

# Cost of a healthy food basket for households on the island of Ireland (Northern Ireland Research)

Area of research interest: [Consumer Interests \(aka Wider Consumer Interests\)](#)

Study duration: 2014-11-01

Project code: FS411025

Conducted by: Vincentian Partnership

## Background

Under 'A Fitter Future for All: a framework for preventing and addressing overweight and obesity in Northern Ireland 2012-2022' In Northern Ireland our organisation assumes co-responsibility for the short-term objective of developing a co-ordinated approach to address 'food poverty'; the medium-term objective of ensuring local support, resources, and facilities are available to those experiencing 'food poverty'; and the long-term objective of a greater proportion of adults eating a healthy diet (as measured by the indicator: percentage of adults experiencing food poverty).

A Food Poverty Network, of which our organisation in NI is co-chair, has been set up to measure the extent of food poverty across the island of Ireland. Network members are seeking to develop a coordinated approach to address 'food poverty' in order to inform and influence practice and policy.

In order to take this work forward effectively, baseline evidence is required, of which this research forms an important part.

## Research Approach

The Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice (VPSJ) has developed a Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL) and associated Minimum Income Standards (MIS) for a range of household types. As part of this they have developed food baskets with members of the public in Republic of Ireland that are both socially acceptable, yet meet healthy eating guidelines and nutritional needs. This food data has not yet been investigated beyond the overall cost of food basket and has the potential to provide valuable data to inform policy and practice relevant to food poverty. The extension of this initiative to Northern Ireland (NI) would provide data on food costs that would take account of the food cost differences in both jurisdictions.

The Food Poverty Network has highlighted this as a key priority action. Safefood has agreed to lead on this action with support from Food Standards Agency NI and Healthy Food for All.

The project will generate food basket data in NI using the MESL methodology in several household types to allow for future analysis and to provide detailed information of the cost a healthy food basket for different household types across using the MIS, (an internationally recognised and validated approach).

## Key Activities

Develop acceptable food menus for 3 household types in NI. This will require recruiting a minimum people to conducting 9 focus groups per household type (10 participants in each focus group who meet on 3 separate occasions) - this will be carried out by the General Consumer Council for NI (GCCNI). The groups need to be representative of gender, urban/rural spread and social groups, must be recruited from 3 different locations in NI; representative of large urban areas as well as more rural locations west of the Bann - Belfast, L'Derry and Enniskillen chosen and use UK Healthy Eating guidelines i.e. Eatwell Plate. Our organisation in NI will fund half the costs associated with the recruitment and facilitation of the focus groups in Northern Ireland.

Using the food data collected in the MESL Research in ROI and NI there will be investigation of food spending across a variety of household types funded by Safefood, but results shared with FSA.

Research report

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