

# Evaluation of the Community Food Initiative Programme 2013 - 2015



# **Evaluation of the Community Food Initiative Programme 2013 - 2015**

**First Annual Report April 2013 – March 2014**

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# Acknowledgements

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# 1 Executive Summary

This report summarises the main findings of an evaluation from the first year of the Community Food Initiative Programme 2013-2015. This is a three-year **safefood** funded programme that is managed by HFFA. It provides funding to 10 Community Food Initiatives (CFIs) based in areas of socio-economic disadvantage across the island of Ireland. This programme follows on from an earlier Demonstration Programme of CFIs, which ran for three years, from 2010 to 2012. The main aim of the CFI Programme is to promote greater access and availability of healthy and **safefood** in low-income areas through a programme of local projects using a community development approach.

## Reach of programme

During the first year of the programme, more than 12,000 people took part in a CFI activity, including 3,225 who took part in healthy eating activities, 3,080 who engaged in gardening/growing activities and 1,515 who took part in activities related to cooking skills. Conversely, very few people engaged in the practical skills associated with meal planning, budgeting or food shopping while they were engaged in these activities. The CFIs were also engaged in other activities, such as networking and sharing their learning with each other and **safefood**.

## Main challenges of year one

The top five challenges identified by the projects were:

- Maintaining and increasing the number of participants (reported by seven projects)
- Motivating volunteers (especially in winter)/managing interpersonal relations and volunteers' expectations (n=7 projects)
- Sustainability of the project (n=6 projects)
- Insufficient community engagement and networking with local organisations/agencies (n=6 projects)
- The inflexibility of the funding process (n=4 projects)

Other challenges at a programme level included inconsistent attendance by key people in some CFIs at networking and training events, and the level of administration carried out by the Development Worker.

## **Main successes of year one**

The top five successes identified by the projects were:

- The projects have started – all or most of the objectives planned for Year one have been achieved (reported by 10 projects).
- A lot of work has been done – the community gardens are in place (n=6 projects).
- Administrative structures are in place and budgets have been met (n=5 projects).
- There has been positive engagement with local community/schools and a positive response from communities (n=5 projects).
- The training courses were well attended and there was positive feedback from participants (n=5 projects).

In conclusion, the evidence from the evaluation suggests that the five objectives of the programme have been successfully addressed in Year one, albeit with more work to be done in Years two and three.

*“WHEN PEOPLE ACQUIRE THE SKILLS TO GROW AND  
COOK THEIR OWN FOOD, THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH  
FOOD CHANGES AND MOST EXPRESS A DESIRE TO  
BUILD ON THESE SKILLS THROUGH MORE COURSES”  
(MAYO)*



*“CHILDREN IN THE BREAKFAST AND AFTER SCHOOL CLUBS ARE  
EATING MORE FRUIT, WHOLEMEAL BREAD AND COOKED  
BREAKFASTS LIKE PORRIDGE AND SCRAMBLED EGG  
(WINDSOR)”*





## 2 Introduction

Food poverty is a reality for many people on the island of Ireland (IOI), with approximately 10 per cent of households in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) found to have experienced food poverty in 2010 (Carney and Maitre, 2012). Food poverty is ‘the inability to have an adequate and nutritious diet due to issues of the access to and affordability of food with related impacts on health, culture and social participation’ (<http://healthyfoodforall.com>). Food poverty is a complex issue, with no single cause identifiable. It is an integral part of experiencing poverty and is linked to a variety of factors, including awareness, self-efficacy, access, affordability and availability.

This report summarises the main findings of an evaluation from the first year (April 2013 to March 2014) of a three-year **safe food**-funded programme, managed by Healthy Food for All, of 10 Community Food Initiatives (CFIs) based in areas of socio-economic disadvantage across the IOI.<sup>1</sup> Underpinning this project is the conviction that CFIs represent a practical way in which barriers to healthy eating can be addressed at local level. The Community Food Initiative (CFI) programme follows on from an earlier Demonstration Programme of CFIs, which ran for three years, from 2010 to 2012.<sup>2</sup> The aim of the CFI Programme is to promote greater access and availability of healthy and safe food in low-income areas through a programme of local projects using a community development approach.

