



# DCNI Quarterly

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**Dr Mike Johnston MBE**

Chief Executive,  
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Northern Ireland

## FOREWORD

**In this edition, with sustainability high on the agenda of government, consumers and competitors, we bring you up to date on the developments within the industry that are aimed at supporting you in improving efficiency, making changes, gathering data and using it to the benefit of your farming business and society.**

We signpost you to the comments of industry leaders who recognise that the sustainability journey is not optional and that data is essential to benchmark and demonstrate progress in reducing emissions and environmental footprint to meet legislative and consumer demands.

Elsewhere we review our latest nutrition and education activities and detail how our social media is gaining momentum.

Finally, I'd like to bring you some personal news ... after 34 years as CEO of the Dairy Council for Northern Ireland, I informed the Board, at its meeting on 4th December, of my intention to retire from the Dairy Council in June 2023. The process to appoint my replacement is already underway. It has truly been an honour to represent the industry over so many years and I look forward over the next few months to continuing to advocate for the best interests of the dairy sector.

# The Sustainability Journey

The sustainability journey that the Northern Ireland Climate Change Act has enshrined in legislation, means that the sector as a whole must travel together and at pace on a path to reach stretching targets. In particular, this means the necessity to carry out carbon audits on every farm.

The Dairy Council is supporting farmers by playing its role in the establishment of a Northern Ireland Sustainability Body (SB) as well as the development and implementation of a Carbon Audits (CA) programme.

Commenting Dr Mike Johnston said, "Our sustainability journey must be evidence based, hence the need for data. The tools that are used to deliver the mitigation measures must be science based, and although in some areas the science is not complete, doing nothing until all the science is complete and available is simply not an option. We need to work with what we have and make sure that science evolves to give us the next generation of tools."

He went on to say that, as pointed out by the chief executives of Northern Ireland dairy companies who spoke at the EU Sustainability Symposium in November, legislation is not the only driver of change and that the sector needs to take heed of the demands of customers and the actions of competitors:

**"The NI agri-food sector cannot ignore these drivers, and it needs to move now and with pace to meet the demands of legislation and the needs of customers, and to catch up with many of our competitors. There are many issues that we know of that need to be addressed, and many that will emerge in the coming years; but one thing is certain, we have no choice but to meet our legislative responsibilities and the needs of our customers. That is why a key pillar of our work is in ensuring we are at the very centre of developments, with a seat at the table of the Sustainability Board and supporting a CA programme that is accessible to all dairy farmers."**



# EU Sustainable Dairy Symposium

## Symposium Success

**The 5th Annual EU Sustainable Dairy Symposium, hosted by the Dairy Council NI took place at the Dunadry Hotel on 8th November 2022, with over 120 delegates attending from across the dairy sector and beyond.**

Unsurprisingly, data collection was a key topic and one of the highlights was a discussion panel with the three CEOs of Northern Ireland's largest dairy co-operatives Dale Farm, Glanbia Cheese and Lakeland Dairies who underlined the importance of on farm sustainability to their own businesses. They also spoke about their sustainability plans, how they are working with farmers to tackle climate change and the role data collection will play in helping

market Northern Ireland dairy produce to local and international customers.

Board Member of the Dutch Farmers Organization Wilco Brouwer de Koning provided a snapshot of the work being undertaken on his own dairy farm and the work being undertaken in the Netherlands to improve biodiversity.

While media coverage of the event helped spread the word on Northern Ireland Dairy's progressive approach to sustainability, social media activity ensured engagement with stakeholders from across politics, industry and education.

The symposium can be viewed in full [here](#).

# Milk It sports nutrition seminar scores at W5 Belfast

**November signalled the return of our annual #MilkItNI seminar to discuss all things sports nutrition.**

Following two years of virtual sessions, 2022's seminar was a great success and returned in person at W5 Belfast where leading performance nutritionists shared their knowledge and insights into the role of milk and dairy food for sports and exercise nutrition.



