



# Going Beyond the Symbols:

**Ethical Consumerism**  
and **Fair Trade** for  
Community Groups



Source: Majority World

**The Waterford One World Centre is a Development Education Centre that focuses primarily on Ethical Consumerism and Fair Trade along with related issues.**



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# About this Resource




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*Going Beyond the Symbols: Ethical Consumerism and Fair Trade for Community Groups* is designed to provide an introduction to Ethical Consumerism and Fair Trade (EC/FT) for groups working in the informal education sector. As Development Education providers, we share much in common with the principles of good community work such as participation, citizenship, empowerment and solidarity.

This resource is divided into three action plans designed to take your group through the full cycle of exploring a topic. The topics we have chosen are Fair Trade, Climate Change and Waste. Each Action Plan provides background information, links to videos available free of charge on-line, activities, discussion suggestions and actions that community groups can take to support their learning.

While good community work is rooted in the local, providing a global perspective can benefit groups by allowing them to see themselves in solidarity with and learn from people around the world. Understanding that the problems we face are similar to those faced by people around the world demonstrates that these problems are a result of the global power system and not of our own making.

The aim of this resource is to build solidarity between the people of Ireland and people around the world so each action plan links to a global theme. This resource will achieve the following outcomes for participants:

 <b>Knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understanding that local action can have global impacts</li><li>• Importance and impact of ethical consumerism</li><li>• The need to balance social, economic and environmental concerns</li><li>• Sustainable living</li></ul>
 <b>Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased capacity for learning</li><li>• Working with others</li><li>• Acknowledging alternative perspectives</li></ul>
 <b>Attitudes/ Values</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Importance of global social justice</li><li>• Empathy and solidarity</li><li>• Civic engagement and participation</li><li>• Belief that positive social change is possible</li></ul>

We hope this work leads to a greater understanding that what we share in common is greater than what divides us. These activities were piloted in community settings in the South East of Ireland during 2016 and 2017.

We recommend a visit to [developmenteducation.ie](http://developmenteducation.ie) for the full range of teaching and learning material available for formal and non-formal settings as well as lots of excellent background information, case studies of development education in practice, videos, blogs and other neat stuff.

# ACTION PLAN FOR FAIR TRADE

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**EVERY TIME YOU SPEND MONEY  
YOUR'RE CASTING A VOTE  
FOR THE KIND OF WORLD YOU WANT.**

- ANNA LAPPÉ

## Read about Ethical Consumerism and Fair Trade

### Consumer choices impact most people on a weekly, if not daily, basis.

The decisions we make while shopping are generally influenced by price, brand, etc. But how we choose to spend our money can influence the lives of humans, animals and the planet both in our own communities and around the world.



As consumers we have the right to choose. Exercising this right with a conscience makes us responsible consumers. It is not only what we buy, but who profits from our purchases. This is power and we have the ability to influence the state of the world through our purchasing decisions. Ethical Consumption is a form of activism.



Fair Trade, most often associated with this symbol for Fairtrade, enjoys high recognition among the Irish public. Although Fairtrade is only one example of Ethical Consumerism it is the most familiar and as such it is a good place to start your learning journey about issues such as ecotravel, ethical fashion, organic and free range products, and child and forced labour.

There are a number of other Ethical Consumer and Fair Trade labelling initiatives that are common in Ireland including the Rainforest Alliance, World Fair Trade Organisation, Clean Clothes Campaign, World Wildlife Federation, Cruelty Free International along with a number of campaigns against particular companies that use child or forced labour or have weak environmental standards. It is important that consumers recognise that there are a number of ways that they can use their purchasing power to support a fair economic system.

Fair Trade recognises that people are more important than profit. It stands for a transparent and fair alternative to the conventional trade system. It is based on respecting human dignity and partner relationships, promoting economic justice and building solidarity with the world. It connects us directly with people in the South who produce many of our goods. It gives us the possibility to positively impact their lives when we make consumer decisions based on values. Fair Trade Organizations work primarily with small, worker-owned and democratically run cooperatives and associations which bring significant benefits to small producers and workers.



The vast majority of countries around the world have outlawed child and forced labour and the United Nations has ratified freedom from forced labour as a fundamental human right. Despite that, there are 21 million people around the world who are currently victims of forced labour. Most of this labour takes place within the domestic work, agriculture, construction, manufacturing and entertainment industries including 4.5 million people that are forced into sex work. (Source: *International Labour Organisation*). Additionally, according to estimates from the International Labour Organisation, there are 168 million children around the world working regularly rather than attending school. Fair Trade ensures that no children or slaves are involved in the production of our goods.

## Watch about Fair Trade

Fairtrade Matters, a video produced by the Fairtrade Foundation UK, shows first-hand accounts of how Fairtrade has helped people, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oJcy4nxCbw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oJcy4nxCbw)



### WANT TO READ MORE?

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The following will provide some more information about Ethical Consumerism and Fair Trade:

- Fairtrade Ireland has a great section that looks at the lives of farmers and producers by the products that they produce which really helps to put a human face to Fairtrade, they also provide advice to businesses, schools and community groups that wish to embrace Fairtrade, available at: [www.fairtrade.ie](http://www.fairtrade.ie)
- The UK Fairtrade Organisation has compiled a page on their website that covers pretty much everything you might want to know about Fairtrade, available at: [www.fairtrade.org.uk/en/what-is-fairtrade](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/en/what-is-fairtrade)
- The Irish Congress of Trade Unions has published a very handy guide about ethical consumerism aimed at the average consumer, available at: [www.ictu.ie/download/pdf/ethical\\_consumer\\_guide\\_ictu.pdf](http://www.ictu.ie/download/pdf/ethical_consumer_guide_ictu.pdf)



### WANT TO WATCH MORE?

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There are a lot of videos available on-line about Fairtrade that look at the impacts on people's lives as well as specific products. These are a few that are relevant to the Fair Trade work in this resource but a simple search on YouTube will yield many more.

- Banana Wars from the Fairtrade Foundation.  
Available at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=yzpuxBVG-NA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yzpuxBVG-NA)
- The Global Environmental Injustices of Banana Plantations, Colgate University.  
Available at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=9EjRkxnFKoQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9EjRkxnFKoQ)
- The Ethletic Fairtrade Football Story.  
Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ZM5-FbKeSw>
- Child Labour: The Darker Side of Chocolate.  
Available at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=KXWFXeiZY9g](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KXWFXeiZY9g)

## Learn about the principles of Fair Trade

The principles of Fair Trade are broad and address many areas including equality, environmental justice and sustainability.

