visitors can also cook the prawns themselves on a BBQ at one of the special cooking huts located around the site.

When not occupied with prawns, there are stand up paddle boards, pedal boats, water based activities, trout ponds where visitors can feed hungry trout using the feed provided on their site map that they receive on entrance. There are treasure hunts and nature walks. All the while with educational signs relating to the aquaculture and native NZ flora and fauna as well as fun facts by the mascot “Shaun the Prawn”.



*Educational and child friendly signs around Huka Prawn Park*

## CASE STUDY 2. Island Creek Oysters, (ICO) Duxbury Massachusetts, USA



Located in Duxbury, MA. It is a boating, yachting and sailing community that is sleepy in the winter and buzzing in the summer.

ICO has their own oyster farm and also distributes oysters for other farms. Duxbury is the largest area of small farm holdings in the US, while Washington and Chesapeake have the largest producing farms.

ICO Farm initially started around 25 years ago, by founder, Skip Bennett, and by his own words they have experienced overnight success after 25 years of hard work.

They have a young dynamic team and have attracted staff by creating a fun and quirky atmosphere. They also link in with the marine science course at a local university (In conversation with Chris Shearman CEO, January 2020)

It is obvious they have worked on building an extensive business rather than just a producing farm.

They have various components of their business:

- A hatchery and farm. The hatchery is in operation 2-3yrs, producing algae, spat and also experimenting with clams and scallops.
- Wholesale to 700 restaurants across the US
- B2C; home delivery across the US
- Tours / Experiences
- Own Restaurants
- Involvement in foundations in Haiti and Zanzibar



The tours experience have been running over 8-10 yrs. They started with a boat that can carry six people. In 2019 they doubled their capacity, now they can take twelve people per tour. The experience, which lasts approximately two hours has a focus on education while offering participants an exciting time. It comprises a tour of the hatchery, a boat ride out around the bay and the farm, during which time crew on the boat shuck oysters for the guests and talk about the region. Visitors can bring their own beer or wine. For this experience, visitors will pay \$100 pp. They operate 4 tours a day, from the months of May- Sept, and in 2019 had about 4000 visitors.

Their approach to selling the experiences is interesting. They pick a date to release the tickets and go on sale. All contacts in their database are notified, there is promotion through the restaurants, magazine advertising and with anyone that purchases from them directly. By the time the season was starting they had sold 75% of their available tour slots.

They have now also built a “Raw Oyster Bar” in the courtyard where people can just walk or sit before or after their tour, and enjoy oysters with wine or champagne. There is an element of luxury while still in a rustic natural setting.



*Island Creek Oysters, Duxbury, Massachusetts, USA*

In both approaches, a fun and entertaining approach was used to influence people in eating Seafood. Huka Prawn farm is aimed at families and mass volumes, whereas ICO offers niche experiences aimed primarily at adults. The prices of the experiences are very different with ICO offering a luxury experience in a rustic style, With Huka Prawn Farm offering an entire

tourism experience for the family. In both instances the tourism aspect has added significantly to their bottom line.

### Collaboration and Education; Snapshots of other examples:

#### **Burren Farm Experience, Burren, Co. Clare, Ireland**

Bronagh O'Rourke and her husband Cathal launched Burren Farm Experience in 2019, and further developed in 2020, despite Covid restrictions and decrease in international tourists. Bronagh married into the farm and decided to mix her passion for Health, wellness and working with people with farm life. Bronagh has collaborated with wellness coaches, yoga teachers, food producers to offer visitors a chance to experience wellness days, craft days and programmes showcasing local produce in the surroundings of their own farm in the Burren in Co. Clare. These offerings have supported Bronagh in creating an emotional connection with their visitors, providing a stepping stone to launching their own brand of beef and in doing so creating a potential customer base while promoting her farm the the produce that comes from it. In conversation with Bronagh she highlighted that her initial aim was to open the farm gate and see what the market was looking for, however one of the key parts of her success in diversification has been collaboration with other businesses.

#### **The National Lobster Hatchery in Padstow, Cornwall, UK**



The lobster hatchery, is a self-guided experience with educational videos was initially set up as a conservation project. Currently an established social enterprise, It's three goals are Stock enhancement programmes, research programmes education of the public about the fishing industry, its sustainability problems and its solutions. The hatchery is involved in breeding and protecting lobsters to release back into the wild, working with local lobster fishermen. The visitor experience acts as an educational platform and revenue generator for the hatchery. An interesting collaboration the hatchery has with local

restaurants on their “Buy one set one free” initiative, whereby when consumers upon ordering a lobster at the restaurant a percentage is donated to the hatchery closing the gap between consumption and conservation.. Connecting the consumer to the environment and industry in a successful way.

