

improve

food & drink sector skills council

Profit through skills

Sector Skills Agreement

**Food and Drink
Manufacturing Sector**

Northern Ireland National Report

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Produced by:

Improve Ltd
Providence House
2 Innovation Close
Heslington
York
YO10 5ZF

Tel: 0845 644 0448

Email: info@improveltd.co.uk

Web: www.improveltd.co.uk

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Sector Skills Agreements (SSAs) are understandings between employers and providers/funders of training, facilitated by Sector Skills Councils, which are intended to influence the supply of relevant learning provision to the sector and to raise employer commitment to skills. SSAs will help to deliver on the Skills for Business Network's strategic objectives of increasing productivity, addressing skills shortages and gaps, widening opportunities and making provision more responsive.

The creation of Sector Skills Agreements involves five key stages:

1. Assessment of current and future skills needs of the sector (Skills Needs Assessment)
2. Assessment of current learning provision available to the sector
3. Analysis of the gaps and weaknesses in current workforce development activity, based on stages 1 and 2, leading to agreed objectives
4. Assessment of the scope and level of collaborative action and commitment of resources by employers
5. Development of an action plan with key delivery partners

The final stage of the process, addressed by this document, is the agreed action plan with key delivery partners and employers. The key purpose of this is to formerly illustrate what collaborative solutions have been agreed to support a new vision for the sector.

The key objectives of this stage are:

- To produce a plan, with key delivery partners, that will deliver the overall vision for the sector
- Partners sign up to carry out actions that address issues in the sector identified through the earlier stages of the SSA, and which complement agreements with employers

Demand and supply-side evidence

The sector is vital to the Northern Ireland (NI) economy. In 2004, the sector made the largest contribution to manufacturing Gross Value Added (13%) and contributed approximately 2.1% of Northern Ireland's total Gross Value Added the. The importance of the sector has been recognised by Government with the setting up of the Food Strategy Implementation Partnership (FSIP).

- Northern Ireland Food and Drink Industry had an estimated total gross turnover at £2,508m in 2004.

- Level of employment in Food & Drink processing sector for 2004 is estimated at 21,151 employees¹ (ONS 2004a)
- The ten largest firms accounted for approximately 44% of total gross turnover and 37% of employment in 2004.
- Milk/milk products and beef/sheepmeat subsector are the dominant subsectors in terms of turnover in 2004.
- The Food and Drink Sector has seen increases in profits of 4% 2003-2004.
- In 2004, around 276 companies in the sector have turnovers in excess of £250,000.

As identified in the Stage 1 report, the sector's rate of decline in employment is less than for manufacturing as a whole and it is a world leader in terms of its productivity. However, the UK has an ageing population which reflects upon the age structure of the food and drink manufacturing workforce. A minimum of 56,000 workers are expected to retire from the sector over the next 8 years while there are fewer 16-29 year olds available to replace this older cohort. Overall replacement demand for the sector is expected to be 118,000 by 2014. A key strategy in addressing this replacement demand has been to increase the employment of overseas nationals in the industry which has so far proved beneficial for the sector. Overseas nationals are increasingly filling jobs that the local working population are unwilling to take. If the industry is to maximise this opportunity it must work to improve communication and language skills together with raising the overall skill levels of this group of workers.

If the industry is to attract the people and talent it requires to raise productivity then it must make itself more aware, more attractive and more accessible to the majority of the population i.e. female, ethnic and younger sections of the population. There is a shortage of technical (food scientists and technologists, engineers, electricians) and skilled (especially craft) workers (bakers, butchers, cheese makers). These problems are evident across the whole UK food and drink manufacturing industry. If the food and drink manufacturing sector is to boost its productivity and competitiveness, management and supervisory skills must be raised and improved and the quality and supply of technical, practical and craft skills must be increased.

In terms of supply issues facing the sector, there is much more that unites the nations of the UK than divides them. Employers and training providers throughout the UK identify the same issues irrespective of their geographic location.

Employers, training providers, and public sector stakeholders, have a good grasp of the key training issues, a clear understanding of the problems, and a reasonably strong infrastructure to support and build upon training initiatives. The level of training carried out by the sector's

¹ Standard Industrial Classification 15 only (core footprint)

workforce needs to move from basic to higher level provision in order to meet the skills demanded by the sector. In turn, this should decrease staff turnover, increase off the job training and increase accessibility to the industry for the whole of the working population.

There is a lack of understanding of what is available in terms of support from the public sector and there is frustration that some funding opportunities are missing their target audience. This may be due to a supply-led approach to training funds in the public sector. There is a low level of take up of publicly funded training even though in many parts of the country there are initiatives targeted at those with low or no qualifications levels. On these criteria up to half of the Improve sector workforce would be eligible for public funding support: much training is driven by legislation and regulation requirements rather than innovation, new technology, and final demand.

Over the next eight years, the sector is forecast to shed a significant number of elementary and machine operative roles in favour of managers, professionals and technical occupations. This implies a step change in the workforce and in workforce skills. Currently there is neither the demand for higher skills training through publicly funded routes from individuals, nor a radical demand for that change from Improve's partners or employers. While qualitative intelligence may highlight some demand, the evidence of action in the public learning provision sector is not there to support this assertion.

Key Issues: Demand and Supply

The market testing in stage 3 has brought together the key findings from stages 1 and 2, and has identified the key issues and gaps currently faced in the food and drink manufacturing sector. The key issues and gaps identified are;

The workforce of the future: employment in the sector will decrease over time, but replacement demand for workers will be relatively high. Elementary occupations will decrease through technology change though there will still be requirements for replacement plant and machine operatives, skilled trades occupations and managers in particular.

Problems in recruiting graduate scientists and engineers: the sector has difficulties in recruiting sufficient graduates for its needs now and in the future. In part this is due to reducing levels and quality of science teaching in schools and in part a reflection of the image of the industry. All the same, the sector is not one that is particularly highly regarded as a career path.

Overseas nationals: Since EU enlargement in May 2004, large numbers of overseas nationals have come to the UK to work. One of the sectors that has welcomed this labour source is the food and drink manufacturing sector. Survey evidence with employers shows

that these workers are highly motivated, work well and are prepared to take on more responsible jobs in the sector. Issues arise over language and workforce development.

Changing market conditions: a number of non-skills related developments will have an impact on the sector over the coming years, as they have had an influence in the past. The combined impact of the demands from the major retailers and more diverse consumer demand, aligned with global sourcing of raw materials, tighter requirements for waste management and the need to control energy use and carbon emissions mean a more complex environment for managers.

The benefits of skills development and acquisition: much of the formal training activity that is going on is focussed on meeting legislation and regulatory requirements, with less being done in areas which will contribute to the productivity of the sector. At the same time, there is a lot of on the job and non-accredited training happening in an informal manner. This is reflected in the qualifications profile of the workforce of the sector, where nearly half of employees do not have a level 2 qualification at least. There is a question as to whether individual training budgets are sufficient for the needs of a business, and why, if the sector is one with high GVA, do employers use reducing margins as a barrier or excuse for not investing more in training

Problems of time and space for training: this is a particular issue for food sector employers on a 24/7 regime, as the production line needs to be maintained and in an industry where margins are tight, releasing staff to undertake training can be an overhead expense too far. The evidence from the employer training pilot (ETP) models, that included wage subsidy to provide cover, showed that this did facilitate the take up of learning.

Limited planning and training planning in the sector: whilst overall the sector has a sound track record of business and training planning compared to the all sector average, its performance deteriorates as the size of the employer decreases. Also in common with other sectors, the incidence of planning and training budgets has reduced.

Finding and identifying providers and relevant provision: training provision is hard to identify among some public sector providers and often word of mouth within the sector is the best way of finding the appropriate provision.

The Qualifications regime: employers are largely indifferent as to whether training leads to a qualification or not and will purchase training depending on operational requirements. If there is an outside incentive for qualifications, (regulation, customer requirements) then they will be obtained. Some employers do recognise that employees may value the external accreditation and

use this for motivation, however small companies in particular fear that once qualified, an employee will move on to a competitor.

Similarly, providers will supply the required training, whether or not it leads to a qualification, according to the employers' needs. Where employers, employees and providers may lose out is that with some refinements, an accredited qualification programme could be delivered that may draw down some elements of public funding, and thus help to meet public sector targets as well. It is public funding regimes and the priorities of government and other stakeholders that may drive the qualifications imperative.

The Cinderella Sector: food and drink is often a priority sector for different English regions and UK nations. However, the food manufacturing sector is not defined uniformly by stakeholders leading to confusion for employers and other stakeholders. Within this confusion of definition, the Improve footprint can be lost and therefore employers lose out on funding and support to other "sexier" sectors.

Collaborative Solutions

Based on the findings in SNA Stage 1 and Stage 2, Improve produced a suite of thirteen proposed solutions (called the Baker's Dozen) which met the key gaps and skills issues raised in those documents. This Baker's Dozen was then presented to a Northern Ireland stakeholder group in a market testing event and to employers in a series of meetings. As a result of feedback from the event and meetings, as well as the various UK wide consultation events, such as Skills Summits, the Baker's dozen was refined, with some solutions being rejected and others reformulated. This refining process has resulted in the eight proposed solutions presented here;

- **Careers Development** - Programmes designed to address skills shortages from a number of disciplines for entry into and progression within the sector.
- **Promoting Productivity** - A programme designed to enable companies and employees to adopt the continuous improvement and lean manufacturing skills that are right for them, including Kaizen, MRP II, Supply Chain Management, Lean Manufacturing, Agile Manufacturing, 5S/Cando and ISO 14000. Among other elements, this programme would also help them to adapt to increasing pressures to manage waste and improve energy efficiency. This initiative could have a particular emphasis on smart logistics, waste minimisation, and energy saving, and would aim to help companies in the sector to identify and apply the relevant and best elements of these techniques in their sustainable operations.
- **Flexible Qualifications** - A strategy which helps employers recognise the achievement of employees, through the use of units

which lead to customised qualifications that suit the skills needs of the individual and the employer's business.

- **Training, Learning and Development** - To support and encourage structured approaches to training and development in the workplace.
- **Information, Advice and Guidance** - Existing skills brokerage arrangements across the UK need enhancement in order to fully understand and meet the needs of the food and drink sector. Therefore this solution focuses on ways of embedding specialist sector knowledge and information into existing brokerage arrangements. On a wider scale, employability skills need to be developed and better used by employees at all levels; with stakeholders, with customers, with regulators, and with workforce colleagues and the supply chain.
- **Skills as a Strategic Business Driver** - A programme for enhancing the industry's strategic view of skills as a means of raising productivity and not merely as a minimum legal requirement.
- **'A Future in Food'** - A programme to promote career opportunities, entry and progression routes, to ensure skills deficiencies are met.
- **Networking for Success** - Actions to promote regional and sub-regional co-operation and collaboration on skills issues amongst sector SME's who lack their own suitable in-house training facilities

Northern Ireland Action Planning

Improve has engaged with key employers and partners to discuss ways in which they can 'sign-up' to joint action to address the issues. This has resulted in the production of a NI Action plan presented below;

SSA Agreements in Northern Ireland

Rationale	SSC Proposed Strategic Action	Lead Partner	Support Partners	Related Skills	Strategic Actions in Northern Ireland	Specific Actions / Proposed Delivery	Start Date
Priority 1: Careers Development - ensuring that we have a smart food & drink sector							
<p>The sector has difficulties in recruiting sufficient graduates for its needs now and in the future. In part this is due to reducing levels and quality of science teaching in schools and in part a reflection of the image of the industry. All the same, the sector is not one that is particularly highly regarded as a career path.</p>	<p>Development and delivery of learning programmes needs to be agreed with educational bodies and administrations.</p> <p>Programmes need to be developed by HE/FE lead partners with learning format in line with employer needs to provide seamless training programmes.</p>	<p>CAFRE UU QUB</p>	<p>FDTC ANIC DEL DARD Dairy UK QCANI NI Seafood</p>	<p>The Essential Skills Strategy Careers EIAG Management and Leadership strategy IIP Marketing Strategy FE/HE Development Strategy Skills Barriers to Employment Focus</p>	<p>Development of conversion programmes to be pursued to deliver food scientists and food technologists and engineers for the industry.</p> <p>Raise awareness and promote the sector and careers within it to attract entrants and progression by;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> developing a progression route from school to HE for the NI Food and Drink industry Development of case studies Potential Schools Challenge input 	<p>Improve to develop plans to produce a sector graduate development programme</p>	TBC
						<p>Improve, QCANI, DEL and DARD will carry out initial review/comparison of BSc Chemistry with existing HN units (Food Technology). Once the units are matched, consideration will need to be given/proposal developed on how they will be delivered</p>	TBC
						<p>Improve to develop Northern Ireland sector progression routes and disseminate to partners.</p>	TBC
						<p>Discussions to be held between Improve and partners (FE/HE) and employers to generate case studies illustrating sector careers</p> <p>FDTC to develop case study portfolio</p> <p>Improve will seek to work with partners to develop 'Schools</p>	TBC TBC

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing and Promotional Materials 	<p>Challenge' in Northern Ireland</p> <p>NI Seafood to work with Improve to consider action of promoting management career opportunities across seafood companies.</p> <p>FDTC to work with Improve as an Ambassador with FE/HE/schools to encourage employers to take student placements and provide materials to educational industry e.g. willing to attend Milk Round and link to Improve's website</p> <p>Improve to work with DEL to ensure proper stakeholder collaboration</p> <p>FDTC would like to establish stronger links with education on behalf of employers to increase industry knowledge of education at all levels and involvement with industry</p> <p>FDTC and A4E to work further with Improve on the promotion of MAs (esp. level 2)</p> <p>FDTC and Improve to work together on methods to address the negative perceptions of the industry as a career choice.</p> <p>Improve to provide DEL Careers advisers with information on relevant courses offered and careers prospects</p>	TBC
					Inform relevant advisers of sector courses offered and careers prospects		TBC
					Labour Market and Skills Information Bulletins	Improve to role out programme to develop IAG capability – newly appointed IAG specialist.	TBC
						DEL, DARD and Improve to work	TBC

						together in the provision and review of data, trends and evidence of demand for FS&T courses.	
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Rationale	SSC Proposed Strategic Action	Lead Partner	Support Partners	Related Skills Policies	Strategic Actions in Northern Ireland	Specific Actions / Proposed Delivery	Start Date
Priority 2: Promoting Productivity – ensuring a competitive and sustainable sector							
Lean manufacturing has to become a reality for the sector to maintain competitive advantage, leading to a greater professionalism of management functions. Professionals within the sector will need to develop and continuously improve their skills in this area. Much of the formal	Implementation of a programme for employers to adopt continuous improvement and lean manufacturing skills. Develop a skills dimension to existing organisation's activities e.g. Carbon Trust/WRAP/ Envirowise with the food and drink sector Food chain issues need to be understood	CAFRE UU QUB	FDTC CAFRE ANIC DEL DARD Dairy UK QCANI NI Seafood MLN	Policy for HE and Skills FE Review Food Sustainability Strategy	Identification of priority areas within lean manufacturing for joint working within the food and drink industry in Northern Ireland	MLN to work with Improve on the identification of specific products from frameworks (Business Improvement Framework, Workforce Development Framework for M&L) FDTC to highlight and promote these specific products to sector employers FDTC and Improve to work together to promote and sell the benefits of lean manufacturing techniques and awareness to members. Willing to explore the NSA offer here. Improve will work with established training providers (discussions to be held) on a framework on existing lean manufacturing courses. FDTC to act as a conduit for careers information, advice and guidance Improve to provide Learn direct with updates on the training providers identified here. Improve and CAFRE to develop a suitable 14-16 diploma in line with CCEA Vocational Enhancement	TBC TBC TBC TBC TBC TBC

training activity that is going on is focused upon meeting legislative and regulatory requirements, with less being done in areas which will contribute to the productivity of the sector.	explicitly, involving and including best practice institutions such as engineering research and food research, technology					Programme	
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Rationale	SSC Proposed Strategic Action	Lead Partner	Support Partners	Related Skills Policies	Strategic Actions in Northern Ireland	Specific Actions / Proposed Delivery	Start Date
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Priority 3: Flexible Qualifications

