

The Dromana Declaration

A Really Resilient Food System in the SE bioregion

Our North Star

“We want future food to be:

Grown and eaten with passion, without which we will fail.

Inspirational. Easy to get and affordable for all.

Connected to people and communities.

Familiar. Surprising

Secure, in a system where farmers and consumers share an interest in this security.

Pristine. Fair. Seasonal. Nutritious. Delicious.”

*Excerpt from the SE Bioregional Food Manifesto
co-written by local producers and consumers Sept 2023*

A Really Resilient Food System

Ireland depends on inspirational individuals and groups to give their communities access to healthy, nutritious food. These local producers farm without harming the soil, the water or the wider landscapes around them. Their customers eat without harming themselves. These diverse networks of people are coming together to show that another way really is possible. They should be supported and represented at every level of society and every step of decision-making.

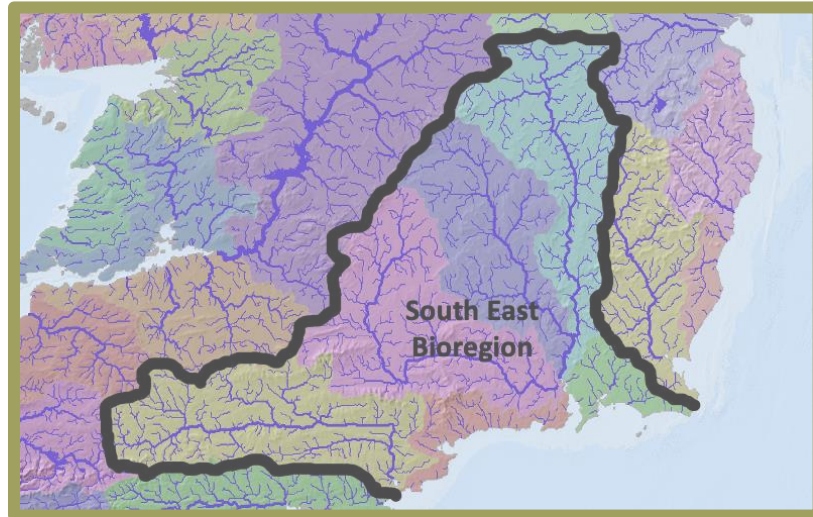
Individuals and organisations in the South East Bioregion (an area defined by nature's ecosystems and the communities they hold – see map) have come together to create and sign this Declaration - and to take action to establish, support and maintain a **Really Resilient Food System**.

*A **really resilient food** system is a dynamic, adaptive and diverse network of food production, processing, and distribution that ensures consistent access to safe, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food for all people.*

It is designed to not only withstand and recover from shocks (such as: floods, storms, droughts, pandemics, or economic crises) but to ‘bounce forward’ —transforming, learning, and improving its efficiency and equity in the process

United under this Declaration, we will strengthen our capacity to live well, to protect the land that holds us, and to address the local and global crises that impinge upon us. It will lead to food sovereignty – local food for local people in this area of Ireland. The declaration is written to attract local, national and international support for the people and nature in our bioregion – including through processes linked to The Nature Restoration Law, The National Biodiversity Plan, Food to Fork set by the Irish government,

and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as set by the United Nations and supported by the European Union.



The Dromana Declaration

In January 2026, 40 local producers, retailers and consumers of nutritious food rooted in healthy soils, gathered at Dromana House to chart a pathway to 'really resilient food' (food sovereignty) in South East Ireland. The people present came from backgrounds working across grain, dairy, meat, and horticulture, all living within the shared landscape, ecologies and culture that are entangled and connected (the basis for a bioregional framing).

The growers, bakers, writers, farmers, butchers and milkers and eaters all acknowledged a strong bond between each other but also expressed a feeling of disconnect in terms of being a joined-up, represented force for delicious food from really resilient farming practices.

It was unanimously agreed that stronger representation is required and that this can be achieved through establishing a common set of principles of common beliefs, building networks of mutual support and moving towards more formal co-governed organizational structures.

The **Dromana Declaration** aims to pave the way to finding the strong voice and the effective support system that will represent local food producers and consumers as individuals and as part of a collective force for positive change in regional food systems.

The **Dromana Declaration** sets out common principles as a foundation for cooperation and then lists ideas that are recommended and desired to take these to action.

Signatories to the declaration who agree with the spirit of the Declaration and abide by the Common Principles, and who continue to engage with the Proposals and Ideas to take to Action, have the power

to give the South East of Ireland the foundation it needs for really resilient and healthy food and give everyone engaged in it a good quality of life living in landscapes where nature really thrives.

What We Believe In

We recognise our traditional food system that depends on agriculturally rich lands, rivers, estuaries, seas and uplands high levels of biodiversity is subject to increasingly challenging conditions – and that it is within our creativity and power to make changes to address this.

We know that every relationship - between farmers, workers, communities, and natural ecosystems - strengthens the backbone of our grain, horticulture, meat, dairy and other food systems.

We identify with belonging to a ‘bioregion’ by valuing what brings us together: our landscape and water, our climate, culture, traditions, arts, food, heritage and a rural/urban way of life that identifies us and unites us under the same living and connected ecosystem.