The objectives of the CFI programme 2013-2015 are:

- To fund ten community-based food projects across the IOI, over a three-year period
- To provide technical support and collective training and facilitate networking
- To encourage projects to consider long-term sustainability from the beginning of the programme

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<sup>1</sup> For further information see [www.safefood.eu](http://www.safefood.eu) and [www.healthyfoodforall.com](http://www.healthyfoodforall.com).

<sup>2</sup>The Demonstration Programme of Community Food Initiatives funded seven CFIs across the island of Ireland, from 2010 to 2013: KASI Community, Killarney; The Food Garden Project, Dundalk; Limerick Seed to Plate project; Food Focus Community Food Initiative, Cork; Footprints Women’s Centre Building a Transition Community, Belfast; East Belfast Mission Healthy Eating Education Programme; and Food for Life, Derry. The evaluation report may be accessed at <http://healthyfoodforall.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/safeFoodCommunityFoodInitiatives20102012Evaluation.pdf>

- To promote shared learning amongst CFIs on the IOI
- To identify policy and best practice lessons from the programme and increase awareness of these among key stakeholders across the IOI

An overview of the 10 projects funded by **safefood** as part of the CFI programme 2013–2015 is presented in Table 1.<sup>3</sup> The projects are very diverse, albeit with the common aim of promoting healthy eating among the participants and ultimately the wider community. The CFI Programme was launched in Belfast on the 11<sup>th</sup> April 2013.

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<sup>3</sup>Each of the projects has been funded to a maximum of £35,000 or €45,000.

**Table 1: Overview of projects in the CFI programme 2013-2015**

<b>Project title</b>	<b>Host organisation</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Main target groups</b>
Family Growing Project	Ballybeg CDP (in partnership with Barnados).	Co. Waterford	Families living in the Ballybeg estate
Eat Wise Project	Mayo North East LEADER Partnership Company Teoranta and Mayo Travellers Support Group.	Ballina, Co. Mayo	The residents of local authority housing estates in Ardnaree and Parkside, Ballina
Dublin 15 Good Food Network	Blanchardstown Area Partnership	Blanchardstown, Dublin 15	Marginalised communities in Dublin 15
Incredible Edibles Project	Cloughmills Community Action Team	Cloughmills, Co. Antrim	Cloughmills village
CHANGE	Doras Buí	Coolock, Dublin 17	One-parent families living in the north-east part of Dublin city
Grow it, Cook it, Eat it	Dunmanway Family Resource Centre	Dunmanway, Co. Cork	Disadvantaged families in Dunmanway
Fatima Food Project	Fatima Groups United	Fatima, Dublin 8	Residents of Fatima, Rialto and Dolphin
Growing Community Roots	Fettercairn Community and Youth Centre	Tallaght, Dublin 24	Local community
Community Seasonal Eating Project	Owenkillew Development Company	Gortin, Co. Tyrone	Local community
Food For Thought Project	Windsor Women's Centre	Belfast	Women and their families in the surrounding area

The 10 projects were chosen for the CFI programme 2013–2015 on the basis of the following criteria:

- The project is located within an established organisation with a proven track record in collaborative, community-based projects.
- The target audience for the CFI has a low level of income.
- The focus of the CFI is on adults who are responsible for food shopping and meal preparation for their family and/or children.
- The CFI adopts a community development approach.
- The CFI agrees to influence positive eating habits among families and address some or all of the following:
  - Creating awareness and knowledge of healthy eating
  - Promoting cooking skills, food safety and hygiene
  - Promoting the prevention of food wastage, budgeting and planning skills
  - Growing food
  - Improving the availability and access to safe and healthy food in the community
  - Being committed to shared learning and networking between the projects
  - Having access to space for meeting and training and other facilities, such as a kitchen or garden
  - Having a senior member of staff available to dedicate time (5+ hours a week) to the programme for duties such as co-ordination of the project, attending events, completing reports, and shared learning

A Development Worker, employed by Healthy Food for All, was appointed to manage and co-ordinate the CFI Programme.

## 3 Methodology

The data summarised in this report are taken from a number of sources. First, each CFI was requested to complete a monthly report on its activities and progress. A copy of the CFI questionnaire can be seen in appendix A. The following data were gathered by means of these questionnaires.

