Policy proposal overview:

A Basic Income for Local Food Farmers

Investing in Ireland's resilience & food sovereignty

Talamh Beo

Land · People · Community

A Basic Income for Local Food Farmers

Why invest in Local Food Farms?

Local Food Farms generate multiple social, economic and environmental benefits. Increasing domestic food production reduces reliance on imports, strengthens resilience to supply-chain disruption and keeps more value circulating locally. There is significant potential to grow this sector while reconnecting land, people and communities. Local Food Farms:

- Create rural employment & local enterprise
- Support the health of farmers & eaters
- Improve biodiversity, soil health & climate resilience
- Facilitate generational renewal & diversity of land use
- Encourage use of diverse varieties, heritage breeds & seed saving thus increasing resilience of domestic food production
- Enable opportunities for community engagement, education & rural cohesion
- Keep more food spending within local economies

What does our current food system look like?

Ireland has a highly productive agricultural sector, but our current food system is heavily shaped by export markets:

- **We import as much as 83% of our fruit and vegetables**
- We produce around 7x more beef than we consume yet, import over 40,000t of beef each year
- 90% of Irish dairy production is exported
- >50% of the average diet in Ireland is ultra-processed

Our current model disconnects what we produce from what we eat, and shifts value away from farmers and local economies.

"Being a local food farmer is hugely rewarding, but we operate on an unfair playing field - delivering wider benefits that go unrewarded while competing with cheap imports."

Janet Power, Gorse Farm

Our Research

Through 2025 and 2026, Talamh Beo conducted in-depth primary research of Ireland's Local Food Farms* - a sector that has remained largely invisible to government and inadequately supported.

As part of this work we:

- Built a database of over 350 local food farms across Ireland
- Interviewed and surveyed over 150 local food farmers

When asked what supports would help them feel hopeful and secure about their future:

- **69% identified financial support as a top priority**
- More than 50% identified labour support and community connection as critical needs

Local Food Farms already provide the foundations of a more resilient food system. The opportunity now is to invest in that existing base and enable it to grow.

** IEN funded project 'Strengthening Local Food Economies' with partners Cultivate & Feasta, 2025-26*

Why a Basic Income?

If we want thriving local food systems, we need to guarantee a fair income for Local Food Farmers, but many Local Food Farms are overlooked by the current subsidy system. As voiced by farmers in our research, a **Basic Income for Local Food Farmers** would:

- Provide income stability
- Enable long-term planning and investment
- Increase production and market reach
- Drive on-farm innovation
- Facilitate agroecological land stewardship
- Improve farmers' overall wellbeing
- Support essential caregiving responsibilities
- Create opportunities for on-farm educational programmes & community engagement

Talamh Beo proposes a Basic Income for Local Food Farmers as a **straightforward, fair and implementable income support mechanism.**

What is a Local Food Farm?

Talamh Beo have developed robust criteria to assess the eligibility of candidates for this Basic Income proposal. A summary is as follows:

1. **Primary food production** – the farm is actively engaged in the rearing or growing of primary food products
2. **Local market oriented** - at least 70% of food produced is sold via Short Food Supply Chains
3. **Agroecological production** – prioritising biodiversity and the long-term health of soils and ecosystems
4. **Commercial activity** – able to demonstrate a minimum annual production value

Next Steps

and how you can get involved

Campaign Launch for policy makers and journalists – October 29th, Trinity College Dublin

Scan for more information and to join our campaign, get updates and help build momemtum!

Get in touch: foodsystems@talamhbeo.ie

Talamh Beo is a democratically organised, member-led organisation. It is run by farmers who have direct experience of the issues they campaign on.

"We want everyone in Ireland to have access to high quality, locally produced food. We also want farmers to earn a fair living from providing that food into their communities."

Join a movement that's shaping the future of food and farming in Ireland! Becoming a Talamh Beo member adds your voice to ours, strengthens our campaigns, our advocacy, and our power to push for real change. It helps us run trainings, events, and farm walks, and it supports the skills of agroecological farmers and growers across the island.

Scan for more information and resources or to become a member!

www.talamhbeo.ie/localfoodcampaign