

BIM EMFAF Work Programme Project Report 2022

BENEFICIARY:	Bord Iascaigh Mhara
PROJECT REFERENCE NUMBER:	22/KGS/DIS-BG010-BR051
NAME OF PROJECT:	Taste the Atlantic
IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD:	1st January to 31st December 2022

Project Scope

The Taste the Atlantic (TTA) initiative will be critical to creating better understanding, acceptance, and public support of aquaculture along the western seaboard. The successful coexistence of aquaculture and tourism must be promoted to the public to ensure that the 'social licence' for aquaculture endures and that it is abundantly clear that aquaculture and leisure activities and tourism are not mutually exclusive. Failure to deliver positive public engagement about aquaculture and marine tourism could contribute to negative public perceptions, opposition to sustainable development and difficulties for the industry in applying through the aquaculture licencing process and the emergence of a narrative that aquaculture does not support coastal communities whereas, in fact, the opposite has been shown to be true.

BIM will work closely with the Irish aquaculture industry and Failte Ireland (FI) to develop new aquaculture related visitor experiences along the Wild Atlantic Way (WAW) that can contribute to much improved understanding of the aquaculture sector and that can contribute to wider public acceptance of aquaculture as a food producing sector. It is vital that visitor experiences about aquaculture and how it contributes to communities in numerous ways (direct/indirect employment, production of premium quality seafood, increased sales/consumption of locally produced seafood) are facilitated.

Objectives

BIM proposes to develop a number of aquaculture visitor experiences during 2022. BIM has identified eight potential projects which could be implemented during 2022.

In tandem with the development of the visitor experiences, FI will look to integrate the TTA into their regional development initiatives with the express aim of increasing the impact of TTA and increasing numbers of visitors to TTA seafood producers. FI see this as a more strategic option to increase cooperation amongst various regional offerings and to increase visitor numbers across the board in this region.

BIM will also facilitate a series of farm visits for key regional stakeholder groups to create better understanding of aquaculture amongst influential groups like chefs, journalists, NGOs and food/tourism industry interests. It is critical to foster better understanding of the aquaculture sector in order to ensure that support for the sector is obtained through creating a positive public perception and with it an enhanced 'social licence' for aquaculture.

BIM will engage a 'TTA aquaculture ambassador' to undertake a series of communications initiatives (media, social media, and 'live' outreach events) during 2022. The purpose of this will be to use a person of suitable public profile, who can be recognised as a sectoral influencer or leader in the Irish marine or food sector to



facilitate an open and facts-based dialog on TTA and the aquaculture producers on the trail. These initiatives will include representatives of the aquaculture industry and other relevant stakeholders in order to allow the industry to be given a direct voice to discuss important national, European and global opportunities and challenges for the aquaculture industry. A wide range of topical issues can be covered over a limited series and this will create an opportunity for fair and objective discussion around aquaculture and tourism and the impact on communities around Ireland.

Outcomes

To date there are a total of 21 producers involved in the Taste the Atlantic programme. These are located along the whole of the Failte Ireland tourist trail, the Wild Atlantic Way. This project is run in partnership with Failte Ireland.

In 2022 the focus was upskilling the operators and creating awareness 'social licence' of aquaculture operations along the TTA route.

- A full review of the 21 producers was conducted in early 2022 with results indicating the need for further awareness through social media of the TTA trail. This was put into action with the Taste the Atlantic Young Chef programme.
- The Young Chef Ambassador programme was further developed in 2022 on the success of the initial programme in 2021. Five Young Chefs were selected by programme partners Chef Network from around Ireland. These chefs were provided with the opportunity to meet the producers directly and find out exactly how seafood products such as oysters, mussels and salmon are produced. In addition, each chef was asked to develop a recipe based on produce from the TTA producers following their visit.
- The route was also used for study tours of the 'Next Generation' Oyster Group who conducted a tour of a number of operations in the Galway and Mayo region of the trail in June 2022.
- In conjunction with the Galway Oyster Festival an event was held with the members of the TTA and the Young TTA Ambassador Chefs to present the recipes they developed as part of their site visits. This event achieved wide media coverage highlighting the aquaculture and tourism sectors working together.
- Development works were carried out on a wide range of the facilities of the 21 producers along the TTA route. This was all done in consultation with Failte Ireland. One success was the initiation of farm tours and oyster tasting at Croagh Patrick Seafoods and Flaggy Shore Oysters.

A target of 10 producers for the development of tours was set out in 2022. This target was met, and developments were undertaken in eight of these locations during the year.

A significant amount of media coverage was achieved from a range of activities associated with the TTA from the Young Chef Ambassadors to the launch of new tours. This has generated support from both Failte Ireland and local communities where these aquaculture activities take place. This is a significant support to the 'social licence' objective that this activity supports. Media (not including social media) coverage reach in 2022 was estimated at c.500,000 people throughout Ireland with a wide regional spread. In addition to this sentiment from this media coverage were exclusively positive.



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Summary of Project Spend

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Total Approved Costs	€250,000
Total Eligible Expenditure	€249,180
EMFAF Eligible Expenditure	€124,590
Exchequer	€124,590

Report by: Richard Donnelly

Date: January 2023



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