



WEN - Wexford Environmental Network

## Draft National Food Waste Prevention Roadmap Public Consultation Questions

Responses

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?

**Response:**

*It's a good step in the right direction but lacks urgency in reducing food waste and any other waste related to it, such as plastic waste or excessive use of carbon/fossil fuels (food miles). In fact, the goal itself isn't ambitious enough. 50% reduction in the next 8 years might seem a more "realistic" target, but based on previous missed realistic targets we feel Ireland should strive for much more and the roadmap should stress this, along with the urgency to achieve a much higher goal. In one of the latest reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change titled 'Climate Change and Land' it is estimated that loss and waste of food caused between 8 and 10% of the emissions of the gases responsible for global warming in the period 2010-2016. Tackling food waste is a very important mitigation against climate change.*

2

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

**Response:**

## **Education**

*We believe education is the main key. We can't prevent food waste if we do not value food and what it means for our survival - to know how it is grown, its impact on climate change and biodiversity. Our education system largely fails in this area. Schools could play a much bigger role in food education. Home economics should be a core subject in all schools and there should be time allocated for school lunches in primary schools. This is currently not the case with the exception of a few DEIS schools. There is very little attention given to the relationship between food and health with the exception of some government sponsored leaflets. Food education in schools and universities should include all aspects of the food chain - such as land use, production, distribution and waste. The food education curriculum should be designed by the Department of Education, based on research and science and not be sponsored by vested interest groups. If we expect the public to shift away from wasteful habits and ensure a circular economy, we need to bring more awareness, honesty and transparency in food education.*

## **Composting and encouraging food growing**

*At local level, local authorities could implement a system where households' food waste is collected, turned into compost and then given back to the local community - for example, to anyone carrying out urban garden projects, allotments, community gardens, and edible gardens in suburban housing estates. Local authorities should also encourage food growing at a community level. Growing food is a fun and healthy activity, ensures less 'food miles', supports food education and can be undertaken by all ages. Self grown food is less likely to be wasted.*

## **At Retail Level**

*A real revolution in the retail system would be very welcome. There should be daily local markets (a role for the local authorities?) where farmers can 'sell direct' and supply local people with fresh produce. These local markets could be located within existing supermarkets. Supermarkets should be incentivised to buy locally grown produce first and only have a dedicated "exotic" foods area. Underpricing locally grown food should be illegal. Every supermarket should facilitate a system where consumers can buy all kinds of food by weight and plastic free - as it is in many other EU countries. There should be support for 'box schemes' and online markets, encouraging consumers to buy only what they need (and pre-requested), with no plastic packaging, but using compostable or reusable and returnable containers. There should be schemes to support organic produce - at all levels of production.*

### 3

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

**Response:**

*Widely promote and support local, seasonal, organic foods - emphasising the health and environmental benefits to encourage people to make the better value choice.*

*Cheap meal deals and fast food, as well as highly processed food should be discouraged through advertising campaigns and raising awareness.*

*Again Education at all levels is key with practical, hands-on teaching of food production (e.g. school gardens) and meal preparation (e.g. cooking classes) in schools. There should be school canteens that promote sustainable diets, use locally sourced (preferably organic) ingredients and even grown in and around the schools. This should be extended to university cafes and restaurants and hospital kitchens.*

*Drastically change the specification so that there is no discrimination due to shape or look of a fruit or vegetable. Misshapen fruit and vegetables should be allowed to be sold in supermarkets and other food outlets.*

*Promote a "use after date" programme with suggestions on how to use expired produce (for example: milk and yogurts can still be used to bake breads or cakes, not only at home, but where large quantities of these ingredients could be collected - safely - by local bakeries and restaurants). The food business sector should be encouraged to promote using up 'food waste' either by reusing the food waste in restaurants/cafes or by producing recipes for unwanted or 'leftover' food.*

*Restaurants could be given accreditation for being sustainable through buying locally sourced (preferably organic) produce and for drastically reducing their food waste or being 'Zero Waste' outlets. The meals on offer should come in 2 or 3 sizes or portions so that people who do not have big appetites are not encouraged to order a meal and then waste most of it. All food outlets - albeit restaurants, cafes or fast-food canteens - should offer 'doggy bags' using non plastic and reusable/recyclable containers.*

*Food planning and food menus should be designed with the specific needs and tastes of the consumers, particularly in institutional settings. Pop-up restaurants could be created after big events such as festivals to 'use up' the excess food (as a form of food donation or at a much reduced price).*

**4**

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

**Response:**

*Awareness at individual level would allow for faster implementation in every single sector. It is of uttermost importance to show how food waste could be reduced and avoided by all.*

*More than any other sector, the Retail sector could play a stronger role in sustainable food production and distribution. Local authorities and government bodies need to 'lead by example'. At any state sponsored event, the catering should be sustainable and minimise food waste. For example, instead of the usual "party food" consisting of processed food - a lot of which is uneaten - the caterers could survey the participants in advance, in order to prepare only what's going to be consumed.*

**5**

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

**Response:**

*Yes. We would encourage a quicker self-evaluation, even on a monthly basis, for households, restaurants and canteens. Every restaurant, food outlet, institution and supermarket that produces food for production and consumption should have a food waste plan. With a food waste plan, business sectors involved in the food industry can be encouraged to not only reduce the waste that arises at the point of sale, but also collateral waste that occurs lower down and higher up the food chain on farms, in food production and in our homes. For example, offering different size meal options and doggy bags for restaurants*

**6**

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

**Response:**

*As mentioned, this is a good roadmap to tackle a very big issue but we cannot afford any further delays. In one of the latest reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change titled 'Climate Change and Land' it is estimated that loss and waste of food caused between 8 and 10% of the emissions of the gases responsible for global warming in the period 2010-2016. We understand it is a slow process, however, lessons learned from Covid show how fast things can change if there is public and political support. Ireland could and should really do a lot more and strive for a more ambitious target. Food is essential to our survival and wasting it is a missed opportunity to create a better food production and distribution system, a healthier, more sustainable world and to take real action to mitigate climate change.*