

THE DAIRY | 2024



60 Years
Supporting
Ireland's Dairy
Farmers



60 YEARS
SUPPORTING IRISH DAIRY



INTRO



Mark Keller - Director of Strategic Operations

2024 has been a challenging year for our dairy farmers but, as always Irish dairy farming families are resilient and focused on delivering high quality nutritious milk for local and international consumption. The National Dairy Council continues to protect and grow Irish dairy's social licence to produce while celebrating the nutritional benefits of dairy as part of a healthy balanced diet - for all life stages.

I am pleased to share that in the face of many headwinds and negative narratives public trust in dairy farmers to take care of the environment stands at 72%. This is up from 47% two years ago. 2024 saw significant investment in TV and outdoor advertising, national and local radio campaigns and increased significantly our presence on social media and digital audio. We have invested significantly in social media this year making our content more relevant for under 18 to 35 year olds resulting in a large shift in attitudes towards dairy in this age cohort.

In May 2023 we changed our consumer research model and since then have conducted eight research panels in the field, the most recent just completed. To add to our positive trust score we're pleased to see that 8 in 10 consumers see dairy as an essential part of a healthy balanced diet while 8 in 10 also believe that dairy is part of a sustainable diet. The underlying data also provides and insight into consumer attitudes and

affiliation to Irish dairy and to the NDC as a voice of trust for Irish dairy's social license to produce. We also recognise the challenges particularly with a younger audience and the insights will inform our messaging strategy for 2025.

Looking ahead to 2025, the NDC team is focused on three core objectives. We will continue to build public confidence in Irish dairy as a responsible and sustainable food production system. We will demonstrate Irish dairy's contribution to the socio economic fabric of rural Ireland and the national economy. We will encourage consumption through a deep and broad understanding of dairy's role in a healthy, sustainable diet, celebrating the taste and tradition of delicious dairy products and ingredients. To do this we will sharpen our messaging strategy to reach and be relevant to a wide audience. We will invest in critical areas and speak to parents, teachers, school children, young active ageing adults, both urban and rural to reconnect them to Irish dairy while measuring our effectiveness ensuring we get a return on this investment.

On behalf of the NDC Team, I thank you for your continued patronage and support and wish you and your family a Happy Christmas and the very Best Wishes for 2025.



The NDC's new CEO is Emma Walls. A long-time advocate for Irish food and agriculture, she is immensely proud of Ireland's dairy heritage and the farmers who work tirelessly and sustainably to produce the best quality and most nutritious

food. "The NDC team, steered by Interim CEO Mark Keller, has achieved great success during 2024. I'm delighted to lead this ambitious, committed and highly-skilled team into the future." Emma is a former director of Glenisk, a member of Bord Bia's Brand Forum Steering Group and a director of Love Irish Food.



TRUST

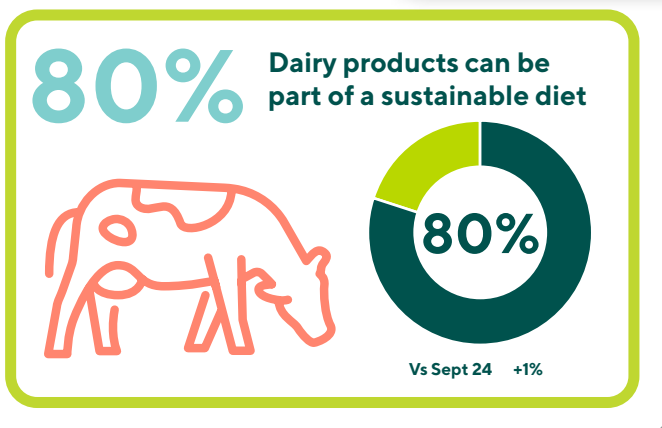
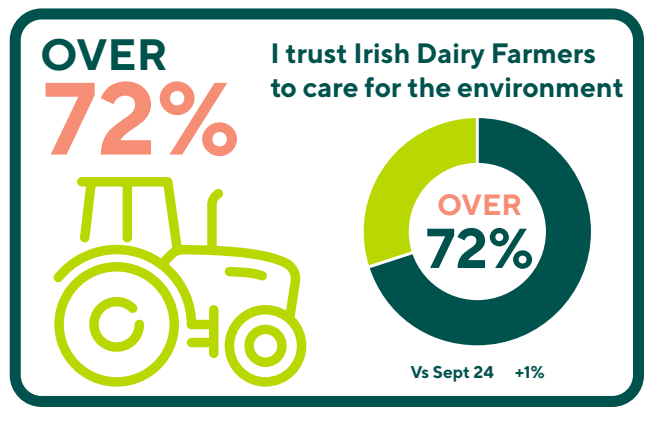
NDC Dairy Trust Barometer

The National Dairy Council has commissioned Opinions Research to conduct quantitative research on behalf of NDC since May 2023. This brand tracking process for the NDC is in the form of a series of 'pulse' surveys conducted via the Opinions online omnibus.

