Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework

Food at the Heart of our Society - A Prospectus for Change

Consultation Summary of Responses 2022

Sustainability *at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.*

Department of
Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

www.daera-ni.gov.uk

INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE

Contents

1. Executive Summary

In September 2021, The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) launched a public consultation which sought stakeholder endorsement of proposals for a cross-departmental Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework under Green Growth. In particular, the consultation sought views on the proposed vision, principles and goals of a Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework. In total, 63 responses were received, with 61 of these from organisations representing a wider network.

The proposed Framework was welcomed across all stakeholder groups. The food systems approach was viewed as innovative and the "dismantling of traditional silos" viewed as refreshing. Across all respondents, there was a sense of opportunity for Northern Ireland to be a market leader for environmentally sustainable food. Most of the specific comments made by respondents reflected proposed minor wording changes rather than any substantive alterations to content.

General Comments

All response groups suggested that more detail was required on implementation, including the requirement for greater partnership working across departments and with a wide range of key stakeholders from across industry, community and voluntary sectors. The importance of being cognisant of other established and developing government policies was also highlighted.

Many respondents proposed the addition of a reference to the affordability of food within the vision, aim, principles and priority areas of the Framework.

2. Introduction

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) launched a consultation on 24 September 2021 seeking views on proposals for a Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework.

The consultation document set out a series of proposals for the Framework relating to:

- a new 'systems approach' for the development and delivery of future policy in Northern Ireland;

- a long-term framework;

- the ambition, vision, scope and aim;

- guiding principles; and

- governance and implementation structures.

The consultation ran until 19 November 2021 on the DAERA website, using NI Direct's Citizen Space platform. As this is a cross-departmental Framework that recognises the interconnectedness of food, health, the economy and the environment, a communications plan was developed to raise awareness of the consultation across a wide range of Northern Ireland stakeholders - extending across the stakeholder networks of DAERA, Department of Health, Department for Communities, Department for Economy, and Department of Education, in particular. The communications included online information sessions, social media and press releases.

Approximately 1,574 people or organisations representing stakeholders from across the business, health and community sectors were contacted directly via email. They were provided with details of the consultation and its supporting documents, including web links to the consultation's website page which contained further information on how to respond. During the eight-week consultation period, the consultation was widely and regularly publicised through DAERA media platforms, including Twitter and Facebook accounts and shared through other government department media channels.
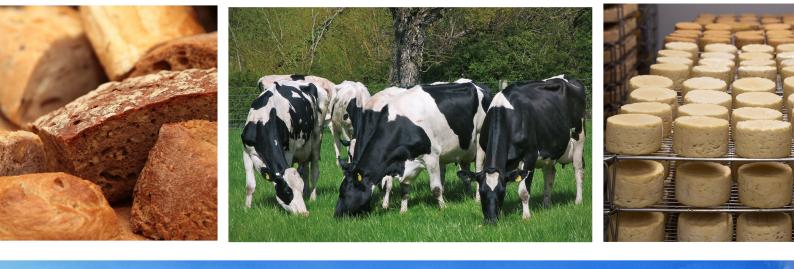
Eight online information sessions were held during October and November 2021. The first session was for the stakeholder representatives who participated in the Strategic Insight Lab in 2019 which informed the development of the Framework. A further three public online information sessions were held during October. These sessions were open to all, to help explain the Framework and to answer questions raised by attendees in advance of them completing their formal consultation response. The four information sessions were led by DAERA officials with input from officials across other Departments including Economy, Health, Education, Communities, Justice as well as the Food Standards Agency (NI) and Invest NI. A further four sessions were delivered following specific requests from stakeholder organisations, including

one which was hosted by the Department for Communities for their voluntary and community sector stakeholders.

The consultation document can be viewed on the DAERA website by clicking on the following link: (https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations/northern-ireland-food-strategy-framework). Email and postal responses were also accepted.

DAERA would like to express its thanks to all those who responded to this consultation.

3.   Responses to the Consultation

The consultation closed on 19 November 2021. In total 63 responses were received. 61 of these were from organisations, many of them representing a wider network (hereafter referred to as organisations) and 2 from individuals.

As with any Northern Ireland Civil Service public consultation, responses were received from a self-selecting range of respondents. Respondent organisations self-selected their designation as either public sector, private sector, community/voluntary sector or "other". The latter category included for example, representative bodies, political parties and charities. It should be noted that the self-designation did result in some anomalies but for the purposes of this response document, designations were maintained as recorded by respondents. A list of the respondent organisations and individuals who submitted a response is provided at Annex B.

The consultation questionnaire provided respondents with the opportunity to answer questions based on the proposals (see list of questions at Annex A). For some questions there was the opportunity to respond in favour of the proposals or against. Respondents were also provided the ability to comment on the proposals. It was not compulsory for respondents to answer all questions. As such not all respondents indicated if they agreed or disagreed with each question and not all respondents provided comments to each question. The number of responses to each question is summarised in Annex C.

Any responses received by email/hard copy were uploaded to the Citizen Space platform. All comments have been considered in the analysis of responses.

A comprehensive and extensive exercise took place to review each response submitted. Whilst there was overwhelming support for the proposals, many respondents also provided detailed commentary as part of their response. Various themes were identified and captured per-question. Where the report refers to 'a number of respondents' or 'some respondents', it should be noted that this does not refer to all respondents.

The quantitative reporting function on Citizen Space was used to produce a high level overview of responses to the questionnaire. This is available on the Department's website at: [Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework High Level Overview of Response....pdf (daera-ni.gov.uk)](daera-ni.gov.uk).

Further analysis of responses was undertaken, and the following sections of this document present a more comprehensive summary of the responses made by stakeholders to the 24 questions included in the consultation. It should be noted that it is not intended to be a comprehensive report of every view expressed but rather a broad summary of the key issues raised by respondents. The analysis included both quantitative and qualitative assessment of responses, detailing the number of respondents and the number for and against the proposal (where relevant). The analysis also provides a summary of responses in relation to the key themes identified.

4.   Summary of responses

A Food Systems Approach

Q1. Do you agree with taking a food system, whole of government approach, through a Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework?

SUMMARY OF CONSULTEE RESPONSES

Fifty-five responses were received to this question, representing an 87% response rate. Fifty-three were from organisations (of which 11 were private sector, 22 were public sector, 5 were from the community and voluntary sector and 15 from "others") and 2 private individuals.

Forty-nine responses from organisations (of which 9 were private sector, 21 were public sector, 5 were community and voluntary sector, and 14 were "others") strongly agreed or agreed with the proposal for taking a food system, whole of government approach.

Three organisations (1 private sector, 1 public sector and 1 from "others") neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal.

One private sector organisation strongly disagreed with the proposal.

The two private individuals both strongly agreed with the proposal.

Q2. What are your views on taking a food system "whole of government" approach through a Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework?

Fifty-seven responses were received to this question, representing a 90% response rate. Almost all the responses received were in support of the proposals. In addition, many of the respondents referred to the need to ensure appropriate stakeholder involvement and appropriate resourcing of the programme.

VIEWS IN SUPPORT OF THE PROPOSALS

Public, private and community and voluntary sector comments in agreement with the proposals included, "a Food Systems 'whole of government' approach through a NI Food Strategy Framework should bring efficiencies and better use of resources"; "a whole government approach is needed and welcomed to address the complex inter-related issues within the food system"; and, "local government and food and drink sector stakeholders need a consistent, clear approach from government, as departmental intervention in the food and drink sector has long been disjointed".

A private sector organisation stated, "it is entirely logical that that there should be a whole government approach to a Food Strategy Framework given the cross-cutting nature."

A public sector academic institution proposed that a food system approach needs to be informed and underpinned by justice, equity and a lay or consumer voice. They proposed the need for a lead agency or Minister and an independent voice for monitoring and evaluation. Several different public and private sector organisations, while in agreement with the proposals, also raised the potential for conflicting departmental priorities e.g. social versus economic, and highlighted that more detail is required on the mechanism to resolve such issues.

