

Food partnerships and the climate emergency: session notes

1. How is the food system contributing to climate change?

- At all levels- on personal, community local food system level and national and international levels. Plus all along supply chain- from production to consumption. This includes: imported animal feed, methane from meat and dairy industry, high input farming systems (contributions vary depending on farming system used); fossil fuels used in transport, fertilizer production, nitrogen, manufacturing, packaging and processing, inorganic fertilizers; decomposing landfill, food waste...
- Land use change e.g. destruction of peat lands and deforestation and resultant reduction of carbon in soil.
- Waste – the food system is geared to over produce and there is a lack of a system for disposal.
- Large food miles linked to the import and export of foods (we are locked into a globalized food system).
- Engineering of desires – out of season food for example, demand for unsustainable and over processed food and over consumption.
- Disconnection from food and our place in wider ecological systems.
- Cultural associations and stigma.
- Social inequalities and access to sustainable food choices and cooking facilities.
- Food/ cooking literacy.
- Commercial supermarket chains are very efficient and are highly successful at fulfilling societies expectations. (Looks more resilient than it is?)
- Procurement
- Positive contributions can be created through shorter supply chains (including manufacturing); developing sustainable local food economies; organic + growing; urban agriculture; shifting to local, seasonal diets and more plant based diets; composting

2. Where is the food system at risk from climate change?

- Extreme weather: flooding, drought, unexpected/ chaotic weather, changes and unpredictability of seasons makes it difficult to plan growing season, can reduce yields and wash harmful chemicals into water system...
- Some areas of the world are more vulnerable to weather chaos than others and this will affect global supply chains.
- Just in time supply chains- vulnerable to extreme weather events. Plus yield failures can affect availability and price etc.
- Reduced yields could affect price which can lead to worsening inequalities and food poverty.
- Increased pest and diseases risk
- Seed bank under threat...
- Risks to scale of production – damage to harvests e.g. hay.
- Decreasing pollinator populations etc, reduced effective pollination?
- Increasing the diversity of farming systems etc can minimize the risks of future shocks. Diversity in grass and seed types through to diversity of farming systems – more mixed farming (perhaps a place for hydroponic, aquaponics, aquaculture), through to diversity of retail.

3. What tools and approaches can be used to shift the above?

- Normalize the sustainable food agenda through planning and procurement.
- Lobbying at the local strategic level...
- Procurement contracts/ procurement of climate friendly foods: seasonal, local, plant based, less but better meat, organic + foods

- Planning: allocate more land to food production, market gardens and community growing. Ensure all new developments have space for growing, storing, cooking and composting.
- Localize food systems and shorten supply chains, including supporting urban agriculture. (affected by urban planning)
- Drastic action at the policy level e.g. taxation: calorie tax (but not all calories created equally)? Meat tax? Tax on processed foods? Progressive agriculture policy. Increase UK food production to reduce food miles.
- Plan for biodiversity at the local level.
- Wellbeing for life: Public friendly campaigns around sustainable diets, including 'less but better meat'.
- Campaign for different agricultural system – promoting mixed farming systems, no dig, urban agriculture, agro ecological systems, permaculture and carbon farming.
- Shift to renewable energy sources.
- Support peer learning and training for farmers to transition and farm carbon and diversity! This should include farmer-focused discussion groups and support networks and should support transitions to organic and agro ecological systems, conservation grazing etc.
- Increase diversity across food supply chains: seed diversity, crop and animal diversity on farms and types, number and types of farms producing food, reduction in grain fed livestock.
- Dynamic seed banks and seed saving networks.
- More indoor growing?
- Whatever replaces CAP to support agro ecological farming.
- Food hubs – brokering between production and procurement.
- Peat land protection, reforestation and shift towards agroforestry systems.
- Circular economy initiatives supported around food waste, composting, re-fill, re-use and recycling schemes.
- Relax health and safety around composting food waste (food waste collection!) to support development of circular economies.
- Shift in how measure success- inclusive of wellbeing
- Sustainable food education, including that which builds understanding of the connections between climate and food and empowers people to take action. Make use of experiential learning.
- Public facing campaigns and events e.g. The Big Dig, climate justice campaigns, meat free Mondays, disco soups, plant based diet challenges etc.
- Change choice architecture- make sustainable diets more easy to access for all.

Question raised: At the local level how could counties and districts do more to work with the land management sector?

4. What are your leverage points?

National legislation is needed to shift structural issues e.g, the economic argument (cost of food versus cost of environment). Support political shift from jobs and economy to prosperity and well being. CAP a good opportunity post Brexit? However...

- This discussion opens the door for a lot of things we've already been championing – e.g. climate-friendly catering. Climate change is the leverage to get a lot of these existing solutions higher up the agenda.
- Procurement by councils, schools and hospital (Local, seasonal and climate friendly)
- Work with Local Economic Plan to develop local initiatives e.g. circular economies and rural economy transitions.
- Living wage campaigns to reduce risk of poverty- this is a human rights issue!

- Link to transport side of climate change discussion.
- Find local champions to help drive this work forwards.
- Education – including immersive learning- to support communities in reconnecting to food system and wider environment. Showcase alternatives: vegan feasts, disco soups, seasonal meals...and work with schools around no dig and agro ecological growing.
- Facilitate spaces for new people to come into conversation and system.
- Role of local food partnerships – planning e.g. building in food growing, plant food plants/trees in ornamental planting etc.
- Cork city plan – area plan include more food growing, citizens assembly, include farmers in the debate.
- Need for easy solutions for people – reflect on the context for many people – young people e.g. on zero hour contracts, busy lives, living with parents.

Action

- SFC to collectively declare a climate and ecological emergency?
- SFC to develop a guide for partnership coordinators on how to approach the climate and ecological emergency agenda.