

# Origin Green News

Ireland's Food and Drink Sustainability Programme

## Powered by Partnership

A message from **Deirdre Ryan**, Director of Sustainability and Quality Assurance, Origin Green at Bord Bia



**LAUNCHED BY BORD BIA IN 2012**, the Origin Green food and drink sustainability programme has developed a national infrastructure for farmers and producers committed to positive change and sustainable food production across Ireland.

Origin Green collaborates with over 55,000 farms and 300 leading Irish food and drink companies to prove and improve the sustainability of Ireland's food and drink sector; with the vision of creating a thriving

agri-food sector that is responsive to the future needs of our people and our planet.

Like every other sector of our economy, the **Climate Action Plan** has set out an ambitious plan to more than halve our carbon emissions over the course of the decade. This will be challenging and will require significant changes in many areas of Irish life including farming and the food and drink manufacturing sector. The programme, in conjunction with partners, will help drive innovation and improvements in farming and land management to reduce emissions, and build on Ireland's green reputation for producing high-quality and sustainable produce, ensuring that the long-term outlook for the industry remains positive and resilient. */continued on next page*

**Origin Green's latest strategy, Powered by Partnership, is inspired by the programme's nationwide coalition of farmers and producers, who have spent the last 10 years working towards positive environmental change and establishing more sustainable food production methods.**



## Powered by Partnership<sup>continued</sup>

Bord Bia has established partnerships with groups such as Teagasc, National Biodiversity Data Centre, Repak and many others, to ensure that the practical business of sustainability is supported with data and best-in-class training. Origin Green's new strategy, Powered by Partnership reinforces the partnership approach driving the programme and supporting more sustainable outcomes.



As the urgency of addressing climate change and the biodiversity crisis escalates, the Origin Green programme is placing a greater emphasis on science-based targets, nature-based solutions and integrating circular approaches. We will achieve these goals by developing and growing Market

Leading Standards which are based on industry best practice and independently verified. Bord Bia will work in collaboration with others to provide best-in-class guidance, tools and metrics to support farmers and businesses implementing sustainable practice.

We will partner with our leading academic institutions to empower and educate the leaders of Ireland's food and drink industries, giving them the understanding to drive change in their businesses.

Our partnership approach is based on a desire to work with stakeholders across the industry and political sphere. Ireland's food and drink industry has a hard earned, global reputation as a leader in sustainability. Addressing our environmental challenges offers us the potential to protect and grow that reputation for generations to come.

## Progress Update Report 2021

In September 2021, Bord Bia provided a detailed update on the Origin Green programme, as members continue to make progress across a range of sustainability initiatives. The **Origin Green's Progress Update Report 2021** presents an overview of the latest developments within the programme and highlights the significant efforts of its members to impact positively on greener ways of farming and the adoption of more sustainable food production methods.



### Key highlights include:

- Sustainable beef and lamb assurance scheme (SBLAS) members recorded a 6.3% average reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> per unit of beef
- Sustainable dairy assurance scheme (SDAS) members recorded a 6% average reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> per unit of milk
- Manufacturing members of the programme have set a total of 2,779 sustainability targets and established 13,600 sustainability initiatives over nine years since the programme launched in 2012
- In retail and foodservice, Origin Green's 10 verified members represent circa 75% of the Irish retail market and have set a total of 165 sustainability targets across the areas of sustainable sourcing, operations, health and nutrition and social sustainability
- The scale and scope of the Origin Green programme continues to produce important results, with 290,000 carbon footprints calculated to date at farm level.



**6.3% average reduction** in CO<sub>2</sub> per unit of beef from SBLAS members



**6% average reduction** in CO<sub>2</sub> per unit of milk from SDAS members





# Sustainability is a key driver for Irish food businesses in global markets

In September 2021, Bord Bia published the results of one of the most extensive global surveys of the attitudes of thought leaders, consumers and trade buyers to sustainability ever undertaken.

