

**From:** Shaileen McGovern <shaileenmcgovern@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday 31 January 2024 18:30  
**To:** DRCD SE Consultation  
**Subject:** Social Enterprise Policy 2023/2024

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To whom it may concern,

Firstly, thanks very much for providing the opportunity to the public to offer feedback and ideas on the Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland. It's fantastic to see the broad range of areas covered across the five policy objective areas you put forward.

I'm going to focus my email and feedback solely on **Policy Objective 3: Climate Action Contribution** as my thoughts on this area are fully aligned with your outline of just how impactful positive interventions could be for tackling "[perhaps] the most significant international challenge of our time". The most salient thoughts of mine are that Social Enterprise Policy should focus on:

**1. The importance of food's contribution to climate action & biodiversity loss:**

- I would strongly recommend that future Social Enterprise efforts focus on increasing the amount of plant-based foods in the general Irish diet. Perhaps, aiming to have half of all menus in public institutions (hospitals, schools, canteens etc.) be plant-based, and / or introduce a 'Green Monday', where everything offered on menus is plant-based. Fantastic examples to look to for this are the New York public [hospitals](#) - their inpatient meals are plant-based by default, and 'Meatless Monday', which has been implemented across the world, New York is also ahead of the game for [school](#) lunches too!.
- Oftentimes, the impact of what (and how much) we eat on our environment and the climate is an afterthought. We have been making progress toward decarbonising Ireland in relation to transport and housing (e.g. grants that have increased household uptake in technologies like hybrid and electric vehicles, solar panels and other renewable energy options etc.); changing how we eat is lagging way behind.

For Ireland (and countries internationally), in order for us to meet our climate action targets, we must shift away from conventional animal agriculture. The Good Food Institute Europe (using primary resources, please see [here](#)) frames the pertinence very well:

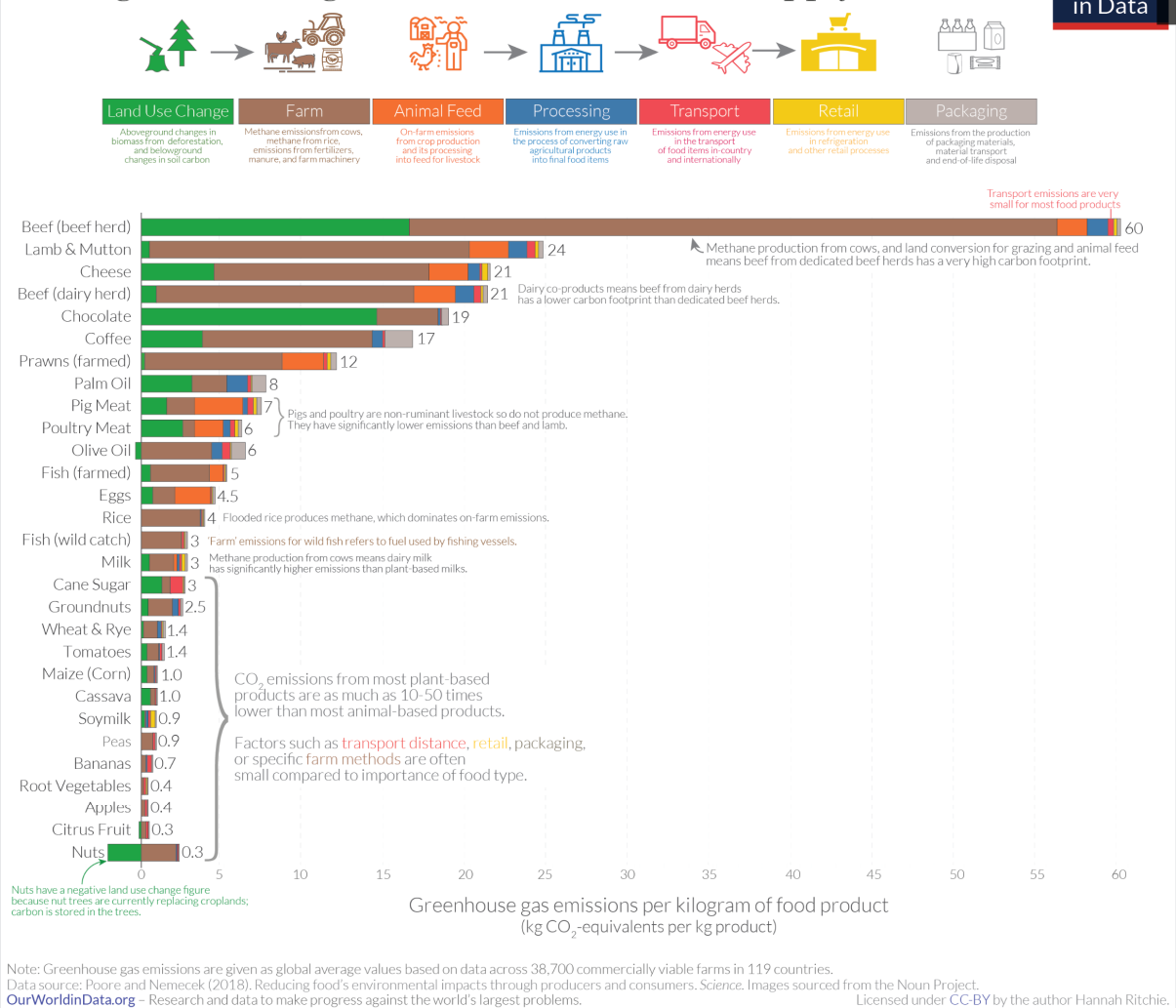
- "Animal agriculture causes 20% of global greenhouse gas emissions – equivalent to all the planes, trucks, cars, trains and ships on Earth."
- "Research by Oxford University shows that the world cannot meet its climate targets without shifting away from conventional animal agriculture. But in Europe, meat consumption is increasing."
- "Moving to plant-based and cultivated meat could reduce climate emissions by up to 92% compared with farming animals – enabling people to eat familiar foods, without accelerating the climate crisis."

