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RESEARCH TENDER CALL



TENDER INFORMATION DOCUMENT

Project Reference No.: 01-2023

Project Title: 'Are knowledge and behaviours-related to food purchase, storage and cooking in the domestic context affected by the current cost of living crisis?'


1. Objective/Knowledge Gap:

This project will examine current consumer knowledge and practices in relation to food purchasing, storage and cooking practices, including meal planning, cooking, batch cooking, chilling, freezing, date markings, fridge temperatures. The project will involve visiting homes (at least 100) to look at fridge temperatures and storage, a questionnaire to assess knowledge, practices and understanding, and further studies to look in more detail at purchasing, cooking and storage practices. The results of the project will be used to inform consumer messaging around meal planning, cooking practices and food storage, which is particularly important given the increase in cost of living and energy prices.

2. Background

In 2022, consumers on the island of Ireland and across the EU have seen significant increases in the cost of living, including energy and food costs. In Ireland, the Central Statistics Office reports that electricity costs increased by 62.7%, gas rose by 86.5%, liquid fuels (home heating oil) up 39.9% and solid fuels up 46.9%. The cost of food & non-alcoholic beverages rose by 11.7%, with very significant increases in some food products, including fresh whole milk (+33.3%), sugar (+30.0%), eggs (+23.5%), butter (+23.1%) and bread (+16.3%) compared with December 2021¹.

Food and non-alcoholic beverage prices in the UK rose by 16.9% in the 12 months to December 2022, up from 16.5% in November. The annual rate of inflation for this category has risen for 17 consecutive months, from minus 0.6% in July 2021. Indicative modelled estimates suggest that the rate would have last been higher in September 1977, when it was

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estimated to be 17.6%. The British Retail Consortium reported a 13.8% rise in food prices in Northern Ireland during January 2023, compared to the January 2022². In a survey conducted by the Consumer Council in November 2022, 59% of respondents reported cutting back on the amount they spend on food³.

The cost-of-living crisis is a key public health issue across the island of Ireland. As the cost of living continues to rise, it is expected that the numbers experiencing food poverty will increase. Food is often the 'flexible' element in the household budget. The most recent data for Northern Ireland show that approximately 1 in 6 respondents were food insecure (i.e. had low or very low food security)⁴, that 4% of households are showing signs of food poverty⁵ and that 8.9% of the population are experiencing food poverty in Ireland⁶.

This research project will investigate the impact of these financial pressures on meal planning, food purchasing, food storage, use of leftovers. It will provide information on consumer understanding and behaviours regarding date markings, chilling and freezing of food, which will be used to inform **safefood**'s consumer communications.

3. Approach


The research will involve a mixed methods approach to achieving the objectives laid out above. The research will include the following elements:

- i. Literature review on consumer practices in relation to food storage, meal planning, food shopping and cooking practices
- ii. Survey of domestic fridges
- iii. Survey / questionnaire with participating households
- iv. In-depth studies, such as observational studies, focus groups
- v. Final report to **safefood**

4. Technical Specification

(a) Scope of research

The research will involve visiting 100 households on the island of Ireland to gather data on storage, including a survey of fridges (temperature, layout, food placement, date markings), and completion of a questionnaire with the householder, covering meal planning, food purchasing, food storage practices, use of leftovers, cooking practices, and

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the impact of cost of living increases on these behaviours. A more in-depth examination will be conducted with a smaller number of participants and may involve an observational study and/or focus group discussions.

(b) Literature review

The contractor must carry out a robust literature review on consumer practices in relation to food storage, meal planning, food shopping and cooking practices, and the impact of cost-of-living increases on these practices. The literature review will include peer-reviewed publications and also a full search of the grey literature including government and other organisation reports (to include publications from international centres of excellence). Detail must be provided regarding how the literature review will be structured.

