

Kettle Irish Foods

Meat craft

Serving the best cuts to restaurants and retail

Passion, knowledge and craftsmanship are key elements in building the Fermanagh based Kettle Irish Foods meat brand, says Maurice Kettle.

Born and reared on a Fermanagh farm on the shores of Lough Erne, and with 15 years experience in the meat industry, Maurice Kettle had a dream.

In 2004 he set out to turn that vision into reality. With just two employees working from a small base in Lisnaskea, his ambitious goal was to produce the very best of Irish beef for restaurants throughout Ireland and Great Britain.

Now with a “proper” factory and growing staff of 29, he and his team have achieved all that, and more, with help from the Rural Development Programme.

Agricultural and Forestry Marketing Development Grant Scheme provides financial support for businesses engaged in the marketing of the produce of agriculture (including horticulture) and forestry or of agricultural products derived from such produce.

“Although we started out on day one selling to just eight restaurants we’ve grown that now to around 600 restaurants, across greater Belfast, Northern Ireland, Dublin and London,” Maurice explains.

Originally the company focused exclusively on beef from traditional Angus and Hereford beef herds, “dry aged” on the bone for up to 35 days. Gradually the Kettle range diversified to include Lough Erne lamb, Fermanagh free range chicken, dry cured bacon, duck, fine venison and slow maturing, humanely-reared veal.

“With my farming and meat industry background I always had this frustration that in Fermanagh and beyond, we were producing the very best of meat in comparison to any part of the world, yet we probably weren’t marketing that product properly,” says Maurice.

So he set out to build the eponymous Kettle brand. As well as exporting over the border and across the water, the company has a distribution network in Belgium, Holland and Greece.

“Also, 35% of our business is now retail, through high-end retailers such as Marks and Spencer. Without the capital expenditure and refitting of the factory it just wouldn’t have been up to speed with the requirements of such a multiple.

“Without the support it would have been very difficult to expand at the rate that we did. It’s a fast moving consumer environment and you have to move quickly.”

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