



Healthy Food for All
access | availability | affordability

Development Plan 2008-2010

November 2007

1. Introduction

Healthy Food for All (HFfA) is a multi-agency **all-island** initiative which promotes access, availability and affordability of healthy food for low-income groups. HFfA was set-up by Combat Poverty Agency, Crosscare and the Society of St Vincent de Paul as a follow up to the publication **Food Poverty and Policy** (2004). HFfA operated on a pilot basis from September 2006 to December 2007.¹ Following the success of the pilot phase, HFfA has prepared a three-year development plan covering 2008-2010, which is detailed below. Total funding of €510,700 is required to implement this plan.

2. Pilot phase, Sept 2006-Dec 2007

Under its pilot phase from Sept 2006 to Dec 2007, HFfA implemented a programme of activities under three main themes:

- a) Support for community and school initiatives which increase access to and availability of healthy food for low-income groups
- b) Networking with state, voluntary, community and business interests on an all-island and UK/Ireland basis to share good practice
- c) Promoting awareness of the structural barriers underpinning food poverty across various aspects of public policy

An external evaluation of the work of HFfA in the pilot phase was undertaken (summary attached).² The main highlights were:

- Successful establishment of the initiative with effective governance structures
- Effective lobbying and influencing to ensure inclusion of food poverty on the national policy agenda
- Well-attended series of regional and national networking events
- Development of a clear, navigable, factual website, with e-newsletter.

3. Development plan 2008-2010

This document outlines a draft three year development plan (2008-2010) for HFfA, to follow-on from the completion of the pilot phase in December 2007. It outlines the rationale for the continuation of this initiative in light of the current policy context. It also outlines the three strategic objectives of HFfA for the three year period and the main actions that will be undertaken under each. To implement the development plan, core funding of €170,200 per annum is required. In addition, HFfA is negotiating funding to develop a number of specific new programme areas with public and business bodies.

¹ Funding of €104,300 was raised to cover a 15 month period from September 2006 to December 2007. The sources of funds were DoSFA, HSE, Safefood, Combat Poverty, FSAI and Dublin City Council. This funding was used to employ a coordinator, to develop communication tools and events. An additional €40,000 was received from Combat Poverty Agency for 2 Good Practice Guides on a) School Food Initiatives and b) Community Food Initiatives.

² The evaluation was undertaken by Ann Clarke of Eustace Patterson.

The development plan was produced in consultation with the advisory committee of HFfA and will be finalised following bilateral discussions with key interests and approval by the advisory committee of HFfA.

The work of HFfA is based on a number of core principles:

- **Social exclusion and anti-poverty**
Food poverty is caused by structural factors relating to inadequate income and exclusion from conventional food markets and events.
- **Partnership and networking**
A partnership of state, voluntary, community and business interests is required to maximise the value of existing work on food poverty and to identify opportunities for new initiatives.
- **Evidenced-based policy and practice**
Policies and good practice to tackle food poverty must be informed by research findings and be based on evidence of what works.
- **Community development approach**
The target group of low-income families must be actively involved in identifying and delivering solutions to food poverty.
- **All-island and European perspective**
Policies and initiatives to tackle food poverty should be informed by all-island, UK/Ireland and European perspectives.

4. Evidence Base and Policy Context for Development Plan

The ***Food Poverty and Policy*** (2004) report highlighted the issue of food poverty as of major concern for food and nutrition policy in Ireland. A parallel report **Food Poverty: Fact or Fiction** was published for Northern Ireland in October 2007. Uniquely, we now have an all-island comparative perspective on a social policy issue.

Low-income households are most at risk of food poverty. Among the 20 percent of the population at-risk-of-poverty (ie below 60 percent of median income)

- 11% went without a substantial meal on at least one day in the past two weeks
- 11% were unable to afford a roast once a week
- 9% were unable to afford a meal with meat, chicken or fish every 2nd day.
- 30% who are unable to afford to have family or friends around for a meal or a drink once a month.

The problem of food poverty is even more acute for children¹:

- 14% of children never have breakfast during the weekdays
- 17% of children go to bed or school hungry because there is no food at home
- Children, particularly girls, from the lower social classes less likely to consume the recommended five-a-day portions of fruit and vegetables.
- Children from the lower social classes are more likely to consume soft drinks.