Qualifications need to be fit for purpose and meet employer needs. While employers are divided in their views, the take-up of publicly funded provision set against the	There is a need to ensure qualifications and learning frameworks relevant to the sector and with sufficient flexibility are available and can be delivered. There is a need to	QCA	FDTC CAFRE ANIC DEL DARD Dairy UK QCANI NI Seafood	Credit and Qualifications Framework Essential Skills Strategy FE review implementation programme	Ensure frameworks relevant to the sector and with sufficient flexibility are available and can be delivered; e.g. SQS, NOS reform, Matrix of Units.	Improve to work with qualification regulators, such as QCANI and awarding bodies, to ensure frameworks relevant to the sector and with sufficient flexibility are developed, available and can be delivered. e.g. active awarding body forum and consultation groups. QCANI (in collaboration with Improve) will pilot Employer Self Assessment against National Qualifications. QCANI will work with Improve to carry out an audit of existing qualifications and units which are	TBC TBC TBC
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<p>volume of internal training that is taking place implies that they are not fit for purpose.</p>	<p>ensure that the qualifications and credits are not penalised through the funding regimes, and are supported where appropriate by public funding.</p> <p>Ensure that the voice of employers from the sector are heard in the consultations and construction of any new qualification and credit framework.</p>		MLN		<p>Ensure that the qualifications and credits are not penalised through the funding regimes, and are supported where appropriate by public funding.</p> <p>Ensuring that the voice of employers from the sector are heard in the consultations and construction of any qualifications and credit framework.</p> <p>Provision of labour Market and Skills Information Bulletins</p> <p>Development and distribution of marketing and promotional materials on qualifications and frameworks</p> <p>Promotion of the 'Green Card Skills Passport' in Northern Ireland to record skills development and credit accumulation.</p>	<p>relevant to Food and Drink manufacturing.</p> <p>OCA will work in collaboration with Improve</p> <p>Improve to discuss with DEL potential funding mechanisms in line with review of qualifications (e.g. SQS).</p> <p>Improve and its partners to ensure that the voice of employers from the sector are heard in the consultations and construction of any new qualification and credit framework e.g. employer technical and strategy groups</p> <p>Improve and providers and DEL to work together in the provision and review of data and trends on sector qualifications – to aid the understanding of demand and supply</p> <p>Improve to work with DEL Careers Service to ensure up to date information on qualifications and units is available.</p> <p>FDTC to act as roll out mechanism for any initiatives not yet discussed</p> <p>FDTC to roll out as part of MA programme and also other courses such as train the trainer</p>	<p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p>
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Rationale	SSC Proposed Strategic Action	Lead Partner	Support Partners	Related Skills Policies	Strategic Actions in Northern Ireland	Specific Actions / Proposed Delivery	Start Date
Priority 4: Training, Learning and Development							
<p>Much of the formal training activity that is going on is focused upon meeting legislative and regulatory requirements</p> <p>There is also a lot of on the job and non-accredited training happening in an informal manner.</p> <p>This is reflected in the qualifications profile of the workforce of the sector, where nearly</p>	<p>The support of level 2 & 3 or equivalent qualifications -Increase uptake of Skillseekers, SVQ's (level II & III) and MA's or equivalent qualifications among adult trainees to support this move and pump prime the activity.</p> <p>The support of training for in-house trainers to gain qualifications</p> <p>Promotion of case studies where this approach has</p>	QCA	FDTC CAFRE ANIC DEL DARD Dairy UK QCANI NI Seafood MLN	<p>The Essential Skills Strategy</p> <p>Careers EIAG</p> <p>Management and Leadership strategy</p> <p>FE/HE Development Strategy</p> <p>Skills Barriers to Employment Focus</p>	<p>Encourage NVQ and MA provision and achievement in order to increase the qualifications base within the Northern Ireland workforce;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase employer involvement in the National Training Programs • Increase the number of Food and Drink Skill seekers • Increase the number of Level II MAs • Increase the number of Level III MA's 	<p>QCA to work with Improve to review outcome of UK VQ Reform plan (done in 2005 and due to be repeated in 2008).</p> <p>Improve to work with FDTC to promote and support increased uptake of qualifications amongst the Northern Ireland food and drink workforce.</p> <p>Improve and FDTC to promote the industry through a variety of media</p> <p>This to be leveraged through FDTC working in partnership with other stakeholders</p> <p>Improve and FDTC to develop a network of F&D employers to champion workforce development</p>	<p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p>

<p>half of employees do not have a level 2 qualification at least.</p> <p>There is also a clear rationale for increased provision in order to integrate minority groups (returners, part-timers, NEETs, etc) and immigrant labour effectively into the sector and be able to utilise the best migrant workers.</p>	<p>been used and has shown financial benefits to the company.</p>				<p>Develop a network of F&D employers to champion workforce development</p> <p>Support level 3 or equivalent qualifications among adult trainees and 'pump prime' the activities proposed.</p> <p>Formalise the link between in-house training to recognised standards and qualifications achievements, through the SQS.</p> <p>Support training for in-house trainers to gain qualifications</p> <p>Promote the 'Cultural Diversity Workshop' to address the issues relating to recruiting overseas nationals.</p> <p>'Green Card Skills Passport' in Scotland as a recognition system to record employee's skills development</p> <p>Promote case studies and other marketing materials and identify key opportunities to deliver messages at employer events.</p>	<p>Discussions to be held</p> <p>Discussions to be held</p> <p>FDTC and Improve to work together on the enhancement of train the trainer courses</p> <p>FDTC to seek appropriate funding for this and A and V awards</p> <p>Discussions to be held</p> <p>FDTC to act as roll out mechanism for any initiatives</p> <p>Improve to work with DEL Careers Service to ensure up to date information on qualifications and units is available.</p>	<p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p>
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Rationale	SSC Proposed Strategic Action	Lead Partner	Support Partners	Related Skills Policies	Strategic Actions in Northern Ireland	Specific Actions / Proposed Delivery	Start Date
Priority 5: Information, Advice and Guidance							
<p>While overall the sector has a sound track record of business and training planning compared to the all sector average, in common with other sectors, this track record deteriorates as the size of the employer decreases.</p> <p>Also in common with other sectors, the incidence of planning and training budgets has reduced.</p> <p>Relevant provision is hard to identify among public</p>	<p>Need to embed or, at least, provide a channel that enables the specific industry messages to be accessed by senior decision-makers.</p> <p>Any existing skills brokerage arrangements need enhancement in order to fully understand and meet the needs of the sector.</p> <p>Employability skills need to be developed and better used by</p>	<p>DEL</p> <p>FDTC</p>	<p>CAFRE</p> <p>ANIC</p> <p>DARD</p> <p>Dairy UK</p> <p>QCANI</p> <p>NI Seafood</p> <p>MLN</p>	<p>Skills Barriers to Employment Focus</p> <p>Develop and deliver greater Employability Skills</p> <p>The Essential Skills Strategy</p> <p>Careers EIAG</p>	<p>Ensure partners have sufficient (<i>food and drink manufacturing</i>) industry knowledge to provide an effective service for employers.</p> <p>Labour Market and Skills Information Bulletins/Marketing and Promotional Materials</p>	<p>Improve to promote and provide sector information for relevant stakeholders</p> <p>FDTC to develop suitable NI specific IAG</p> <p>FDTC to work with Improve on the promotion of business access and investment in training.</p> <p>FDTC will promote the case for training across the industry</p> <p>DEL Careers Service to work with Improve on the dissemination of sector specific information to centres, advisers and partners</p> <p>Improve to provide DEL Careers Service with supplementary sector specific information via briefings to business line advisers</p>	<p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p>

sector providers and often word of mouth within the sector is the best way of finding relevant provision.	employees at all levels				Develop wider college and industry relationships in the key F&D geographies Develop a plan to increase employability skills of learners in schools and colleges	FDTC and Improve to develop a working relationship with Training Partners Support Services for SMEs. ANIC to work with Improve on the development of wider college/industry relationships (i) Improve the skills/employability of learners (ii) increase industry input into colleges	TBC TBC
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Priority 6: Skills as a Strategic Business Driver

Much of current training provision is aimed solely at satisfying legal requirements, as opposed to increasing the 'success' of the sector. Skills are not widely accepted as	Develop and promote case studies and facts sheets (or similar) and/or other marketing routes in order to raise awareness of the benefits of skills development	DEL FDTC	CAFRE ANIC DARD Dairy UK QCANI NI Seafood MLN	The Essential Skills Strategy Careers EIAG Management and Leadership strategy FE/HE Development Strategy Skills Barriers to Employment Focus	Increase employer commitment to workforce development planning and budgeting. Identify key opportunities to deliver message at employer events. Promote the benefits related to skills development and the value it brings. Identify and develop 'best	FDTC and Improve to develop suitable case studies and consider quantitative research to demonstrate skills as an added value supplement to the business bottom line	TBC
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<p>a means of raising business productivity and performance.</p> <p>Some employers perceive that training encourages increased labour turnover.</p> <p>While overall the sector has a sound track record of business and training planning compared to the all sector average, in common with other sectors, this track record deteriorates as the size of the employer decreases.</p> <p>Also in common with other sectors, the incidence of planning and training budgets has</p>	<p>with an emphasis on 'bottom-line benefits'</p> <p>Develop and promote on-line business resources.</p> <p>Engage with the process of tool and material development to ensure suitability, pass on existing best practice where available, and avoid duplication of existing activity.</p>				<p>practice' case studies</p>		
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Rationale	SSC Proposed Strategic Action	Lead Partner	Support Partners	Related Skills Policies	Strategic Actions in Northern Ireland	Specific Actions / Proposed Delivery	Start Date
Priority 7: A Future in Food – ensuring that potential employees are aware of the sector’s potential							
<p>The sector is not one that is particularly highly regarded as a career path.</p> <p>Awareness of the sector and the career opportunities available within it are low.</p> <p>Thus it can be difficult to encourage skilled individuals e.g. scientists and engineers, to take up the required food science/technology and engineering roles that will</p>	<p>Develop suite of suitable teaching and communication resources – the image of food and drink manufacture needs to be linked directly with science, technology, diversity and communication skills.</p> <p>Provision of national co-ordination for work experience / placement programmes /communication exercises.</p> <p>Ensure consistency</p>	<p>DEL</p> <p>FDTC</p>	<p>CAFRE</p> <p>ANIC</p> <p>DARD</p> <p>Dairy UK</p> <p>QCANI</p> <p>NI Seafood</p> <p>MLN</p>	<p>The Essential Skills Strategy</p> <p>Careers EIAG</p> <p>Management and Leadership strategy</p> <p>FE/HE Development Strategy</p> <p>Skills Barriers to Employment Focus</p>	<p>Promote a ‘Schools Challenge’ in Northern Ireland to encourage school leavers to pursue a career in the food & drink industry</p>	<p>Improve will work with FDTC and DEL/DE to support and promote ‘Schools Challenge’ activities</p>	TBC
					<p>Promote specific Food and Drink Manufacturing careers guidance and IAG through events, schools, colleges and universities</p>	<p>Improve to work in collaboration with various stakeholders on a programme to develop IAG capability - development of a sector framework/template for IAG requirements</p>	TBC
					<p>Raise the profile of the industry at a Regional and local level</p>	<p>FDTC to work in collaboration with Improve on raising the profile of the sector</p> <p>FDTC to work with Improve on promotion of careers through a variety of mechanisms</p>	TBC
					<p>Ensure students, teachers and advisers are offered quality experience of</p>	<p>Improve and LSDA to consider how Lecturers into Industry might</p>	TBC

be required.	of message and coverage across all applicable groups. Find long term solution for the management and delivery of the Schools Challenge				industry. Identify teachers and advisers for placement in industry Disseminate the message that industry commitment is needed to offer placement opportunities to target audiences. Develop a program of college student placements in industry Secure long term viability and development of the programme.	include the F&D sector In line with above FDTC to leverage through Board of Directors FDTC to work with QUB to obtain suitable placements for students QUB to maintain regular cohort intake to relevant courses	TBC TBC TBC TBC
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Rationale	SSC Proposed Strategic Action	Lead Partner	Support Partners	Related Skills Policies	Strategic Actions in Northern Ireland	Specific Actions / Proposed Delivery	Start Date
Priority 8: Networking for Success							
SMEs in particular often do not have sufficient resources for in-house training facilities. Relevant training provision is	Promote, or if appropriate, develop regional/local co-operation and collaboration on skills issues Consideration given to	DEL FDTC	CAFRE ANIC DARD Dairy UK QCANI NI Seafood MLN	The Essential Skills Strategy Careers EIAG Management and Leadership strategy FE/HE Development Strategy Skills Barriers to Employment Focus	Develop methods to 'pump prime' the activity. Use of group training facilities Labour Market and Skills Information Bulletins	Improve to research potential mechanisms with relevant stakeholders Improve to discuss how and when facilities might be made available FDTC to further assist with profile	TBC TBC TBC

<p>hard to identify among public sector providers and often word of mouth within the sector is the best way of finding relevant provision.</p> <p>Providers may not advertise their provision if they believe it would mean they are not able to cope with the demand generated.</p>	<p>contracting direct with the group training facilities.</p> <p>The development of these collaborative solutions needs to be "pump primed". This may include a need to support capital expenditure.</p>				<p>Marketing and Promotional Materials</p>	<p>Improve to attempt to source funding within NI to develop specific localised literature.</p>	<p>TBC</p>
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1. Introduction

1.1 Improve's vision for the UK food and drink sector

Improve's vision for the food and drink manufacturing sector is encapsulated in its mission statement

To drive up workforce skills in food and drink manufacturing in order to achieve world-class productivity and higher profits

Achieving this vision comes from a strategy which is research-based and derived from the fullest understanding of how the sector operates and the pressures it has to deal with. The Sector Skills Agreement is a key tool in shaping and implementing that strategy.

1.2 Sector Skills Agreements

Sector Skills Agreements (SSAs) are understandings between employers and providers/funders of training, facilitated by Sector Skills Councils, which are intended to influence the supply of relevant learning provision to the sector and to raise employer commitment to skills. SSAs will help to deliver on the Skills for Business Network's strategic objectives of increasing productivity, addressing skills shortages and gaps, widening opportunities and making provision more responsive.

Sector Skills Agreements are underpinned by:

- A case for change
- A statement of the priority issues for the sector
- Additional employer investment and commitment
- Agreement from government to re-allocate existing public resources.

The creation of Sector Skills Agreements involves five key stages:

6. Assessment of current and future skills needs of the sector (Skills Needs Assessment)
7. Assessment of current learning provision available to the sector
8. Analysis of the gaps and weaknesses in current workforce development activity, based on stages 1 and 2, leading to agreed objectives
9. Assessment of the scope and level of collaborative action and commitment of resources by employers
10. Development of an action plan with key delivery partners

The final stage of the process, addressed by this document, is the agreed action plan with key delivery partners. The key purpose of this is to formerly illustrate what collaborative solutions have been agreed to support a new vision for the sector.

The key objectives of this stage are:

- To produce a plan, with key delivery partners, that will deliver the overall vision for the sector
- Partners sign up to carry out actions that address issues in the sector identified through the earlier stages of the SSA, and which complement agreements with employers

1.3 Action Planning

This document has three main sections (Sections Two, Three, and Four) which follow immediately after this introduction.

Section Two summarises the demand-side evidence collated in stage 1 of the process, the Skills Needs Assessment, and highlights the key issues facing the sector.

The third section presents the supply-side evidence gathered in stage 2 of the SSA, An Assessment of Current Provision.

Section Four of this document represents the collaborative solutions agreed by stakeholders and employers. A process of consultation with a large number of stakeholders and employers across NI has been undertaken Autumn 2006 – Spring 2007. The results of those consultations enable Improve to move forward to specific planning with due regard to time, national and stakeholder influences.

2. Summary: Demand-side Evidence

2.1 Introduction

This section summarises the processes and findings of stages 1, the Skills Needs Assessment.

The first stage of the Sector Skills Agreement process produced the following outcomes:

- Identification and a comprehensive assessment of the key drivers facing the food and drink manufacturing sector;
- An overview of the state of the industry in terms of size, productivity, employment and qualifications;
- An assessment of the current skills deficiencies facing the sector; and
- Some initial forecasting of future employment and skills needs and the possible impact on the demand for skills.

2.2 Stage 1 – Key Findings

2.2.1 Drivers for the Food and Drink Sector

The complexities associated with satisfying ever-changing consumer demands via a food chain that embraces production and investment in distant locations, and usually on a 24/7 production schedule, are significant. A decent-sized supermarket in Northern Ireland will carry 20,000 products and this range can be revised and re-ordered on a daily basis. A food manufacturer has to respond to purchase/packaging orders from supermarkets and caterers that are often delivered at the last possible minute in order to accommodate changing consumer demands and to minimize storage and transport costs. At the same time, the average food and drink manufacturing company has to deal with the variability of raw material supplies provided by farmers and the weather. As a final complication, many of these food products are perishable and all have the capacity to damage health or even kill. It's quite a complex problem.

Of course the food and drink manufacturing sector is not alone in having pressures. The oil industry is concerned with pollution and its impact on the environment on an hourly basis; manufacturers in general constantly concern themselves with safety, energy efficiency and waste minimisation; and the media industry worries about counterfeiting and protecting intellectual property. But no other industry in recent years has had to cope with; Avian Flu, Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO), food safety and health scares, traceability to the nth degree and associated product recalls, the intricacies of dismantling the Common Agricultural Policy, and the inherent

conflicts and confusions of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) trade negotiations. Add in obesity, e-commerce, e-shopping and the market power of the multiple retailers and you get a potent cocktail of politics, commercial interest and consumer activists. All this provides clues as to what drives the food and drink manufacturing industry. In summary, the drivers are;

- *consumer change*; i.e. the changes in intermediate and final demand caused by changing incomes, population, tastes and lifestyles. Driving increasing skills in marketing, NPD, forecasting, business planning, change management and implementation skills on the factory floor.
- *changing technology*; i.e. the search for and adoption of new products, new processes, new distribution methods, storage systems etc. This requires a workforce capable of analysing potential technological benefits and being able to deliver and maintain this technological change within the manufacturing process cost-effectively.
- *market power*; i.e. the changing scope and direction of competition as globalisation and retail concentration occurs leading to new routes to market develop, including own-label versus brands, and the Internet/web shopping vs supermarkets/farmer's markets. Employees within the sector will need to respond to the challenges from 1st line managers to Technical operators, Logistical coordinators and senior managers involved in developing the 5 year strategic vision.
- *continuing regulation*; i.e. the changes in farming, food and drink processing and food and drink distribution that are constrained or encouraged by new dictates on health and nutrition, the environment, and international trade preferences. Again the workforce will need to take the regulation and interpret what it means to their business / consumer and find a mechanism to implement the regulations effectively – maybe even as a competitive advantage?

Analysis and discussions of the various aspects of these drivers leads to several observations about the shape of the food and drink manufacturing sector in the future.