Most Fair Trade labelling organisations adhere to these same principles. It is important that people realise that the Fair Trade symbols stand for more than just paying farmers more money for their products. The case studies included here are all from Fairtrade Certified Cooperatives and Farms and were provided courtesy of Fairtrade Ireland. For the full text of the case studies or for more information about Fairtrade Ireland, visit their website at: [www.fairtrade.ie](http://www.fairtrade.ie)



**Time:**

15 minutes



**Materials:**

- Copies of Fairtrade case studies (included in this resource)
- Copy of Fair Trade Principles (included in this resource)



**Steps:**

- Participants should read the case studies either individually or as a group.
- Ask participants to compare the Case Studies to the Fair Trade Principles list and discuss how the Case Studies reflect the Fair Trade Principles.

### Fair Trade Principles

- Creating opportunities for economically disadvantaged producers and farmers
- Transparency and Accountability in financial matters
- Fair Trading Practices among all people involved
- Payment of a Fair Price
- No Child Labour and Forced Labour
- Commitment to Equality
- Good Working Conditions
- Helping people be better at their job
- Promoting Fair Trade within the local communities
- Respect the Environment

*(Adapted from the World Fair Trade Organisation's website)*

## Learn about Fair Trade producers



Source: Fairtrade Ireland

### Meet **Juliet Arku Mensah**

Juliet Arku Mensah is the Fairtrade Officer and Occupational Health and Safety Officer for the Volta River Estates, Ltd. (VREL) Banana Farm in Ghana.

VREL produces both conventional and organic bananas for Fairtrade and employs 441 people, 28% of whom are women. All of the workers belong to a union, 95% are on permanent contracts and wages are 40% above the government set minimum wage.

VREL receives \$1.00 (USD) in social premium for each box of Fairtrade bananas which is invested back into community development projects including:

- New school buildings
- University scholarships for children of workers
- A health insurance scheme
- Mosquito nets to stop the spread of malaria
- A pension fund for workers
- Programmes to help women start their own business

For more information about the Volta River Estate, check out: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=HqJJWSXgyl](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HqJJWSXgyl)



Source: tcvnews.tv

### Meet **Kuapa Kokoo Cooperative** from Ghana

Chocolate, which comes from the cocoa bean (pictured here), is a very popular food around the world but it is hard work to grow. Cocoa plants like hot and wet climates and 90% of cocoa is grown by small family-run farms.

Kuapa Kokoo is a cooperative which means that it is made up of a lot of small farms spread out throughout Ghana. Kuapa Kokoo has over 80,000 members, many of whom live in rural parts of Ghana. Kuapa Kokoo makes sure that these farmers have access to cocoa markets so they can sell their product and that they receive a fair price.

Projects funded by the social premium include:

- Pumps and bore holes for fresh water
- Health clinics
- Use of the by-products from cocoa production in soap making companies run by women
- Construction of day-care centres

For more information about the Kuapa Kokoo Cooperative, check out: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4KkUpG5PSs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4KkUpG5PSs)



## Learn about Fair Trade producers



Source: Fairtrade Ireland

### Meet **Ivan Vasquez**, Raos Cooperative, Honduras

About 125 million people around the world depend on coffee to make a living and coffee is the highest traded agricultural commodity. Fairtrade was initially set up in the 1980s to help Mexican coffee farmers who were suffering from huge drops in the price of coffee beans. South America is the largest coffee producing region in the world (Brazil produces the most coffee). Coffee likes to grow in warm climates at high-altitudes with stable rainy and dry seasons. Coffee plants are hard hit by climate change. Fair Trade makes sure that farmers use environmentally sustainable production methods.

Ivan Vasquez started in the coffee industry at a young age picking coffee beans and now he is an award-winning Coffee Cupper (this is the person who picks which beans and blends are best and is a highly-skilled position).

The Raos Cooperative includes 174 male and 54 female producers in Honduras. The Raos Cooperative runs the first training course in Honduras for Coffee Cuppers and the first to focus on organic growing methods.



Source:  
[www.sugarindustryofbelize.com](http://www.sugarindustryofbelize.com)

### Meet the **Belize Sugar Cane Farmers Association (BSCFA)**

Most of the sugar consumed around the world comes from sugar cane (80%). Most sugar cane is grown by small-scale farmers and plantation workers who do not have access to sugar mills and distribution channels. Sugar cane likes tropical climates. The sugar that does not come from cane is harvested from sugar beets which like cooler climates like Ireland. There is currently a movement to bring back sugar beet production to Ireland.

Belize, in Central America, relies on sugar production (60% of exports). BSCFA has a membership of over 5000 sugar cane growers with approximately 50,000 people who rely on sugar cane production for their incomes. BSCFA receives around \$3.5 million (USD) per year in Fairtrade Social Premiums which has been used in the following ways:

- Soil analysis which has led to increased crop yields
- Decreased reliance on chemical pesticides
- Sustainable waste recycling facilities
- Assistance to community members for medical costs
- Payment of fees and scholarships to workers' children

# Read about the Problem with the Banana

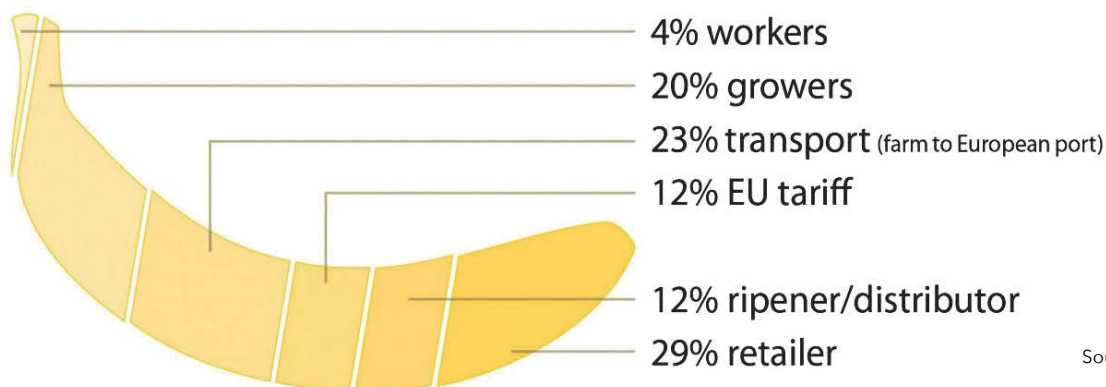


**Bananas are the most popular fruit in Ireland with over 5 million of them eaten every week** (The Journal).

But bananas do not grow in Ireland and so are imported from tropical climates. Most bananas eaten in Ireland originate in the Dominican Republic. But problems within the banana industry date back to the time of U.S. and European efforts to colonise tropical locations around the world. The popularity of the banana means that it requires a large international labour force. The banana industry has traditionally been dominated by huge multinational corporations who have shown little regard for worker safety or environmental concerns.