One public sector organisation, whilst agreeing with the proposal, suggested that net zero carbon budgeting needs to be reflected further.

VIEWS NEITHER AGREEING NOR DISAGREEING WITH THE PROPOSALS

One private sector organisation expressed a view that, although the sentiments are laudable, they were concerned that decisions on healthy foods and diet may not be in line with the ability of local food production systems to meet the requirements.

VIEWS SEEKING FURTHER CLARIFICATION

Six public sector organisations sought "An indication on whether a statutory duty will be placed upon Councils to participate in the future implementation and delivery of the framework."

VIEWS NOT IN SUPPORT OF THE PROPOSALS

One private sector organisation disagreed with the 'whole of government' approach proposing it appears to have factors which massively contradict each other and suggested that moving away from animal-based food production is the quickest, easiest and most cost effect way to achieve the targets that need to be met.

Strategic Context

Q3. What are your views on the strategic context identified?

Fifty-two responses (83% response rate) were received to this question. Fifty of these were from organisations (of which 21 were public sector, 11 private sector, 5 from the community and voluntary sector and 13 "others") and 2 from private individuals.

Sixteen public sector responses were content that the strategic context identified was appropriate and 5 provided a response which did not clearly indicate agreement or disagreement.

Six private sector responses were content with the strategic context identified and 5 provided a response which did not clearly indicate agreement or disagreement.

Three community and voluntary responses received were content with the strategic context identified and 2 provided a response which did not clearly indicate agreement or disagreement.

Seven of the "other" organisations were content with the strategic context identified and 6 provided a response which did not clearly indicate agreement or disagreement.

Two private individuals were content with the strategic context as identified.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Although many respondents concluded that the strategic context has been broadly accurately identified, some additional references were proposed, such as:

- Reference to the proposed NI Climate Bill;

- Reference to the Draft Energy Strategy;

- Reference to Food Insecurity and the need for emergency food relief, resulting from Covid-19;

- The framework should be underpinned by a rights-based approach; and

- The connections with Agricultural Policy Framework, the Circular Economy Strategic Framework, Skills and Economic Development strategies.

Q4. From your perspective, are there any other NI government policy linkages which you feel are relevant?

Fifty-two responses (83% response rate) were received to this question, 21 from the public sector, 10 from private sector, 6 from the community and voluntary sector, 2 from private individuals and 13 from "others".

Whilst most respondents felt that there were no additional relevant government policy linkages, several suggestions were made and these include:

- Environment Strategy
- Biodiversity Strategy
- Climate Bill (under development)
- Ammonia Strategy
- Peatlands Strategy
- Waste Prevention Programme
- Anti-Poverty Strategy
- Trade Strategy
- Marine Strategy
- Mental Health Strategy
- Existing government strategies & programmes
- Local Council Strategies
- Growth and City Deals
- Cross-border linkages

Ambition, Scope, Vision and Aim

Q5. What are your views on the proposed ambition of the NI Food Strategy Framework?

Fifty-four responses (86% response rate) to this question were received. Fifty-two were from organisations (of which 12 were private sector, 20 were public sector, 6 were from community and voluntary sector and 14 from "others") and 2 private individuals.

IN AGREEMENT WITH PROPOSAL

Approximately 78% of respondents were supportive of the proposed ambition. One public sector organisation felt it was an "exciting framework that could lead to changes in the food chain". One private individual and one "other" organisation welcomed the emphasis on soil and the phrase "soil to society". One public sector organisation noted "it is positive to see respect for the environment included as part of the ambition." One private individual described the proposed ambition as "awesome".

Whilst agreeing with the proposed ambition of the NI Food Strategy Framework several organisations indicated potential wording changes/additions to the ambition. Comments included the ambition should include the phrase "the highest standards of food safety and nutritional standards" as a focal aspect of the ambition. Several organisations encouraged the ambition to aim higher. A farming-orientated private organisation felt the ambition "should be to grow the agri-food sector above current levels", one private food business suggested "world leading" instead of "world class", one farming orientated "other" organisation suggested "world class food producing region" with two "other" organisations supporting the idea of aiming higher.

One voluntary environment focused organisation and two "other" environment focused organisations advocated that the proposed ambition should be for Northern Ireland to have a sustainable food system based upon the FAO's (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations) definition.

NOT IN AGREEMENT WITH PROPOSAL

Twelve respondents (22% response rate) were not in agreement, including 1 from the Community and Voluntary sector, 4 from the Private sector, 4 from the Public sector and 3 "others". One Health focused "other" organisation considered the ambition to be "too food production focused" and requested a greater focus on health ambition. They suggested the goal must be to improve the availability of healthy food choices, which would in turn improve population health. Similar sentiments were expressed by three public sector organisations - one environment based, one academic and one public sector health focused organisation.

One academic organisation suggested the ambition should make explicit mention of the consumer/citizen as a stakeholder of importance. One public sector organisation supported this concept stating that "involving and engaging consumers at every stage of the framework will help realise many aspects of the strategic priorities."

One local government organisation believe that "respect for the environment" should be strengthened to include protection and restoration of natural resources and ecosystem services. This greater emphasis on environmental considerations was also endorsed by one public sector and one private sector organisation.

OTHER COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS

The importance of skills and encouraging innovation was highlighted by one skills-orientated organisation from the voluntary sector, three private sector organisations and one public sector organisation. One farming orientated organisation from the community and voluntary sector highlighted recruitment challenges across all types of employment within the sector.

Q6. What are your views on the proposed scope of the NI Food Strategy Framework?

Out of a total of 63 responses, 53 (84%) responded to this question. Fifty-one were from organisations (of which 12 were private sector, 20 were public sector, 6 were from community and voluntary sector, 13 from "others" and 2 private individuals).

IN AGREEMENT WITH PROPOSAL

Approximately 71% of respondents were supportive of the scope. Support for the scope was highest amongst the public sector organisations. One public sector academic organisation felt "the scope is sufficiently broad and importantly it recognises the role of the consumer". Whilst agreeing with the proposed scope, several organisations also indicated potential wording changes/additions. For example, one public sector organisation felt the "scope recognises that the whole food network from farm to consumer needs to be included to influence and drive positive sustainable environmental behaviours forward."

One fish focused representative body believe the sea food sector should be an integral part of the Food Strategy Framework. An environment focused organisation also suggested the strategy should specifically include marine-based food sources. One food focused organisation suggested expanding the scope to include the drinks industry, and to also give recognition to the Great Taste Awards.

NOT IN AGREEMENT WITH PROPOSAL

Fifteen respondents (29% response rate) were not in agreement. These comprised 2 from the Community and Voluntary sector, 4 from the Private sector, 3 from the public sector and 6 "Others".

Two farming focused "other" organisations questioned the extra costs of producing food sustainably and how this would be paid for. One private sector food company queried how consumers' values would be measured and whether they would be prepared to pay a premium for sustainably produced food.

Two food focused "other" organisations believe the scope is too narrow and should consider the export markets the NI agri-food industry serve. One environment focused "other" organisation and two public sector organisations believe the scope should include food and feedstuffs imported into Northern Ireland and their associated "unsustainable supply chains".

Two environment focused voluntary organisations, two private sector organisations and one public sector organisation suggested the scope should be expanded to consider waste production at all stages. Two of these organisations referred to "circular economy" questioning if the scope was too linear.

OTHER COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS

Several respondents suggested areas that were absent from the scope. For example, nine public sector organisations (six from local government) noted that food distribution and supply were not mentioned. One local government and one farming focused organisation suggested food security should be referenced. One voluntary environment focused organisation and one "other" trade focused organisation suggested the inclusion of "the carbon agenda" and one public sector organisation proposed the scope "does not recognise the contribution of the current food system to climate and environmental destruction from emissions."

