

CPA Profile

Brendan McGowan



Title:

Head of Finance and Assets,
Agribusiness

Company:

Aurivo Co-operative Society Ltd

Qualifications:

CPA & Professional Diploma in
Management Excellence, UCD.

Why did you decide to start out on a career in accountancy?

When I finished post primary education, I actually had no idea what career path I wanted to embark on. I was accepted on an Engineering degree course in UCG which I tried for two years but from early on in this venture I realised this was not for me. I did however enjoy the college life there and participated in the vibrant student culture that's present in Galway. Having left college, I returned to my home in Tubbercurry and commenced work in the local Co-op Head Office of North Connacht Farmers Co-op. Working primarily in the accounts area, I quickly discovered that this was the road I should pursue. With the support of

the Co-op and my superiors I began my studies and accountancy journey. I first completed the Accountants Technician exams and shortly thereafter set out in quest of the CPA qualification.

Why did you choose CPA Ireland as your qualification route?

Having decided on what I wanted to do I looked at the various options available. Returning to full time education wasn't an option whilst working full time in a busy and diverse environment. The CPA route fitted well into my work and personal life schedule. The student supports that were on offer were also a deciding factor. With a combination of weekend education in Dublin and

lots of time grinding at the books at home, in 1999 the qualification eventually arrived. The fact that CPA is a well-recognised and respected qualification here in Ireland and internationally also swayed my thinking that this was the accounting body that I wanted to be a member of.

Please provide a brief history of your career.

I have spent all of my working career with the same employer. That is North Connacht Farmers Co-op, Connacht Gold Co-op and now known as Aurivo Co-operative Society Ltd. I started as an accounts clerk and once I got my accounting technician qualification I

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was appointed as accounts payable supervisor. I remained in this role for a number of years whilst studying for my CPA qualification. Following my CPA qualification, I was appointed as accountant for the stores/retail section of Agribusiness.

Shortly thereafter I took the accounting responsibility for all of Agribusiness, 30+ stores/retail outlets and the Animal Feed processing plant, Nutrias, in Ballaghaderreen. This is a business with an annual turnover of circa of €120million, primarily animal feed, fertiliser and farm inputs. We also have Hardware, Household offerings and Garden Centres.

My current role is Head of Finance and Assets for Aurivo Agribusiness. I work closely with my fellow finance colleagues in the other areas of the business – Dairy Ingredients, Consumer Foods, Marts and My Goodness Ltd. The total Aurivo turnover is circa €450million.

How do you find your CPA qualification has helped you in your role?

Unquestionably the CPA qualification has been the backbone of my journey with Aurivo Co-op. Achieving this qualification while working was the spring board for the progression towards my current role in the Co-op. My managers at the time recognised my achievement and the drive and commitment I had to achieve that goal.

What has been your biggest career achievement?

There have been many notable landmarks in my 33-year career with Aurivo. Two that are prominent in my mind would be the amalgamation / merger of NCF and Kiltoghert Co-op's and recently, the introduction of a totally new software system in our retail and milling business. The financial implications of these two events posed many challenges but with careful planning, the co-operation of colleagues and

knowledge of the business, a relatively seamless transition ensued.

What do you think are the most pressing issues for Accountants and the Industry you operate in?

The primary issue right now for the Agribusiness / Food sector is undoubtedly the massive uncertainty surrounding Brexit. This is the sector of the economy that will be most affected by a disorderly exit by Britain from the EU. Much forward planning and forecasting has been done in order to mitigate the fallout, but this period of volatility appears to be set to continue.

How do you unwind?

Outside of my professional life my passion is for Amateur Drama. Though not an actor, I know my limitations, I'm deeply involved in the Amateur Drama world, particularly the Drama Festival movement, locally and nationally and have served as secretary and chairman of the Amateur Drama Council of Ireland.