A successful food and drink manufacturing industry will need to contain;

- new products and services that reflect the changing pattern of consumption and consumer tastes, especially those that emphasise value-added in food products;
- raw material, production and distribution facilities that allow food and drink manufacturing companies to operate on a local and a global scale and that will reflect the myriad of regulatory changes that characterise a modern developed economy;
- producer/retailer relationships, innovation and marketing budgets, that enable food and drink manufacturing companies to react to the growth in market power of food retailers and the competition from and new opportunities in the own-label product area; and

- information technology which offers food and drink manufacturing companies the chance to significantly improve their contact and understanding of customers and gain cost efficiencies in distribution

None of these elements will be obtained without a degree of uncertainty and risk, research and investment and regulatory interference. Most importantly, none of them will be dealt with without people and a commitment to their training and skills transfer. This, ultimately, will enable manufacturers to remain profitable and competitive.

2.2.2 Current Skills Needs in the Food and Drink Sector

Sector Profile

The sector is vital to the Northern Ireland economy. In 2004, the sector made the largest contribution to manufacturing Gross Value Added (13%) and contributed approximately 2.1% of Northern Ireland's total Gross Value Added the. The importance of the sector has been recognised by Government with the setting up of the Food Strategy Implementation Partnership (FSIP).

- Northern Ireland Food and Drink Industry had an estimated total gross turnover at £2,508m in 2004.
- Level of employment in Food & Drink processing sector for 2004 is estimated at 21,151 employees² (ONS 2004a)
- The ten largest firms accounted for approximately 44% of total gross turnover and 37% of employment in 2004.
- Milk/milk products and beef/sheepmeat subsector are the dominant subsectors in terms of turnover in 2004.
- The Food and Drink Sector has seen increases in profits of 4% 2003-2004.
- In 2004, around 276 companies in the sector have turnovers in excess of £250,000.

Within the NI food and drink manufacturing sector, the distribution of enterprises are concentrated in the bakery and meat processing sub-sectors (ONS 2004b). Whereas, the distribution of employment is concentrated in the meat sub-sector (49% of the workforce) which has more than three times the employment of the second largest sub-sector (bakery) in terms of employment (ONS 2004a).

The age structure of the NI food and drink manufacturing workforce follows a broadly similar pattern to the other UK nations, the exception being a significantly greater proportion of 20-24 year olds (and a greater proportion of 16-25 year olds). This signals a greater number of young

² Standard Industrial Classification 15 only (core footprint)

people entering food and drink manufacturing in N.I. than in the other UK nations.

Food and drink manufacturing employers in NI have commented on skills and aptitudes of workers across the age spectrum (Improve 2006c);

“School leavers expect more nowadays but not all of them are prepared to work for it”

“Young people are lazy and passive”

“Older workers would never be idle and are proactive in seeking out work when things are slow”

These comments are anecdotes from a small number of employers and not a generalisation across the whole NI sector, however they illustrate the issues which can be found and the opportunities to be maximised through the utilisation of older workers. This is particularly relevant given the recent review of pensions, led by Lord Turner³, and the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations introduced in October 2006⁴.

The employment status of the NI food and drink manufacturing industry can be compared to that of the UK sector as a whole in table 2.1 below. The NI sector demonstrates a greater proportion of part-timers and self-employed than the UK sector average and a smaller proportion of female workers than male (Dickerson *et al* 2006).

Table 2.1: NI food and drink manufacturing employment shares by status and gender, 2004

Employment shares; Status and gender	NI F&D Sector %	UK F&D Sector %
Full-time	81	86
Part-time	14	11
Self-employed	5	3
Male	70	67
Female	30	33

Source: Dickerson *et al* 2006

³ which proposes that the state pension be payable from the age of 67, rather than 65. If this recommendation is implemented, there would be an increase in the number of potential employees

⁴ aimed at ensuring that individuals are not discriminated against because of their age. This will have an impact on employers because they will need to demonstrate that training and promotion opportunities are provided to staff based on ability and potential, and that age is not a factor. The regulations will also introduce a right for employees to request working beyond retirement age and a duty on employers to consider that request

The workforce is largely dominated by blue-collar workers. Elementary and process, plant and machine operatives account for 42% of the workforce. A further 17% of employees work in skilled trade role and 10% in managerial occupations.

Table 2.2: NI food and drink manufacturing employment structure by occupational group, 2004

Employment shares; Occupational groups	NI F&D sector %	UK F&D Sector %
Managers & senior officials	10	13
Professionals	3	4
Assoc. prof. & technical	9	8
Admin. Clerical, secretarial	9	9
Skilled trade	17	15
Personal service	1	1
Sales & Customer service	10	8
Transport & Machine Operatives	25	26
Elementary	17	16
total	100	100

Source: Dickerson *et al* (2006)

The NI food and drink manufacturing sector's occupational structure reflects that of the UK sector as a whole, with the exception of skilled trades which contribute a larger share of the workforce. This is unsurprising given the predominance of the meat and bakery sub-sectors which will employ large numbers of skilled trades, for example; butchers and bakers. Managers and senior officials contribute a smaller proportion of the workforce in comparison to the UK sector as a whole, which is also noteworthy given that the combination of training and management generates higher levels of productivity in the food and drink manufacturing sector (Jagger *et al* 2005).

Skills Deficiencies

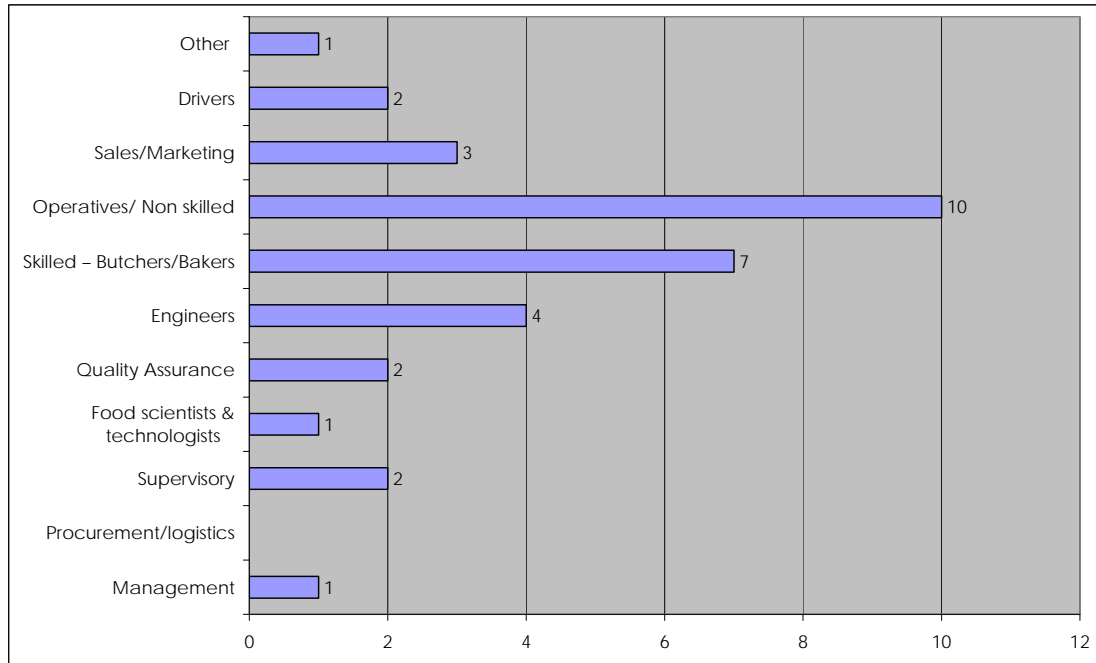
The NI food and drink industry is characterised by a workforce with a majority of employees (68%) having level 2 or lower qualifications. 35% of workers do not have any qualifications at all. Nevertheless, approximately 15% of the workforce has level 4 qualifications or higher (ONS, 2004a).

28% of Northern Irish food and drink manufacturing companies surveyed by Improve (2006d) reported skills gaps⁵ amongst their current workforce. This proportion is significantly smaller than reported by English sector employers (38%), but greater than that reported by Welsh

⁵ Skills gaps are defined as occurring where one or more members of staff in a firm are not fully proficient in their current job.

employers (18%) and the same as that reported by Scottish sector employers (28%). Skill gaps are most evident within operatives/non skilled (10%), skilled – butchers/bakers (7%) and sales/marketing (3%).

Figure 2.1: Occupational areas of skills gaps (%)



Source: Improve 2006d
Base: 100

In addition, a qualitative study highlighted core skills gaps in supervisory and management roles. Existing staff are reported to often lack the ability to discipline their colleagues or take responsibility and lack 'soft' skills such as man-management, communication skills, motivation and team building. These findings differ from the survey findings in figure 2.1 above, which may indicate skill gaps in supervisory/management areas being more significant for larger companies, as the majority of depth interviews were conducted with larger employers.

Industry knowledge and soft skills such as communication, combined with reliability and having a positive attitude were the key areas requiring attention amongst current staff.

The skill gaps identified in the research are impeding business growth as senior managers have to cover the skill deficient roles and become involved in operational areas which prevent them from getting on with the strategic development of the company.

There is evidence of low general literacy and numeracy levels amongst the workforce and an increasing need for basic IT literacy. The impact of low numeracy / literacy levels is seen not only in Quality Assurance paperwork challenges but also in how it affects these individual's disposition to undertake further training and their ability to learn; aspects of their make-up which may have in part led them to a career in food & drink manufacturing industry in the first place

The majority of NI food and drink manufacturers who responded to the research have some recruitment problems, albeit at different levels.

Poor availability of electrical / engineering staff for installation and maintenance of increasingly complex and absolutely vital production or handling equipment

Boning and butchering skills hard to find unless a competitor closes nearby

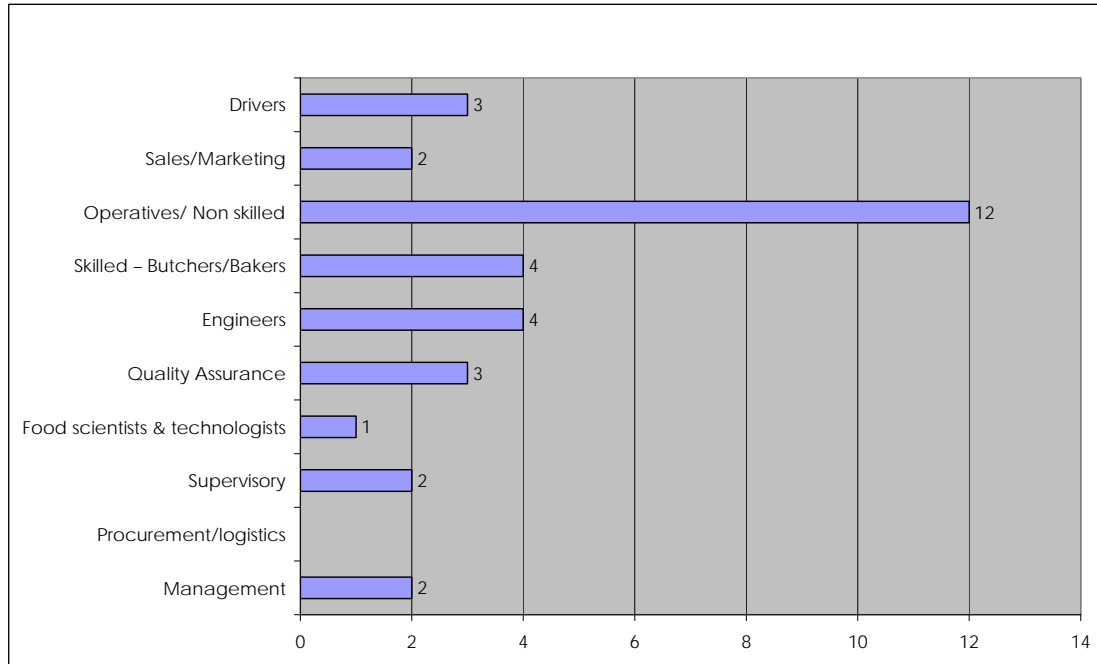
Finding drivers able and willing to work unsociable hours but still take orders, do merchandising and establish a rapport with customers

Smaller companies without their own logistics teams or vehicles felt dissatisfied with poor (cavalier) attitude of 'bought-in' hauliers who let them down or delayed deliveries and collections; having a severe knock-on effect on shelf-life of product when it eventually made it to retailers

Source: Improve 2006d - qualitative

24% of Northern Irish food and drink manufacturers report vacancies that are hard to fill, a considerably greater proportion than reported in England (8%). Hard to fill vacancies are most frequently found at the operative/non-skilled level, with 12% of employers having experienced difficulties. The image of the industry, long hours and the working environment are reported as key reasons for hard to fill operative/non-skilled positions.

Figure 2.3: Difficult to fill vacancies by occupation (%)



Source: Improve 2006d
Base: 100

In addition, difficulties recruiting workers in skilled trades (butchery, bakery), engineering, quality assurance and logistics are reported by sector employers (Improve 2006d). Although these are small proportions, they reflect the UK-wide findings.

7% of food and drink manufacturing companies report vacancies that are hard to fill due to skills shortages, a smaller proportion than reported by English sector employers (9%). Skill shortage vacancies are identified within supervisory, sales/marketing, operatives/non-skilled, food scientists and technologists, engineers and skilled trades-butchers/bakers. Whilst the numbers involved are very small, they reflect UK-wide findings.

Depth interviews indicate that the industry struggles to attract high calibre staff at management levels and existing employees are often unwilling to take supervisory level roles due to the added responsibility. Employers report that even white collar managers shirk responsibility and are unwilling to go to the next level up because of the added pressure of responsibility.

New Northern Irish recruits often only last days or sometimes hours because they seldom have the work ethic found in overseas nationals. There is a feeling some locals only apply and come along so they can meet a requirement for continued job seekers allowance. Many are caught in the "benefits trap" and are not prepared to lose benefits or work hard for what might only be an extra £20 - £30 per week.

Table 2.3: Main reasons job vacancies are difficult to fill

Occupation/role	Reason positions are difficult to fill
Management	Other industries appear more attractive options
Supervisory	Individuals not willing to take responsibility
Quality Assurance	Insufficient tertiary level education within applicants in this discipline
Sales	Lack of people with sales and food experience
Butchery	Lack the skills required and retail appears to be a more attractive option
Engineering	Lack of skills in machinery maintenance

Source: Improve 2006d - qualitative

Quality Assurance (QA) is an occupational area often filled by individuals with food science or technology qualifications. UK-wide Improve research (2005e) reveals that more than half of employer respondents agree that there is a shortage of food scientists and technologists, and the image of the industry together with fewer young people studying science subjects are key contributing factors. The lack of sufficiently skilled/qualified QA recruits is compounded by the 4% increase in food science and technology roles forecast over the next 2-3 years (Improve 2006a).

The poor image of the industry is evidently a major disincentive to potential recruits and is cited across most participating companies.

“if they ask me what I do for a living, what would I tell people”

The image of the industry is something that teachers or parents will “threaten” teenagers with if they don’t work harder in school.

The main themes which emerged in the qualitative phase of the research;

- Unsociable working hours
- Boredom in same routine work
- Perceived as a ‘white coat’ industry
- Meat, poultry and fish sectors seen as ‘cold’, ‘wet’, with a bad smell and heavy handling issues
- Too many school leavers would rather go for what they perceive as an attractive university education and junior management route rather than work as an apprentice where salary expectations are low

It should be noted that a limited number of respondent companies, especially smaller, family owned/managed, enjoyed excellent business conditions and were very satisfied with their human resource; having no recruitment issues.

The impact these recruitment issues have upon the business are significant, and include difficulties in remaining competitive and increasing business costs. Food and drink manufacturing businesses in NI then have to try and reduce costs wherever they can, for example; laying off staff seasonally and the use of the minimum wage wherever possible (and so compounding the unattractiveness of the industry).

Methods used to try and alleviate recruitment difficulties are numerous, but generally focus on cuts, reductions and increased automation;

- Working schedules revised to reduce boredom and introduce variety e.g. rotate team on lines, etc.
- Use of agencies for sourcing staff at short notice;
- Recruiting at neighbouring employers if there are redundancies announced;
- Increasing the level of automation to down-skill otherwise skilled roles;
- Upskilling existing workers using internally designed and externally sourced programmes;
- Recruiting overseas nationals;

The use of overseas nationals is widespread in the NI food and drink manufacturing sector (used by a third of those employers surveyed) and for many employers is 'the answer' to recruitment issues, reflecting findings across the UK (Improve 2005d).

"They're more willing than locals to work unsociable hours and they have a positive can-do attitude"

"the industry would be lost without them"

The areas highlighted in this section should form the basis for the future recruitment strategy.

2.2.3 Future Skills Needs in the Food and Drink Sector

Projections produced for the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) (Dickerson *et al* 2006) indicate that total employment in the NI food and drink manufacturing sector will fall by around 4% between 2004 and 2014, a smaller fall than the forecast for the whole UK sector. However, replacement demands generate a total requirement of around 6,000 new recruits by 2014 which is 30% of current levels.

