



# Draft National Food Waste Prevention Roadmap

Public Consultation Questions

Airfield Estate

## Context of Submission:

Airfield Estate is an educational charity that aims to inspire and enable people to make better food choices; better for our health, better for our pockets and better for the planet. From pre-school children to 3rd level and adult education as well as the public, our educational programmes, estate and research and aims to be as accessible as possible and inclusive across all levels of society, with a particular focus on outreach to disadvantaged children and families, who are in most need.

Our activities and research have been accessed by over 2 million people in the last 4 years through physical and online interactions. We utilise our physical location and the working farm and production gardens to help people explore, understand, to see and to connect with how food is produced, created and how they can make better, more sustainable food choices. Our systems approach to food literacy and education encourages an interactive and hands on approach to long term, effective behaviour change. We have conducted 2 studies in the last year into the practical application of food waste interventions to assess the real-world change in reduction and awareness of food waste within the home. The estate farms both regeneratively and organically with all food being produced going into our restaurant and farmer's market. We produce meat, milk, eggs, fruit, and vegetables and can provide a real systems approach to food production.

Activities on the estate include visits and programmes for pre-school, primary and secondary school students to learn about food, farming and the environment. We run specific programmes students including Teen Chef projects, Breakfast Clubs as well as our Community Food Hubs, which helps works with the parents of DEIS school children to increase their have confidence to cook and prepare healthy, nutritious meals on a fixed budget for their families. Our Good Food Delivered programme brings our chefs and kitchens together with the HSE and local charities to provide daily meals for 75 older people. We also provide free curricularly linked school resources to primary and second level schools with our Food: From the Ground Up for the Junior Cycle and our Farmer Time programme which links classes to farmers for fortnightly phone calls that facilitate our future consumers to link directly with their food producers.

Central to all our programmes and outreach is our own and collaborative research. We conduct empirical research around our programmes, working with numerous universities and colleges. We endeavour to research all aspects of food production, from our regenerative agriculture system and biodiversity to our consumers understanding of their food, their food waste and sustainability, we aim to identify opportunities to enable impactful and realistic consumer behaviour change at all levels and ages within Irish society.

### Public Consultation Questions

#### **1. Do you think the approach as outlined in the draft Roadmap will deliver the reductions necessary to reduce Ireland's food waste by 50% by 2030?**

They will certainly. However, a focus on an entire systems approach at all stages will be necessary. By this we mean that we would like to see all stakeholders in a room to problem solve specific aspects of the Food waste issue, rather than funding individual projects that focus only on one stage or aspect of the food waste problem. A co-production of knowledge is imperative for better problem sharing and the involvement of local community groups and unbiased NGO's is imperative for success of sharing knowledge and creating real change.<sup>1</sup>

The consumer is also the sector that has the best available data currently and a greater understanding of their role in the context of the food system, for them, is important. With little or no current data available for other sectors it can seem that the consumer has an unfairly high impact on food waste. Our own research has shown that despite caring about sustainability of food, consumers are confused as to what it means and how they can impact it.<sup>2</sup>

Our research on food waste<sup>3</sup> has shown that an engaged consumer audience will adopt new methods of food waste reduction readily and stick with it in the long term. They will embrace new technology and simple, incremental changes to their food waste actions can result in a significant reduction in food waste<sup>4</sup>. They are willing to change if the changes are small and incremental. The consumer base of knowledge is also quite high, although what goes into the bin can still be a challenge. The introduction of an organic food waste bin could be very hard to implement for example.

Incentivising behaviour change at all levels around food wastage is also important. There needs to be a clear pathway for them to share their knowledge and experience. This is not yet clear in the roadmap.

Food donation and redistribution is a worthy way of redirecting food waste. However, research from UCD<sup>5</sup> found that although it was a good use of food it could provide a nutritionally unbalanced diet for those most at risk of food poverty and this also needs to form part of the food systems approach

---

<sup>1</sup> RIA White Paper, 'Better together: Knowledge co-production for a sustainable society'

<sup>2</sup> Corish, C., McAdoo, K., Alhilou, M. (2020). Assessing knowledge and attitudes towards food sustainability among people who visit Overends Kitchen, Airfield Estate, Dublin. Proceedings of the Nutrition Society, Volume 79, Issue OCE2: 13th European Nutrition Conference, FENS 2019, 15–18 October 2019, Malnutrition in an Obese World: European Perspectives

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.airfield.ie/food-waste-fighters/>

<sup>4</sup> Examining the effect of technology as an intervention on household food waste reduction.