Our Common Principles

The principles we believe in, and how they appear as they are implemented in practice, are crafted from the words stakeholders prioritised when asked ‘**What do you know and what do you want?**’ Each principle is described as a desire and then described as what it would look like in practice.

Participants’ original words	Principle		What this looks like in practice
Disconnect, Purpose, Increase awareness, Common sense, Change, Small is beautiful, New vision, Freedom, Choice, Honesty, Passion, Belonging, Joy, Mental health, Life’s purpose, Have graceful fun, Vision, I am already engaged in this process, The power of nature, How do you measure success, Moral issue, Dignity, Fight for our rights	1	Flourishing Together	<p>We want to connect work to purpose, joy, and wellbeing, while honoring the power of nature.</p> <p>To begin with this looks like members taking time for reflection, celebrating small successes, and designing work that aligns with their values.</p> <p>In the long run this will be seen as a cooperative culture where wellbeing is embedded, decisions are purpose-driven, and people thrive alongside nature.</p>
Collective, Community, Symbiosis, Knowledge, Education, Change the curriculum, Experiential learning, Good local networks and support, Information sharing, Training, Communities connecting over food, Support thy neighbour, Cooperatives, Meitheal, Know your farmer, Know where your food comes from, Farmer and butcher should be friends, Farmers and ecologists should be friends, not enemies, Community-supported	2	Learning & Sharing	<p>We want to build trust, exchange knowledge, support each other, our neighbours and future generations, and make friends.</p> <p>To begin with this looks like well-attended meitheals, open workshops, mentorship, and regular sharing of experiences and skills among members.</p> <p>In the long run this will be seen as a community where learning is continuous, knowledge flows freely, and everyone feels empowered to contribute and</p>

Participants' original words	Principle	What this looks like in practice
agriculture, High trust, Empowerment, Social farming, Farm events to connect to community, Educating children, Feed our children local food in school meals, Homeschooling, Have children, The next generation, Encourage new entrants.		innovate. New and alternative educational curricula and learning offerings, related and connected to local food and place, will be normal at all ages.
Nature, Build resilience, Farming with nature, Holistic management, Reductionist vs holistic view, Medicine, Food as medicine, Health and wellbeing, Detoxification, Poisoned, Chemical free, Clean food, Nutrient-dense food, Vegetables, Water quality, More organic farms, Foraging, Our planet, Our ecosystem is under threat, Holistic food production.	3 Caring for Nature Caring for Ourselves	<p>We want to steward land, water, and ecosystems; grow healthy, sustainable food and build really resilient food systems in holistically managed landscapes. We want food to be seen as medicine and nutrition connected to health and well-being.</p> <p>To begin with this looks like more organic and nature-positive farming practices, biodiversity-friendly land management and sourcing inputs responsibly.</p> <p>In the long run this will be seen as resilient ecosystems, healthy food systems, high quality water, and a cooperative known for its environmental, cultural and social stewardship.</p>
Cost, Price-maker, Quality, New concept of value for money, Stability for farmers, Quality of life for farmers, Succession of family business, Family farm, Independent, Direct selling, Direct sales, Buy local or bye-bye local, How to stop butcher shops closing, Raw milk over the table rather than under the table, Stay away from the tax man.	4 Fair Value	<p>We want to ensure fair livelihoods, transparent pricing, and local economic resilience.</p> <p>To begin with this looks like clear pricing strategies determined by producers, direct sales, and fair compensation for all members.</p> <p>In the long run this will be seen as a thriving local economy, farmers appreciating their quality of life, sustainable small family farms, and a cooperative where members can make a decent living while supporting each other. Butcher shops will still be found, local milk will be available to those that want it, and local Irish grains for Irish bakers and animal feed will be the norm.</p>
Regulation, New regulations, Consistency of inspection, EHO bias and bullshit, Power, Self-regulation, Incentives, Policy developed on old information will give you the same results, Policy rooted in community, Local decisions, Access, Local, Infrastructure, New routes to market, Online presence, Visibility,	5 Shaping Systems	<p>We want to engage with policies, markets, and infrastructure to strengthen community-led solutions that are supported by appropriate regulation.</p> <p>To begin with this looks like members participating in local decision-making, advocating for fair policies, and experimenting with alternative market channels.</p>

Participants' original words	Principle		What this looks like in practice
<p>Your USP, Convenience is a problem, Alternative, Local food for local people, Real food for real people (not Supervalu tho!)</p>			<p>Inspiration is accessed of what works for influencing regulation from really resilient food grassroots networks.</p> <p>In the long run this will be seen as a cooperative that influences local systems, creates resilient networks, and ensures that community needs are prioritized. Regulations will have enabled local food to be available to local people. Inspections will be appreciated as useful empowerment mechanisms.</p>
<p>Bride valley, Irish grown wheats, Irish food, Irish people, What food is, Coriander is overrated, The book _____ by Christopher Cluxton, Our future.</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>Celebrating Place</p>	<p>We want to honor local culture, heritage, and landscape in everything we do.</p> <p>To begin with this looks like telling stories of the land and people, integrating local traditions into events, using regional products, and making maps that bring food and place into a common space.</p> <p>In the long run this will be seen as a cooperative deeply rooted in its place and its bioregion, fostering pride, identity, and lasting connections between people who know what Irish food is and its origin landscape.</p>