

Ireland



1 Which bioeconomy-related policy strategies exist?

Ireland has not yet developed a national bioeconomy strategy. The Irish government states that the country is only at the beginning of its bioeconomy development. However, the government has recognized the country's potential for bioeconomy and has taken first steps in promoting the capitalization of Ireland's large quantity of natural resources. In 2008, the national advisory body for agriculture and food, Teagasc, published the foresight report **"Towards 2030 – Teagasc's role in Transforming Ireland's Agri-Food Sector and the Wider Bioeconomy"**. In 2014, the government demonstrated further ambitions for promoting an Irish bioeconomy by funding the two-year project **"A Bio Economy for Ireland - An Evaluation of De-**

velopment Opportunities, Policies and Initiatives Shaping Ireland's Transformation to a Sustainable Low Carbon Bioeconomy" (Bio-Éire).

Until 2012, bioeconomy was predominantly treated within the wider context of green and blue economy. An earlier government initiative related to green economy is covered by the comprehensive policy statement **"Delivering our Green Potential"** (2012) in which the government committed itself to developing a bioeconomy strategy as part of a broader green economy strategy. With the strategy paper **"Harnessing our Ocean Wealth"** (2012), the government formulated an integrated marine roadmap for developing the Irish blue economy.

2 Is the term "bioeconomy" or "biobased economy" used in the strategy documents?

Yes No

X

The policy statement **"Delivering our Green Potential"** (2012) understands bioeconomy as "the sustainable production of renewable biological resources and their conversion – and that of waste

streams – into feed, food and biobased products such as bioplastics, biofuels and bioenergy"¹⁹.

¹⁹ Ireland. Government of Ireland, 2012, p. 35.

3 Who is the author of the strategies?

The first initiative regarding bioeconomy was taken by Teagasc with its report “Towards 2030” of 2008. In recent years, the Department of the Irish Prime Minister has mainly guided bioeconomy as part of a wider green and blue economy strategy. Its commitment resulted in the policy statement of 2012. The ocean strategy (2012) was prepared by the Marine Coordination Group (MCG) which was set up to coordinate marine policies. The group is composed of representatives from all departments responsible for marine affairs.

Building on the government’s commitment to develop a national bioeconomy strategy, the Bio-Éire project was drawn up in December 2014 to update the priority areas of Ireland’s bioeconomy and to identify new opportunities to boost Ireland’s GDP, exports and employment. The project is implemented by a multidisciplinary research team.

4 What are the key goals of the strategies?

Teagasc’s “Towards 2030” (2008) report envisions the agri-food sector as a key element of the Irish bioeconomy by 2030. Bioeconomy is seen as contributing toward coping with future challenges, such as food and energy security. Bioeconomy should further help to achieve social goals, including better public health, improved food products and enhanced rural development. The report assumes that the Irish gross output value of the food sector will double from EUR 20 billion to EUR 40 billion by 2030. Teagasc’s report contains a plan for strategic and short-term actions which should be implemented by Teagasc itself. Within this action plan Teagasc intends to contribute to the ongoing national policy debate.

By developing a green economy strategy, the Irish government aims to strengthen growth, competitiveness and employment in Ireland. More specifically, the policy statement “Delivering our Green Potential” (2012) aims at identifying business opportunities for companies which could result from green economy.

With the ocean strategy (2012), the Irish government seeks to strengthen sustainable growth and to optimize the economic benefit from marine resources. In this respect, the strategy aims to increase the turnover from the marine sector to EUR 6.4 billion by 2020. Furthermore, the marine sector should contribute 2.4 percent to GDP by 2030.

5 What are the priority areas of the strategies?

The focus of Teagasc’s “Towards 2030” report is generally on strengthening the agriculture and food sector. Research and innovation should play a crucial role in underpinning growth in the bioeconomy. Therefore, the report puts emphasis on strengthening knowledge capacity by means of education and

training. The core element of the report was the first attempt to identify future priority areas of the Irish bioeconomy which highlighted four central pillars. Firstly, food production and processing should be an integral part of the future Irish bioeconomy with emphasis on grass-based production. Secondly, by

2030 the Irish bioeconomy will focus on food innovations that have positive effects on human health. Thirdly, it emphasizes the promotion of so-called agri-environmental products and services and, associated with this, the farmer's role in contributing to high environmental quality. Fourthly, the future Irish bioeconomy will focus on the innovative use of crops and the forestry sector in order to produce feedstock for energy and bioprocessing.

The strategy paper "Delivering our Green Potential" highlights various key areas of Ireland's future green economy. Bioeconomy is mentioned as a research area which should be promoted by means of expanded investment in public research institutions. The strategy points out key areas of

the Irish bioeconomy, including the agri-food and fisheries sector, as well as forestry and biopharmaceuticals.

With a view to bioeconomy, the ocean strategy puts emphasis on using marine resources for renewable energy and health applications. In this respect, marine biotechnology is considered as key enabling technology for the production of drugs, enzymes, biomaterials and also functional ingredients for healthy food. The strategy further focuses on developing Ireland's research infrastructure, e.g. by establishing clusters on research and innovation.

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