

MINISTER GILDERNEW TO OPEN IFEX 2008

The Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development, Michelle Gildernew MP MLA, will open IFEX 2008 at the King's Hall on 29th April 2008.

Ireland's International Food, Drink, Hospitality and Retail Exhibition (IFEX) celebrates its 22nd anniversary this year and the King's Hall will play host to a comprehensive range of local and international products and services across the industry.

In addition to opening the event, the Minister will be visiting stands at the exhibition including the new Artisan Producers Quarter, where local producers will have the opportunity to showcase the wide range of quality local produce available to visitors. This is being supported by the Northern Ireland Food and Drink Association (NIFDA) and the Ulster Pork and Bacon Forum (UPBF), with assistance from local chef Sean Owens. DARD has been pleased to be able to provide part funding under its Northern Ireland Regional Food Programme.

The Minister said: "I welcome the IFEX 2008 exhibition to the North of Ireland and the opportunity it gives to local producers and processors to showcase their products to a wide range of companies in the hospitality and retail sector. I am really looking forward to seeing the new Artisan Producers Quarter and even lending a hand in some of the cooking. This is a great opportunity to promote the quality and range of local produce available."

In addition to visiting IFEX, the Minister will be lending her own support to local produce by assisting Cathal Armstrong, chef and patron of Restaurant Eve, Washington, in delivering his cookery demonstration on the opening day of the event.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. IFEX 2008 is being held at the King's Hall, Belfast from 29th April to 1st May 2008.
2. The Artisan Producers Quarter is being delivered by the Northern Ireland Food and Drink Association (NIFDA) and the Ulster Pork and Bacon Forum (UPBF) with the assistance of the Northern Ireland Regional Food Programme.
3. The Northern Ireland Regional Food Programme was established as part of the implementation of The Fit for Market Report, which was published by the Food Strategy Group in November 2004.
4. The Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development attended a masterclass in Cathal Armstrong's Restaurant Eve in Washington in May 2007. This was part of the 'Rediscover Northern Ireland' showcase, which culminated in the Smithsonian Folklife Festival.
5. All media enquiries to DARD Press Office Tel: 028 90524619