Table 2.4: Overview of projected job roles within the NI food and drink manufacturing sector 2004-2014 (%)

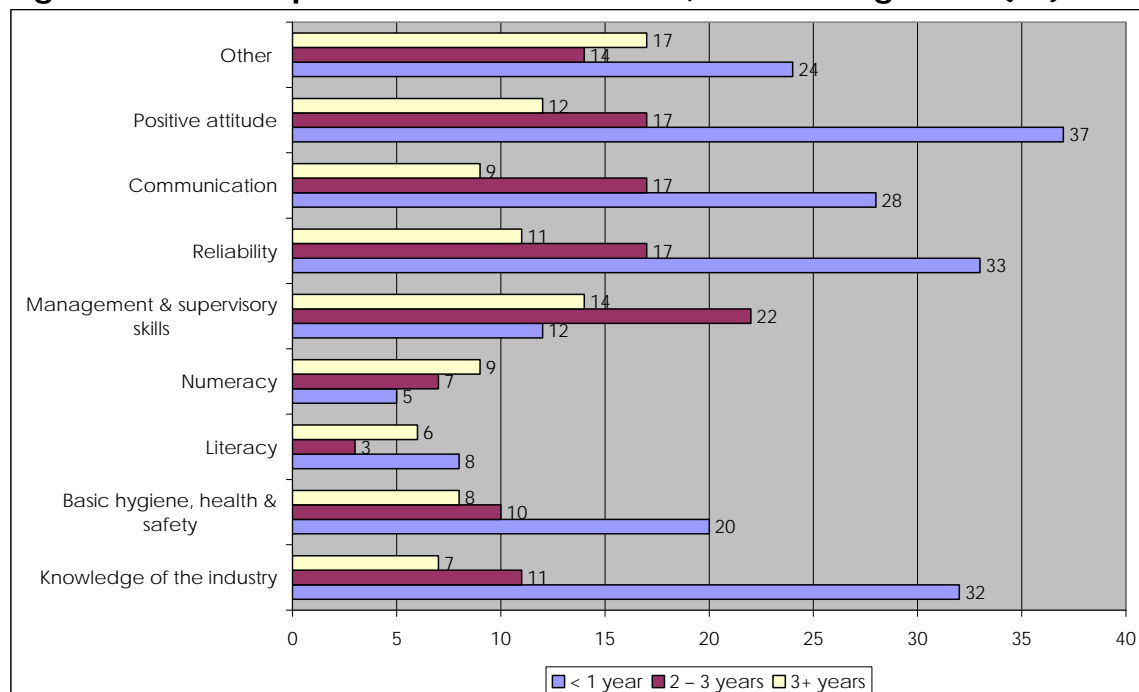
SOC Code	Employment (%)		Changes 2004-14		
	2004	2014	Net change	Replacement Demand	Total Requirement
Managers & Senior Officials	10	12	14	34	48
Professionals	3	4	22	33	55
Associate Professional & Tech.	9	10	11	32	44
Administrative, Clerical and Sec.	9	10	11	39	50
Skilled Trades	17	15	-16	32	17
Personal Service	1	1	8	39	47
Sales & Customer Service	10	12	18	31	49
Machine & Transport Operatives	25	23	-11	36	26
Elementary Roles	17	13	-26	34	8
Total Employment	100	100	-4	35	30

Source: Dickerson *et al* (2006)

Expanding numbers of managers and senior officials together with professionals, associate professionals, admin roles and sales all generate high total requirements to 2014. In contrast, skilled trades, operatives and elementary roles are contracting in numbers to 2014. These projections illustrate the transition of the workforce to a higher skill level, reinforcing the need for employers, the government and the educational sector to focus investment on the sector and raise skill levels to contribute to increases in productivity.

NI employers were asked what skills their company would need to prioritise in the short term, medium term and long term in order to have a workforce skilled enough to develop the business and become more competitive and productive in the future. The findings are presented in figure 2.4 below, which provides a much more realistic impression of the extent of the skills gaps facing companies and where their priorities lie.

Figure 2.4: Skills priorities over the short, med & long-term (%)



Source: Improve 2006d Base: 100

Whilst few would admit to serious skills gaps, making analysis of specifics difficult, the priorities over the next 12 months focus on “soft skills” such as positive attitude (37%), reliability (33%) and communication (28%) and form the most frequently cited priorities. In addition, knowledge of the industry is also a priority for 32% of the sample.

In the medium and long term these three soft skills remain the most important but are joined by management and supervisory skills as the most frequently mentioned priority. This is encouraging given that projections for the sector indicate a transition to a workforce with higher skill levels.

So what does the research tell us?

There is a need to address;

- The image of the industry – (with school pupils, teachers, careers advisors, parents, college and university students, etc)
- The low level of awareness of opportunities within the sector
- Management and supervisory skills – particularly within operational areas and ‘soft’ skill areas.
- Craft skills – particularly butchery and boning, bakery
- Technical skills - Engineering (maintenance and electrical) and Food Scientists & Technologists
- Making the sector more accessible and flexible to a larger labour pool
- Aptitudes such as positive attitude, reliability, communication and knowledge of the industry

Meeting these needs and increasing these skills must be tackled in employment, schools, Further Education, Higher Education, and by enabling onsite accessible learning across the UK.

3. Summary: Supply-side Evidence

3.1 Introduction

This section summarises the processes and findings of stage 2, An Assessment of Current Provision.

The second stages of the Sector Skills Agreement process produced the following outcomes:

- A comprehensive view of the policy context for NI and how this impacts on the food and drink manufacturing industry
- An analysis of who has been learning relevant skills for the sector and by which learning routes
- employer and provider views on learning provision and training for the food and drink manufacturing sector

3.2.1 Skills and Education Strategy in Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Skills Strategy 2006 (DELNI 2006) is the crucial policy context for the province. The key challenges for Northern Ireland include the general level of skills in the existing workforce, a high level of economic inactivity, and the negative impact of the skills deficiencies on productivity and competitiveness. The aim of the strategy is therefore to help people up the skills ladder in order to lift skills levels in the workforce.

After setting a broad but ambitious vision for skills in the future, the strategy document concentrates on how that vision will be delivered via a programme of implementation, with an initial focus of three years. It has four themes covering:

- Understanding the demand for skills;
- Improving the skills levels of the workforce;
- Improving the quality and relevance of education and training; and
- Talking the skills barriers to employment and employability.

The themes variously cover planning and funding skills development, skills initiatives targeted at individuals, improving the supply side quality and relevance, and helping individuals overcome barriers to work.

In addition, there are Public Sector Agreement (PSA) targets focused on the proportion of the working age population with Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications and numbers improving their essential skills. This focus on those with low levels of formal qualifications will have an impact on the food and drink manufacturing sector, where the plant and process machine operatives and those working in elementary occupations are more likely not to have formal qualifications to level 2.

There will be work to investigate the feasibility of a level 2 entitlement across the workforce, while the 16 FE Colleges are being merged into 6 regional colleges by August 2007. In common with England and Wales, there is also ongoing activity to help to create a unitised and credit based Framework for Achievement for implementation by December 2010.

3.2.2 Overview of Current Workforce Development Activity

Food and drink manufacturing employers already invest considerable time and funds in workforce development. The vast majority of the workforce development activity which goes on in the sector is on-the-job and does not lead to formal qualifications. While this up-skilling is recognised in-house by the employer it is not formally recognised by the government as it does not lead to a qualification and consequently does not attract public funding.

It should be noted that qualifications cannot be used as a direct proxy for skills, particularly in the food and drink manufacturing industry which does not have a tradition of undertaking qualifications unlike other sectors e.g. engineering. The true extent of the workforce's skills is therefore not formerly captured and recorded. Only around 15% of the sector's workforce development activity is actually recognised by the government as training because it leads to a qualification. The marginal role formal qualifications play in the sector's workforce development emphasises the relatively minor part public funding really plays in up-skilling the food and drink manufacturing workforce today.

Current workforce development activity for the sector can be assessed in a number of ways. It can be considered by looking at the take up of relevant publicly-funded learning opportunities however, the learning activity individuals undertake may not be related to their current work situation or indeed be related to work at all. In addition, publicly-funded learning does not encompass the whole range of potential learning situations.

The Office of National Statistics Labour Force Survey (ONS 2004a) asks individuals whether they have participated in job related education or training in the past 13 weeks. The data presents participation in job related training for the food and drink manufacturing sector which was 21% compared to an all sector average of 28%. Further analysis undertaken by the National Institute for Adults Continuing Education (Quinn and Felstead, 2005) shows this lower incidence of training continuing when involvement in training or learning in the past 4 weeks

and past week are explored. In addition, Quinn and Felstead (2005) indicate that in the food and drink manufacturing sector, on the job training is slightly more common than the all sector average and off the job training somewhat less common. It is also less likely that those working in the Improve sector will be working towards a qualification.

Employers are a key source of training and learning activity. Although often exhorted by government to take more responsibility for training their workforce and to invest more in their workforce, they are already undertaking a considerable amount of activity. Table 3.1 shows the incidence of training funded and/or arranged by employers, with data sourced from each nation's employer skills surveys for comparison purposes.

Table 3.1: Levels of employer supported training in the past 12 months

Incidence of Training	Improve	All sectors
Northern Ireland 2002* - proportion of establishments funding or arranging off-the-job training for employees in the past 12 months	41%	42%
Scotland 2004 – proportion of establishments funding or arranging off-the-job training for employees in the past 12 months	54%	63%
England 2005 – proportion of establishments funding or arranging training for employees in the past 12 months	63%	65%
Wales 2005 - proportion of establishments funding or arranging off-the-job training for employees in the past 12 months	51%	58%

Source: SSDA 2006, Futureskills Scotland 2004, Futureskills Wales 2005

* Results should be treated with caution due to a small sample size

From this it can be seen that in all countries, the food and drink manufacturing sector is slightly less likely to arrange training for its staff than the all sector average, with the greatest difference in Scotland.

3.2.3 Learning Provision in Northern Ireland – Publicly Funded

3.2.3.1 Availability

A large number of qualifications have been used by training providers to develop the skills required by the food and drink manufacturing industry. In order to provide meaningful analysis of provision, enrolments in Further Education (FE) and Work Based Learning (WBL) in particular have been summarised into a number of groupings. The key ones used are:

- **WM** (Food/Drink/Tobacco (industrial))
- **NE** (Baking/Dairy/food and drink processing (often with a craft bias))
- **NH** (Food Science and Technology)

These groupings are based on the Learn Direct Classification System (LDCS) and equate to the Superclass groupings used in Scotland.

Improve's audit of qualifications relevant to the food and drink manufacturing sector (Improve, 2005a) has researched and recorded the current accredited national occupational standards and approved vocational qualifications in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) as it applied in Northern Ireland, England and Wales and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The following table shows the qualifications that are currently available for the Northern Irish sector;

Table 3.2: Northern Ireland Food and Drink Manufacturing Qualifications

Reference	Qualification	Type	Level	Awarding Body	Accreditation	
					Start	Finish
Generic Food and Drink Qualifications						
Q1054400	City & Guilds Level 1 NVQ in Food and Drink Manufacturing Operations	NVQ	1	City & Guilds	11/06/01	31/03/07
100/2639/3	FDQ Level 1 NVQ in Food and Drink Manufacturing Operations	NVQ	1	FDQ	01/10/02	31/03/07
100/5651/8	FDQ Level 1 Certificate in Food Hygiene	VRQ	1	FDQ	01/10/05	30/09/08
Non-framework	Level 1 Award in induction to food safety for manufacturing	VRQ	1			
500/1370/1	CIEH Level 2 Award in Food Safety for Manufacturing	VRQ	2	CIEH		
500/1182/0	RSPH Level 2 Award in Food Safety for Manufacturing	VRQ	2	RSPH		
500/1544/8	FDQ Level 2 Award in Food Safety for Manufacturing	VRQ	2	FDQ		
500/1439/0	CIEH Level 3 Award in Food Safety Supervision for Manufacturing	VRQ	3	CIEH		
500/1181/9	RSPH Level 3 Award in Food Safety Supervision for Manufacturing	VRQ	3	RSPH		
500/1183/2	RSPH Level 4 Award in Food Safety Management for Manufacturing	VRQ	4	RSPH		
500/1505/9	CIEH Level 4 Award in Food Safety Management for Manufacturing	VRQ	4	CIEH		
100/1497/4	CIEH Intermediate Certificate in Hazard Analysis Principles and Practice	VRQ		CIEH		
100/2974/6	Edexcel Level 3 BTEC National Award in Food Science and Manufacturing Technology	VRQ	3	Edexcel		
100/1973/X	GCSE Level 1/2 Double Award in Manufacturing	GCSE	1/2	OCR		
100/2064/0	GCSE Level 1/2 Double Award in Manufacturing	GCSE	1/2	Edexcel		
100/2261/2	GCSE Level 1/2 Double Award in Manufacturing	GCSE	1/2	CCEA		
Various	GCSE Design and Technology (Food Technology)	GCSE				

	Level 2 in Laboratory and Associated Technical Activities	NVQ	2	Edexcel/OCR/ PAA/VQSET/ C&G		
	Level 3 in Laboratory and Associated Technical Activities	NVQ	3	Edexcel/OCR/ PAA/VQSET/ C&G		
	Level 4 in Laboratory and Associated Technical Activities	NVQ	4	Edexcel/OCR/ PAA/VQSET/ C&G		
Q1054401	City & Guilds Level 2 NVQ in Food and Drink Manufacturing Operations	NVQ	2	City & Guilds	11/06/01	31/03/07
100/5045/0	EDEXCEL Level 2 BTEC Award in Nutrition Awareness	VRQ	2	EDEXCEL	01/05/05	30/04/08
100/2640/X	FDQ Level 2 NVQ in Food and Drink Manufacturing Ops	NVQ	2	FDQ	01/10/02	31/03/07
100/5771/7	FDQ Level 2 Introductory Certificate in Management	VRQ	2	FDQ	01/01/06	31/12/08
100/5772/9	FDQ Level 2 Certificate in Management	VRQ	2	FDQ	01/01/06	31/12/08
Q1054402	City & Guilds Level 3 NVQ in Food and Drink Manufacturing Operations	NVQ	3	City & Guilds	11/06/01	31/03/07
100/2973/4	EDEXCEL Level 3 BTEC National Certificate in Food Science and Manufacturing Technology	VRQ	3	EDEXCEL	01/05/03	31/08/07
100/5887/4	EDEXCEL Level 3 BTEC Award in Nutrition	VRQ	3	EDEXCEL	01/01/06	31/08/07
100/2641/1	FDQ Level 3 NVQ in Food and Drink Manufacturing Operations	NVQ	3	FDQ	01/10/02	31/03/07
100/5773/0	FDQ Level 3 Introductory Certificate in Management	VRQ	3	FDQ	01/01/06	31/12/08
100/5774/2	FDQ Level 3 Certificate in Management	VRQ	3	FDQ	01/01/06	31/12/08
100/5775/4	FDQ Level 4 Introductory Certificate in Management (Revised NQF Level)	HL	4	FDQ	01/01/06	31/12/08
100/5776/6	FDQ Level 4 Certificate in Management (Revised NQF Level)	HL	4	FDQ	01/01/06	31/12/08

Reference	Qualification	Type	Level	Awarding Body	Accreditation	
					Start	Finish
Bakery Qualifications						
100/2264/8	City & Guilds Level 1 in Bakery	NVQ	1	City & Guilds	01/06/02	31/05/07
100/2579/0	HAB Level 1 in Bakery	NVQ	1	HAB	01/09/02	31/05/07
100/1579/6	ABC Level 1 Certificate in Cake Decoration	VRQ	1	ABC Awards	01/11/01	30/09/07
100/1624/7	ABC Level 1 Certificate in Wired Sugar Flowers	VRQ	1	ABC Awards	01/11/01	31/07/07
100/1625/9	ABC Level 2 Certificate in Wired Sugar Flowers	VRQ	2	ABC Awards	01/11/01	31/07/07
100/1580/2	ABC Level 2 Certificate in Cake Decoration	VRQ	2	ABC Awards		
100/1310/6	City & Guilds Level 2 Progression Award in Bakery	VRQ	2	City & Guilds	01/07/01	31/03/07
100/2989/8	City & Guilds Level 2 NVQ in Bakery	NVQ	2	City & Guilds	01/05/03	31/08/08
100/2988/6	HAB Level 2 NVQ in Bakery	NVQ	2	HAB	01/05/03	31/03/08
100/1494/9	ABC Level 2 Certificate for Pastry Cooks and Patisiers	VRQ	2	ABC	01/10/01	31/07/07
100/1495/0	ABC Level 3 Diploma for Pastry Cooks and Patisiers	VRQ	3	ABC Awards	01/10/01	31/07/07
100/2298/3	ABC Level 3 Certificate in Cake Decoration	VRQ	3	ABC Awards	01/06/02	30/09/07
100/2323/9	City & Guilds Level 3 NVQ in Bakery	NVQ	3	City & Guilds	01/06/02	31/05/07
100/2974/6	Level 3 BTEC National Award in Food Science and Manufacturing	VRQ Tech Cert	3	Edexcel		
100/2879/1	Level 3 Certificate in Retail Operations	VRQ Tech Cert	3	GOAL		
Meat and Poultry Qualifications						
100/1502/4	FDQ Foundation Certificate in Meat and Poultry Hygiene	VRQ	1	MTC		
100/5645/2	Level 1 NVQ in Meat and Poultry Processing	NVQ	1	MTC	01/09/05	31/12/08
100/3034/7	FDQ Intermediate Certificate in HACCP Practice (Meat Plant)	VRQ	2	MTC		
100/3525/4	Level 2 NVQ in Meat and Poultry Processing	NVQ	2	MTC	01/01/04	31/12/08
100/5789/4	FDQ Level 2 Certificate in Meat and Poultry	VRQ	2	MTC	01/01/06	31/12/08
100/2251/X	FDQ Advanced Certificate in Meat and Poultry	VRQ	3	MTC	01/08/02	31/07/07
100/6140/X	RSPH Level 3 Certificate in Poultry Meat Hygiene and Inspection	VRQ	3	RSPH		

100/6139/3	RSPH Level 3 Certificate in Meat Hygiene and Inspection	VRQ	3	RSPH		
100/6141/1	RSPH Level 3 Diploma in Meat Hygiene and Inspection	VRQ	3	RSPH		
100/2366/5	FDQ Advanced Certificate in Meat and Poultry Hygiene	VRQ	3	MTC		
Q1054081	Level 3 NVQ in Meat and Poultry Processing	NVQ	3	MTC	20/04/01	31/03/07
100/2974/6	Level 3 BTEC National Award in Food Science and Manufacturing Technology	VRQ	3	Edexcel		
100/5771/7	MTC Level 2 Introductory Certificate in Management	VRQ	2	MTC		
100/5772/9	MTC Level 2 Certificate in Management	VRQ	2	MTC		
100/5773/0	MTC Level 3 Introductory Certificate in Management	VRQ	3	MTC		
100/5774/2	MTC Level 3 Certificate in Management	VRQ	3	MTC		
100/5775/4	MTC Level 4 Introductory Certificate in Management	VRQ	4	MTC		
100/5776/8	MTC Level 4 Certificate in Management	VRQ	4	MTC		
Q1050112	FDQ Level 4 NVQ in Meat Processing Management (Technical and Production) (Original NQF Level)	NVQ	4	FDQ	25/02/98	31/07/06

Source: openQuals – QCA'S database of accredited qualifications, www.openquals.org.uk, data extracted 18th and 19th May 2006;

Source: Improve 2005a; List of Awards and Qualifications (last updated 1st February 2007)

3.2.3.2 Providers in Northern Ireland


The Department of Employment and Learning Northern Ireland (DELNI) and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Northern Ireland (DARDNI) provided an analysis of relevant areas of learning undertaken at colleges in the province, and where there was relevant provision in the past, the websites of each college were reviewed to see whether provision would be continuing.

