

BIM EMFAF Work Programme Project Report 2023

BENEFICIARY:	Bord Iascaigh Mhara
PROJECT REFERENCE NUMBER:	23/KGS/DIS-BG011-BR057
NAME OF PROJECT:	Taste the Atlantic
IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD:	1 st January to 31 st December 2023

Project Scope

Taste the Atlantic – A Seafood Journey is an initiative to create 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 works closely with the Irish aquaculture industry and Failte Ireland (FI) to develop new aquaculture related visitor experiences along the Wild Atlantic Way (WAW) to contribute to much improved understanding of the aquaculture sector and how this enhanced understanding can contribute to wider public acceptance of aquaculture as a food producing sector. It is vital that visitor experiences and events 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.

Taste the Atlantic (TTA) is a part of Ireland’s efforts to foster social licence for aquaculture under Priority 3 (Ensuring social acceptance and consumer information) of the National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture (NSPSA). This aligns with the EU Commission’s “Strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021 to 2030” specifically the stated objective of *“fostering social acceptance and improved consumer information on EU aquaculture activities and products”*.

Objectives

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.

In tandem with the development of the visitor experiences, Failte Ireland assessed opportunities to integrate 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 to a target level of c.30,000. Failte Ireland expressed that this as a more strategic option to increase cooperation amongst various regional offerings and to increase visitor numbers across the board in this region.



The Taste the Atlantic Young Chef Ambassadors programme creates a communications platform for a number of positive, factual and informed discussions about aquaculture and aquaculture products. The credible, authentic young voices of promising chefs resonates strongly with the public.

Outcomes

- Upgrade of six interpretive/information centres were delivered by the end of 2023. The project continues to deliver interpretive and supporting information materials for the industry. Improvements and upgrades continue to be implemented as and when necessary: Connemara Smokehouse, Sligo Oyster Experience, Croagh Patrick Seafoods, Mussel House (Killmakillogue), Réalt na Mara (Castlemaine Harbour), Kelly Oysters, DK Connemara Oysters, Burren Smokehouse.
- A target of 30,000 visitors to new and existing interpretive centres was set for 2023 and based on operator feedback, this has been achieved.
- The Taste the Atlantic Young Chef Ambassadors programme continued with the purpose of increasing the awareness of aquaculture products within the food service industry. A total of five chefs were recruited in 2023. Events held at the Marine Institute, Savour Kilkenny, 'Eat the Streets' (Dublin) Cromane Seafest, Food on the Edge, Galway Oyster Festival, Crinniú na mbád (Galway), Blas na hÉireann and Catex (Dublin) featured TTA Ambassadors and/or TTA Producers.
- The media assets produced during the programme were presented to the Aquaculture Advisory Council, the Comms unit at DG MARE and the programme has been recognised as the template for the EU-wide Aquaculture Ambassadors programme for 2024.
- Three workshops/learning events were completed with 90 participants. This included participation from other sectors of the aquaculture industry as part of this knowledge sharing. The target was exceeded as a significant number of farm visits were conducted in Ireland and also in France, where a fact-finding trip was conducted in May 2023 for 14 industry representatives with BIM and Fáilte Ireland. Visits to Kelly Oysters, Mulroy Bay Mussels, Ummera Smoked Products, Roaring Water Bay Rope Mussels, Sligo Oyster Experience and Wild Atlantic Oysters were completed.
- Three farm visit trips were completed with 30 participants.
- The target of 20 producers on the TTA trail was achieved with demand for participation in the initiative by industry remaining strong.
- Áine Budds, a 2023 Taste the Atlantic Young Chef Ambassador, was featured in the national media as one of the 'One's to Watch in 2024', a feature that covered young people who are showing exceptional promise in a range of fields including food, business, sports, arts etc.
- Fiona Keyes, another 2023 'Taste the Atlantic Young Chef Ambassador attended the Flemish Aquaculture Conference and discussed her experiences with participants. Fiona also met with the secretariat of the Aquaculture Advisory Council and discussed her experience of the programme. (Brussels, Oct. 23)



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Summary of Project Spend

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Total Approved Costs	€200,000
Total Eligible Expenditure	€199,245
EMFAF Eligible Expenditure	€99,622
Exchequer	€99,622

Report by: Máirtín Walsh

Date: February 2024



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