Starter worksheet - Chapter 5

FULFIL Bars: An Irish Success Story Goes Global

When Irish entrepreneur Barry Connolly launched FULFIL Nutrition in 2016, he noticed a clear gap in the market. Most protein bars were aimed at serious gym users, with brands like Maxi Muscle leading the shelves. Connolly saw an opportunity to create a high-protein bar for everyday consumers, something that tasted like a treat but offered protein and vitamins. The idea worked. Within a few years, FULFIL became one of Ireland's fastest-growing snack brands, sold across Ireland, the UK and Europe. After building strong sales within the EU trading bloc, the company looked further afield for growth.

In 2020, FULFIL partnered with The Hershey Company to enter the United States, the world's largest market for protein bars. The move offered major opportunities: access to millions of new customers, large-scale production, and a global distribution network. Partnering with Hershey also gave the brand recognition and credibility in a competitive market.

However, trading outside the EU brought new challenges. Within the EU, Irish firms trade freely without customs duties or complex paperwork. The US is not part of the EU trading bloc, so FULFIL faced customs duties, stricter labelling and food-safety rules, and more documentation. These are examples of protectionism, where countries use tariffs and regulations to protect local industries. Transporting products across the Atlantic added cost and delay, while exchange-rate changes affected prices and profits.

Despite these challenges, FULFIL's expansion proved highly successful. In 2025, The Hershey Company bought full control of FULFIL's North American business from Barry Connolly in a deal worth tens of millions of euro. The sale confirmed FULFIL as one of Ireland's most successful global brands and showed how innovation and ambition can turn a local idea into an international success.

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1. What market opportunity did Barry Connolly identify when creating FULFIL Nutrition, and what was its **unique selling point (USP)**?

2. Explain the **opportunities** that FULFIL could take advantage of, or benefited from, by expanding to the United States.

3. Describe the **challenges** that arose for FULFIL as an Irish brand trading outside the EU.

4. What does Barry Connolly's success show about the **potential rewards of international trade** for Irish entrepreneurs?