



Up-skilling – A Skills Strategy for Operatives & Supervisors in the Food and Beverage Industry

Taste 4 Success Skillnet Report, March 2011



Acknowledgements

Today, more than ever, those working in the food and drink sectors must be focused on world class standards in order to remain competitive and responsive to the ongoing changes and business challenges that the current economic environments present.

This report is based on research carried out during the period October 2010 – January 2011, by the Taste 4 Success Skillnet on behalf of its member companies and stakeholders. The report is driven by the need to identify a training and development initiative for operatives and supervisors that meets the ongoing changes and needs of the Taste 4 Success Skillnet member companies, their employees and stakeholders.

We would like to thank the many industry executives, staff at State Agencies, expert organisations, and our colleagues in Ireland, the UK and Northern Ireland (listed in Section C) who provided valuable information and input.

The Taste 4 Success Skillnet would also like to record its appreciation to the members of the Steering Group responsible for overseeing the work of the report for their commitment and contribution.

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Foreword

On behalf of the Taste 4 Success Skillnet, I am delighted to introduce this report on the up-skilling opportunities for operative and supervisor roles for those working, and those hoping to work, in the food and beverage processing industry.

The food and beverage sector is Ireland's largest indigenous sector, with a turnover of almost €24 bn. with a Gross Added Value (GVA) of €7.8 bn. The industry employs 46,000 people directly, with a further 60,000 indirect employees and utilizes 90% of outputs from 120,000 farmers. This report re-emphasises the importance of the industry in providing sustainable employment, while recognising the competitive pressures that the industry currently faces.

Following the report by The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs launched in November 2009, this subsequent research was commissioned by the Taste 4 Success Skillnet to specifically address Recommendation 2A of that report and to identify a clear way forward to training and up-skilling operatives and supervisors.

I would like to thank all those who contributed to the production of this report. In particular, I would like to thank those who participated in meetings and consultations. The time given by all those contacted has been invaluable in putting together a pilot programme. Participating companies are listed in Section C.

I believe that the recommendations contained in the report as well as the proposed pilot programme outline will enable operatives and supervisors in the food and beverage to develop the ongoing and complex skill sets to enable companies and organisations to be in the best possible position to succeed in the future.

In summary, I believe that this is a very valuable report because of the way it maps the individual needs of the food and drinks industry with the priorities of government bodies and offers a well researched specific recommendation that will, I hope, be quickly implemented. Time is of the essence for the Irish Food & Beverage Sector.

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Executive Summary

0.1 Context

In November 2009 the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) launched a report entitled 'Future Skills Requirements of the Food and Beverage Sector'. Within this report a number of recommendations are highlighted including the need to provide an operative and supervisor accredited up skilling programme (Recommendation 2A).

The Taste 4Success Skillnet commissioned this national research study to achieve a more detailed understanding of the food and drink sector's specific training requirements, current practices, challenges and potential solutions relating to training operatives and supervisors and ultimately address Recommendation 2A.

In effect the aim of the study is to compare the macro viewpoint of EGFSN recommendation 2A with current day to day training and development practices and challenges facing the food and drink sector and provide practical recommendations that would adequately address recommendation 2A in accordance with industry needs.

The report has sought to clearly outline a skills strategy programme, encapsulating international best practice and aligned to the National Framework of Qualifications and the European Framework of Qualifications.

The report has made every effort to ensure that all current training provision available on the Island of Ireland has been identified and calibrated against member company needs. The gaps identified and subsequent recommendations proposed, represent a skills strategy model that can be easily accessed and implemented by those seeking to achieve a quantum leap in performance by providing training and up-skilling for operatives and supervisors working in the ever changing food and beverage industry.

The report details current training initiatives employed and innovative tailor made training initiatives. Training initiatives promoting best practice have been case studied and analysed against current sector needs identified during the course of the study.