- Total number of participants who engaged in a range of CFI activities
- Ongoing activities organised by the CFI
- One-off events organised by the CFI
- Networking
- Training
- Sustainability of the project
- Shared learning
- Technical support
- The main challenges and problems
- The main successes
- The main 'learnings' of the process

Following the launch of the CFI Programme in April 2013 and the appointment of an Evaluator in June 2013, the questionnaires were first completed by the CFIs in July 2013. This system was later changed to a quarterly reporting requirement in September 2013, following feedback from the CFIs, which suggested that a quarterly reporting format was sufficient to map their progress.

Second, the Evaluator and the Development Worker separately visited each site and collected a range of qualitative data on issues affecting the progress of the CFIs. The Evaluator and the Development Worker subsequently met on two occasions and they also exchanged multiple emails and telephone calls on diverse aspects of the evaluation. Feedback from the funders on the financial process was provided by email.

A summary of the findings was put together for each CFI and subsequently reviewed by an appointed person in each project to verify that it accurately reflected their progress and views (Appendix B).

A summary of the evaluation process for Year one is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Outline of the evaluation process in year one**

Month	CFI report	Site visits by Evaluator	Site visits by Development worker
April–June 2013	-	-	-
July 2013	Monthly	Ballina Fettercairn Dunmanway Ballybeg	-
August 2013	Monthly	Dublin 15 Cloughmills	Dublin 15
September 2013	Monthly	Fatima Doras Buí Owenkillew	Owenkillew Cloughmills Fettercairn Ballina Dunmanway Doras Buí
October 2013	-	Windsor	Fatima Windsor Ballybeg
November 2013	-	-	-
December 2013	Quarterly	-	-
January 2014	-	-	-
February 2014	-	-	-
March 2014	Quarterly	-	-

# 4 Findings

The 10 projects selected for the CFI programme are quite diverse and distinctive in their own right. For instance, they have different target groups and they are widely distributed across the island of Ireland. Conversely, they are united by their common aim of promoting healthy eating amongst their target groups and their wider communities. The focus of this chapter is on the commonalities identified by the 10 projects participating in the CFI programme. A more detailed outline of the 10 projects is contained in appendix B.

## 4.1 Programme reach

During the first year of the programme, more than 12,000 individuals<sup>4</sup> took part in a CFI activity, including 3,225 individuals who took part in healthy eating activities, 3,080 individuals who engaged in gardening/growing activities and 1,515 individuals who took part in activities related to cooking skills. Conversely, very few people engaged in the practical skills associated with meal planning, budgeting or food shopping (Table 3). The CFIs also engaged in a number of other activities, such as networking and more informal sharing with each other through site visits.

The ‘other’ activities comprised a range of miscellaneous activities, such as physical activity (1254), food and healthy living seminars/demonstrations (1172), community meals (836), open or fun days (233), foraging (12), networking (16) and a range of other activities (194).

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<sup>4</sup> This number refers to the number of individuals who took part in an activity organised by a CFI. While some individuals took part in more than one activity and are, therefore, counted twice, most participants (74 per cent) took part in only one activity during any given month.

**Table 3: Total engagement in CFI activities in year one**

CFI projects	Gardening/ growing	Cooking skills	Healthy eating	Planning/ budgeting/ shopping	Other activity	Total engaging in CFI activities
Ballybeg	60	24	16	10	10	120
Ballina	301	87	163	4	201	756
Dublin 15	1,580	435	111	18	86	2,230
Cloughmills	158	335	19	-	63	575
Doras Buí	108	-	45	22	15	190
Dunmanway	48	15	16	9	153	241
Fatima	22	153	135	53	782	1,145
Fettercairn	607	226	1,984	52	2,118	4,987
Owenkillew	309	227	209	205	264	1,214
Windsor Women's Centre	80	13	601	-	25	719
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,273</b> (27%)	<b>1,515</b> (12%)	<b>3,299</b> (27%)	<b>373</b> (3%)	<b>3,717</b> (31%)	<b>12,177</b> (100%)



#### 4.1.1 Participation in regular ongoing activities

Many of the people who engaged in a CFI activity during Year one did so intermittently, often for a school or community event. Others engaged more regularly in a CFI core activity, such as gardening, cooking or healthy eating (Table 4). The data indicate that an average of 80 individuals participated regularly in each of the CFIs. However, there is considerable variation in the numbers involved in the 10 projects, ranging from 14 participants in one project to more than 200 in the biggest project. The larger numbers tend to be associated with projects close to schools, where the students engaged in one of the regular CFI activities. Conversely, some of the CFIs attracted smaller numbers because of their small catchment areas and the marginalised nature of their target groups.