It should be noted that the Northern Ireland institutes of further and higher education are due to be merged in August 2007, to reduce numbers from 16 to 6.

Table 3.3: College providers in Northern Ireland

Colleges	WM	NE	NH
Belfast IFHE			
Castlereagh IFHE			
Causeway IFHE			
East Down IFHE			
East Tyrone IFHE			
Fermanagh IFHE			
Lisburn IFHE			
Newry & Kilkeel IFHE			
North Down & Ards IFHE			
North East IFHE			
North West IFHE			
Omagh IFHE			
Upper Bann IFHE			

Source: DELNI, college websites.

Key: Course available = 


The College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) also provides sector relevant further education training, however it sits outside the Association of Northern Ireland Colleges (ANIC) umbrella as it is funded by DARDNI.

In addition, it has been possible to identify three key higher education establishments providing higher level skills to the sector as shown in table 3.4.

Table 3.4: Key Providers Offering Higher Education in Northern Ireland

HE Provider	Courses offered in 2006	Notes and linkages
University of Ulster		Food Science, Food Studies
Queens University Belfast		Food Quality, Safety
College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE)		Food Studies, Food Manufacture, Food Technology

Source: Foundation Degrees for the Food and Drink Industry, Improve, and institution and UCAS websites July 2006

Key: Courses available = 

Food Scientists and technologists have been identified as an area of potential skills shortage and of growth in employment terms for the future. It is therefore important to look at the provision available for this particular set of occupations. Improve research (2006a) provides a listing of full and part-time courses;

University of Ulster

- BSc (Hons) Food and Nutrition/ with DIS/DAS
- Postgraduate Diploma/MSc Food Biotechnology

College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise

- BSc Food Technology
- FdSc/Certificate of HE Food Studies
- FdSc Food, Nutrition and Health
- FdSc in Food Product Innovation
- National Diploma in Food Technology
- National Diploma in Food, Nutrition and Health
- National Diploma in Laboratory Analysis
- National Certificate in Food Technology
- First Diploma in Food, Nutrition and Health
- First Diploma in Food Technology
- Short courses available

Queens University Belfast

- BSc (Hons) Food Quality, Safety and Nutrition

Belfast Institute of Further & Higher Education

- BTEC National Certificate in Food Science and Manufacturing Technology

3.2.3.3 Non-accredited Qualifications

Improve's (2005b) investigation of non-NOF qualification provision showed that on the whole, non-NOF qualifications for the food and drink manufacturing sector are offered on a commercial basis, attracting small and large businesses. Providers are approached by employers to deliver tailor-made qualifications. The majority of providers contacted during this research programme acknowledged that they are prepared to offer anything that industry requires. One provider is reported as noting that they offer qualifications that are tailored to employees' level of understanding because some candidates have learning difficulties.

Customised qualifications prepared on demand for employers usually take a 'short course' format and some of the short courses are assessed. Popular bespoke qualifications that fit this remit are based on Health and Safety, Food Hygiene (Safety), Quality Assurance and Supervision/Management.

However, the majority of short courses are not assessed. This is primarily because of the short time span and because employers do not see the need for assessment. Rather, on many occasions, candidates on short

courses are offered Certificates of Attendance and not a certificate which demonstrates achievement or competence.

3.2.3.4 Take-up of publicly-funded provision in Northern Ireland

WBL is funded through relevant funding routes such as Apprenticeships and is driven by the needs of the work environment. FE is funded through funding councils in each of the four nations and is delivered through institutions recognised as eligible to receive FE funding. Apprenticeships undertaken through colleges will appear in WBL figures as this is the funding route for that enrolment. HE is funded through relevant funding streams although it may be delivered at colleges as well as Universities. Those colleges will have had to undergo rigorous assessment to ensure they are capable of delivering HE programmes. All figures quoted are based on those supplied by the funding organisations, and the enrolments they have purchased, to ensure consistency throughout.

This is also the methodology used to ensure that no learning is double counted – enrolment data quoted in this section is based on funding data and not supplemented by information by awarding bodies, although some have kindly supplied information to use as a sense check. Improve would like to thank all those organisations and individuals who supplied data.

It is important to note that Food Safety (Food Hygiene) qualifications, as presented here, are important to a wider range of industries than just the food and drink manufacturing sector. Provision is widely available, and widely accessed. Public funding for food hygiene may reduce in future, but it is one of the most widely sought areas of learning for the Improve Ltd sector. The key issue is whether public funds should be used to support training activity that employers are required to engage in to meet industry regulations.

Total enrolments in learning for the sector in Northern Ireland make up 1% of all UK enrolments in publicly funded learning. The main learning/funding routes in Northern Ireland are Modern Apprenticeships, Further Education and Higher Education. Table 3.5 shows the numbers of enrolments in each for the analysis years.

Table 3.5: Enrolments in N.I. publicly funded learning by funding route

Funding route	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05
WBL	48	4	34
FE	2,823	3,316	3,754
HE	n/a	247	239
Total	n/a	3,567	4,027

Source: FESR⁶, FDTC⁷, DARDNI (Cafre data) and HESA.

Information on public funding support for provision in Northern Ireland is not currently available.

⁶ Further Education Student Record

⁷ Food and Drink Training Council for Northern Ireland

Enrolments by qualification area

A more detailed analysis of enrolments by qualification area is shown for each of the funding routes in tables 4.63 to 4.65.

Table 3.6: Starts by qualification area – Modern Apprenticeships

WBL	02/03	03/04	04/05
Food & Drink manufacturing	23	4	16
Meat & Poultry	19	0	18
Craft Bakery	6	0	0
Total	48	4	34

Source: FDTC

MA starts have exhibited fluctuations over the past 6 years with the three analysis years shown demonstrating this clearly. It is believed that some of this fluctuation is more due to issues in the management of the programme that changes in employer demand. It should be noted that MAs in N.I. are equivalent to Advanced Modern Apprenticeships in England.

Table 3.7: Enrolments by qualification area – Further Education

FE	02/03	03/04	04/05
Meat / fish processing	45	46	78
Baking / confectionery	104	44	40
Food hygiene	2,279	2,802	3,131
Food technology	374	361	380
Other	21	63	125
Total	2,823	3,316	3,754

Source: FESR (supplied by DELNI), Cafre data (supplied by DARDNI)

In common with England and Wales, FE enrolments are dominated by food hygiene courses. Enrolments in baking and confectionery have fallen substantially over the analysis period and the overall increase in enrolments is due to growth in food hygiene. As already noted, this area of qualifications is common to a number of industries and not just food and drink manufacturing. The overall lack of enrolments in bakery qualifications could have an impact on the stock of skills in Northern Ireland in the future. Numbers on meat, fish and poultry related courses are also low, potentially leading to an issue with skills butchers, fishmongers and poultry dressers in the future.

Table 3.8: Enrolments by qualification area – Higher Education

Qualification Area	2003/04	2004/05
(D600) Food & beverage studies	16.5	19
(D610) Food science	57.5	72
(D620) Food hygiene	19	14
(D633) Food & beverage technology	25	12
(D640) Food & beverages for the consumer	129	122
Total	247	239

Source: HESA data

There has been a marginal reduction overall in HE enrolments⁸, with the key area of decline being Food & Beverage Technology. The main growth area of learning is Food Science.

Enrolments by gender

Table 3.9 shows the gender mix of enrolments in each of the main publicly funded learning routes. In common with England and Wales, the more industrially oriented areas of learning have a higher proportion of male learners while food science/technology and food hygiene have more female enrolments.

Table 3.9: Percentage of starts/ enrolments by gender and broad qualification area

	2002/03		2003/04		2004/05	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Modern Apprenticeships						
Food & Drink manufacturing	26	74	50	50	38	62
Meat and Poultry	5	95	0	0	67	33
Craft Bakery	0	100	0	0	0	0
Total	15	85	50	50	53	47
Further Education						
Meat/Poultry/Fish	18	82	22	78	18	82
Bakery	80	20	44	56	43	57
Food Science/Technology	68	32	63	37	61	39
Food Hygiene	66	34	69	31	67	33
Total	65	35	67	33	65	35
Higher Education	n/a	n/a	85	15	88	12

Source: FESR, FDTC, DARNI (Cafre data) and HESA.

⁸ Data used is from HESA to ensure consistency. This data does include enrolments from Cafre

Enrolments by age

Table 3.10: Enrolments by age (banded) – WBL

MA	02/03	03/04	04/05
16 -19	19	3	11
20 – 24	29	1	23
Total	48	4	34

Source: FDTC

Table 3.11: Enrolments by age (banded) – FE

FE	02/03	03/04	04/05
under 19	576	597	634
19 – 24	320	344	420
25 and over	1704	1896	1903
Total	2600	2837	2957

Source: FESR

Note: this table excludes data from Cafre (DARDNI supplied) due to lack of availability

Table 3.12: Enrolments by age (banded) – HE

HE	03/04	04/05
Under 19	32	47
19-24	169	149
25-49	43	41
50+	3	2
Total	247	239

Source: HESA

In WBL all enrolments are among those aged under 25 due to funding regimes and regulations. In FE younger learners account for a third of enrolments, but numbers of enrolments are increasing for all age groups. Please note; the FE figures exclude data from Cafre as full data was not available. In HE, there has been an increase in enrolments aged under 19, but a fall in those aged 19 to 24.

Enrolments by ethnicity

No ethnicity data was provided by DELNI in their analysis of FE student records therefore this has been excluded here. In WBL in the three analysis years, there was one enrolment from an individual from a non-white ethnic background. Early analysis of learner data for 2005/06 indicates that 42% of starts are from those from a non-white ethnic background.

Table 3.12: Enrolments by ethnicity – HE

HE	03/04	04/05
White	203	201
Non-white	2	3
Unknown	7	4
Non-UK	36	32
Total	247	239

Source: HESA

Enrolments by level

Table 3.13: Enrolments by level of learning – FE

FE	02/03	03/04	04/05
Entry & level 1	1760	2017	2498
level 2	476	686	809
level 3	551	595	438
level 4 and over	36	18	5
Total	2823	3316	3754

Source: FESR, DARNI (Cafre data)

As in England and Wales, the majority of enrolments are at Entry and Level 1, with the majority of these in food hygiene. The level 4 enrolments are in Food Science and Meat Technology.

Table 3.14: Enrolments by level – HE

HE	03/04	04/05
Other undergraduate qualifications	1	0
Foundation degree	1	3
First degree	202	199
Postgraduate	43	37
Total	247	239

Source: HESA data

The majority of those enrolled on HE are on first degree courses.

Quality of provision

In Northern Ireland, there have been no achievements on the modern apprenticeship programme, however enrolments are very low and with high labour turnover in the sector, this is hardly surprising.

A small sample of inspection reports for colleges with relevant provision in Northern Ireland were reviewed to develop an understanding of the quality of provision. However the reports do not contain any reference to specific subject areas, so were not useful in this regard.

3.2.4 Consultation

The key element of this part of the work were two studies, one qualitative and one quantitative, and these were undertaken in order to gauge the views of employers, training providers and public sector stakeholders (Improve 2006b).

3.2.4.1 Employers

Attitudes toward training and assessment

Both the qualitative and quantitative surveys showed that virtually all employers conducted some form of training with their staff, and nearly half (47%) trained all staff at least once a year.

Improve's qualitative study with Northern Irish sector employers⁹ (2006c) found that all provided basic, legislative driven training and annual updates on any new requirements or machinery, which complements the findings from the UK-wide studies undertaken. When considering off-the-job training alone, 41% of sector employers report that they provided (funded or arranged) this for employees in the last year, compared to 42% in all Northern Irish sectors (Skills Monitoring Survey 2002 in SSDA 2006)¹⁰.

Larger companies were more likely to have a structured on-going program of personnel development than smaller companies. Ad hoc training to meet specific needs as they emerged was common, often as a result of skills shortages identified through individual formal assessments of staff training needs. As training was directed by the company, virtually all candidates complete training once it has been commissioned.

Post training assessment of skills learnt in some form was common, although the type of assessment varied from an informal chat with a supervisor to formal written reports. There was strong evidence that most employees were willing trainees and pro-actively approached employers with training requests. Across the sector as a whole it appears that the vast majority of employers have in place the internal structures, and willingness, to assess and train staff on a regular basis.

Key Drivers to Training

Legislative and customer requirements and potential productivity gains were the key drivers to training. Of all the training conducted by the majority of companies, between 40% and 60% was to meet legal requirements. Whilst potential productivity benefits from training were

⁹ Respondents to this study were primarily large food and drink manufacturers.

¹⁰ The latter data should be treated with caution due to a small base size and what is now relatively old data.

commonly cited as a driver, internal quantitative measures of the productivity benefits of training appear to be lacking. Frequently cited drivers to training were to improve staff retention rates and staff morale (because the company felt it had a moral duty to train its workforce). As with productivity, these drivers are either not quantifiable (e.g. staff morale) or not systematically quantified (e.g. retention rates) by employers. Whilst companies have a clear rationale for training, they lack the structures to formally assess the benefits of any training that is in addition to that required by law.

Qualifications

Employers mix and match qualifications and non-qualifications based training for staff. Qualifications based training is generally required to meet legal requirements, however when conducting additional non-statutory training, employers choose the form of training which most directly meets their specific needs.

There was no agreement across the sector on whether existing qualifications met the needs of the industry. For some companies the existing qualifications are meeting their needs and for an equal proportion of others they are not.

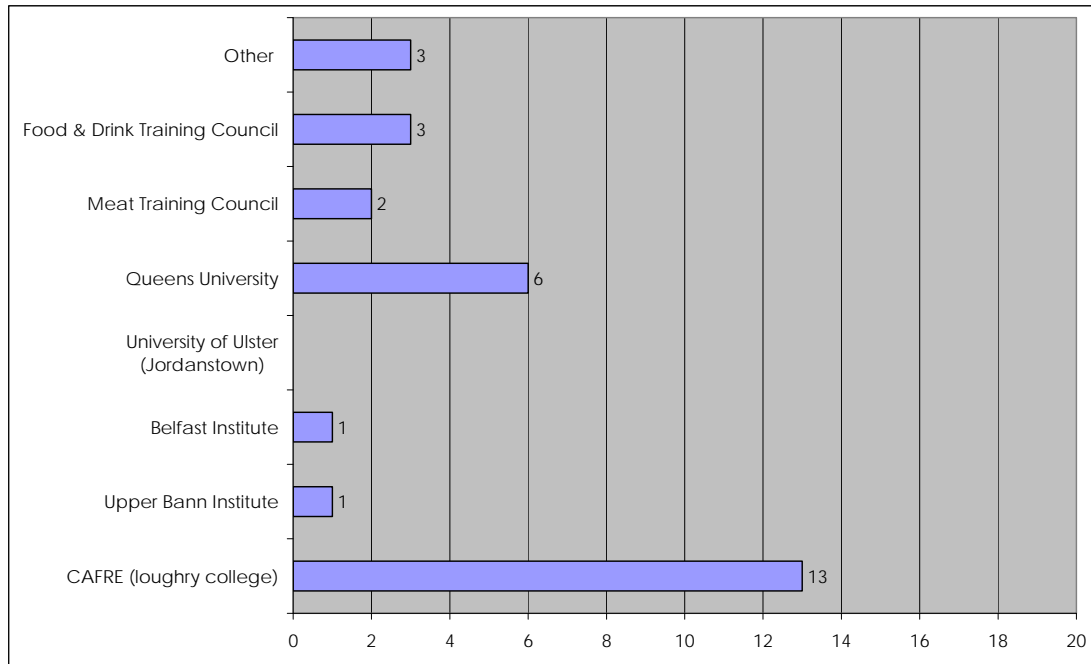
Extent of In-House Training

The vast majority of employers conduct some form of training in-house (88%). This may be limited to new staff induction and job specific skills, others included leadership/management and soft skills training. Cost, flexibility, and better quality training were the most commonly cited reasons for training in-house. 90% of employers felt their in-house trainers were sufficiently skilled to conduct adequate in-house training, either on the basis of job experience and/or formal training in training techniques.

Extent of External Training

Northern Irish research (2006d) indicates that externally sourced training contributes only a minority of training which goes on in the sector. However, of those that do use external providers, the most widely used for those surveyed is Loughry College (CAFRE) which has been used in the past by 13%. Other providers mentioned include Queens University (6%), Food & Drink Training Council (3%) and Meat Training Council (2%).