**Hazardous pesticide and chemical use:** Large-scale farming common to the banana industry has resulted in crops that require increasing amounts of agrochemical use. The chemicals commonly used by the banana industry are known to breakdown into compounds that are carcinogenic to the growers, their families and communities that live near banana farms. Fair Trade does not allow the use of the most dangerous of these pesticides.



**Low-pay for workers:** Low-pay is a long-standing problem in the banana industry. Supermarkets compete with each other to offer consumers the lowest priced bananas possible which has resulted in unsustainably low prices for bananas. Workers, mostly growers and pickers, are at bottom of the value chain which means as prices have gone down so have their wages. The graphic shows how the price that a consumer pays for a single banana is divided among all parties on the value chain. Fair Trade ensures a more equitable split on the price of a banana.



Source: CAFOD

**Mono-cropping:** Much like with the Potato Famine, the banana industry is susceptible to blight (and experienced a devastating crop failure at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century). Monocrops deplete the soil and require large amounts of pesticides to protect them. The longer mono, or single, crops are used in a particular area, the greater these problems become and the greater risks become to banana production. Fair Trade works with farmers and producers to help build their capacity to diversify crops and develop other local industry.

# Learn about the cost of a Banana

COMPARISON OF FAIRTRADE AND NON-FAIRTRADE BANANA PRICES (PRICE PER BANANA)		
Shop	Fairtrade 	Non-Fairtrade 
Tesco	.26	.30
Dunnes	.35	.21
Lidl	.31	.19
Aldi	.26	.19

\* Prices as of May 2016, Waterford City, in Euro

Based on the prices in the table, the average cost of a Fairtrade banana is €0.29 and for a non-Fairtrade banana it is €0.22.

Based on the cost of the average Non-Fairtrade banana, the amount of money received for each step on the supply chain is reflected below. The amount received is based on the sale of 1000 bananas.

BANANA VALUE CHAIN		
Value Chain	Percentage Received (per 1000 bananas)*	Euro Received
Banana Worker	3.33%	7.32
Plantation Owner	16.66%	36.65
Shipper	13.34 %	29.34
Importer and Ripener	23.33%	51.32
Shop/Supermarket	43.34%	95.34

\* Percentages based on CAFOD figures, available at:  
[http://cafod.org.uk/content/download/843/6730/version/3/Secondary\\_Fairtrade\\_enrichment-day\\_banana-split\\_game.pdf](http://cafod.org.uk/content/download/843/6730/version/3/Secondary_Fairtrade_enrichment-day_banana-split_game.pdf)

## Talk about Fairtrade and Ethical Consumerism

- Do you think a €0.07 difference in price for a Fairtrade banana would stop people from buying Fairtrade?
- Who receives the largest share from the sale of the banana? Why do you think it breaks down this way? Do you think that breakdown accurately reflects the amount of work that goes into banana farming?
- Why do you think people buy Fairtrade products? Would you be willing to spend more money to ensure that the people who made your products were paid fairly? How much more would you be willing to pay?
- What do you think the average person can do about inequality? Have you experienced inequality or injustice in your own lives?



### Act on Ethical Consumerism and Fair Trade: **COFFEE MORNING**

Fairtrade Fortnight takes place each year at the end of February running through early March and is designed to raise awareness about Fairtrade. There are events that take place in many Irish cities and towns and you could become involved in existing activities or design your own, such as collecting signatures to convince a local shop to stock only Fairtrade bananas or have your organisation only use Fairtrade tea and coffee. Fairtrade Ireland has up to date information about Fairtrade Fortnight along with ideas for activities: [www.fairtrade.ie](http://www.fairtrade.ie)

Holding a Fair Trade Coffee Morning is a fun and easy activity to organise which can raise awareness about Fair Trade or raise money for another event or project in your community.



#### Steps:

- Identify a good time and location for your Coffee Morning making sure that you have enough space for coffee and tea as well as your baked goods and that there are electrical outlets if you need them or facilities to make the tea and coffee. Also this is a good time to decide if you want to charge for goods/raise money for a charity or other project.
- Comparison shop for your Fair Trade products. Most major supermarkets carry Fair Trade tea, coffee, tea, sugar, chocolate, cocoa powder and bananas.
- Prepare your baked goods and decide the pricing for your coffee morning (if any).
- Contact Fairtrade Ireland for literature about Fair Trade to pass out on the morning.

Included here are some Fair Trade recipe cards (there are many more available on the internet although these have been personally tested). You can also substitute Fair Trade products in your regular recipes, they will not cook up any differently.

# Talk about Fairtrade and Ethical Consumerism

## Banana Bread

- 225 g plain flour
- 3 mashed ripe bananas
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 75 g veg oil, about 1/3 cup
- 100 g brown sugar
- Juice of ½ lemon
- 3 tsp cinnamon, pinch of ginger, pinch of nutmeg
- ½ t vanilla
- Pinch of salt
- Coconut oil for greasing
- Optional: Sprinkle sugar on top, Add chocolate chips or walnuts

**Bake time:** 60 minutes at 180°

**Instructions:** Mash bananas and add in lemon juice, sugar, oil and vanilla. Mix remaining dry ingredients and add to banana mixture. If you are adding chocolate chips or walnuts, now is the time. Fold everything together and add to greased bread pan. This has the added benefit of being vegan if you skip the chocolate (or use vegan chocolate) and delicious.