Several organisations commented on the importance of the interdependencies in the scope to ensure an increase in health outcomes, whilst two "other" organisations (one health focused, the other environment focused) and one public sector organisation commented that "producing high quality food did not always result in healthy food choices". One public sector organisation stated, "the scope does not consider food as a human rights issue, as a key determinant of health and wellbeing or the social, cultural, or psychological significance of food in modern society".

Q7. What are your views on the proposed vision of the NI Food Strategy Framework?

Out of a total of 63 responses, 51 (81%) responded to this question. 49 were from organisations (of which 12 were private sector, 20 were public sector, 5 were from community and voluntary sector and 12 were from "others") and 2 private individuals.

IN AGREEMENT WITH PROPOSAL

Approximately 86% of respondents to this question were supportive of the proposed vision. Many organisations, whilst agreeing with the proposed vision indicated potential wording changes/additions. For example, eight organisations, (two "others", one food focused, one academic, two private organisations and four public sector) highlighted the need to include food affordability within the vision. One local authority highlighted that "accessibility and affordability are two different issues."

The role of protecting natural resources and sustainability was highlighted by eleven organisations (two voluntary and community, four "other", one private sector and four public sector) and a range of alternative wordings of the vision were provided. For example, three environment focused organisations and one public sector organisation suggested that the vision should go further and not just protect natural resources but "enhance and restore" them, and one additional environmental focused public organisation highlighted that the vision only considered agricultural land. One health focused "other" organisation and one private organisation suggested that the order in which economic and environmental sustainability is currently drafted should be reversed to demonstrate the importance of sustainability.

Two organisations (one "other" organisation and one food producing private organisation) suggested reference to a "transformed innovative food system".

The important role of education/information in facilitating informed food choices was highlighted by six organisations (one community and voluntary, two "other" and three public sector). Two public sector organisations suggested the vision implies that only "people who make informed healthy choices will access safe and nourishing food" and suggested rewording of this sentence.

Three health focused organisations (two "other", one public sector) believe the vision needs "to go further to improve public health and wellbeing".

NOT IN AGREEMENT WITH PROPOSAL

Two food focused organisations (one "other", one private sector) viewed the changes required in the food system as "evolution not revolution". One organisation felt the market drivers which consumers are seeking (including taste, quality, green credentials but above all affordability) are much better understood by the industry than by government.

One private sector food company questioned if products can "be environmentally and economically sustainable" and expressed concern that small producers/processors may struggle, and local products will find it difficult to compete with cheaper imports.

One private sector food company suggested "a transformed food system that protects natural resources for future generations is not an animal food-based system."

Q8. What are your views on the proposed aim of the NI Food Strategy Framework?

Out of a total of 63 responses, 52 (82.5%) responded to this question. 50 were from organisations (of which 12 were private sector, 20 were public sector, 6 were from community and voluntary sector and 12 were from "others") and 2 private individuals. Approximately 65% of respondents were supportive of the aim, a further 31% neither agreed nor disagreed and 4% disagreed.

IN AGREEMENT WITH PROPOSAL

Whilst agreeing with the proposed aim of the NI Food Strategy Framework, many organisations indicated potential wording changes/additions to the aim. For example, 17 organisations (four community and voluntary, four "other", five private sector and four public sector) suggested the aim could be interpreted as only considering cross-government interactions with no engagement from external stakeholders. The aim is described by several organisations as "too inward looking" and three organisations have questioned the meaning of "long term food decision making". In general, organisations encouraged wider engagement with a range of interested parties when implementing the food systems approach.

Seven organisations (one community and voluntary, four "other" and two private sector), predominately from environment-focused backgrounds highlighted the reporting/oversight support that will be needed to realise the aim. Three organisations called for "clear action plans with 'SMART' targets and related budgetary commitments", and one private sector food business stated that "the aim would require a robust framework for execution of this strategy".

Five organisations (three public sector, two "other") suggested the aim required greater recognition of other elements such as waste, sustainability and health.

Three organisations (two food focused organisations and one private food business) felt the aim needed to reference the cross-border nature of the supply chain as well as food imported into Northern Ireland and the export of large volumes of food to other UK regions and the associated carbon emissions.

Strategic Priorities

Q9. Do you agree with the proposed six priorities?

SUMMARY OF CONSULTEE RESPONSES

Out of a total of 63 responses, all 63 (100%) responded to this question, with 76% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with them (32% strongly agreed and 44% agreed), 19% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed; and 5% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed (2% strongly disagreed and 3% disagreed).

Q10. Are there any amendments or refinements that you would like to make these priorities?

Out of a total of 63 responses, 59 (94%) responded to this question. There was strong support for the six strategic priorities. It should be noted that some respondents provided a high-level overview on the priorities, whilst others gave specific comments for each priority area. The responses to this question have been summarised in two sections. Section One identifies the high-level, general comments provided and Section Two reflects specific comments related to each priority.

SECTION ONE: GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE SIX PRIORITY AREAS

- **Alignment with Other Initiatives**
One environment focused "other" organisation and two public sector organisations noted the overlap between the priorities and those in the Sustainable Food Places (SFP) framework. One public sector organisation suggested aligning with the UK National Food Strategy while one private sector food company thought the priorities should be aligned to international standards/priorities, "each one colour coded and mapped to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)."

- **Priority Listing and Overlap**
One health focused "other" organisation, one private sector food company and one local government organisation suggested the priorities could be interpreted as being listed in order of priority, stating it was unclear if they were equally rated and that they found there to be a degree of overlap between them. Two farming focused organisations and two private sector food companies viewed the Vegetable/Horticulture sector as having a key role in contributing to several of the strategic priorities.

- **Key Partners**
One skills focused voluntary organisation and two respondents from academia emphasised the importance of a "collective effort" involving a range of stakeholders. Several local councils held the opinion they should be included as a key partner in a number of the priorities.

- **Implementation**
Several organisations from different fields (one environment "other" organisation, one farmer based "other" organisation, one private sector food business and one university based private sector organisation) requested more details regarding implementation, reporting and associated governance of the priorities, with one organisation suggesting the use of a balanced scorecard.

SECTION TWO: SPECIFIC COMMENTS PER PRIORITY.

(1) Strategic Priority One - Building connections between health/wellbeing and food. Key issues raised:

FOOD POVERTY, FOOD SECURITY AND AFFORDABILITY

Food poverty, food security and affordability were identified as strategic priorities by 31 organisations (fifteen from public sector organisations, four from private sector organisations, six from "other" organisations, four from community and voluntary sector organisations and two private individuals).

A public sector organisation stated that "the development of overweight among populations, mainly low-income, occurs hand-in-hand with hunger". They suggested, there is a need for recognition of the connection between affordable nutritious food and wellbeing. This view was reiterated by a public sector health focused organisation, who highlighted the importance of issues such as obesity and food poverty being addressed by NI government at Ministerial level.

A community and voluntary sector organisation stated "the connections between the provisions of affordable nutritious food and physical and mental health and wellbeing should also be recognised".

INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Seven local council organisations identified the importance of local government involvement in Priority One. This view was endorsed by another public sector organisation who proposed that local councils should be a "key partner" in this priority due to their existing work in this area. This was echoed by a further public sector organisation who highlighted the importance of partnership working, and their current work on food and nutrition initiatives delivered by Environmental Health Departments across all Council areas.

HOLISTIC APPROACH

Two organisations (1 Community and Voluntary, and 1 public sector) suggested Priority One takes too much of a 'holistic approach'. One community and voluntary sector organisation proposed "there is an inherent assumption that everyone has access to nutritious food without taking consideration of affordability". This organisation also suggested the 'impact of seasonality' could be included as "urbanised societies have moved away from seasonal food and knowledge of provenance".

