

Draft National Food Waste Prevention Roadmap Public Consultation Questions

Submitted by: The Clean Technology Centre, MTU



1	<p>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?</p>
	<p>Response: While the roadmap identifies all the main elements required to reduce food waste, whether the target can be achieved or not is difficult to determine from the roadmap. Firstly, we still don’t know what our baseline is so we don’t have sight on the scope of the improvement/reduction required. If we go back to 2015 for our baseline, when the SDGs were first signed (which we probably should), then the progress that has been made since then will certainly help in moving towards our target - as progress has been made across the different sectors. However, as things stand, with the fragmented approach (lots of different actors involved but not singing from the same hymn sheet) and the lack of momentum around the topic (which is a pity considering some of the great things that have happened over the past number of years) it will be a huge challenge to hit the target.</p>
2	<p>What additional actions do you think would be effective in helping Ireland reduce its food waste?</p>
	<p>The sectoral approach espoused in the roadmap is the correct one, but the active engagement and active participation of sectoral stakeholders and networks is essential (especially for those sectors where the 50% target applies). While a lot of effort has been made to engage with such stakeholders, it is imperative to realise that food waste is still not a priority for many and until that changes, and these important groups (e.g. RAI, IHF) start openly talking about food waste as a problem that can be successfully tackled, it will be very difficult to make the necessary inroads required. Additionally, a consistent programme of support, which provides direct support to these organisations (and their members) is needed. Though different supports are in place, there is a lack of Government of Ireland cohesion around the topic. This Roadmap, and the strategy that will come from it, will hopefully change that but it is imperative that all government departments and agencies are invested and committed to a unified approach – and this may need to be strongly enforced from the top.</p> <p>More specifically, the momentum that came with the first few Forums, the establishment of the Charter and the convening of the Retail Action Group seems to have slipped away recently. Such momentum is crucial to ensure that positive actions are built upon, and communicated to the relevant sectors. If things go too slowly on the front lines, with initiatives held up through slow decision making and a lack of autonomy within support organisations, then a fragmented approach will ensue due to different agencies doing their own thing owing to the perception that enough is not being done. This undermines existing programmes and removes the cohesion and collaboration required.</p>

	<p>At a household level, the Stop Food Waste (SFW) programme is very advanced in terms of its messaging and the level of in-depth knowledge it has on the topic (target audience, types of food waste and reasons for wasting food). However, changing behaviours requires more than just information awareness, especially when it comes to food waste which is such an individual and multifaceted issue. The direct engagement with individuals through community based approaches (bottom up) is something that SFW used to do (in collaboration with local authorities). While this was a laboured approach (in terms of the numbers of people it connected with), it will be very difficult to generate the social peers (influencers) required to precipitate change without some degree of direct contact/outreach. A reconsideration of this may be merited.</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>What are the most effective awareness raising measures that could be taken to reduce food waste?</p>
	<p>At a household level SFW is a very good programme with advanced messaging. Of course, it should be given more resources for both awareness raising and outreach. However, it is important to note that this is still a nascent area – other international food waste prevention programmes are at a similar point as we are, struggling to figure out how to convert information and awareness raising into changed behaviours. Supporting ongoing programmes that become the ‘go to’ and trusted resource are imperative (at a business level as well as at household). But reducing food waste will not work with just a top down approach. It requires bottom up as well, where local communities and local ambassadors bring the messages into the public psyche through less formal communication channels. Supporting local food waste prevention initiatives through, for example LAPN, should be considered. These typically react to local needs and through listening to what communities want around a topic, while still supporting a targeted national information programme, can provide the broad approach (top down and bottom up) required.</p> <p>At a business level, again a consistently supported programme that becomes the trusted default source of information and support nationally is a must. Through this, the same type of targeted and behaviour-focused information that SFW provides to householders should be provided to the various business sectors (commercial and industrial). There is a lot of good work currently taking place in this domain in Ireland. There are numerous examples that should be actively promoted to individual businesses ideally, through the representative organisations. With the resources already on the Food Waste Charter, with more to come, there is great scope to develop a communications campaign targeting different sectors and actions. But developing a programme into a ‘trusted’ source for information (as SFW is for householders) will take time, collaboration and results. Consequently, any information programme needs to include active support and funding and be sustained.</p>

4	<p>Which sectors or stakeholders do you think should play a key role in the implementation of the Roadmap?</p>
	<p>Households:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Authorities • Tidy towns • Other community groups • Retailers (ideally through the retail action group (RAG)) <p>Restaurants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RAI • Local chambers • LEOs • Local Authorities <p>Hotels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IHF • Failte Ireland • Local Authorities • Local Chambers <p>Hospitals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HSE <p>Retail</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RAG <p>Food Drink and Manufacturing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Origin Green • Food Drink Ireland • BITC • DAFM • BIM <p>Primary production</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IFA • Teagasc <p>In addition to these, there are of course the essential institutional stakeholders that should be involved in a collective committee style approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCCA • EPA • DAFM • BIM • Local Authorities • Regional Waste Management Offices • Waste Collectors

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and consultancy groups • Representative bodies (see above)
5	Are you satisfied with the proposed Roadmap monitoring and evaluation arrangements?
	<p>Yes, providing they are adhered to and those that need to be involved are given the time and resources to participate. One of the issues that the National Waste Prevention Committee has had in the past is the lack of work output that the committee was involved in. This wasn't from a lack of interest or willingness from those involved, rather it was never established to do that. An inclusive cross sectoral approach is crucial for the National Food Waste Programme to be successful. But in order for this to happen, trust and capacity will first need to be built. This will take time as it will involve developing relationships, building mutual understanding (through reciprocity) and through successful collaborations. Once this has occurred with the individual sectors and/or representative organisations, then the national programme will be in a place of authority whereby it can legitimately bring different groups together. Empowering those charged with enacting the Roadmap, by supporting them to monitor and evaluate progress, will be an important starting point. However, it is important to consider that, when it comes to changing behaviours and reducing food waste, there may well be a time lag between initial engagement and results being observed. Therefore, it would be important that the national food waste prevention programme be given sufficient time to develop capacity and achieve results rather than expecting instant success.</p>
6	Have you any other comments or feedback on the content of the draft Roadmap?
	<p>The content of the roadmap cannot be argued with. However, a major concern is the lack of direct actions, with assigned responsibilities. These are needed to ensure that significant momentum is built in a short period of time. It is also imperative that one agency be given an oversight role for food waste nationally – this is needed to ensure a consistency of message and coordination of the different aspects involved.</p> <p>While voluntary agreements are a good way to involve interested early adopters, there will be a need for more mandatory actions. A number of examples could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory food waste reporting through Origin Green should be considered. • Including mandatory reporting (using the national standards that are being developed) as a requirement for any business that receives grant aid • Membership of sectoral organisations should include annual food waste reporting • Linking rates to food waste reporting could be considered • Ensuring that all national programmes in this area use the national measurement methods

	<p>The above examples all focus on measurement as this is an important precursor to prevention. It will never be possible to force people or businesses to change how they do things in order to produce less food waste but, through good food waste measurement, and linking this to turnover and/or environmental standards (or awards), the conditions for prevention can be developed.</p>
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