



Talamh Beo
Land • People • Community



Local Food Farms

Policy proposal:

Basic Income for Local Food Farmers

An investment in Ireland's
resilience and Food Sovereignty



Acknowledgements

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1. Executive Summary

Ireland has a strong food-producing economy, yet much of the food we eat depends on long supply chains and imports, while the majority of what we produce is destined for export markets. In a period of increasing geopolitical, climatic and supply-chain uncertainty, maintaining a diverse domestic food-production base is an important component of national resilience.

Many of the farmers supplying domestic markets operate with insecure incomes and limited financial resilience. Talamh Beo's research shows that this financial insecurity limits the ability of Local Food Farmers to plan, invest, employ labour, develop their enterprises and remain in food production. In turn, this constraint limits the sector's contribution to domestic food provision, rural employment, local economies, biodiversity, soil health, education and community resilience.

Local Food Farms* are not formally recognised as a distinct category in national policy, and existing supports are not designed around the particular realities of diversified and locally focused food production. This proposal presents the primary intervention from Talamh Beo's wider **Local Food Policy Framework** which sets out a pathway based on recognition, targeted supports and market opportunities to bolster Local Food Farms and contribute to a more resilient local food system.

Our proposal: **A Basic Income for Local Food Farmers (BI-LFF)** of €350 per week, paid monthly, using a reference cohort of 600 farmers for initial implementation and costing. The purpose is to provide a predictable foundation of income that gives farmers greater security to continue producing food, invest in their enterprises and build for the future.

The payment would not be tied to hectares farmed, output volume or specified expenditure, and would complement rather than replace CAP and other existing supports. Eligibility would be based on four core characteristics: primary food production, Short Food Supply Chain (SFSC) orientation, commercial activity and agroecological farming practices.

Formal recognition of Local Food Farms is a broader policy objective in its own right and the foundation on which BI-LFF and other supports can be built. At present, no standard administrative category exists. The criteria set out here and outlined in Talamh Beo's Local Food Policy Framework provide the basis for both that recognition and for scheme delivery.

The design of this scheme draws on Ireland's Basic Income for the Arts as a practical precedent for a targeted, taxable and regularly paid Basic Income, supported by baseline data, ongoing monitoring and independent evaluation.

Costed for an indicative reference cohort of 600 farmers, the gross annual programme cost for the first tranche would be approximately €11.2 million, with an estimated net Exchequer cost of approximately €8.3 million after indicative tax recoupment. Using Department of Agriculture and the Marine's (DAFM) 2026 current expenditure allocation as an indicative reference point, this net cost would be equivalent to around **0.4% of annual departmental expenditure**. Wider economic, social and environmental returns would be assessed through independent longitudinal evaluation.

This proposal is intended as a developed policy proposition and starting point for detailed scheme design. Implementation would require multidisciplinary input across agricultural policy, public expenditure, taxation, social protection, State-aid law, administration, data and evaluation, alongside the continued participation of Local Food Farmers. The purpose of this document is to establish the case for the intervention, define its core principles and provide a credible basis for further scheme development. Identifying the legal basis for the payment, including State aid compliance, is a matter for Government.

A Basic Income is a practical intervention within a wider framework designed to protect and develop Ireland's Local Food Farm base – the productive foundation on which stronger local and regional food systems can be built.

*For the purposes of this proposal, 'Local Food Farm' includes fruit and vegetable farms as well as livestock, mixed and other primary food producers.

2. Why the need to support Local Food Farmers?

2.1 Why Local Food Farms Matter

Local Food Farmers play an important role in Ireland's food system, supplying fresh food to domestic markets while contributing to a broad range of environmental, social and economic outcomes. Operating across horticulture, livestock, mixed farming and other diversified enterprises, they:

- strengthen local food security through shorter supply chains;
- generate rural employment and support local economies;
- contribute to biodiversity and healthier soils; and
- support education, community connection and rural resilience.

Their work generates significant public value that extends well beyond food production alone.

Maintaining and expanding Ireland's Local Food Farm base is therefore **an investment in domestic productive capacity and national food-system resilience**. Increasing local food production and strengthening shorter supply chains can reduce exposure to supply-chain disruption, retain productive capacity within Ireland and keep more economic value circulating within local and regional economies. At the same time, Local Food Farmers operate agroecological systems that align closely with national objectives relating to climate action, biodiversity restoration, healthier diets and rural development.

Ireland already possesses a diverse and entrepreneurial Local Food Farmer sector. Many farmers express ambition to expand and diversify, but structural and policy constraints limit the sector's ability to realise that potential.



2.2 Structural Barriers to Local Food Production

Primary research conducted by Talamh Beo identified a consistent set of barriers facing farmers producing for local and domestic markets. The principal barriers are enumerated as follows:

- Income and viability
- Existing policy and support gaps
- Labour
- Land access
- Infrastructure
- Market access and pricing
- Climate and weather risks

Taken together, these barriers point to a wider structural problem. Local Food Farms operate as a

distinct and identifiable part of Ireland's food system, yet they are not recognised as such within agricultural policy. As a result, there is no coherent framework of supports designed around their particular role, scale, markets and production systems.

This lack of institutional recognition makes it more difficult to design coherent policy responses to many of these barriers. Local Food Farmers also face climate related challenges which further compound financial issues. Talamh Beo proposes targeted income support as a key intervention within a wider policy framework for Local Food Farmers, alongside formal institutional recognition of the sector. Please refer to our Local Food Policy Framework for full detail.

Storm Éowyn: A recent example of the support gap

Storm Éowyn in January 2025 exposed a significant weakness in the support available to smaller horticultural farmers. The storm caused widespread damage to polytunnels, glasshouses, crops and other production infrastructure. Teagasc subsequently reported that 153 growers suffered crop losses or structural damage.

DAFM responded by reopening the 2025 Scheme of Investment Aid for the Development of the Commercial Horticulture Sector specifically for storm-related investment. However, the scheme required a minimum eligible investment of €7,500 excluding VAT and provided grant aid of up to 50%.

For smaller growers, this created significant gaps. Repair costs could fall below the qualifying threshold, while the requirement to finance expenditure upfront added cash-flow pressure at a time when businesses had already suffered losses. This was compounded by the fact that the storm occurred in January when horticulture businesses typically experience their lowest levels of income. The scheme was also oriented towards capital investment rather than compensating for lost crops, lost income or smaller-scale repairs. For businesses operating on tight margins, even losses below the investment threshold could represent a substantial financial shock.

In several cases, growers instead turned directly to their communities for support. Crowdfunding campaigns raised thousands of euro to rebuild damaged polytunnels and keep farms operating, many attracting hundreds of individual donations.

Storm Eowyn illustrates both the inadequacy of existing mechanisms for smaller farms, and the strong value communities place on retaining local food producers. Community solidarity helped fill an immediate gap, but crowdfunding is not a substitute for a support system capable of protecting viable food-producing enterprises from shocks.

2.3 Gaps in Existing Supports

Talamh Beo's producer research indicates that Local Food Farmers are often poorly served by the existing agricultural support system. While some may be eligible for existing agricultural supports, these measures are fragmented and not designed around the realities of small-scale, diversified farms supplying local markets.

