

Press release

Our Rural Future: Ministers Humphreys, McConalogue and Hackett announce final call for applications to the LEADER Food Initiative

From [Department of Rural and Community Development](#)

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- €5 million fund aimed at artisan, micro and small food businesses
- Funding will help artisan, micro and small food businesses to respond to challenges posed by Brexit and COVID-19
- LEADER programme a key plank of 'Our Rural Future'

Small food businesses are today (Tuesday, May 25th) being encouraged to apply for funding under the LEADER Food Initiative – a €5 million investment aimed at assisting businesses to deal with the challenges posed by Brexit and COVID-19.

The final call for applications was made by Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys, Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue and Minister of State for Land Use and Biodiversity, Pippa Hackett.

The funding will help artisan, micro and small food businesses to respond to challenges posed by Brexit and COVID-19, while also supporting diversification in agriculture.

In December 2020, Ministers Humphreys, McConalogue and Hackett announced the extension of the LEADER Food Initiative into 2021.

As part of that announcement, the maximum rate of aid available to projects involving economic activity was increased from 50% to 75% for project applications received on or after 1st April 2021.

Announcing the final call for applications, all three Ministers urged small food businesses to submit their applications.

Minister Humphreys said:

“I recently launched the Transitional LEADER Programme for 2021 and 2022, underpinned by €70 million in funding. Today, I am delighted to announce the final call for applications under LEADER Food Initiative.

“‘Our Rural Future’, the Government’s ambitious new policy for the development of Rural Ireland, outlined the importance of the Agri-food sector for our country. This initiative is a key part of the Government’s plans for our agriculture community - support artisan, micro and small food businesses, new or existing to develop their businesses.”

Minister Humphreys continued:

“Some 116 projects have been approved by the various Local Action Groups (LAGSs) to date. Since the launch of this programme in 2018, my Department and I have seen the really positive impact the LEADER Food Initiative funding can have on supporting local enterprises to expand and develop.

“Supporting local enterprises and employment is a key focus of ‘Our Rural Future’. I would encourage local enterprises, who may qualify for this funding, to contact their Local Development Company to avail of this funding and support as we move into a post pandemic economy.

“Along with Minister McConalogue and Minister Hackett, I will continue to drive forward with implementing the commitments in ‘Our Rural Future’ as we strive to support our Agri-Food sector.”

Commenting on the development, Minister McConalogue said:

“I am happy to announce that the final tranche of the €15m funding allocated by my Department for the LEADER Food Initiative is now being made available for this final call for applications for artisan, micro and small food enterprises engaged in the agri-food sector. Following on from my announcement last year on extending the measure into 2021, I am pleased that applicants with eligible projects under this call can be eligible for consideration for the increased maximum funding limit now increased from 50% to 75%. The €5m funding now made available will help support farmers and food enterprises to develop premium, sustainable outlets for their products on the Irish market.”

Minister Mc Conalogue added:

“I hope that the increased maximum rates of aid will encourage these food businesses, who have shown great resilience during the past year, to apply for this funding support.”

Minister Hackett continued:

"It is so important to help connect small food producers to the consumer. That’s why I am pleased that this funding is made available under the LEADER Food Initiative. The support will help local food enterprises to access advisory, investment and marketing support for those who wish to diversify into new products and to build efficient, sustainable routes to market that help connect small food producers to the consumer."

Contact details for all Local Action Groups and their Implementing Partners (Local Development Companies) can be located: [here](#).

ENDS

Notes to editor:

LEADER is a rural development programme co-funded by the EU which operates a locally-led, bottom-up, approach to meeting the needs of local communities and businesses. The programme supports private enterprises and community groups in rural areas. LEADER forms part of Ireland's multi-annual Rural Development Programme which is co-financed by the EU and is part of the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP).

The LEADER programme is delivered by 29 Local Action Groups (LAGs) in 28 sub-regional areas. These groups are partnerships of public and private entities from a defined geographical area.

The LEADER Food Initiative was allocated €15 million as part of Ireland's Rural Development Programme and was launched in May 2018 to support the further development of food and beverage businesses throughout rural Ireland.

The LEADER Food Initiative has been open since May 2018 and 116 projects to the total value of circa €10 million, including permitted Animation and Administration costs, have been approved to date. Some projects funded under the initiative are in Appendix I.

The funding covers inter alia the renovation and extension of production facilities, the purchasing of processing equipment, as well as supporting participants in the artisan food and beverage sector in areas such as market development, competitiveness, and innovation.

The initiative is managed by the Department of Rural and Community Development, with funding provided by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

The maximum amount of funding available is €200,000 per project and funding will be provided for both capital investment and softer supports related to analysis and development or training. This includes support for collaborative proposals where food businesses jointly address common processing and marketing challenges.

Appendix 1- Example of projects funded under the LFI

Promoter Name	Promoter Address	Description of Project	LEADER Grant Amount
Blanco Nino Limited	Clonmel, Co.Tipperary	Installation of a production and baking line.	€152,660.50
John Finlay	Ballacolla, Co Laois	Feasibility study on developing a grass protein for human consumption.	€14,340.00
Lavins Fruit & Vegetable Limited	Drimdough, Breaghwy, Co Mayo	Production line equipment, to assist in the future growth of the business	€200,000.00
Staranize Ventures Limited	Ballyliffin, Co Donegal	Extension and upgrade of production facility.	€108,688.50

Limerick Food
Group CLG

Mungret Street,
Limerick City, Co
Limerick

Marketing support, to develop the
Limerick Food Trail to promote locally
produced food and beverages

€15,385.05