

New Funding Awarded to Community Food Initiatives across the island of Ireland in a bid to help tackle Food Poverty

safefood to fund 7 community food projects over 3 years

Wednesday, 27th January: **safefood** today announced the recipients of funding for the Demonstration Programme of Community Food Initiatives, aimed at promoting greater access and availability of healthy food to those on low incomes. Funded by **safefood**, the Programme is the first of its kind on the island of Ireland, and aims to address the inequalities and overcome some of the problems faced by communities in accessing healthy, affordable food. The Programme was officially launched in Belfast today by Northern Ireland's Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Michael McBride.

Speaking at the launch, Dr. McBride said; "I welcome the opportunity to launch the Community Food Initiatives today. These projects are excellent examples of local communities working together to develop solutions that will improve health and tackle inequalities."

"Many communities find it difficult to access foods that are of high quality and available at affordable prices. This is where the Community Food Initiatives come into play and can make a real difference. They can help communities and individuals to overcome these problems, while educating people about the importance of maintaining a well-balanced and nutritious diet."

Martin Higgins, Chief Executive of **safefood** said; "Food poverty is a complex issue and requires a variety of approaches in addressing it. One of these approaches is supporting practical food initiatives in the local community, and encouraging projects to share their experiences and knowledge with others in this area. By identifying these Community Food Initiatives and the support they require, this Programme can help inform future policy development in the area of food poverty".

Three examples of initiatives that are receiving funding include Dundalk's '*The Food Garden Project*' developing a community garden to support very marginalised and vulnerable individuals to grow, prepare and cook a range of healthy organic fruit and vegetables throughout the year; '*Limerick Seed to Plate Project*', a community

gardening project promoting healthy eating and organic home-gardening practices; and Belfast's '*East Belfast Healthy Eating Education Programme*', which will provide health and diet sessions and cookery demonstrations to residents and ex residents on how to plan and prepare healthy food on a low budget.

The seven recipients of the Community Food Initiative (CFI) funding are:

- East Belfast Healthy Eating Education Programme (Belfast)
- Food Focus Community Food Initiative (Cork)
- Food for Life (Derry)
- Footprints Women's Centre Building a Transition Community (Belfast)
- KASI Community Garden (Killarney)
- Limerick Seed to Plate Project (Limerick)
- The Food Garden Project (Dundalk)

The CFIs will be managed at a local level by Healthy Food for All, an all-island multi-agency initiative seeking to promote healthy food for low-income groups. Ms Marjo Moonen, Chair of Healthy Food for All, explains; "The core aim of our work is to end food poverty on the island of Ireland. As such, it is vitally important that we help make these community food initiatives work locally. We understand the common issues that these seven projects face and can draw on our expertise, from our wide network base, to assist them. We want to use these Community Food Initiatives to inform future developments; creating successful and sustainable models to ensure healthy and affordable food is ultimately available to everyone."

Each Community Food Initiative will receive funding annually over a period of three years to set up, manage and sustain their project, with **safefood** investing up to €75,000 per project.

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Notes to Editors:

Food Poverty Statistics:

Socially disadvantaged groups:

- eat less well compared to socially advantaged groups; have difficulties accessing a variety of nutritionally balanced good quality and affordable foodstuffs; spend relatively more money on food; and know what is healthy but are restricted by a lack of financial resources (Friel and Conlon 2004).

A study carried out by the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) showed that the cost of healthy eating in ROI accounted for up to 58% of a family's weekly social welfare benefits and for teenage boys in particular, the entire allowance could go on healthy foods (HFfA 2009)

In 2008, of the total ROI population:

- 3.8% were unable to afford a roast once a week and 3.0% were unable to afford a meal with meat, chicken or fish every 2nd day
- 9.1% were unable to afford to have family or friends around for a meal or drink once a month (CSO 2009)

Of the population at risk of poverty in ROI:

- 7.4% were unable to afford a roast once a week and 6.5% were unable to afford a meal with meat, chicken or fish every 2nd day
- 20.4% were unable to afford to have family or friends around for a meal or drink once a month (CSO 2009)

4.2% of the population were living in consistent poverty in ROI, while 14.4% were at-risk of poverty. Consistent poverty means that they are living on a low income and are deprived of one or more basic necessities, including food related items.

