

## FOOD AND DRINK MANUFACTURING FACT SHEET – NORTHERN IRELAND

### OVERVIEW AND PROSPECTS



Improve represents the food and drink manufacturing and processing industry, including the following sectors: meat and poultry, bakery, fruit and vegetables, dairy, beverages, fish and animal feeds, amongst others.

An estimated 17,000 people<sup>1</sup> are employed in the industry in Northern Ireland, across 400 businesses.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of a predicted decline in the number of people employed in the industry over the next decade, an estimated 6,000 people will need to be recruited between 2007 and 2017 to replace those retiring or moving on.<sup>3</sup> This will lead to many job opportunities at all levels, including managers, technical workers, skilled and production workers.

### OCCUPATIONS WITHIN THE INDUSTRY

Sector	Typical Jobs	Number of NI employees 2007 <sup>1</sup>
Meat and Poultry	Butcher, Boner, Meat Process Worker, Meat Processing Manager, Food Safety Manager	7,900
Bakery	Baker, Cake Decorator, New Product Development Manager, Multi-skilled Engineer	3,000
Fruit and Vegetables	Quality Assurance Manager, Logistics Supervisor, Line Leader, Packer, Canner	1,700
Dairy	Cheese Maker, Food Technologist, Quality Technician, Bottler, Supply Chain Manager	1,200

Employment projections for 2007-2017<sup>3</sup> indicate a move to a more highly skilled workforce, with managers, professionals and technical workers taking a greater share of the workforce. This is also reflected in the need for new recruits; managerial roles, technical occupations (e.g. food technologists), skilled trades (e.g. butchers, bakers, fish filleters, cheese makers) and production workers are anticipated to have the largest recruitment need 2007-2017.

<sup>1</sup> Labour Force Survey 2007 (4 quarter average), Office for National Statistics

<sup>2</sup> Inter Departmental Business Register 2008, Office for National Statistics

<sup>3</sup> Improve estimates based on Working Futures 2007-2017, UK Commission for Employment and Skills

## SKILLS AND ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

There are many routes into the industry, from apprenticeships, NVQs in food manufacture, sector-specific Vocationally Linked Qualifications (VLQs), through to foundation degrees, and degrees in food technology, food science, food supply management, amongst others. Employers expect applicants to demonstrate a good level of literacy and numeracy, enthusiasm, time management, communication skills and commercial awareness. They are keen on recruiting individuals who are willing to take on responsibility, are motivated, good team players, and pay attention to detail.

For further information on the skills and qualifications requirements for different roles within the industry go to [www.improve-skills.co.uk/careers](http://www.improve-skills.co.uk/careers)

## CURRENT VACANCIES AND SKILL SHORTAGES

- Demand is high for a wide range of roles, including managers, supervisors, butchers, bakers, engineers, quality assurance, food scientists and technologists and production roles;<sup>4</sup>
- There is a general lack of people with core “soft” skills such as man-management, motivation, team building and communication;
- Reliability and the right attitude are hard to find for operative positions; and
- There is a need to bring young people into the industry, as they are currently under-represented.

## DID YOU KNOW THAT IN NORTHERN IRELAND...

- the food and drink manufacturing industry is vital to the Northern Ireland economy; generating an annual turnover of more than £2.4 billion<sup>2</sup>
- 90% of employees in the industry work full-time, although part-time work is more prevalent in some industries, for example Bakery<sup>1</sup>
- around 400 people are currently enrolled on higher education courses in food and drink subjects<sup>5</sup>
- the average, gross earnings for a worker in the food and drink manufacturing industry is £322 per week<sup>1</sup>
- employers offer apprenticeships in Food Manufacture e.g. in meat processing, butchery, bakery, amongst others.

## USEFUL LINKS

Careers Service NI	Provides an impartial all-age careers information, advice and guidance service: <a href="http://www.careersserviceni.com">www.careersserviceni.com</a>
Improve's Careers website	Improve's careers website for food and drink manufacturing: <a href="http://www.improve-skills.co.uk/careers">www.improve-skills.co.uk/careers</a>
Labour Market Intelligence	Improve's labour market intelligence for the industry in Northern Ireland: <a href="http://www.improve-skills.co.uk/research-consultation/labour-market-intelligence">www.improve-skills.co.uk/research-consultation/labour-market-intelligence</a>
Food and Drink Sector Skills	Food and Drink Sector Skills – Northern Ireland: <a href="http://www.fdtc.co.uk">www.fdtc.co.uk</a>
JobCentre Online	Contains vacancies currently notified to Jobs and Benefit offices: <a href="http://www.jobcentreonline.com">www.jobcentreonline.com</a>

Information provided by Improve. Last updated February 2009. To check that this is the most up-to-date fact sheet go to [www.careersserviceni.com](http://www.careersserviceni.com)

<sup>4</sup> Improve, Northern Ireland Skills Needs Research 2006 (part of Sector Skills Agreement)

<sup>5</sup> Higher Education Statistics Agency; and the College of Food, Agriculture and Rural Enterprise 2006/2007