

## High profile food conference investigates 'The Protein Jigsaw'



"beef and lamb can be at the centre of the plate across so many meal occasions," said Colin Smith. "It's a case now of building on this potential."

As the Commission representative went on to point out, it's very much a case of educating consumers from the very earliest age. And this means starting in the schools.

Here in Northern Ireland LMC holds a much-envied position in this regard.

LMC hosts 600 cookery demonstrations in both primary and secondary schools across Northern Ireland on an annual basis.

Invariably, teachers wanting to know more about the role of red meat in the diet will reach out to LMC in order to get the information they need.

"And we want to build on all of this for the future," Colin Smith stressed. "The strong and sustained demand for high quality protein provides an opportunity to put beef and lamb at the very heart of the dietary preferences expressed by consumers. But making this happen will require red meat processors committing to make beef and lamb more convenient meat options. Enhanced innovation at every level within the red meat sector will be required to grasp this opportunity."

But protein is not the only component of a healthy diet.

According to Colin Smith, the period ahead will see a growing focus placed on the nutritional significance of dietary fibre. "And here again a very positive message can be discerned, where high quality beef and lamb is concerned," the LMC's Chief Executive suggested.

"The interfacing of protein and fibre in that nutritional sense brings us back to the days when a meal comprising meat and two vegetables was the assumed keystone of a healthy diet. And, this in turn, delivers the opportunity to put beef and lamb at the centre of the plate, so to speak, when it comes to defining what ingredients should make up the main meal of the day. Research presented at Invest NI's event clearly showed a positive correlation between fibre and red meat with those purchasing red meat having a higher percentage of fibre in their basket. This is another opportunity to be grasped by the industry."

Colin Smith concluded, "There are tremendous opportunities now presenting themselves to better educate consumers in Northern Ireland about the quality of the beef and lamb produced on their own doorsteps. We must grasp this opportunity to point consumers to beef and lamb as the solution to their dietary needs. Currently LMC is using limited levy funds strategically to maximise the impact of our consumer campaigns. However, it is clear from all the speakers at Invest NI's recent conference that there are opportunities to further tap into strong consumer demand for protein rich, nutrient dense convenient meal solutions. A fully resourced LMC is in the perfect position to do this."

### LMC staff fundraiser supports Air Ambulance NI

The staff team at the Livestock and Meat Commission recently came together to host a fundraising event at their offices, with proceeds donated to Air Ambulance Northern Ireland (AANI).

Following the successful initiative, some of the LMC staff team visited AANI's base in Lisburn to learn more about the vital, life-saving service and to formally present the funds raised.

Commenting Colin Smith, LMC Chief Executive said, "We were delighted to present funds raised by staff to AANI. While visiting the site we met with Colleen Milligan, AANI Business Development and Project Manager. Colleen shared incredible insight to the work of AANI detailing the history of this life saving service providing an overview of its dedicated team and outlining the types of incidents they have attended.

"As an organisation intrinsically linked to the agricultural sector we are acutely aware that in the event of an accident or medical emergency time is of the essence. This truly hit home when viewed in the light of stories of former patients who now actively advocate for this service. The fact that AANI and its highly skilled medics can reach as far west as Garrison, Co Fermanagh, in just over 20 minutes is testament to its lifesaving capabilities. As a staff team we all came away with a deep appreciation for this vital service."



### NI Spring Conference 2026

The NI Spring Conference will return to the Glenavon Hotel, Cookstown on Friday 17 April. Hosted by the Livestock and Meat Commission in partnership with the Irish Farmers Journal, the informative event will hear from Michael Haverty, partner and senior research consultant at The Andersons Centre. Michael will present an insight into the current profitability of UK farming and the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

LMC Chief Executive, Colin Smith will open the conference and guide the panel during discussions.

Registration is required. Please book your place today by scanning the QR code or visiting [www.ifj.ie/springconference2026](http://www.ifj.ie/springconference2026)



**NI SPRING CONFERENCE 2026**

**FRIDAY 17 APRIL**  
**THE GLENAVON HOUSE HOTEL,**  
**COOKSTOWN, BT80 8QS**  
**9AM TO 1PM**

**FARMERS JOURNAL** | **LMC** Livestock & Meat Commission | **THE ANDERSONS CENTRE**



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