

Ireland

Food Vision 2030: A world leader in sustainable food systems

Context

The agrifood sector is Ireland's largest indigenous exporting industry, playing a vital role in Ireland's economy. The sector accounts for almost 7% of Gross National Income and over 9% of exports in value terms. The sector employs almost 165,000 people, representing close to 7% of total employment in the country, but a far greater proportion in rural and coastal areas. Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions for 2022 show that agriculture is responsible for 38% of total emissions. These figures reflect the relative importance of agriculture to Ireland's economy, and the lack of heavy industry in comparison to many other countries.



Rationale

The Irish agrifood sector has benefited from strategic planning in the development of stakeholder-led strategies. Since their inception 20 years ago, these strategies have ensured that the sector has a coherent, stakeholder-led vision and strategy to underpin its continued development. **Food Vision 2030** aims for Ireland to become a “world leader in sustainable food systems” by 2030. This will deliver significant benefits for the Irish agrifood sector, for Irish society and the environment. In demonstrating that the Irish agrifood sector meets the highest standards of sustainability – economic, environmental and social – this will provide the basis for the future competitive advantage of the sector. By adopting an integrated food-systems approach, Ireland will seek to become a global leader of innovation for sustainable food and agriculture systems, producing safe, nutritious and high-value food, while protecting and enhancing its natural and cultural resources and contributing to vibrant rural and coastal communities and the national economy.

Approach

Food Vision 2030 consists of 22 goals and 218 actions, grouped into four high-level missions for the sector to work towards.

Mission 1 is to achieve “a climate-smart, environmentally sustainable agrifood sector” with an overall target of a climate neutrality by 2050, with verifiable progress to be achieved by 2030.

There are seven goals in this mission, encompassing emissions reductions, carbon sequestration, improvements in air quality, restoration and enhancement of biodiversity, improvements in water quality, development of diverse forests, enhanced seafood sustainability, exploring the bioeconomy and strengthening Origin Green, Ireland's national food and drink sustainability programme.

Mission 2 is for “viable and resilient primary producers, with enhanced well-being.” This mission places primary producers, farmers, fishers and foresters at the centre of the strategy. It involves improving the competitiveness and productivity of primary producers; increasing the creation of value and distributing it fairly; introducing greater diversification in production systems and incomes; and improving the social sustainability of primary producers across areas such as generational renewal, gender balance, health and safety, mental health and well-being, and wider rural development.

Mission 3 is for “food that is safe, nutritious and appealing, trusted and valued at home and abroad”, with a particular focus on the importance of trade. Food Vision 2030 looks to protect and build on Ireland's global reputation as a trusted supplier of high quality, safe, sustainable food to consumers at home and abroad. This mission aims to prioritize coherent food and health policies for better health outcomes, to enhance consumer trust in our food system, to add value through insight, innovation and product differentiation, and to further develop market and trade opportunities both at home and abroad. Diversifying and developing markets will continue to be a priority.

Mission 4 is for an “innovative, competitive and resilient agrifood sector, driven by technology and talent.” There are seven goals in this mission, which are relevant to all other missions and will act as key enablers. They include moving to a challenge-focused innovation system, having a strategic approach to funding research and development, developing dynamic knowledge exchange practices, enhancing the use of technology and data, improving competitiveness and resilience, attracting and nurturing diverse and inclusive talent, and improving policy coherence in sustainable food systems between Ireland's domestic and foreign policy. The strategy envisages a more output-focused collaborative innovation system by 2030, with private research and development to reach 1% of turnover.