0.2 Study Objectives

The main objectives of the report were to research and report on:

- (a) The current and pressing needs of members regarding the up skilling of operatives and supervisors in the food and drink sectors,
- (b) Recent developments, relating to the provision of accredited training opportunities for supervisors and operatives, that have emerged since the launch of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) report in November 2009.
- (c) Current trends in training and what accredited and non-accredited training is actually happening in the ROI to address food and drink operative and supervisor skills and up skilling.
- (d) Practical recommendations that would adequately address training issues identified by network members and non-members in the food and drink sector, achieve a quantum leap in the performance of supervisors and operatives while simultaneously implementing recommendation 2A of the Future Skills Requirements of the Food and Beverage Sector by the EGFSN, November 2009 [the provision of an accredited programme for upskilling operatives and supervisors in the food and drink sector]

0.3 Why IMPROVE?

The new IMPROVE Standard was identified as an interim solution because it

- (a) Is aligned to the European Qualifications Framework
- (b) Promotes continuous learning by providing horizontal and vertical progression paths for learners.
- (c) Is primarily 'on the job' and can be delivered by in company trainers (reducing cost, increasing relevance).
- (d) Facilitates employers to select units to build a qualification that best addresses their specific business requirements thus ensuring the overall relevance of the programme.
- (e) Provides a broad base of training units that address the range of training issues identified as providing the quantum leap in performance (Section 8.0) such as
 - ✓ Empowering operatives/supervisors and providing a vehicle for harnessing their skills and expertise [benefiting both the staff member and the company].
 - ✓ Providing cross skilling, up skilling and multi-skilling opportunities
 - ✓ Facilitating consultative problem solving

0.4 Recommendation

Taste 4 Success can act as a catalyst for achieving a quantum leap in performance by delivering a pilot of the new IMPROVE programme for supervisors and operatives. The pilot would consist of five business units implementing the new **IMPROVE IPQ Level 2 Award in Food Industry Skills** and five business units to implementing the new **IMPROVE IPQ Level 2 Certificate in Food Industry Skills** [Equivalent to Level 4 on the Irish NFQ]

Following the pilot develop and strengthen alliances with key industry stakeholders such as FETAC and National Adult Literacy Agency and other stakeholders to ascertain how a similar/improved version of IMPROVE could be developed and delivered as a major FETAC award at levels 4, 5 and/or 6

0.5 Outcomes/Benefits

- ✓ Identification of key learning points, gaps and potential improvements arising from the pilot. The basis for developing a FETAC equivalent major award.
- ✓ Level 4 evaluations detailing tangible business impacts on productivity and staff motivation.
- ✓ Documented and Disseminated case studies to the food and drink sector highlighting best practice and the tangible benefits arising from investing in human capital at operative and supervisor levels

0.6 Upskilling and developing Job Seekers

During 2010 the Taste 4 Success Skillnet had tremendous success with a Job Seeker specific programmes resulting in 40% of participants securing full time job placements (Winner of the IITD Outstanding Achievement Award 2011). According to an external evaluator report of a recent Taste 4 Success Job Seeker programme (extract in Appendix I) the programme resulted in a dramatic increase in participant personal confidence, motivation and confidence to get a job in the food & drink sector. This study recommends that the Taste 4 Success Skillnet continue to target vulnerable groups, providing them with the fundamental skills and competencies that will provide jobseekers with a greater opportunity to achieve employment in the food and drink sector. This can be achieved by designing and delivering a

pilot IMPROVE Level 2 IPQ Award in Food Industry Skills to job seekers to increase their employability as operatives in the food & drink sector and wider manufacturing sector. (Recommendation Z-1)

0.7 Other Recommendations

Other recommendations detailed in the report include

- (a) The Taste 4 Success Skillnet assuming an ongoing role with regard to the implementation of the EGFSN recommendation 2A by acting as a point of reference for food and drink companies who wish to ascertain what accredited and non-accredited programmes are available, facilitating companies to participate in training, identifying gaps in the current provision and developing new programmes in conjunction with relevant stakeholders. (Recommendation X)
- (b) Developing and delivering a highly practical accredited consultative decision making programme aimed at supervisors, team leaders and/or team hands. (Recommendation Z-2)
- (c) Strengthening the alliance with the National Adult Literacy Agency to achieve the successful delivery of each of the recommendations made in this report (NALA Recommendation)

0.8 Next Steps

The next step for the Taste 4 Success Skillnet to commence the process for implementing recommendations with key dates, timelines and appropriate actions that can be achieved by December 31, 2011.