This mismatch emerged repeatedly across the survey and interviews. Farmers identified financial support as their strongest need, while also highlighting difficulties relating to labour, market access, processing infrastructure, regulation and technical support. In the interviews, existing schemes were frequently described as difficult to access or poorly suited to horticultural and diversified enterprises.

Existing supports can be valuable, but important gaps remain:

- area-based payments provide limited support to highly productive farms operating on small acreages;
- capital grants require investment capacity and often co-financing;
- environmental and organic schemes support particular practices, but do not address underlying income insecurity;
- advisory and development supports are uneven across sectors and farm types;
- processing, distribution and market-development infrastructure remains limited in many areas; and
- there is no dedicated support recognising the role of farms supplying food primarily to local and domestic markets.

The result is a support system that can assist particular activities or investments, but does not provide the predictable income security that farmers identified as central to their ability to remain in production, employ labour, invest and develop their enterprises.

National Policy Gap

Food Vision 2030¹, the Government's ten-year strategy for the Irish agri-food sector, explicitly adopts a food-systems approach, yet it does not establish domestic or local food production as a distinct strategic objective, production priority or market-development pathway for primary producers. Nor does it set out a specific pathway for increasing the share of food produced for, and supplied through, Ireland's domestic and local markets.

Ireland's CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 Specific Objective 3 identifies the need to "develop and promote local markets supporting locally produced food, including organic produce". However, the 2025 Annual Performance Report² identifies no dedicated intervention and no monitoring indicator capable of demonstrating progress against that stated need.

¹ Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Food Vision 2030.

² Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, 2023-2027 CAP Strategic Plan: 2025 Annual Performance Report, Section 1.2.3





3. Local Food Farm Status – Formal Institutional Recognition

3.1 Overview

Local Food Farms already form an identifiable part of Ireland's food system, but they are not currently recognised as a specific category within agricultural policy. This limits the State's ability to identify the sector, measure its contribution and design policy around its particular role, scale, production systems and markets.

Talamh Beo proposes the formal recognition of **Local Food Farms** as a distinct category within agricultural policy. Recognition is a broader objective than any single support. It is the foundation for the wider range of measures set out in Talamh Beo's Local Food Policy Framework and illustrated through the Local Food Pathway (Figure 1), and it stands on its own merits whether or not any individual support is adopted. BI-LFF is the first support proposed for recognised Local Food Farms and is built on the same criteria.

Local Food Farms form the productive foundation of the pathway: without a viable producer base, stronger local markets and associated processing, distribution and procurement systems cannot develop.

A recognised Local Food Farm status could enable:

- targeted income supports – including BI-LFF;
- improved data collection and monitoring of the sector;
- advisory and development supports better aligned with diversified farms;
- stronger engagement with public procurement and institutional food markets; and
- clearer representation of Local Food Farms within agricultural and food-system policy.

Local Food Farm status would therefore provide the policy and administrative infrastructure through which BI-LFF and a wider range of future supports, market measures and sector-development initiatives could be designed and delivered.

Local Food Farm status would be based on the four criteria detailed Section in 3.2. The same criteria define the cohort for whom BI-LFF is intended.



3.2 Local Food Farm Criteria

1. Primary Food Production

Primary production is the rearing or growing of food products.

2. Commercial Activity

Farms must have a minimum agricultural sales turnover of €8,000.

Note 1: In alignment with existing DAFM parameters for small-scale organic horticultural producers under the Organic Farming Scheme, applicants must demonstrate a minimum annual agricultural sales turnover of €8,000.

Note 2: This threshold recognises meaningful commercial participation without excluding developing enterprises or farmers combining food production with off-farm work. This is important given that around 30% of survey respondents did not identify farming as their primary economic activity.

3. Agroecological Farming Practices

Production must be undertaken using agroecological farming practices that prioritise biodiversity and the long-term health of soils and ecosystems.

Organic Certification, including in-conversion status, is a practical, transparent and independently verifiable mechanism for assessing farm-level agroecological production.

4. SFSC Orientation³

This criterion identifies farms that maintain a direct or geographically proximate connection to the final consumer, rather than selling into anonymous commodity trade.

A farm is eligible where it sells directly to consumers, or directly to a retailer, restaurant or procurement body with no intermediary, or through an aggregator, hub or cooperative that keeps farms identifiable to downstream buyers and sells into short or local markets.

A farm is ineligible if more than 30% of annual sales value goes through wholesale or aggregating commodity channels.

Note 1: Scheme design should allow limited exceptions for temporary disruptions to a farm's normal sales pattern. Other market arrangements not clearly covered above shall be assessed by the administering body against the principle set out above.

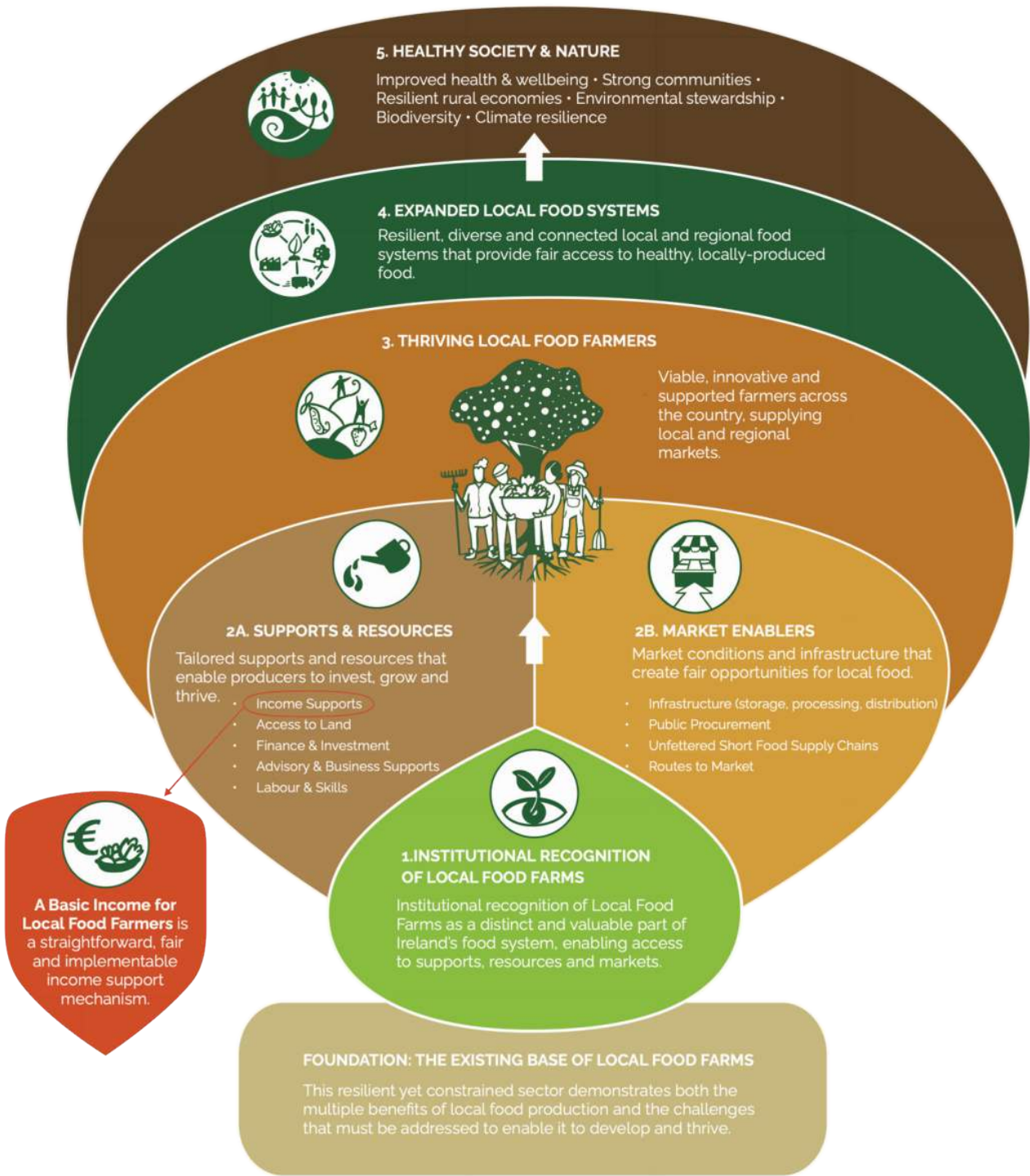
Note 2: The 70% threshold recognises meaningful SFSC participation while accounting for current limitations in short supply chain infrastructure; as our research found, 43% of surveyed farmers use wholesale channels, this reflects how many farmers engage with wholesale to some degree, not necessarily the share of their total sales it represents (Figure 7). The threshold is designed to support this cohort as SFSC market infrastructure continues to develop, rather than exclude farmers for practical business decisions made in the current market environment.

