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20 October, 2026

Welcome to the SFA ezine.

In this edition we are highlighting the approaching of the deadline for the SFA Awards, a call for members interested in being part of our Member Advantage Area, a reminder on the first Digital Product Passport going live and much more.

*For this edition we have a total of **nine articles and two recommended events**. Please click **Read in web browser** on the top right corner to make sure you see all of them and enjoy your read.*

Director's Note



Last week, I attended the AI Summit which was the flagship event of Ireland's Presidency of the EU. There I briefly met with Minister for Enterprise, Tourism & Employment, Peter Burke, TD and we discussed the outcome of Budget 2027. Currently, the Oireachtas is processing the Finance Bill which will implement the various budget proposals, some of which will reduce taxes and ease the administrative burden for small businesses. As always, the SFA will keep you informed of any significant legislative developments.

In just over two weeks' time (6th November) the SFA will be hosting its Annual Lunch at the Round Room in the Mansion House. This year's special guest is Gary Lavin, Founder of Vit Hit. Table bookings are close to capacity, **so please book your spot or contact the SFA team to avoid disappointment**. In the same week, the SFA will be present at the EU's SME Summit in Dublin. The event is attended by leading European policy makers with a focus on how the EU can best serve the interests of the small business community.

Furthermore, we are approaching the deadline for entries for the SFA National Small Business Awards. We have been inundated with fantastic applications throughout the categories. However, **if you are a potential entry for the Exporter, Manufacturing or Workplace Wellbeing categories, I would urge you to get your submission in this week**. If you are interested or would like to recommend a business to be nominated, please do so as soon as you can.

Tomorrow's planned industrial action by public sector employees has been postponed as Government and public sector trade unions negotiate a new pay deal for the sector. The SFA will keep you informed of any developments as they happen.

Last week to submit your application for the SFA Awards



Application deadline is approaching for the 23rd SFA National Small Business Awards! This is your opportunity to gain national recognition, boost team morale, and elevate your brand. All finalists receive a prize package valued at €50,000, including an Irish Independent feature, strategic masterclass day away, and exhibition space at SFA Business Connect. With ten diverse categories, from Innovation to Family Business, there is a stage for every thriving enterprise. **Make sure to submit your FREE entry before the deadline (NO SFA membership needed)**.

Choose a category to enter

Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) Frequently Asked Questions



A Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) is a formal but realistic document that outlines specific performance concerns, expectations for future improvement, details on the support provided and a timeline for achieving these improvements.

In this article, we are looking to answer some of the most frequently asked questions about PIPs.

MEMBER ONLY: Read full article

Calling for Expressions of Interest: The New SFA Member Advantage Area 2027



In early 2027, we will launch a redesigned SFA Member Advantage Area, and we are currently inviting members to get involved.

This online hub is a dedicated space where SFA members can offer tailored services, discounts, or unique benefits to fellow members. Participating is a great way to support the Small Business community while naturally raising your business profile. Rather than traditional advertising, it provides a collaborative platform to connect with a highly engaged network of business owners, helping you build meaningful partnerships and generate new business in a supportive environment.

MEMBER ONLY: Express your interest



Join now and get TWO MONTHS OFF your membership fee

Return-to-Office Requirement Leads to Discrimination Claim Being Rejected by WRC



A recent Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) decision highlights the importance of clear hybrid working arrangements, employee engagement and the proper use of formal remote working procedures. The case also serves as a reminder that claims under the Employment Equality Acts must be linked to one of the protected grounds set out in the legislation.

MEMBER ONLY: Read full article

Reminder: the first Digital Product Passport mandatory requirement goes live next year



As part of the Digital Product Passport (DPP) Registry launch, the European Commission has launched the Testing Environment and the User Guide. The Testing Environment allows users to explore DPP features and workflows in a safe test environment, without affecting live data or real processes. User Guide provides detailed instructions for Economic Operators on enrolling an organisation and registering and managing DPPs.