Difficulties in accessing food have knock-on implications for health status, and for educational attainment, particularly for children.

The Safefood study, *Standard of healthy living on the island of Ireland*, recognised that those in lower socio-economic groups on the island of Ireland are more at risk of developing major chronic diseases and that dietary intake is a key contributory factor to this inequality.

Ireland has the second highest food costs in Europe² and food costs continue to rise. The repeal of the Groceries Order has failed to deliver any reductions in the price of food items. Global factors such as climate change policies, sustained rises in energy prices, biofuel production, serious droughts, growing demands for meat and dairy in Asia, high grain prices have affected, and will continue to affect the cost of food.

We know from our collective work that consuming and sharing food is problematic for those on low incomes living in areas with poor service provision and adequate shopping facilities.

Tackling food poverty is linked to a wide range of public policy issues, ranging from health, social inclusion, food production and rural/urban regeneration. Some recent examples include:

- **Report of the National Taskforce on Obesity** (2005) highlights the importance of facilitating healthy food choices. It outlines measures to tackle poor diet and the role each government department can play in addressing this issue.
- **Towards 2016** contains targets relating to food poverty, including the development of the School Meals Programme, a new Health Promotion Policy, as well as action on children's food poverty and obesity.
- **National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016** states that *Working in partnership, the Department of Health & Children will develop specific community and sectoral initiatives to encourage healthy eating and access to healthy food and physical activity among adults, with a particular focus on adults living in areas of disadvantage* (2007; 46).

- **Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Strategy** will produce a cross-departmental implementation plan in response to the Fit Futures report in order to ensure that obesity prevention contributes to tackling health inequalities.
- **EU Charter to Tackle Cardiovascular Disease** (2007) as a signatory Ireland recognises that lifestyle is not a matter of the individual alone and that policy makers have a role to play in providing supportive environments through legislative measures.
- **CLÁR LEADER Village and Countryside Enhancement Scheme** has developed guidelines to LEADER groups establishing farmers markets.
- **Review of the School Meals Scheme**, which highlighted the importance of school food provision for disadvantaged children.
- **Cardiovascular Health Strategy** (1999) sets out a comprehensive strategy to reduce inequalities and to achieve health and social gains. Particular attention is paid to promoting healthy eating and to how key players from different sectors of society must work together to develop lifestyle interventions which modify risk factors for cardiovascular morbidity and mortality.
- **National Nutrition Policy** (forthcoming 2008) will set out a strategic framework for working in partnership between government departments and agencies to promote national and all-island actions on healthy eating to help reduce food poverty. A priority of this policy is to *continue to facilitate strategic actions to combat food poverty with relevant agencies addressing food poverty*.
- **Interdepartmental Committee for the Prevention of Chronic Disease** is being established, which will include healthy eating as part of its remit.
- The **World Health Organisation** identifies *Unhealthy dietary practices, including the high consumption of saturated fats, salt and refined carbohydrates, as well as low consumption of fruit and vegetables* as major risk factors impacting on the rise of cardiovascular diseases³.
- **Second WHO European Action Plan on Food and Nutrition 2007-2012** supports EU member states to implement national nutrition policies. The plan will address food insecurity, undernutrition and obesity and nutrition-related chronic diseases at the European and Global level. It sets goals and targets to reduce the health burden related to food and nutrition.
- **EU White Paper on Nutrition on and Obesity** sets out an integrated EU policy approach to reduce ill health due to poor nutrition, overweight and obesity. Related to this is an **EU Fruit & Vegetable Scheme for Schools** which is being considered as part of the reform of the CAP.

5. **Strategic objectives and actions**

The development plan 2008-2010 re-affirms the core aim of HFFA as promoting access, availability and affordability of healthy food for low-income groups. To this end, it seeks to promote new initiatives and policies in conjunction with relevant actors, centred on three strategic objectives of community action, shared learning and networking, and policy development. The actions and outputs under each of these objectives are set out below.