Verification: sales records/invoices showing direct sale or sale via a qualifying aggregator, with no wholesaler or commodity-market intermediary involved.

³ This criterion draws on EU approaches to short supply chains, including the one-intermediary model under Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 807/2014 and the revised definition in Regulation (EU) 2026/1739, which recognises both direct and geographically proximate producer-consumer connections.

Figure 1: Talamh Beo's Local Food Pathway

Our Local Food Pathway





4. Why a Basic Income?

Income instability emerged as one of the most significant and persistent barriers facing Local Food Farmers. A Basic Income would provide a predictable foundation on which farmers could plan, invest and develop their enterprises over time.

Existing agricultural supports do not adequately reflect the structure of this sector. Much CAP income support is linked to land area, while many Local Food Farmers operate on relatively small holdings and generate significant production, employment and public value from limited acreage. As a result, they may receive comparatively little support despite running highly active commercial enterprises.

A Basic Income offers a different and complementary approach. Rather than linking the level of support to hectares farmed, output volume or prescribed investments, it provides a predictable income floor to farmers who meet and continue to meet the agreed Local Food Farm criteria. In this way, the support is linked to participation in a defined part of the food system – producing food for domestic markets through agroecological farming – while allowing individual farms flexibility in how that income is used.

This is particularly important for Local Food Farmers, whose enterprises vary considerably by sector, scale and stage of development. It also creates a clear policy incentive to enter, remain in and develop Local Food Farming, without prescribing how individual farms must develop or invest. A BI-LFF would:

- provide predictable income stability;
- enable long-term planning and investment;
- support diverse production systems and farm scales;
- complement rather than replace CAP and existing schemes; and
- recognise the wider public value generated by Local Food Farmers.

Ireland has already demonstrated, through targeted Basic Income approaches in other sectors, that predictable income support can provide stability while allowing recipients flexibility in how that support is used.

What do we mean by Basic Income?

The Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN) defines Basic Income as a periodic cash payment delivered unconditionally to all on an individual basis, without means test or work requirement. Schemes vary in practice: universal schemes pay everyone, while targeted schemes pay people in a defined group.

BI-LFF is a targeted scheme and departs from the BIEN definition in two ways. It would be paid to farms meeting defined criteria rather than to everyone, and per eligible Local Food Farm rather than per individual, because the eligibility criteria apply to the farm as a business. In other respects it follows the Basic Income model: a regular cash payment that doesn't depend on output, hectares or specified spending, and doesn't vary with the farm's earnings. Targeted schemes show how predictable income can work for groups with irregular earnings. BI-LFF would add evidence from farming and could inform the wider debate on Basic Income.

4.1 Evidence and Precedent for Basic Income Approach

The evidence for a BI-LFF is grounded first in Talamh Beo's own research⁴ which consistently identified financial insecurity as a constraint on the viability and development of Local Food Farms. This evidence is reinforced by emerging evidence from Basic Income within food production, wider Basic Income research, and Ireland's own experience of targeted Basic Income through the Basic Income for the Arts scheme.

4.2 Evidence from Research with Local Food Farmers

(please refer to Appendix A for further detail)

Talamh Beo's research provides the primary evidence base for this proposal. Engagement included an online survey of 132 Local Food Farmers, 52 in-depth one-to-one interviews and seven structured group conversations involving 38 farmers. Participants represented a wide range of production systems, farm scales, stages of development and routes to market. Despite the different methods employed, a high degree of consistency emerged across the findings.

The survey demonstrated both the diversity and economic activity of the sector. Sixty-six percent of respondents were involved in horticulture, almost half produced livestock, 70% identified farming as their primary economic activity, and 58% were certified organic or in conversion. Farm size varied considerably, from under five acres to over twenty acres, reinforcing that Local Food Farming is defined not by scale but by its orientation towards domestic markets and local value creation.

Financial security emerged as the strongest identified need. When asked what would increase confidence in the future of their farm or business (figure 2), **69% identified financial support**, ahead of labour support (52%), stronger community networks (50.4%), greater consumer awareness (48%) and improved market access (40%).

The one-to-one interviews added depth to this picture. Farmers described unstable incomes, dependence on off-farm work, difficulty building savings and limited capacity to expand without taking on unacceptable financial risk. These pressures existed alongside other structural barriers, including labour costs, regulation, market access, infrastructure, land access and climate risk.

The group conversations explored what a stable income support could enable over a ten-year period. Across all seven sessions, farmers identified greater security and more time as expected benefits. Investment and innovation, stronger communities, and environmental and climate resilience were each raised in six of the seven conversations, while sector renewal and continuity were raised in five. Participants frequently described Basic Income not simply as additional personal income, but as creating the conditions to undertake work they already wanted to do – producing more food, investing in their farms, reducing reliance on off-farm employment, supporting community activity and improving environmental resilience.

Taken together, the three strands of research present a consistent picture: Local Food Farmers are diverse, commercially active and ambitious, but financial insecurity constrains their ability to plan, invest and remain in production (table 1). Greater income security was consistently associated with increased capacity to develop enterprises, create employment and contribute more widely to communities and the environment.