The November 2024 results below represent the eighth wave of the process with research conducted among a nationally representative sample of n=1,001 adults in the Rep. of Ireland. The research focuses on:

- General attitudes towards dairy
- Spontaneous brand and advertising awareness for NDC and other key organisations in the industry
- Key brand association measures for The NDC
- Attitudes towards dairy Nutrition and Consumption

Attitudes towards Dairy in the market remained positive with the only area losing some traction is around Nutritional Benefits and this is particularly evident among under 35's. The work over the last two years has established a much stronger foundation and belief in both our dairy and our farmers and has seen improvements in positivity around the NDC brand.



ADVOCACY

The Grassroots Movement - Climate Focused Nature Based



NDC continued its Grassroots Movement marketing campaign in 2024, promoting the message that Irish Dairy is Climate Focused and Nature Based.

Being Climate Focused - Irish dairy farmers are focused on reducing their impact on the environment as part of a transition towards a sustainable food production system. Examples of which include adopting scientific backed research practices on soil & grassland management, increasing biodiversity on farm, activities to protect waterways and caring for their herds. Nature Based Irish dairy farmers are on farm everyday working with nature, on a journey implementing practices from the ground up towards a sustainable future.

The campaign features a number of NDC's Farmer Ambassadors telling their stories in print, on TV and on radio to forge a stronger connection for Irish consumers from grass to glass.



Scan here to view the ad

Majella McCafferty announced as a Nuffield Scholar for 2025



Majella McCafferty

Congratulations to Farm Advocacy Manager, Majella McCafferty who was recently announced as a Nuffield Scholar for 2025. She has been selected as one of only four Irish participants in the prestigious 2025 Nuffield Ireland Scholars Programme. This highly competitive programme is designed to develop world-class leaders in the agri-food sector, with scholars recognised for their outstanding contributions to agriculture both in Ireland and internationally.

Majella's selection highlights her passion for agriculture, her dedication to the Irish dairy industry, and her potential as a future leader in the field. Nuffield Scholars are recognised globally as ambassadors for agriculture, with past recipients achieving distinction across a wide range of fields.



ADVOCACY

Kennedy Farm from Co. Tipperary Awarded Top Prize at the 2024 NDC & Kerrygold Quality Milk Awards

Affectionately known as the Dairy Oscars, the prestigious annual awards programme, now in its 15th year, saw 11 farming families from six counties and 11 dairy co-operatives, celebrated for excellence in milk production and sustainable dairying at a special ceremony hosted at Lyrath Estate Hotel, Co Kilkenny.

Following their nomination by Dairygold, the Kennedys excelled through a comprehensive judging process that evaluated a range of the most important aspects of modern dairy farming. These topics included environmental sustainability, animal health and welfare, farm infrastructure, hygiene standards, soil and grassland management, and technical performance amongst other important factors including advocacy and community engagement.

Aidan and Derval Kennedy along with their children, Nickolas and Galina, and farm team, were recognised for demonstrating the highest standards of excellence in dairy farming and were presented with the 2024 NDC & Kerrygold Quality Milk Awards perpetual cup.



Scan here to view this years finalists



Aidan and Derval Kennedy along with their children, Nickolas, and Galina



ADVOCACY



Majella McCafferty with a selection of NDC's Farmer Ambassadors

NDC Farmer Ambassador Programme

The National Dairy Council continued to expand its Farmer Ambassador Programme in 2024 with four new Ambassadors. The 16 Farmer Ambassadors act as advocates and spokespeople for Ireland's family-farm-based, grass-fed dairy production system. They speak on behalf of Ireland's 17,000 family run dairy farms. The Farmer Ambassador programme provides a voice for our industry and the platforms they need to tell their stories so that the public can feel better connected to the farming process that ultimately puts the dairy in their fridge. NDC continues to work to forge a stronger connection between the farmer and the consumer.

Enda Walsh from Galway, **Christopher Tuffy** from Sligo, **Paddy O'Kelly** from Limerick and **James Flaherty** from Kerry joined NDC's 16-strong troop of exceptional dairy farmers in 2024 and continue to spread the message of sustainable dairy production across Ireland.

To meet NDC's farmer ambassadors please visit



ADVOCACY

2024 NDC & Kerrygold Farm Walk and Seminar

John Macnamara and his family opened their farm in Hospital, Co Limerick for the annual Farm Walk hosted by Teagasc, in association with Kerry Agribusiness, NDC and Ornua. John was the overall winner of the 2023 NDC & Kerrygold Quality Milk Awards, the event was an opportunity to showcase why his farm was the top dairy farm of 2023. John was also honoured by the Lord Mayor of Limerick for his award at a Civic Reception earlier this year.



Majella McCafferty, NDC; Dr Laurence Shalloo, Teagasc; Mark Keller, NDC; John Macnamara, host farmer, and son Padraic; Prof. Karina Pierce, UCD; Pat Murphy, CEO, Kerry Dairy Ireland and Rebecca Claffey, Ornua.

Podcasts

NDC's Dairy Matters podcast has been running for a number of years, hosted by communications expert Jeremy Probert. The podcast covers a range of interesting topics on farming, science and nutrition and interviews with experts from the worlds of agriculture and food.

To listen use the QR Code right.



EVENTS | TALKS | OPEN FARM | WALKS

Future Proofing our Food for a More Sustainable Future

The Sustainable Kitchen event with Irish celebrity chef Anna Haugh

The National Dairy Council hosted an event at Airfield Estate for Irish chef Anna Haugh whose restaurant Myrtle in London has gained great praise since it opened in 2019. She has built a successful broadcasting career as well with appearances on BBC's Ready Steady Cook, Saturday Kitchen, Sunday Brunch and Masterchef – The Professionals.

Anna said "I was raised to waste nothing and have always insisted this ethos continues in my kitchens. It's not just a matter of saving money but also being aware of the repercussions on the planet. Challenging yourself to find the best ways to handle the ingredients that come through our door is exciting and rewarding."



Chef Anna Haugh at Airfield Estate

Anna cooked a delicious four course lunch, with locally sourced in-season produce from Airfield Estate and urban farm in Dundrum for an audience of food experts, producers, and media. Other speakers included **Conor Spacey, Culinary Director of FoodSpace Ireland** which focuses on zero food waste and Irish Chef and restaurateur **Eric Matthews of Kicky's in Dublin.**



From left to right: Eric Matthews, Chef with Anna Haugh and Conor Spacey, Chef.





Mark Keller with garden designer Tünde Perry and An Taoiseach Simon Harris at the NDC Garden

A Feast for the Senses at Bord Bia Bloom 2024

Hungarian Garden Designer and regular at Bloom, Tünde Perry's Garden for the NDC was designed as an impactful space forging a deeper connection between Irish consumers and sustainable dairy production. The NDC exhibited at Bord Bia Bloom for the third year with a packed five days of talks, celebration, competitions, cooking demos, school visits and a special evening reception to celebrate 60 years of the National Dairy Council. The Sustainable Kitchen in association with Airfield Estate hosted dairy-rich recipe demos with cookery teacher Lisa Davies and MC Food writer Dee Laffan.

The heart of the garden was the Farm, showcasing Ireland's unique landscape and 6,000 years of farming and dairy production. It included a grass meadow, multi species swards and Irish native trees, shrubs, and hedgerows. Bloom provided the perfect platform for the NDC to activate and promote the story of grass to glass to a large audience of mainly urban consumers.



25 talks over 5 days

4 photocalls



10 recipe demos



40 pieces of media coverage

Over **100,000** visitors to Bord Bia Bloom in 2024



EVENTS | TALKS | OPEN FARM | WALKS



Agri Aware's Open Farm to Bridge the Disconnect Between Producers and Consumers on Kildare Dairy Farm

Agri Aware in partnership with the NDC, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, the Irish Farmers' Association and Tirlán hosted the Open Farm event in June. The dairy farm of Stephen Byrne and family hosted this year's event which included a special school's day with over 500 primary school students visiting the farm from Kildare and Dublin.

The school's day gave the next generation a chance to see firsthand how local Irish food is produced, particularly dairy products and give the next generation an appreciation of where their food comes from.



Marcus O'Halloran (Agri Aware), Minister Martin Heydon, Mark Keller (NDC) and farmer Stephen Byrne on his farm in Wicklow





**BEST IN GLASS
GUARANTEED**



**GARRY RINGROSE
RUGBY INTERNATIONAL**

CONSUMPTION



Did you know that only 4% of Irish Teenagers are meeting their Dietary Guidelines?

Although 98% of Irish adolescents consume dairy, a recent report from the Irish Universities Nutrition Alliance has revealed worryingly low intakes, with only 4% meeting the recommendations set out by the Department of Health's dietary guidelines. On average, teenagers were found to consume just under 2 servings per day. However, the guidelines suggest 5 daily servings from the 'milk, yogurt and cheese' food group for those aged 9-18 years, due to higher calcium requirements during the teenage years, with 3 servings recommended for other age groups.

The IUNA National Teens' Nutrition Survey assessed food and nutrient intakes in 428 teenagers aged 13-18 years across the Republic of Ireland. A sub-study was commissioned by the National Dairy Council to further explore the contribution of the 'milk, yogurt and cheese' food group to the nutritional quality of Irish teenagers' diets. Lead researcher Emma Kane said "Higher consumers of dairy had a significantly better-quality diet balancing all the necessary nutrients whilst having no difference in their body weight or BMI as compared to low dairy consuming teenagers.

Mind your Bones with Good Nutrition

The most common bone condition in Ireland is osteoporosis, with approximately 300,000 people over 50 years estimated to have the condition. However, it is often referred to as a silent disease as it can go unnoticed, without symptoms, until a fracture occurs. In fact, only about 15% of people with osteoporosis get diagnosed. **37 million fragility fractures** occur globally each year and pose an enormous human and health economic burden worldwide.

Both Cappagh Hospital and the National Dairy Council promote the benefits of good bone health, with dairy providing many of the key nutrients needed for musculoskeletal health.

Osteoporosis results from a progressive loss of bone tissue, which causes bones to become weak and brittle. One in two women and one in five men over 50 years will develop a fracture in their lifetime.

Senior Nutritionist at the National Dairy Council, Dr. Mary Harrington says "Lifestyle factors such as diet, are a great place to start in taking some control to reduce fracture risk. A balanced diet which provides adequate nutrients, including calcium, protein, and phosphorus, are essential for musculoskeletal health and these are present in dairy foods such as milk, yogurt, and cheese. Dairy is well recognised as a natural source of bioavailable calcium, which means that it is easy to absorb by the body. In addition, dairy foods contain a matrix of other nutrients which have important roles in health".

For more information on bone health and nutrition, please visit www.mindyourbones.ie



CONSUMPTION

New approach to milk allergies promises breakthrough

Researchers have demonstrated how a novel approach to managing cow's milk allergy could transform how food allergies are treated.

Food allergies occur when the immune system reacts abnormally to otherwise harmless food proteins, which can cause immediate symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhoea, hives, and respiratory issues. Severe reactions can lead to anaphylaxis, a life-threatening condition requiring emergency medical attention.

Now researchers at the Irish Centre for Maternal and Child Health Research (INFANT) at University College Cork and Cork University Hospital have shown that cow's milk can be safely and effectively reintroduced to children with milk allergies which affects 2-3% of infants, marking a significant breakthrough in allergy management.

However, INFANT, UCC researchers have demonstrated that using the "Milk Ladder" method as a step-by-step approach, allows for a home-based reintroduction of milk under the careful supervision of caregivers. This method significantly reduces the need for hospital visits and enables the immune system to gradually become less reactive to milk proteins. Most notably, the children managed with the Milk Ladder were almost 4 times more likely to successfully reintroduce milk compared to those who followed the traditional avoidance approach.

The findings from the study are published in the *Journal of Paediatric Allergy and Immunology*.

Dr. Juan Trujillo, Consultant Paediatric Allergist at Cork University Hospital, University College Cork and the lead researcher on the study, highlighted the impact of food allergies on Irish families, stating, "The diagnosis of food allergy can be



life-changing, bringing significant challenges to households, including psychological stress. In Ireland, the three most common food allergies in children under 3 years old are eggs, cow's milk, and peanuts. Our research aims to support these families, enabling more successful and quicker recoveries."

