



Mairéad
McCullough

Site Technical
Manager

What does your job entail?

As the Site Technical Manager, I look after everything related to food safety, food security, traceability and legal labelling from live animals coming into the site to the finished packs arriving on the supermarket shelf. My team also oversee animal welfare on site.

How did you get into this line of work?

I started as an industrial placement student in May 2010 and that was my first real insight into the industry first-hand. I continued on to the graduate programme when I left university.

Outline your career to date

Initially conducting my placement in operations, I joined the Technical Graduate Programme with ABP covering various sites. I progressed through the scheme and was awarded the Assistant Technical Manager position within 18 months. I progressed to Technical Manager at the age of 24. I took on more responsibility alongside the Technical Manager's role looking after one of the agri accounts for one of the major retailers for ABP. I then left ABP and travelled to New Zealand taking up a position as Assurance Manager for Livestock and Shareholder Services for one of the main processors, this covered sheep, beef and venison. I then ventured back home and took a role as Group Technical Manager for the Primary Division, conducting compliance audits, site support and group support. A position came up in Ellesmere, one of ABP's largest and more complex sites as Site Technical Manager, I was awarded this in September 2019.

Tell us about your qualifications and training

I have a BSc Agricultural Technology degree through Queen's University in Belfast. This has supported me in my career as it is an applied science. Throughout my career I am having to constantly evolve with knowledge-based learning and attending training courses to upskill, these include animal welfare, Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP), food safety, Threat Assessment and Critical Control Points (TACCP), health & safety and BRC to name a few. When there is new legislation, compliance, or customer standards – we have to understand and apply these to our business.

What qualities are required for your job – personal and professional?

Being a people person, being able to liaise and relate to people at all different levels, from shop floor through to directors and customer shop floor colleagues to head of divisional teams.
Being able to cope and work under pressure and work to reduced deadlines.
Being able to make decisions quickly.

Tell us an interesting fact about yourself

I am terrified of water, but when I was in New Zealand, I joined the Corporate Rowing Team to push me outside my comfort zone and that was a fantastic experience.

Who has inspired you most in your life?

My parents have always instilled a work ethic in me, they have been fantastic in pushing me further and were there to support me along the way, but my greatest inspiration has to be my mentor who was assigned to me on my graduate programme – Krissy Kelland. She is a fantastic Technical Manager, how she balanced a fast-paced job as well as being a hands-on mum and managed her work-life balance still is awe inspiring.

What advice would you give your 16-year-old self?

Don't get caught up thinking that you have to choose your life-long career at 16! Ensure you pick courses, that you enjoy and don't follow the herd! Apply yourself and don't let anyone tell you that you 'can't'.