(2) Strategic Priority Two - Building Sustainable Economic Prosperity. Key issues raised:

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

A private sector organisation stated that "economic growth and environmental sustainability only have the potential to drive each other synergistically if economic growth is steered towards environmental sustainability and away from environmental destruction". An environment focused

community and voluntary sector organisation argued that it is 'absolutely critical' that Priority Two is set in the context of the climate and nature crisis. A private sector food organisation argued that Priority Two should encourage diversity in farming enterprises, by for example ensuring tillage has a place alongside livestock production. One private sector organisation felt the 'best agronomic practices must be encouraged' by considering new production metrics for farming in line with sustainability ambitions such as consideration of carbon margins for each crop or enterprise. Furthermore, one public sector environment focused organisation highlighted the importance of the inclusion of food waste prevention within Priority Two. One "other" organisation stressed the importance "to decrease Northern Ireland's reliance on imports to provide resilience against significantly changing shifts in supply chains in the future".

ECONOMIC SUPPORT

One public sector organisation highlighted the importance of micro companies and Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's) within the food sector and the challenges they face, due to Covid-19 and Brexit. For example, difficulties due to labour shortages and repeated 'emergency' situations. The organisation suggested that investment in automation could help ease some of these issues. This was echoed by another public sector organisation highlighting that farming and agri-food processors need support for economic prosperity, and by a community and voluntary sector organisation who suggested the NI Food Strategy Framework 'must provide greater levels of support for environmentally friendly, low impact methods of food production'.

KEY PARTNERS

One "other" sector organisation involved in livestock products argued that private sector businesses either primary producers or other supply chain partners are critical for Priority Two.

ECONOMIC COSTS OF DISEASE CAUSED BY POOR NUTRITION

A public sector health focused organisation recognised the importance of economic growth but recommend that the Framework should include economic costs of disease caused by poor nutrition. They highlight that poor diet is associated with a range of chronic diseases which "cost directly and indirectly £370 million in 2009 to the health service."

(3) Strategic Priority Three - Building a Food Culture And Food Conscious Society. Key Issues Raised:

FOOD EDUCATION

A private sector food focused organisation suggested "reconnecting people with knowledge of where food comes from" will change consumer behaviour and culture. They suggested that there is a direct role in this sphere for the Department of Education. Another private sector environment focused organisation reinforced that Priority Three "requires a root and branch approach on education at all levels of society". A community and voluntary sector food focused organisation suggested that primary schools should be funded to visit food companies as part of the curriculum. Another community and voluntary sector organisation supported this view,

highlighting the importance of promoting cooking and growing skills among the general public, together with education of food professionals in the use of local, sustainable ingredients.

One "other" farmer focused organisation strongly believe that school meals should be a priority suggesting, "if we can teach them to eat well, we will ultimately reduce the burden on the NHS, with poor diet related illnesses" and noted the omission of the Department of Education as a key partner.

LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTION

One public sector organisation argued that as NI society shifts towards increased processed food consumption there is a need to build an indigenous, food conscious society that could be linked with greater local food procurement.

A private sector fish focused organisation highlighted that as much of Northern Ireland's seafood is exported to Europe, it is important to increase the local consumption of locally caught seafood. Another private sector grower focused organisation argued the need for a local integrated promotion organisation.

(4) Strategic Priority Four - Protecting and enhancing our natural resources. Key issues raised:

ROLE OF PRIMARY PRODUCERS

Seventeen organisations across all of the groupings highlighted the important role of primary producers in enhancing biodiversity/soil health, together with the challenges of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and associated carbon footprints. Two "other" organisations and one public sector organisation suggested carbon foot printing should be a vital consideration when providing support to farmers, including measurement and the potential to grow more products locally.

Two farming focused organisations, one political representative, and one skills based "other" organisation highlighted the future work required to balance profitability alongside welfare/environmental concerns to deliver "economic-environmental win-wins".

REGENERATIVE FARMING

Four environment focused organisations, one private food business and one public sector organisation emphasised the role of regenerative farming and associated ecosystem services. One public sector organisation proposed greater promotion of organic farming practices.

OTHER COMMENTS

Seven local councils and two health focused organisations (one "other" and one local government) believe that councils should be a key partner and highlighted their role in initiatives aimed at reducing food waste and their statutory biodiversity duty in developing Biodiversity Action Plans.

(5) Strategic Priority Five - Building healthy lives through food education. Key Themes Raised:

EXISTING PROGRAMMES

One professional health focused organisation, two professional food hygiene organisations and five local councils outlined the different initiatives already operational and advocated their role in this priority. Examples included; community nutrition skills programmes, "Let's get Cooking", Calorie Wise Award Scheme, promotion of MenuCal, (a calorie and allergen management tool for business use and nutrition sampling surveys) and mapping of food poverty initiatives across councils.

FREE SCHOOL MEALS/BREAKFAST CLUBS

A range of organisations (one environmental organisation, one "other" farmer focused organisation, an additional "other" organisation and one individual) suggested the provision of free school meals, free breakfast clubs or subsidies to purchase fruit and vegetables.

LIFELONG EDUCATION

One environment focused organisation suggested feeding and weaning from birth to two years old would lay the foundations for a healthy diet, while another environmental organisation proposed that food education is required at all levels, from children to teachers to professionals. One skills focused organisation suggested interventions should be made at primary school level and one "other" organisation proposed the inclusion of young adults/adults in higher education who are shopping and cooking for themselves for the first time.

OTHER COMMENTS

Three farming focused organisations highlighted the importance of achieving balance between the cost of producing food with welfare and environmental improvements. They also highlighted dietary imbalances within most segments of society, and the importance of considering the overall nutritional quality of the diet, avoiding focus on individual food groups and polarising dietary choice, with the imperative that food education is based on sound peer-reviewed science.

Three public sector organisations have highlighted the overlap with other priorities and suggested amalgamation of priorities.

(6) Strategic Priority Six - Building and maintaining appropriate emergency contingency plans across the supply chain. Key Themes Raised:

CLIMATE CHANGE

Five organisations (one voluntary environment focused, two "other" organisations - one of which is food focused, one private sector food business and one public sector health focused organisation) identified that climate change impact should be considered in future contingency planning. Three of these organisations referred to the requirement for "resilient supply chains" while a food focused organisation suggested the need for a contingency fund.

LOCAL COUNCILS

A health focused "other" organisation and several local councils identified the role they played during the Covid-19 pandemic and highlighted that councils have a civil contingencies role in the event of an emergency and should be a key delivery partner.

OTHER COMMENTS

Two public sector organisations felt that the lack of emphasis on ecosystem services was apparent in Strategic Priority Six, where there is no mention of soils, pollinators, pests, diseases, or invasive alien species.

Two farmer focused organisations identified the critical role of the agriculture industry and how a range of disease challenges and geopolitical issues can adversely impact the ability to stock shelves. One academic public sector organisation suggested further work was required to assess "to what extent local diversification could help with import substitution and thus reduce carbon footprint and promote more profitability in local farming, etc."

Two responders from academia identified that the Covid-19 crisis response demonstrated the lead role government should take in contingency planning, supported by the community/voluntary sectors. They suggested building food hubs and basing them around food policy councils (or some local food group) across the region as one way to address food insecurity in times of emergency. This could also link to social supermarkets and other approaches to delivering food to the vulnerable and addressing closed or circular food economies.

Q11. From your perspective, are there any strategic priorities that are missing from the NI Food Strategy Framework? If 'yes', what are they and why?

Out of a total of 63 responses, 53 (84%) responded to this question. 20 responses said no priorities were missing, and three organisations (one environmental, two farmers focused) noted there were still several other strategies under development which could impact on the food strategy. Key themes raised:

PUBLIC SECTOR PROCUREMENT

Three environment focused organisations, one farming body, one political party and two public sector organisations discussed the role of government food procurement in driving the development of a more sustainable economy including a more sustainable food sector. A farming organisation highlighted recent government procurement requirements in France "to source at least 40 per cent of their food locally".