⁴ Irish Environmental Network funded project 'Strengthening Local Food Economies' with partners Cultivate & Feasta, 2025-26



Figure 2: Survey finding: key needs identified by farmers

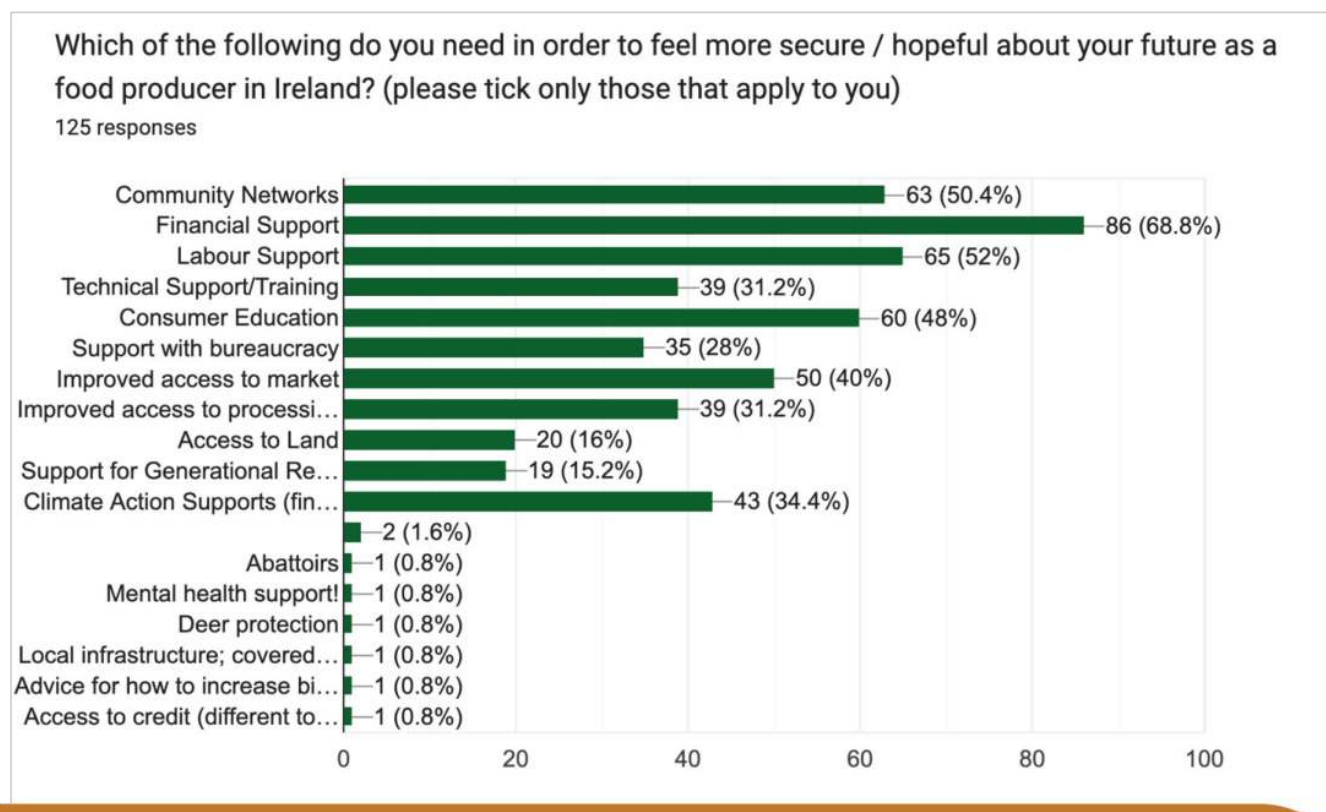


Table 1: Cross-cutting findings from producer engagement

Cross-cutting finding	What the research showed
A diverse and entrepreneurial sector	Local Food Farmers operate across a wide range of farm sizes, production systems and routes to market.
Ambition to develop and expand	Many farmers expressed ambitions to increase production, diversify enterprises and respond to demand for locally produced food despite structural barriers.
Income instability as a central constraint	Financial insecurity limited farmers' ability to plan, invest, innovate and sustain viable livelihoods.
Poor fit with existing policy and supports	Policy, regulatory and support systems were frequently described as poorly aligned with small-scale, diversified and horticultural enterprises.
Wider structural barriers remain significant	Labour, land access, processing and distribution infrastructure continue to constrain development.
Benefits extend beyond food production	Farmers described contributions to biodiversity, climate resilience, education, community development, local economies and public health.
Income security as an enabling condition	Greater income security was associated with increased capacity to invest, produce food, employ people and contribute more widely to communities and the environment.

Irish Farming Case Study: Bioregional Basic Income

The following case study is drawn from Feasta's policy position paper⁵ produced as part of the Strengthening Local Food Economies project. It is based on Feasta's conversation with market gardener Roger Ahern, recipient of the Bioregioning Basic Income Initiative run by Bioregioning South East Ireland. The case study provides a directly relevant Irish example of how Basic Income can operate in practice for a local food farmer. Roger Ahern currently receives €1,400 per month for three years under this pilot. His experience closely reflects several of the themes identified through Talamh Beo's own producer research.

Regarding his sense of income stability, Roger reported a "huge" impact, appreciating the reliability of the Basic Income. As a market gardener, "your income is anything but reliable and stable." The Basic Income has also reduced his financial stress. Roger stated that "it's really hard to work at your best when you're stressed financially." During his first year receiving a Basic Income he was able to install a customer car park, which has been a "huge asset", and means that customers no longer have to park out on the road. Until receiving the Basic Income, he did not have the spare money to make this investment.

Reflecting on how the Basic Income has affected his social and community engagement, Roger reported that he no longer has to take on a second job on a nearby farm every winter and spring to make ends meet: "The reality is, market gardening is not a very high income job and Ireland has become very expensive so I had to take on extra work to make ends meet. So I had very little free time." He is also using this additional time to volunteer as a first responder in the local community. The income has also created space for experimentation and enterprise development: "It's also given me wriggle room where I can take a few risks. Last year I trialled a kiddie's grow your own course. Because I have the BI I was able to set aside a part of my field for these classes and I can pay someone to help out with those classes as well."

Looking to the future, Roger describes the three-year Basic Income as a "€50,000 investment": "My plan is to use it to expand my own operation in a way that I can earn as close to that income." He has taken on the lease of an additional acre and plans to invest in irrigation, machinery and other improvements that will make expansion manageable. As he puts it: "What this is really doing at the end of the day is it's making it so I can grow more food."

This is a single case study, but it closely reinforces themes emerging from Talamh Beo's wider research: greater income security supporting investment, reducing reliance on off-farm work, creating space for innovation and strengthening the capacity to produce food and contribute to the wider community.

4.3 Basic Income for the Arts: Irish Sectoral Precedent

Ireland's Basic Income for the Arts (BIA) scheme provides an important national precedent for targeted Basic Income within a defined occupational sector. The 2025 qualitative evaluation found that the stability of the payment significantly reduced financial stress and anxiety, while increasing recipients' time and capacity to focus on their core work.

