CERTIFIED IRISH ANGUS

SCHOOLS COMPETITION 2026

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FOREWORD

Certified Irish Angus, along with our processer partners, ABP and Kepak, welcome you to the final of the Certified Irish Angus School Competition 2026.

We are honoured and privileged to have had the opportunity to work with these students, along with their schools, teachers and families over the past two years.

We are in awe at the level of enthusiasm and appetite for learning about agriculture and in particular, the production of Certified Irish Angus Beef. The effort that these students have gone to in the rearing of their calves and in the promotion of Certified Irish Angus Beef, along with the in-depth research and reports they have completed is astonishing. This reflects the commitment and effort of their school, teachers and parents to a full and complete education.

To our partners, ABP and Kepak, we wish to thank you most sincerely for your support and help in this project.

We hope this has been a memorable experience for all of the students who have taken part and wish you the very best of luck in the future.

FCJ SECONDARY SCHOOL, BUNCLODY

Students from FCJ Secondary School, Bunclody, centered their focus on the theme of **“Positioning Ireland as a Global Leader in Sustainable Beef Production”.**

This was a first entry to the Certified Irish Angus Schools Competition for the school, and the two students embraced the opportunity to challenge perceptions of agriculture while building their own knowledge, confidence and communication skills.

The group wanted to investigate consumer’s views on agriculture. Their project explored how Irish beef compares internationally, examining production systems in countries by talking to experts from Canada, Brazil, the USA, South Korea, Iran and New Zealand. This global perspective highlighted Ireland’s strengths in grass-based systems, animal welfare and family farming, while also identifying practical ways sustainability can continue to improve.

Multispecies swards became a central focus of the groups work so they visited farms to get more information. The group tried this out for themselves with positive results demonstrating reduced fertiliser use, improved soil health and strong animal performance.

Working closely with their host beef and tillage farm in Wexford, the students reared five Irish Angus calves, tracking weight gain, health and finishing performance. Their results showed that high-quality genetics combined with multispecies grazing can deliver excellent carcass weights at a young age, highlighting the economic and environmental benefits of sustainable systems. The group participated in factory visits, where the students saw first-hand the professionalism, traceability and care involved in processing Irish beef.

A creative highlight, the group developed the “Bó-Goer”, a locally sourced, gluten- friendly Angus burger that connected nutrition, inclusivity and consumer choice. The group identified it can be a common worry among people with food related disease like coeliac disease, that they will be no longer able to enjoy their favourite foods, like a burger, and the group wanted to change that perspective by creating the “Bó-Goer”.

Education was a core component of their project, with the group deciding to share everything they had learned about agri-food and beef production and created a “Farm to fork” primary school pro-gramme and an information booklet for local farmers.

Through research, local action and strong communication, the FCJ Bunclody team delivered a project that celebrated the Irish Agri-Food industry while inspiring future advocates for the sector.

COLÁISTE MHUIRE, BALLYGAR

Students from Coláiste Mhuire, Ballygar delivered a highly innovative and consumer-focused Certified Irish Angus project centred on **“Increasing Consumer Perceptions of the Value of Beef,”** aimed to educate consumers on sustainability, food waste reduction, and the farm-to-fork process”.

Coming from strong suckler, beef and mixed farming backgrounds, the team explored how consumer awareness, food waste reduction and sustainability are closely linked across the farm-to-fork chain.

Their research revealed a clear disconnect between the effort involved in producing high-quality Irish beef and how it is valued at consumer level. Surveys showed that price often outweighed sustainability in purchasing decisions, while knowledge of food waste prevention was limited. In response, the students launched their “What’s At Steak?” campaign, combining public engagement, recipe development and practical demonstrations to highlight the real cost, environmental and economic, of wasted beef.

A standout feature of the project was the construction of a small-scale anaerobic digester using recycled materials. This demonstrated how food waste can be converted into renewable energy, helping the students explain complex sustainability concepts to schools, community groups and industry audiences. Their work gained national attention through agricultural shows, media interviews and collaboration with energy and agri-food organisations.

Community engagement was central throughout, with tasting events, school visits and public talks encouraging discussions about quality, waste and responsibility.

These events included being interviewed on Galway Bay FM, showcasing their knowledge at Ballyforan Fair, farm visits, visits to an Anaerobic digester, and the group being invited to a panel talk with Gas Networks Ireland at the Ploughing Championship.

By connecting production, processing and consumption, the Ballygar team successfully raised awareness about sustainable agri-food, beef production and food waste reduction. Their anaerobic digester project demonstrated the potential of small-scale biogas production, and they gained valuable skills, industry insights, and community support, making the competition a transformative experience.

NEWPORT COLLEGE

Students from Newport College, North Tipperary focused on **“Sustainable Farm Technology for their research project”.** From strong farming backgrounds in dairy, beef and mixed systems, the team explored how echnology both low-cost and high-cost, can support more efficient and nvironmentally responsible beef production. The students focused on raising awareness of sustainable technologies in agriculture.

By surveying over 90 farmers across dairy, beef and calf-to-beef systems, the students identified a clear gap between awareness of sustainable technologies and their actual adoption, and there was a need for further education on this area. Practices such as soil sampling were used by 83% of farmers, while other practices, including grass measurement, was only utilised by 40% of farmers. These findings contributed to the theme of the project, promoting sustainable practices and technologies with one of the primary focuses on grass measurement.