**Table 4: Engagement in regular ongoing CFI activities in year one**

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Average year one
1. Ballybeg	12	8	42	27	22
2. Ballina	80	53	39	38	52
3. Dublin 15	71	38	398	321	207
4. Cloughmills	42	62	116	157	94
5. Doras Buí	18	16	27	41	25
6. Dunmanway	15	17	7	16	14
7. Fatima	n/a	54	92	98	81
8. Fettercairn	290	167	13	45	129
9. Owenkillew	n/a	188	66	90	115
10. Windsor Women's Centre	26	35	114	88	66
Average	69	64	91	92	79

#### 4.1.2 Profile of participants

The profile of participants evolved during Year one, from one of a predominantly female profile to a situation where participants are now more mixed, albeit still with a greater percentage of females. The projects have attracted very few teenagers or elderly participants (Table 5).

**Table 5: Gender and age profile of participants in ongoing activities in year one**

	GENDER		AGE				
	Male	Female	1-12 years	Teens	Young adults	36-60 years	Elderly
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1. Ballybeg	53	47	34	-	39	27	-
2. Ballina	53	47	15	5	25	47	8
3. Dublin 15	34	66	90	2	4	4	-
4. Cloughmills	44	56	30	6	29	32	7
5. Doras Buí	7	93	17	5	2	73	2
6. Dunmanway	38	62	-	-	3	92	5
7. Fatima	45	55	27	-	4	63	5
8. Fettercairn	33	67	66	-	18	16	-
9. Owenkillew	50	50	51	-	17	28	4
10. Windsor Women's Centre	32	68	53	-	15	9	23

## 4.2 Main challenges, successes and ‘learnings’ from year one

Each of the projects was asked to identify the main challenges, success and ‘learnings’ from Year one.

### 4.2.1 Main challenges of year one

The top five challenges spontaneously<sup>5</sup> identified by the projects were:

- Maintaining and increasing the number of participants (mentioned by seven projects)
- Motivating volunteers (especially in winter)/managing interpersonal relations and volunteers’ expectations (N=7 projects)
- Sustainability of the project (N=6 projects)
- Insufficient community engagement and networking with local organisations/agencies (N=6 projects)
- The inflexibility of the funding process (N=4 projects)

Other challenges reported by the 10 projects in Year one included delays in the start-up phase caused by bad weather, contractual issues in gaining access to a space for a community garden, infrastructural issues (n=3), engaging with difficult target groups, such as children from difficult family situations (n=2), time spent on administration (n=2), ongoing promotion of the project in the community (n=2), the amount of work being greater than envisaged (n=1), finalising the work plan (n=1), a lack of expertise in planning the garden (n=1), operating in multiple sites (n=1), vandalism of gardens (n=1), a primary focus on doing things rather than engaging with the programme (n=1), unexpected costs (n=1), managing the budget (n=1), and achieving targets even if there were difficulties outside of their control (n=1).

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<sup>5</sup> The projects were not given a list or prompted in any way in their responses to this open question.

*“ONE OF OUR MAIN CHALLENGES HAS BEEN  
RETAINING THE INTEREST AND ATTENDANCE” (CORK)*



*“DESPITE PARTICIPANTS LOVING THE WORK, OTHER  
AREAS OF THEIR LIVES HAVE HAD TO TAKE  
PRECEDENCE” (WATERFORD)*



*“I KNOW THE PROJECT CAN BE SUSTAINABLE BUT A  
LOT WILL DEPEND ON THE COMMUNITY THEMSELVES  
TAKING OWNERSHIP AND VOLUNTEERING”  
(BLANCHARDSTOWN)*



*“THE CHALLENGE IS TO MAKE PEOPLE AWARE ... AND ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY FOR THE PROJECT WHEN FUNDING COMES TO AN END” (TALLAGHT)*



The Development worker also identified a number of challenges in her role:

1. Report writing and administration

She suggested that her reports, which take substantial time to prepare, may be too detailed to be of use by the CFIs. Another challenge is that she spends a lot of time following up with a small number of projects for their reports, time that is taken away from other aspects of the programme.