Dr. Trujillo cautioned against the unnecessary avoidance of certain foods, particularly in young children, as this avoidance of certain food types at the wrong time in their lives can negatively impact their growth and increase the risk of developing food allergies. He advised, "We strongly recommend consulting with a GP for an appropriate referral and diagnosis and avoid unregulated allergy testing methods"



MARKETING OUR MESSAGE



Always on with Garry

The NDC works with Ireland Rugby International Garry Ringrose across all our marketing, PR and social media campaigns to endorse the NDC Guarantee Mark with promotions running across billboards, TV and in-store point of sale. There are lots of parallels that can be drawn between athletes and farmers. It starts with the right ingredients, hard work, effort, and passion 365 days a year to deliver a world class food product. In the same way that producing world class dairy mirrors the processes of elite athletes. It begins from the ground up, from good foundations. Like our athletes, our farmers stay grounded while performing on the world stage of top food production.

Garry Ringrose said, "I am proud to be working with the NDC as an ambassador and to promote the significant benefits of Milk – "Nature's sports drink". Just as I commit myself to rugby, Irish dairy farmers pour their heart into their land. It's the same commitment and dedication, and this is what makes our dairy produce truly exceptional. Eating well is essential and adapting your nutritional intake to your sport is a necessity. In-season or out of season, as well as pre-, during and post-performance, all influence our nutritional decisions."

NDC Promotes Yogurt as part of EU Campaign in 2024



The NDC is working on a new three-year EU funded campaign which will be run across four markets – Belgium, Ireland, Germany, and Denmark and will promote the health and versatility of yogurt as a delicious everyday food.

Yogurt. It's Great Inside features an extensive marketing campaign highlighting two Dublin cafes and two yogurt companies who serve and produce yogurt every day. The campaign includes 120 out-of-home billboards and posters in Dublin and key cities nationwide as well as 200 bus supersides. This campaign is also supported by print advertising and native articles in national media and an influencer led social media campaign. The two Dublin cafes featured are **Póg cafes** in Dublin with locations in Clontarf, Malahide, Howth, Tara Street and Bachelors Walk and **Brother Hubbard cafes** with locations in Capel Street, Harrington Street, Arnotts and Ranelagh.

Two well-known yogurt companies also feature, **Killowen Farm** in Wexford and **Glenilen Farm** in West Cork. As part of the campaign, the NDC is working with **Daniel Davey, Performance Nutritionist** and **Erica Drum who is a TV Chef**, cookery tutor and food stylist. Erica interviewed the owners of the cafes and yogurt companies and these videos appear on social media.



MARKETING OUR MESSAGE

Socially Aware!

Have you noticed the fresh 'look and feel' on our social media channels? Maybe you spotted our mascot Milly on Instagram or TikTok? 2024 has been the year of social media for the National Dairy Council, and we're only getting started.

For Millennials (born 1980-1994) and Gen Z (born 1995-2012), social media is the go-to place for the latest information, entertainment and news updates. That's why we are investing in fun and engaging social media content to educate consumers about Ireland's dairy production system and the benefits of dairy as part of a healthy balanced diet. From July to September 2024, the NDC reached over 1.83 million people on social media, which is roughly 50% of the adult population.

In 2025 and beyond, we will continue to shine a light on the actions taken by Irish dairy farmers to improve their farming practices, reducing their emissions and providing naturally nutritious food for households across the country.

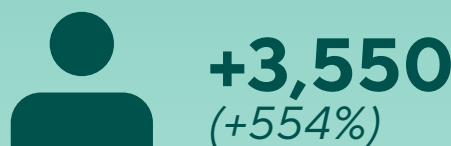
Follow us on social media to find out more!



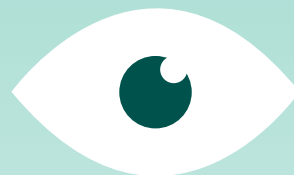
Social Media Performance From January to September 2024



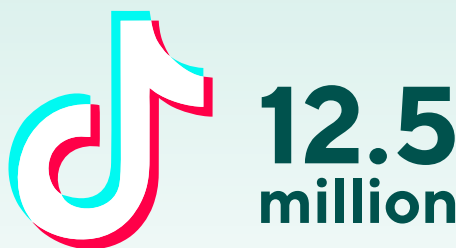
Follower count grew by



Video views grew by



TikTok impressions grew by



EDUCATION

NDC had a very busy schools programme this year, packed with events, talks, farm visits and livestreams.

