Public consultation submission

Question 1: Are you satisfied the outlined Pillars represent the structure of the Irish bioeconomy?

I believe that these seven pillars are a huge step in the right direction as it shows that the government have a plan, and have broken down the plan into these important steps. However, the governance pillar is surely the most essential part of this plan, as it is critical that each pillar has a direction.

Question 2: Are there specific key performance indicators and/or targets the bioeconomy should be setting out to achieve to measure its implementation?

Some key performance indicators that shold be set are; job creation, significant bioeconomy percentage growth each year, and a significant percentage reduction in carbon emissions each year.

Question 3: What other key issues should the Governance Pillar deal with?

The governance pillar should deal with problems that encompass the broad issue of the bioeconomy. Therefore this key pillar should control the funds directed from the government towards the bioeconomy. This would include the lobbying for funds and issuing these funds out appropriately towards each of the other six pillars, always with health of the bioeconomy in mind.

Another issue for the governance pillar to deal with would be to pursue legislation which would force people and businesses to change the way they operate on matters such as waste. Impactful legislation could be critical in the strengthening of the bioeconomy.

Question 4: What key issues should the Research, Development & Innovation Pillar deal with?

This pillar should aspire to develop and commercialise new ideas which will benefit the bioeconomy and the environment as a whole. This pillar must support scientists and engineers who come up with innovative new ways to do things such as converting materials previously thought of as waste into products of value.

Question 5: How could the RD&I bioeconomy approach be best structured to support the enhancement, application and scaling-up of biological knowledge and bioeconomy solutions?

I would suggest that if people in industry come up with exiting and innovative new techniques and methods of growing the bioeconomy that they should be able to contact the government team in charge of the RD&I pillar and apply for funding/compensation for their idea/finding. So long as the finding is sure to improve and grow the Irish bioeconomy, then I see no reason why they should not be compensated for their help in ensuring bioeconomic growth. Otherwise, people may lack incentive to help in this area.

Question 6: What key issues should the Nature, Climate & Circular Pillar deal with?

This pillar should focus on utilising all of our natural advantages in Ireland to reduce our national carbon footprint and produce jobs in the process. Advantages such as the potential energy we could be producing from wind energy in particular. We know that countries such as Germany are not going to meet their renewable energy goals in the near future[1], so this could be a huge opportunity for Ireland for export our excess energy that we could be making from purely renewable sources.

Question 7: What key issues concerning consumption patterns need to be examined to close the gap between sustainable supply of biological resources and demand?

One key issue is our throwaway culture which has developed in the western world. The lifespan of consumer products such as electronics is getting shorter[2], and we tend to replace items such as clothes rather than repair them. I think that this consumption pattern is very dangerous but with education, funding, and legislation, this issue could be solved.

Question 8: What key issues should the Agriculture, Food & the Marine Pillar deal with?

Firstly, this pillar must focus on maximising the natural advantages in Ireland including our relatively long growing season, mild climate, fertile soils, large forest land and huge seabed territory. However this focus must be balanced with making sure it is utilised in an environmentally friendly way.

For me, the key issue in this pillar is to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) from the agriculture sector which take up 37% of the total GHGs emitted in Ireland[3].

Question 9: What key issues should the Communities Pillar deal with?

The communities pillar will be vital in educating the public of the importance of the bioeconomy. This pillar should focus on raising awareness of important, but also specific issues so that people change. Specific issues such as the re-using of clothes which I mentioned in question 7.

Question 11: What key issues should the Industry & Enterprise Pillar deal with?

The Industry & Enterprise Pillar must deal with industry leaders and convince them that bioeconomic growth is beneficial for everyone in the long term. It is not the average person, but these large businesses which cause the significant carbon emissions into our atmosphere, and therefore it is essential to maintain regular contact and cooperation with these industries so as to grow the bioeconomy in Ireland.

Question 14: What key issues should the Knowledge & Skills Pillar deal with?

The knowledge and skills pillar should deal with educating people in industries such as agriculture on the bioeconomy, and giving them the skills to help its growth. This pillar should work closely with the Research, Development & Innovation Pillar, so ideas can be put into practise on the ground level. This way, a difference can actually be made.

Question 18: Indicate what the top five priorities for action in the bioeconomy over the next three years should be?

1. Increase public support for the bioeconomy.
2. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions across Ireland.
3. Increase growth of the bioeconomy.
4. Produce more jobs in the bioeconomy.
5. Develop and implement legislation to encourage the bioeconomic growth.

References:

[1] https://www.aicgs.org/2021/09/germany-has-a-math-problem-and-its-about-to-get-worse/

[2] https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/mar/03/lifespan-of-consumer-electronics-is-getting-shorter-study-finds

[3] https://www.teagasc.ie/environment/climate-change--air-quality/signpost-programme/publications-/understanding-greenhouse-gas-emissions-on-farms/#:~:text=In%20Ireland%2C%20agriculture%20currently%20contributes,belched%20by%20cattle%20and%20sheep