2. Maintaining the all-island nature of the programme

She finds it challenging to motivate the 10 CFIs and maintain their focus on the all-Ireland nature of the programme. If she does not link in or visit them regularly, their focus tends to revert back to their own projects.

3. Consistent attendance of key people in each CFI

A requirement of the programme is attendance at three networking events each year, with a two-day commitment to be given to each event that requires the attendance of key members of staff on an ongoing basis so that the learning reaches a certain level. However, some of the project organisers have found this difficult and have consistently sent other representatives to the networking events, especially when the networking event is located some distance away. This has the potential of the programme learning being lost unless the same people attend the networking events.

4. Sharing of information

Finally, the Development Worker would like to see more sharing between CFIs outside of the structured networking events.

#### 4.2.2 Main successes of year one

The top five successes spontaneously identified by the projects were:

- The projects have started – all or most of the objectives planned for Year one have been achieved (mentioned by 10 projects).
- A lot of work has been done – the community gardens are in place (n=6 projects).
- Administrative structures are in place and budgets have been met (n=5 projects).
- There has been positive engagement with local community/schools and a positive response from communities (n=5 projects).
- The training courses were well attended and positive feedback was received from participants (n=5 projects).

Other successes reported by the 10 projects included the volunteer contribution to the project (n=3), reaching marginalised groups (n=2), networking and sharing of knowledge in local community (n=2), bringing people together (n=2), providing practical life skills in growing and cooking (n=2), increasing consumption of healthy food (n=2), introducing people to the joys of physical exercise (n=1), the hosting of special events that got people interested in healthy eating (n=1), and beginning to address food poverty (n=1).

*“PEOPLE AREN’T TURNING UP THEIR NOSES NOW AT  
THE IDEA OF HEALTHY EATING. THEY’RE ASKING  
QUESTIONS AND WANTING TO FIND OUT MORE”  
(BLANCHARDSTOWN)*



*“PEOPLE ARE DEFINITELY TALKING ABOUT FOOD AND EXCHANGING RECIPES” (OWENKILLEW)*



When asked what was working well in the programme, the Development Worker identified the following aspects of the programme: the projects are engaging substantial numbers of people, many from marginalised communities; they are making a significant difference in their local areas; relationships are getting stronger between the CFIs as the programme progresses; most of the CFIs are engaged with the programme and they send in reports and attend networking events in line with programme requirements; **safefood** has not had to be as involved in the programme compared with the Demonstration programme; and **safefood** has been **flexible** on budget changes and the development of a user-friendly and clear financial reporting system. She also believes that her site visits are very beneficial in building relationships with the projects and becoming familiar with their target groups

#### **4.2.3 ‘Learnings’ from year one**

The list of ‘learnings’ from Year one was quite diverse and related to the experience of individual projects. Four projects highlighted the importance of networking and communicating with other groups in the community, three projects highlighted the importance of being flexible and meeting people ‘where they are at’, two projects found that food can be fun and tasty, two projects emphasised the importance of specialist support when working with children or planning a garden, and two projects believed that the aims of the programme, and not just project activities, would need to be promoted.

Other ‘learnings’ identified by individual projects were the following:

- The time and commitment required by the project has been more than originally envisaged.
- There has been a positive impact by the community garden on the local area.
- It is important to allow the community to shape the project.
- People are motivated to continue their involvement when they see results.
- Meaningful engagement takes time and energy, especially by resource-poor community organisations.
- Tasks should be fulfilled in manageable chunks.
- It is important to listen carefully and then act quickly.
- It is important to keep people informed.
- There is a great willingness in young people to become involved in community activities and their parents are supportive.
- It is important to plan enough interesting activities for the winter.
- It is important to let people participate at their own pace.
- Opportunities should be created for groups to bring their ideas into the garden.

The Development Worker also identified a number of ‘learnings’ for the programme, including the contribution of site visits to the overall progress of the programme, the tendency for CFIs to focus on the day-to-day activities of their project rather than the broader programme, the importance of facilitating formal and informal networking opportunities for shared learning, and the value of evidence in identifying best practice and challenges. She also believes that if the projects are to be sustained beyond the present programme, they will need to be clear about their purpose and to use this to decide what is working well and worth developing further.

