



The Importance of Benchmarking Sustainability Performance

18th November 2013



About the Company

Slaney Foods International (SFI) is a beef processing business located in the heart of the Slaney Valley, one of Ireland's prime farming regions. The company is renowned for sourcing the highest quality livestock for its beef processing business. It combines best quality Irish Beef with ultra-modern processing facilities to offer a superb product range. Slaney Foods, along with the leading lamb processor Irish Country Meats, forms part of the Linden Food Group, which also includes Linden Foods in Dungannon, Co. Tyrone, a leading lamb and beef processor.

Established as a family business in 1970, it prides itself on its reputation for sourcing and producing only the highest quality Irish beef; this is why Slaney Foods are recognised as *The Beef Specialists*.

The supply of premium carcass and primal cuts of beef is its core business, and the company has developed strong and successful long-term relationships with premium customers including leading multiples, the food service and food manufacturing industry. The company currently employs approximately 350 people its site at Ryland, Bunclody, Co Wexford.

Sustainability at Slaney Foods International

Slaney Foods International is focused on making the ethos of sustainability central to all policies of the company. In doing so it aims to continually improve its sustainability and environmental performance by realising the ambitious targets of its sustainability plan. This work is underpinned by the company's ISO 14001 certified Environmental Management System. The company also operates under many other environmental and quality certifications and licences, including the EPA - IPPC license; Repak – Certificate of Compliance; Bord Bia Beef Quality Assurance Scheme; the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Foods Approval and Beef Labelling Certification; IOFGA – Approved Organic Standard; BRC – Certificate of Conformity and CLAS – Laboratory Accreditation Certificate.

Important sustainability measures already undertaken by SFI are major upgrades to the boning hall facility in 2011, and building a new abattoir in 2013 with advanced animal welfare conditions and improved efficiencies in energy and water usage.

To drive energy efficiencies at site level, the company has heavily invested in installing alternative fuel machinery such as LPG boilers, heat recovery systems, variable speed drive refrigeration compressors and energy efficient induction lighting. As a result of the implementation of a comprehensive waste management strategy, high levels of recycling, usage of reusable packaging such as reusable trays to ship to customers, and strong rates of diversion from landfill to recycling are in place. By-products of the beef processing activity, previously recovered as waste by-products, are now further utilised and no longer a waste material.

SFI works closely with supplier farmers on animal welfare issues and provides information on animal health issues through the Slaney Farmers website. Slaney also collaborates with key customers to measure CO₂ in beef production to develop benchmarks and action plans to reduce the carbon footprint in primary beef production.

The procurement team apply a strict framework when selecting raw material, packaging and other resources, and an approval system is in place for livestock hauliers and end product transport. All cattle used in production are Bord Bia Farm Quality Assured. Animals are at the core of the SFI business, and a high standard of animal welfare has always been a fundamental objective of its operation. Provision of ready access to water, shelter and space all increase the comfort of the animal in the lairage. In addition, training and welfare monitoring improves awareness among employees of animal welfare, and also provides for the rapid identification of any issues with subsequent implementation of corrective action. Slaney Foods International is also a stakeholder in Animal Health Ireland, and the company website communicates best animal practice and animal health information to farmers.

On a local community level, the company is committed to working with neighbours in the local community and supports local schools and charities.

Key Strategic Objectives

SFI has embarked on the sustainability journey with the objective of strengthening its position as the preferred supplier of key blue chip customers due to its sustainability performance while achieving financial benefits due to cost reduction processes. Furthermore, the company aspires to be a positive functioning part of the local and national economy thus giving economic benefit while going the extra distance through sustainable practices in supply, production and distribution. It strives to continue to achieve high performance as an 'ethical employer' by providing a good working environment for all employees and facilitating their role in sustainability. With regard to animal welfare, SFI intends to work on the basis of on-going improvement. This work will be central to the minimisation of stress levels for animals and will also involve extensive and intensive engagement with our farmer suppliers in relation to animal husbandry.

All employees will implement the sustainability plan within the company, each one contributing in their own capacity. A sustainability plan team has been formed as a working group to lead this movement.

In order to deliver the sustainability plan, Slaney Foods International is focused on communicating the objectives and targets internally to all personnel, and externally to key customers and suppliers. To truly embed the sustainability plan in company culture, all employees will participate in training courses to appreciate these values.