Overweight and obesity in ROI:

- a. Adults aged 18-44 years:- 39% overweight (45% men and 33% women) and 25% obese (24% men and 26% women) based on measured rather than self reported data among 2174 adults (SLAN, 2008)
- b. In ROI those in the lower social classes are more likely to be overweight or obese according to the latest SLAN figures (measured not reported BMI) – Of those overweight/obese under 45 years, 52% SC1-2; 50% SC3-4; 60% SC5-6. Of those overweight/obese over 45 years, 76% SC1-2; 75% SC3-4; 80% SC5-6 (Morgan et al 2007)
- c. Children in ROI aged 5-12 years - 11% overweight and 11% obese – based on n=596 children using the UK90 reference (IUNA, 2005). Teenagers aged 13-17 years in ROI: – 11% overweight (11% males and 11% females) and 8% obese (9% males and 7% females) based on n=441 using the UK90 reference (O'Neill, J., Launch of the National Teens Food Survey, Dublin, 2008)

About Healthy Food for All:

For more information on Healthy Food for All please visit www.healthyfoodforall.com.

Background on the 7 Community Food Initiatives that will receive funding:

A. KASI Community Garden

Killarney Asylum Seekers Initiative (KASI) is developing a community garden on the outskirts of Killarney town. It will provide a 'social space' that will help facilitate interaction between the target groups and local communities, in a very holistic and 'organic' manner, of working together, sharing and exchanging ideas, skills, crops, food and culture. Training will also be provided in gardening, healthy eating on a budget and nutrition (incorporating language training support for participants with very little English).

B. The Food Garden Project

The Food Garden Project, managed by RehabCare and the Simon Community in Dundalk, is developing a community garden. Its aim is to support very marginalised and vulnerable individuals to grow, prepare and cook a range of healthy organic fruit and vegetables throughout the year. There is an emphasis on transferring these skills to their home life. A support worker and a cookery instructor will be employed to assist the participants in learning how to grow produce and prepare healthy meals using the food products harvested from their community garden.

C. Limerick Seed to Plate Project

The Limerick Seed to Plate project, a joint project between Limerick Food Partnership (lead), hosted by PAUL Partnership, the St. Munchin's Family Resource Centre and Southill Area Centre, will employ two gardeners, one in each community, to develop their gardens further. There is a strong educational emphasis to the project and it is intended that the learning at the community gardens will be transferred to participants own homes and lifestyles. Southill has a newly opened community café and the food grown in their garden will be showcased and cooked in the centre and café. The project will also result in increased long term health benefits arising from a healthier lifestyle.

D. Food Focus Community Food Initiative

The Food Focus Community Food Initiative plans to promote healthy eating through a variety of co-ordinated, strategic activities that offer people a way to engage in a positive approach to food. It aims to create one community, one message about healthy eating and ensure the ability to achieve a healthy diet through building a variety of sustainable, engaging food activities. Food Focus will be a set of community based structures dedicated to addressing the risk and instances of food poverty in the Knocknaheeny area.

E. East Belfast Healthy Eating Education Programme

The aim of the East Belfast Mission Healthy Eating Education Programme is to provide healthy nutritious food for residents and ex-residents of their homeless shelter. This project will also provide health and diet sessions and cookery demonstrations to residents and ex residents on how to plan and prepare healthy food on a low budget. Information and advice sessions will also be provided for local residents, senior citizens and users of their family and community programmes giving advice and support on how to prepare and cook healthy meals on a low income.

F. Footprints Women's Centre Building a Transition Community

The Building a Transition Community Initiative will oversee the development of the grounds at Footprints Women's Centre and will offer food growing training to local residents who will be encouraged to volunteer in the garden. A local gardener will be hired and will oversee the development and training of the volunteers. The project will grow fruit and vegetables within the grounds of Footprints Women's Centre and this produce will be used within the Footprints Catering Services. Any supplies surplus to requirements will be used in schools in the neighbourhood.

G. Food For Life

The Bogside & Brandywell Health Forum (Healthy Living Centre) will develop, organise and deliver a range of healthy eating programmes including demonstration and practical cooking activities as well as education based activities and information. It will bring together a range of community and statutory workers who are tasked with the improvement of health within the local community. They will provide a range of programmes and activities that will provide knowledge and practical skills in the preparation of a healthy diet.