Professor Sharon Madigan, Head of Performance Nutrition at Sport Ireland Institute, chaired the event and was joined by Professor Craig Sale, Professor of Human Physiology and Nutrition at Manchester Metropolitan University, who spoke to an audience of sport and health professionals on the role of milk and dairy

foods for bone health in athletes, before Postgraduate Researcher Conor Raleigh, from the University of Limerick, took to the lectern to take a closer look at the impact of low carbohydrate diets on athletes' bones.

Dr Emma Tester, Head of Nutrition at Tottenham Hotspur Football Club, joining virtually to present a 'week in the life of the Premier League' including insight into some of the strategies around fuelling, recovery and hydration for professional footballers, with an in-person appearance from Northern Ireland Women's football captain Marissa Callaghan bringing the sports discussion full circle.

The 2022 seminar was also a win-win for Ulster University students Chiara Rehman and Adam McCrindle who were named as worthy recipients of the Dairy Council for Northern Ireland's annual 'Sports Nutrition Award'.

Through this award, we work with the School of Sport at Ulster University and Course Director Dr Andrea McNeilly to celebrate students who achieve the highest mark in their MSc in Sports and Exercise Nutrition, encouraging excellence in sports nutrition research and in the education of the sports nutritionists of the future.

# Annual UU Nutrition Lecture Shines Light on Vitamin D

**We were two for two on in-person nutrition events in November with the second taking us to Ulster University's Coleraine campus for the Annual Dairy Council Nutrition Lecture which sparked an illuminating conversation on Vitamin D and Health: is it the 'sunshine superstar' or just 'media hype', to an audience of over 100 nutrition students, academics, and health professionals.**

Given by Professor Susan Lanham-New, Professor of Human Nutrition and Head of Department of Nutrition Science, University of Surrey, our 33rd nutrition lecture with Ulster University re-enforces the Dairy Council's credibility as a trusted source of nutritional information.

The expertise and timely insights of Professor Lanham-New put the spotlight squarely on Vitamin D. Considered a 'unique nutrient' as its main source is the action of sunlight on the skin, rather than diet, understanding of vitamin D's role in health has developed extensively over the past 100 years with interest spiking during the spread of SARS-CoV-2 when vitamin D was proclaimed as the 'magic-bullet' "cure" across social media and online forums.

