Community Food Initiatives (CFIs) aim to positively influence the eating habits of families in low-income communities by addressing the barriers to having a healthy diet and supporting greater access to affordable and healthy food at a local level. Overall, CFIs promote good health by making it easier for people to make healthy food choices. Ten CFIs on the island of Ireland (IOI) are currently being funded by safefood as part of the CFI Programme 2013–2015, which is managed by Healthy Food for All.

Objectives of the Programme
2. Provide technical support, collective training and facilitate networking.
3. Encourage projects to consider long term sustainability from the start of the programme.
4. Promote shared learning among CFIs on the island.
5. Identify policy and best practice lessons and increase awareness of the programme among key stakeholders.

An independent evaluation of the first year of the programme involved the review of data from a number of sources including monthly reports and questionnaires. Data was gathered on:

- Total number of participants engaged in CFI activities
- Ongoing activities organised by the CFI
- One-off events organised by the CFI
- Networking
- Training
- Sustainability of the project
- Shared learning
- Technical support
- The main challenges and problems
- The main successes
- The main ‘learnings’ of the process.

While the learnings from evaluation of year one of the programme were diverse, some key learnings were identified:

- Continue to network and communicate with other CFIs – to learn and share learnings with others
- Be flexible and facilitate community member’s needs – no ‘one size fits all’ approach
- Be creative – e.g. make food fun and tasty
- Get specialist support when necessary – e.g. involving a gardener

The CFI programme is a worthwhile and valuable approach to tackling food poverty at a community level.

This poster arises from the Joint Action on Chronic Diseases and Promoting Healthy Ageing across the Life Cycle (JA-CHRODIS), which has received funding from the European Union, in the framework of the Health Programme (2008–2013). Sole responsibility lies with the author and the Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

The independent evaluation was completed by Weafer Research Associates.