## Mocha Ginger Biscotti

- 100g plain flour
- 30g Fairtrade cocoa
- ½ tsp baking powder
- Pinch of salt
- 120g Fairtrade sugar
- ½ tbs ground Fairtrade coffee
- 30g Fairtrade dark chocolate
- 2 eggs
- 2 balls stem ginger

**Instructions:** Mix flour, cocoa, baking powder and salt in food processor. Add sugar, coffee and chocolate and pulse until fine. Add eggs and process until you have a firm dough and then fold in ginger. If it is really sticky you can add a drop of milk to loosen the dough. On a floured surface roll the dough into a log and bake at 180° for 30 minutes. Remove dough and let cool. Turn oven down to 150°. Slice dough into biscotti (about 2 cm) and lay down on a baking sheet and cook for another 15-20 minutes.

## Mint Chocolate Cake (Vegan)

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <p><b>CAKE:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 beetroots (precooked packaged work great)</li> <li>• 1 cup vegan milk mix with 1t vinegar</li> <li>• ¼ cup melted coconut oil</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 tbs Fairtrade vanilla</li> <li>• 1 ¼ cup flour</li> <li>• ½ cup Fairtrade cocoa</li> <li>• 1 cup Fairtrade sugar</li> <li>• 1 tsp b soda</li> </ul> | <p><b>ICING:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 150 g Fairtrade dark chocolate</li> <li>• 4-8 drops peppermint essence (to taste)</li> </ul> |
|---|--|--|

**Bake time:** 40 minutes at 180°

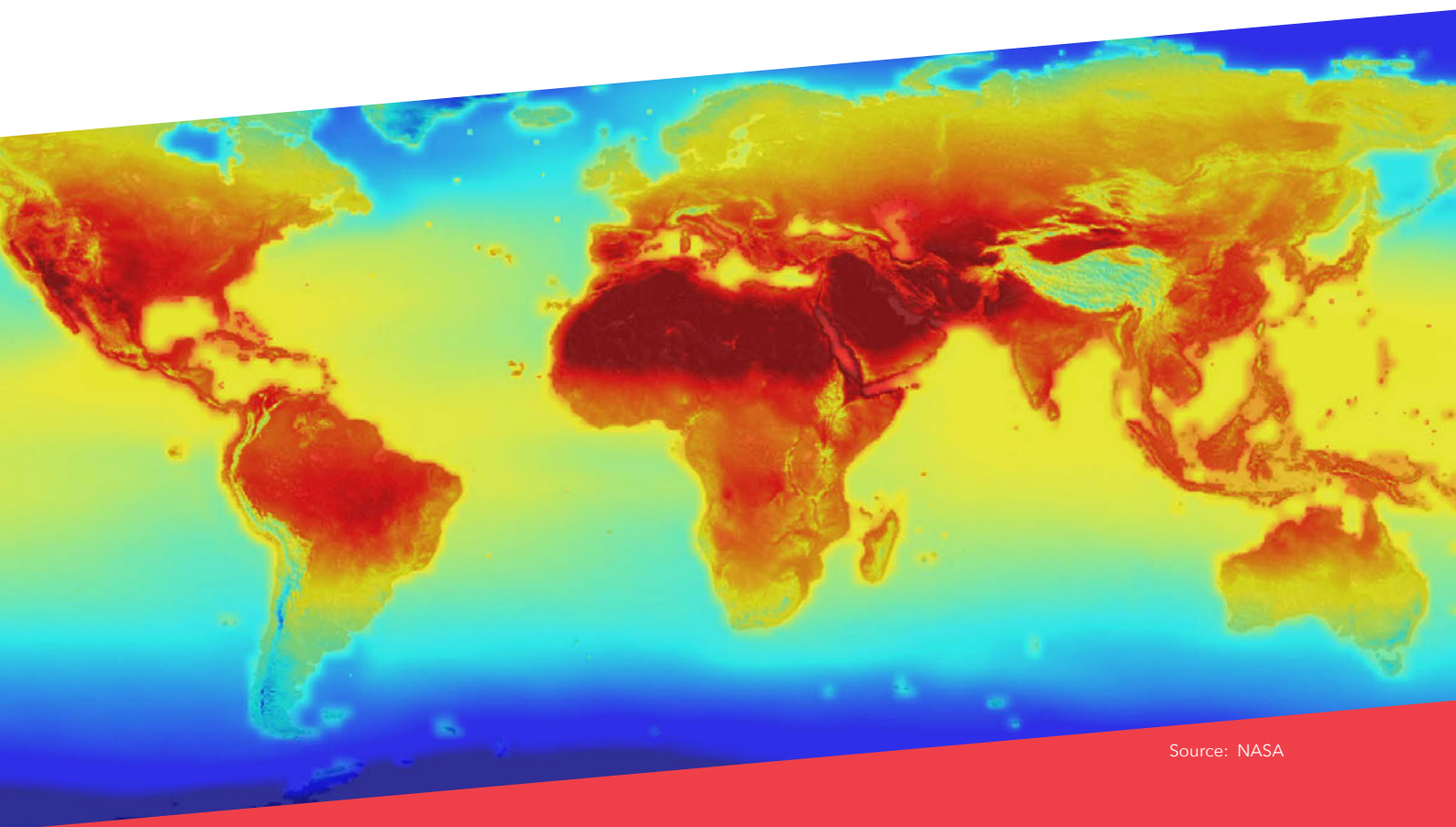
**Instructions:** Mix milk with vinegar and leave aside to curdle a little bit. Sift together dry ingredients. Puree beetroot and add coconut oil. Add milk mixture to dry ingredients and then fold in beetroot and oil. Use a bit more coconut oil to grease pan. For icing, melt chocolate in a heat proof bowl over simmering water and add in peppermint. Poor the chocolate over the cake once the cake has cooled.

