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Sent: Tuesday 30 January 2024 21:05
To: DRCD SE Consultation
Subject: "Social Enterprise Policy 2023/2024"

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To whom it concern,

Thank you very much for your interest in taking feedback and providing both time and a means for the public to do so. I am excited about Ireland's pursuit to bolster its existing Social Enterprise programme, and appreciate the areas chosen for this year's refocusing. Below are some of my thoughts on what I would like to see as areas of improvement and investment for existing and upcoming SE's and the programme as a whole.

1. Awareness:

Raising public awareness can be done along with improving youth engagement in the programme by:

- Creating or supporting academic scholarships built around collaborating with or developing SE's or SE goal related projects.
- Coordinating between academic institutions and Social Enterprise organisations for college credit or guaranteed employment through internships and/or graduate programmes.

2. Growing social enterprise (market opportunities):

In addition to raising awareness of programmes and encouraging youth engagement, offering scholarships for relevant studies and projects would have the added benefits of:

- Boosting relevant training and experience in the incoming workforce
- Developing a consistent, skilled workforce pipeline through the Internships / work for credit / graduate work programmes

Additionally, the added attention and collaboration with academic institutions could encourage outside funding through donations (alumni) as well as adjacent government programmes supporting educational and skilled-labour markets.

3. Climate action:

Ireland's 2030 and 2050 climate goals are ambitious, but attainable – if we are willing to make the most effective, and sometimes difficult, changes. While renewables, energy efficiency, and EVs are a great start, SEs should look beyond those.

- Plant-based default/meatless Monday programmes in all public/governmental institutions
- Change individual behaviour through a pull, not a push (e.g., make electric vehicles more affordable rather than diesel ones less so)
- Change the way industries are held accountable and how their emissions are counted – from the beginning of the supply chain to the end of life of the product (e.g., beef should be considered for the environmental impact of its entire production cycle – environmental impact of feed, methane/nitrogen emissions, antibiotic resistant/zoonotic diseases, other health impacts, etc)
- Tackle agricultural emissions with the same drive as those of other industries

Additionally, SEs which focus on food and electronic waste could contribute hugely to the circular economy.

- Incentives for upcycling, refurbishing, and for producing goods which last beyond the median of alternative products
- Reusing food byproducts (e.g., BioSol reclaiming spent grain from the brewing process to create a range of snack and baking products)
- Expired/soon to expire food in markets collected and donated (possibly in situ to avoid secondary transport from the shops) rather than being thrown out

A huge task facing the country is how to manage our agricultural sector going forward. Supporting farmers and making an ethical transition towards environmentally sustainable will be key to meeting climate obligations while leaving no one behind. Special focus should be put on organisations which facilitate a Just Transition away from the most damaging practices in agriculture and towards advanced, sustainable methods (e.g., vertical farming, cellular agriculture, precision fermentation, etc...)

4. National and international engagement:

A great way to increase national and international engagement, is to look at what others are doing that has worked, and copy them! Reaching out and coordinating the implementation of another's (successful programme) will save a great deal of time and expense on innovation and trial and error, and create bonds between the involved parties.

- Following the example of existing programmes which benefit health, the environment, poverty stricken people, and animal welfare, which include:
 - Default plant-based meals in hospitals in NYC
 - Compensated transition away from animal agriculture in Denmark, the Netherlands, and Germany
 - Expired/soon to expire food being donated instead of thrown out in France

Thank you for providing an opportunity for feedback, and for your time in reading it.

Best,

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