OTHER COMMENTS

Two farming focused organisations advocated for the creation of a dedicated food marketing body with a strong identity to deliver for all the food industry, citing the example of Bord Bia in the Republic of Ireland.

Two environment focused organisations (one voluntary, one public sector) suggested the decarbonisation of Northern Ireland and its food systems deserved a separate priority or greater emphasis in priorities 4 and 6.

One political organisation proposed greater focus on making agriculture more self-sustainable in fruit and vegetables, whilst two private food businesses suggested the priorities need to reflect the development of a more plant-based food culture.

Three food businesses believe more support for innovation in agriculture and manufacturing was required, whilst one political organisation, one voluntary skills focused organisation and one private sector organisation suggested greater emphasis on skills training and increasing the level of qualifications within the industry.

Decision Making Principles

Q12. What are your views on the proposed guiding principles to be used to guide the development of future policy interventions?

Out of a total of 63 responses, 48 (86%) responded to this question. Most respondents agreed with the guiding Principles, however they suggested further elaboration on each would be beneficial.

Two private sector organisations (one food focused and one environment focused) both highlighted that 'leadership/industry engagement, a shared value to succeed, [and] an acceptance of responsibility' are all key to delivering success, and that all Principles should revolve around society and economic gain. One stated that leadership is critical to success, and it is vital that such leadership is non-political and detached from Government.

PRINCIPLE 1: INCLUSIVITY AND OPENNESS

One private sector organisation sought clarity as to which voices were being represented and where they were being selected from.

A public sector health focused organisation recommended the Framework include a protocol for the management of conflicts of interest, such as commercial entities influencing decision making on the Food Strategy.

PRINCIPLE 2: COLLABORATION AND LEADERSHIP

One private sector organisation sought clarity on "who is responsible for what and by whom in this Principle."

PRINCIPLE 3: EVIDENCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

One environment focused public sector organisation suggested that Principle 3 should include the ability to innovate and undertake research that may not be evidence-based at present.

One local council organisation welcomed the Principle being evidence-based, transparent and accountable, however they encouraged greater alignment with the 'Sustainable Development Goals and FAO's Sustainable Healthy Diets Guiding Principles'.

One "other" food focused organisation suggested Principle 3 should refer to 'Peer reviewed' evidence.

PRINCIPLE 4: RIGHT TO FOOD

Two academic organisations and one environment focused "other" organisation referenced Nourish Scotland 'Right to Food campaign' and advocate a statutory commitment to the right to food in Northern Ireland. One grower focused organisation felt that there must be an emphasis on food security and affordability which requires a 'strong local production base which provides core capacity and is economically viable'.

PRINCIPLE 5: SUSTAINABILITY

Two environment focused organisations (both "other" organisations) suggested amending the wording in Principle 5. One suggested 'Sustainability' was too broad and open to potential manipulation and needed to have more specific criteria. The other organisation suggested the wording could be changed to 'Sustainability and Regeneration' to include a food system where decision making supports social, environmental, and economic sustainability and regeneration.

A public sector health focused organisation proposed an amendment to Principle 5 to reflect the UN's '17 Sustainable Development Goals'.

PRINCIPLE 6: ADAPTABILITY

Three organisations (one public sector local council organisation, one private sector food focused organisation and one grower focused organisation) proposed wording improvements for Principle 6. One suggested rewording to 'a sustainable food system that is people focused, knowledge and science driven, resilient and adaptive to innovations as priorities emerge'. Secondly, they described the wording 'people focused' as 'unclear' and suggested it should be clarified. Another felt the wording was misleading, suggesting that the food system should be market-driven and supported, not led by science.

PRINCIPLE 7

No comments were made regarding Principle 7.

PRINCIPLE 8: SINGLE SUPPLY CHAIN

Key issues:

SUSTAINABILITY

Five organisations (two local council organisations, one grower focused organisation, two environment focused organisations) suggested that Principle 8 should also indicate that sustainability is embedded within the single supply chain. This would recognise the benefits of localised, shorter supply chains that increase 'food security, strengthen local economies and regenerate rural communities'.

SINGLE SUPPLY CHAIN

One organisation highlighted that instead of one supply chain it should be based on multiple supply chains that evolve over time to meet specific needs. Another organisation raised concerns that relying on a single supply chain that is heavily dependent on non-sustainable feedstocks is not effective. One organisation requested a clearer definition of a single supply chain and why it is desirable.

OTHER COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS

Two organisations (one private sector farmer focused organisation and one council organisation) felt there was a lack of clarification in Principle 8. They felt that this makes it impossible to identify if 'carbon leakage' is a factor being taken into consideration which in their view would be important.

Q13. From your perspective, are there any guiding principles missing? If yes, what are they and why?

Out of a total of 63 responses, 48 (76%) responded to this question. Of those who responded, most organisations felt the 8 guiding Principles were appropriate for the Framework outlined. However, some organisations felt that they were missing particular aspects which have been detailed below. Key themes raised:

SUSTAINABLE FOOD ACCREDITATION

Six organisations (two community and voluntary food and environment focused organisations, two local council organisations, one "other" food focused organisation and one private sector food focused organisation) highlighted the need for education and training for businesses, organisations, and stakeholders across the food supply chain to secure enhanced sustainable food accreditation.

AFFORDABILITY

Four organisations (one local council organisation, one public sector organisation, one private sector food focused organisation and one public health organisation) felt that Principle 4 should include food affordability. One organisation highlighted the importance of affordability being included in these Principles in terms of the resources needed to deliver on the framework including budgets.

HEALTH

Three organisations (one private individual and two Public Health focused organisations) referenced the need to include health within these Principles, citing the strong connection between health and food. One organisation suggested a collaborative approach to improving the health of people by incorporating health considerations across all decision-making approaches.

A public sector health focused organisation believe that 'Proportionate Universalism' should be included as a principle within the Framework. They recommended a 'higher-level commitment to tackle health and social inequities in the principles of the Framework'. They suggested this can be done by creating an expert advisory group to make recommendations on equity-focused measures, along with conducting a health equity audit as part of mid-term or final reviews.

FOOD POVERTY

Two organisations (One community and voluntary environment focused organisation and one "other" University organisation) felt that Food Poverty needed to be addressed in a variety of ways ensuring healthy foods are accessible to those with a low-income.

ECONOMIC PRINCIPLES

Three organisations (two private sector food and environment focused organisations and one "other" University organisation) wanted to see greater emphasis on economics, in delivering value for money. One organisation believe it was important to see how the Framework delivers successfully in relation to financial resources, including how economic benefits are to be measured.

Two organisations (one private sector food focused organisation and one "other" business organisation) recommended that principles of trade are given a greater role.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Two organisations (one local council organisation and one Community and Voluntary sector environment focused organisation) suggested that climate change should be mentioned in Principle 5. They argued that the need to reduce climate change and adapt the food system to be resilient and secure should be implemented.

Q14. Do you agree with the high-level vision, principles and strategic areas contained in the proposed NI Food Strategy Framework?

Out of a total of 63 responses, 52 (83%) responded to this question. Overall, approximately 73% agreed/strongly agreed (30% strongly agreed and 43% agreed). 17% of respondents did not answer the question, 2% of respondents strongly disagreed; and 8% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

Q15. Have you any other comments on the proposed NI Food Strategy Framework?

Out of a total of 63 responses, 47 (75%) responded to this question. Key themes raised:

IMPLEMENTATION

A range of organisations (including one environment focused voluntary organisation, one farmer focused organisation, one private sector food business and two local government organisations) identified the challenge would be in converting these words and sentiments into an agreed action plan that will deliver outcomes. Issues identified included the financial and political commitments required, conversion of the plan into actual projects and associated review processes, as well as competing priorities between departments for resources/funding.

ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Seven local councils, their representative body and a food hygiene focused organisation felt that "account has not been fully taken of the role of local government and our ability to deliver at local level". They also believe that a mapping exercise should be carried out of existing initiatives and groups to establish a baseline that would inform future plans, avoid duplication, combine resources and ensure a true "whole of government approach."

OTHER COMMENTS

Three environment focused organisations advocated that the Department should engage with the Belfast Food Network and its "seven-step emergency food aid response that relies wholly on the provision of healthy sustainable food through existing local supply chains".

One health focused public sector body highlighted their work in food education in schools together with nutritional standards for schools and health and social care settings, highlighting that this should be reflected within the strategic framework. One health focused "other" organisation and one university organisation highlighted a need for greater involvement of private, community and voluntary sectors.

Two farmer focused organisations proposed greater focus on the significant marketing and promotional activities of the "big players", stating that changing culture and behaviours is going to require their support.

Implementation Approach

Q16. What are your views on the proposed approach to implementation, i.e. five-year action plans will be developed and implemented in collaboration with key stakeholders and partners?

Out of a total of 63 responses, 53 (84%) responded to this question and more than half of those who responded agreed with the 5-year action plan. Key themes raised:

MORE DETAIL REQUIRED

Twenty organisations (1 community and voluntary, 7 "other", 1 private sector and 11 public sector) believe more detail on the actions plans and the associated engagement process is required. Issues raised include, "detail is lacking on how each topic specific working group would link with each other and work collaboratively" and it is "not clear how inevitable conflicts of interest in policy agendas between government departments and between state and commercial actors will be managed."

FIVE-YEAR TIMELINE

There were a range of views presented on the proposed five-year action plans. 11 organisations (one farmer focused organisation, one food focused organisation, one private individual and eight public sector organisations) felt five-year plans were appropriate and commented that it "gives sufficient time for plans to be implemented once developed and their effectiveness reviewed." Six organisations (two voluntary environment focused, and four "others") gave a qualified endorsement of the five-year plans suggesting annual reviews, whilst four organisations (three private sector/one public sector) felt that action plans needed to be immediate with two suggesting the adoption of a three-year plan.

OTHER COMMENTS

Eight organisations (one voluntary, three "other" and four private sector), five of these organisations being farmer focused expressed concern that the proposed approach appeared bureaucratic, with a number of associated issues for example cost, a potential lack of responsiveness in dealing with sudden changes (e.g., Covid-19 Pandemic) and a lack of urgency resulting in industry disengagement.

Five organisations (one "other" and four private sector), three of these being farmer focused organisations, wished to see the industry voice heard in the process while six organisations (three "other", one private sector and two public sector) highlighted the importance of the citizen voice in implementation arrangements.

Nine public sector organisations identified that effective delivery will require additional resources to avoid it being burdensome for key partners and to ensure their full participation and the ultimate success of the strategy.

Q17. What are your views on the establishment of a Food Programme Board that is embedded within the governance arrangements for Green Growth?

Out of a total of 63 responses, 55 (87%) responded to this question. There was broad agreement on the proposed Food Programme Board. However, 11 organisations highlighted concerns surrounding representation and 8 organisations suggested additional information was required on roles and responsibilities. Key themes raised:

STAKEHOLDER REPRESENTATION

Eleven organisations (one local council organisation, one community and voluntary environment focused organisation, five public sector organisations, one private sector organisation, three "other" food and environment focused organisations) stated that key stakeholders and communities needed to be represented within the Food Programme Board. These organisations highlighted the importance of all sectors and agencies relevant to the food industry being represented and having a voice within the board. Three organisations (two private sector organisations and one "other" diet related organisation) highlighted that the board members should have commercial knowledge and understanding of the specific challenges facing the NI Agri-food Sector.

One local council organisation highlighted the importance of a local government link with the Food Programme Board to ensure continuity and progression.

OVERSIGHT OF FOOD PROGRAMME BOARD

Eight organisations (six public sector organisations, one local council organisation and one community and voluntary farmer focused organisation) argued that it is essential that there is oversight around the proposed Food Programme Board to ensure delivery of the strategy and provide accountability.

One community and voluntary food focused organisation suggested the Food Programme Board should report to the Ministerial Group directly.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON FOOD PROGRAMME BOARD STRUCTURE AND ROLE

Eight organisations (three private sector food focused organisations, one public sector organisation, one private individual and three "other" environment and food focused organisations) believe additional information is required on the proposed roles and responsibilities of the Food Programme Board. An environment focused organisation wanted to know what "formal processes and structures will be put in place." A second food focused organisation highlighted its concern over environmental priorities taking precedence due to the title of 'green growth'

Q18. Do you have any comments on future arrangements for engagement with stakeholders about implementation and delivery of the NI Food Strategy Framework?

Out of a total of 63 responses, 51 (81%) responded to this question. Key themes raised:

INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL COUNCILS AND KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Twenty-four organisations (nine local council organisations, 10 "other" organisations, 6 public sector organisations, 5 private sector organisations, 2 community and voluntary sector organisations and one private individual) identified that the Framework will require engagement with local councils and key stakeholders with relevant understanding and knowledge to be successful. Public sector organisations suggested discussions with local government organisations should be initiated at CEO level.

Private sector organisations commented that farmers need to be assured that their input will be reflected in discussions. This was echoed by one local council organisation who suggested key stakeholders from the food and drink industry be part of the process, providing expertise and experience as full participants. Many respondents suggested that overall wider representation of all parts of the food system, including the consumer, was required.

ADVISORY PANEL

A private sector food focused organisation recommended a formal advisory panel, including industry and youth voices to attract young people in NI and suggested this could involve the Department for Education.

STAKEHOLDER FOOD FORUM

One local council organisation suggested the creation of a Stakeholder Food Forum, as an alternative to adapting existing structures, with which councils would be involved.

REGULAR REVIEWS

Two organisations (one local council organisation and one public health focused organisation) suggested a need for regular progress reviews to be carried out by the Food Programme Board. The health focused organisation recommended that periodic progress reports on the implementation of the strategy be provided to the Minister for Health and the Chief Medical Officer.

OTHER COMMENTS

Two organisations (one "other" food focused organisation and one community and voluntary sector environment focused organisation) suggested that the NI Food Strategy Framework provides a unique opportunity to implement open government practices based on transparency, participation and accountability.

One political organisation highlighted that the Section 75 equality duty imposes an obligation on public authorities to have a 'due regard to promote Equality of Opportunity'. This is a powerful tool for the sector to get their voices heard but also to shape policy and decisions. They recommended early engagement with the industry to progress the strategy.

Q19. Have you any other comments on how to achieve a diverse and inclusive process for public engagement?

Out of a total of 63 responses, 48 (76%) responded to this question. Key themes raised:

WORKSHOPS/PUBLIC MEETINGS

Ten public sector organisations recommended using workshops, public meetings and forums, consultation with trade associations, local public engagement events, webinars, public surveys and use of flyers, social media, TV and radio to help achieve a diverse and inclusive process of public engagement. One industry body cautioned that the greater the diversity of views being represented, the more difficult it becomes to achieve a consensus that is meaningful and capable of achieving objectives. Two "other" organisations and one private sector organisation encouraged using innovative and creative ways to gain public engagement.

Two farmer focused organisations advocated for effective chairperson skills during any engagement event to avoid it becoming a "talking shop".

YOUNG PEOPLE

Four organisations (one environment focused voluntary, one trade body and two private organisations - one a food business) specifically mentioned the need to include input from young people in any engagement.

COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR INVOLVEMENT

Four organisations, (two "other" - one environment focused, one farmer focused, and two private organisations) stated that it is important that the community and voluntary sector is included as a key stakeholder.