³ <http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/publications/facts/cvd/en/>

OBJECTIVE 1: To increase the range and effectiveness of school and community food initiatives for low-income groups

Actions:

- A. To develop and manage a demonstration programme for community food initiatives on an all-island basis in conjunction with **safefood**
- B. To identify and promote good practice in community and school food initiatives
- C. To explore school-based models which provide fruit and vegetables for low-income children
- D. To support local food strategies in conjunction with local development agencies, the health service and community organisations

Outputs:

- i. Establishment of 6 demonstration community food initiatives⁴*
- ii. Publication of a good practice guide to community food initiatives
- iii. Publication of a good practice guide to school food initiatives
- iv. Assessment of school food programmes in 60 schools*
- v. Establishment of 10 prototype breakfast clubs*
- vi. Development of a model of local food partnerships

OBJECTIVE 2: To work in partnership with statutory, voluntary and business sectors on measures to increase access and availability of healthy food

Actions:

- A. To explore and share best practice on food initiatives for low-income families on an all-island and UK/Ireland basis
- B. To dialogue with food producers and retailers on ways in which the corporate sector can promote healthy food for all
- C. To work with UK, European and international bodies on measures to tackle food poverty
- D. To explore new approaches to food banking
- E. To disseminate information on food poverty initiatives through use of modern communications tools, including website and e-newsletter, and by holding regional and all-island events

Outputs:

- i. Registration of 40 organisations as members of HFfA
- ii. Publication of four e-newsletters per annum

⁴ Outputs in italics are subject to sourcing of additional dedicated funding

- iii. *Implementation of three corporate initiatives on food access*
- iv. Organisation of three regional events on food poverty per annum and one all-island event.
- v. Participation in one international event on food poverty per annum

OBJECTIVE 3: To advocate food poverty concerns in the policy realms of health, social welfare, agriculture, retail planning and consumer affairs

Actions:

- A. To develop and promote policies to address food poverty at national, local and EU levels.
- B. To engage with the EU, WHO Europe and the FAO on policies which impact on food poverty
- C. To strengthen the evidence base on food poverty, drawing on existing data and undertaking new research as appropriate.
- D. To act as an Irish centre of expertise on issues relating to food access.

Outputs:

- i. Production of two policy submissions/statements per annum
- ii. Organisation of three liaison meetings with a government department, public body or social partner per annum (at least one will be in Ireland or N Ireland)
- iii. Convening a national consultation event on the proposed EU School Fruit Scheme to feed into EU-wide consultation
- iv. Publication of one factsheet every year on aspects of food poverty on all-island basis
- v. *Publication of a study on an aspect of food poverty*

6. Resource requirements for Development plan 2008-2010

The core resources requirements to implement the development plan are set out below, categorised by staff posts, programme activities, monitoring and evaluation and administration.

Staff posts

i) Project Co-ordinator (existing post)

The project co-ordinator will manage the initiative, implement the workplan, co-ordinate activities and communicate the work of the initiative with external agencies.

ii) Networking and Communications Officer (new post)

A networking and communications officer was recommended in the evaluation report to expand the work of HFfA. This position will develop sectoral programmes, organise regional and training events and develop the web site and e-communication tools.

Programme activities

Programme activities include the organising and hosting of networking events, the maintenance and development of the HFfA website, the circulation of a newsletter, policy consultations and submissions, publications, etc. A communications strategy will frame the development of tools to promote awareness of the work of the initiative.

Monitoring and evaluation

An external consultant will be contracted to support the process of evaluation.

Administration

Crosscare will continue to provide administrative support for HFfA on a contract basis. A total cost of €9,000 over the three year period has been estimated to cover administration to include employment costs, office space, phone, travel/subsistence, electricity etc.

7. Additional programmes (subject to specific funding)

HFfA is in discussions with various bodies to develop additional programmes in addition to its core activities. These include:

Community Food Programme

HFfA has agreed funding for a three year Demonstration Programme on Community Food Initiatives. The programme will provide funding for a limited number of community food initiatives over a three-year period. In addition, the programme will provide a testing ground for community food initiatives, with the aim of identifying the resources and supports necessary for their development on a sustainable basis. HFfA will coordinate the programme, including provision of technical support, networking and shared learning, and policy development and dissemination. Central to this role will be the recruitment of a development worker to co-ordinate the programme. This funding is provided by **safefood** (Food Safety Promotion Board).

