Transition Kerry Public Consultation on the Draft Agriculture, Forest and Seafood Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan. 2019

Transition Kerry is delighted to have this opportunity to input into the Public Consultation on the Draft Agriculture, Forest and Seafood Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan. 2019

Transition Kerry is a community and voluntary group operating in communities across County Kerry and part of the wider international Transition Network.

Our objective is to develop a greater degree of resilience in our local communities in response to the challenges of Peak Oil, Climate Change and the continued global economic, environmental and social uncertainty.

We are working towards an integrated community-led approach in the areas of energy, food security, water efficiency, local economy, biodiversity, transport and waste.

Transition Kerry believes that the primary energy of any community is its food and that our food production’s resilience is dependent on our natural environment and biodiversity.

We believe that any “Climate Adaption Strategy”, need’s to seriously consider local food security and resilience as a cornerstone in dealing with the future impact’s and challenges of Climate Change.

Transition Kerry’s Food and Biodiversity group (TKFBG) is focusing on how we can deal with the challenges of climate change and peak fossil fuels in terms of our food security, biodiversity and the larger natural environment that supports us.

TK believes that it is time to transition part of our current food production to community-supported farms and urban food production. This will help to develop strong resilient, sustainable and climate proofed communities. This approach has the potential to improve the ability of our local community and family farms to produce food. While at the same time, adapting to Climate Change, Peak Oil and reducing biodiversity loss.
TK is working on a 'Sustainable Food Roadmap' (Feeding the Kingdom' by 2030).

Having previously worked closely in conjunction with Kerry Co. Council on the ‘Sustainable Energy Community Roadmap’

‘An Action Plan for County Kerry’s Transition to 100% Renewable Energy Supply’….which in turn supported the start of Kerry Sustainable Energy Co-Operative (2015)

**Our food production has to have these as priorities:**
- ✔ Supporting small diverse family farms
- ✔ The preservation and enhancement of agricultural landscapes
- ✔ High water quality and conservation
- ✔ Emphasis on resource efficiency and zero waste
- ✔ Climate mitigation and adaptation
- ✔ Biodiversity using natural farming systems

Given that the primary energy of any community is its food and that its resilience is dependent on its natural environment and biodiversity our submission is primarily based on the fact that food security and resilience should be a primary objective for our Civil and political leadert’s.

**Transition Kerry’s Food and Biodiversity group (TKFBG) recommends focusing on the challenges/impact of Climate Change and Peak Oil on our food security, biodiversity and the larger natural environment that supports us.**

We know our industrialised export driven food system is a major cause of our current unprecedented Climate Change. That a stronger focus on Local Food security and sovereignty can play a major role in meeting the challenges caused by an outdated, oil dependent industrialised model of food production and distribution.

We believe that with the right policies and supports, our local communities / farms can play a more dynamic role in meeting Ireland’s carbon and renewable energy targets. They can do this by providing local, affordable and sustainable food systems, with shorter supply chains, which support more resilient communities.

***This should be the foundation in any plans to tackle climate change.***

TK believes that it is time to transition our farms and communities by Supporting small-scale local food production. Helping to develop strong resilient, sustainable and climate proofed communities.

We strongly believe the levels of supports for export-driven food markets should be balanced with equivalent supports for locally based food production and supply systems that enhance the health of our rural economy, environment and people.
‘Transition Farming’ - Transitioning to sustainable and diverse farming ties in directly with tackling Climate Change, Biodiversity loss and local food sovereignty.

TK believes that it is time to transition our farms and support them in adapting to the challenges they face here in Kerry and Ireland. Therefore helping to develop strong resilient and sustainable climate proofed farms and communities.

To Climate proof our family farms, we need to.

- Work with farmers to introduce them to alternative ecological and biological solutions that they can implement into their existing farming practices.
- Assist in identifying the challenges that farmers face. Current and future.
- Help farmers adapt to these challenges using nature based ecological and biological farming methods.
- Reduce or replace high cost industrial and oil based inputs.
- Use of on farm resources more efficiently. (Circular economy) Replacing external energy and import costs with more self sufficient, resilient on-farm solutions
- Explore the latest scientific research and information on Soil biology, ecology and whole farm biodiversity.
- Identify the benefits of using the technological tools and apps that have evolved in recent years. To improve on farm efficiently and product quality.
- Help our farmers re-imagine a new way of farming for the future, which will re-inspire the next generation to return to the land and our rural communities.

We need to highlight the potential of where farmers can diversify their farming and provide valuable environmental benefits for both their farms and the wider community. This can be done while at the same time improving their existing farming systems and their ability to generate a sustainable livelihood from their current farming enterprises. While at the same time protecting their farms’ biodiversity for the next generation to come.

Transition Farming is about introducing farmers to new ways of looking at Climate Change challenges and converting their farms into being part of the solution in a sustainable and localised way.