One voluntary environment focused organisation and two public sector organisations felt language and literacy levels need to be considered due to the diverse population in Northern Ireland. This would include connecting with the many people from different countries and cultural backgrounds who now call Northern Ireland home.

Benefits to be Realised

Q20. Do you agree with the potential benefits to be derived from taking a Food Strategy Framework approach?

Out of a total of 63 respondents, 51 (81%) responded to this question with 49 in agreement with the benefits. Although in agreement with the benefits several respondents provided additional thoughts which have been detailed below.

HEALTH

One "other" diet focused organisation recommended the inclusion of health benefits, stating there appears to be no health benefits in taking this food strategy approach.

CLIMATE CHANGE

One community and voluntary environment focused organisation and one private individual suggested there should be recognition of the role of the entire food system in both mitigating and adapting to climate change and addressing biodiversity and resource crisis.

One "other" farmer focused organisation stated that cementing Northern Ireland's place as a key supplier of choice to the wider UK would be a beneficial outcome.

STANDARD OF LIVING

One private food business recommended reference to standard of living for producers along with improving hospitals, school meals and procurement to the existing benefits.

METRICS

Two organisations (one private sector food focused organisation and one public sector local government organisation) recommended regular measurable reviews with the benefit enhancements being transparently reported to all. One local government organisation suggested deliverable outcome-based targets and one community and voluntary sector organisation suggested without targets and agreed outputs it would risk losing meaning. One community and voluntary food focused organisation felt that areas of responsibility need delineated to allow partners and stakeholders to take ownership of each component of the strategy. Two organisations (one "other" grower focused organisation and one voluntary sector farmer focused organisation) suggested many of the benefits are wordy, generally intangible and impossible to measure.

FOOD MESSAGING

A diet focused organisation suggested a greater emphasis on coordination and repositioning of food messaging to the citizens of Northern Ireland could be very valuable but that new partnership working structures will need strong support from government.

OTHER COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS

One public sector academic organisation commented that taking a food systems approach "assumes a logical model of intervention and this runs several dangers. Competing interests become a problem." They suggested the need for a mechanism to negotiate and talk through tensions.

One "other" farmer focused organisation believe that the success of the strategy will depend on buy-in from stakeholders, demonstrating early wins for areas such as public procurement of local quality assured food. A public sector health focused organisation suggested strengthening the Food Strategy governance arrangements in order to assist with achieving the benefits. A food focused "other" organisation reinforced this, advocating for a more joined-up approach and proposing that an Inter-Ministerial group would speed up decisions.

Two organisations (one environment focused and one food focused "other") highlighted the lack of detail, insufficient clarity and evidence on the potential benefits.

Rural Needs Assessment

Q21. Are there any rural needs comments that you wish to raise at this point about the impact of the NI Food Strategy Framework on Rural areas? Do you have any evidence that would be useful to Departments? If so, can you describe the evidence and provide a copy.

Out of a total of 63 responses, 46 (73%) responded to this question, with 21 respondents providing additional comments. Key themes raised:

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Seven organisations (two private sector food focused organisations, one "other" organisation, two private individuals, and two public sector organisations) highlighted the need for increased support for farmers, particularly mental health support as suicide rates remain high within the farming community. An environment focused organisation felt "we need to be mindful of the hardships and stress in rural communities".

SCHEMES AND PROGRAMMES

A private individual suggested designing strategies that promote small scale farmer participation. A second private individual suggested more support for small farm shops. One food focused organisation highlighted that 'evidence shows that micro and small businesses have lower levels of innovation and productivity', suggesting more support in these areas is needed.

RURAL TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Four organisations (three local council organisations and one food focused organisation) highlighted the importance of geography and its impact on availability and accessibility to food.

In rural areas for example accessibility may be impacted by public transport and geographic availability of food outlets and shops. Geography can also impact what local food outlets stock and therefore potentially impact on availability of choice. Local councils argue the Rural Needs Impact Assessment does not appear to deal with accessibility to food outlets and shops in rural areas and highlighted the importance of establishing who is not able to access healthy, affordable, and varied diets. They also referenced the poor access to a range of services such as public transport due to its geography. A food focused organisation believes improvements need to be made surrounding infrastructure such as health and schools in support of rural areas.

Three organisations (two private sector organisations and one "other" food focused organisation) highlighted the need for energy solutions in rural areas. One food organisation argued the energy network in rural communities is inadequate and consequentially means that agriculture cannot support the demand. It was stated that rural broadband also needs to be improved.

OTHER COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS

One community and voluntary environment focused organisation suggested consideration be given to the significant differences in the ways the Strategic Framework is "delivered in various communities; rural and urban, farmers and consumers, companies and restauranteurs". They felt that all participants need to be recognised and considered.

Equality Assessment

Q22. Are there any equality comments that you wish to raise at this point?

Do you have any evidence that would be useful to Departments?

If so, can you describe the evidence and provide a copy.

Out of a total of 63 responses, 43 (68%) responded to this question. Key themes raised:

FOOD INEQUALITIES

Four organisations (one community and voluntary sector organisation, one private sector organisation, one "other" organisation and one public sector organisation) highlighted the emergence of food inequality issues (such as gender, ethnicity, income, and other cultural factors) in terms of availability and accessibility and the need for these to be addressed. One public sector academic organisation echoed this inequality with particular reference to income and access to food. They also highlighted that low-income groups tend to have higher levels of obesity. A second public sector organisation raised the importance of consumer/citizen and food insecurity expert representation in any discussions related to this topic.

One food focused organisation argued that this strategy also needs to address diversity in the workforce.

Q23. Are there any environmental impact comments that you wish to raise at this point? Do you have any evidence that would be useful to Departments? If so, can you describe the evidence and provide a copy.

Out of a total of 63 responses, 47 (75%) responded to this question. Key themes raised:

CLIMATE CHANGE, CARBON, BIODIVERSITY REFERENCES

Six organisations (two voluntary, two "others", one private sector and one public sector) of which four are environment focused, raised the need for more specific mention of climate, carbon, biodiversity, resource, water and waste impacts. One organisation felt that "unsustainable production practices and pollution jeopardises the entire sector and NI's food security as well as the health of our environment and our people".

Two food focused organisations raised concerns that "government does not give credit to industry for projects and initiatives that are already operational" and without an active, sustainable agri-food sector the delivery of environmental targets will not be possible". This was re-iterated by two food businesses who advised they are actively incorporating technologies to address environmental concerns.

One public sector environment focused organisation acknowledged opportunities with potential land use change but also urged caution as "it raises the possibility of some types of farming being globally uncompetitive with consequential impacts on individual farms and communities as well as the natural environment".

CARBON FOOT PRINTING

One food focused organisation and a public sector organisation identified carbon foot printing of food and the agreement of a common measurement protocol to be agreed and implemented as a priority.

LINKS TO OTHER DOCUMENTS

Several organisations provided links to reports which they felt should be considered. These are referenced at Annex D.

Environmental Assessment

Q24. Are there any other comments you wish to make or any other evidence of need that you think Departments would find helpful?
Please submit any evidence with your response.

Out of a total of 63 responses, 54 (86%) responded to this question with a wide variety of additional evidence submitted. A list of all additional documents submitted is provided at Annex E.