# ACTION PLAN FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

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Source: NASA

# Read about Living Sustainably

**Sustainability is a concept that is becoming more and more mainstream with organisations and programmes dedicated to helping people live a more sustainable lifestyle.**

A sustainable lifestyle is simply one in which we live in such a way that we leave enough resources for future generations. Sustainable living includes such things as:

- Switching from fossil fuels (oil, coal, natural gas) to renewable energy sources (solar, wind, water turbines)
- Eating locally grown food or growing your own food
- Buying your clothing from ethically sourced brands, brands that do not use child or forced labour, do not pollute the environment or even better, buying your clothes second-hand
- Decreasing reliance on private cars for transportation by walking, biking or taking public transportation



Source: United Nations

The United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the start of 2016 and these are designed to provide long-range targets for global development. All of them promote and support a more sustainable lifestyle. These goals have been approved by all of the 193 member countries of the United Nations. There are a total of 17 Goals with 169 specific targets. The SDGs are meant to be aspirational, giving the world an idea of what kind of life we could all lead if we came together and recognised our shared interests.

## **Learn about Global Interdependence**

**In order to explore the nature of interdependence and consumerism, compile a list of what your group has thus far consumed on the day of your meeting including food, clothes, supplies, petrol, etc. List everything on a board or paper.**

Identify which items are produced in Ireland and those that are made elsewhere in order to demonstrate how dependent we are on imports. Discuss what the day would have looked like if we had to only rely on Irish-made products.

You can also do this activity focusing just on breakfast foods making one column for ingredients that we produce in Ireland and another column for those we import and talk about what kind of breakfasts we would eat if we could not import sugar, tea, oranges, coffee, etc.



### **DISCUSS**

#### **Sustainability, Interdependence and Climate Change**

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Transportation is the third largest contributor to the greenhouse gas emissions that are responsible for climate change. In Ireland, we are heavily dependent on imports for our clothes, food and manufactured goods. Possible topics for discussion include:

- Would you be willing to give up your favourite food items to benefit the environment? How about your favourite clothing brands?
- Is it more important to decrease the distance our food has to travel in order to get to our plate (food miles) than it is to buy Fair Trade products which generally travel great distances to get to Ireland.
- Is it a good idea for Ireland to make it a state priority to decrease our dependence on other countries (this can be left general as is or made more specific to food or goods)?



# Read about Climate Change and its impact on Ireland

**Climate change is a complicated subject and there are on-going debates about the nature and severity of the changes that are taking place on our planet.**

This info sheet defines some key terms and outlines the differing points of view. We support the work done in 2013 by the *Environmental Research Letter* which surveyed existing scientific literature and found that 97.1% of accredited scientists attribute global warming to human activity. Decreasing our impact on the environment is one of the key factors to living sustainably.

**Is climate change natural or the result of human activity?** The real answer is both. Natural climate change occurs in which the average temperature of the earth goes up and down and it is cyclical. It also happens over very long-periods of time. The change that is now occurring is taking place at a relatively fast-pace which does not give the planet or its inhabitants time to adjust to the new conditions. Agriculture, energy and transportation account for the majority of greenhouse gas emissions, 73% according to the Irish Environmental Protection Agency.

The more obvious impacts of the early stages of global warming in Ireland are seen with the increased incidence and severity of floods around the country. As sea levels rise, our coastal areas are at risk from increased strength of storms, rising sea levels and erosion.

It is hard to predict the full impacts of climate change on Ireland but we do know that globally more severe and deadly impacts have already started to take place including:

- Rising Sea Levels & Erosion of Coastal Areas
- Longer and More Damaging Wild Fires
- More Intense Hurricanes and Tsunamis
- Destruction of Coral Reefs
- Climate Refugees
- Increasing Temperatures and Heat Waves
- Falling Ground Water Levels

## CLIMATE CHANGE TERMS

**Climate** refers to weather over a long-period of time, for example, Ireland has a generally rainy climate during the winter months even though there might be a fine day every now and again. Weather refers to what happens on a short-term basis, for example, it is going to be nice this week.

**Climate Change**, otherwise known as **Global Warming**, refers to a shift in generally observable weather patterns. The average temperature in Ireland has risen 0.7°C from 1890 to 2013 (*Source: Environmental Protection Agency*). While this may not sound like a tremendous amount, the generally agreed upon science suggests that a 2.0°C rise overall will make life on earth far more difficult and a 4.0°C rise would be catastrophic.

**Greenhouse Effect** is a result of human-produced or released gasses becoming trapped in the earth's ozone layer which stops the heat from the sun from escaping back out of the atmosphere. There are two main greenhouse gasses, Carbon Dioxide and Methane, both of which occur naturally and by the hand of humans, and both of which have increased due to human activity. Carbon dioxide is released from burning fossil fuels such as oil and coal. Methane is produced by live-stock as well as rotting food and garbage and wastewater.

**Carbon Sinks** refer to anything that absorbs greenhouse gasses and includes trees, the ocean and soil. It is important to protect carbon sinks because they naturally regulate the amount of pollutants in our air.

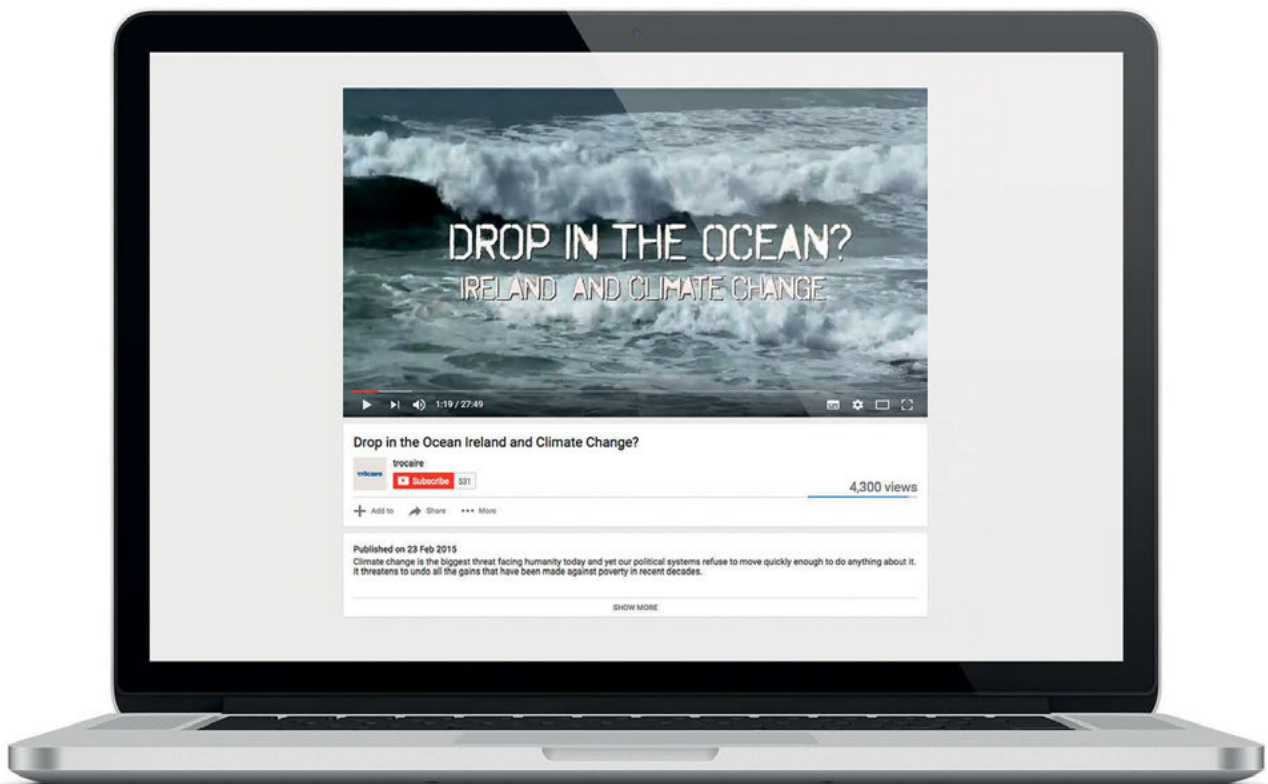
## Watch and Discuss | Drop in the ocean

