

Report of 1st Meeting of Food Vision 2030

High Level Implementation Committee

Wednesday 24 November 2021

Attendance:

Chair : Minister Charlie McConalogue

Agencies by webex: Tara McCarthy, Bord Bia, Jim O'Toole, BIM, Professor Frank O'Mara, Teagasc, Leo Clancy, EI, Laura Burke, EPA,

Other Government Departments by webex: Georgina Hughes-Elders, DPER, Declan Hughes, DETE

DAFM by webex: Brendan Gleeson, Secretary General, Sinéad McPhillips (ASG), Bill Callanan (CI), Paul Savage (ASG), Cecil Beamish (ASG)

Secretariat by webex: Seán Bell, Wila Bruce, Karl Walsh, Economics and Planning Division

Apologies: Brian Carroll, DECC

Items 1 and 2: Tom Arnold, Chair of Agri-Food Strategy Stakeholder Committee

Item 1: Introduction

Minister McConalogue welcomed the Committee to the first meeting of the Food Vision High Level Implementation Committee (HLIC). He said that he was delighted to launch the Strategy in August with the Taoiseach and Government colleagues as he believes that Food Vision is a landmark for the Irish agri-food sector, with the potential to transform our agriculture, food, forestry and marine sectors in the period to 2030, with sustainability at its core.

The Minister said this Strategy is honest and upfront about the challenges ahead. But crucially, it proposes solutions and charts a pathway to sustainability in all its dimensions – environmental, economic and social. One of the stand-out aspects of the Strategy is its adoption of a food systems approach, taking a more holistic view of agri-food by ensuring an interconnectedness between it and the areas of health & nutrition and the environment. Food Vision aims for Ireland to be a world leader in Sustainable Food Systems, which would deliver

food security and nutrition for all in such a way that the economic, environmental and social basis to generate food and nutrition for future generations are not compromised.

Food Vision 2030 sets out 22 goals under four high-level missions that the sector must achieve if it is to fulfil this ambition: A Climate Smart, Environmentally Sustainable Agri-Food Sector; Viable and Resilient Primary Producers, with Enhanced Wellbeing; Food that is Safe, Nutritious and Appealing, Trusted and Valued at Home and Abroad; and An Innovative, Competitive and Resilient Sector, Driven by Technology and Talent.

The Minister said that he would like to use the HLIC as a forum as one of the main drivers of the sector's environmental ambitions. The sector has set itself a mission of "A Climate Smart, Environmentally Sustainable Agri-Food Sector" with an overall target of a climate-neutrality by 2050, with verifiable progress by 2030. On 4 November Ireland's Climate Action Plan 2021 was launched - this is the most ambitious Climate Action Plan ever produced and it places farmers at the very centre. The targets for agriculture will help make Irish farms more carbon efficient and build a more resilient agri-food sector. Farmers know the land better than anyone and are best placed to meet our climate ambitions. This plan sets ambitious climate mitigation targets for farming, but also recognises the special position of the sector in producing high quality food and supporting a balanced regional economy. These commitments for reducing greenhouse gas emissions are challenging and delivering real results will require collaboration, co-operation and sense of shared responsibility between citizens, industry and the State.

The **Minister** stated that the primary producer, farmers, fishers and foresters, have a prominence and centrality in this Strategy that sets it apart from its predecessors. There are four Goals in Mission 2, which involve improving the competitiveness and productivity of primary producers, increasing the creation of value and distributing it fairly, introducing greater diversification in production systems and incomes, and improving the social sustainability of primary producers across areas such as generational renewal, gender balance, health and safety, mental health and wellbeing and rural development.

Food Vision looks to protect and build on Ireland's global reputation as a trusted supplier of high quality, safe, sustainable food to consumers at home and abroad. The Committee believes that the sector can reach €21 billion in exports by 2030, driven by value rather than volume. One of the new initiatives arising from the food systems approach is that DAFM have committed to working closely with colleagues in the Department of Health, to follow through on the food policy aspects and especially the areas of health and nutrition. As in the past, the sector needs to acknowledge the challenges but recognise the opportunities. Food Vision does both and forecasts a dividend from achieving its vision of Ireland becoming a world leader in Sustainable Food Systems.