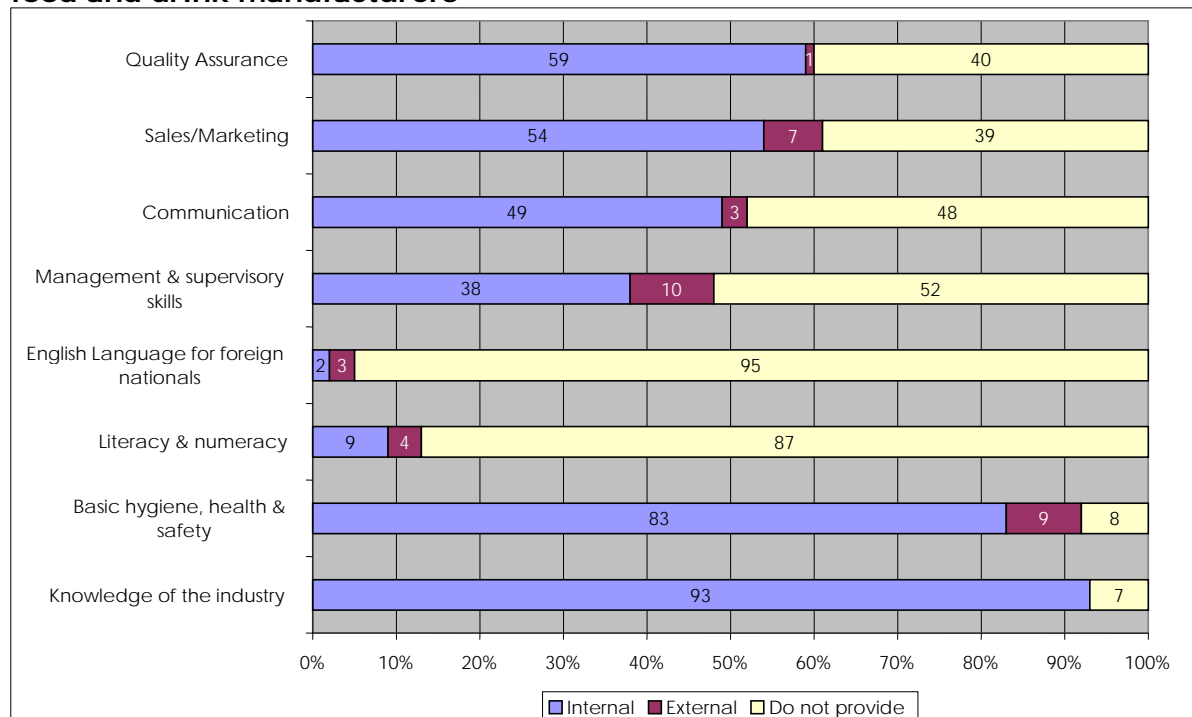
Figure 3.1: Training Provider use by Northern Irish Food and Drink Manufacturers



Base: 100
Source: Improve 2006d

Management and supervisory skills, basic/food hygiene, health and safety and sales and marketing are the most frequently externally sourced training, as illustrated in figure 3.2 below;

Figure 3.2: Types of Training sourced internally and externally by N.I. food and drink manufacturers

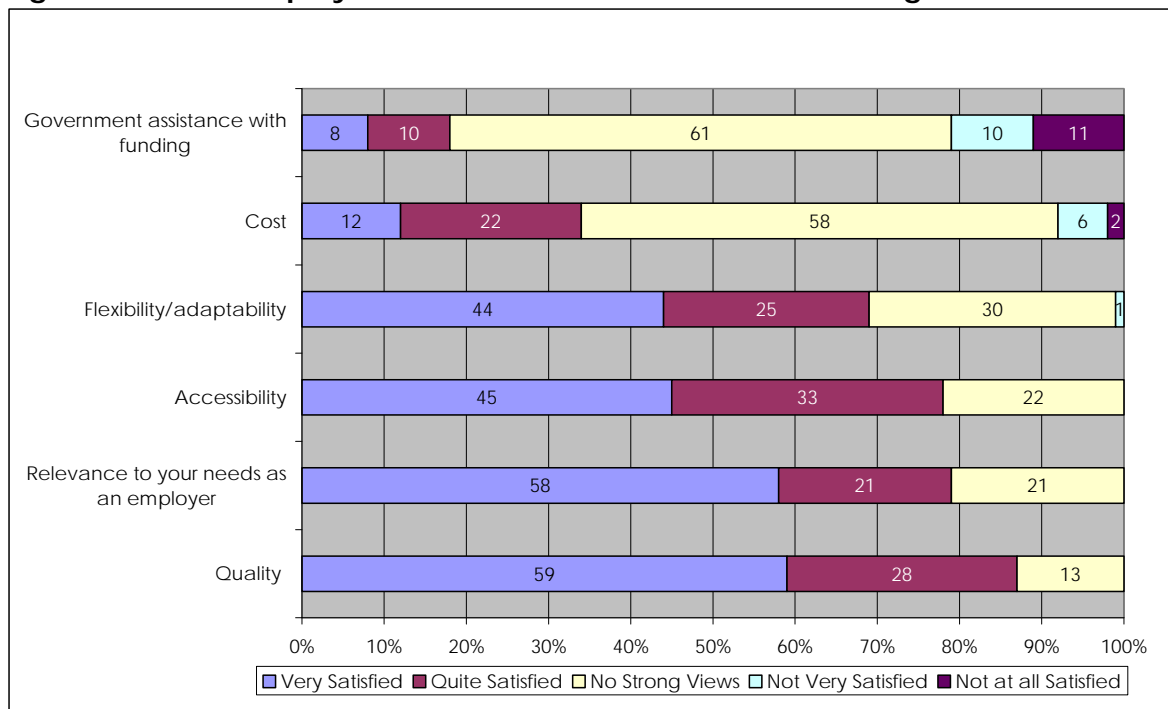


Base: 100
Source: Improve 2006d

The key factors that drive the choice of provider are cost, training quality and range of training. Many employers overcome quality issues with external trainers by only using a limited range of trusted and/or recommended training providers. Good relations with trusted training providers are highly regarded, indicating that there may be employer resistance to training offered by unfamiliar training providers, even if at reduced cost.

Employers (Improve 2006d) indicate a general satisfaction with training available to them.

Figure 3.3: N.I. Employer Satisfaction with Available Training



Base: 100
Source: Improve 2006d

87% of companies surveyed are either satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of training available to them. 79% of employers are happy with the relevance, 78% are happy with the accessibility, and 69% are happy with the flexibility of training available to them. However, satisfaction with cost (34%) and government assistance (18%) is much lower.

Responses from the depth interviews with N.I. employers suggested that external basic training provision is felt to be satisfactory for food theory and for underpinning basics such as health & safety and food hygiene but it seldom covers the specifics of individual company operational aspects. As a result many larger companies use in-house training which is very hands-on and bespoke. (Improve 2006c)

Understanding of Public Funding

Employers readily admitted to confusion over what public sector training and training funds were available to them. Only around one-third of employers had accessed public training funds in the last 2 years. There was clear support amongst companies spoken to as part of the qualitative research for a one-stop shop or “broker” to administer funds and be a source of guidance to the sector.

There was clear support from employers for a more flexible criteria in public funds for training and not for restricting funds the under 25’s or to Level 1 or 2 training. Of those employees who had made use of public training funds, 81% said the impact of that funding had been positive or very positive. However, it still remains that employers are confused with what is available and they still require further clarity.

3.2.4.2 Providers

Employer Drivers to Training

Trainer providers confirmed that sector employers were willing to train staff. Trainers suggested the same drivers to training identified by the employers, confirming in part the trainers’ view that they had a good understanding of the needs of the sector.

Trainers felt that demand and supply of training to the sector was broadly in balance, that the sector was well serviced with training provision and that trainers were able and willing to adjust their training offer to meet the needs of the sector as those needs emerged.

“Just like any business you’ve got to talk to your clients”

Private sector training provider, Northern Ireland

Attitudes to Qualifications

Training providers expressed no strong support for either qualifications or non-qualifications based training. They emphasised a desire to meet the needs of the client company needs using whichever form the company preferred.

As with the employers, trainers were evenly divided on the merits of existing qualifications and no clear consensus emerged as to which qualifications “worked” for the industry and which didn’t. It was felt that the existing structure was doing a reasonable job and perfect mapping of qualifications to (dynamic) industry requirements was an unrealistic goal.

Attitudes towards funding

Trainers felt that public funds to train in the sector were essential to support any non-legislative training by companies. Trainers felt that employers training spend was static or slightly decreasing and reported increases in the volume of training in the sector was a direct result of public financial support.

Providers strongly supported initiatives that were industry part funded. Participation and completion rates were perceived to be significantly higher when industry has joint funded training than when the same training was offered for free.

4. Key Issues: Demand and Supply

Stage 3 (Improve 2007) of the SSA has brought together the key findings from stages 1 and 2, and identified the key issues and gaps currently faced in the food and drink manufacturing sector. The key issues and gaps identified are;

The workforce of the future: employment in the sector will decrease over time, but replacement demand for workers will be relatively high. Elementary occupations will decrease through technology change though there will still be requirements for replacement plant and machine operatives, skilled trades occupations and managers in particular.

Problems in recruiting scientists and engineers: the sector has difficulties in recruiting sufficient graduates for its needs now and in the future. In part this is due to reducing levels and quality of science teaching in schools and in part a reflection of the image of the industry. All the same, the sector is not one that is particularly highly regarded as a career path.

Overseas nationals: Since EU enlargement in May 2004, large numbers of overseas nationals have come to the country to work. One of the sectors that has welcomed this labour source is the food and drink manufacturing sector. Survey evidence with employers shows that these workers are highly motivated, work well and are prepared to take on more responsible jobs in the sector. Issues arise over language and workforce development.

Changing market conditions: a number of non-skills related developments will have an impact on the sector over the coming years, as they have had an influence in the past. The combined impact of the demands from the major retailers and more diverse consumer demand, aligned with global sourcing of raw materials, tighter requirements for waste management and the need to control energy use and carbon emissions mean a more complex environment for managers.

The benefits of skills development and acquisition: much of the formal training activity that is going on is focused on meeting legislation and regulatory requirements, with less being done in areas which will contribute to up-skilling and productivity of the sector. At the same time, there is a lot of on the job and non-accredited training happening in an informal manner. This is reflected in the qualifications profile of the sector's workforce, where more than half of employees do not have a qualification higher than level 2. There is a question as to whether individual training budgets are sufficient for the needs of a business, and why, if the sector is one with high GVA, do employers use reducing margins as a barrier or excuse for not investing more in training

Problems of time and space for training: this is a particular issue for food and drink sector employers on a 24/7 regime, as the production line needs to be maintained and in an industry where margins are tight, releasing staff to undertake training can be an overhead expense too far.

Limited planning and training planning in the sector: whilst overall the sector has a sound track record of business and training planning compared to the all sector average, its performance deteriorates as the size of the employer decreases. Also in common with other sectors, the incidence of planning and training budgets has reduced.

Finding and identifying providers and relevant provision: training provision is hard to identify among some public sector providers and often word of mouth within the sector is the best way of finding the appropriate provision.

The Qualifications regime: employers are largely indifferent as to whether training leads to a qualification or not and will purchase training depending on operational requirements. If there is an outside incentive for qualifications, (regulation, customer requirements) then they will be obtained. Some employers do recognise that employees may value the external accreditation and use this for motivation, however small companies in particular fear that once qualified, an employee will move on to a competitor.

Similarly, providers will supply the required training, whether or not it leads to a qualification, according to the employers' needs. Where employers, employees and providers may lose out is that with some refinements, an accredited qualification programme could be delivered that may draw down some elements of public funding, and thus help to meet public sector targets as well. It is public funding regimes and the priorities of government and other stakeholders that may drive the qualifications imperative.

The Cinderella Sector: food and drink is often a priority sector for different English regions and UK nations. However, the food and drink manufacturing sector is not defined uniformly by stakeholders leading to confusion for employers and other stakeholders. Within this confusion of definition, the Improve footprint can be lost and therefore employers lose out on funding and support to other "sexier" sectors.

5. Collaborative Solutions

The development process

Based on the findings in SNA Stage 1 and Stage 2, Improve produced a suite of thirteen proposed solutions (called the Baker's Dozen) which met the key gaps and skills issues raised in those documents. This Baker's Dozen was then presented to a stakeholder group in Northern Ireland in a market testing event and to employers in a series of meetings. The same process has been carried out across the other UK nations and English regions. As a result of feedback from those meetings, as well as the various consultation events, such as the Northern Irish Skills Summit, the Baker's dozen was refined, with some solutions being rejected and others reformulated. This refining process has resulted in the eight proposed solutions presented here.

The strategic context

The proposals for action do not exist in a policy vacuum. As set out in the SSA Stage 2 report, there are a number of initiatives in existence to support learning and skills and the food and drink manufacturing sector. These will continue and will provide support to the sector. The proposals for action either aim to take existing concepts and package them to be clearer, more targeted and easier to access for the sector, or to take ideas and develop them specifically for the sector.

Description of the proposals

The following section describes each proposal in terms of the following:

- Its key purpose
- Its key features
- The potential benefits to employers it offers
- The potential benefits it offers to key stakeholders in terms of contributing to the achievement of national and regional policy objectives.
- Supply-side issues
- Action for employers
- Action for stakeholders

5.1 Careers Development

Key Purpose – ensuring that we have a smart food & drink sector

Programmes designed to address skills shortages from a number of disciplines for entry into and progression within the sector. For example:

1. Developing science graduates into food scientists or technologists capable of undertaking product development work. This should aim to address the shortage of food scientists and technologists with the industry skills and knowledge needed to drive innovation in the sector.
2. Developing engineering graduates into engineers with skills sets (such as environmental and energy saving) specific to the needs of the sector. This should aim to mitigate the shortage of engineers within the industry and to harness the skills and knowledge needed to drive productivity gains and technology change in the sector.
3. Developing programmes for current employees within the industry with basic skills and language problems.
4. To support new entrants in to the sector at entry level across all age groups.

Key Features

- Expanded media efforts to link career opportunities and progression routes with graduate decision-making
- A fast-track training scheme to enable graduates to acquire industry specific knowledge and skills necessary for a career in the sector
- Training could combine online or distance learning, tutor support and off-site training if necessary.
- The programmes would be modular, developed in partnership with employers and provided by specialist universities or FE institutions
- Some programme elements are likely to be common across the programmes (e.g. Food Safety), other modules could be sub-sector or even company specific.
- These programmes are likely to lead to the equivalent of an NQF level 4 qualification and might attract funding and/or support from a variety of bodies e.g. DELNI, DARDNI, DETI, DENI, etc

Employer Benefit

Increasing the supply of graduate food scientists and technologists to the sector should help drive product and process innovation which will be central to the viability of enterprises in the sector in the medium and long term.

Recruiting graduate engineers into the food and drink manufacturing industry should help drive technical productivity gains and enhance technology change which will be central to the viability of enterprises in the sector in the medium term

Stakeholder Benefit

The programme should support stakeholder efforts to increase graduate retention in the Northern Irish economy, and ensure that highly-skilled graduates are able to make a genuine contribution to economic growth.

Supply side issues

The programmes needs to draw on existing best practice with regards to graduate development and conversion programmes

Mechanisms need to be developed to raise awareness of the programmes among engineering and science undergraduates

Action for Employers

- Employers need to be involved in identifying the core competences that need to be built into graduate programmes
- Employers may need to contribute towards the cost of the learning programmes
- Employers may need to offer sponsorship to graduates in order to encourage engagement with the programmes

Action for Partners

- Funding for development and delivery of learning programmes needs to be agreed with either DELNI, DENI, other educational bodies, or devolved administrations
- Programmes need to be developed by HE/FE lead partners with learning format in line with employer needs to provide seamless training programmes

5.2 Promoting Productivity

Key Purpose - ensuring a competitive and sustainable sector

A programme designed to enable companies and employees to adopt the continuous improvement and lean manufacturing skills that are right for them, including Kaizen, MRP II, Supply Chain Management, Lean Manufacturing, Agile Manufacturing, 5S/Cando and ISO 14000. Among other elements, this programme would also help them to adapt to increasing pressures to manage waste and improve energy efficiency. This initiative could have a particular emphasis on smart logistics, waste minimisation, and energy saving, and would aim to help companies in the sector to identify and apply the relevant and best elements of these techniques in their sustainable operations.

Key Features

The programme would establish a “gold standard” for companies seeking to implement skills relating to lean-manufacturing techniques, drawing on the experience of exemplars in the sector and in conjunction, where appropriate, with agencies and bodies dealing with aspects of the sustainability agenda such as The Carbon Trust, WRAP (The Waste and Resources Action Programme), Envirowise, and similar regionally-based initiatives.

Under the programme, Improve would compile a list of consultants and agencies that meet the “gold standard” which also possess experience in the sector.

Employer Benefit

- The programme will allow firms to maximise potential productivity growth by encouraging investment in skills development linked to process improvement.
- The programme will also enable employers to make informed decisions and plan for change.
- The impact for an employer should be improved productivity, increased margins, and demonstrably sustainable operations.

Stakeholder Benefit

Enabling companies to adopt continuous improvement, lean manufacturing, and sustainable techniques will be an essential aspect of ensuring that industries in our sector can be globally competitive and sustainable.

Supply side issues

- Availability of experts and training programmes in these knowledge areas – especially for environmental and carbon-footprint issues
- Supply of suitable training materials and courses

- Measurement of benefits and links to costs

Action for Employers

- Incorporation of productivity measurements into training and skills programmes. Measurement is a key instrument of management.
- Seek workforce understanding that skills = productivity
- Buy in of sustainability at Board level – this is a key driver of the modern food and drink industry and will be a potential point of difference for food and drink companies

Action for Partners

- Funds, resources and support needs to be committed at local, regional and national levels by DELNI, DARDNI, FDTC, ANIC, Enterprise Ulster, Economic Development Forum and training providers
- Best practice institutions such as engineering research, food research, technology, need to recognise food chain issues explicitly
- Carbon Trust/WRAP/Envirowise need to commit to a skills dimension in their activities with the food and drink sector

5.3 Flexible Qualifications

Key Purpose - ensuring flexibility and adaptability

A strategy which helps employers recognise the achievement of employees, through the use of units which lead to customised qualifications that suit the skills needs of the individual and the employer's business.

