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LMC marks 20 years of school cookery demonstrations

Since 1999, the Livestock and Meat Commission for Northern Ireland (LMC) has been helping to educate approximately 100,000 young people by providing beef and lamb cookery demonstrations to post-primary schools across the Province.

The initiative, which evolved out of a conference hosted for Home Economics teachers in collaboration with ABP in 1998, was established to help educate pupils on the importance of consuming beef and lamb as part of a healthy diet and how to cook with them.

In the first year only a dozen schools were visited however, the demonstrations have steadily grown and are now an eagerly anticipated part of Food and Nutrition classes. In the past academic year, a record-breaking 350 demonstrations were carried out between September 2018 and March 2019, reaching over 7,000 school pupils.

In 2016 LMC's Northern Ireland Beef and Lamb Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (NIBL FQAS) was added to the GCSE and A Level Food and Nutrition and Nutrition and Food Science syllabuses. This allows pupils to learn about the key pillars of NIBL FQAS and how their food is produced from farm to fork. Not only that but LMC also began hosting 'Red Meat Skills' workshops in 2018 for Food and Nutrition teachers to develop their skills and confidence when working with beef and lamb in the classroom. Last month LMC also launched the 'Meat4Schools' scheme, aiming to make beef and lamb more accessible for those studying food related subjects.

"LMC has been educating Northern Ireland school pupils about the merits of cooking with and consuming beef and lamb for two decades which is a momentous achievement," said Education Services Manager, Cherrie Kenny. "It has been a pleasure for everyone at LMC to watch the schools programme grow from somewhat humble beginnings back in 1999, to the popular event that post-primary schools really look forward to today.

"When the schools programme was first established, our main goal was to educate the young people of Northern Ireland, which has not only been achieved but surpassed with the addition of NIBL FQAS to the curriculum, our teachers' workshops and our 'Meat4Schools' scheme.

“I would like to thank everyone who has been involved with the programme, from ABP to the teachers, who have supported us so well down through the years. We must also express gratitude to our levy payers who had the foresight to see the importance of engaging with young people and delivering key messages about our red meat industry. We wouldn’t be marking this wonderful occasion without your support.”

Elsewhere, Heather Kettle, Head of Home Economics at Enniskillen Royal Grammar School claims that the support of LMC has been ‘invaluable’ to teachers.

“In the current climate of financial constraints within education where non-specialists are being asked to deliver the Food and Nutrition curriculum, the support of LMC through their cookery demonstration and teachers’ workshops has been invaluable. Their demonstrations and workshops have served to up-skill many teachers across Northern Ireland, which in turn has enhanced the learning of our young pupils.

“LMC have always gone above and beyond their remit and have played a key role in delivering the Food and Nutrition curriculum over the last 20 years. I hope that this will be continued long into the future.”

Meanwhile, George Mullan, Managing Director of ABP in Northern Ireland added: “We are delighted to have played a role in getting this initiative off the ground and seeing it grow over the past two decades.

“Helping young people understand more about the relationship between farming, meat and health is something which ABP is fully committed to. Initiatives like this and our own ABP Angus Youth Challenge skills development programme is helping strengthen that positive connection for school children throughout the Province.”

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