Experience and results achieved

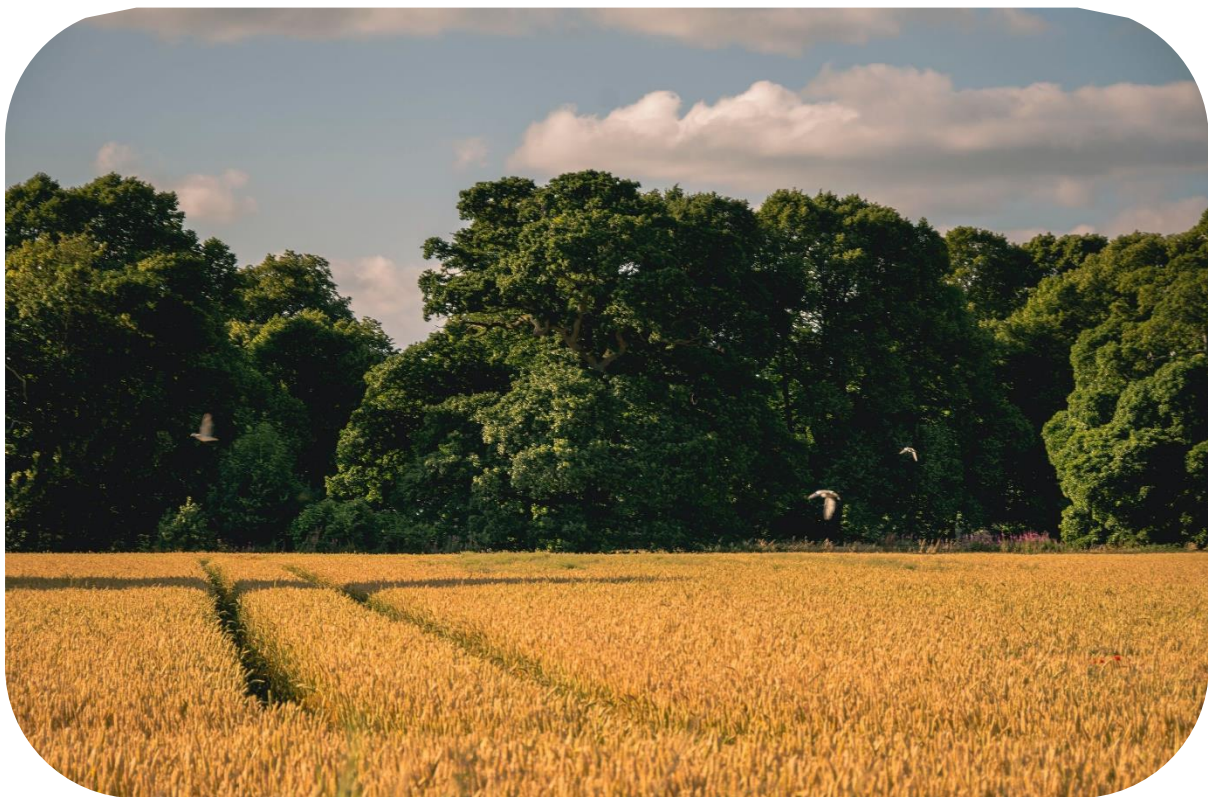
Each of these missions has ambitious goals rooted in a strongly practical approach to what needs to be achieved for future environmental, economic and social sustainability. The success of Food Vision 2030 depends on effective implementation and oversight. For this reason, a Monitoring and Implementation Framework is included. A High-Level Implementation Committee chaired by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine and comprising senior officials from relevant government departments and agencies involved in the agrifood sector oversees the delivery of Food Vision 2030. In addition, a formal implementation plan for Food Vision 2030 was published, identifying stakeholders, deliverables and a time frame for each of the actions. Implementation of Food Vision 2030 is under way, with many of its actions commenced, including important work on environmental sustainability in the dairy and beef sectors, and progressing to specific stakeholder groups. The first Food Vision Annual Report was published in May 2023. In terms of overall progress

to date, 14 actions are complete, 108 actions have substantial action undertaken, 92 actions have commenced and are progressing, and 4 actions have not yet commenced.

Lessons learned

A food-systems approach to sustainability involves considering the interconnectivity of the food system. A sustainable food system is one that delivers food security and nutrition for all in such a way that the economic, environmental and social bases to generate food and nutrition for future generations are not compromised. Adopting and advocating this approach highlights that a holistic approach is necessary.

Crucial to success is all actors in the sector working together in a constructive fashion, in a spirit of collaboration and partnership and, if necessary, compromise, to address the challenges and grasp the opportunities.



This is one in a set of country case studies demonstrating policy action that individual countries are taking with the aim of transition to sustainable agriculture. They are country owned and do not represent wider views of the Policy Dialogue participants.