

FARMING WORLD

Couple's award proves West Cork entrepreneurs are worth their salt

by Joe Dermody

Irish Atlantic Seasalt has won the overall prize in the West Cork Enterprise Board's Local Company of the Year Award 2012.

Launched in 2010 by Glengarriff husband and wife team Michael and Aileen O'Neill, Irish Atlantic Seasalt supplies naturally harvested West Cork sea salt to more than 100 independent retailers and 50 super-markets across Ireland.

"We are thrilled to receive this award from West Cork Enterprise Board," said Mr O'Neill. "It is not easy to set up a business these days and it is even harder to grow a business to its full potential. We have been extremely fortunate to have the support of our local enterprise board who have seen the potential of Irish Atlantic Seasalt from the beginning, and I am proud that we continue to prove them right in their continued support of our business."

"We are looking forward to an even brighter year ahead, as we are in the advanced stages of supplying all the main multiples with our product and are also now in a position to seriously look at export possibilities, particularly to the UK and US markets."

In recent months, the company has invested over

€200,000, with over €100,000 financial assistance from the board and Cork County Council to develop a 3,000 sq ft premises. The premises will allow the business to upscale production from this month and produce over a tonne of salt per week.

The expansion will also allow the company to fully explore the export market from early 2013.

Irish Atlantic Seasalt was established with the assistance of the West Cork Enterprise Board in 2010 to set up a small production unit on the Beara Peninsula.

Board chief executive Michael Hanley said: "Michael and Aileen have proven that, with a great business idea, innovation, and hard work, it is possible to grow a strong business. "It is no accident that businesses such as Irish Atlantic Seasalt thrive. It is down to dedication and determination that drives a business to succeed."

"Michael and Aileen's ability to identify and develop a niche artisan product from an infinite resource is an outstanding example of innovation and business acumen and I am delighted that the West Cork Enterprise Board has been able to be a part of this success story."



Michael and Aileen O'Neill of Irish Atlantic Seasalt receive their award for West Cork Local Company of the Year 2012 from Michael Hanley, CEO, and Michael Hennebry, chairman of West Cork Enterprise Board. Picture: Niall Duffy

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