*“PARTICIPANTS ARE GAINING CONFIDENCE TO GIVE COOKING NEW THINGS A GO” (BALLYBEG)*





*“IT HAS BEEN CHALLENGING TO CONTAIN THE BREADTH OF POSSIBILITIES AVAILABLE THAT THIS PROJECT OFFERS, THE GREAT ENTHUSIASM THAT WAS PROVIDED BY PARTICIPANTS AND THE IDEAS THAT AROSE WITH THE REALISATION THAT NOT EVERY EXPECTATION COULD BE MET” (FATIMA)*



*“MANAGING WORKLOADS AND EXPECTATIONS HAS BEEN TRICKY FOR VOLUNTEERS” (CLOUGHMILLS)*



*“THE WORKLOAD INVOLVED IN ESTABLISHING THE COMMUNITY GARDEN WAS FAR GREATER THAN ANTICIPATED” (COOLOCK)*



### 4.3 Achievement of CFI programme objectives

The evidence from the evaluation suggests that the five objectives of the programme have been successfully addressed in Year one, albeit with more work to be done in Years two and three.

#### 4.3.1 Objective 1: To fund 10 community-based food projects across the island of Ireland over a three-year period

The 10 CFIs are operational and most of them have satisfactorily completed their objectives for Year one. During the first year of the programme, they completed a lot of work and installed their community gardens. A substantial number of people, including people from marginalised and disadvantaged communities, took part in a CFI activity. They have engaged with their local communities, and feedback on their training courses and once-off events has been positive. Furthermore, the funding and administrative structures are in place, including a financial template provided by *safefood*. While four CFIs found the funding process somewhat inflexible, the majority were satisfied with the process. All of them found the financial template easy to use and the support provided by *safefood* to be helpful. From the funder's point of view, the common template makes the review of spending a lot simpler and more efficient when all projects are using the same format to return information. This has saved *safefood* time and made the process of preparing the next round of funding more efficient. Conversely, as previously mentioned, the CFIs have also encountered a number of challenges: maintaining and increasing the number of participants, motivating volunteers and managing their expectations, sustaining the projects, insufficient community engagement, and the perceived inflexibility of the funding process. Other challenges at a programme level included inconsistent attendance by key people in some CFIs at networking and training events and the level of administration to be carried out by the Development Worker.

#### **4.3.2 Objective 2: To provide technical support, collective training and facilitate networking**

The Development Worker provided collective training during the networking events and technical support during each site visit (Table 2). During the first year of the programme, she supported the 10 CFIs in a number of ways, including establishing and maintaining good relationships with the 10 CFIs, visiting each CFI site, organising three networking events and encouraging the CFIs to share with each other, and identifying and organising the training needs that reflect the emerging needs of the 10 projects and the programme. All of the project organisers indicated they were very satisfied with the support provided by the Development Worker during networking and training events and in the course of her site visits. Conversely, the Development Worker found it challenging to get the key people in some CFIs to attend the networking and training events, especially when these events involved substantial travel and time away from their projects.

#### **4.3.3 Objective 3: To encourage projects to consider long-term sustainability from the beginning of the programme**

This is only starting for most projects, with some of them looking at social enterprise to get funding. However, since it is still early days in the programme, it is not yet a priority, and their primary focus is on the development of their gardens and the day-to-day issues surrounding their projects. There are indications that this aspect of the programme is beginning to change. A networking and training event on volunteerism and sustainability was held in the first quarter of Year two. Similar training and networking events are planned for Year two.

#### **4.3.4 Objective 4: To promote shared learning amongst CFIs on the island of Ireland**

Most shared learning occurs at the networking events and when projects visit each other. Learning is also shared through an online forum, Mango Apps. The Development Worker believes that networking is a very powerful forum for the projects to build relationships and share learning. She has also encouraged projects to visit other sites so that they can gain a different perspective on their project and think beyond their own local area. Half of the CFIs said they were satisfied with the shared learning to date, while the others were somewhat dissatisfied. Some projects, for example, would like

more informal contact and sharing of information on common issues. A Facebook page will be available in the first quarter of Year two to improve the level of sharing within the programme.

