

TOP 10 PRODUCER TIPS FOR BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL FOODSERVICE BUSINESS

1. Review each of the **foodservice channels** and identify products within your business with potential to fit one or more channels. Have a **structured approach** to dealing with the foodservice sector and create prioritised lists to help focus on the market channels most appropriate to your business. Ensure that you conduct research in advance of approaching buyers – in addition to reviewing their profile and online presence, ensure that you have visited at least one site and observed the customer profile and existing food and beverage offering.
2. Remember the importance of **service** in foodservice. Ensure paperwork is provided as requested, orders are fulfilled as specified every time and product quality is consistent. **Labelling** and **product specifications** must comply with all FSAI and EU legislation. Ensure the **packaging** is correct and ‘fit for purpose’. Speaking to relevant industry contacts will provide insights regarding portion control etc. and help producers design and deliver appropriate packaging.
3. Understanding **international foodservice trends** will help producers anticipate the needs of tomorrow and feed into a cycle of product innovation. Ensure that **innovation** is taking place at all levels and be proactive in bringing new products and concepts to the market. Also ensure that you are well informed with what’s happening on the domestic market – sign up to Bord Bia’s monthly **Foodservice Newsletters** and investigate other trade information alerts and/or publications.
4. **Relationships** are key to developing sales. Ensure you maintain ongoing communication with your customers. Be proactive and realise the importance of **telling the provenance story**. Remember that the sales process cannot be passive.
5. Continued **price** pressure means that new ways to cut costs at manufacturing level need to be identified. As a producer, ensure that your company has embraced **lean manufacturing** principles. Focus on improving product efficiencies and eliminate unnecessary production costs in order to allow for greater price competitiveness. Think about opportunities for delivering a competitive ‘per portion’ cost.

6. Develop **Key Account Management** skills within your business to manage important foodservice accounts (both distributors and operators). Understand the needs of your key customers and manage these accordingly. If it's not possible to assign responsibility for the development of your foodservice business internally, then consider employing external expertise.
7. Develop a **partnership model**. Work hand in hand with your distributors to get closer to the end customer – it will provide producers with a deeper understanding of the challenges facing foodservice operators and in turn identify existing or new products that can potentially address these challenges. Educate your distributor's team and work closely with them to monitor feedback, ensure that stock is moving and drive sales.
8. Develop a strong **promotional calendar** in consultation with your distribution partner (and end operator, if appropriate). Think about building **brand awareness**, attending trade shows, maximising PR opportunities, training distributor sales teams, interacting with relevant **Trade Associations**, having a social media presence and organising product sampling. Build a foodservice '**marketing toolkit**' to support your product range – add a foodservice tab to your website, develop foodservice specific promotional leaflets etc.
9. Think about how your product proposition can **add value** all along the supply chain. What's in it for each player? Think about providing a '**total solution**' that can ultimately help deliver what the end consumer is looking for.
10. Make time for foodservice in your business and ensure that you have a **strategy** in place. Producers need to ensure that clearly defined objectives exist within the business in order to grow foodservice sales, with provision for necessary resources to service this sector. Harness any existing **foodservice** product category **research** and/or consumer **insights** to guide your strategy – Bord Bia's Consumer and Market Insights Department is a useful resource to this end.