**Drop in the Ocean** is a short documentary film produced by Trócaire that examines the impact of climate change in Ireland.

While there are a lot of videos that talk about the impacts of climate change, we recommend *Drop in the Ocean* because it is one of the few that looks specifically at the impacts to Ireland.

Watch the video as a group (approximately ½ hour) or on your own (it is available on YouTube at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=xTz8xjL6g3E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xTz8xjL6g3E)) and follow-up with a discussion based around the following questions:

- Have you noticed any of the impacts discussed in the video in your own lives?
- Do you think that we should really have to worry about climate change if the worst impacts will happen far away?
- Do you think there are things individuals can do to help stop climate change or other big global problems?





## Learn about your Carbon Footprint

This activity contains a set of questions designed to help people understand what they can do to decrease their carbon footprint.

It also leads to the understanding that individuals do have the power to have a positive impact on change. Each question contains an action that contributes to a more sustainable lifestyle.

 **Time:** 10 minutes

 **Materials:** Carbon Footprint Quiz (you can either copy one for each participant or read our questions and they can tally their scores on scrap paper)

-  **Steps:**
- Have participants take the quiz and tally up their own points.
  - Discuss what things individuals can do to have an impact on climate change and have your group decide one thing to do either as individuals or as a group action.

**Do you normally take a bath or a shower?**

Bath +20     Shower +10

**How do you get around town?**

Walk/Bike +0  
 Carpool/Public Transportation +10  
 Individual Car +20

**Do you compost at home?**

Yes +0     No +20

**Do you always turn off tv when you leave the room?**

No TV +0     Yes +10     No +20

**Do you recycle at home?**

Yes +0     No +20

**Do you let the water run when you brush your teeth?**

Yes +20     No +0

**Do you give away or donate your unwanted clothes?**

Yes +0     No +20

**How do you get rid of leftovers?**

Eat them +0  
 Dogs/Chickens +5  
 Bin +20

**Do you eat Strawberries in the winter?**

Yes +0     No +20

**How do you dry your clothes?**

Line/Rack +0  
 Combination Line/Rack and Tumble dryer +10  
 Only tumble dryer +30

**Do you use a dishwasher or hand wash for dishes?**

Dishwasher +20     Handwash +10

**Do you buy Fair Trade products when you have the option?**

Yes +0     No +20

**Do you check to see if your clothes were produced without child labour?**

Yes +0     No +20

Total number of points: 260 | Least amount of points: 20

# ACT | Taking Steps

**In addition to the individual actions highlighted by the carbon footprint quiz, there are actions that can be taken within our communities and by our government.**

It is important to remember that even the smallest steps, when taken together, can make a difference in the face of these big problems.



### ACTIONS FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF IRELAND:

- Subsidies for clean renewable energy or for hybrid cars
- More bike or bike to work schemes
- Renewed commitments to international targets and the Sustainable Development Goals



### ACTIONS FOR OUR COMMUNITIES:

- Compost programmes
- Allotment schemes
- Improved bike lanes
- Tree planting programmes
- Local education and awareness programmes



### ACTIONS FOR THE INDIVIDUAL:

- Eat less meat
- Use clean energy sources when you can (like energy saving light bulbs)
- Walk or bike
- Reduce, reuse, recycle
- Buy second-hand clothes

# ACTION PLAN FOR WASTE

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Source: National Geographic

# Read about waste in Ireland

**Although the situation is definitely getting better, we still have a big problem with waste in Ireland.**

This section looks at the amount of general waste we produce and focuses on two specific areas of concern: food waste and plastic waste. Ireland has instituted a bin system that is designed to decrease actual waste and how much ends up in landfill. This is great. But we still regularly see illegal dumping sites, empty green bins with overflowing black ones, and an on-going demand for landfill sites. The amount of waste we send to landfill is well-above the EU average (*Source: CSO Statistics*) with 58% of our total waste going to the dump (compare to under 10% for the highest performing countries).



### GENERAL WASTE:

This is usually thought of as the stuff that would go into black bins which means pretty much anything. Despite most homes having both a recycling and compost bin, many people still use the black bin for all of their waste which is expensive and bad for the environment. Textile (cloth and other fabrics) waste amounts to 225,000 tonnes per year in Ireland alone (*Source: re-dress*). And because most textiles are treated with a number of chemicals (to prevent them catching on fire for example), they take a really long time to decompose in landfill.



### FOOD WASTE:

Food Waste does not refer to leftovers, this figure refers to food that is never even taken out of its packaging. The EPA reports that 25% of what is in black bins in Ireland is food waste. Additionally, there is a large portion of food waste that comes from restaurants and take-aways. There has been a lot of work done to try to get Irish retailers to decrease the amount of food wasted, most notably from the organisation Food Cloud who match restaurants and shops with excess food to people and organisations who can distribute it to people in need (*visit them at <https://food.cloud/>*).



