



The Local Food project, Ireland, 18.4.2020



Food is essential and supply chains are not invincible, IR

Lisa Fingleton, The Barna Way, The Local Food Project (<https://www.facebook.com/thebarnaway/>), 18.04.2020

For years, many of us have been concerned about food and our reliance on imported food. We have also been worried that our food is largely from toxic, industrialised food systems with huge repercussions for our health and wellbeing.

We have been concerned that, despite the fact that we are an Island, there has been no comprehensive food strategy. It seems the only plan is to produce more beef and more dairy. We have seen the effectiveness of this strategy in the recent 'beef strikes' and when we look around our 'green fields' with hardly a vegetable in sight.

Farmers have been herded down the cul de sacs of monocultural food systems despite the looming threats of climate change and biodiversity loss. Without pollinators, we are a diminished world. In addition, without pollinators we also cannot grow food. There are parts of the world where humans are doing the pollinating themselves, moving painstakingly from plant to plant. In the face of climate change farmers need to be supported to diversify and literally 'not have all our eggs in one basket'.

In addition, seeds are becoming increasingly controlled by huge corporations. They are being patented and genetically modified so that the control and profit are multiplied for the multinationals, while subjecting farmers to cycles of ever increasing debt. Already a few weeks into a global pandemic, it is getting harder to access seeds in Ireland. We need to start an urgent seed saving programme and support the fantastic work of organisations such as the Irish Seeds Savers Association (<http://irishseedsavers.ie/>) in Clare and Brown Envelope Seeds (<https://brownenvelopeseeds.blogspot.com/>) in West Cork.

Simply put, this has to change. We have to start valuing food and stop throwing a third of all our food in bin. We need to remember that food does not come from supermarkets. **Real food comes from fields and gardens.** We have to decide if we want real food. We have to make a collective and conscious

decision to support farmers and growers if we want to eat real carrots and potatoes. In the short term it is so much easier to make profit from creating ingredients that taste like food in labs, but is this really what we want for our children and grandchildren?

Most of us are lucky to know what real food tastes like. Picking mushrooms in the field and frying them in the pan. Collecting blackberries and coming home with black lips. Perhaps the best of all is eating the first potato of the year with butter and salt, knowing that you minded that plant for months before this moment.

In the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic people all over this wonderful island are realising that food is essential and supply chains are not invincible. People are digging up their lawns and building polytunnels. We are only 150 years out of a famine in which we lost over 1 million people from this island.

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