

## GUARANTEED IRISH MARKS ITS 50<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY

Dia Dhaoibh a dhuine uaisle, tá fáilte romhat anseo inniu.

Distinguished guests, members, colleagues, friends, thank you for inviting me to present to you today.

This March, **Guaranteed Irish**, the not-for-profit membership organisation celebrates 50 years supporting businesses in Ireland. Guaranteed Irish currently represents over 2000 members who employ over 120,000 people. Established in 1974, as a national symbol of trust and provenance for business in Ireland, it is dedicated to sustaining jobs and communities. Almost three quarters of consumers in Ireland recognise the symbol and nine out of ten members say it has financially benefited their business.

The 2024 Guaranteed Irish report conducted by Red C research, outlines the economic impact of the membership organisation with 80% agreeing that by buying from Guaranteed Irish businesses, they are promoting a sustainable economy.

The report also highlighted the value of the symbol, with 81% stating that Guaranteed Irish stands out from other brands in its support for Irish jobs, community and circular economy. And 91% of consumers agree that by buying from Guaranteed Irish businesses they are supporting local jobs. The annual turnover among members is estimated at €14.2bn and globally at €52.27bn.

The 50th anniversary presents an opportunity for us to celebrate the impact that Guaranteed Irish has had for existing business members, and to attract new ones. Our members who are committed to Ireland and its workforce span indigenous businesses to locally based global leaders, support over 120,000 jobs throughout Ireland. It is through their continued commitment to supporting sustainable jobs, contributing to local communities and commitment to Irish provenance that allows us to grow our offering and we look forward to continuing this commitment into the future.

To mark the 50th anniversary, Guaranteed Irish have and continued to launch several initiatives including a national communications campaign that explains what Guaranteed Irish represents in a modern Ireland. National campaigns such as 'The 50-50-50 Competition' which offers the chance for one lucky business with 50 employees or more the chance to win communications campaign worth €50,000 including national & Regional Radio, TV, Print, Digital, PR. The competition is open to current licensed members of Guaranteed Irish in 24/25. Please inform your constituents and your local employers at home.

A commemorative stamp was released in February marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and a specially commissioned book is also available which tells the story of the impact of Guaranteed Irish across Irish society and Ireland's economy from the year it launched.

As the year is 2024, this makes it GI's 50th anniversary- so we must look back to ensure we learn from our history to secure a better future.....

To celebrate we have commissioned a book detailing the last 50 years, and this will be launched this month-you are all invited.

It is the story of GI and its role before and during the first 50 years of Ireland as an EU member. It is a story of support, agility and adaptability of people who want to hold on to their Irishness and still be part of the European movement- As an island nation, we have always wanted the best of both worlds. And that translates into, 'support local, look global'. Precisely -the role- of Guaranteed Irish. We need both.

I can't think of any other NFP brand that has lasted the test of Time for 50 years.....

Few such brands, even International, enjoy such longevity and adaptability. And, in my opinion we need to make more use of this- it is underutilised in this country.

I invite you as members of the Oireachtas to avail of this marketing tool to create more opportunities with us in Guaranteed Irish.

As you all know from your own businesses, companies go out and spend a fortune on brand development, brand messaging and communicating, creating a sense of purpose in an effort to build trust. And here we have a national brand that has achieved all of these things over the last 50 years.....a symbol that is recognised by 75% of the current multi cultural population, seen as the "**national symbol of trust**", '**an international seal of approval**', with an overflowing '**sense of purpose**' that connects with sustainability, business and the community- It begs the question, 'Why aren't we using it more?'

Did you know that 9 out of 10 of our members have told us this year, that it helps them drive sales and positively impacts their bottom line. Others have said it helps them attract quality talent- it is multipurpose. People are looking for it, help them to find it by using it everywhere.

As it's the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, I must pay tribute to all who have gone before in their commitment to GI. Looking back, what a 'half century' it has been and as a nation- haven't we come a long way?

A special acknowledgement to the design team who 50 years ago, conceptualised the small but powerful symbol with the I inside the G- brilliant in many ways, but now of iconic status. GI just happens to capture "all that is good about Ireland" – unlike any other brand and that is why it has prevailed....

in 1973- when Ireland joined the EEC, GI helped companies move from an island economy to a European economy-focusing on quality and marketing ....only those who adapted survived.

With change, comes opportunity, and for those businesses who were brave and agile enough rewards came in the shape of exports.

In 1974- GI, as we know it now, was born- a not for profit company limited by Guarantee. Its mission was to to 'support local' and in doing so, create much needed employment.

As Multinationals started to invest in Ireland.....dot.coms emerged....we became entrepreneurs....we were a Trusted and now also a 'safe' place to invest and work ( following the Good Friday Agreement).

Throughout this time, Guaranteed Irish, while diminished, was steady, it was trusted in a world of 'distrust'. A longterm trusted companion is a tool that should never be underestimated in any society, But it certainly needed revitalising.

In 2016, GI modernised its role- it relaunched itself as a national symbol of trust to support all business based in Ireland, homegrown and international, who supported jobs, community and provenance in a sustainable manner. It was no longer protectionist. Application for the licence, was open to all.

In 2020, hit by a global pandemic- we were all forced to re-evaluate - GI came into its own, advocating for businesses to 'support local while still looking global'. We were living the brand- we were at our best -we were "All together better".

HERE WE ARE NOW IN 2024- It's perhaps *the* election year of our lifetime.

Globally, 49% of the people in the world—are meant to hold national elections, the results of which, for many, will prove consequential for years to come. The burden is heavy, and we have a responsibility to try and get things right.....so how can GI help?

GI has always thrived in times of change.

It has always been a positive brand for Ireland. In a world of unrest, distrust and uncertainty, a brand like GI creates a stable and trusting business environment and a solution to some of our sustainability targets, particularly the education of sustainability, a well meaning word, but more often than not misunderstood.

Think about it,....if you support a local business, you are not just securing those jobs, you are also reducing carbon miles and building trust equity into your supply chain. There is a value in that.

We learnt a lot in Covid- its good to know where our products are coming from, its good to trust where our products are coming from and its good to trust that those who are supplying us are doing good things- to their people and..... to our planet.

GI has a leading role to play here and we are ready and willing to play it.

-----

We have worked hard to arrive at this stage-I would like to pay a special tribute to the current Board of Directors and Appraisals team for their time, commitment and vision.

As Volunteers..... they give their precious time pro-bono to the organisation- their commitment, experience and advice is invaluable to me and the direction of the organisation. These are exceptional people.

Like our members and Directors, I invite you to participate and support Guaranteed Irish and its member businesses across Ireland as we embark on our biggest journey together to sustain life, enterprise and economies in our local Irish communities together in harmony.

Thank you.

ENDS