In the first half of 2021, Bord Bia conducted global research to better understand global sustainability demands around food and drink. The insights are designed to help understand customer and consumer behaviours and demands around sustainability. This research will help the Irish food and drink industry to focus on the right sustainability priorities and arm it with the sustainability messages that resonate best. This Global Sustainability Survey was undertaken domestically and in 12 of Ireland's most important export markets, to understand attitudes to sustainability and emerging trends in three groups; **agenda setters** (advocacy groups, policy makers, industry leaders), **customers** (trade buyers, sustainability leads, operations leads) and **consumers**. The survey found clear differences in what each group prioritises and how they see the topic of sustainability.

The survey also identified **clear benefits** to companies that could demonstrate positive action and leadership on key sustainability issues. In several areas, consumers appear to be looking for greater information around key sustainability issues. Bord Bia believes there is an opportunity for Irish brands to stand out if they can communicate in a clear way.

**Sustainable packaging and plastics** were identified as a key issue for commercial food buyers in Ireland, and three in ten consumers surveyed reported that sustainable packaging influences choice when doing grocery shopping. In response, Bord Bia launched an updated Packaging Guidance for its Origin Green members to support the industry's ambition to reduce the amounts and types of raw materials used in packaging.

Speakers at the event included representatives from Repak, who provided an update on recent packaging legislation and challenges, and Mabbett, the international environmental auditing body, who provided an overview on the Origin Green programme's packaging targets and the new packaging guidance document.

**72%**  
of trade buyers  
say it's important  
to have suppliers  
with strong  
sustainability  
credentials



The Global Sustainability Insights are available at: <https://www.bordbia.ie/global-sustainability-insights/>

## Origin Green's role in Food Vision 2030 and the Climate Action Plan

**Food Vision 2030 is the new 10-year strategy which will shape the future Irish agriculture.** While previous strategies have always incorporated sustainability and measures to enhance Ireland's environmental performance, Food Vision 2030 places environmental performance at the heart of the strategy. At its very core, this is a strategy which seeks to map a road to a carbon neutral agri-food sector.

Among the elements which are included in the strategy is the need to significantly enhance the role of the Origin Green programme. A full chapter of the strategy is devoted to the enhanced role that the programme will play in supporting Irish farms and Irish food companies in improving their sustainability performance.

The report is clear in saying that the work carried out by Bord Bia through the Origin Green programme to date provides an excellent base from which to build, but that we must now do more. Origin Green's focus must move to supporting Irish agri-food to create and achieve measurable and meaningful sustainability targets.



We have already begun to move in this direction. Larger food producers are now signing up to targeted emissions reductions as part of their membership.

As the recently published Climate Action Plan and Carbon Budgets demonstrate, there is a challenge ahead of us, particularly in agriculture. Through the Origin Green programme Bord Bia have a key role to play in supporting the sector to rise to that challenge.

## Diversity and Inclusion Guidance Document in Partnership with AgDIF and the 30% Club

**Origin Green verified members are encouraged to include Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) targets under the social area of their sustainability plans.** To support members to increase the number and ambition of their diversity and inclusion targets focusing on gender equality, in October 2021 the Origin Green team hosted a webinar and released a new Diversity & Inclusion Guidance Document that has been developed by D&I partners AgDiF (The Agri-Food Diversity and Inclusion Forum run by Bord Bia and Aon) and the 30% Club. This webinar will outline how to go about building a D&I strategy and detail the supports available to Origin Green members.

The business case for balanced participation of women at management and senior level in businesses is well documented. In addition, building a diverse and inclusive company means that firms can draw from across the talent pool, attracting the skilled employees they need, supported by a strong employee brand and recruitment proposition. Attracting and retaining women is key to that and business leaders are advised to identify what actions need to be taken at their company level to give them that competitive edge.