Recipients reported greater ability to plan, invest in resources and skills, undertake more ambitious work, experiment and take risks, and reduce reliance on employment outside their sector. The report also found increased confidence in remaining within the profession and pursuing a viable longer-term career path. These and other benefits of a Basic Income are explored in more depth the Environmental Pillar/Feasta paper, "Universal Basic Income and a Wellbeing Economy: A Proposal for Ireland".

⁵Jenny Dagg, Basic Income for the Arts in Ireland: Qualitative Report. Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Government of Ireland, May 2025.

⁶ "Universal Basic Income and a Wellbeing Economy: A Proposal for Ireland", July 2026.

5. Eligibility Criteria for the Basic Income Proposal

The purpose of the Basic Income is to support Local Food Farmers whose model of food production delivers wider environmental, social and economic objectives. Eligibility for BI-LFF is based on Local Food Farm status, which is defined by the four criteria set out in Section 3: primary food production, SFSC orientation, commercial activity and agroecological farming practices. A farm must meet all four. This section sets out who receives the payment once a farm meets them.

5.1 Recipient Eligibility

While Basic Incomes are typically granted on an individual basis, we suggest that one payment be made available per verified Local Food Farm. This is because eligibility under the Section 3 criteria (turnover, sales channels and production practices) is assessed at the level of the farm enterprise rather than the individual, and the farm is the productive unit that delivers the public value the payment recognises. A single payment per farm also keeps the scheme simple to administer and verify, avoids the need to determine how many people work on a farm, and keeps costs predictable. This recipient must be actively and substantially involved in

operating the production enterprise. Where more than one individual is actively engaged in the management and production of the enterprise, the enterprise shall nominate a single recipient.

5.2 Application in Specific Cases:

- **Farm couples** – One partner must be nominated as the recipient.
- **Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)** – The enterprise nominates a single recipient (typically the lead grower).
- **Absentee landowners** – Ineligible
- **Head grower/manager** – Eligible where they are nominated by the enterprise and meet the eligibility criteria.
- **Contract growers/rearers** – Eligible where the farm meets the eligibility criteria.
- **Incorporated companies** – The company shall nominate a single individual who meets the eligibility criteria.



6. Design and Implementation Framework

This section outlines the proposed design and implementation of a BI-LFF, including eligibility, payment structure, administration, governance and implementation arrangements.

6.1 Basic Income for the Arts as Precedent

The proposed BI-LFF draws on Ireland's BIA as a practical precedent in Ireland for delivering a targeted, regular income payment to a defined professional cohort.

We draw on the BIA as it effectively demonstrates that the State can identify an eligible occupational group, provide a fixed recurring payment that is not tied to prescribed expenditure, allow recipients to continue earning other income, apply normal tax treatment, and build monitoring and independent evaluation into the scheme from the outset.

While the farming and arts sectors are distinct, the BIA provides a useful model for the core architecture of the BI-LFF and reduces the need to design an entirely new administrative approach from first principles.

6.2 Proposed Scheme Design (see Table 2)

Table 2 sets out the main design features of BI-LFF. The scheme would make a regular monthly payment to eligible Local Food Farms for an initial five years. The payment would not depend on output, hectares farmed or specified spending. Eligibility would be confirmed annually, and independent evaluation would inform any decision to continue, modify or expand the scheme. These features are a starting point for detailed scheme design.

6.3 Application and Verification

Participation would be through an open application process. Applicants would be required to demonstrate they meet the Local Food Farm eligibility criteria set out in Section 3. The administrative process should include:

- Clear evidence of the eligibility requirements outlined in Section 3;
- An appeals mechanism;
- Annual confirmation of continued eligibility; and
- Simple, transparent verification processes using existing records wherever possible.

6.4 Payment Model

The proposed regular payment of €350 per week (paid out monthly) is informed by the precedent of Ireland's BIA, which demonstrates that a targeted Basic Income can be administered through existing public systems and used to provide predictable income security to a sector characterised by irregular earnings and significant public value.

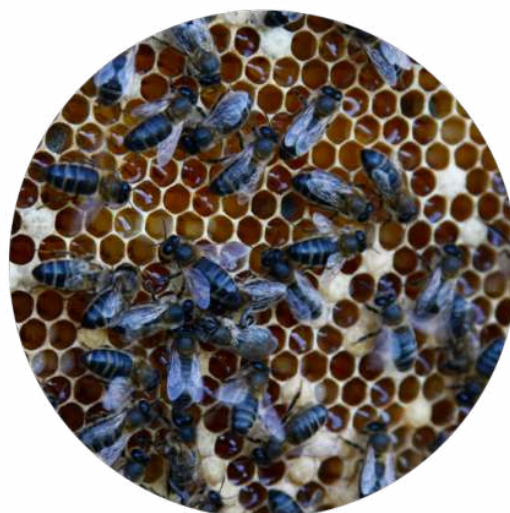


Table 2: Proposed Scheme Design for BI-LFF

Design Feature	Design Proposal
Eligibility	Eligible primary Local Food Farmers meeting the criteria set out in Section 3.
Payment	A regular payment, paid monthly, equivalent to €350 per week.
Scheme Duration	An initial five-year scheme period. This duration is intended to provide sufficient income security for participants to make medium-term decisions on production, investment and enterprise development, while allowing meaningful longitudinal evaluation of outcomes.
Post-Scheme Review	Continuation, modification or expansion beyond the initial five-year period would be informed by independent evaluation of scheme outcomes, including impacts on farm viability, SFSC interaction, employment, wider public benefits and value for money.
Conditionality	De-coupled from yield and output metrics. The payment would be available irrespective of CAP participation or the level of CAP support received, provided the applicant meets the Local Food Farm criteria. It would not be linked to hectares farmed, output volume or specified expenditure, but would remain conditional on continued eligibility as a Local Food Farmer.
Other Earnings	Payment would not vary according to annual farm or off-farm earnings once the applicant meets the commerciality threshold and remains eligible.
Administration	Administered and disbursed through existing departmental payment systems, where possible.
Interaction with Department of Social Protection (DSP)	The interaction between the payment and means-tested social protection supports would need to be clearly established in advance. It is proposed that the payment be treated as income for the purposes of relevant means tests.
Tax Treatment	Subject to standard income tax rules.
Monitoring and Data Collection	Baseline and ongoing reporting would track economic, wellbeing, farm-development and wider environmental outcomes.
Evaluation	Independent evaluation, including cost-benefit analysis, would assess scheme impacts and inform longer-term policy development.

6.5 Administration and Governance

The implementation of a BI-LFF would require coordinated delivery across relevant Government departments and agencies. It is proposed that this initiative be led by DAFM. As with the BIA, a degree of cross-departmental coordination with the Department of Social Protection and Revenue will be required.

As the agreed lead delivery body, DAFM would be responsible for:

- Assessing eligibility;
- Administering payments;
- Maintaining participant records;
- Managing appeals and periodic reviews;
- Identifying and putting in place the legal basis for the payment;
- Financial oversight; and
- Monitoring scheme performance.