Key Features

Given that training modules required by some employers often sit across two or three different qualifications, this aims to develop a matrix of units for employers to develop their workforce in line with company needs.

This solution builds on work currently being undertaken by Improve through its Sector Qualifications Strategy (SQS) where an extensive consultation process will continue to be critical in expressing employer needs.

Improve would work with UK qualification regulators, providers and awarding bodies to ensure that information is available to employers that is clearly presented, comprehensive and easily understood, on how a qualification can be achieved and the full range of elements that are available.

The strategy ensures a link between competency-based and vocational qualifications to reduce repetition and duplication.

Employer Benefit

- The proposal will help employers gain much greater control over the content of employee learning, thereby ensuring that investment in skills and training is of direct benefit to the employer's business operations.
- The proposal will support employees in the sector to acquire whole qualifications. This will help maintain employee motivation while at the same time ensuring that the learning is of a genuine relevance to the employer.

Stakeholder Benefit

- By ensuring that qualifications are better matched to the needs of employers in our sector, the associated learning is likely to generate greater productivity and stronger economic performance. At a macroeconomic level this will mean higher sector GDP and employment levels.
- A qualifications and credit framework better specified to the needs of the individual employer is also likely to solicit greater buy-in from that employer. This may result in increased support for learners, such as more time-off to study, and possibly a greater willingness to invest their own money in learning and development.

Supply side issues

- Providers may need to be able to provide a wider range of units than they do currently in order to support the full qualification need of an individual
- Providers will need to work with awarding bodies and the qualifications regulators to ensure that the majority of employers' skill requirements can be met.
- Providers will need to work with qualifications bodies and regulators to ensure that the credit and accumulation framework in Northern Ireland are clearly explained

Action for Employers

- As a qualifications and credit framework has been driven by employer demand, it will be important that employers support this, use it and provide feedback to help it to develop further.
- Employers should promote this among their employees.

Action for Partners

- Improve will need to work with bodies such as QCANI, DELNI, FDTC, awarding bodies, training providers, trade associations, trade unions, etc to ensure there is sufficient support and resource. The qualifications and credits need to be supported *where appropriate* by public funding and do not get penalised through the funding regimes.
- As Qualifications Reform is a UK-wide issue, Improve and its partners will need to be ensuring that the voice of employers from the sector are heard in the consultations and construction of any new qualification and credit framework

5.4 Training, Learning and Development

Key Purpose – ensuring that the sector can look after its own

To support and encourage structured approaches to training and development in the workplace.

Key Features

- Promote and fund (or co-fund) training for in-house trainers to gain qualifications in Direct Training and Support (S/NVQ level 3). This will ensure that training is delivered to a high standard and will ensure training delivery follows current best practice.
- Fund (or co-fund) training for identified migrant workers to gain qualifications in Direct Training and Support (S/NVQ level 3). These workers would then be used to cascade training to other workers with the same linguistic background.
- Fund (or co-fund) key workers to achieve A1 and A2 Assessor Awards. This would assist with qualifying the sector's workforce and may well have a motivational among lower order occupations in the workforce.
- The development of structured processes to measure the effectiveness of training provision, ensuring that skills development is fit for purpose e.g. implementation of records of achievement, appraisals and training plans linked into overall business strategy.
- Ensure that all training undertaken by the company meets its needs.

Employer Benefit

- The programme gives employers greater confidence in the quality of in-house training provision, thereby ensuring that investment in skills and training is of direct benefit to the employer's business operations.
- The programme ensures that employees retain the motivation of gaining a full qualification while undertaking training that is of a genuine relevance to the needs of employers.
- Reducing training costs for statutory training through the use of in-house trainers whilst maintaining training quality.
- The programme allows employers to maximise the productivity of OSN workers through better training without having to incur the additional costs of translators during the training process.
- Provide a mechanism for supporting the best OSN workers into supervisory/ frontline management positions, and encouraging the retention and career development of motivated and gifted OSN staff.

Stakeholder Benefit

- By ensuring that the in-house provision of training is of high quality and that, wherever possible, all skills are formalised within a qualifications and credit framework, the programme should improve the skills pool in the sector's workforce and facilitate future growth in the sector.
- By "pump priming" the provision of better quality training within firms, stakeholders are likely to foster a greater appreciation of training within the sector. Potentially, this could lead to a reduction in the level of public subsidy required in the future.
- By encouraging career development amongst OSN workers, stakeholders are facilitating longer term commitment to Northern Ireland by the worker and retaining the benefits to the economy from the OSN workers migration decision.
- Assisting the qualification of the Northern Irish workforce through highly relevant provision.

Supply side issues

For some providers this could be a significant change in the type of provision they are required to supply, which may not be a comfortable transition. However it may widen the pool of providers that can support the industry

Action for Employers

Identification of employees with the potential to benefit from this training and the ability to inspire co-workers.

Action for Partners

- Identification of funds to support level 3 or equivalent qualifications among adult trainees to support this move to pump prime the activity
- Promotion of case studies where this approach has been used and has shown financial benefits to the company
- Improve needs to work with bodies such as DELNI, DARDNI, DETI, Enterprise Ulster, Economic Development Forum, InvestNI, QCANI, FDTC, ANIC, trade associations, trade unions, etc

5.5 Information, Advice and Guidance

Key Purpose – ensuring good employability skills

Existing skills brokerage arrangements across the UK need enhancement in order to fully understand and meet the needs of the food and drink sector. Therefore this solution focuses on ways of embedding specialist sector knowledge and information into existing brokerage arrangements. On a wider scale, employability skills need to be developed and better used by employees at all levels; with stakeholders, with customers, with regulators, and with workforce colleagues and the supply chain.

Key Features

- Improve will work with learning providers (both public and private) servicing the food and drink sector to help ensure that information on their provision is included on all major searchable databases of learning opportunities.
- Improve will work to raise awareness of these databases amongst sector employers.
- A learning programme will be developed that helps generic skills brokers (such as those supporting Train to Gain in England) to develop a deeper appreciation of the food and drink sector, the way it works and the issues facing employers.
- Communications skills will be promoted as a key skill for food and drink employees at all levels

Employer Benefit

- Sources of information on learning provision will be more comprehensive and easily accessible.
- Access to a wider range of provision than they are currently able to find through conventional methods.
- Skills brokers will be more knowledgeable on the sector and will therefore be able to offer better advice and guidance.
- Workforce efficiency will improve

Stakeholder Benefit

- Greater take-up of the available training offer
- Greater learner provider buy-in to maintenance of information systems
- Improved satisfaction with brokerage services.

Supply side issues

- Communications in a 24/7 industry require a specific approach – part of this is the improvement of databases and access to them

- Getting the message across to stakeholders requires a team of ambassadors – or at least a joined-up effort
- All those engaged in the industry are potential ambassadors – but do they know it?

Action for Employers

- All major trade associations, for example NIFDA, must be part of the joined-up effort
- Every food and drink company must be prepared to act as an unpaid “ambassador”
- Communications skills should be seen as contributing to productivity

Action for Partners

- The LSC and other brokerages need to accept the need for embedding or, at least, provide a channel that enables the specific industry messages to be accessed by senior decision-makers.
- Improve need to work with InvestNI, FDTC, DARDI, ANIC, QCANI, training providers, trade associations, trade unions, etc on this proposed solution. Need to ensure that key agendas are embedded with the fact that skills/training programmes are best designed by the customers i.e. they should be demand led. Good communications make this easier

5.6 Skills as a Strategic Business Driver

Key Purpose – ensuring that skills are seen as THE key success factor

A programme for enhancing the industry's strategic view of skills as a means of raising productivity and not merely as a minimum legal requirement.

Key Features

- A well-crafted promotional programme emphasising “bottom line benefits” to businesses from skills and learning, supported by sub-sector specific case studies.
- A selection of targeted on-line tools to help businesses (particularly small businesses) to create quality business plans and training plans.
- Study-derived evidence to refute common myths that training encourages high wage demands and increased staff turn-over.

Employer Benefit

- Positive support with tools to create and sustain a framework for training within the company.

Stakeholder Benefit

- Encourage engagement by the sector in training to boost productivity and enhance the NI economy.

Supply side issues

- Develop, if appropriate, and promote suitable sub-sector specific case studies and facts sheets or similar highlighting the benefits of training and refuting myths.
- Develop, if appropriate, and promote on-line business tools package to create business and training plans.

Action for Employers

- Provide material and staff time for case studies for their sub-sector.
- Engage in the development of the on-line resources with feedback on the suitability of the tools offered and the “user-friendliness” of the interface.
- Promote the benefits of training amongst employers and decision makers within the company to create a positive training ethos amongst staff at all levels.

Action for Partners

- Fund the development, if appropriate, and promotion of case studies and facts sheets (or similar).

- Fund the development, if appropriate, and promotion of on-line business resources.
- Engage with the process of tool and material development to ensure suitability, pass on existing best practice where available, and avoid duplication of existing activity.
- Improve to work on this potential solutions with InvestNI, Economic Development Forum, Enterprise Ulster, DETI, FDTC, training providers, trade associations, trade unions, etc

5.7 'A Future in Food'

Key Purpose – ensuring that potential employees are aware of the sector's potential

A programme to promote career opportunities, entry and progression routes, to ensure skills deficiencies are met.

Key Features

A programme to promote careers in the food and drink industry amongst young and adult learners, with a particular focus on the higher level and specialist craft skills, food science & technology, and engineering careers available in the industry.

Elements could include high quality work experience placements, teacher placements, careers events and sponsorship, high quality case study materials and media engagement.

The development of a range of promotional materials for use with adults through IAG networks to cultivate an over-arching positive image for the sector's potential employees.

This proposal is about promoting the sector to all, including minority groups such as overseas nationals, young learners, and women returning to work.

Employer Benefit

- A pool of young recruits motivated to meet the specific technical needs of the sector in the medium and long term.
- A new supply of adults willing to consider a future career in the food and drink sector.

Stakeholder Benefit

A sustainable and organic supply of key skilled employees to ensure the continued growth and development of the sector

Supply side issues

- The programme needs to develop specific suitable teaching resources aimed a different age cohorts and different groups promoting the food and drink industry.
- The programme needs to develop, co-ordinate and promote student and teacher placements and sponsorship opportunities

Action for Employers

- Provide material and staff time for case studies, careers events and media activities
- Develop suitable work experience placements in co-ordination with relevant stakeholders.
- Be ready to support the "a future for skills in the food and drink sector" message

- Fund and engage with sponsorship programmes where appropriate

Action for Partners

- Fund the development of suitable teaching and communication resources – the image of food and drink manufacturing needs to be linked directly with; science, technology, diversity and communication skills.
- Provide national co-ordination for work experience / placement programmes/communication exercises.
- Liaise with full range of partner organisations with a stake in employment opportunities to ensure consistency of message and coverage across all applicable groups. For example, DELNI, DARDNI, InvestNI, training providers, schools, trade associations, etc

5.8 Networking for Success

Key Purpose – ensuring that collaboration gets a chance

Actions to promote regional and sub-regional co-operation and collaboration on skills issues amongst sector SME's who lack their own suitable in-house training facilities

Key Features

- The make better use of existing or develop new regional or sub-regional groups of employers willing to collaborate on workforce development and training actions.
- The development of shared training facilities with space and relevant resources for training and updating existing employees.
- A central resource for training apprentices off-site, with relevant facilities and by bringing together learners from a number of employers, scale economies and sharing of experiences.
- Potential to draw in funding for providing training to the unemployed and those on incapacity benefit as well as vocational training for young learners.
- Provide a facility for e-learning that would otherwise be too expensive at the individual employer level.

Employer Benefit

- Economies of scale while also overcoming barriers to training to do with space and lack of facilities.
- Ability to tailor training to employer requirements more than purchasing one or two places on an open programme

Stakeholder Benefit

- The development of local resources is likely to increase the take-up of learning, leading to a more qualified workforce.
- More economically viable cohorts for external training providers to service.
- Easier for learning providers and other partners to consult with on matters of interest and concern.

Supply side issues

- Local FE or private sector training providers may wish to offer to provide services to the group training facility.
- Need to consider how the learning provision of the group training facilities fits with the overall provision matrix for each local area.

Action for Employers

- Employers need to contribute to identifying common training needs
- Employers need to be willing to commit to using the services provided by the group training facility.
- Employers may need to consider contributing resources (financial and human) towards the development and running of any shared training facility

Action for Partners

- Funding agencies may need to consider contracting direct with the group training facilities.
- Finance needs to be provided in order to “pump prime” the development of these collaborative actions. This may include a need to support capital expenditure.
- Improve to work with a variety of organisations on this potential solution for example, FDTC, DELNI, InvestNI, FSB, training providers, trade unions, trade associations etc

6. Northern Ireland Action Planning

Existing Situation and Priorities

Food and drink is key sector in Northern Ireland, accounting for about 20,000 employees and turnover of more than £2 billion. The industry is dominated by agriculture and primary production and the two largest sub-sectors are red meat and dairy.

As a result, agri-food has the largest influence and manufacturing and processing is some way behind. Legislation and other EU policies, such as allowing competition across the EU are likely to have a major impact on the region

Northern Ireland suffer the same issues in relation to skills as many other regions: lack of basic skills, attracting and retaining labour due to the low levels of unemployment and a poor sector image, developing leadership and operations management, and lack of engagement by employers

The agri-food sector is considered vital to the economy and the Food Strategy Group has set out a new strategy for the sector in its Fit for Market report. The key objective is the transformation of the food and drink industry away from raw production to a more value add approach. The strategy complements the proposals for action presented here. For example, a promotional strategy for the industry, fostering innovation (new product development, etc) together with training, curriculum and qualifications development to attract top quality entrants to the industry.

The government see skills as the overarching criteria for success. Other common priorities across the proposals for action and the wider Northern Irish strategies include skills for innovation, careers and IAG, Adult skills, emphasis on apprenticeships and reform of vocational qualifications.

Feedback and Comments

Stage 3 event attendees agreed with the gaps identified within the sector matched their experience. The attendees broadly supported most of the proposed solutions. The need to develop solutions within a context of the situation in Northern Ireland and in close co-operation with Northern Irish partners to avoid duplication and waste was emphasised.

When discussing the issue of food science based qualifications and graduate development, it was identified that the Food Strategy Implementation Partnership initiative has implemented a Cadetship graduate conversion programme for the food industry in Northern Ireland, providing 25 places per year. However, funding has not yet been secured beyond 2007/08. The group also requested that SSCs working with other science focused SSCs to work together and lobby government.

Initiatives such as the Schools Challenge and similar programmes e.g. young enterprise have been perceived as very positive for the food and

drink manufacturing sector. It these sort of initiatives which would attract support within the sector, as Northern Ireland is deemed to small to implement brokerage networks and training provider databases. The issues are mainly focussed on lack of awareness and attractiveness of the sector in Northern Ireland.