# Farmer Support

## Origin Green and Irish Farmers - Sustainability Assured

**Over 55,000 Irish farms are working with Origin Green to deliver increased sustainability. Members of Origin Green's Sustainable Assurance Schemes for beef and lamb farmers (92% of beef produced), dairy farmers (95% of milk produced), horticulture (70% of horticulture) and egg (95% of eggs), which are aligned to Origin Green.**

Throughout the country, over 100 independent auditors, working on behalf of Bord Bia, undertake 650 weekly engagements on farm as part of these programmes. In addition to quality, the sustainability criteria measured and monitored are greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity, water use, energy efficiency, soil management and socio-economic factors.

Over 290,000 carbon assessments have taken place on beef and dairy farms over a five-year period. These carbon assessments has recorded improvements among our farmer members, such as 6.3% average reduction in CO2 per unit of beef from SBLAS members and a 6% average reduction in CO2 per unit of milk from SDAS members.

As the Irish food industry and the Origin Green programme move to a greater focus on science-based targets, the existing participation by the vast majority of Irish farms in the Sustainability Assurance Schemes provides a strong base from which to build.



# 55,000+ farms

### Origin Green Farmer Phone Helpdesk



The Origin Green team are always on hand to support farmer members with issues in relation to sustainability and environmental performance. If you know of farmers looking for support in the area of sustainability, tell them to get in contact, **01 5240410**.



### Bord Bia supports Teagasc Signpost Farm Collaboration

**Bord Bia is proud to partner with Teagasc, farmers, and the wider industry on the Signpost Farms initiative.** This Teagasc led initiative is a collaborative programme to lead climate action by Irish farmers and the transition towards more sustainable farming systems. A key outcome of this initiative is that the whole industry will be aligned in our support and recommendations to farmers on the implementation of environmental measures on-farm and demonstrate new solutions. A range of measures which farmers can take to reduce emissions is provided by the Bord Bia Farmer Feedback Report and we anticipate that learnings from these Signpost Farms will inform the development of the feedback report and other Bord Bia programmes in the future.



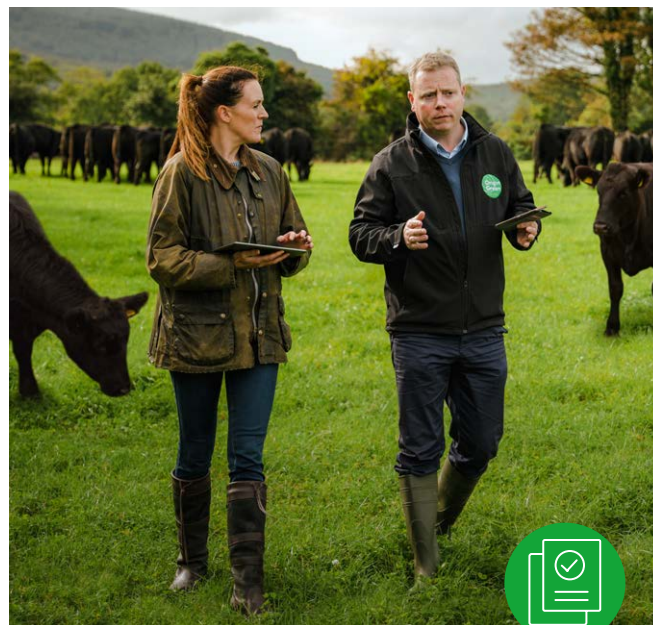
## Farmer Feedback Report

**Bord Bia offers practical guidance and advice to inform farmers on how to become more sustainable, primarily through the Farmer Feedback Report, which was an important step introduced in 2019.**

As part of the Sustainable Assurance Schemes, Bord Bia auditors gather data during the audit process through the Sustainability Survey that enables Bord Bia to assess the environmental performance of quality assured farms via a carbon footprint calculation.