The group brought their research beyond the classroom through farm walks with Teagasc and a visit to the Teagasc DairyBeef500 event, mart engagement, school open nights and primary school visits. Their host farm in Clonlara already used sustainable practices such as soil sampling, habitat preservation, and water management improvements. This provided the platform to demonstrate the groups research and sustainable practices.

A highlight of the project was its strong community impact, with farmers engaging directly with students and reconsidering how technology could fit their own systems. Farmers were seeing the benefits outlined and were open to utilising these practices. The group ensured there was impact to the project and recontacted all survey participants to share their results and highlight which technologies would most benefit their farms.

Newport College findings suggest that while Irish farmers are aware of sustainability issues, many still need support to understand, access, and apply available technologies. Simple, low-cost practices such as soil testing and grass measurement can make a major difference.

ST. BRENDAN'S COMMUNITY SCHOOL, BIRR

Students from St. Brendan's Community School, Birr coming from rural backgrounds across Offaly, the group combined experience from beef, dairy, suckler and organic systems, alongside a strong interest in genetics, engineering and sustainable agriculture.

Their project focused on the idea that **"incremental changes can yield significant improvements in sustainable beef production"**.

Rather than promoting large-scale or costly interventions, the students explored how small, manageable, evidence-based decisions at farm level, such as soil testing, silage analysis, targeted dosing and grassland planning, can reduce inputs while maintaining strong animal performance. Working from their host farm in Coolderry, the group implemented nutrient management plans, monitored liveweight gain monthly and explored tools such as AgNav, LESS technology and improved slurry utilisation to guide decision-making.

The group had the opportunity to explore Kepak's Elite Breed Improvement Programme, speak with Teagasc advisors, J. Grennan and Sons, Grassland Agro and Agri Stock to help curate a Grassland and Nutrient Management Plan. The results demonstrated how small steps at farm level can contribute to sustainable beef production.

A strength of the project was its emphasis on communication. The students shared their findings through radio interviews, podcasts, local media and a highly successful farm launch night that brought together industry leaders, local farmers and the wider community including Padraig Brennan from Tullamore Show's Sustainability Village, with Certified Irish Angus beef burgers for everyone! Within the school, regular updates and calf-naming competitions maintained engagement throughout the programme. The group were then invited by Padraig Brennan to speak at the Livestock Sustainability Village at the Tullamore Show in 2025.

The project sshows that basic changes can make farming both more profitable and more sustainable without overcomplicating things. From carrying out simple tests like faecal egg counts, soil, silage and slurry analysis, small steps can be taken to increase sustainability in beef production.

SACRED HEART SECONDARY SCHOOL, CLONAKILTY

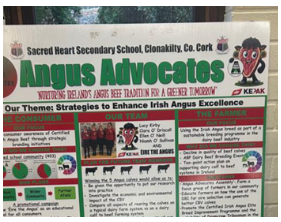
Students from Sacred Heart Secondary School, known as The Angus Advocates, the four students had strong dairy farming backgrounds with a shared interest in education, communication and the future of Irish agriculture.

The groups project title was **"Increasing Awareness of the Certified Irish Angus Brand"** focused on increasing awareness of the brand for consumers and farmers by clearly linking quality beef production, traceability and sustainability.

Analysing over 1000 surveys revealed limited understanding of the farm-to-fork journey, while farmer research highlighted knowledge gaps around breeding tools such as DBI and CBV. In response, the students developed a highly engaging education campaign built around their mascot, Éire the Angus, which became a tool for storytelling and learning across schools, shows and national events.

Following the success of the community events, the group were invited to meet Minister for Agriculture, Martin Heydon. This meeting recognised the national importance of the project and allowed discussions of the Certified Irish Angus brand, agri-food, sustainable beef production, and the role of DBI and CBV in strengthening the dairy-beef sector. We were subsequently invited to Dáil Éireann, where we met An Taoiseach Mícheál Martin, An Tánaiste Simon Harris and presented our project. This experience reinforced the importance of youth involvement in shaping the future of Irish agriculture and sustainability.

Practical learning was reinforced through visits to marts, processors and industry events, giving the students a full view of the beef supply chain. Their work included attendance to farm walks, agricultural shows, media coverage, and a gala dinner that brought together farmers, processors and consumers. The project made breeding and sustainability ideas practical and easy to understand.



Through education, research and community engagement, the Sacred Heart team demonstrated how young people can play a vital role in connecting consumers and producers while promoting the future of Irish beef.

TESTIMONIALS

“This competition has taught me more than just facts and statistics about the agricultural sector. I have learned about responsibility, teamwork and the importance of good communication.”

Hollie-Mae Power Sinnott, FCJ Secondary School, Bunclody

“Through the Certified Irish Angus Schools competition it has opened up a range of opportunities that have allowed me to step outside of my comfort zone and develop new skills.”

Ciara O'Driscoll, Sacred Heart Secondary School, Clonakilty

“Without a shadow of a doubt in my mind this competition changed me for the better in ways I never thought it would and for that I am very grateful.”

Joey McLoughney, St. Brendan's Community School, Birr

“Standing in that room, representing Irish agriculture on an international stage, was empowering. It made me realise how important it is for young people to have a voice in shaping the future of farming and food production.”

Katie Ann Gacquin, Coláiste Mhuire, Ballygar

“Overall, the competition has given us a real insight into the Irish beef industry, built our confidence, and encouraged us to pursue future careers connected to agriculture.”

Cillian Marren, Kyle Gow & Sam Caplis, Newport College

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