### PLASTIC WASTE:

Plastic represents a real threat to the health of our planet and we use it everywhere. Every piece of plastic ever made still exists in one form or another. Although we do recycle some plastic, there are still many forms of plastic (like films and lids) that are not recycled in Ireland. We produce 210,000 tonnes of plastic waste per year in Ireland and only 36% of that is recycled. The rest is either burned or goes to landfill. (*Source: Science Spinning*)

## Read about the problem with plastic

### Humans have become incredibly dependent on plastic.

Stop and think about the amount of plastic you encounter in a single day. Our food comes wrapped in plastic, our consumer products are encased in plastic and our water is taken out of the ground and put into single use plastic bottles.

While some plastics can be recycled, all of the plastic that has ever been produced is still on the planet in some form or another. It does not go away. This has become a serious problem for landfills but even more so for our oceans. There is an amazing amount of plastic floating around our oceans. We see it washing up on beaches, showing up in the stomachs of the full range of sea life and it has created a vast floating island of plastic in the middle of the Pacific Ocean that scientists refer to as the Pacific Trash Vortex.



Source: Wordpress



### Taking steps on plastic

It can be very hard for consumers to reduce our reliance on plastic when pretty much everything we buy comes wrapped in it but there are simple steps we can take:

- Stop buying water in plastic bottles and purchase a good water bottle. Chances are that the water from your taps is essentially the same as the water in the bottles and a whole lot less expensive and a lot less damaging to the environment.
- Don't put your loose vegetables from the shop into plastic bags. They will make it home ok unwrapped.
- When you buy goods that are in plastic, make sure that it is a type of plastic that can be recycled. There are a lot of plastic bags and films that cannot be recycled and those should be avoided when possible.
- Stop taking plastic cutlery from the shops or takeaways. Keep a set of regular cutlery in your office or school instead or use your own when at home.
- Stop using straws!



### Watch | The story of stuff

The *Story of Stuff* group has produced a series of videos that look at the amount we humans consume and the impact that our overconsumption has had on the environment.

They are easy to understand but tackle some really big issues in a clear and engaging manner. The series includes:

- The Story of Stuff
- The Story of Electronics
- The Story of Microbeads
- The Story of Bottled Water

There is a lot more on their website, including additional videos, links to resources and to their podcast available at: [storyofstuff.org](http://storyofstuff.org)

We recommend watching *The Story of Stuff* to get an understanding of how much resources go into the making of our consumer goods and the impact that our disposable society has on the environment. The following questions can form the basis of a good group discussion:

- What was the major point of the film? Do you agree or disagree?
- What techniques did the filmmakers use? Were these techniques effective?
- Do you think this video could impact the way people consume?



#### WANT TO WATCH MORE?

- Tristram Stuart, who is an anti-food waste advocate, gives a great TED Talk about the global food waste scandal, available at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=cWC\\_zDdF74s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cWC_zDdF74s)
- CNN did a 15-minute piece on the impact of plastic ocean waste on the Pacific Ocean and its wildlife, available at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=lsJqMmuFWO4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lsJqMmuFWO4)
- Comedian John Oliver's news report on food waste, available at: [www.developmenteducation.ie/resource/last-week-tonight-with-john-oliver-food-waste/](http://www.developmenteducation.ie/resource/last-week-tonight-with-john-oliver-food-waste/)



## Learn about NEEDS vs. WANTS

**This activity helps people make the distinction between the things that we actually need versus the things that we want.**

It is an important part of understanding our power as consumers to recognise that most of the things that we buy are not necessities. Knowing the difference between a need and a want enables people to recognise that much of what we purchase/consume is in excess of what would meet our needs.

You can use the Needs and Wants cards included in this resource or alternatively make your own lists based on the lives of your group.

Have people work in pairs or small groups and put the cards into a needs pile and a wants pile. If there are any that the group cannot agree on, have them make a separate pile for those cards.

In full group discussion, ask each group to identify any cards that they had a disagreement over whether it was a need or a want and discuss what they felt was a need vs. a want. It can be very interesting if there are disagreements between groups about where one of the cards should be placed. For example, internet access is often seen as a want but in reality it is probably becoming a need in our society.



### DISCUSS

**Discuss the following questions (or those of your own):**

- Does consumerism, or having lots of things, make people happy?
- Are there things that should be considered Needs that have not been included here?
- What are some non-commercial ways of achieving happiness?
- Does what we need differ depending on where in the world we live?
- What can we do to make the world a better place? Does this involve buying things? Does this involve buying less things?

## NEEDS vs. WANTS Cards

<b>Food and Water</b>	<b>Shelter</b>
<b>Family and Friends</b>	<b>Clothes</b>
<b>Car</b>	<b>TV/Radio</b>
<b>Designer Shoes</b>	<b>Clean Air</b>
<b>Internet Access</b>	<b>Music</b>
<b>Safety</b>	<b>Pets</b>
<b>Rest &amp; Recreation</b>	<b>Money</b>
<b>Good Health</b>	<b>Free Speech</b>

# Taking individual action on food waste

The two most important things we can do about waste in Ireland is to decrease our own personal waste and to raise awareness about the amount of waste that we are producing and the impact that it is having on our environment.

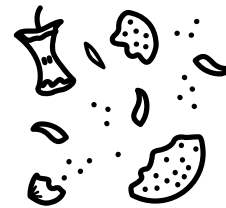
We have included two actions that address both of those concerns. The first is an individual action plan for reducing in-home food waste.

We waste a lot of food both in our homes and in our restaurants and canteens. Although it would be difficult to get to a zero-waste household, it is not impossible and it certainly IS possible to significantly reduce the amount of food that we waste. The following set of actions are things that we can all easily do that will have a real and positive impact. Decreasing our food waste also has the added benefit of saving money. As a group, have members pledge to follow some or even all of the steps listed below toward the goal of a waste-free house.