This will involve using a combined approach called ‘Whole Systems Thinking’, integrating Permaculture, Organics, Agroforestry, Mycofarming (Mushrooms), Seed Saving and other methodologies.

There are many innovative, creative and appropriate nature based technologies and systems being developed worldwide and we can learn from these and adapt them to our own farming systems and conditions.
These methods and approaches to Transition farming and growing food locally are directly linked to:

- **The preservation and enhancement of agricultural landscapes.** This is crucial as the hedgerows, woods and waterways all provide huge hidden benefits that are difficult to put a cost on. The ecological services they provide and how to manage them would be an integral part in how we deal with climate change. We want to support family farms, community supported agriculture and sustainable food production, where the main emphasis is on protecting and enhancing the natural landscape that we value so much.

- **High water quality and conservation** is critical, as it is such a precious resource and needs to be managed more carefully and appropriately. Access to and care of water quality and how we use it appropriately in our farming systems is critical.

- **Emphasis on resource efficiency** is essential as part of the Transition Farming model. We need to promote creative circular systems on farms with no waste of resources and maximum efficiency of all of our natural resources.

- **Climate mitigation and adaptation** are at the heart of ‘Transition Farming’ as it promotes pathways to low- carbon food production. Adapting to Climate Change, how we grow our food in the future, soil management, localising inputs and sustainable agroforestry methods are all part of this plan to help with the adaptations and mitigation that need to be faced urgently.

- **Biodiversity** is critical in all of the natural farming systems we are dependent on. We rely on these ecosystem services so we can produce good quality affordable food while protecting our soil, air and water. The All- Ireland Pollinator Plan (produced by the National Biodiversity Data Centre) should be an integral part of our approach to educating farmers and growers about pollinators and the vital roles they play in our farming and natural ecosystems.

- **Future proofing our farm incomes.** We must learn how to become carbon farmers No matter what system of agriculture our farms are engaged in. (Dairy, Beef, Sheep, Horticulture, Forestry etc) We are all farming carbon. In the near future CAP and the other existing payments and supports will be based on carbon sequestration. So we must understand the carbon cycle and how dependent it is on our ecological and biological systems. All of which are effected by current industrialised practices and connected biodiversity loss.

The main benefits of Transitioning our Farming systems would be that it has the potential to improve the ability of our family farms to produce food. While at the same time adapting to Climate Change, Peak Oil and biodiversity loss.

This will have the vital benefit of improving food security in our communities for this and future generations. To this end we have the following suggestions...
TK recommends the development of edible landscapes rather than flowers in our villages and towns.

Planting edible landscapes and community orchards is beneficial for our environment on many levels.

Planting fruit and nut trees as orchards offers multiple benefits:

- They act as a carbon sink, helping to combat climate change and global warming
- They clean the air
- They are producing food locally, reducing use of fossil fuels and transport costs
- They transform wasteland to useful productive land
- They create areas of rich biodiversity within these ecosystems and habitats for wildlife

These types of projects encourage local people to be active in their own communities:

- Highlights Climate Change and biodiversity
- Promotes the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan
- Acting on a local level, with both local and global benefits
- Encourages intergenerational activity, with people of all ages taking part
- The trees can include heritage varieties, which encourages conservation of older varieties that may be endangered
- Promotes healthy activities, healthy eating

TK believe that a new category of producer should be developed and supported, to help promote real growth in the local and organic horticulture sectors in the coming years.

We support calls for creating a new classification of farmer / grower, the Horticultural Market Grower or small-scale Commercial Horticultural Producer.

This new Grower classification should be given high priority status within government bodies.

The following are suggested criteria for inclusion in this category:

1: Food producers who are supplying directly into their local community through:

Farmers’ markets, CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) systems, Direct marketing, Food hubs, Farm shops, and other distribution systems embedded in the local community.

Who are engaged in mixed ecologically diverse farm systems.

TK also recommends the establishment of supports within local government for allotments and community food production.
Transition Kerry recommends supports to encourage local seed production: Supporting the active ISSA “Seed Guardian Network”.

The minimum requirements for inclusion in this option would include:
1: Attendance at a seed saving course for basic training.
2: Commitment to local seed swapping and planning.
3: Being an active member in a national Seed Saving Co-operative / Seed bank / i.e. the Irish Seed Savers Association
4: Grow a seed crop for redistribution back into the Seed Saving Co-operative / Seed bank.

We also recommend:
• A new Organic farming scheme. One that does not have an end date or time frame. Organic farming needs to be supported into the future with no question of restricting its development by closing the organic farming schemes.
• The establishment of a Development Team to advance the agenda and progress of the local and Organic small-scale horticulture sector.
• The creation of a Degree course in Organic Horticulture to bridge the education gap as currently the only education offered is FETAC level 5 and a Masters course.
• The creation and support of a mentoring scheme for knowledge transfer from experienced growers and food producers to the new entrants.
• Transition Kerry also recommends the expansion and future support of the Organic apprenticeship scheme for knowledge transfer from experienced organic growers to the new entrants.