### **Taste the Atlantic Salmon Experience, Lisdoonvarna, Co. Clare, Ireland**

Birgitta Curtin has been producing and marketing her Organic Irish Smoked Salmon globally since 1989. She set up her first visitor centre in 1995 with tastings and a video on the smoking process of the salmon. Since then the offerings have developed and in 2019 she opened the Taste the Atlantic salmon experience.

This experience incorporates a self-guided educational tour into the world of Irish salmon farming and the smoking process. The tour takes visitors through the environmental, heritage, cultural and culinary perspective as well as educating consumers on the industry, all before leading them to the gourmet food store where they can taste the hot and cold smoked salmon as well as other local artisan food products. It partners education with experience.

### **George Cleave: Fishmonger, Port Isaac, Cornwall, UK**

Before setting up his fish merchant business, supplying some of the top seafood restaurants in the popular Cornwall Peninsula, George Cleave, a young fishmonger, launched his business with Port Isaac Seafood School. Located in the old RNLI building, George started providing fish selection and filleting classes and workshops - educating consumers on how to select, prepare and cook some of the best fish and in particular ones that consumers may not have been as aware about.

Through this practice George gained a strong following and a customer base that would purchase from him directly. He expanded in facilitating educational workshops for chefs in local restaurants, which ultimately provided a reputation that encouraged him to set up his wholesale business. Throughout the interesting conversation with George, he explained his passion for educating consumers and chefs on fish, in particular less common species and how this led to the growth of his reputation and business.

## **Moving with the times..... Virtually**

An aspect of experiences in food tourism that is increasingly popular and available is in the area of Virtual food tours. Restrictions due to Covid19 have accelerated this exponentially. Platforms such as 'Airbnb Experiences' and 'Travelling Spoon' are moving their offerings to virtual where the hosts are able to facilitate this. It is now easy to organise virtual farm visits, Virtual cooking demos and, in our business, virtual oyster shucking demonstrations, with consumers in Ireland and the US. In 2020, due to Covid19 restrictions, the Burren Food Fayre, which is in its 9th year, moved their traditional 2-day event to a virtual food fayre, facilitating 10 minute cookery demos and producers talks over 10 days.



# Food tourism as a beneficial educational tool to industry and communities

“Food tourism has been examined from the perspective that it can sustain regional identity, especially given the role it can play in rural regeneration and agricultural diversification, helping to forge closer relationships between production and consumption in the countryside”. (Everett & Aitchison, 2008)

Food tourism can be travelling to a region known for its gastronomy or engaging with food producers such as cheese makers, coffee roasters, chocolatiers or butchers through meet-the-maker events and attending food festivals. It can be walking the farm with a farmer under the guise of agritourism, or hauling lobster pots with a fisherman under the guise of pesca tourism. It can be catching prawns in-between pedalling boats around prawn ponds or experiencing an exclusive behind-the-scenes look at a working oyster farm. Regardless of what it is called, it is the direct connection and the ensuing discussion between the producer and consumer and how it can create a positive impact to a number of benefactors; Industry, environment and conservation, communities, visitors, hosts, the overall perception of food production and a country and its food.

## A) Industry

Regardless of the primary production sector, food tourism can be a vehicle to enhance the industry, working hand in hand in getting the correct information and industry perspective out there through direct engagement with consumers. In this regard, producers are shortening the gap with the consumer and creating a case for social licence to operate (SLO).

Often in the case of aquaculture (Salmon Farming and Oyster farming in particular), it can come under scrutiny in holiday areas as can be criticised for obstructing the coastal view for holidaymakers. If holidaymakers gain an insight into the importance of these industries, both economically and in the context of global food security, it lends itself to open dialogue where all options can be explored rather than ‘us and them’ conflict.

It can be an opportunity for the industry to experience first-hand the concerns of the public from the questions asked throughout an experience. This can give valuable insight of the consumers understanding of food production, where the gaps may be, and importantly, it can give the industry advance warning of misconceptions that may cause issues in public perception. This information should be fed back to industry bodies, with the producers acting as the linkage in the chain. This promotes the industry taking control of information fed out through media or campaigns, while addressing the direct concerns of consumers in a proactive rather than reactive approach.

Food Tourism Experiences educate the public through non formal interaction, and possibly teaching a new skill such as filleting fish, shucking oysters or herding sheep. It can highlight the value of protecting our seas and land, discuss the connection of land and sea and in particular in the case of oysters, the influence of Merroir (How the connection of land and sea influence the flavours of the oysters).

