

## Healthy food, healthy families – A community approach

Evaluation of **safefood's** all-island  
Community Food Initiatives 2016-18

# COMMUNITY FOOD INITIATIVES

**safefood** funded 13 projects from 2016-18. As well as increasing awareness and knowledge around healthy eating, these projects promoted enhanced food skills including: healthy shopping, improved meal-planning and budgeting. All of these are tangible, transferable skills that can benefit an entire community. The Community Food Initiatives were administered by South & East Cork Area Development (SECAD).

### Why? Food poverty on the island of Ireland in 2016

Republic of Ireland

**10%**

experience **food poverty**



Northern Ireland

**17%**

at risk of **food poverty**



**Low-income households**

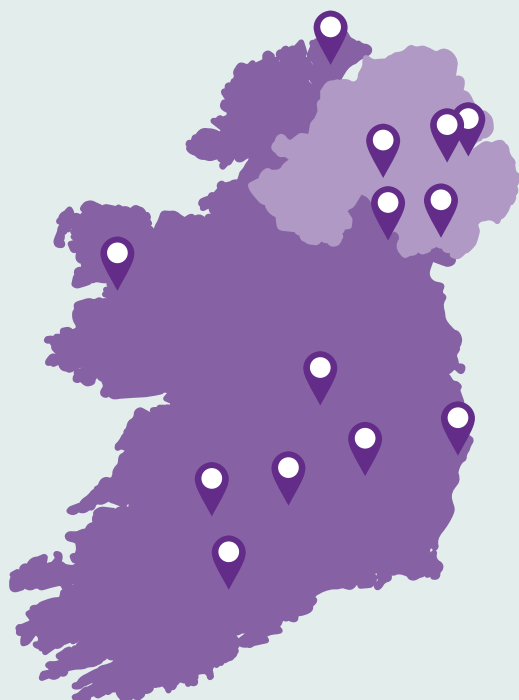
**Constraints:** financial, skills, access

Eat **less well** than  
higher-income households

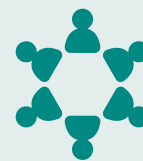
Higher level of  
**diet-related disease**



### How? **safefood** funded 13 CFIs throughout the island of Ireland



**119**  
Small projects  
delivered by the CFIs



**2,016**  
Participated in  
small projects



**82**  
Networking  
events



**4,051**  
Families took part  
in show case events

## CFIs themes:



**Supporting an increased awareness and knowledge around healthy eating.**



**Improving the availability and access to safe and healthy food in the community.**



**Budgeting and food/meal planning skills.**



**Preventing food wastage, promoting food safety and hygiene.**



**Healthy shopping.**



**Cooking skills.**

## Evaluation:

An evaluation was carried out to explore to what extent **safefood's** CFIs have achieved its aims and objectives to positively influence the eating habits of families in the community setting by:

- mainstreaming healthy food in the local setting.
- working to promote a greater access and availability of healthy and safe food in low-income areas.

## Evaluation methods:

### The 3 sources of data used in the evaluation were:

#### Focus groups

Participants discussed their experience of the CFIs, to what extent it had changed their attitudes towards healthy food, what they had liked most and least about the programme, if they felt more confident in cooking and shopping for healthy food, and to what extent it has had a lasting impact on their lives.

#### Interviews

Interviews were conducted with two representatives from **safefood** and the programme administrators SECAD. The topics covered included the representative's views of the programme and the perceived impact of the programme on low-income families.

13 CFIs leaders completed a detailed questionnaire on a range of issues relating to the progress of their CFIs and took part in an extended interview with the evaluator.

#### Surveys

An online survey was completed with a sample of stakeholders including 42 steering group members and 7 Food Poverty Network members.

## Findings:

### Leaders:

- 85% were satisfied with the progress of their CFIs, 100% were satisfied with their experience as a leader.
- felt their work had made a worthwhile impact on the lives of participants, specifically through the small projects. The support from steering groups and stakeholders was invaluable.
- reported that participants' food habits and skills had improved during the programme.

### Participants:

reported they enjoyed the programme and acquired new knowledge and food skills.

### Stakeholders:

held a positive view of the CFIs, particularly their capacity to change practice, its scalability and its integration with existing structures and services.

### SECAD:

reported working in the CFIs was a very positive experience and felt only a few changes were needed.

### safefood:

were happy the CFIs built on learnings from previous initiatives and focused on skills that were applicable in the home.

## Conclusion:

The initiatives are progressing in an informed and positive direction. Strengths such as the adoption of a community development approach and the cooperation with other organisations/stakeholders were acknowledged by all participants. The CFIs have seen the successful involvement of 368 stakeholders.

**safefood** introduced important new features to the initiative which increased its reach, perceived impact and long-term sustainability. The development of participants' food skills has proven to be a clearly justified and effective decision.

## Find out more

For more information on the 2016-2018 Community Food Initiatives visit [www.safefood.eu](http://www.safefood.eu)