6.6 Implementation Pathway

The practical rollout of the initiative comprises the following key steps:

- Formally establish Local Food Farm status in accordance with the criteria set out in Section 3;
- Designate administrative body and establish the administrative structure;
- Publish guidance on Local Food Farm status, evidence requirements and application process;
- Launch an open application process;
- Assess applications, verify eligibility and award Local Food Farm status;
- Each eligible Local Food Farm nominate one recipient for the BI payment;
- Initiate regular monthly payments;
- Gather baseline data across participating enterprises;

- Establish structured intervals for monitoring and review; and
- Undertake a formal review before the end of the five-year period to inform continuation or future scaling.

6.7 Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

The evaluation framework should draw on outcomes strongly indicated by Talamh Beo's producer research as well as wider social, economic and environmental outcomes that the scheme is expected to influence.

The first grouping of outcomes below reflects changes that Local Food Farmers themselves identified as likely consequences of greater income security. The second captures wider impacts that may follow from a stronger and more viable Local Food Farming sector and which should be measured over the lifetime of the scheme.

6.7.1 Outcomes Directly Identified Through Producer Research

These indicators assess whether Basic Income improves the security, viability and capacity of participating Local Food Farmers:

- Income stability and predictability – changes in the regularity and security of farm household income.
- Farmer wellbeing, stress and work-life balance – changes in reported stress, financial anxiety, quality of life and ability to take time away from the farm.
- Ability to remain in farming – whether the payment increases farmers' confidence and capacity to continue farming over the medium and longer term.
- Reduced dependence on off-farm work – whether recipients are able to devote more time to food production and farm development.
- Investment in farm infrastructure and productive capacity – changes in expenditure on equipment, infrastructure, land access and production.

- Employment created or sustained – changes in paid labour, seasonal employment and capacity to retain workers.
- New entrants and generational renewal – evidence that improved viability creates clearer pathways into local food farming.
- Education, mentoring and community engagement – changes in farmers' capacity to host training, share knowledge and participate in local food initiatives.

6.7.2 Wider Outcomes to be Evaluated

These indicators assess whether improved farmer security translates into broader food-system, economic, environmental and community benefits:

- **Local and domestic market reach** – growth in sales through direct markets, retailers, food hubs, restaurants, procurement and other domestic channels.
- **Local economic activity** – changes in local spending, employment and use of local suppliers and services.
- **Organic farming uptake and retention** – changes in the number of farmers converting to, entering or remaining in certified organic production, and in the productive capacity of participating organic farms.
- **Environmental outcomes** – changes in soil condition, habitat and biodiversity, land stewardship and measures that strengthen resilience to climatic and weather-related pressures.
- **Community resilience and food-system security** – changes in local food availability, producer-consumer connections, community participation and resilience to supply-chain disruption.

6.7.3 Evaluation Considerations

These broader food-system, economic, environmental and community outcomes require appropriate baseline data to evaluate and measure. The evaluation should therefore establish baseline data at the point of entry wherever possible, combine quantitative and qualitative methods, and distinguish between outcomes that can be measured directly and those that require proxy indicators or longer-term assessment.

For some outcomes, the scheme itself would help create the first consistent dataset for the Local Food Farm sector.

6.7.4 Complementary Data Sources

Where participants also engage with existing schemes or certification systems, evaluation should make use of relevant administrative and monitoring data already collected. This could include CAP payment and scheme participation data, Organic Farming Scheme records and certification data, environmental scheme participation, land-use information, employment records and other relevant DAFM or CSO datasets. Linking these sources, subject to consent and data-protection requirements, could reduce duplication and strengthen the assessment of changes over time.

Agroecological assessment frameworks, such as the FAO's Tool for Agroecology Performance Evaluation (TAPE), could be considered in future to capture environmental and social outcomes, subject to adaptation for the Irish context.



6.8. Stakeholders and Institutional Roles

Successful implementation of a BI-LFF would require coordinated engagement with stakeholders across government, research, civil society and the farming sector. Table 3 provides an overview of these stakeholders and their potential roles in the scheme.

Table 3: Relevant stakeholders and their potential role in the scheme

Stakeholder	Potential Role
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	Lead policy and delivery department; formal recognition of Local Food Farms; scheme administration; integration with CAP, Organic Farming Scheme and other agricultural supports.
Department of Finance / Department of Public Expenditure	Assessment of fiscal implications, taxation and public expenditure approval.
Department of Social Protection	Clarify treatment of the payment in relation to means-tested supports and social insurance.
Revenue Commissioners	Clarification of tax treatment and reporting requirements.
Department of Rural and Community Development	Role in rural development, local economic resilience and community impacts.
Research institutions / universities	Independent baseline design, monitoring, longitudinal evaluation and cost-benefit analysis.
Central Statistics Office / State data bodies	Provision of complementary statistical and administrative data where appropriate.
Farmer organisations and Local Food Farmer networks	Scheme design input, participant engagement, testing of eligibility criteria and ongoing feedback.
Civil-society organisations	Policy advocacy, public engagement, coalition-building and contribution to wider food-system outcomes.

7. Financial Model

Talamh Beo has mapped 350 self-identified Local Food Farmers through its membership, outreach and research. These farmers have not yet been assessed against the eligibility criteria set out in Section 3, and the number eligible under those criteria is not yet known. **For modelling purposes, this proposal uses an indicative reference cohort of 600**, allowing for growth in the number of qualifying farms by the time a scheme could be introduced. The actual eligible population would only be established once Local Food Farm status is formally recognised and an open application process is launched.

At the proposed payment level of €350 per week, the following calculations can be made:

- Annual direct payments to 600 recipients: €10.9million
- Administrative and evaluation costs (2.6%): €0.28million⁷
- Gross programme costs: €11.2 million
- Estimated exchequer recoupment through taxation at 27%: €2.9 million
- **Net Cost per annum: €8.3 million, approximately 0.4% of DAFM's current €1.98 billion expenditure allocation**

Note on tax: The payment would be taxed under normal rules, so part of the gross cost would return to the Exchequer. An indicative recoupment of 27% has been assumed (20% Income Tax, about 4% Class S PRSI and 3% USC). Actual recoupment would vary with recipients' total income, tax credits and circumstances.

Note on wider fiscal and social returns: The BIA pilot provides a useful precedent for considering the wider returns from a Basic Income-type intervention. Its social Cost-Benefit Analysis⁸ found that for every €1 of public money invested, society received an estimated €1.39 in return. The analysis also found that the net cost

of the pilot fell from €105 million to under €72 million due to tax generated and savings on social welfare.

⁷ Administration is costed at 2.6% of payments, the average annual rate over the three years of the Basic Income for the Arts pilot. It is indicative, and final costs would depend on scheme design.

⁸ Cost-benefit analysis for the Basic Income for the Arts, Prepared for the Department of Culture, Communications and Sport, September 2025.

7.1 Approach to Cost-Benefit Analysis

BI-LFF is expected to generate economic, social and environmental returns extending beyond the direct income received by participating farmers. These include increased productive capacity, farm retention and employment, stronger local economic activity, improved farmer wellbeing, increased organic production and wider environmental and community benefits.

