

The Climate-Energy-Food Security Nexus

Developing a multi-stakeholder governance model in Northern Ireland



Funded by the ESRC, the Nexus Network brings together researchers, policy makers, business leaders and civil society to develop collaborative projects and improve decision making on food, energy, water and the environment.

In July 2016, the Nexus Network announced five research partnership awards that will advance understanding of the food- energy- water- environment interactions and support actions to improve their sustainability. These partnerships will enable researchers to build interdisciplinary research collaboration in locations across both the UK and Africa.



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The project explores how climate change and future energy availability may affect food and farming systems in Northern Ireland. Extreme weather events, and the risks of passing climate ‘tipping points’, pose serious threats to global food security. Industrialised food systems are also critically dependent on supplies of cheap, fossil energy (oil and gas), projected to decline over the next decades.

The project combines action research with multi-stakeholder scenario planning. This means providing a context for policy learning and being a catalyst for collaborative actions. Stakeholders, from public, business and NGO sectors, have been interviewed and will be brought together for two scenario planning workshops, with options for follow-up meetings to discuss collaborative initiatives.

The workshops will examine potential global climate and energy scenarios. Participants will translate these into regional scenarios, identifying food system risks and opportunities, testing

existing policies, and developing preferred transition pathways. Participants also have opportunities to attend public lectures at Queens University, addressing the climate-energy-food nexus.

Early findings suggest a polarisation of views, between those favouring large-scale, export-oriented, industrial agriculture, but moderated by ‘sustainable intensification’; and others advocating smaller-scale, localised production, using organic and agroecological methods. The second view is associated with a rights-based approach to food, and an emerging policy advocacy initiative addressing food poverty.

Host institution

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Partners

Institute for Global Food Security

Department of Agriculture Environment & Rural Affairs NI

Agri-Food & Biosciences Institute

Belfast Food Network

Friends of the Earth NI

“Policy debate about food and farming in Northern Ireland needs to broaden out – not just for more expert input on climate impacts and energy transition, but also to engage more stakeholders in that debate. The scenario planning approach is potentially an effective way of achieving this.”

Prof. John Barry,
Co-Investigator

FIGURE 1 QUB NEXUS PROJECT – SCHEMATIC