Future Farmers

The NDC launched a Future Farmer Competition open to all primary and secondary students in April. Students were asked to send a video, voice note, essay or poster explaining why they want to be a Future Farmer. The competition received media coverage and was advertised on social media. The winners participated on our panel at Bord Bia Bloom, which was MC'd by Farmer Ambassador Nicole Keohane, who is passionate about the next generation of farmers.

An Taoiseach, Simon Harris - spoke to some of our Future Farmers on his way into visit our garden and told them that 'we need more farmers'. The talk was attended by a school from the EU School Milk Scheme and was popular with people walking by the garden. All of the Future Farmers were excellent ambassadors for farming and were able to talk about the technology in use on their farm and where they see farming in thirty years.



Competition winners with NDC mascot Milly.



The future farmer competition winners at Bord Bia Bloom in the Phoenix Park L-R



Kids using milk churns to make real butter.



EDUCATION

MooTube Goes Live to 11,000+ students

The livestream event MooTube took place on Thursday 23rd of May on the Kavanagh's farm outside Baltinglass in association with Agri Aware. Over 11,000 students registered for the event which had videos from schools, farm advocacy and nutrition. There was a focus on encouraging schools to sign up to the School Milk Scheme but also to educate primary school students about where their milk comes from and the technology in place on dairy farms. They were also educated on why milk is excellent 'fuel for school'.



NDC and Agri Aware present MooTube with broadcaster Keith Walsh at Donal Kavanagh's farm in Baltinglass Co Wicklow.

Experiencing the Virtual Reality of a Farm in Dublin City

In order to promote the EU School Milk Scheme and raise awareness, visitors to the Bloom Garden this year were able to engage with an immersive virtual reality experience. Visitors were transported to a dairy farm in Cork using 360 video. The cardboard headsets are available to use at events after Bloom for schools and other stakeholders in the future!



EDUCATION

25,000 kids log on for World School Milk Day

NDC hosted a special webinar for schools on World School Milk Day, 25th September. The half hour event included an interview with a school participating in the School Milk Scheme, an interview with a dairy farmer, a talk from Louise Reynolds, Dietitian with the Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute and a cooking demonstration with cookery teacher Lisa Davies at Airfield Estate in Dublin. 25,000 kids and their teachers from all over Ireland logged on to the webinar on the day.



Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine - Charlie McConalogue said
“World school milk day promotes Ireland’s grass-based production system and promotes the benefits of dairy in a healthy balanced diet. I wish to acknowledge the great work that the NDC does in running the EU school milk scheme in Irish schools on behalf of my Department, making available subsidised milk to all our schoolchildren. The health benefits to our children of such school programmes cannot be underestimated. I would encourage all eligible schools to register for the School Milk Scheme so that pupils in schools can benefit from affordable milk that will encourage children to adopt healthy eating choices at a young age”.



Driving more schools to the EU School Milk Scheme

NDC works closely with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) to engage more schools and encourage them to sign up to the scheme. The scheme is directly promoted to Principals of Primary and Secondary schools throughout the country. The Department has committed to fund the campaign with National Funds and see it is an integral part of the 2024-25 recruitment strategy. A special Telemarketing campaign was implemented in September targeting nearly 3000 Schools across Ireland.



NDC IN THE NEWS

Future farmers wanted at Bloom!

SCHOOLGOERS from around West Cork who are hoping to make a career in farming are being invited to take part in a special discussion event at this year's Bord Bia Bloom festival taking place in Dublin. The National Dairy Council is inviting future farmers from schools around the country to say why they want to be a farmer and take part in a special panel discussion at Bloom on Friday May 31st.

They will discuss what excites them about farming and where they see farming going in the future.

This competition is open to all primary and secondary school students, and the winners will get a €150 One4All Voucher and take part in the panel at Bloom.

To enter send a video, voice note, essay or poster to futurefarmer@ndc.ie or Instagram [@ndc_ie](https://www.instagram.com/ndc_ie)

The NDC will have a show garden again at this year's Bord Bia Bloom taking place the June Bank Holiday Weekend in the Phoenix Park, Dublin.

