

# THE BIG CHEESE

## IN THE DAIRY INDUSTRY

*Ingredient Solutions Ltd was established in 2000 to provide innovative cheese ingredients to the food industry. It is now a premier cheese supplier to large food manufacturers of ready meals, snack foods and foodservice companies in Ireland, the UK and across Europe. Hannah Barnett spoke to Sales Director Gary Davies, Technical Manager Suma Lakshmana and Logistics Supervisor Karina Souza to learn more.*

One of the secrets to Ingredient

Solutions success may be that it never stands still.

"We launch around five new product codes a month," said Gary Davies, Sales Director. "These could be a new blend, pack, label, language, or something bespoke to deliver on a specific brief: melt, colour, flavour, nutritional requirement, format or price.

"We also send out over 100 samples a month to new and existing customers across the globe. We try to utilise current products in the range, but are flexible in terms of making something exactly as the customer requires it."

### Always evolving

The Irish company is a BRCGS-accredited, one-stop-shop for food producers looking for a quality cheese supplier. Since starting small, with just four employees working from one room at the turn of the millennium, Ingredient Solutions now exports cheese to over 30 countries and works with more than 200 customers.

The company has spent the last two and a half decades signing up several prestigious customers, including one that generated €8 million in turnover last year alone. Ingredient Solutions now has 85



employees, a turnover above €70 million and a production capacity of 14,000 tonnes.

In May 2022, Ingredient Solutions was acquired by Rupp, the largest family-owned company in the Austrian dairy industry which was founded in 1908. Rupp produces processed and natural specialty cheeses under the Rupp and Alma brands at four locations in Europe and Asia.

The following year was a successful one for Ingredients Solutions as it won 40 new customers. Alongside the acquisition, this accomplishment is also part in thanks to the efficiency and knowledge of the sales and new product development (NPD) team, working to streamline the NPD process, according to Mr Davies.

“Working as partners with our customers is key,” he said. “This means we offer a quick rate of response, as well as providing samples and interactive feedback, and establish a clear objective at the start of the process.”

Ingredient Solutions therefore remains at the cutting edge, and as a result, has built a cross-functional departmental team to drive AI and its potential. Logistics Supervisor Karina Souza is leading the initiative and will oversee forward-thinking training budgeted for later this year.

Indeed, the company invests heavily in staff training and has managed to use the turbulence of the last few years to its advantage. “Covid gave us the opportunity to upskill the teams internally, with

cross-functional training across each sector,” said Mr Davies. “This gave my sales team the empathy, confidence and expertise to deliver not only what the customer requires, but what we, as a business, are experts at.”

### Sincere sustainability

Ingredient Solutions is committed to acting responsibly by integrating social and environmental concerns into business operations.

“Sustainability goes beyond regulatory compliance,” Suma Lakshmana, Technical Manager, explained. “We focus on economic, social and environmental impacts, as well as promoting waste reduction and cutting down on the use of packaging with the promotion of the circular economy.”

As a result, Ingredient Solutions is in the top 1% of companies rated by EcoVadis in the manufacture of dairy products industry. The company is also a verified member of the Origin Green sustainability programme, which covers the period 2023-2027. ▽

#### **Origin Green Sustainability Goals:**

##### **The seven pillars:**

- 1. Raw materials and suppliers.**
- 2. Product packaging.**
- 3. Energy and emissions.**
- 4. Reduce waste.**
- 5. Save water.**
- 6. Promote product health and nutrition.**
- 7. Prioritise employee wellbeing.**



“We have developed a total of nine goals within seven pillars, meeting Origin Green’s minimum Tier 2 member requirements,” said Ms Souza. “All our targets are regarded as SMART, and these seven pillars form the backbone of all that we do.”

The pillars include sustainable sourcing, which means a target of increasing the quantity of sustainably certified raw material purchases from 40% for the base year of 2022 up to 64% by 2027. There is also a commitment to reduce Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 30% and reduce the intensity of Scope 3 emissions by 50% by 2027.

Waste reduction is another key pillar, deeply anchored in Ingredient Solutions’ business strategy. The target is to reduce overall waste by 10.8%, measured in tonnes, by 2027.

“It is one of our biggest challenges, but we do have a series of initiatives to reduce waste in our process,” said Ms Lakshmana. “We are aiming to recycle our general discards as much as possible, by promoting the collection of food waste in the factory process for bio-generation.”

Beyond the immediate environmental impact, the company is similarly concerned with staff wellbeing: “Our goal is for our employees to be happier and healthier: and by investing in professional growth and keeping them motivated, we can increase productivity,” said Ms Lakshmana. “We want to create a positive working environment where individuals and organisations can thrive.”

### Partnerships and people

Like any successful business, strong working relationships throughout the supply chain are vital. Indeed, many of Ingredient Solutions raw material and packaging suppliers have been with the company since its humble beginnings, so it is no surprise that these relationships are both flexible and trustworthy.

The company is also keen to maintain environmental principles in these partnerships, as using high-quality and sustainable suppliers can have significant benefits for the business. These benefits range from cost savings and improved reputation to long-term environmental and social impacts.

“We have approximately 20 top suppliers that all have sustainability targets and goals to reduce the impact of factors affecting the environment,” Mr Davies explained. “Ingredient Solutions follows a strict code of conduct that has also been sent to all suppliers to ensure we are all working to the same standard.”

Ingredient Solutions is a dynamic and exciting business to be part of, made all the more so by investment from the larger global group. The company intends to open a new state-of-the-art factory in 2025, thereby gaining a greater scope than ever.

“Every day is different and there is a whole new horizon out there now we are part of Rupp,” Mr Davies reflected. “I thrive on empowering the team to deliver; steering the culture of the business, and ensuring we are aligned in our mission.”

For Ms Lakshmana, the opportunities for personal growth are what drives her most of all: “One of my passions is self-improvement and helping others grow, both personally and professionally. I knew best practices from my previous experience, so when I came in, I aligned with all the key members of the company and drew a formal road map. Transforming this into a reality is a large undertaking and I feel a deep sense of satisfaction knowing that I have made a difference.”

“The company is always growing,” Ms Souza concluded, “which can be challenging. Daily challenges require quick responses and actions, and this makes me increasingly exceed my potential to deal with problems, thereby becoming a better professional every day.” ■

