

## **Dawn Meats' Sustainability Journey**

### **About the Company**

Dawn Meats is a family business that remains true to its farming heritage and was established in 1980 in Co. Waterford. Since then Dawn Meats has evolved to become a highly integrated production, sales, marketing and distribution operation with a clear focus on quality meat products for some of the most discerning customers in over 40 countries worldwide. Dawn Meats employs in excess of 2700 employees in Ireland and abroad.

Dawn Meats supplies an extensive portfolio of meat products ranging from carcasses and primal cuts to value-added raw and cooked products to Irish and international customers. The company guarantees complete traceability along the supply chain from 'farm to fork', ensuring production to the highest standards.

Business success is achieved by producing safe and consistent high quality products to meet and exceed its customers' expectations, and through continuous investment in new product development. Dawn Meats acknowledges the important role that agriculture, animal welfare, the environment and its staff play in accomplishing this.

### **Origin Green Membership**

Sustainable practices are fundamental to the Dawn Meats business ethos. Sustainability provides environmental, social and economic benefits, not only for the company itself, but also to its supply chain, to the local community and to the global environment in which it operates. As part of the agriculture chain the company considers itself and its partners as custodians of the future.

Dawn Meats is leading numerous initiatives, which seek to support the environmental and commercial sustainability of agriculture. In the last number of years it has focused attention on a variety of different projects aimed at strengthening sustainable agriculture, production and distribution by encouraging discussion of best practice and sharing of information between various stakeholders. Initiatives range from strengthening the farmer supplier base (e.g. Better Farms and Dairy Beef Club), community projects (such as involvement in Harvest Food Festival, agricultural shows and local non-profit organisations), to large-scale investments in innovative technologies that reduce carbon footprint, energy and water usage. Key accomplishments in the area of resource efficiency include the installation of solar and wind turbine powered external lighting, use of reed beds as a low carbon alternative to effluent treatment, ambient air chilling and the use of recovered heat for waste streams.

Dawn Meats sustainability programme has been recognised on a national level, through the Green Awards, Chambers Ireland's CSR Awards and the Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland (SEAI) Awards and on an international level through the Footprint Awards, 2degrees Awards, Green Apple Awards and Sustainability Leadership Awards.

Dawn Meats strong sustainability focus prompted it to sign up to Bord Bia's Origin Green programme. Since the company had already incorporated sustainability into its mission statement, and due to the presence of a sustainability plan, the membership process was even more straightforward. From initial expression of interest to becoming a verified member of the Origin Green campaign took less than four months.

In the company's sustainability charter, submitted as part of the Origin Green membership process, measurable sustainability goals are outlined in the areas of energy, water and emissions for a ten-year period using a 2010 baseline. Progress against these commitments is communicated regularly to Bord Bia, and is subject to ongoing verification by external parties appointed by Bord Bia. The purpose of this verification is to maintain the integrity of the sustainability charter and to ensure that it delivers value to existing and potential customers of the Irish food and drink industry.

## Key Strategic Objectives

In its sustainability charter Dawn Meats declares a commitment to making business decisions based on triple bottom line considerations. Dawn Meats recognises that as a business it has social and environmental obligations and as a result strives to be proactive in reducing emissions, minimising carbon footprint and ensuring that sustainable practices are enshrined in its business ethos.

The sustainability charter is reviewed at a corporate level on an annual basis to ensure Dawn Meats is achieving the stated objectives, targets and vision for sustainability. The corporate sustainability working group includes the Chief Executive, Operations Director, Sales Director, Group Sustainability Manager and Group Agriculture Manager. At site level, the plan is implemented by a multidisciplinary team, incorporating production, technical, financial and management personnel. This allows for a top down and bottom up approach to sustainability management, reinforcing the culture of sustainability within the company. Charlie Coakley, Dawn Meats Group Sustainability Manager states “The cross functional team approach at all levels of our business reflects our commitment and passion for sustainability “

## Sustainability Targets

Dawn Meats sustainability charter sets out realistic and measurable goals in detail over a ten-year period under the headings of energy, water and emissions. In early 2013, Dawn Meats doubled its original improvement targets, due to the success of the ongoing environmental sustainability initiatives. Dawn Meats now aims to achieve a 40% reduction in energy and water usage, and a 50% reduction in direct carbon footprint by 2020. Charlie Coakley, Dawn Meats Group Sustainability Manager commented “The success of the Origin Charter and the sustainability programme is testament to ongoing work by our sustainability teams across our business”

In order to manage energy consumption as responsibly as possible, Dawn Meats has implemented environmental management systems in all of their sites. To reach these ambitious energy consumption goals, the environmental management systems are based on ISO 14001. To-date six Dawn Meats sites are accredited to the standard, with the remaining sites working towards accreditation. Production associated energy consumption will be reduced by implementing a programme of works ranging from capital investment in boiler optimisation, introduction of heat recovery technology, refrigeration optimisation and staff training, resulting in behavioural change in relation to energy usage at site level.

There is also a significant emphasis on the water intensive cleaning processes within the processing plants. By introducing water saving innovations here and by optimising procedures to save water where possible, whilst still maintaining its high standard of hygiene and quality assurance, Dawn Meats plans to achieve its zealous goal in relation to reduced water consumption.

The implementation of the environmental management system and energy plan will lead to realising the reduced energy targets. This in turn will aid the reduction of carbon emissions in direct production. This decrease in emissions will be further complemented by a move towards using low carbon fuels.

## Benefits of Origin Green Membership

Charlie Coakley, states “Origin Green provides a framework for a ‘field to fork’ approach to sustainability, supporting the commercial and environmental sustainability of agriculture and food processing, enabling Irish companies to be at the global forefront in providing leadership on sustainability initiatives and giving Irish companies a real market differentiator.”

## The Future

Dawn Meats is dedicated to continuous improvement in the efficient use of resources, resulting not only in lower operating costs, but also in a lower impact on the environment. It will continue to implement the measures required to achieve the ambitious sustainability goals set out in its sustainability charter. Dawn Meats understands that sustainability is a journey and not a destination. The group has already made solid strides in its sustainability journey, and remains committed to doing even better than set out in its plan. By focusing on the delivery of continual improvement, Dawn Meats ambitious targets for 2020 can be achieved. The systematic benchmarking process will act as a tool to monitor the effectiveness of the initiatives, and indicate where further action may be required to stay on target.