This year's garden, celebrating 60 years of NDC will host a number of talks and discussions from sports stars, broadcasters, weather experts, futurists, and scientists.



The National Dairy Council is inviting future farmers to say why they want to work in the sector.

Only 4% of teens meeting dietary guidelines

Although 98% of Irish adolescents consume dairy, a recent report from the Irish Universities Nutrition Alliance has revealed worryingly low intakes, with only 4% meeting the recommendations set out by the Department of Health's dietary guidelines.

On average, teenagers were found to consume just under 2 servings of dairy per day. However, the guidelines suggest 5 daily servings from the 'milk, yogurt and cheese' food group for those aged 9-18 years, due to higher calcium requirements during the teenage years, with 3 servings recommended for other age groups.

Speaking at The Nutrition Society Annual Congress held in Belfast, Lead researcher on the study, Dr Breige McNulty from University College Dublin, said "Consuming enough calcium and vitamin D during the teenage years is critical in helping our bodies to build strong bones for life. We were particularly concerned to see such high levels of inadequate intakes of these key bone nutrients. These nutrients are particularly important as we lay down our bone mass, with vitamin D needed to absorb calcium. It is important that teenagers consume a healthy, balanced diet to support this rapid phase of growth and development."

Almost 500 delegates from across the UK and Ireland attended the Congress earlier this month

and present the latest research in Nutrition Science.

The IUNA National Teens' Nutrition Survey assessed food and nutrient intakes in 428 teenagers aged 13-18 years across the Republic of Ireland. A sub-study was commissioned by the National Dairy Council to further explore the contribution of the 'milk, yogurt and cheese' food group to the nutritional quality of Irish teenagers' diets. Lead researcher Emma Kane said "Higher consumers of dairy had a significantly better-quality diet balancing all the necessary nutrients whilst having no difference in their body weight or BMI as compared to low dairy consuming teenagers. More than half of those surveyed were found to have inadequate intakes of calcium with 94% having inadequate vitamin D intake.

Intakes of fruit and vegetables were also low in this age group, while 'top shelf' foods such as 'biscuits, cakes and pastries' and 'sugars, confectionery, preserves and savoury snacks' accounted for 21% of caloric intake.

730 Pieces of Earned Media Coverage

€2.1M Earned Media Value

64.4M Reach

Parents want milk with hot school meals scheme

Kathleen O'Sullivan

More than half of parents think milk should be provided with the hot school meals programme, research by the National Dairy Council has found.

The Government's hot school meals programme, which aims to provide a free hot lunch to all primary schoolchildren by 2030, was introduced to 1,400 schools in a pilot project earlier this year.

It will be provided to nearly 2,200 schools from this September. The programme is administered by the Department of Social Protection, which budgets €2.20 for each meal, and the procurement process is managed by the participating schools.

There is no milk or water provided as there was previously when children were provided with a cold school lunch.

Mother of four and dietician with the Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute Louise Reynolds said that the scheme "could be enhanced even further by the addition of an optional small serving of cold milk or water".

"It is great to see that so many parents are supportive of the hot school meals initiative," she said.

"It will certainly help to ensure that every child will have a school lunch regardless of means and will support learning and education.

"Being well-hydrated is also important for children during the school day, with milk and water being the recommended drinks for school children by the Department of Health.

"Milk is a simple, affordable and nutritious addition to a healthy school lunch and provides one of the three recommended servings a day of dairy for this age group."

The National Dairy Council

commissioned research in July speaking to 1,000 people, the majority being parents, and asked what they thought of the scheme and of nutrition in schools.

Almost nine in 10 parents think the hot school meals programme will have a positive impact on children's concentration and performance levels at school, the council said.

Less processed food, more vegetables and more protein are the top three preferred changes to be made to the programme.

Among those with children aged under 18, the biggest food challenge is children not eating vegetables with almost half claiming that this is a challenge for their children.

This is followed by not having enough time to eat (31%); food phobias (27%); and being distracted by other children (25%), the research found.

83% of people believe dairy is part of healthy diet – NDC

83% of Irish people believe that dairy is part of a healthy balanced diet, according to new research from the National Dairy Council (NDC). The survey of 1,000 people carried out in June shows that this figure is up by 4% compared to a similar study carried out in May 2023.