As for biodiversity loss, they note:

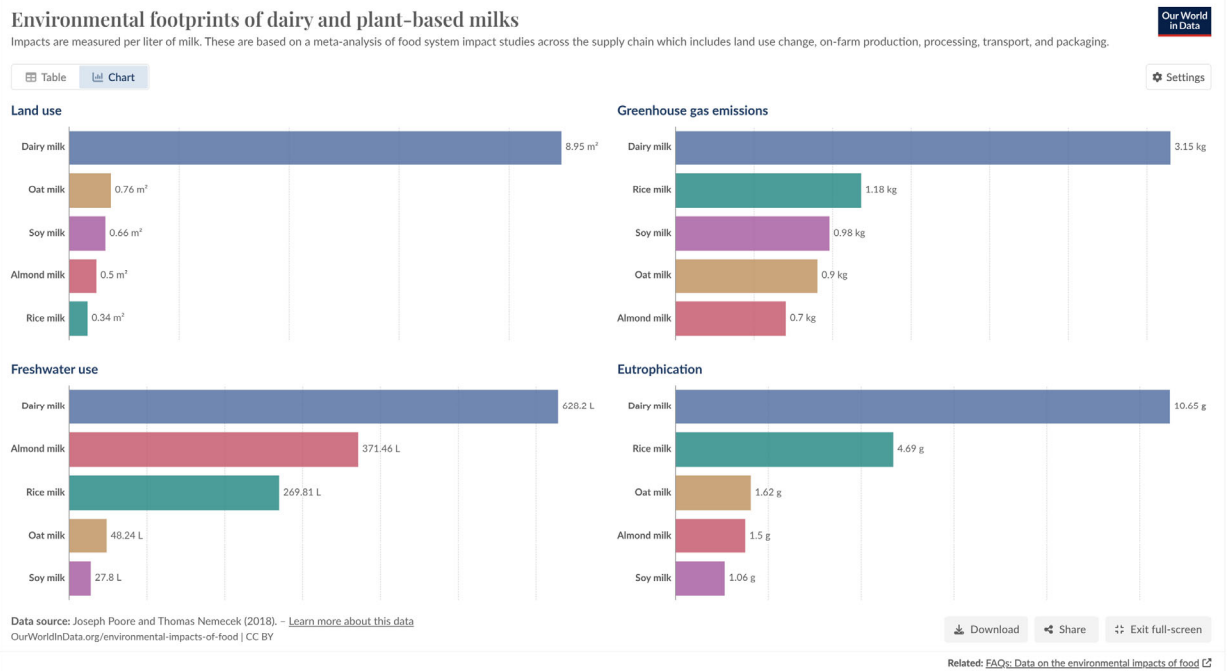
- "Western Europe is one of the most nature-depleted regions in the world.
- According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 37% of global ice-free land is used as pasture for farming animals.
- Cultivated meat production could use up to 90% less land than farming animals, and plant-based meat can use up to 99% less land. Alternative proteins can therefore free up space to restore habitats and make room for more nature-friendly farming methods.
- With 37% of EU marine habitats already endangered, plant-based and cultivated seafood avoid marine pollution and let populations recover from overfishing."

Our World in Data (OWID) have some very sobering data and information on the impacts of animal and plant-based agriculture, which highlights how much more beneficial plant-based agriculture is for biodiversity and the environment / climate:

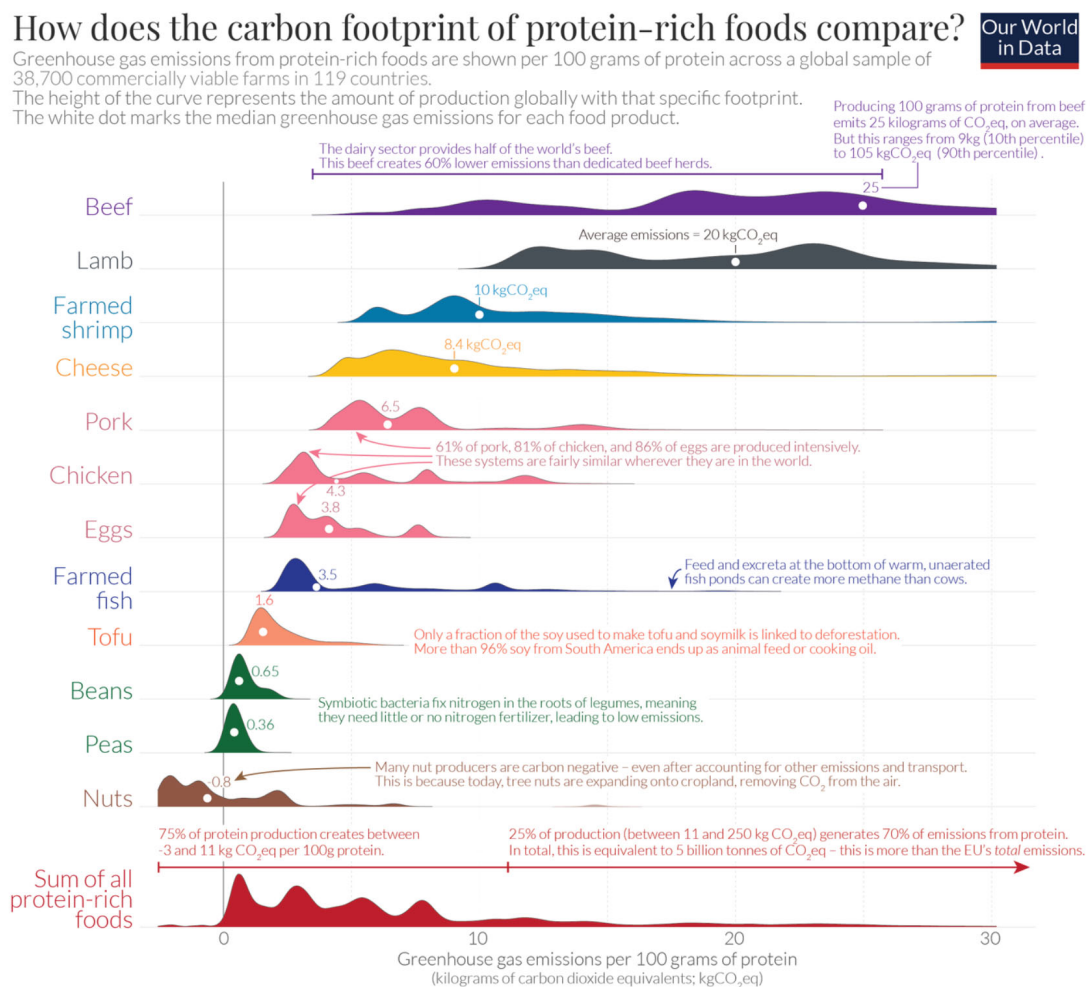
## Food: greenhouse gas emissions across the supply chain



Source: <https://ourworldindata.org/food-choice-vs-eating-local>



Source: <https://ourworldindata.org/environmental-impact-milks>



Source: <https://ourworldindata.org/less-meat-or-sustainable-meat>

- **Our bioeconomy and just transitions:**

- In a similar food-related vein, I consider it extremely important that the much needed food system transformation leaves no one behind. Farmers should not lose their livelihoods when the food system pivots to producing other forms of protein, and future policies should look to 'transformation' policies and work that other EU member states are implementing to help keep rural economies flourishing in tandem with changing what is being farmed. [Germany](#), [The Netherlands](#), and [Denmark](#) provide excellent examples of this, and The Good Food Institute Europe is a fantastic resource that offers support (policymaking, networking, technical, logistical, economic) in these much-needed transitions.
- Having said that, we are already able to 'support Irish' when it comes to alternative proteins and plant-based eating to help our environment; today, longstanding Irish brands are producing plant-based products which are sold in Dunnes, Tesco, SuperValu, Lidl, and Aldi - Denny's have a range of sausages, burgers, and mince, Dairygold's range includes butter, milk, and cheese, Clonakilty have a 'Veggie Pudding', and Flahavan's have their oat milk, flapjacks, and granola. Moreover, excitingly, University College Cork's [recent announcement](#) of the SUSFERM (Centre for Sustainable Fermentation and Bioprocessing Systems for Food and the Bioeconomy) launch will bolster Ireland's future agri-sector in the alternative protein and sustainable food systems space.
- In addition to supporting Irish regarding alternative sources of protein and plant-based foods, there are also opportunities to bolster Irish startups that upcycle food that would've otherwise went to landfill, or sold as low quality commodity (i.e. for farmed animal consumption, rather than human consumption). [BiaSol](#) is a fantastic example of this, the team upcycles brewer's spent grains (a byproduct of the brewing / distillery trade) into high protein, high fibre, tasty food such as oat bars, pancake mixes, and soda bread mixes. Reducing food waste, and maximising food security and nutrition is a public good that I'm sure most (if not everyone!) would get behind.

I truly believe that focusing on what we eat will be key to a positive future climate for Ireland, and Social Enterprise Policy ought to include it as an area of focus under Policy Objective 3: Climate Action Contribution.

Many thanks for taking the time to read through my thoughts, I look forward to learning of future updates to this policy!

Kindest,  
Shaileen

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