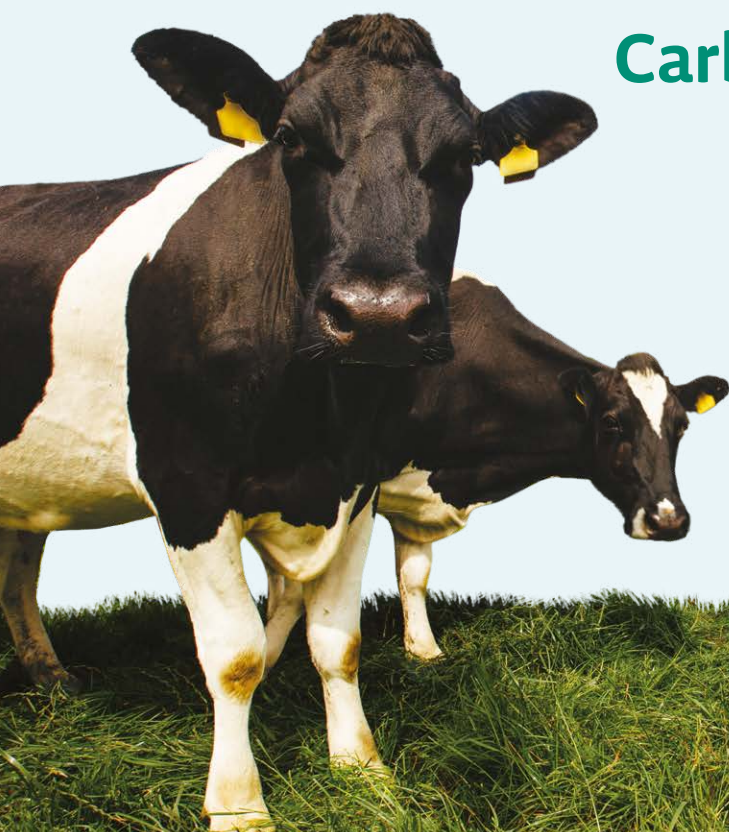
The data gathered is now being used to generate a new farmer feedback report which includes a summary of farm performance under the following headings: General Farm Performance, Carbon Footprint, Greenhouse Gases, Nutrient Management, Grassland Management and Farm Health and Safety. The reported data will compare current farm performance against changes since the last audit and similar production systems.

The purpose of the new farmer feedback report will be to demonstrate to members how their farm inputs and activities contribute to greenhouse gas (GHG) production and will contain advice and feedback on how to mitigate against these emissions and improve production efficiencies. The advisory feedback is



formulated in collaboration with Teagasc and will focus on measures set out in the Teagasc MACC curve.

Data-based initiatives such as this are critical to achieving meaningful improvement in the health and wellbeing of Ireland's farmland.



## Carbon Footprint Champions

**In 2021, Bord Bia developed a Carbon Footprint Champion (CFC) report that identified a subset of 400 SDAS herds which have decreased their carbon footprint over three consecutive audits between 2014 and 2020.** These Carbon Footprint Champions demonstrate that sustainability and productivity go hand in hand.

Bord Bia cooperated with Professor Thia Hennessy of University College Cork to quantify the economic savings made by the Champions while also reducing. The objective was to compare the financial performance of the CFC farms to the average SDAS farms with a view to determine whether it is possible for farmers to both reduce carbon footprint and increase profit, the so-called 'win-win' scenario. [/continued on next page](#)



## Carbon Footprint Champions

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The Champion Farms achieved:

### -18% carbon footprint

Decreased their average Carbon Footprint by 18% per unit of output. (1.22 to 1.00 kg CO<sub>2</sub>e/kg FPCM).

### +50% milk production

Increased milk production by 50%, compared to a 32% increase in milk production for average SDAS herds.