(c) Qualitative and quantitative work


The contractor will select appropriate methodologies to achieve the objectives of the project. A full justification and rationale for the proposed methodology and analytical approach will be required. It will be necessary to indicate for all aspects of the project how the proposed data will be collected, analysed and reported. The research should be mixed in nature.

The contractor must consider all possibilities and influencing factors with regards to this project including:

- Appropriate geographical spread
- Household demographics, the households included should be reflective of those experiencing the greatest impact of the cost of living crisis
- A fifty-fifty split between ROI and NI
- The qualitative and quantitative work should focus on those who are experiencing food poverty or at risk of experiencing food poverty as a result of the impact of the cost of living increases.

The tender application should provide sufficient information on the following anticipated project aspects:

- Surveys
- Observational studies
- Focus groups

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(d) Analysis

The contractor will provide explicit details and justification for the chosen methods for quantitative and qualitative analyses.

(e) Data handling and Reporting


- i. After a six-month period, the contractor will submit to **safefood** an interim report detailing progress for each deliverable of the project.
- ii. The contractor is responsible for collating all outputs and outcomes and a project final project report will be submitted to **safefood** on completion of the study.
- iii. All forms, documentation and electronic files must be retained by the contractor until further notice from **safefood** in case of issues arising after the completion of the research.

(f) Quality assurance

- Ethical approval will be an essential component where data collection from participants is involved.
- The contractor will use validated methods where applicable and will apply best practice quality controls to approaches.
- To ensure transparency and reproducibility, all data sources used in the research must be specified, and all data used must be explicitly specified and justified.
- **safefood** may visit the contractors during the research to assess how the work is being carried out.

5. Proposed Activities/Deliverables

- A review of the literature on the impact of household budget and cost of living increases on food purchasing, storage and cooking practices.
- A survey of domestic fridges in 100 households, to determine fridge temperature, storage practices, food placement, layout, and practices regarding date markings.
- A questionnaire to provide data on knowledge and behaviours around food storage, including chilling and freezing, and how cost of living increases are affecting meal planning, food purchasing, cooking and storage practices on the island of Ireland.

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- In-depth study to gather more detailed qualitative data on the impact of cost-of-living increases on these practices.
- Report detailing the findings and highlighting findings that are of particular relevance to **safefood**'s work on domestic food hygiene education, and on food poverty.
- Recommendations based on the research findings on steps that can be taken to address the needs of those consumers most impacted by the cost-of-living crisis from a health perspective.

6. **Evaluation of Tenders**

Quality of the proposal:

- ✓ Anticipated deliverables.
- ✓ Research method and facilities.
- ✓ Value for money.
- ✓ Potential for application.
- ✓ Work plan, including the overall timeframe.

Quality of Applicants:


- ✓ Experience in subject area.
- ✓ Quality Assurance and Quality Control measures in place.

7. **Duration of Project**

It is anticipated that the duration of the project will be 18 months. A detailed timescale of research should be submitted by each applicant.

8. **Tender Application Forms and Guidelines**

The Tender Application Form and associated Guidelines can be downloaded from <https://www.safefood.net/research-tender-2023>. They can also be obtained by emailing research@safefood.net, quoting the project reference number **01-2023**. Alternatively, please contact **safefood** as per the details below.

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9. References

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2. British Retail Consortium (BRC)-Nielsen IQ index
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4. Food Standards Agency (2022) Food and You 2: Northern Ireland Wave 3-4 Key Findings DOI <https://doi.org/10.46756/sci.fsa.ybe946> [Food and You 2 Wave 3-4 Northern Ireland Key findings reports](#)
5. Department of Social Protection (2022) Food poverty Government programmes, schemes and supports. <https://assets.gov.ie/230064/065ff541-d304-4bd6-8f4b-16ceb0b67fdb.pdf>
6. Department of Health (2022) Health survey Northern Ireland: first results 2021/22. [Health survey Northern Ireland: first results 2021/22 | Department of Health \(health-ni.gov.uk\)](#)
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