VOL. 3

Talamh Beo

Land • People • Community

The Talamh Beo Explainer Series: Part of Talamh Beo's Soil Biodiversity Literacy and Enhancement Project

What is our Local Food Policy?

We want everyone in Ireland to have access to locally produced, nutrient dense, chemical-free food. We also want farmers to earn a fair living providing that food for their own communities.

As an organisation Talamh Beo advocates for policies that support the growth of vibrant local food systems where farmers can provide nutritious, sustainably produced food to their localities, all people have affordable access to food produced in their own locality and where food and farming benefits local communities and revitalizes economies. Local food systems strengthen the link between people and the food they eat and can give them them a greater appreciation of the place, ecosystem, and soil in which it is produced - as well as of the farmers and workers who produce it.

Why is a vibrant local food system important?

The modern industrial food system, with its monoculture production, globalised trade, and centralised processing has created an almost total disconnect between citizens and their origins of their food. This means we largely make choices about what we eat at a distance from the realities and impacts of how it is produced.

In Ireland, supermarket shelves are filled with products from all over the world, including things like potatoes, apples, and onions that can grow well here. At the same time, food produced here is primarily for export; continuing as we did under colonial rule to send our best produce elsewhere before providing for the people of this island. Even farmers often do not have access to what they produce; a farmer who produces beef in Galway may have it slaughtered in Kildare and sold in a supermarket in Dublin, without any of the meat reaching their own table.

This is a system that sees the greatest economic value in the food chain leave the local area and the profits accumulate with large processors and exporters. It is also a system of long and complex supply webs vulnerable to economic, political and climate related shocks.

While not all food can be produced locally, and we are not advocating for limiting our diet to what is available immediately around us, there is huge scope to relocalise much of the food in Ireland by creating an enabling environment for local food production and policies that support local food economies to thrive. This has the potential to:

- Give both farmers and citizens greater control over that they produce and consume (in line with our core belief in Food Sovereignty - See Explainer 1),
- Reconnect people and place, building a greater respect for environment and ecosystems and support agroecological farming practices (see Explainer 2: Agroecology),
- Revitalise rural areas and urban hinterlands
- Create food systems that are more resilient to climate and geopolitical shocks/crises

What do we want for the future?

Ireland's agri-food policy is primarily export and commodities focussed, with most supports directed towards food business with export potential or the ability to supply large supermarket multiples. There is no institutional framework to support local food production, or farms and food businesses that want to primarily supply their own local population.

We want the government to create an enabling environment for local food production by creating a policy framework that supports and provides pathways for local and small-scale producers. Talamh Beo's Local Food Policy Framework proposes:

Institutional recognition
Income supports
Labour and finance incentives
Pilot projects for land access
A focus on short supply chains and local infrastructure

With the right supports local food systems can

Deliver viable incomes for local food producers
Deliver nutrient dense food into communities
Deliver for habitats and ecosystems
Deliver resilient and sustainable communities

For more see Talamh Beo's A Local Food Policy Framework on www.talamhbeo.ie/local-food-policy/

We want more people working the land, in diversified, human scale production, processing and distribution.

Part of Talamh Beo's Soil Biodiversity, Literacy and Enhancement Project, this explainer series sets out the overarching policy framework of Talamh Beo, the mandate of our thematic Working Groups, and our broad vision for the future of Irish farming and rural communities.

Who We Are

Talamh Beo is a democratically organised, member-led organisation run by farmers who have direct experience of the issues we campaign on. We are part of the global Food Sovereignty movement and members of global organisation Via Campesina and their European branch ECVC.
We want to create a better food system in Ireland, where all people have access to nutritious food, people can make a fair living from the land, rural communities can thrive, while restoring natural ecosystems and leaving our soil and land better than where we started.

Become a member & find out more:

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