It is not possible to robustly quantify the monetary value of these returns at the outset. As outlined in Section 6.7, suitable baseline data does not currently exist for a number of important indicators, including domestic food production within the Local Food Farm sector, local economic activity, environmental outcomes and community resilience. Assigning monetary values in advance would therefore require assumptions that cannot presently be supported by sufficiently robust evidence.



The scheme should instead establish the baseline and longitudinal data required to assess these effects over time. A formal cost-benefit analysis should form part of the independent evaluation once sufficient evidence has been generated.

Such an analysis could assess returns across a number of broad areas:

- Economic and fiscal returns – changes in farm income, productive investment, employment, local expenditure and taxation;
- Food production and sector development – changes in domestic food production, farm retention, new entrants, market reach and organic farming uptake;
- Social and wellbeing returns – changes in financial security, wellbeing, work-life balance, community engagement and education;
- Environmental returns – changes in measurable indicators such as soil condition, habitat and biodiversity management, land stewardship and investment in measures that improve resilience to climatic and weather-related pressures.

Where appropriate, established valuation methodologies could be applied to observed outcomes. For example, the **WELLBY framework**, used in the Cost-Benefit Analysis of the BIA (see footnote 8, page 18), provides a method for assigning a monetary value to changes in self-reported life satisfaction.

7.2 Funding Pathway

The preferred funding route is direct exchequer funding through DAFM, as a nationally funded agricultural support measure.

BI-LFF is proposed as a complementary national measure rather than as a replacement for CAP support. DAFM already administers both CAP-funded and nationally funded schemes, providing an established administrative route through which a targeted national intervention could be delivered.

The CAP remains central to supporting farm income and resilience, but much of its income-support architecture is linked to land area or participation in particular schemes and practices. Local Food Farms may generate significant food production, employment and public value from relatively small areas and consequently receive comparatively limited support through hectare-based mechanisms.

A nationally funded BI-LFF would therefore address a specific policy gap while remaining additional to CAP and environmental schemes. Funding would be sought through the annual Estimates and Budget process as part of DAFM's current expenditure allocation, subject to normal Government expenditure appraisal and approval.

Using 2026 as an indicative reference year, a BI-LFF scheme for 600 Local Food Farmers would have a net Exchequer cost of approximately €8.3 million per annum after indicative tax recoupment. This is equivalent to around **0.4% of DAFM's €1.98 billion current expenditure allocation.**

As a nationally funded support for primary agricultural producers, BI-LFF would be developed in accordance with applicable EU State-aid rules.

BI-LFF is a policy proposal rather than a final implementation plan. Identifying a compliant legal basis is a matter for Government, in consultation with the European Commission as necessary. This proposal asks Government to identify and put in place a pathway that preserves the scheme's core features: a predictable multi-year income floor, decoupled from output and hectares, available to farmers meeting the Section 3 criteria. Options the Government may wish to assess include delivery under the agricultural de minimis regulation, notification to the Commission, a block exemption category, delivery within the CAP framework, or a combination. The scheme is designed to avoid features such as output-linked amounts or domestic-origin conditions, that EU State aid rules treat as problematic.

Appendix: Evidence from Producer Engagement

A.1 Engagement Overview

Extensive engagement with Local Food Farmers was carried out during the Strengthening Local Food Economies project (2025–26), funded by the Irish Environmental Network with partners Talamh Beo, Feasta and Cultivate. This engagement sought to develop a comprehensive understanding of the lived reality of the farmers, their challenges, needs and perspectives on targeted income supports, particularly Basic Income. Farmers were identified using the Talamh Beo membership, social media outreach and in-person events organised by both Talamh Beo and allied organisations. Three complementary methods were employed:

- an online survey – 132 participants
- a series of small group sessions – 38 participants across seven sessions
- in-depth one-to-one interviews – 52 participants

Together, these methodologies provided both breadth and depth of insight, capturing a wide range of production systems and farm scales. While each method generated distinct forms of input, a high degree of consistency emerged across all three, strengthening confidence in the findings presented below.

A.2 On-line Survey Respondents Profile

The online survey captured a diverse group of Local Food Farmers across production types, farm scales and business models. The following charts provide an overview of the cohort and help situate the findings that follow.

Figure 3: Production type

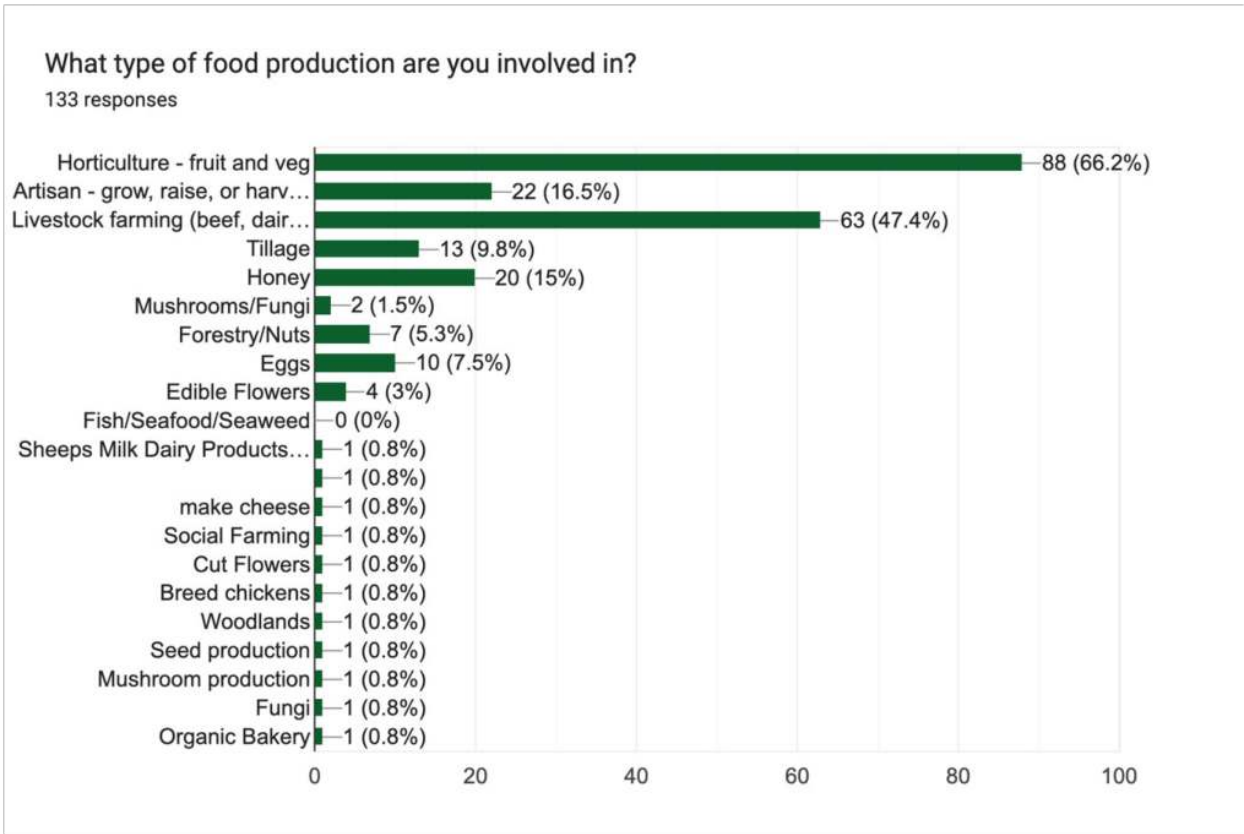


Figure 4: Farm size

Farm size
131 responses

- Small (Under 5 acres)
- Medium (5-20 acres)
- Large (20+ acres)
- Other (please specify)