Sustainability Targets

As part of its sustainability plan, the company has chosen 6 targets: electrical and thermal energy usage, water usage, waste to landfill diversion, emissions and animal welfare. The goals will be implemented between 2013 and 2017, using 2012 as a baseline. Targets were selected following investigation of benchmarks from international best practice and comparison between company and international performance, as well as feasibility analysis.

As SFI have already implemented many electrical energy reduction measures, the scope for improvement has been reduced because of this early good practice. To achieve the stretch target of a 10% reduction in electrical energy usage, the company aims to implement a number of initiatives such as the installation of a monitoring & targeting system; heat recovery technology; improvements in energy efficiency in its wastewater treatment and compressed air systems, and refrigeration. Putting an Energy Management System in place, as well as increasing employee awareness to ensure energy efficient practices are adhered to, will further strengthen this effort.

To achieve the goal of reducing thermal energy usage by 5%, SFI will identify areas in steam and hot water usage where the quantity required can be minimised. By measuring the quantity of water used by the processing machines with flow meters, areas for optimisation will be targeted.

Water usage is a key resource in the production of fresh beef. Consequently, efficient use of water is a significant objective. SFI is already metering all hot and cold water used. Furthermore, high and low pressure hot water feeds to the abattoir are metered and also recycled water for non-potable uses. A 12% reduction in overall water usage was achieved in 2012 compared to 2011. Building on this success SFI aims to further reduce water usage by 10%. Key to achieving this ambitious target is dedicated water metering, monitoring and analysis. This will enable identification of efficient usage and alert where deviations occur so that corrective may be taken quickly. Dry vacuuming of floor debris before cleaning will further reduce the amount of water required for pre-cleaning. Additionally, management is investigating dry vacuuming of carcasses in lieu of washing to save water in carcass dressing.

Waste is generated on site from packaging (in & outward) and from other non-production site activities such as maintenance, administration, quality, laboratory and wastewater treatment. The company aims to achieve a 90% reduction in waste to landfill. By monitoring and reviewing what is entering the disposal waste stream, strategies to reduce or eliminate these materials can be developed. SFI hopes to increase recycling percentage for all materials where possible by providing more receptacles for segregation purposes. The environmental officer is also examining the possibility of reducing the quantity of office paper used on site by restricting data presentation to soft copy in appropriate applications. The sales team will also work with customers to reduce packaging and to use more reusable product packaging such as trays and bins. Finally, possibilities will be explored with the waste disposal provider to see if remaining waste is suitable for recovery.

Carbon dioxide emissions on site are derived from energy supply, both electrical and thermal. Thermal energy includes LPG and gas oil. In achieving the energy reduction targets already described there is an inevitable reduction in CO₂ emissions. In addition to reducing electrical and thermal energy derived carbon, the company actively supports reducing carbon emissions during beef production. SFI is currently working with key customers, and farmers to facilitate CO₂ measurement of beef enterprises. The aim is to produce beef with the minimum CO₂ emissions. It is expected that what is learned from this work will eventually be rolled out to all beef farmers.

Animal welfare is of paramount importance to Slaney Foods International. The company has recently invested substantially in the lairage, race, and pen, to provide for the wellbeing of the cattle. Building on this, SFI commits to lairage animal welfare checks covering the condition of animals on arrival and unloading, additional animal welfare training for all animal welfare personnel, as well as weekly cattle slaughter welfare auditing which includes slips, falls, vocalizations, goad use and stunning. Furthermore, improved animal welfare standards will be achieved through increased farmer interaction with the Slaney Farmer website. Information communicated on this website will include veterinary post mortem information on actionable diseases, which is recorded in the abattoir via touchscreen following installation of a computer program.

Benefits of Origin Green Membership

'Everyone at Slaney Foods International wants to protect the environment for the next generation. Origin Green is helping us to do this.'

We see that one of the key benefits of Origin Green Membership is that it aligns our sustainability strategy with that of our like-minded international customers. When sourcing sustainable raw materials it is therefore easy for our customers to make the choice between suppliers with or without a verified sustainability track record.

Membership of Origin Green also brings with it exceptional expertise in communicating and marketing the sustainability agenda in the international arena which is so important in developing our business and reaching new customers.

With these advantages of membership we expect that as we move towards reaching our targets in 2017 that there will be real financial rewards in new business generated and improved resource efficiency.'

**Mr Rory Fanning,
Managing Director of Slaney Foods International**