### +15% litres per cow

Increased litres per cow by 15%, compared to a 9% increase on average SDAS herds

### +22% milk solids per cow

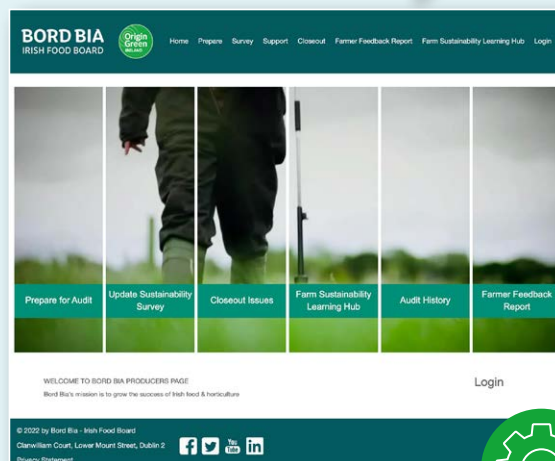
compared to a 15% increase in MS/Cow on SDAS farms.

### -7% less concentrates

per cow per year than the average SDAS herds. (Average concentrate rate fed per dairy cow per day being 2.48 for CFC herds and 2.66 for SDAS herds.)

### +10 days grazing season

grazing season 10 days longer (256 days) than average SDAS herds (246 days).



## Bord Bia Farm Sustainability Learning Hub

**Bord Bia has launched a new online learning hub to provide guidance on sustainability and animal welfare to farmers.** The optional modules have been developed with industry experts, including Teagasc, to simplify the actions that farmers can take to become more environmentally and economically sustainable.

Four modules are available from today covering an introduction to greenhouse gases; the Teagasc Marginal Abatement Cost Curve (MACC); the responsible use of antibiotics; and farmland biodiversity.

Members of the Sustainable Assurance Schemes for beef, lamb, and dairy, can access the modules online at [farm.bordbia.ie](https://farm.bordbia.ie).



# Company Support

## How does Origin Green membership drive sustainability in businesses?

**Origin Green enables Irish food and drink companies to develop a comprehensive multi-annual sustainability plan. This plan encompasses environmental, social and economic sustainability, helping them to reduce environmental impacts, achieve efficiencies in the daily running of their business and ensure their business has a positive social impact in their community.**

Manufacturers can become Origin Green verified members by developing and delivering a sustainability plan with clear, measurable and time bound targets, in accordance with the Origin Green Sustainability Charter. To qualify, a plan must include targets that are relevant to the company's business in three key areas: **Raw Material Sourcing, Manufacturing Processes** and **Social Sustainability**. Each plan is independently verified, with targets reviewed and monitored for continuous improvement on an annual basis by Mabbett, a leading global inspection, verification, testing and certification company.

Retailers and Foodservice companies may also become verified Origin Green members through the development of a sustainability action plan and the delivery of ambitious, measurable and time bound targets that are relevant to the company's business.

Targets must be set in four key areas; **Sustainable Sourcing, Operations, Health & Nutrition**, and **Social Sustainability**.

To enable companies to develop credible and ambitious sustainability targets, a team of experienced environmental consultants, called Origin Green mentors, work one-to-one with each company. They help them through the Origin Green plan development process and submission of their annual review reports. This mentorship ensures companies receive advice on best practice sustainability target setting, as well as compliance with mandatory regulatory requirements.

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**Origin Green is the world's only national food and drink sustainability programme, enabling the industry to set and achieve measurable sustainability targets that respect the environment and serve local communities more effectively.**



# 300 verified members



## How does Origin Green membership drive sustainability in businesses?

continued

At the start of 2020, Bord Bia introduced the a new credits system to the Origin Green programme for manufacturing members, which simplifies the verification process for participating companies and makes the process more transparent. It also enables companies that have demonstrated exemplary sustainability target performance to be awarded Gold Membership. If companies fail to achieve the required threshold of targets during their annual review or do not provide their annual review report, they will lose their Origin Green membership.



## Extensive Sustainability Supports

**A fundamental element of Origin Green involves supporting Irish food and drink manufacturers as they work to set and achieve ambitious sustainability targets.**

In an effort to achieve this, a variety of tools and resources are available to participating companies as they work to achieve full verification, as well as retain their verified member status year-on-year.

