

CAP Network Ireland National Conference

Launch of Bioeconomy Ireland Week 2025 | 13 Oct 2025

GUEST SPEAKERS



*Sustainably growing, mobilising & utilising biomass in Ireland:
Current and future opportunities for bioeconomy business models*



Dr Gillian Barry is Head of Innovation & Enterprise at the Technological University of the Shannon (TUS), with over 25 years' experience in industry, entrepreneurship, and higher education. At TUS she leads the Enterprise Ireland-funded New Frontiers programme and the HEA-funded TUS Works and Student Inc initiatives, supporting start-ups, student and researcher entrepreneurship, and research commercialisation. She oversees TUS's enterprise centres in Limerick, Thurles, and Clonmel, including Qestum, home to companies such as EY Entrepreneurs of the Year, Shorla Oncology, and collaborates with centres nationally and internationally. Dr Barry is a task lead on the Mount Lucas Circular IMTA Demonstration Project, contributing to business model development in this national circular bioeconomy initiative. She also serves on the boards of Limerick Chamber, AXIS BIC, The Forge Design Factory, The Learning Hub and CCEC, and holds an Executive MBA from UCC and a DBA from SETU. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/gillianbarry/>



John Brosnan is Bioeconomy Executive at the Irish Co-operative Organisation Society, and has been working in the agri-food sector for over 20 years. John currently works on developing the role of co-operatives in the evolving Bioeconomy and promoting the inclusion of primary producers in this vital sector. This involves designing roadmaps for bioeconomy deployment with ICOS member co-ops and key Government, semi-state and other industry stakeholders. He led the formation of the 'Comhar BIA' project and was appointed chair of the CBEJU Primary Producers Working Group in 2025, as well as sitting on a number of DAFM and DCCE committees on topics such as Bioeconomy (forum), carbon farming, AKIS, CAP implementation, and biomethane implementation, amongst others. John holds a Bachelor of Business Studies, a Postgraduate Diploma in Co-operative Organisation and Rural Development from UCC, an Executive MBA from the UL and an MSc in Bioeconomy with Business awarded jointly by UCD and MTU. He also runs a grass-based dairy calf to beef farm on a part-time basis.



Kenneth Joyce is Head of Strategic Business Development at Coillte. He has over 20 years of experience in the forestry and forest products sector, including timber sales and marketing, project management, innovation, procurement and forest operations. Kenneth is recognised as an expert in the use of wood and wood fibre in construction products and the emerging use of wood in the bioeconomy to develop bio-products. Kenneth has worked on various bioeconomy projects with wood in Ireland, including construction wood products, biochar, biofuels, bio-fertilisers, bio-adhesives, and other bio-products. As part of this work, Kenneth has built an extensive network and understanding of the wood sector bioeconomy in Europe, the UK and Ireland. Kenneth has a degree in Forestry and Forest Products from Bangor University in Wales.



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Building an Agri-Bioeconomy Business



Dr. Lalitha Gottumukkala is the Chief Innovation Officer (CIO) and Co-Founder of Celignis Bioprocess and Celignis USA, based in Limerick, Ireland. She leads the company's innovation activities, focusing on developing bioprocess technologies and analytical methods that support the growth of the bioeconomy. Her work involves collaborations across Europe, Asia, the USA, and Africa, contributing to projects in biomass valorisation and bio-based chemical production. Under her guidance, Celignis has been part of several Horizon Europe and CBE-JU projects, developing sustainable products from personal care ingredients to materials for furniture and construction. Her main research interests include polysaccharide extraction and modification, and fermentation processes for producing high-value biochemicals.



Dr. Michelle Collins is Director of Research & Development at Tirlán, and is an accomplished R&D leader with over two decades of experience in food science, innovation, and sustainability. She has held multiple senior roles, including Head of Nutrition and Sustainability Innovation and Head of Applied Research at both Tirlán and Glanbia Ireland. Prior to this, Michelle spent over nine years at The Coca-Cola Company in Brussels, where she led external technology and category management across Europe, Eurasia, and Africa. She began her career in food biotechnology and process improvement, supported by a PhD in Food Bioscience from the University of Reading and a Master's in Food Biotechnology from Ulster University. Michelle champions innovation at the interface of nutrition, sustainability, and scientific research, and is a strong advocate for cross-disciplinary collaboration to accelerate advancements in science.



Jack Norman is Co-Founder of Zirkulu and Lurra Bio, two startups developing scalable bio-based materials for agriculture and industry. Zirkulu set out to create outdoor apparel with a focus on renewable materials, circular design, and technical performance.

Jack has worked closely with the Enterprise Ireland ecosystem to bring innovations from concept to market and recently achieved CBE-JU success with the Bluecoat project, advancing next-generation bio-based coatings in Europe.



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Financing the Bioeconomy: Financial Support available to the Bioeconomy



Marina Donohoe is a Divisional Manager for Research & Innovation at Enterprise Ireland, and has led teams in Ireland and overseas, delivering strong export results globally, working with businesses across various sectors, from start-up to Plc. She established Ireland's first International Incubation Centre for the agency in Silicon Valley and was appointed as Director Americas based in New York. Marina has led various Sector teams across LifeSciences, Cleantech & Internationally Traded Services and served as Head of Education in Ireland, a government-wide initiative to promote Ireland as a destination for 3rd level education. She has acted as Regional Director UK & Northern Europe, and led the development of the agency's Eurozone Strategy, driving diversification across Europe and scaled growth in the UK post-Brexit. Marina is a Business graduate of TCD and UCC and completed executive education programs at Stanford, Columbia and London School of Economics .



Diana Patrascu is the Head of the Sustainable Finance Unit at the European Investment Fund (EIF), with responsibility for developing sustainable finance products and advisory initiatives that support the EU's green transition objectives. Diana has over 17 years experience in the financial services sector. Previously, she served as Senior Mandate Manager at EIF, where she played a key role in designing and launching the InvestEU guarantee products. Before joining the EIF, Diana spent 12 years working in the banking sector, leading funding and capital management at a top-tier commercial bank in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE).



Michael Brandkamp is a Founders and General Partner of the European Circular Bioeconomy Fund (ECBF). Michael and his team's goal is to speed up the transformation from a fossil-based to a bio-based circular economy in Europe. The German entrepreneur wrote and executed the business plan of High-Tech Gründerfonds (HTGF), the most active early-stage fund in Europe, investing in innovative technologies and business models since 2005. As the first managing director, he led HTGF until 2019. Michael has 25 years of experience in investment and management in the venture capital industry.



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Martin Heydon,
Minister for Agriculture, Food, and the Marine

Opening Address & Official Launch of
Bioeconomy Ireland Week 2025



Seamus Boland,
Director of CAP Network Ireland, CEO Irish Rural Link,
President of the Civil Society Organisations' Group of the
European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)

Welcome from CAP Network Ireland



Darragh McCullough,
Journalist and Broadcaster

Conference Introduction & Master of Ceremonies



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