Recommended Strategies for Northern Ireland

Short term

Flexible Qualifications
A Future in Food
Skills as a Strategic Business Driver
Training, Learning and Development

Medium Term

Careers Development
Promoting Productivity
Networking for Success

Long term

n/a

SSA Agreements in Northern Ireland

Rationale	SSC Proposed Strategic Action	Lead Partner	Support Partners	Related Skills	Strategic Actions in Northern Ireland	Specific Actions / Proposed Delivery	Start Date
Priority 1: Careers Development - ensuring that we have a smart food & drink sector							
<p>The sector has difficulties in recruiting sufficient graduates for its needs now and in the future. In part this is due to reducing levels and quality of science teaching in schools and in part a reflection of the image of the industry. All the same, the sector is not one that is particularly highly regarded as a career path.</p>	<p>Development and delivery of learning programmes needs to be agreed with educational bodies and administrations.</p> <p>Programmes need to be developed by HE/FE lead partners with learning format in line with employer needs to provide seamless training programmes.</p>	<p>CAFRE UU QUB</p>	<p>FDTC ANIC DEL DARD Dairy UK QCANI NI Seafood</p>	<p>The Essential Skills Strategy Careers EIAG Management and Leadership strategy IIP Marketing Strategy FE/HE Development Strategy Skills Barriers to Employment Focus</p>	<p>Development of conversion programmes to be pursued to deliver food scientists and food technologists and engineers for the industry.</p> <p>Raise awareness and promote the sector and careers within it to attract entrants and progression by;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> developing a progression route from school to HE for the NI Food and Drink industry Development of case studies Potential Schools Challenge input 	<p>Improve to develop plans to produce a sector graduate development programme</p>	TBC
						<p>Improve, QCANI, DEL and DARD will carry out initial review/comparison of BSc Chemistry with existing HN units (Food Technology). Once the units are matched, consideration will need to be given/proposal developed on how they will be delivered</p>	TBC
						<p>Improve to develop Northern Ireland sector progression routes and disseminate to partners.</p>	TBC
						<p>Discussions to be held between Improve and partners (FE/HE) and employers to generate case studies illustrating sector careers</p> <p>FDTC to develop case study portfolio</p> <p>Improve will seek to work with partners to develop 'Schools</p>	TBC TBC

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing and Promotional Materials 	<p>Challenge' in Northern Ireland</p> <p>NI Seafood to work with Improve to consider action of promoting management career opportunities across seafood companies.</p> <p>FDTC to work with Improve as an Ambassador with FE/HE/schools to encourage employers to take student placements and provide materials to educational industry e.g. willing to attend Milk Round and link to Improve's website</p> <p>Improve to work with DEL to ensure proper stakeholder collaboration</p> <p>FDTC would like to establish stronger links with education on behalf of employers to increase industry knowledge of education at all levels and involvement with industry</p> <p>FDTC and A4E to work further with Improve on the promotion of MAs (esp. level 2)</p> <p>FDTC and Improve to work together on methods to address the negative perceptions of the industry as a career choice.</p> <p>Improve to provide DEL Careers advisers with information on relevant courses offered and careers prospects</p>	TBC
					Inform relevant advisers of sector courses offered and careers prospects		TBC
					Labour Market and Skills Information Bulletins	Improve to role out programme to develop IAG capability – newly appointed IAG specialist.	TBC
						DEL, DARD and Improve to work	TBC

						together in the provision and review of data, trends and evidence of demand for FS&T courses.	
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Rationale	SSC Proposed Strategic Action	Lead Partner	Support Partners	Related Skills Policies	Strategic Actions in Northern Ireland	Specific Actions / Proposed Delivery	Start Date
Priority 2: Promoting Productivity – ensuring a competitive and sustainable sector							
Lean manufacturing has to become a reality for the sector to maintain competitive advantage, leading to a greater professionalism of management functions. Professionals within the sector will need to develop and continuously improve their skills in this area. Much of the formal	Implementation of a programme for employers to adopt continuous improvement and lean manufacturing skills. Develop a skills dimension to existing organisation's activities e.g. Carbon Trust/WRAP/ Envirowise with the food and drink sector Food chain issues need to be understood	CAFRE UU QUB	FDTC CAFRE ANIC DEL DARD Dairy UK QCANI NI Seafood MLN	Policy for HE and Skills FE Review Food Sustainability Strategy	Identification of priority areas within lean manufacturing for joint working within the food and drink industry in Northern Ireland	MLN to work with Improve on the identification of specific products from frameworks (Business Improvement Framework, Workforce Development Framework for M&L) FDTC to highlight and promote these specific products to sector employers FDTC and Improve to work together to promote and sell the benefits of lean manufacturing techniques and awareness to members. Willing to explore the NSA offer here. Improve will work with established training providers (discussions to be held) on a framework on existing lean manufacturing courses. FDTC to act as a conduit for careers information, advice and guidance Improve to provide Learn direct with updates on the training providers identified here. Improve and CAFRE to develop a suitable 14-16 diploma in line with CCEA Vocational Enhancement	TBC TBC TBC TBC TBC TBC

training activity that is going on is focused upon meeting legislative and regulatory requirements, with less being done in areas which will contribute to the productivity of the sector.	explicitly, involving and including best practice institutions such as engineering research and food research, technology					Programme	
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Rationale	SSC Proposed Strategic Action	Lead Partner	Support Partners	Related Skills Policies	Strategic Actions in Northern Ireland	Specific Actions / Proposed Delivery	Start Date
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Priority 3: Flexible Qualifications

Qualifications need to be fit for purpose and meet employer needs. While employers are divided in their views, the take-up of publicly funded provision set against the	There is a need to ensure qualifications and learning frameworks relevant to the sector and with sufficient flexibility are available and can be delivered. There is a need to	QCA	FDTC CAFRE ANIC DEL DARD Dairy UK QCANI NI Seafood	Credit and Qualifications Framework Essential Skills Strategy FE review implementation programme	Ensure frameworks relevant to the sector and with sufficient flexibility are available and can be delivered; e.g. SQS, NOS reform, Matrix of Units.	Improve to work with qualification regulators, such as QCANI and awarding bodies, to ensure frameworks relevant to the sector and with sufficient flexibility are developed, available and can be delivered. e.g. active awarding body forum and consultation groups. QCANI (in collaboration with Improve) will pilot Employer Self Assessment against National Qualifications. QCANI will work with Improve to carry out an audit of existing qualifications and units which are	TBC TBC TBC
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<p>volume of internal training that is taking place implies that they are not fit for purpose.</p>	<p>ensure that the qualifications and credits are not penalised through the funding regimes, and are supported where appropriate by public funding.</p> <p>Ensure that the voice of employers from the sector are heard in the consultations and construction of any new qualification and credit framework.</p>		MLN		<p>Ensure that the qualifications and credits are not penalised through the funding regimes, and are supported where appropriate by public funding.</p> <p>Ensuring that the voice of employers from the sector are heard in the consultations and construction of any qualifications and credit framework.</p> <p>Provision of labour Market and Skills Information Bulletins</p> <p>Development and distribution of marketing and promotional materials on qualifications and frameworks</p> <p>Promotion of the 'Green Card Skills Passport' in Northern Ireland to record skills development and credit accumulation.</p>	<p>relevant to Food and Drink manufacturing.</p> <p>OCA will work in collaboration with Improve</p> <p>Improve to discuss with DEL potential funding mechanisms in line with review of qualifications (e.g. SQS).</p> <p>Improve and its partners to ensure that the voice of employers from the sector are heard in the consultations and construction of any new qualification and credit framework e.g. employer technical and strategy groups</p> <p>Improve and providers and DEL to work together in the provision and review of data and trends on sector qualifications – to aid the understanding of demand and supply</p> <p>Improve to work with DEL Careers Service to ensure up to date information on qualifications and units is available.</p> <p>FDTC to act as roll out mechanism for any initiatives not yet discussed</p> <p>FDTC to roll out as part of MA programme and also other courses such as train the trainer</p>	<p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p>
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Rationale	SSC Proposed Strategic Action	Lead Partner	Support Partners	Related Skills Policies	Strategic Actions in Northern Ireland	Specific Actions / Proposed Delivery	Start Date
Priority 4: Training, Learning and Development							
<p>Much of the formal training activity that is going on is focused upon meeting legislative and regulatory requirements</p> <p>There is also a lot of on the job and non-accredited training happening in an informal manner.</p> <p>This is reflected in the qualifications profile of the workforce of the sector, where nearly half of employees do not have a level 2</p>	<p>The support of level 2 & 3 or equivalent qualifications -Increase uptake of Skillseekers, SVQ's (level II & III) and MA's or equivalent qualifications among adult trainees to support this move and pump prime the activity.</p> <p>The support of training for in-house trainers to gain qualifications</p> <p>Promotion of case studies where this approach has been used and has shown financial</p>	QCA	FDTC CAFRE ANIC DEL DARD Dairy UK QCANI NI Seafood MLN	<p>The Essential Skills Strategy</p> <p>Careers EIAG</p> <p>Management and Leadership strategy</p> <p>FE/HE Development Strategy</p> <p>Skills Barriers to Employment Focus</p>	<p>Encourage NVQ and MA provision and achievement in order to increase the qualifications base within the Northern Ireland workforce;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase employer involvement in the National Training Programs Increase the number of Food and Drink Skill seekers Increase the number of Level II MAs Increase the number of Level III MA's <p>Develop a network of F&D employers to champion workforce development</p>	<p>QCA to work with Improve to review outcome of UK VQ Reform plan (done in 2005 and due to be repeated in 2008).</p> <p>Improve to work with FDTC to promote and support increased uptake of qualifications amongst the Northern Ireland food and drink workforce.</p> <p>Improve and FDTC to promote the industry through a variety of media</p> <p>This to be leveraged through FDTC working in partnership with other stakeholders</p> <p>Improve and FDTC to develop a network of F&D employers to champion workforce development</p> <p>Discussions to be held</p>	TBC TBC TBC TBC

<p>qualification at least.</p> <p>There is also a clear rationale for increased provision in order to integrate minority groups (returners, part-timers, NEETs, etc) and immigrant labour effectively into the sector and be able to utilise the best migrant workers.</p>	<p>benefits to the company.</p>				<p>Support level 3 or equivalent qualifications among adult trainees and 'pump prime' the activities proposed.</p> <p>Formalise the link between in-house training to recognised standards and qualifications achievements, through the SQS.</p> <p>Support training for in-house trainers to gain qualifications</p> <p>Promote the 'Cultural Diversity Workshop' to address the issues relating to recruiting overseas nationals.</p> <p>'Green Card Skills Passport' in Scotland as a recognition system to record employee's skills development</p> <p>Promote case studies and other marketing materials and identify key opportunities to deliver messages at employer events.</p>	<p>Discussions to be held</p> <p>FDTC and Improve to work together on the enhancement of train the trainer courses</p> <p>FDTC to seek appropriate funding for this and A and V awards</p> <p>Discussions to be held</p> <p>FDTC to act as roll out mechanism for any initiatives</p> <p>Improve to work with DEL Careers Service to ensure up to date information on qualifications and units is available.</p>	<p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p>
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Rationale	SSC Proposed Strategic Action	Lead Partner	Support Partners	Related Skills Policies	Strategic Actions in Northern Ireland	Specific Actions / Proposed Delivery	Start Date
Priority 5: Information, Advice and Guidance							
<p>While overall the sector has a sound track record of business and training planning compared to the all sector average, in common with other sectors, this track record deteriorates as the size of the employer decreases.</p> <p>Also in common with other sectors, the incidence of planning and training budgets has reduced.</p> <p>Relevant provision is hard to identify among public</p>	<p>Need to embed or, at least, provide a channel that enables the specific industry messages to be accessed by senior decision-makers.</p> <p>Any existing skills brokerage arrangements need enhancement in order to fully understand and meet the needs of the sector.</p> <p>Employability skills need to be developed and better used by</p>	<p>DEL</p> <p>FDTC</p>	<p>CAFRE</p> <p>ANIC</p> <p>DARD</p> <p>Dairy UK</p> <p>QCANI</p> <p>NI Seafood</p> <p>MLN</p>	<p>Skills Barriers to Employment Focus</p> <p>Develop and deliver greater Employability Skills</p> <p>The Essential Skills Strategy</p> <p>Careers EIAG</p>	<p>Ensure partners have sufficient (<i>food and drink manufacturing</i>) industry knowledge to provide an effective service for employers.</p> <p>Labour Market and Skills Information Bulletins/Marketing and Promotional Materials</p>	<p>Improve to promote and provide sector information for relevant stakeholders</p> <p>FDTC to develop suitable NI specific IAG</p> <p>FDTC to work with Improve on the promotion of business access and investment in training.</p> <p>FDTC will promote the case for training across the industry</p> <p>DEL Careers Service to work with Improve on the dissemination of sector specific information to centres, advisers and partners</p> <p>Improve to provide DEL Careers Service with supplementary sector specific information via briefings to business line advisers</p>	<p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p>

sector providers and often word of mouth within the sector is the best way of finding relevant provision.	employees at all levels				Develop wider college and industry relationships in the key F&D geographies	FDTC and Improve to develop a working relationship with Training Partners Support Services for SMEs.	TBC
					Develop a plan to increase employability skills of learners in schools and colleges	ANIC to work with Improve on the development of wider college/industry relationships (i) Improve the skills/employability of learners (ii) increase industry input into colleges	TBC

Rationale	SSC Proposed Strategic Action	Lead Partner	Support Partners	Related Skills Policies	Strategic Actions in Northern Ireland	Specific Actions / Proposed Delivery	Start Date
Priority 6: Skills as a Strategic Business Driver							
Much of current training provision is aimed solely at satisfying legal requirements , as opposed to increasing the 'success' of the sector. Skills are not widely	Develop and promote case studies and facts sheets (or similar) and/or other marketing routes in order to raise awareness of the benefits of skills	DEL FDTC	CAFRE ANIC DARD Dairy UK QCANI NI Seafood MLN	The Essential Skills Strategy Careers EIAG Management and Leadership strategy FE/HE Development Strategy Skills Barriers to Employment Focus	Increase employer commitment to workforce development planning and budgeting. Identify key opportunities to deliver message at employer events. Promote the benefits related to skills development and the value it brings.	FDTC and Improve to develop suitable case studies and consider quantitative research to demonstrate skills as an added value supplement to the business bottom line	TBC

<p>accepted as a means of raising business productivity and performance.</p> <p>Some employers perceive that training encourages increased labour turnover.</p> <p>While overall the sector has a sound track record of business and training planning compared to the all sector average, in common with other sectors, this track record deteriorates as the size of the employer decreases.</p> <p>Also in common with other sectors, the incidence of planning and training</p>	<p>development with an emphasis on 'bottom-line benefits'</p> <p>Develop and promote on-line business resources.</p> <p>Engage with the process of tool and material development to ensure suitability, pass on existing best practice where available, and avoid duplication of existing activity.</p>				<p>Identify and develop 'best practice' case studies</p>		
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budgets has reduced.							
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Rationale	SSC Proposed Strategic Action	Lead Partner	Support Partners	Related Skills Policies	Strategic Actions in Northern Ireland	Specific Actions / Proposed Delivery	Start Date
Priority 7: A Future in Food – ensuring that potential employees are aware of the sector’s potential							
<p>The sector is not one that is particularly highly regarded as a career path.</p> <p>Awareness of the sector and the career opportunities available within it are low.</p> <p>Thus it can be difficult to encourage skilled individuals e.g. scientists and engineers, to take up the required food science/technology and engineering</p>	<p>Develop suite of suitable teaching and communication resources – the image of food and drink manufacture needs to be linked directly with; science, technology, diversity and communication skills.</p> <p>Provision of national co-ordination for work experience / placement programmes /communication exercises.</p> <p>Ensure</p>	<p>DEL</p> <p>FDTC</p>	<p>CAFRE</p> <p>ANIC</p> <p>DARD</p> <p>Dairy UK</p> <p>QCANI</p> <p>NI Seafood</p> <p>MLN</p>	<p>The Essential Skills Strategy</p> <p>Careers EIAG</p> <p>Management and Leadership strategy</p> <p>FE/HE Development Strategy</p> <p>Skills Barriers to Employment Focus</p>	<p>Promote a ‘Schools Challenge’ in Northern Ireland to encourage school leavers to pursue a career in the food & drink industry</p>	<p>Improve will work with FDTC and DEL/DE to support and promote ‘Schools Challenge’ activities</p>	TBC
					<p>Promote specific Food and Drink Manufacturing careers guidance and IAG through events, schools, colleges and universities</p>	<p>Improve to work in collaboration with various stakeholders on a programme to develop IAG capability - development of a sector framework/template for IAG requirements</p>	TBC
					<p>Raise the profile of the industry at a Regional and local level</p>	<p>FDTC to work in collaboration with Improve on raising the profile of the sector</p>	TBC
					<p>Ensure students, teachers and advisers are offered</p>	<p>FDTC to work with Improve on promotion of careers through a variety of mechanisms</p> <p>Improve and LSDA to consider how Lecturers</p>	TBC

roles that will be required.	consistency of message and coverage across all applicable groups. Find long term solution for the management and delivery of the Schools Challenge				quality experience of industry. Identify teachers and advisers for placement in industry Disseminate the message that industry commitment is needed to offer placement opportunities to target audiences. Develop a program of college student placements in industry Secure long term viability and development of the programme.	into Industry might include the F&D sector In line with above FDTC to leverage through Board of Directors FDTC to work with QUB to obtain suitable placements for students QUB to maintain regular cohort intake to relevant courses	TBC TBC TBC
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Rationale	SSC Proposed Strategic Action	Lead Partner	Support Partners	Related Skills Policies	Strategic Actions in Northern Ireland	Specific Actions / Proposed Delivery	Start Date
Priority 8: Networking for Success							
SMEs in particular often do not have sufficient resources for in-house training facilities. Relevant training	Promote, or if appropriate, develop regional/local co-operation and collaboration on skills issues Consideratio	DEL FDTC	CAFRE ANIC DARD Dairy UK QCANI NI Seafood	The Essential Skills Strategy Careers EIAG Management and Leadership strategy FE/HE Development Strategy Skills Barriers to	Develop methods to 'pump prime' the activity. Use of group training facilities Labour Market and Skills Information Bulletins	Improve to research potential mechanisms with relevant stakeholders Improve to discuss how and when facilities might be made available FDTC to further assist with profile	TBC TBC TBC

<p>provision is hard to identify among public sector providers and often word of mouth within the sector is the best way of finding relevant provision.</p> <p>Providers may not advertise their provision if they believe it would mean they are not able to cope with the demand generated.</p>	<p>n given to contracting direct with the group training facilities.</p> <p>The development of these collaborative solutions needs to be "pump primed". This may include a need to support capital expenditure.</p>		MLN	Employment Focus	Marketing and Promotional Materials	<p>Improve to attempt to source funding within NI to develop specific localised literature.</p>	TBC
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Annex 1: Employer Feedback

Employer	Sub-Sector	Priority 1: Careers Development	Priority 2: Promoting Productivity	Priority 3: Pick and Mix	Priority 4: Training	Priority 5: Connecting the Industry	Priority 6: Sweet Success	Priority 7: A Future in Food	Priority 8: Learning Together
Moy Park	Meat	Support. Willing to participate in the Women and Work programme. Currently investigating suitable candidates.	Agree	Support. Opportunity to map in house training against occupational standards.	Agree	Agree	Agree	Support. Welcome participation in the NSA.	Agree
NI Seafood	Seafood	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree
Foyle Food Group	Meat	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree
Classic Mineral Water	Beverage	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree
Avondale Foods	Convenience	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Support. Willing to organise factory visits	Support. Willing to participate in industry focus groups
Fivemiletown Creamery	Dairy	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree
Hughes Mushrooms	Fresh Produce	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree
United Feeds	Milling	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	n/a	Agree	Agree	Agree
Dunbia	Meat	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree
Dawnmeats	Meat	n/a	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree

Kitchen Range Foods	Other food	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree

Annex 2: References

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Improve Ltd
Ground Floor
Providence House
2 Innovation Close
Heslington
York
YO10 5ZF

Tel: 0845 644 0448
Fax: 0845 644 0449
Email: info@improveltd.co.uk
Web: www.improveltd.co.uk



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