Background to Transition Kerry’s Submission focusing on the need for local food security and resilience in dealing with the challenges of Climate change and biodiversity loss.

Ireland has a long agricultural history, which is deeply engrained in our identity. However the role of farmers as food producers for their local area is slowly disappearing. Ideally the primary role of local food production should belong to small-scale local growers and family farms providing fresh produce direct to their local community.

There are many small-scale producers currently operating on small areas of land, with little or no governmental support. If the Irish government is to fulfil its obligation to tackle Climate Change, it needs to support food sovereignty and security by ensuring the supply of good quality, fresh and locally produced food, avoiding the massive environmental cost of transport and oil dependent food systems.

There is currently a lack of direct support for the establishment and maintenance of local food production and distribution in Kerry and Ireland. While there has been some support for investment in organic farming, there is an additional need now to encourage and support food producers providing directly for the local community.

It is time that Irish taxpayers money is spent on producing food directly for Irish citizens, not just for export overseas.
Small-scale local food producers selling directly provide multiple benefits to the local environment, community and economy.

- The production and consumption of food in short chains means increased economic and social activity in rural areas.
- Proportionally, small-scale organic growers and producers have a low environmental impact and a small carbon footprint.
- Small-scale diversified farming encourages local wildlife areas and biodiversity.
- The produce from these farms can get to the customer very quickly and is therefore very fresh and of high quality.
- Improved availability means better diets for people in the locality.
- Establishes functioning local food production systems that have the potential to provide increased local employment, while reducing the environmental cost and negative effects on Climate.
- They are more resilient to economic instability, and more likely to stay in adverse conditions like those posed by Climate Change.

Irish citizens have the right to healthy, locally produced food. Building local food networks is a first step towards food sovereignty and negating the risks associated with Climate Change. It is critical for the development of food sovereignty and security in Ireland.

Slán : Thomas O Connor (Chairperson)
Public Consultation on the Draft Agriculture, Forest and Seafood Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan.

Mr. Michael Creed T.D., Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine invites submissions, observations and comments on the Draft Agriculture, Forest and Seafood Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan. This Plan is mandated by the Government’s National Adaptation Framework.

Adaptation is about managing the unavoidable impacts of climate change. This Draft Sectoral Adaptation Plan for the agriculture, forest and seafood sectors presents an assessment of climate risks to these sectors and describes key adaptive measures.

Why we are launching this consultation?

The objective of this public consultation is to invite all interested parties to contribute their views on the Draft Plan during a seven-week consultation process. The views of the public are essential to delivering a comprehensive Plan that thoroughly assesses the key risks and vulnerabilities of our agriculture, forest and seafood sectors to climate change. A comprehensive Plan, incorporating the public’s views is also essential for ensuring that climate adaptation measures are mainstreamed into all national, regional and local policy making.

Therefore, the objective of this public consultation is to invite all interested parties to contribute their views in relation to the Draft Plan during this seven-week consultation process.

The consultation will end at close of business on Friday 16 August 2019.

How to get involved?

A Questionnaire has been prepared to assist you in making your submission – Public Consultation - Questionnaire (doc 93Kb)

Please email your submissions, observations and comments to us directly at: adaptation@agriculture.gov.ie

Or if you prefer, you can send them by post to:

Adaptation Consultation
Climate Change and Bioenergy Policy Division
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Pavilion A
Grattan Business Centre
Portlaoise
Interested parties are invited to make written submissions or comments no later than close of business Friday 16 August 2019.

Terms and Conditions

All submissions, including the name of the person making the submission, will be published on the Department’s website.

Freedom of Information

All submissions and comments submitted to the Department for this purpose are subject to release under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2014 and the European Communities (Access to Information on the Environment) Regulations 2007-2014. Submissions are also subject to Data Protection legislation. Personal, confidential or commercially sensitive information should not be included in your submission and it will be presumed that all information contained in your submission is releasable under the Freedom of Information Act 2014.

Data Protection

Please note that if you make a submission you are agreeing for it to be published in accordance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR EU 2016/679), the Data Protection Acts 1988-2018, the Freedom of Information Act 2014 and the DPER Consultation Principles and Guidance.

Privacy Statement

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine is committed to protecting and respecting your privacy and employs appropriate technical and organisational measures to protect your information from unauthorised access. The Department will not process your personal data for any purpose other than that for which they were collected. Personal data may be exchanged with other Government Departments, local authorities, agencies under the aegis of the Department, or other public bodies, in certain circumstances where this is provided for by law.
The Department will only retain your personal data for as long as it is necessary for the purposes for which they were collected and subsequently processed. When the business need to retain this information has expired, it will be examined with a view to destroying the personal data as soon as possible, and in line with Department policy. Further information on Data Protection can be found on our website at: https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/dataprotection/informationondataprotection/