

Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine,
Agriculture House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2,
D02WK12.

11th April 2025

To whom it concerns,

Cork Chamber welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to inform the development of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's new Statement of Strategy for the period 2025 to 2028.

Cork Chamber represents 1,200 members together employing 130,000 people throughout the city, metropolitan area and county. Our vision is to lead a transforming and ambitious Cork City and County, and our purpose is to unite, represent and support our members and community. Our direction is guided by our formal pledge to uphold the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Cork Chamber has also been designated an SDG Champion by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications for 2024 – 2025.

Cork Chamber's advocacy efforts are guided by the views and priorities of our partners, and are shaped by our continuous engagement with members, our Board and key stakeholders in Cork City and County.

As a maritime city with a rich marine heritage, the work of the Department is of critical importance for businesses and residents across Cork City and County. Cork Chamber welcomes the Department's current commitment to supporting balanced regional economic development, and natural assets like Cork Harbour should be prioritised in this regard. In particular, Cork has an immense opportunity to become a national hub for the offshore wind sector, with much of the enabling infrastructure required already present in the region, and this should be supported by the Department insofar as possible, building on Cork's maritime heritage.

In 2024, Cork Chamber established the Cork Offshore Renewable Industry Forum (CORIF) to bring together industry representatives to identify and advocate for the key policy and infrastructure enablers needed for Cork to realise its full potential in the offshore wind sector, which will bring considerable economic benefits, as well as supporting the achievement of climate goals.

In addition, sustainability is a key priority for Cork Chamber and its members, and we welcome and support the Department's current mission to contribute to social, economic and environmental sustainability in agriculture and food. Supporting competitiveness across all sectors, particularly key domestic sectors such as agriculture, and food and drink, is vitally important at present with potential economic headwinds on the horizon for businesses of all sizes.

The agriculture and food and drink sectors play a critically important role in the Irish economy, particularly in terms of Irish exports globally. However, increasing geopolitical uncertainty at present is leading to increased pressure on this important indigenous sector. It is critical that the Department continues to consider these evolving economic pressures and responds in a measured way, targeting supports for those most affected by these pressures, particularly SMEs.

Fostering collaboration across sectors is also critically important to support innovation and efficiency, particularly in environmental terms. Ambitious climate targets for the coming years have been set at both national and EU level, and it is critical that all sectors receive adequate supports on their decarbonisation journeys.

In the context of decarbonising the agricultural sector, it is essential that sufficient supports and resources are made available to those seeking to decarbonise their land use and building stock. Transitioning to more renewable energy sources, such as biomethane, can provide important economic opportunities for farmers too. The Programme for Government sets out key aims around rewarding farmers for the production of solar and biomethane energy and this should be pursued in order to support the achievement of our climate goals.

Ireland's rich heritage and biodiversity plays an important role in defining the country's unique offering, a key factor in attracting investment and talent into the country. Biodiversity across Ireland, and indeed across the wider European Union, faces a number of challenges resulting from sustained degradation of ecosystems due to industrial development and other human actions. Protecting Ireland's rich and unique biodiversity is critical for preserving our environment and climate into the future and should be prioritised in all plans for major development, which will in turn support Ireland's economic competitiveness into the future.

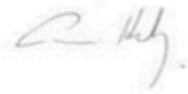
In the development of the Department's new Statement of Strategy, it is crucial that the ongoing integration of efforts to promote sustainable development is prioritised. Collaboration and innovation are critical, and the Department should seek to prioritise targeted, nature-based solutions in line with the European Commission's recommendations where possible to ensure the sustainable utilisation of natural land and marine resources to support their long-term conservation.¹

¹ European Commission, [Nature-based Solutions](#)

The Department should continue to prioritise the pursuit of SDGs, in particular, with a view to supporting sustainable development across all sectors and regions of the country. At Cork Chamber, our direction is guided by our formal pledge to uphold the UN SDGs, five of which have been identified as priority areas by the Chambers Ireland network. The Department has designated Cork Chamber an SDG Champion for 2024 - 2025, and we remain committed to upholding the SDGs across all policy outputs and areas of activity.

Coordinated, collaborative and innovative responses are required to make meaningful progress towards our sustainability goals in the years ahead, and it is vital that the Department continues to engage with other Departments, state and semi-state agencies, and local stakeholders to further these goals.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'C. Healy', is positioned above a horizontal dotted line.

Conor Healy

CEO