Food tourism offers the space to discuss environmental issues in an informal setting, promote the consumption of food and even lesser known products. It gives visitors an insight to another industry and lifestyle through fun engagement. It can be a platform to showcase the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities or threats to an industry. It can be a method to gain support for an industry and a platform to potentially attract new people into the industry. Like the case study of The National Lobster hatchery, it can be a platform to highlight conservation work or stewardship of land and sea.

## B) Local Communities

Local Communities are benefiting from food tourism, whether it's through the development of food trails, showcasing food festivals, or chefs wanting to locate locally produced food with low air miles, low food waste and an opportunity to promote their environmentally friendly ethos.

By coming together collectively, rural and urban communities are able to cross promote, support and create a wider perception of a region to be known for its food and drink. This support expands into the local hospitality sectors in accommodation providers and food

service. Local transport agencies and local service stations. By offering a reason to visit the area, the knock on effect to local rural and urban communities can be great.

“The challenge for Food and Tourism is how to harness the power of these locals, the people that call their locality their home (Mulcahy 2019)

Through Food trails or collective groups and collaboration, it is a great way of harnessing the power of these locals.

In the case of seafood, the ‘Taste the Atlantic’ trail has created a community of seafood producers up along the West Coast of Ireland. It is a platform to attract both overseas visitors and national visitors to lesser known coastal villages and towns. It promotes the quality of Irish seafood while providing unique activities in rural areas.

C) “Tomorrow's tourist wants dynamic escapist experiences, but at the same time social responsibility and authenticity” (Yeoman, 2008).

Through joining the dots to where their food comes from and perhaps learning a new skill, more and more consumers are engaging in and looking for unique Experiences in food. Experiences that will allow them to try something new that may also give them “bragging rights” to friends and family. At a conference hosted by Airbnb, they highlighted that of all activities being booked, 17% is related to food and drink and 13% nature while 33% was history-based.

However, the area that is growing and being promoted is in Food and Drink and Animal related activities, to such an extent that they have created a category for animal experiences. Everything from farm tours, cow safaris, picnics with curious sheep, Fairy pig walks, yoga with goats to beer tours with a dog! No idea is out of bounds and sometimes the more crazy the idea the more popular the tour.

Visitors want to feel close to nature and a perceived slower pace of life, something that is often associated with fishing, aquaculture or agriculture. There is now a generation of tourists looking for a more sustainable way of travel, and sustainable destination, while looking to switch off from the hustle and bustle and perhaps get a quieter place away from the constant ‘ping’ of the mobile phone.

#### D) For the hosts

Experiences in Food Tourism, can impact on the hosts / producers through a number of ways but in particular on a social and emotional level as well as an economic level.

Often, many farmers, fishermen and food producers work alone, or with small teams or family members. If one is a social and people person, it can be lonesome work operating with little human contact for the most part of your day, opening your door to visitors can counteract this, which will suit some personalities and not others.

These producers do not receive yearly performance reviews or told they are doing a good job or a pat on the back or financial bonuses, that one may receive in other industries. Your performance review comes in the form of your Profit & Loss at the end of the year, which is often impacted by external factors outside the realm of one's control. For those involved in food tourism experiences, it can be received in the satisfaction of welcoming visitors and through the reviews that they leave.

When reviews are positive, it can have encouraging effects on esteem and confidence of the host and acts as the virtual pat on the back, not received in day to day work.

It can be particularly beneficial in succession planning with older generations and can require them to be an active part and key player in the business. Experiences are generally less physical work and an opportunity for someone who is engaged and has worked in an industry for the best part of their life, to pass on some of that knowledge and that skill, all in an informal and personal setting. It is an opportunity, through engaging with visitors through stories or discussing changes within the industry. It can be a way of skill sharing and retaining

traditions or at least an appreciation for traditional methods and culture.

Where food tourism can have large impacts on a producer can be on an economic level. There is the advantage of advanced online payment which can ease cash flow.



*Group Of visitors attending "Shuck Off" Oyster Experience, 6th March 2020*

# Conclusions

“Our wealth and potential as an island begins in the earth beneath us and the sea around us”

– Food Wise 2025.

The argument could also be made that our wealth also includes in telling our food story through direct interaction with consumers.

The Conference on Global Food Security and FAO highlight the disconnection between consumers and producers, indeed it is a subject that often arose on Nuffield travels.

Food tourism is a solution to this and can act as a mechanism to reconnect the consumer to the food producer, through experience based tourism with producers, markets, food festivals, agritourism, pesca tourism, or gastronomic tourism.

It facilitates the opportunity to educate the consumer on the origin of produce, while can also create awareness on the conservation work of farmers and fishermen often being implemented as part of daily practices.

As a result, the consumer has the knowledge to make more informed choices when it comes to their selection and consumption of food.

To combine tourism and primary production (be that aquaculture, agriculture, fisheries or food production) is not a new concept but acts as a viable diversification. Food Tourism Experiences place a value on knowledge, skill and experience of the producer as well as the end product.

