

Press Release Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2019

## 15 years of exploring our gut

- The Irish research centre that became a global leader

Research indicates that the vast ecosystem of organisms that lives in our digestive systems might be as complex and influential as our genes in everything from cancer to obesity, and for the past 15 years, one of Ireland's leading research centres, *APC Microbiome Ireland (APC)*, has been advancing our understanding of our insides.

Since its establishment in 2003, APC has become a global leader in microbiome research and today, to celebrate its 15 years in operation, it publishes a new report "*Mining Microbes for Mankind - 15 years of Impact*"<sup>1</sup>, produced in tandem with Cork University Business School, which outlines the impact of APC research on society and on the Irish economy.

Launching the report, Prof Fergus Shanahan, Director APC, said "APC placed Ireland on the map as a global leader in microbiome science and has expanded the R&D capabilities of Ireland in an area of immediate relevance to the food and pharmaceutical sectors of industry. When economic hardship struck Ireland a decade ago, our scientists delivered and APC flourished."

Headquartered at University College Cork and Teagasc, APC is one of Ireland's flagship research centres funded, in part, by Science Foundation Ireland (SFI). APC is ranked #1 globally for research in antimicrobial and therapeutic microbes and is in the top 5 institutions in the world for microbiome research. Recent research areas being led by APC include the development of new diagnostics or biomarkers of health or risk of disease (e.g. colon cancer) based on analysis of the microbiota; exploring the mechanisms by which the microbiota may be favourably mobilised or manipulated (e.g. by bacteriophage) to promote health and 'mining' the microbiota for new drugs (e.g. smart antibiotics) and functional food ingredients.

Key findings of the report published today highlight that:

- For every €1 investment by SFI, APC has attracted another €1.84 of inward investment for APC research
- APC helps to generate €1.2m for the Irish economy each week, including expenditure and taxation impact.
- In analysis of the multiplier effect of investment, the report showed a return of €5.60 return to the economy for every €1 state investment in APC
- 10 APC Principal Investigators were included ranked in the top 1% of researchers in the Clarivate Analytics 2018 Highly Cited Researchers List
- APC scientific discoveries have contributed to global health challenges such as antimicrobial resistance, obesity, mental health, successful ageing and inflammatory diseases
- APC works closely with industry. In the last 5 years, 56 collaborative projects with industry have secured over €30million in R&D funding from industry for APC research.
- APC has produced over 2,500 publications in its 15-year history, which have been cited 80,873 times, equating to an average 32 citations per paper. 40% of the APC publications have been from international collaborations with co-authors based in 59 different countries.

- APC papers have a citation rate over twice the world average, and 25% of APC publications are among the top 10% most frequently cited papers globally.
- APC has developed and trained 550 alumni who have advanced to positions in academia, industry and the healthcare sector across the globe
- APC has a vigorous education and public engagement programme. APC researchers interact with approx. 80,000 members of the public annually.

Commenting on the report, economist Prof Brian Lucey stated “Research institutions in the modern world must increasingly demonstrate both scientific and economic impact. This report demonstrates that APC Microbiome Ireland achieves these twin impacts, convincingly. It goes beyond these indeed, showing social impact. The report underlines the importance of investing in research through national institutes of this calibre and size. In my view APC Microbiome Ireland is an economic, scientific and research success story and an endorsement of the SFI funding approach which allowed it to grow and expand.”

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Mr. Simon Coveney said: “I would like to congratulate *APC Microbiome Ireland* for its significant impact on the Irish economy and society – a €5.60 return to the economy for every €1 of State investment is a remarkable achievement, and demonstrates the importance of the Government’s policy of investing in national research centres of excellence and scale. Who would have thought that our tiny resident microbes can have such a dramatic economic and societal impact?”

The Executive Summary of the report “Mining Microbes for Mankind – 15 years of impact” is available to download at <http://apc.ucc.ie/apc-15-years-impact/>

## **ENDS**

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## **About APC Microbiome Ireland**

The SFI Research Centre APC Microbiome Ireland (APC; <http://apc.ucc.ie>) is a world leading research institute which was formed in 2003 with funding from Science Foundation Ireland and in conjunction with key industry partners. It represents a seamless collaboration between University College Cork and Teagasc (the Irish Agriculture and Food Development Authority). It is widely recognised that the gut microbiota plays an important role in human health and has become one of the most dynamic, complex and exciting areas of research in both food and pharmaceutical arenas. Over the last decade the APC has established itself as one of the leading global centres in gut microbiota research. The APC has made several landmark discoveries and has published over 2,500 research articles in peer-reviewed journals, generating many journal covers and associated editorials.