#### **4.3.5 Objective 5: To identify policy and best practice lessons from the programme and increase awareness of these among key stakeholders across the island of Ireland**

A substantial amount of evidence was gathered during Year one for promotion and advocacy purposes when dealing with government departments and others involved in policy development. Policy and best practice is recorded by the Development Worker following her site visits, her ongoing contacts at networking events and support activities. She also promotes the programme and increases awareness amongst different stakeholders by giving presentations on the CFI programme, through attendance at various events and by establishing informal contacts with relevant stakeholders. During Year one, the Development Worker attended a number of events and engaged with a range of external groups and individuals: the Urban Farms event in Dublin, the OPEN Horticultural Fetac-accredited graduation ceremony, the launch of OPEN FAST (Finglas) community garden, the annual Irish Cancer Society Charles Cully Memorial Lecture 2013, a European Research meeting on Urban Agriculture in Maynooth, the Dublin Community Growers Harvest Festival, St Andrew's Resource Centre Junction Cafe opening, Ballina Food Poverty and Food Sovereignty Seminar, the IPH conference, the Doras Buí garden event, the Clondalkin food poverty event, the National Youth Council young people and food conference, a lecture in UCD on food poverty and food initiatives, Dublin Community Growers conference, and the Belfast Healthy Cities event. At many of these events, she made presentations on the CFI programme.

## 5 Conclusions

Overall, the evidence from Year one indicates that the CFI Programme 2013–2015 is progressing very satisfactorily. Most importantly, they have all set up their projects. The 10 CFIs have approached their work with enthusiasm, and they have achieved most of their Year one objectives. More than 12,000 individuals took part in an activity organised by a CFI in Year one, and people from marginalised backgrounds have been introduced to the benefits of healthy eating. Many of them are engaging with food in ways they would never have done in the past. Each of the projects has set up the necessary infrastructure for their gardens and established administrative structures. Their work was ably supported by a Development Worker, who is perceived by all of the project participants to be enthusiastic and efficient in her work. There is no reason to suggest that the results for Year two will be any less successful. Conversations with participants during on-site visits by the Development Worker and the Evaluator suggest that many of them find joy in growing food and cooking a meal, no matter how simple. Conversely, some issues arose in Year one that will require attention in Year two.

First, some of the projects have found it challenging to engage the target groups to their projects, especially those from the most disadvantaged communities. Low or decreasing numbers of participants can have a negative impact on the motivation of workers and the sustainability of a project. While this is not a significant problem for most of the CFIs and it is important that they understand that quantity is not always better than quality, it is an issue that CFIs should continue to address in Year two, in particular where community development projects are concerned.

Second, some CFIs have begun to consider the implications of sustainability for their projects by, for example, investigating additional funding opportunities, recruiting volunteers and considering ways in which their CFI brand may be sustained when the programme has run its course. One project, for example, indicated that they are aware of the difference between meeting the short-term annual objectives of the programme and the greater challenge of ensuring the long-term success and viability of the project. For most CFIs, however, sustainability is not yet recognised as a priority and it will need to be specifically addressed in Year two.

Third, most emphasis by the CFIs in Year one has been on the establishment of the community garden and gardening skills. There has been less emphasis on meal planning, budgeting and food shopping. These latter skills will require greater emphasis as the programme progresses into Years two and three.

Fourth, while most of the projects are satisfied with the funding process, four of them believe that the funding process is not sufficiently flexible when it comes to budget allocation. They would like the funding process to be capable of reacting more quickly to a project's unforeseen or changing circumstances. One CFI suggested that items needed by most project organisers, such as gardening equipment or cooking facilities, could be purchased in bulk at a more advantageous price. Another project would like a margin of approximately 10 per cent budget line for small changes that could be made without written consent from **safefood**. Conversely, six CFIs and **safefood** believe that the funding process has worked satisfactorily during Year one following some minor modifications to the template.

Fifth, most projects would appear to have focused primarily on their own projects and the specific tasks associated with developing and maintaining their CFI. This is understandable given the start-up phase of their projects and the relatively low level of resources available to organisations in the community sector. However, if they are to benefit from the shared learning that comes with networking with other CFIs, they will need to look outside their project and to engage more with the programme and the Development Worker in Year two.

Lastly, the administrative difficulties identified by the Development Worker relating to the completion of reports by some CFIs will need to be resolved by the projects concerned so that they do not worsen and threaten the good relationship that clearly exists between the Development Worker and all the projects.

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