NORTHERN IRELAND FOOD STRATEGY FRAMEWORK
Food at the Heart of our Society - A Prospectus for Change
Consultation Summary of Responses 2022

ANNEX

Annex A: Consultation Questions

QUESTION 1.	Do you agree with taking a food systems, whole of government approach through a NI Food Strategy Framework? • Completely agree • Agree • Neither agree/disagree • Disagree • Completely disagree
QUESTION 2.	What are your views on taking a Food Systems "whole of government" approach through a NI Food Strategy Framework?
QUESTION 3.	What are your views on the strategic context identified?
QUESTION 4.	From your perspective, are there any other NI government policy linkages which you feel are relevant?
QUESTION 5.	What are your views on the proposed ambition of the NI Food Strategy Framework?
QUESTION 6.	What are your views on the proposed scope of the NI Food Strategy Framework?
QUESTION 7.	What are your views on the proposed vision of the NI Food Strategy Framework?
QUESTION 8.	What are your views on the proposed aim of the NI Food Strategy Framework?
QUESTION 9.	Do you agree with the proposed six strategic priorities? • Strongly agree • Agree • Neither agree/disagree • Disagree • Completely disagree
QUESTION 10.	Are there any amendments or refinements that you would like to make to these priorities?
QUESTION 11.	From your perspective, are there any strategic priorities that are missing from the NI Food Strategy Framework? If 'yes', what are they and why?
QUESTION 12.	What are your views on the proposed guiding principles to be used to guide the development of future policy interventions?
QUESTION 13.	From your perspective, are there any guiding principles missing? If yes, what are they and why?

QUESTION 14.	Do you agree with the high level vision, principles and strategic areas contained in the proposed NI Food Strategy Framework? • Completely agree • Agree • Neither agree/disagree • Disagree • Completely disagree
QUESTION 15.	Have you any other comments on the proposed NI Food Strategy Framework?
QUESTION 16.	What are your views on the proposed approach to implementation, i.e. five year action plans will be developed and implemented in collaboration with key stakeholders and partners?
QUESTION 17.	What are your views on the establishment of a Food Programme Board that is embedded within the governance arrangements for Green Growth?
QUESTION 18.	Do you have any comments on future arrangements for engagement with stakeholders about implementation and delivery of the NI Food Strategy Framework?
QUESTION 19.	Have you any other comments on how to achieve a diverse and inclusive process for public engagement?
QUESTION 20.	Do you agree with the potential benefits to be derived from taking a Food Strategy Framework approach?
QUESTION 21.	Are there any rural needs comments that you wish to raise at this point about the impact of the NI Food Strategy Framework on Rural areas? Do you have any evidence that would be useful to Departments? If so, can you describe the evidence and provide a copy.
QUESTION 22.	Are there any equality comments that you wish to raise at this point? Do you have any evidence that would be useful to Departments? If so, can you describe the evidence and provide a copy.
QUESTION 23.	Are there any environmental impact comments that you wish to raise at this point? Do you have any evidence that would be useful to Departments? If so, can you describe the evidence and provide a copy.
QUESTION 24.	Are there any other comments you wish to make or any other evidence of need that you think Departments would find helpful? Please submit any evidence with your response.

NORTHERN IRELAND FOOD STRATEGY FRAMEWORK
Food at the Heart of our Society - A Prospectus for Change
Consultation Summary of Responses 2022

ANNEX

Annex B: Consultation Respondents

NI Food Strategy Framework List of Respondents*

Public Sector	Private Sector	Community & Voluntary Sector	Other
Waste Policy Team (DAERA	Eva tech DAC	Food and Drink Sector Skills	Culmore Organic Farm
Lisburn and Castlereagh Council	GRG Foods Ltd	Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful	British Diabetic Association
Ards and North Down Council	Plant Based Plans Ltd	National Trust	Chartered Institution of Wastes Management
Derry City and Strabane District Council (x2)	White's Speedicook	Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL)	Belfast Food Network
Causeway Coast and Glens Council	Dairy Council for NI	Plunkett Foundation	Nature Friendly Farming Network
City University, London- Centre for Food Policy	Veg NI	Ulster Farmers Union (UFU)	Livestock and Meat Commission NI
Fermanagh and Omagh Council	Bell Architects Ltd	Farmers for Action	Sustainable Soils Association
Newry Mourne and Down District Council	Green Resources Ltd		NI Agricultural Producers Association (NIAPA)
Gourmet Ireland	NI Grain Trade Association		Food NI
Southern Health Trust	Horticulture Forum NI		Not for Profit Industry Body
Ulster University (Food and Drink Business Development Centre)	Moy Park		Royal Society Protection for the Birds (RSPB)
Public Health Agency	Northway Mushrooms Ltd		British Association of Shooting and Conservation

Public Sector	Private Sector	Community & Voluntary Sector	Other
Armagh Craigavon Banbridge Borough Council	Born Maverick Food Innovation Ltd		Sinn Féin
Consumer Council NI	Sea Source (ANIFPO)		Chartered Institute of Environmental Health
Environmental Health NI			NI Food and Drink Association (NIFDA)
Mid Ulster District Council			Ulster University
Belfast City Council - waste and biodiversity			
Institute of Public Health Ireland			
NI Local Government Association			
Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside			
Tourism NI			
NI Environment Agency (submitted as private individual)			

*Responses from Private Individuals have not been named

Number of respondents categorised by organisation-type

Respondent Type	Total	Percent
Public Sector	23	36.51%
Private Sector	14	22.22%
Community/Voluntary	7	11.11%
Private Individual	2	3.17%
Other (please specify)	17	26.98%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

NORTHERN IRELAND FOOD STRATEGY FRAMEWORK
Food at the Heart of our Society - A Prospectus for Change
Consultation Summary of Responses 2022

ANNEX

Annex C: Responses to Closed Questions

Question 1: Do you agree with taking a food systems, whole of government approach through a NI Food Strategy Framework?

81% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with taking a food systems, whole of government approach through a NI Food Strategy Framework.

Responses to Question 1: Do you agree with taking a food systems, whole of government approach through a NI Food Strategy Framework?

Option	Total	Percent
Agree	30	47.62%
Agree	21	33.33%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	3	4.76%
Disagree	0	0.00%
Strongly Disagree	1	1.59%
Not Answered	8	12.70%

Question 9: Do you agree with the proposed six strategic priorities?

76% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed.

Breakdown of responses to Question 9: Do you agree with the proposed six strategic priorities?

Option	Total	Percent
Agree	20	31.75%
Agree	28	44.44%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	12	19.05%
Disagree	2	3.17%
Strongly Disagree	1	1.59%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

Question 14: Do you agree with the high level vision, principles and strategic areas contained in the proposed NI Food Strategy Framework?

73% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed.

Breakdown of responses to question 14: Do you agree with the high level vision, principles and strategic areas contained in the proposed NI Food Strategy Framework?

Option	Total	Percent
Agree	19	30.16%
Agree	27	42.86%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	5	7.94%
Disagree	0	0.00%
Strongly Disagree	1	1.59%
Not Answered	11	17.46%

NORTHERN IRELAND FOOD STRATEGY FRAMEWORK
Food at the Heart of our Society - A Prospectus for Change
Consultation Summary of Responses 2022

ANNEX

Annex D: Environmental Impact Links
Provided by Respondents

Noticing Nature report, February 2020, https://nt.global.ssl.fastly.net/documents/noticing-nature-report-feb-2020.pdf

ORNI, Outdoor Recreation: People, Nature, Health, March 2021, http://www.outdoorrecreationni.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/People-Nature-and-Health-NI-March-2021.pdf

State of Nature Report 2019, https://nbn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/State-of-Nature-2019-UK-full-report.pdf)

UK Food System GHG https://wrap.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-10/WRAP-UK-Food-System-GHG-Emissions-Technical-Report_0.pdf

Pathway 2030:-Delivering a 50% reduction in the GHG footprint of UK food and drink (summary-report) https://wrap.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-10/WRAP-Pathway-2030-Delivering-a-50%25-reduction-in-the-GHG-footprint-of-UK-food-and-drink-summary-report_0.pdf

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NORTHERN IRELAND FOOD STRATEGY FRAMEWORK
Food at the Heart of our Society - A Prospectus for Change
Consultation Summary of Responses 2022

ANNEX

Annex E: Evidence Provided by Respondents for Consideration

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