There are different approaches to the diversification that producers can take, one can diversify fully into tourism with that being the main income generator often requiring more capital investment but aimed at larger volumes of visitors.

Or it can be niche experiences involving little capital input, but plenty of time and character in creating unique behind the scenes look into a business. One can request a higher price for this experience but usually more exclusive in visitor numbers. It can showcase a regular day-to-day job that we take for granted or it can be wild and wacky.

The author believes that it is the niche experiences that will survive and be more popular post Covid19, as visitors will want to experience remote areas as opposed to mass tourism in the immediate future.

However, the quality of services plays an important role in attracting repeat custom, but also in creating an international reputation for quality, consistency, authenticity, and value for money. One can implement Italy's system of licencing of agrotourismos or Scotland's system of implementing a framework policy, it can be a code of practice that everyone signs up to such as the Burren food trail with the Burren Ecotourism network. Until a policy or framework is introduced, the success of the food tourism industry relies on social proofing through online reviews. When they are good, they are very, very good but when they are bad, it is horrid!! Airbnb recently highlighted that 60% of customers globally leave reviews of their experiences.

The author notes that throughout travelling and meeting with hosts, when discussing this research topic, it was frequently commented that Ireland had good food tourism and was ahead in areas such as food trails etc. The overseas reputation was stronger than anticipated but this was generally with food influencers or agencies. It showcased the amount of work done in this area but there is much left to do for this reputation to trickle down to visitors that are spending the money in the country.

No doubt 2020 has been a challenging year. Through Covid 19 we saw the world change in ways that we never imagined, with foundations in logistics and travel shook to their core. When the author started writing this report, it was primarily about diversifying into tourism, all of a sudden in the space of a week that industry disappeared. Instead of our world being tangible and experience-based it became more insular and virtual.

Instead of getting on planes, people could click a button and participate in a guided walk of a shore or farm through virtual farm tours and cooking classes. Experiences in food tourism are happening, just in a new way.

Throughout it all, across the globe, food became one of the biggest forms of comfort. As new normals continue to be discovered and travel bans lifted, people will move, people will eat, it is up to us to discover how to encourage them to come to our community and eat our food.

# Recommendations

The author makes the following recommendations

- As our Tourism Agency - Failte Ireland - has now divided the country into marketable regions such as The Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Ancient East, Hidden Heartlands, it has created an umbrella that allows primary producers to connect directly with the consumers. The author suggests that this connection should be promoted more through direct marketing by Bord Bia, BIM as well as the tourism agencies. Collaboration of various food producers within the country should be encouraged and promoted as a collective marketing tool for Ireland's Food and Drink Industry.
- Ireland's Primary food industries along with the various agricultural, aquaculture and fisheries bodies need to recognize experiences in food tourism as a potentially viable alternative to scaling in production. By supporting these diversifications through training, funding, recognition and marketing it assists in creating alternative sustainable businesses in rural areas.
- Food Tourism per se is currently an unregulated area. From an industry perspective in the area of agri or pesca tourism, the author recommends that a form of Quality assurance mark needs to be established, ensuring that the quality assurance goes beyond the social proofing of online reviews and is also monitored by a competent overseeing body. A bad experience, if not providing quality and value for money to the visitor, can potentially harm the national reputation. There needs to be a standard, framework or code of practice in place, examples of which would be the Italian Agriturismo, Scotland's Food Tourism Framework model or the Burren Ecotourism Code of Conduct.
- A bookable Platform for Ireland's food and drink experiences should be developed, allowing visitors to see the experiences available prior to travel and booking straight away. Listings only work so much, customers need to be able to book and hosts need to feel the traction to encourage better practice. This can be connected to the quality framework.

- The Taste the Atlantic has been developed to showcase Irish Aquaculture along the west coast. The author feels that this could be developed further to encompass both culinary and cultural aspects of life along the trail. There is potential for it to have real impact by strengthening the experiences both on the aquaculture farms, the inshore fishing industry and in their communities.
- The author recognises that the limitations of this report did not facilitate delving further into the economic impacts of diversifying from commodity or export markets into food tourism experiences. Perhaps a further report could be carried out to investigate this and evaluate the true economic impact on businesses.
- Finally, while the author's main focus was on marine food tourism she recognises from her previous work with UNESCO in Africa that food tourism has a major potential to provide revenue to households in developing countries and should be supported in an international development context, contributing to SDGs 11 and 8. To enable this, an Inter Departmental strategy on how Ireland delivers on the SDG's would bring rigor and evidence to this recommendation.



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- National Lobster Hatchery, Padstow, UK
- Eden project, Cornwall UK