



Blessington Allotments Campaign
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Dear Sir/Madam,

This consultation response is in relation to *Section 4.7 Consultation Questions – Food Waste:*

Q4.7 (1) What are the underlying causes of food waste in Ireland?

Fresh food is easily available, however, there is no real understanding by local consumers of the time and effort that goes into each product they purchase, given the cheap price of the products. In addition, the consumer has had no role in the quality of the products that are available in the supermarket, other than deciding with their euro.

For example, blueberries are currently available in supermarkets which originated in Peru, which is 9,360 km away from Ireland. While fruits do not grow easily in Ireland during the winter period, during the warmer months, blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, apples and pears can easily be grown.



This week, the Blessington Allotments Campaign carried out a survey amongst families in Blessington, Co. Wicklow which asked local residents to call out which fresh fruit would they purchase per week. The results are below from 128 respondents:



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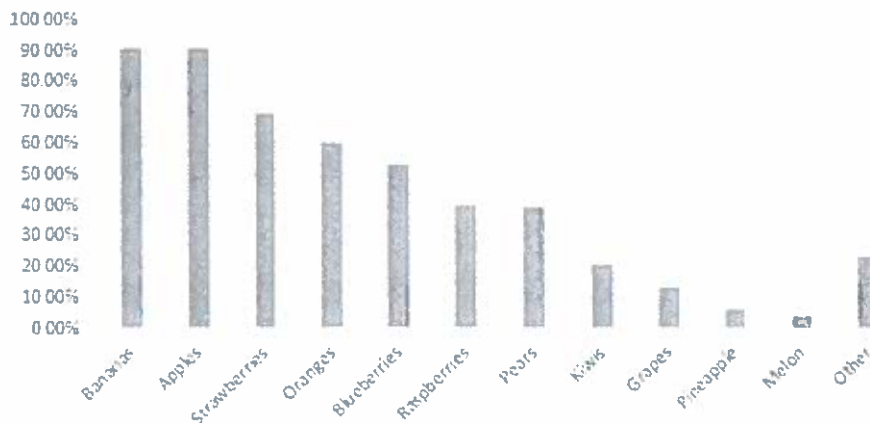
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Which of the below fresh fruit would you buy per week? (Multiple choice poll)



While bananas, oranges, kiwis, grapes, pineapples and melons would struggle to grow in Ireland, there is ample opportunity for apples, strawberries, blueberries, raspberries and pears to be grown in local communities. By growing locally, it is more sustainable and enables local communities to go from “farm to fork” within minutes of picking.

Despite the above survey, recent Irish estimates are that 10% of Irish people live in food poverty and are not getting enough nutritious food in their diet. In addition, obesity in children and adults is at its highest levels.

Research performed by Grow It Yourself has highlighted the positive benefits of allotments. Grow It Yourself estimate that a family can product 135kg of nutritious fruit and vegetables per year in one plot. The provision of allotments throughout towns and villages in Ireland will provide local communities with the space to grow their own, which ultimately sets children up for success later in life.

Food poverty and waste are complex issues which require many aspects to help remove it from society, but the provision of land for allotments will directly help with this.

<https://aiv.ie/archive/row-your-way-out-of-food-poverty.html>

Q4.7 (2) Should Ireland introduce a national prevention target in advance of a possible EU target?

Yes – but targets must be introduced alongside initiatives to benefit the consumer as well, such as the provision of community growing areas in every community in Ireland.



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Q4.7 (3) How can Ireland become a 'farm to fork' global leader in food waste reduction?

Currently, Ireland does not have a governmental policy, strategy, or guidance for local authorities when it comes to the provision of allotments or community growing facilities. This has resulted in a situation whereby it has become difficult to find an allotment in Ireland, as per the article in the Irish Times last month:

<https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/why-is-it-so-hard-to-find-an-allotment-in-ireland-1.4128812>

As a benchmark, Scotland have recently introduced a requirement for local authorities to prepare a community "Food Growing Strategy":

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/part-9-community-empowerment-scotland-act-2015-allotments-guidance-local-authorities-section-119-duty-prepare-food-growing-strategy/pages/6/>

Amongst the many benefits of allotments and community growing, the following is highlighted:

"Community growing can lead to a reduction in food waste through composting and reduced food packaging, contributing to the national and local zero waste agenda, and help to meet the food waste reduction target"

In addition, the Scottish Government has improved the rights of local communities to avail of allotments by putting in place specific guidance for local authorities. Local authorities in Scotland have a duty to keep a list of official requests received for allotments, and a duty to provide allotments:

"3.1 Section 112(1) imposes a duty on local authorities to take reasonable steps to do the following: (1) provide sufficient allotments to keep the waiting list referred to in section 111 at no more than half of the authority's current number of allotments; and (2) ensure that a person entered on the waiting list does not remain on it for a continuous period of more than 5 years."

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/part-9-community-empowerment-scotland-act-2015-allotments-guidance-local-authorities/>

[REDACTED]

Ireland should adopt a similar strategy to Scotland by improving the legal support for allotments, providing an official strategy for "growing your own", implement policies based on this and provide guidance documents for local authorities for the provision of allotments or community growing facilities.



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Q4.7 (4) Have you any other comments or suggestions on how you would like to see Ireland transition to a more resource efficient and circular economy by improving our waste management practices?

The most sustainable action a community can take is to grow local, eat local. Rather than consuming fruits that came from almost 10,000km away, there will be substantial benefits in several areas by encouraging local communities to grow their own. As well as being more efficient from a transportation point of view, it also puts more control back into the hands of the consumer as they are given an option to grow their own.

It is important to call out the other benefits that would arise from the provision of a governmental strategy, policy and guidance for local authorities on allotments and community growing facilities:

1. **Mental Health benefits:** It can be a haven to shelter from daily pressures and problems.
2. **Physical benefits:** It gets people out of their homes and into the fresh air. It also promotes healthy eating by providing organic uncontaminated fresh fruit and vegetables.
3. **Sense of achievement:** Allotment gardeners from the UK state that the use of allotments is very rewarding (even though it can be hard work!).
4. **Social inclusiveness:** It promotes a sense of community amongst everyone interested in allotments.
5. **Loneliness is a sad aspect of our society, but thankfully allotments can help with this.** By providing a space for communities to grow their own, allotments allow fellow holders to share experiences, which will ultimately help combat loneliness.
6. **Nature and the Next Generations:** It brings nature face to face with people who might not have been familiar with the growing season. Also, a plot is especially valuable to bring children up eating well and being aware of where food comes from.

Best regards,

Dónal McCormack

Chairperson Blessington Allotment Campaign

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