[https://qrcgcustomers.s3-eu-west-](https://qrcgcustomers.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/account13805329/21990209_1.pdf?0.24383793350974003)

[1.amazonaws.com/account13805329/21990209\\_1.pdf?0.24383793350974003](https://qrcgcustomers.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/account13805329/21990209_1.pdf?0.24383793350974003)

<sup>5</sup> Brennan, A., Browne, S., (2021). Food waste and nutrition quality in the context of public health: a scoping review. Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health 2021, 18, 5379.

to food waste. Using data from organisations such as Food cloud and food banks such as Crosscare will show what food is being over produced and therefore be reduced.

## **2. *What additional actions do you think would be effective in helping Ireland reduce its food waste?***

A real and actual sustainable systems approach to understanding the origins of food waste and preventing its production in the first instance is imperative. A successful feedback system that allows all sectors to successfully interact quickly with each other to prevent, compost, and redistribute food is essential.

Funding that actively encourages both a systems approach to food waste prevention as well as encouraging academia to partner with non-academic partners or partners in different sectors is essential to change theory of practice into real-world actions. A clear and concise dissemination plan around all research that also aims to explain the research to the consumer. There should be a focus on behaviour change models, especially those that support long term incremental change for all sectors.

Consumers need context for understanding their role in food waste. They have a conflict as the brown bins, whilst redirecting their food waste, also allow for it to occur more often as it can be seen as a “good thing to do” and not as bad as putting food waste into landfill. They need to see the effects of reduced food waste through small incremental change that allows them to find a method of reduction that suits them and that they can know that they are achieving a 50% reduction in food waste within their home.

Education around food waste is strong within the school environment especially with the green-schools initiatives. However, education of adults is much more difficult, and time, resources and research should be aimed at involving them in food waste literacy.

Inclusion of incentives for training staff in all sectors and an understanding of the increase in time spent due to segregation of food waste, redirection etc. would be important so that there is industry buy in. A reduction in costs to the company through reduced food waste may not be enough. There is also a cost to some industries around involving technology and training around that technology in order to reduce food waste and with a sometimes-transient workforce (especially at restaurant and retail levels) this can be harder to do.

## **3. *What are the most effective awareness raising measures that could be taken to reduce food waste?***

We have found that by working directly with the consumer to introduce one food waste intervention at a time results in successful food waste reductions. However, also important to this is the explanation of their role and impact on food waste. They need to understand the wider context of food waste and how food wastage at their stage means a higher cost to the environment than at the earlier stages of food production. We need to give clear, concise instructions as to how to deal successfully with food waste and push prevention rather than composting as the correct route.

All sectors are aware of food waste, however, the incentive other than cost to them is not clear and so communications must be succinct in their messaging as to the impacts on food poverty and the

environment. It should tie clearly into the ESG aspects of their business and become clearly measurable and comparable between companies and industries.

**4. Which sectors or stakeholders do you think should play a key role in the implementation of the Roadmap?**

All play a part in the implementation of reduced food waste however, the upper end of the chain (retailers, restaurant, consumers) waste more resources through food waste than the producers and manufacturers. However, for the upper end of the chain to understand this can be complex and it is a challenge. Government bodies and organisations need to set clear targets and make food waste a priority for industries. A dynamic communication tool or organisation is imperative if the population and industry are to take food waste more seriously. A good start is the National Food Waste Prevention Day, although more funding and public activities around this would be good. Both industry and the public need to have a much better understanding of the “Bigger Picture” of food waste and how it impacts health, wealth, and the environment. Sustainability is a big term for all and understanding and appreciating the role of Food waste within the sustainability of their businesses, their homes and for the environment is vitally important.

**5. Are you satisfied with the proposed Roadmap monitoring and evaluation arrangements?**

The formation of the taskforce and those that sit on it is pivotal as is making their findings public and accessible. Making this taskforce accountable to someone like the new Food Ombudsman should also be considered.

The Forum on Food Waste is also good and should include as many stakeholders as possible and again disseminate their findings quickly and easily.

**6. Have you any other comments or feedback on the content of the draft Roadmap?**

There is huge potential in this road map but Airfield Estate feels that there needs to be more emphasis on a whole systems approach to research, incentives, communication and actions. The Taskforce and Forum are ideal examples of sector integration, but the voice of the consumer (especially those of a younger generation) are important to be heard at this level also. We have demonstrated that the public are willing to change but are confused by the terminology and where the responsibility around sustainable food and diets lies. We would be more than happy to engage as a stakeholder in any way that can be of use to the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications.