

## Innovative Research Solutions with Industry

Food

**CLIENT:**  
Fáilte Ireland

**AREA:**  
Hospitality and Tourism



## Research into support of food tourism networks



The Irish Academy of Hospitality and Tourism (IAHT) at IT Tralee is a dedicated facility which houses an experienced applied research community at postdoctorate and postgraduate level. The research agenda at IAHT is informed directly by a steering committee of key industry CEOs and representative bodies and by international academics who also mentor and support the Academy.

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Through this collaboration, the IAHT aims to further enhance Ireland as a high-quality and competitive world class tourism destination. The IAHT researchers provide on-going support to a number of networks and groups who aim to develop and maintain inter-organisational collaborations. The IAHT also provides continuous professional development programmes of specific practical application to the industry it serves e.g. the IAHT is the sole provider of the national trainee hotel manager programme delivered through an innovative blended learning approach, incorporating traditional classroom learning with work-based learning and on-line classes and tutorials. Fáilte Ireland is the National Tourism Development Authority with a remit to support



Hospitality Training at IAHT, IT Tralee

the tourism industry and work to sustain Ireland as a high-quality and competitive tourism destination.

Fáilte Ireland identified food tourism as a growing market segment and is working towards the goal that "Ireland is recognized by visitors for the availability, quality and value of our local and regional food experiences which evoke a unique sense of place, culture and hospitality". Food tourism networks are key facilitators in developing food tourism in Ireland. Optimally performing →

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- > food tourism networks play a major role in the establishment of reputable food tourism destinations which in turn attract increasing numbers of food tourists annually.

The IAHT applied for funding under the Fáilte Ireland Applied Research Scheme in 2011/12 to examine how food tourism networks can be supported. The application was successful and the IAHT was funded to complete the collaborative research project 'Managing Food Tourism Networks – A Practical Manual'. The primary objective of this research project was to develop a tool which captured best practice in supporting the development of food tourism networks and optimising their performance. The IAHT researchers collaborated with a number of networks in the hospitality and tourism sector in order to complete this project. The resultant manual produced disseminates best practice in managing food tourism networks to the wider hospitality and tourism sector. It is available at [www.iaht.eu](http://www.iaht.eu).

As a result of the expertise established in the area of Food Tourism Networks, the IAHT were invited to collaborate as a partner in an IT Tralee coordinated FP7 project proposal named TRADE-IT (Traditional Food: Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Technology Transfer) under the 2013 KBBE call. The €4million project was subsequently ranked number one in Europe for this particular call. The TRADEIT project is a multidisciplinary, multi-sectoral collaborative initiative supporting a network of traditional food SMEs and food researchers to increase the competitiveness and inter-regional advantage of Traditional Food Producing SMEs. The IAHT will support the development of network learning through the promotion of collaboration, innovation, entrepreneurship and knowledge and technology transfer.

Other notable research projects ongoing at the IAHT focus on community-led tourism, festivals and events, world heritage and adventure tourism. ■

## TESTIMONIAL

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### **Mary Rose Stafford**

*Irish Academy of  
Hospitality and Tourism*

*"The IAHT, in partnership with Fáilte Ireland, pioneers international collaboration, applied research and continuous professional development within the Hospitality and Tourism sector. Future growth of the tourism industry in Ireland will come from innovations in products, services and new business models. The IAHT is committed to developing the competitiveness of the Irish tourism industry supporting applied research and establishing networks that successfully facilitate knowledge and technology transfer."*

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