

Packaging Challenges: The Food Sector

Last year Enterprise Ireland set up a team to look at packaging innovation in the food sector in Ireland. The objective is to investigate barriers or issues that packaging may be causing to the food sector. These issues have the potential to limit industry growth and exports.

A team was established in order to make recommendations to help overcome these barriers. The team are:

Eimear Daly (Enterprise Ireland), Helen King (Bord Bia), Hugh Stevens (E.I.), Dorothy Timmons (E.I.), Colm Munnelly (Repak) and James Walsh (E.I.).

In February the team held a meeting called “Packaging Challenges in the Food Sector” at the Red Cow Hotel in Dublin. The aim of the meeting was to ask relevant people in the food industry what their views were in relation to packaging, including what systems or services worked well for them and what could be seen as barriers in the food industry. Participants throughout the supply chain were represented at the event including researchers, packaging test facilities, packaging manufacturers, food packers and fillers, retailers and packaging support services.

Barriers to packaging innovation:

1. Supply/Order Quantities
2. Cost
3. Biased Information/Knowledge Gaps
4. Training/Education of the industry and the public
5. Technical Issues and Design Skills
6. Threat from Imports
7. Networking
8. Environment and Recycling Issues
9. Legislation
10. Testing/Certification/Validation
11. Fragmentation
12. Retailer Issues
13. Innovation and Ideas
14. Converters supplying food companies



Attendees at the ‘Packaging Challenges in the Food Sector’ meeting, Dublin

To facilitate the discussion Martin Kaye from PIRA International in the UK spoke about how his organisation helps companies with packaging issues. Paddy Callaghan spoke about Nature’s Best food packaging and Colm Munnelly from Repak led a discussion on major issues affecting the packaging industry in Ireland.

After coffee there were break-out sessions where a number of key issues were identified by participants. Helen King from Bord Bia and Eimear Daly from Enterprise Ireland collated these into a summary list (see panel). These issues will now form the basis of further investigation by the innovation team. Having identified these key issues the team will now carry out a number of fact finding exercises to see how these issues can best be overcome.

The team then intend to produce a report on the issues identified and the possible solutions to them once the required information has been gathered. Some participants at the meeting have also volunteered to help with this work.

Further information meetings are also planned, the first of which is expected to happen in September. If you wish to contribute to the work in this area or require further information, please contact Eimear Daly (Eimear.Daly@enterprise-ireland.com) or Colm Munnelly (Colm.Munnelly@Repak.ie).