School Food Programme

HFfA has developed a Good Practice Guide for School Food Projects. The initiative is preparing a dissemination and implementation strategy for the guide in schools

throughout the island of Ireland. The strategy will work with schools and community groups to incorporate healthy eating policies by providing advice on how to source food, where to access funding etc. A related proposal is to develop and fund a small number of 'prototype' breakfast clubs.

Corporate Retail Initiative

HFfA is considering an initiative with the retail sector to promote access to healthy food within local stores. Part of this initiative would consist of education and awareness programmes for adults and children. Working in partnership HFfA will develop a programme approach to ensure that the healthy option is the easy option for consumers.

8. Governance

The governance of HFfA is based on three components:

Management committee⁵ – meets on a monthly basis to monitor progress on the implementation of the workplan. The management group acts as a support and guide to the project co-ordinator and oversees the management of the budget. The monthly meetings provide a forum for consultation and participation on major strategic proposals.

Advisory Committee⁶ – meets every quarter to advance the aims of the initiative. The meetings provide a forum for the inclusion of a broad range of key stakeholders. The role of the Advisory Group is to act as a sounding-board and to provide advice to the initiative, to provide access to organisational resources, to act as a communication point between HFfA and the organisations of members and to raise awareness of food poverty with their own organisation. According to the interim report of the evaluation members of the Advisory Group perceived this forum as being highly effective as a means of communication between the Co-ordinator and its members. It is also considered an effective mechanism for providing advice and guidance on the direction of HFfA and as a discussion forum. Participation by members contributes to its effectiveness as a means of addressing challenges and supporting inter-organisational co-operation and communication.

⁵ Consists of representatives from Combat Poverty Agency, Crosscare, **safefood**, UCD (School of Biology and Environmental Science), Society of St. Vincent de Paul and Tallaght Partnership.

⁶ Armagh & Dungannon Health Action Zone, Bord Bia, Combat Poverty Agency, Community Dietitian Service, Clondalkin Health Initiative, Crosscare, Department of Health & Children, Department of Social & Family Affairs, Dublin City Council, Family Support Agency, Focus Ireland, Food Safety Authority Ireland, Food Standards Agency Northern Ireland, Limerick Food Partnership, Public Health Alliance for the island of Ireland (PHAll), Population Health (HSE), **safefood**, School of Biology and Environmental Science (UCD), Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Tallaght Partnership, Taste Council.

- **Administration, financial management and staff support** – provided by Crosscare on an agency-basis. Two Crosscare staff are involved in the day-to-day management of HFfA: the Programme Manager for Food and Shelter and the Financial Manager. It is an objective of HFfA to establish itself as an independent body by 2010.

9. Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

Procedures will be put in place to monitor and evaluate on an annual basis over the three-year period. Quarterly monitoring reports on project activities will be prepared and circulated to all relevant stakeholders. A formal evaluation of the project will be completed.

10. Budget

The budget required to support the development plan 2008-2010 averages €170,700 per annum. Details of the budget are set out below.

	2008	2009	2010	Total
Staff (incl ER costs)				
• Project Co-ordinator	€63,200	€65,800	€68,600	€197,600
• Networking and Communications Officer	€48,400	€49,900	€51,300	€149,600
Programme				
• Events/activities	€24,000	€24,000	€24,000	€72,000
• Communication Activity	€10,000	€10,000	€10,000	€30,000
• Evaluation	€12,000	€12,000	€12,000	€36,000
Administration				
• Office, phone, etc	€3,000	€3,000	€3,000	€9,000
• Travel and training	€5,500	€5,500	€5,500	€16,500
Annual total	€166,100	€170,200	€174,400	€510,700

We have developed a multi-agency funding strategy to provide this budget and are requesting 7-10 government bodies, north and south, to contribute in the region of €25,000 per annum for three years (total of €75,000). These government bodies incorporate in their remit the issue of healthy food for all and are in a position to support this project.

¹ The Irish Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children Study 2006

² http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-SF-07-090/EN/KS-SF-07-090-EN.PDF