



10th November 2017

Submission on Ireland 2040 Our Plan – National Planning Framework

Cré believes there is potential to develop a strong biological treatment industry in Ireland through composting and anaerobic digestion that will significantly assist Government with achieving important national and EU waste, energy and climate targets as well as increasing employment opportunities.

Cré calls for greater effort, co-ordination and co-operation between all stakeholders to ensure that the total potential organic waste stream is fully captured and diverted to current and future composting and anaerobic digestion plants in Ireland.

This will safeguard existing jobs and businesses and create many new sustainable indigenous jobs while supporting the growth of a biological treatment sector that can contribute significantly toward achieving the Government's waste diversion, recycling and bioenergy targets.

Established in 2001, Cré is the Composting and Anaerobic Digestion Association of Ireland. Cré (which is the Irish word for 'soil'), is a non profit association of public and private organisations, dedicated to growing the biological treatment sector. Cré supports the production of high quality outputs, assists the delivery of Government waste diversion and bioenergy targets, and promotes the creation of sustainable indigenous jobs.

Cré has a broad membership base ranging from compost and anaerobic digestion facilities, waste companies, local authorities, technology providers, local authorities, consultants and third level colleges.

Cré is recognised by Government and agencies as the voice of the industry in Ireland and Northern Ireland. It is frequently called on to give the industry view on future policy and legislation. Cré also represents its members in the European Compost Network working groups and is a member of the European Biogas Association.

Cré has many members in Ireland which processing organic resources into high value products and also has a member who has biorefineries in Italy that manufactures various high value bio-products

Long term, Cré believes that our sector needs to reposition the sector as key components of bioeconomy sector in Ireland.

Cré would see itself as a key trade body for companies producing bio-based products.

Cré helps to promote and develop the production and use of bio-based products in Ireland; to unite people working in these industries and to develop partnerships with those who share our vision: to put the bioeconomy agenda at the centre of the political debate on sustainability and economic growth in Ireland. The bio-based products sector does not require fiscal incentives, rather the need is for policies which help create markets, and history shows that these can function well in drawing inward investment.

By 2030, our vision is to see:

- the bioeconomy sector in the Ireland as a central pillar of the Irish economy.
- a range of commercial scale plants fed by sustainability produced biomass (including biological wastes) operating across the country.
- entrepreneurial effort focused on areas of greatest scientific and economic potential, as well as those which deliver against our environmental and sustainability challenges. This includes our efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and to decrease the reliance of the chemical process and energy sectors on petrochemical, raw material and finite resource feedstocks and reduce their carbon footprints. This will assist in the long-term goal of decoupling economic growth from use of these finite resources.
- Ireland as the location of choice for global investment in the bioeconomy.
- Ireland become a global leader in utilising carbon-containing wastes and residues as resources in a vibrant bioeconomy, where appropriate, producing high value resource efficient materials, chemicals, and energy.
- Ireland as a major exporter of process technologies and business models, exploiting intellectual property abroad and retaining value for Ireland while offering solutions globally and delivering against environmental targets.

Circular Bioeconomy

Cré believes Ireland should look to the future and innovations in the bioeconomy, and setting us on a path to be ambitious and 'reach for the stars'. The recent EU Circular Economy package will provide opportunities for our sector to produce high quality end products but also, more importantly; it will help create new jobs from the collection and reprocessing of waste resources and the sale of end products.

The European bio-economy employs some 21.5 million people and presents an annual market worth over €2 trillion, with significant potential for further growth, as EU member states supplement food production with sustainable technologies for production of biofuels, bio-fertilisers, bio-chemicals and bio-plastics. The Irish bioeconomy strategy needs to enable a swift transition from fossil to bio-based resources.

Cré's submission is primarily on the development of the bio-based industries within the bioeconomy. The terms bioeconomy and bio-based economy are often used interchangeably, but for the purposes of clarity within our response the use of 'bio-based' is reserved for products derived wholly or in part from biological resources.

If we want to get serious about bioeconomy, we can take several, easy and cost effective measures immediately:

1. Changing the scenario on waste management, improving recovery of brown bin food waste and linking this to improved soil management
2. Creating incentives and obligations through legislation
3. Preferential Government Procurement

This will result in more jobs, more investment, more exports, less imports, less CO₂ and less waste.

Sustainable Management of Water and other Environmental Resources

Introduction to Brown Bin Biological Treatment Market in Ireland

Based on official figures, it is estimated that there are potentially 560,000 tonnes of brown bin (household and commercial) material available in Ireland with only 27% of this currently collected. Indecon published a Regulatory Impact Analysis in 2011 for the European Union (Household Food Waste and Bio-waste) Regulations 2013 which predicted that 203,360 tonnes of food waste would be collected from households throughout the country by 2015. The latest statistics available from the Environmental Protection Agency show that only 87,230 tonnes of domestic organic waste was collected in 2015, which is 57% below the amount forecast by Indecon.

The Waste Management (Food Waste) Regulations 2009 (S.I. No. 508 of 2009), which have been in place for nearly seven years, have yet to result in significant behavioural change from the commercial sector. There is a need for considerable improvement in this regard to increase the amount of source-segregated food waste collected from commercial premises that is currently discarded as part of the residual waste stream.

The indigenous biological treatment industry is still struggling to grow and develop after more than decade. In comparison, the industry within Northern Ireland has developed to provide additional processing capacity and now attracts significant volumes of brown bin material from all over Ireland.

There is an opportunity for the Government to assist the indigenous industry in the following ways:

- Enforcement;
- Pricing incentives for the use of the brown bin; and
- Education and awareness on how to use the brown bin.

Cré calls for greater effort, co-ordination and co-operation between all stakeholders to ensure that the total potential organic waste stream is fully captured and diverted to current and future composting and anaerobic digestion plants in Ireland. This will safeguard existing jobs and businesses and create many new sustainable indigenous jobs while supporting the growth of a biological treatment sector that can contribute significantly toward achieving the Government's waste diversion, recycling and bioenergy targets.

Cre support the National Policy objective 55- supporting the circular and bioeconomy sectors.

Agriculture

Cre support the statement that there is significant potential in the areas of strategic energy resources that are agri – based, particularly in the areas of bio-energy, bio-technology, anaerobic digestion and combined heat and power.

Transition to Sustainable Energy

Anaerobic Digestion and its Benefits

Anaerobic digestion (AD) is a technology that can make a major contribution to sustainable waste management processes and the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The generated products – biogas and biofertiliser – substitute fossil energy, recirculate nutrients and mitigate methane emissions in waste and agriculture. These unique features define AD as a significant GHG mitigation technology.

AD also has significant cross-sectoral benefits. It provides a dispatchable electricity supply (compared to the intermittent nature of other renewable energy sources, such as wind energy). When injected into the natural gas grid, it can be flexibly used for heating, cooling and transport. AD can contribute toward achieving important waste management targets and the deployment of AD across the country has the potential to facilitate rural development and sustainable agriculture.

AD has the potential to supply enough electricity to power 20% of Irish homes, or to replace 7.5% of the fossil-based natural gas used via the national gas grid with renewable 'green' gas, saving Ireland €200 million in imported fuel. If the full potential of AD development is realised, 2,250 direct permanent jobs could be created across Ireland, with many more generated in the construction phase.

The agriculture sector faces a significant challenge to moderate its GHG emissions (32% of Ireland's total) and convert to a low carbon sector. The processing of manures in AD plants makes a greater contribution to CO₂ reductions than the treatment of energy crops.