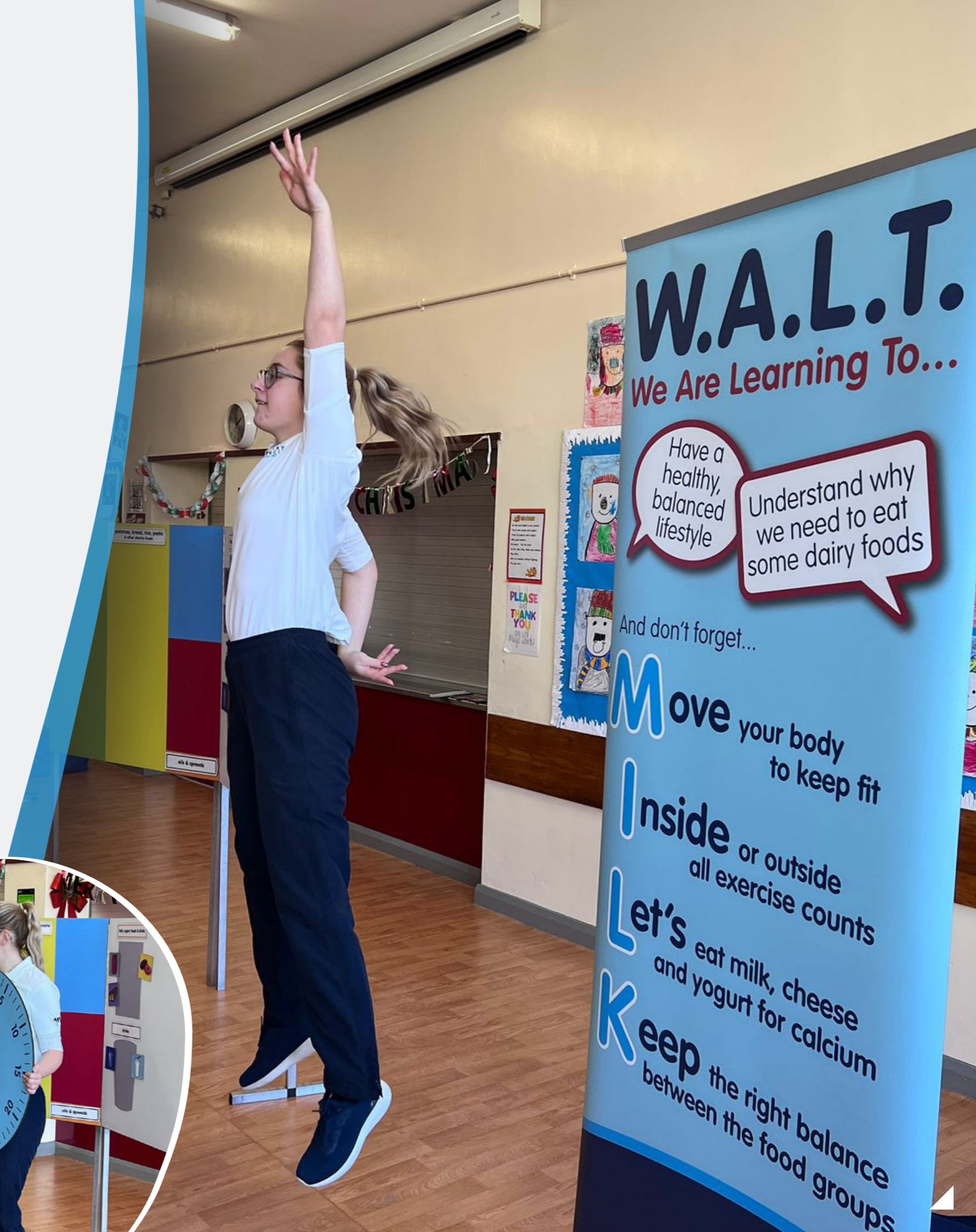


# Food and Fitness Team on the Road Again

As school term returned the DCNI Food and Fitness team were back on the road again delivering important nutritional information in a fun and engaging way.

The interactive presentation explores a balanced diet and lifestyle with Key Stage 2 pupils, including the role of milk and dairy products. The programme, which went virtual during lockdown, remains extremely popular with Northern Ireland's primary schools and the team are fully booked until the end of term.

Each session also includes the Food & Fitness support pack for teachers and information for the children to take home to their parents.



# Social Media

The Dairy Council social media channels continue to garner positive traction and engagement with both consumers and stakeholders with our recent Sustainability symposium standing as a good example of reaching the latter audience.

Bringing festive cheer to the DCNI Instagram was our latest seasonal collaboration with [@JillBakes\\_](#)

Following on from the mouth-watering Easter recipes, Jill created Christmas tree-shaped brownies using the finest local dairy ingredients, pairing the festive treats with homemade hot chocolate for extra dairy indulgence.

You can follow along [@dairycouncilni](#) for creative content and mouth-watering recipes, from cheesecake to homemade soup, all aimed at raising the profile of quality local dairy products.

We're on [Twitter](#) too where we continue to build positive engagement particularly with health professionals.



# Heads Up

## Putting local products on the global stage.

Our completed three-year Middle East export programme achieved more than £8 million in sales since its launch in 2019.

Despite the disruption brought on by Covid, the ME export programme secured 162 buyers from Overseas Trade Missions and 46 buyers from the Inward Trade Missions, underlining the programme's crucial importance to the ongoing success of NI dairy internationally.

The South-East Asia programme which recommenced with a visit from a delegation of Japanese buyers in September continued with a further inward mission in December and outward missions to both China and Japan. The SE Asia programme was completed in January and we will bring you news of its performance in future editions of your ezine.



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