

Rural socio-ecological innovations: drawing on ‘the local’ through a sustainable lens



The innovator

Catherine Kinsella

Region: Wexford (Southeast Ireland)

Area of interest: Dairy/farming

Bursary granted from Circular Economy Innovation Grant Scheme of the Government of Ireland



Features of my innovator journey

- My innovator journey began in October 2020 by researching an idea to bring the milk produced on our farm direct to local consumers in glass bottles, eliminating waste packaging and contributing to the circular economy
- We launched Saltrock Dairy in 2021 as a mobile milk vending unit moving the trailer daily to reach customers throughout the area
- It was a new business model with nothing to benchmark against. Nerve-wracking but empowering
- Attempts to seek funding from LEADER encountered resistance to a new concept without proven success. However, my bank showed great enthusiasm and we were able to move forward
- The Local Enterprise Office and Teagasc will help us to expand our dairy product range
- Our greater aim is to develop a small, profitable, local dairy model that can be adopted by other producers across Ireland and possibly Europe
- Small farms across Ireland have the potential to be hubs of environmental protection and education which support the retention of traditional skills
- We plan to build a demonstration kitchen that will be an education centre for rural skills such as yoghurt making, butter making, baking, rural hand crafts etc.

Innovation from 3 perspectives

Economic

Use of local and natural resources

Diversification and consumer awareness strengthens the viability of small family farms

Strong market and stakeholder support

Environmental

Small farms as hubs of environmental protection and education

Waste reduction/elimination model

Cutting out unnecessary food mileage

Social

Contribute to and celebrate vibrant rural communities

Collaborative work and partnerships to champion rural innovation

Preserve and promote traditional practices through education

Viable rural business offers greater work/life balance

Contribute to better health and diets



Barriers

A lack of vision on the part of support agencies for new/ innovative approaches to business development

A lack of joined-up thinking between some rural and business support services

Inefficient processes linked to support for innovation. This creates a replication of paperwork and administration for women seeking business support

“I want to play an instrumental part in strengthening rural communities through the growth of viable and sustainable rural business, particularly initiatives led by women which have a positive impact on our very precious physical and social environment”. Catherine Kinsella, farmer



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 101083408



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