



19 February 2014

## **Public consultation on RDP 2014-2020**

### **Submission by Transition Kerry (Food Security Group)**

RDP = Rural Development Programme

Transition Kerry is delighted to have this opportunity to engage with the development of the of the new RDP 2014 - 2020 support structure.

**Transition Kerry believes that it is time to support small-scale horticultural producers in Ireland therefore helping to develop strong resilient and sustainable communities. The best way to do this is through the inclusion of Food Sovereignty and Food Security Principles in the RDP 2014 -2020 Programme.**

We strongly believe the levels of supports for export driven food markets should be balanced with equivalent supports for locally based food production and supply systems that enhance the health of our rural economy, environment and people.

Transition Kerry is a community and voluntary group operating in communities across county Kerry and part of the wider international Transition Town Network. Our objective is to develop a greater degree of resilience in our local communities in response to the challenges of Peak Oil, Climate Change and continued global economic environmental and social uncertainty.

We believe that with the right policies and supports local communities can play a more dynamic role in meeting Irelands carbon and renewable energy targets by providing affordable, sustainable food system and therefore supporting more resilient local and national communities.

We are working towards an integrated community-led approach in the areas of energy, food security, water efficiency, local economy, biodiversity, transport and waste, and we have sub-groups actively working locally in each of these areas.

**Transition Kerry would recommend very strongly that a new category of producer be included in the Rural Development Programme to help promote real growth in the organic horticulture sector in the coming years.** We support calls for creating a new classification of farmer / grower, the Horticultural Market Grower or small-scale Commercial Horticultural Producer. This new Grower classification should be given high priority status within the RDP and bring Ireland more in line with what has been achieved in other EU countries.

The following are suggested criteria for inclusion in this category:

- 1: Food producers who are supplying directly into their local community through:  
Farmer's markets, CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) systems, Direct marketing, Food hubs, Farm shops, and other distribution systems embedded in the local community.
- 1a: Who are certified to organic standards of production.
- 1b: Who are engaged in mixed farm systems, including agroforestry.
- 1c: Who are farming or growing on smallholdings.

**Transition Kerry recommends a GLAS + option to encourage local seed production: Supporting the active ISSA “Seed Guardian Network”.**

The minimum requirements for inclusion in this option would include:

- 1: Attendance at a seed saving course for basic training.
- 2: Commitment to local seed swapping and planning.
- 3: Being an active member in a national Seed Saving Co-operative / Seed bank / i.e. the Irish Seed Savers Association
- 4: Grow a seed crop for redistribution back into the Seed Saving Co-operative / Seed bank.

**Transition Kerry would recommend that the new category of “Horticultural Market Grower” is included Under Measure 3 on the Proposed Targeting / Selection Criteria List for On Farm capital investments.**

**Transition Kerry would like to see the Removal of the 5-year Rule for Young Farmers.**

**Transition Kerry would also like to see the replacing of the necessity of proving a financial track record with an acceptable business plan that can show potential future income streams.**

**Transition Kerry would recommend that the new category of “Horticultural Market Grower” is included Under Measure 4 on the Proposed Targeting / Selection Criteria List for Knowledge Transfer Measures**

**Transition Kerry would recommend that the new categories of “SEED GUARDIAN” and “SEED GUARDIAN NETWORK” are included Under Measure 4 on the Proposed Targeting / Selection Criteria List for Knowledge Transfer Measures**

**Transition Kerry recommends the establishment of a Development Team to advance the agenda and progress of the small-scale horticulture sector.**

**Transition Kerry recommends the creation of a Degree course in Organic Horticulture to bridge the education gap as currently the only education offered is FETAC level 5 and a Masters course.**

**Transition Kerry recommends the creation and support of a mentoring scheme for knowledge transfer from experienced organic growers to the new entrants.**

**Transition Kerry also recommends the creation and support of an apprenticeship scheme for knowledge transfer from experienced organic growers to the new entrants.**

**Transition Kerry would recommend the funding of a Feasibility Study for the establishment of an Organic Food Co-Op . A co-op would be responsible for the distribution and sale of Irish organic products within Ireland. We would recommend that funding for a Facilitator for the establishment of this CO-OP be made available.**

### **Background to Transition Kerry’s Submission and our reasons for recommending the establishment of the new category of “ Horticultural Market Grower ” within RDP Framework**

Ireland has a long agricultural history, which is deeply engrained in our identity. However the role of farmers as food producers for their local area is slowly disappearing. Ideally the role of food producers should belong to small-scale local growers and family farms providing fresh produce direct to in their local community.

There are many small-scale producers currently operating on small areas of land, with little or no governmental support. If the Irish government is to fulfill its obligation to provide food sovereignty and security by ensuring the supply of good quality, fresh and locally produced food to feed its people it needs to take action now.

There is currently a lack of direct support for the establishment and maintenance of local food production and distribution in Ireland. While there has been some support for

investment in organic farming, there is an additional need now to encourage and support food producers providing directly for the local community. It is time that Irish taxpayers money is spent on producing food directly for Irish citizens, not just for export overseas.

Small-scale local food producers selling directly provide multiple benefits to the local environment, community and economy.

- The production and consumption of food in short chains means increased economic and social activity in rural areas.
- Proportionally, small-scale organic growers and producers have a low environmental impact and a small carbon footprint.
- Small-scale diversified farming encourages local wildlife areas and biodiversity.
- The produce from these farms can get to the customer very quickly and is therefore very fresh and of high quality.
- Improved availability means better diets for people in the locality.
- Establishes functioning local food production systems that have the potential to provide increased local employment.
- They are more resilient to economic instability, and more likely to stay in adverse conditions,

Irish citizens have the right to healthy, locally produced food. Building local food networks is a first step towards food sovereignty. It is critical for the development of food sovereignty and security in Ireland that priority is given to the inclusion of local small scale, multi-crop producers . (“Horticultural Market Grower”) in the RDP 2014-2020

**Transition Kerry would like to be part of the ongoing RDP consultation process.**

## **Appendix:**

### **What is food sovereignty?**

Food sovereignty is the principle that peoples have the fundamental right to grow and consume food, which is economically, ecologically, socially and culturally appropriate to local conditions.

### **Why is it relevant for Ireland?**

Ireland has a strong agricultural sector, which in spite of historical difficulties is still tied into a market-logic of exports and world market prices. While Ireland has a high number of small sized farms, few are perceived as being “commercially viable” within the existing framework. The Irish government’s policy of basing growth predictions on the current model does not offer long-term economic sustainability for rural communities in Ireland.