Available Supports

- **Workshops:** The Origin Green team has run over 100 introductory workshops that assist companies in understanding the programme and developing their plans.
- **Templates:** Participating companies are provided with an Origin Green plan template which outlines everything that needs to be included in their sustainability plan.
- **Feedback Reports:** Individual feedback reports are provided to companies developing sustainability plans to assist with development.
- **Online Course:** Following workshops, the Origin Green team runs a plan development course. The course has been designed to take companies from the introductory stage to the stage where they have developed a complete sustainability plan that is ready to become verified.
- **Cross-Sectoral Knowledge Sharing:** A number of visits to Origin Green verified member plants are organised with the aim of sharing knowledge about best-practice in sustainability with other companies.
- **Sustainability Target Guidance:** Bord Bia has developed a series of **target guidance documents** to ensure Origin Green members have required sustainability knowledge to set ambitious sustainability targets.
- **One-to-One:** Should any other queries from companies arise, the Origin Green team is on hand to offer support and guidance on a one-to-one basis.



# Pathways to Net Zero

**Bord Bia works with companies to establish emissions reductions targets that are exacting, but realistic within the context of their business.**

These targets are not only increasingly important from a regulatory perspective, we also know from our research that customers are increasingly demanding proof of progress to lower emissions.

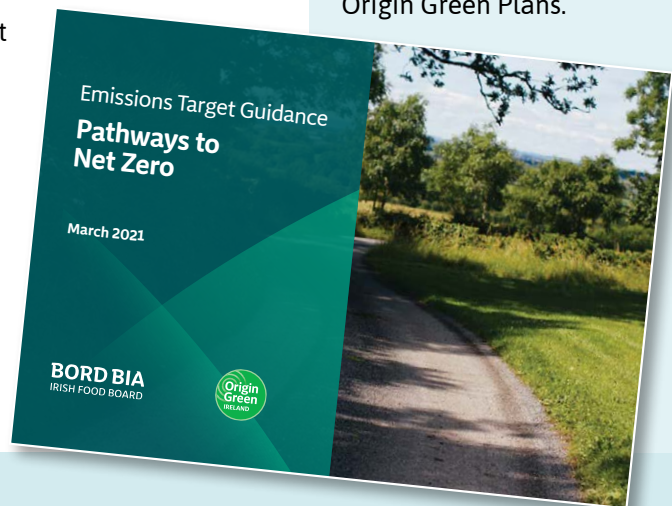
As of this year, all Origin Green member companies with a turnover over €50m are required to set mandatory emissions reductions targets. To further support companies in establishing robust and credible emissions targets, Bord Bia in conjunction with Accenture will a five-part Science-Based Target (SBT) webinar series to educate Origin Green members on how set SBTs and communicate them to key stakeholders.

SBTs provide companies with a clearly defined path to reduce emissions in line with the Paris Agreement goals. They have become the “quality label” of corporate climate action. All major Irish customers are setting Science-Based Targets themselves and their supply chains e.g., Tesco, Sainsbury’s, McDonalds, Lidl etc. The webinar series begun in mid-February through and continue into late April. Following the webinars series, Bord Bia will publish a SBT thought leadership report on how best the agri-food industry can adopt SBTs.



## Sustainability Target Partnerships

Bord Bia is committed to working with national and international partners who demonstrate best practice in their fields, working to improve the performance of the industry as a whole and drive continuous sustainability improvement with members Origin Green Plans.



### Session 1: Define

#### Introducing Science Based Targets

*Companies understand the commercial imperative to act now*

### Session 3: Reduce

#### Reducing emissions Part 1

*Levers to reduce scope 1 and 2 Emissions in Irish food, drink and horticulture companies*

### Session 5: Communicate

#### Science Based Targets communications

*Approaches to communicating your SBTs to customers, investors and other stakeholders*

### Session 2: Measure

#### Measuring Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions

*The methodologies and tools your company needs to respond to the demand of more accurate data*

### Session 4: Reduce

#### Reducing emissions Part 2

*Implementing emissions reduction into your value chain and how to address Scope 3 emissions*