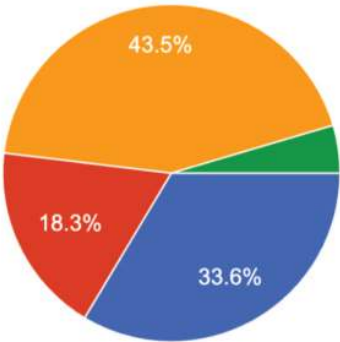


Figure 5: Organic status

Is your farm Organic certified?
107 responses

- Yes
- No
- In conversion

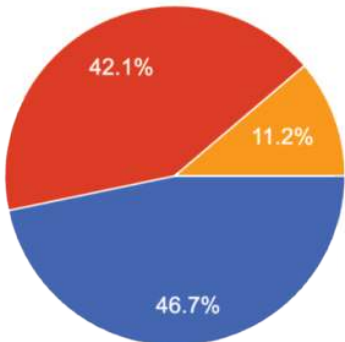
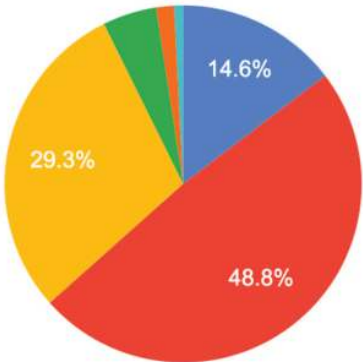


Figure 6: Livelihoods supported by the enterprise

How many FTE's (livelihoods) are supported by the farm?

- <1
- 1-2
- 3-5
- 6-10
- 20-25
- 30+

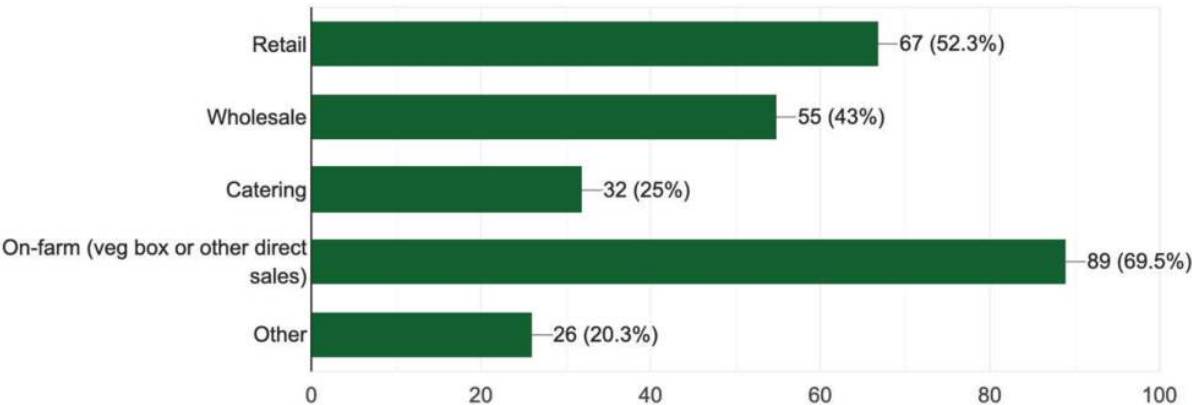


A.3 Routes to Market

Local Food Farmers use a mix of direct, retail, wholesale and catering channels (Figure 7). Understanding these routes to market is important in assessing how the sector currently participates in SFSCs and where market-development supports may be needed.

Figure 7: Routes to market

If you answered yes to the above, what are your routes to market? Please list all that apply.
128 responses



A.4 Future Support Priorities

Farmers were asked which forms of support would increase their confidence in the future of their farm or food business. **Financial support (69%) emerged as the most frequently identified need**, alongside labour (52%), community networks (50.4%), consumer awareness (48%) and market access (40%). Refer to Figure 2 (page 10) in the main body of text.

A.5 Group Conversations

The group conversations explored how a stable income support might affect farmers, their enterprises, communities and the wider food system. Six recurring themes emerged across the seven sessions, with security and time raised in all seven conversations.

Table 4: Recurring theme in group conversation

What greater income security could enable	Frequency of mention
Greater security	7 of 7
More time	7 of 7
Investment and innovation	6 of 7
Stronger communities	6 of 7
Environmental and climate resilience	6 of 7
Sector renewal and continuity	5 of 7

A.6 One-to-One Survey Findings

52 one-to-one interviews were conducted with Local Food Farmers. In response to the question “What are your biggest challenges right now?” answers were grouped into recurring themes. Respondents could raise multiple challenges; percentages reflect the share of respondents mentioning each theme.

Table 5 In answer to the question “What are your biggest challenges right now?”

Major challenge	% of substantive responses
Income / financial viability	68%
Labour / time / workload	45%
Regulation / administration / policy fit	40%
Market access / pricing / buyer power	40%
Infrastructure / processing / equipment	25%
Land / housing / succession	15%
Skills / advice / training	15%
Climate / weather / biological risk	13%

Proposal Endorsements

The organisations below have formally endorsed this proposal for institutional recognition of Local Food Farmers and targeted BI-LFF. It does not necessarily imply endorsement of every technical or administrative detail contained in this document. The full list of organisations endorsing the BI-LFF campaign is continually updated and can be found at: www.talamhbeo.ie/localfoodcampaign.

Organisations that formally endorse this BI-LFF policy proposal :



Climate+Health Alliance



TALAMH BEO is a member-based organisation, led by farmers and land workers, and open to everyone with an interest in food and agriculture. Together, we are working towards a fairer, more sustainable food system and are informed by direct experience of the issues we campaign on.

We want to create a better food system in Ireland, where all people have access to healthy, nutritious and affordable local food.

We want to farm in ways which benefit and restore natural ecosystems and build soils, leaving the land better than when we started.

We want to show solidarity with rural communities across Ireland and the world and ensure that living from the land and with the land continues into the future.

We believe that farmers and communities should be at the center of decision-making for food and agriculture systems and developing agricultural policies.

We stand for a system which puts the power back into the hands of communities instead of corporate interests.

Join the campaign:

[www.talamhbeo.ie/
localfoodcampaign](http://www.talamhbeo.ie/localfoodcampaign)

Contact Us:

info@talamhbeo.ie

Become a member:

www.talamhbeo.ie



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