The NDC said that the results come "against a background of heightened interest in, and awareness of, plant-based alternatives". Despite "increasingly vocal anti-meat and dairy sentiment", the findings show that 80% of Irish people think that dairy products can be part of a sustainable diet, which is an increase of 4% since May 2023.

In terms of public perception of farmers, 71% of those who participated in the survey said that they trust Irish dairy farmers to take care of the environment. According to the NDC, over 16,000 dairy farmers currently take part in sustainability initiatives.

The organisation said that the results – which are up 6% on May 2023 and 1% on February 2024 – imply "a greater

public recognition of farmers' actions to achieve environmental targets".

The findings come as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) confirmed a 4.6% reduction in agricultural emissions in 2023. Mark Keller, Interim Chief Executive of the NDC, said that the figures are "an indicator of genuine public support for the Irish dairy industry".

He said that the sector includes 17,500 family farms, supports 55,000 jobs and is responsible for €6.3 billion in export revenues.

"Ireland's dairy farmers are committed to improving their environmental sustainability and are employing new farming practices and technologies – such as soil sampling, low-emission fertilisers and GPS-guided fertiliser spreading – to achieve those goals.

"That the measures are having an effect is demonstrated by the reduction in agricultural emissions seen from yesterday's EPA report," he said. Keller said that, similar to other sectors, dairy is "facing unprecedented

challenges when it comes to its impact on the environment" and has "clear, stretch targets to meet".

"Sometimes, however, it feels as if more attention is paid to how we describe our efforts, rather than to what we're actually doing.

"Technically, the Irish dairy production system is not wholly sustainable – alongside most other industrial sectors – but our farmer's efforts to improve environmental performance while de-

livering consistently high-quality food should be applauded, not glibly dismissed as 'greenwashing'.

"Our consumer opinion research shows that Irish people across all age groups support dairy farmers and see dairy produce as an important part of their diet.

"There is always room to improve and the story of quality Irish dairy and its place on the world stage will continue to be told," he said.



Over 70pc of people trust dairy farmers to take care of the environment

NEW data from the National Dairy Council (NDC) – the farmer-funded, consumer-facing organisation

promoting Irish dairy products – and production – shows that over seven in ten Irish people now trust Irish dairy farmers to take care of the environment.

The results – which are up 6% on May 2023 and 1% on Feb 2024 – imply a greater public recognition of farmers' actions to achieve environmental targets and are supported by yesterday's EPA figures [1] showing a 4.6% reduction in agricultural emissions in 2023.

Mark Keller, Interim CEO of the National Dairy Council, believes the figures are an indicator of genuine public support for the Irish dairy industry, its

17,500 family farms, the 55,000 jobs it supports and the €6.3bn export revenues it delivers to the Irish economy each year.

"Ireland's dairy farmers are committed to improving their environmental

sustainability and are employing new farming practices and technologies – such as soil sampling, low-emission fertilisers and GPS-guided fertiliser spreading – to achieve those goals.

That the measures are having an effect is demonstrated by the reduction in agricultural emissions seen from yesterday's EPA report"

At the same time – and against a background of heightened interest in, and awareness of, plant-based alternatives – 83% of Irish people believe that dairy products are part of a

healthy, balanced diet – talking with the Irish government's recommendation of 3 servings of milk, cheese, or yoghurt a day. This figure is 4% up on May 2023 and 2% on Feb 2024.

Sustainable diets are those that are nutritious, environmentally-conscious, affordable, accessible, and culturally acceptable, and 80% of Irish people believe that dairy products can be part of a sustainable diet. This number has grown – despite increasingly vocal anti-meat and dairy sentiment – by 4% since May 2023 and 3% since February 2024.

"Ireland is an agricultural nation and dairying is a part of our heritage, with a history in Ireland of some 6,000 years. Like every sector, however, it is facing unprecedented challenges when it

comes to its impact on the environment, and it has clear, stretch targets to meet.

"Sometimes, however, it feels as if more attention is paid to how we describe our efforts, rather than to what we're actually doing. Technically, the Irish dairy production system is not wholly sustainable – alongside most other industrial sectors – but our farmer's efforts to improve environmental performance while delivering consistently high-quality food should be applauded, not glibly dismissed as 'greenwashing'.

"Our consumer opinion research shows that Irish people across all age groups support dairy farmers and see dairy produce as an important part of their diet. There is always room to improve and the story of quality Irish dairy and its place on the world stage will continue to be told."

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