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Kerry Group

Pioneering partnership announced between Kerry Group and the World Food Programme

Kerry Group to contribute US\$750,000 plus technical support to pilot 3-year programme in Honduras.

Details of a unique initiative, launched by Kerry Group and the World Food Programme (WFP), the food assistance branch of the United Nations, are announced.

Under this partnership, the first between an Irish company and WFP, both parties have agreed to collaborate on a 3-year programme to be known as '*Project Leche*'. The project will focus on the nutritional enhancement of school meals for children in Honduras through the inclusion of sustainably produced dairy products.

Working directly with local communities and key national stakeholders, the project aims to support smallholder farmers in the production of safe and sustainable dairy products that can be used locally to optimise the nutritional content of school meals. In Honduras, recurrent natural disasters and a susceptibility to the effects of climate change contribute to food insecurity. Weather extremes such as prolonged drought and hurricanes severely affect the ability of subsistence farmers to produce enough food to feed their families.

WFP has been supporting Honduran communities since 1970 and a core element of their work is the School Meals Programme. Funded largely by the Honduran Government and managed by WFP, this programme provides meals to 95 percent of the country's total school population. The programme supports access to education and reduces gender inequality, giving families an incentive to send their children to school. WFP's Home Grown School Meals (HGSM) Programme goes one step further by purchasing food from small, local producers whenever possible, helping to strengthen local economies.

Through *Project Leche*, Kerry and WFP aim to improve the impact of the HGSM Programme in the project area, for both children and their local communities. The initiative, which forms part of Kerry Group's broader sustainability programme 'Towards 2020', leverages the company's key strengths and will apply its extensive nutritional, agricultural and processing expertise to support WFP in achieving the programme's objectives. These objectives are to increase the nutritional value of school meals by increasing the dairy component, to build a more sustainable milk supply originating from local farms serving local schools, and to raise the level of nutritional awareness amongst children, parents and teachers. In addition to the provision of the Group's expertise, Kerry will provide direct financial support of \$750,000, which will be used to fund the innovative pilot project.

Speaking at the launch, Minister for Agriculture, Food & the Marine Michael Creed TD welcoming the announcement of this important partnership said: "As a country, Ireland and its people have a long standing commitment to supporting those in need. I am delighted that Kerry Group, through its partnership with the World Food Programme, is continuing this proud tradition. Kerry's partnership with WFP builds on Ireland's core strengths in sustainable dairy production and I am sure that Kerry Group's expertise will be of benefit to WFP in advancing its ongoing efforts to tackle malnutrition. My Department continues to support the WFP through a Strategic Partnership Agreement that provides multi-annual humanitarian assistance funding."

Commenting on the announcement, Kerry Group Chief Executive, Stan McCarthy stated that the partnership with WFP was a natural fit for the Group. He said; “Kerry’s origins as a dairy cooperative and our direct link to our farming heritage has instilled a strong belief in supporting communities. Our knowledge and skills in dairy processing have long since been complemented by our unique technological capabilities and nutritional expertise that make us the global leader in Taste & Nutrition. When these strengths are coupled with our ability to develop tailored solutions that meet specific consumer needs, the potential of our partnership with WFP is clear. We are proud to be the first Irish company to partner with such a trusted organisation and over the next 3 years we look forward to making a real difference to the lives of people in Honduras through Project Leche.”

The inclusion of sustainably produced dairy products into the Home Grown School Meals programme is a global aim for WFP. Greg Barrow, Head of WFP’s United Kingdom & Republic of Ireland Office explained that WFP’s Home Grown School Meals programmes link small holder farmers with income boosting local market opportunities, whilst the inclusion of fresh local foods into the school meals enhances the nutrition and dietary diversity of school children. “The World Food Programme is hugely excited to be partnering with Kerry and bringing their expertise on board as we try to add dairy products to the school diet in Honduras,” Barrow said at the partnership launch event. “This pilot project in Honduras has great potential and we hope it will set the standard for the integration of dairy products into school meals, for the benefit of child nutrition and poor milk producers in other developing countries around the world.”

Contact Information

Media

Frank Hayes Director of Corporate Affairs +353 66 7182304 corpaffairs@kerry.ie

Website

www.kerrygroup.com

Editor’s Notes

Kerry Group provide the largest, most innovative portfolio of Taste & Nutrition technologies and systems and Functional Ingredients & Actives for the global food, beverage and pharmaceutical industries. Our consumer foods division, Kerry Foods, is also a leading consumer foods processor and supplier in selected EU markets.

Kerry’s industry leading technologies are backed by the industry’s most robust in-house processing capabilities and expertise to address manufacturing challenges and help customers design winning consumer products.

Quoted on the [London](#) & [Irish](#) Stock exchanges, with headquarters in Tralee, County Kerry, Ireland, the Group reported annual revenue of €6.1billion in 2016.