## Taking individual action on food waste

### STEPS FOR THE IRISH HOUSEHOLD:



- ✓ **MAKE LISTS:** Plan your meals and make a shopping list based on those menus. You will then only buy what you actually need.
- ✓ **SHOP OFTEN:** Shopping every couple of days rather than once per week will encourage you to only buy the things that you need and food is less likely to go off and therefore to waste. The added benefit is that your fruit and vegetables will be fresher than if you only shop once per week.
- ✓ **ORGANISE YOUR FRIDGE:** If you can see foods that are about to go past their use-by date, especially vegetables, you are more likely to use them.
- ✓ **USE YOUR FREEZER:** Meats and breads can be bought and stored in the freezer, only keeping fresh what you plan on using. Frozen vegetables can be a good alternative to buying fresh as they keep for a much longer period of time. Leftovers can also be frozen and used later.
- ✓ **INVEST IN GOOD STORAGE:** Foods that are kept in proper storage containers that keep the air out will keep for much longer.
- ✓ **EAT LOCAL:** Not only will you get fresher food, but it is much better for the environment to decrease the distance that food has to travel to get to our plates.
- ✓ **COMPOST:** Most households in Ireland have a brown bin for composting or you can compost directly into your own garden (for what can and cannot be composted, check out: [www.stopfoodwaste.ie/home-composting/what-can-i-compost/](http://www.stopfoodwaste.ie/home-composting/what-can-i-compost/))
- ✓ **SHOP RESPONSIBLY:** Buy only what you need and try to buy from responsible sources that are not wasteful in their own practices.

[Adapted from Humane Education]

# Taking community action on plastic

Although it is best to try to avoid any plastic whenever possible due to the environmental impacts of its production and disposal (even when we recycle plastic, it still takes a lot of energy), some plastics are better than others.

There are seven types of plastic and items are usually marked on the bottom with the recycle symbol and a number that identifies the type of plastic that is used. The plastic that is used in soda and water bottles and food jars is generally recyclable in all facilities. But the caps from those bottles and jars are not recyclable. Neither are plastic wraps, straws, yogurt containers, plastic bags, Styrofoam, take-away containers and plastic knives and forks.

Plastic Bottles & Cans	✓ Yes please	✗ No thanks
 <p>recycle for West Berkshire</p> <p>Please use this bag to recycle: ✓ Plastic bottles and food and drink cans</p>	 <p>Plastic drinks and milk bottles</p>	 <p>Butter, margarine and yogurt pots</p>
	 <p>Plastic detergent and cleaning fluid bottles</p>	 <p>Plastic trays and tubs</p>
	 <p>Plastic shampoo, conditioner and shower gel bottles</p>	 <p>Polystyrene</p>
	 <p>Plastic spray bottles (spray tops removed) and all other plastic bottles</p>	 <p>Plastic bags and film</p>
	 <p>Steel and aluminium cans</p>	 <p>Other plastic packaging, items and lids</p>
	 <p>Sweet or biscuit tins</p>	 <p>Aerosol cans</p>

**Please rinse all bottles. Remove lids and dispose of them in your rubbish bin**

Source: Veolia

It is really important that people are made aware of the growing problem of plastic pollution through public education campaigns. One of the major sources of plastic pollution is single-use plastic water bottles (the kind we buy in the shop). According to *The Irish Times* (22-8-2016), Irish consumers spend about €150 million euro each year on bottled water. That's a lot of bottles. The *Times* also points out that it takes three litres of water to make a one-litre bottle of water and it takes 1000 years for that bottle to biodegrade. Trócaire reports that 70% of these plastic water bottles end up in landfill.

As an action, your group can help raise awareness within your Community Centre or Estate about the importance of switching to a reusable water bottle. A good fund-raising idea is to sell reusable water bottles with the name of your GAA Club, Community Centre, or other group on the side. There are a number of Irish companies that will do personalised water bottles for very reasonable prices.



Source: All Trading Post

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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### DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION IN COMMUNITY SETTINGS

IDEA, 2014. Development Education in Adult and Community Settings: Guidelines for Good Practice. Available at: [www.ideaonline.ie/latest/news-article/development-education-in-adult-and-community-settings-good-practice-guideli](http://www.ideaonline.ie/latest/news-article/development-education-in-adult-and-community-settings-good-practice-guideli)

McNeil, H. 2005. Connecting Communities. Dublin: LYCS.

Wilding, Nick. 2011. Exploring Community Resilience in Times of Rapid Change. UK: Fiery Spirits Community of Practice. Available at: [www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/carnegieuktrust/wp-content/uploads/sites/64/2016/02/pub1455011679.pdf](http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/carnegieuktrust/wp-content/uploads/sites/64/2016/02/pub1455011679.pdf)

### FAIR TRADE

Fair Trade Campaigns (available at: [www.fairtradecampaigns.org](http://www.fairtradecampaigns.org)) is a US-based organisations but has listed a bunch of campaign ideas that have taken place within communities and run by community members.

Want to become a Fairtrade town? Fairtrade Ireland has everything you need to know at: [www.fairtrade.ie/get-involved/fairtrade-towns/](http://www.fairtrade.ie/get-involved/fairtrade-towns/)

Top 10 Facts about Fair Trade put together by developmenteducation.ie is available at: [www.developmenteducation.ie/blog/2015/03/top-10-facts-about-the-fairtrade-movement-in-ireland](http://www.developmenteducation.ie/blog/2015/03/top-10-facts-about-the-fairtrade-movement-in-ireland)

### CLIMATE CHANGE

Environmental Protection Agency. 2014. Current and Future Vulnerability to Climate Change. Available at: [www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/research/climate/CCRP\\_29.pdf](http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/research/climate/CCRP_29.pdf)

Trócaire's Climate Change Report (2014) looks at the impacts of climate change from a global perspective and is available at: [www.developmenteducation.ie/media/documents/Trocaire\\_Climate\\_Change\\_Report\\_2014.pdf](http://www.developmenteducation.ie/media/documents/Trocaire_Climate_Change_Report_2014.pdf)

### WASTE

Stop Food Waste Ireland's website has information about how much we waste and steps to decrease that waste as well as public campaigns and pledges. Available at: [www.stopfoodwaste.ie](http://www.stopfoodwaste.ie)

Head Stuff has a great section on the alternatives to single-use plastics, available at: [www.headstuff.org/2017/01/plastic-bottle-oceans/](http://www.headstuff.org/2017/01/plastic-bottle-oceans/)





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