Read full article



SFA IN THE MEDIA

"Every small business has a story to tell" – The awards that celebrate the achievements of small businesses in Ireland @Irish Independent

As the economy flourishes, why have commercial property vacancy rates soared? @BusinessPlus

Business groups unhappy with minimum wage rise decision @RTE

A pro-business budget, but dark clouds are still gathering @Irish Examiner

Pensions report: Ireland's auto-enrolment makes a strong start @Irish Examiner

SMEs need tailored hybrid work and flexibility, says SFA director @Irish Examiner

What does Budget 2027 mean for companies? @Newstalk

Launch of Intelligence:Applied Programme to support Irish workers and business to adopt AI



Last week, the Government launched a new programme, Intelligence:Applied, to accelerate AI adoption across the economy and public sector, and to position Ireland as one of the world's leading locations for responsible applied AI. The programme will see 35 impactful initiatives implemented over the period to 2030 under the themes of People, Economy, Infrastructure and Ecosytem, building on the ambition set out in the National Digital & AI Strategy, Digital Ireland.

Read full article

Call for evidence: Diversifying Supply Chains



The European Commission issued a call for evidence, as it is preparing a "diversification package" to support faster supply chain diversification and reduce dependencies in critical sectors throughout their value chains. This initiative may include making more efficient use of existing or proposed measures, creating a new trade diversification instrument, adapting existing Single Market instruments and putting in place other measures to develop new instruments. **The call for evidence is open until 27 October 2026.**

Read full article

EU-pilot project on enforcement of the Prior Informed Consent



The SFA would like to bring to your attention that the HSA, as the Designated National Authority and National Enforcement Authority for the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) Regulation, will participate in an EU- pilot project on enforcement of the PIC Regulations ((EU) No. 649/2012). The PIC Regulation is European Union law that governs the international trade (import and export) of certain hazardous chemicals. The operational phase of the project will run from November 1st, 2026 to May 15th, 2027.

Read full article

Food Drink Ireland has published their Business Monitor (Issue 2) 2026



Food Drink Ireland has published the second issue of its Business Monitor for 2026, tracking vital retail, economic, and consumer trends. As small firms face mounting cost pressures across energy, labour, raw materials, and packaging, this edition delivers actionable data to support your strategic business planning. It also features expanded analysis on food commodity indices, critical fuel prices, and accessible metric explainers designed to help navigate ongoing market volatility.

Find out more

UPCOMING EVENTS



SFA Annual Lunch 2026

Friday, 6 November | 12 to 4PM | The Round Room at the Mansion House, D02 XK40

From a Dublin start-up to a €75 Million exit: **VITHIT's Gary Lavin**, one of Ireland's most dynamic homegrown business leaders, will be our Special Guest Speaker at the SFA Annual Lunch in November.

Come hear from a visionary Dublin entrepreneur who has successfully navigated the highs and lows of the modern business landscape during the traditional fireside chat with SFA Director, David Broderick. Beyond hearing Gary's incredible story, our Annual Lunch provides the perfect backdrop to entertain clients, reward your hardworking team, and connect with fellow SFA members from across the country. **This event is about to sell out, so make sure you purchase your ticket today to avoid disappointment!**

Reserve your spot



Navigating Work Permits, Visas and Right to Work in Ireland: An SFA Webinar in Partnership with Future Direct

Wednesday, 4 November | 11 to 11.30AM | Online

As skills shortages continue to impact businesses across Ireland, many employers are exploring international recruitment to access the talent they need. Join the SFA and Future Direct for a practical webinar covering Ireland's employment permit and visa system, right to work requirements, employer compliance obligations and the key considerations when hiring non-EEA nationals. This session will provide employers with a clear overview of the current landscape, common challenges and practical guidance on successfully recruiting and supporting international talent in Ireland.

Register now

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Contact us today via 01 605 1776 or book a meeting with a member of our team via this link to make sure you are availing of everything that is available to you. We are here to help and will be delighted to guide you through our resources.

WE VALUE YOUR FEEDBACK

We hope you have enjoyed your read and, as always, we'd love to hear from you about any queries you may have, issues you wish to have raised with Government or other stakeholders and your ideas on how we can improve the business environment for us all.

Please contact me on tel: 01 605 1530 or e-mail: david.broderick@sfa.ie, check our LinkedIn or visit our website.

Kind regards,

David Broderick
SFA Director

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