



Advisory Group on a 'Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy'

Fifth Meeting – Wednesday 22 April 2020 - Food Waste Prevention and Management Policy

Virtual meeting via Zoom

1. Welcome and Introduction

Philip Nugent opened the meeting and welcomed those attending this meeting - the topic for which was Food Waste Prevention/ Management Policy.

2. Presentations

Shane Colgan of the EPA presented on the work of the National Waste Prevention Programme while Pauline McDonagh of the Southern Regional Waste Management Planning Office gave a presentation on the MyWaste.ie portal.

Frank Conway, Chair of the Price Monitoring Group, also outlined some of the main elements of a submission he had made to DCCAE which was circulated to the Group prior to meeting.

3. Discussion highlights and comments

- The PMG submission referenced issues around data being provided to consumers regarding their bin weights, collection dates etc. The NWCPO

noted that audits of waste collectors have not revealed any issues with weighing systems. The IWMA noted that all weighing systems are checked and approved by the NSAI. It was agreed that both the waste industry and regulatory sector have confidence in the accuracy of available information on bin weights.

- The need for greater education and awareness was identified as critical in efforts to reduce food waste and waste generally and its consequent impact on climate change. Connecting the message of reducing food waste with other government programmes was also suggested, with Healthy Ireland being given as a good example. Primary focus of any such campaigns must be on moving up the waste hierarchy rather than on just managing food waste.
- Education and awareness is also important in demonstrating the benefits of cutting food waste in terms of financial savings to both consumers and the commercial sector. However to be effective there needs to be greater measurement of volumes wasted and this needs to be communicated effectively to consumers and retailers concerned.
- Food waste collection in apartment complexes remains an issue. There are a number of trials ongoing on this issue which provide useful information on how to encourage greater use of the brown bin in these properties. There is also a need to expand brown bin collections to all households in the State.
- Food donation was identified as a practical and beneficial solution to reducing food waste with organisations such as Food Cloud cited as good examples. However to widen its use and appeal to the commercial sector a number of issues need to be examined including the issue of liability to those donating the food and the potential for tax rebates to incentivise donation.
- The potential for a Producer Responsibility Initiative scheme for food waste should be investigated further.
- Issue of concerns relating to Covid-19 and food packaging were discussed. It was noted that there is no scientific evidence of the virus being spread by food or food packaging. Equally there is no evidence of disposable containers being safer than re-usable containers. It is important

that Covid is not used as an excuse to undo all the good work which has been done to date.

- Philip Nugent brought the meeting to a close and summarised the discussion as follows
 - Every sector has issues with food waste and each sector needs to identify methods of reducing it.
 - The focus of reducing food waste must be broadened earlier in the pipeline with manufacturers/retailers having a major role to play.
 - Education and awareness will play a vital role.
 - There is a need to address consumer demands on food packaging they want and provide leadership in terms of preventing and reducing food waste.
- As usual any further comments in writing would be welcomed which should be submitted to Paula.OToole@dccae.gov.ie or Denis.Dunne@dccae.gov.ie

4. Next Meeting

Next meeting which will discuss the issue of enforcement, will take place at 11:00 am on Wednesday 29 April again via the Zoom application with a discussion note to issue in advance.