## Partnership with National Biodiversity Data Centre

**In 2021, Bord Bia announced a new partnership with the National Biodiversity Data Centre to support companies in identifying and implementing smart company biodiversity targets in line with the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025.** Protecting and enhancing biodiversity has been a key focus of the Origin Green programme and the National Biodiversity Data Centre partnership will support Origin Green companies to develop measurable Biodiversity strategies for their own businesses. As part of the partnership, Bord Bia is funding a dedicated Biodiversity Officer at the National Biodiversity Data Centre to provide expertise and guidance on Origin Green member companies' biodiversity plans.

Members are encouraged to include at least one biodiversity target in their sustainability plans. According to the latest Progress Update Report, to date, Origin Green business members have committed to over 105 biodiversity targets and over 500 initiatives. The number of member companies setting biodiversity targets has been increasingly steadily since 2017. The majority were focused on biodiversity enhancements, while a smaller number of targets were related to invasive species control and general biodiversity initiatives.

Bord Bia has also introduced a new online training course on Biodiversity for Origin Green farm members, which details the importance of maintaining farmland biodiversity and the practical actions that farmers can take.



## Delivering Packaging Solutions

According to our Global Sustainability Survey, packaging is a key area of focus for consumers across the world. It is an area that they can understand and where they feel that their consumption choices can make a real difference. Packaging has been a mandatory target for all members of the Origin Green programme since 2019. Bord Bia has partnered with Repak over many years, to increase awareness of the importance of minimising packaging and moving away from single-use plastics, wherever possible. Our team runs regular seminars with Repak and are seeing the value of these in the progress being made by members. Recently, we created a **Pathways to the Circular Economy guidance document** to help members set SMART packaging targets.



## Supporting Food Waste Prevention

The Global Sustainability Survey made it clear that food waste is front of mind for consumers with almost 9 in 10 say they have made an effort to reduce food waste in the last year. Helping consumers in Ireland reduce their food waste is a great way for organisations to communicate a brand's care for sustainability, but it is also integral for organisations in the supply chain to undertake efforts to reduce waste in that supply chain. In the last full reporting year, member companies' awareness and action on food has continued to grow, with 31 targets set in relation to food waste alone. There is, however, scope for increased uptake in by-product re-use innovation targets. This ties into wider efforts to increase the circularity of the Irish food and drink sector.

To promote food waste reduction, Bord Bia has worked in close collaboration with the EPA Stop Food Waste team to adopt EPA food waste measurement tools and sign up to the Retail Food Charter.



## Origin Green Gold Members 2021

In September 2021, Bord Bia announced that 51 Irish food, drink and horticulture companies had achieved Gold Membership status based on exemplary performance in reaching their sustainability targets. This marks a 100% increase on the previous year, reflecting raised ambition in the programme and sustainability from industry members.

To attain Gold Membership, a company must demonstrate exceptional annual performance in areas such as raw material sourcing; water and energy efficiency; waste reduction; packaging; and social sustainability. This year's Gold Members excelled most in the areas of energy, packaging, and community engagement. More information about each of the Origin Green Gold Members 2021 can be found at [origingreen.ie](https://origingreen.ie)



Sustainability Programme  
**GOLD MEMBER**  
**2021**



**Deirdre Ryan**, Director of Origin Green and Sustainable Assurance with Bord Bia, commented:

“51 member companies have achieved Gold Member status in 2021, excelling in their sustainability targets and demonstrating industry leading results. Their ambition reflects the increased sustainability focus companies are committing to in order to support sustainable development in the Irish agri-food sector.”

## Contact us:

The Origin Green programme has over 55,000 farms (or 71,000 members) and 300 agri-food companies. These are located in every county in the country. If you have specific questions, please feel free to contact us at:

**[info@bordbia.ie](mailto:info@bordbia.ie)**

We will do our best to ensure that we address your questions.



Ireland's food and drink  
sustainability programme