The Strategy has already played a role internationally, being the central theme of DAFM engagement with the UN Food Systems Summit, where the Minister attended the pre-Summit in Rome in July and President Higgins gave Ireland's address to the Summit. Ireland's experience of inclusive, multi-stakeholder dialogue has shown that systemic change, while challenging, is possible but that it requires the willingness of all stakeholders to engage and cooperate, and at times to accept difficult compromises. Ireland is committed to working multilaterally, to advance and to advocate for food systems transformation in the two-year period where the Summit ambition and outcomes will be advanced.

The Minister said that Food Vision provides a vision for a dynamic, sustainable and innovative sector ready to adapt and to embrace change for a more sustainable future and that he is committed to leading the implementation of Food Vision. He asked for the Committee's full support and that of their organisations in helping to achieve this goal.

Item 2: Presentation by Tom Arnold, Chair of the Stakeholder Agri-Food 2030 Committee

The Minister introduced Tom Arnold, Chair of the Agri-Food Stakeholder Committee and asked him to give a presentation on Food Vision 2030, its development and his thoughts as the implementation phase begins.

Tom Arnold welcomed the opportunity to talk to the HLIC and said that the HLIC is crucial for successful implementation of the 2030 strategy. The strategy is a significant, relevant national policy which was built on a good terms of reference. However, the food systems approach needs to be explained, with emphasises on the interconnectedness between the national food sector and its link to the environment and health. All actors in the chain have a role to play in this– from farm to fork. It is important to set ambitious core objectives showing Ireland as a leader in sustainable food systems. It is significant that stakeholders accepted the strategy and that Government has expressed its support. It now needs to be communicated that it is an agreed national strategy while recognising that there are issues to be resolved. Food Vision is relevant to the current times and should be the framework for other policy decisions, with the distillation of core messages and priorities important.

A discussion on Food Vision followed.

Item 3: Draft Terms of Reference including the establishment of the Environmental Working Sub-Group

The Minister said that the Committee had been circulated a copy of the Draft Terms of Reference, which provide structure and objectives for the High Level Committee and the establishment of the Environmental Working Sub-Group.

Sinéad McPhillips said the draft terms of reference reflected feedback from the last Food Wise HLIC and the need to focus on priorities to drive implementation of Food Vision. Each mission will be considered at least once annually with a focus on individual actions and a commitment to publish an Annual Report of progress. There will be a separate Environmental Working Group and which will engage with all key stakeholders on a regular planned basis and the Chairs of any sectoral groups will be invited to report to the HLIC.

A discussion on the draft terms of reference followed.

Item 4: Food Vision 2030 Implementation Plan and priority actions

The **Minister** told the Committee that the success of any Strategy is its implementation and that implementation of Food Vision 2030 is underway with many of its actions already

commenced. The Department is currently finalising an Implementation Plan which will be circulated to the Committee for observations and published in the new year.

The Minister added that an important part of today's meeting is to agree priorities for the sector for 2022 and to determine the processes which will best advance and implement these actions. The Minister said that producing detailed plans by Q2 2022 to manage the sustainable environmental footprint of the dairy and the beef sectors is a key action and a priority for the sector and, in the context of the Climate Action Plan 2021, the sector needs to start work immediately on the important action. This will include extensive engagement with the sector.

Sinéad McPhillips said this is a very specific and important commitment in Food Vision and we need to act on it urgently – this is also acknowledged by the sector. The Department will develop proposals for this action and will need significant input and support from the relevant agencies on this, which will then require stakeholder consultations. Dairy and beef have different, but equally difficult, challenges.

A discussion on the Food Vision Implementation Plan followed.

Item 5: Public Event on Food Vision 2030

The **Minister** said the launch of the Strategy was curtailed due to the Covid 19 pandemic. However, the Department plans to host a launch event, at which the Strategy will be presented and discussed in more detail, at a time when public health advice allows. The Secretariat will circulate a draft outline of the event and will ask for comments and suggestions.

Item 6: Date of next meeting & AOB

Minister: advised the next meeting will be early in the new year.

Economics and Planning Division

November 2021