

South East Region Pilot Technology Programme

SERTEC

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ACTIONS TAKEN

1. Industrial Liaison Officers (ILOs) in RTCS
 The Carlow ILo Scheme
 Waterford ILO Scheme
2. Technology Audits
3. Business Technology Centre, Carlow
4. strawberry Demonstration Project
5. SERTBC Newsletter
6. South East Region Brochure
7. South East Directory

STUDIES UNDERTAKEN AND PROPOSED

1. Advanced Manufacturing Technology (AMT)
2. Information Technology Projects (IT)
3. Biotechnology
4. Technology Park
5. Heritage and Genealogy Project
6. Regional Food Centre
7. The Leather Industry
8. Malting Barley Project
9. Raspberry Project

PIPELINE PROJECTS

1. Pharmaceutical Technology Laboratory
2. Strategic Programme for Innovation and Technology Transfer (SPRINT)
3. Technological Information Centre (T.I.C.)
4. Information Technology In Company Demonstrations
5. Community Service centres
6. Farm Management System
7. Industrial Linkage
8. Computer Integrated Management and Manufacturing System (CIMNS)

CHAPTER 2

Summary of Findings

INDUSTRY

There is a need in Industry for people with experience in Advanced Manufacturing Technology, in order to improve efficiency, and the better to meet varying market demands.

There is considerable room for improvement in the level of access of industrial firms to information sources, and in their capability in the area of Information Technology.

The existence in the region of a strong capability in the areas of food and biotechnology make it likely that new products can be developed in these areas.

While the leather industry has ceased to be a major element in the region, there may be scope for a partial revival in a different form.

There is an active indigenous pharmaceutical industry in the region and there is scope for cooperation in the manufacture of generic pharmaceutical products.

By comparison with the state as a whole, Waterford Glass gives the region a pre-eminent position in the minerals sector.

The region also has a relatively high concentration in the drink/tobacco sector, at least in terms of number of firms.

The metals/engineering and food sectors between them account for over half of all manufacturing industry in the region. Concentrations are slightly higher than in the state as a whole.

Industrial productivity varies widely over the region between sectors. This is probably due more to the mix of traditional/high tech. than to any particular feature of the region.

Employment in industry in the region as a percentage of the total at work is higher (24%) than in the state (21.7%).

While the pattern of firm size in the region is not radically different from the national average. there is a significantly higher percentage of firms in the 30-200 employee range (27.5% as against 24.1% nationally).

The three main industrial centres are at Waterford, Carlow and Wexford with somewhat lesser concentrations at Kilkenny and Clonmel.

RTD CAPABILITY / THIRD LEVEL EDUCATION

The up-grading of Waterford ETC to NIHE status is regarded by those involved in the region as being of critical significance, as a source of graduates within the region, as a source of technical advice and consultancy to industry, and as an attraction to those managers of inwardly-investing companies, and indigenous companies who have families at third level education age.

The number of students from the region attending University or BEA-funded colleges is well below the national average, because of the lack of such an institution within the region.

Output of Graduates in the region is also very low, for the same reason.

The region has a weak technological base, with investment in R&D below the national average, which in turn is low internationally.

Expenditure by businesses in the region on R&D is slightly better than gross expenditure, by comparison with the norms for these parameters.

Total expenditure per head of population on state funded R&D programmes in the region in 1985 was only two-thirds of the national figure. Only one other region has a lower figure than that of the South East.

Statistical information on which to base reliable estimates of RTD capability on a regional basis is limited in scope and relatively dated.

AGRICULTURE

There is a strong agricultural base in the region, with favourable soil and climatic conditions.

The region is well above the national average in terms of average farm size, and land quality.

Beef and dairy production are strong in the region, but development of these areas will be constrained by future EEC quota considerations.

Total area under tillage is above the national average

There is an indication that livestock stocking levels is below what the land can support

The region has a particular capability in the area of fruit. 60% of the nation's production of strawberries other soft fruits occurs in the region, as well as almost half the output of apples, pears and plums. Soft fruit production is particularly strong in Wexford.

Of the cereal crops currently produced in the region, melting barley, in which there is a significant export trade, and which is not subject to quota constraints, is of particular importance and should be a focus for further development in the cereals area.

Given the region's relative proximity to UK as continental markets, and its favourable soil and 01mm conditions, there is the potential for the development of a strong horticultural industry, which should be pursued

There is considerable scope for increasing the output of the region's agricultural sector generally, particularly in certain areas not subject to quota constraints.

SERVICES

The region lags behind the State in terms of service employment.

Service sector employment increased by 18.4% in the South But by comparison with 21.7% in the State between 1975 and 1986.

Decentralisation of the public service was expected to bring significant numbers of relatively well paid jobs into the region but this did not materialise.

There are specific aspects of tourism in the region which show particular potential for development. such as:

- Heritage and genealogy information services, which are the subject of one of the projects in the Action Programme.
- Fishing (both inland and sea angling).
- Forest parks. The region has large areas of relatively nature forestry, much of it is areas of great scenic beauty.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The extension and up-grading of Waterford Airport to take jet aircraft and to be less vulnerable to aircraft diversions due to weather, is considered to be of pivotal importance to the whole development of the region.

There is already a programme of major road improvements in hand, further development of which is expected to attract ERDF funding.

Major developments for the ports at Waterford, New Ross and Rosslare are already proposed for EU funding.

The natural gas pipeline already passes through the Region and services Waterford, Clonmel and Carlow. Extension to Wexford is being considered.

Note – the above is an extract from the full report