

# SICAP 2020 Case Study



## Comhar na nOileán CTR – Goal 1 Project

Target Group - Low Income Workers/Households and Disadvantaged Communities

*Margadh Feirmeoirí: Establishing a Farmers Market on Cape Clear*



CAPE CLEAR FARMERS  
MARKET  
MARGADH FEIRMEOIRÍ  
CHLÉIRE

**Cork West Islands (18-7)**

Farming and fishing are an integral part of life for many residents of Irish islands. As part of our SICAP annual plan for 2020, we are committed to providing support for fishers and farmers on the West Cork Islands. 2020 has been a very challenging experience for many island residents, and in particular for those who rely on income from tourism. The impact of Covid-19 on island economies, many of whom rely on tourism as a major part of their economy was severe, and as a result, many islanders were forced to explore alternative means of income.

Cape Clear is an island off the west coast of Cork, and like many islands, tourism is an important source of revenue for many islanders. The main tourism season on Cape Clear runs for about six weeks from July until mid-August, with a final flurry for the Story Telling Weekend in September. The island also plays host to Irish language students during the summer months, but as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak, there were no students, causing economic strain on not only local households who would normally host the students but the island economy as a whole. The ensuing Covid-19 lockdown also meant that there were no people visiting the island and all of the local businesses were hit hard.

Island residents on Cape Clear order most of their shopping either online or over the phone from the local supermarket. This is then packed into cardboard boxes and delivered to Baltimore, where it is put in a container and hoisted by crane onto the ferry. As a result of the lockdown these deliveries were like *'Christmas deliveries, three times a week'* and consequently, orders were outweighing the actual capacity of the delivery container.

While sitting in her office, Jude, the SICAP Development Officer would often see a couple of small fishing boats bobbing along the 'Bealach', which is locally known as the 'Gaisceanán Sound', and is the stretch of water between Sherkin Island and Cape Clear. This led her to think about what if local fisher-people could sell their catch on the island, which in turn would keep money on the island and support the local economy. A message was sent out on the local community WhatsApp enquiring about local interest in setting up a fish market. Unfortunately, a local fisherman pointed out that this was potentially illegal, and that a specific license would be required. However Treasa Ní Chéadagáin a young local lady, and a Climate Ambassador for An Taisce, got in touch as a result of this message, and stated that she would be interested in helping to start up a farmer's market on Cape Clear.

*'I went over to Scotland and took part in a rural youth project. The idea was floated to have something like a food market. I came home from that and never really thought much about it again until Covid-19 hit, and I ended up being at home for six or seven months and I realised that we were buying in all of our shopping. Like everything was coming in from the mainland, and I was convinced that there was a way to buy at least a third of our shopping on the island...well at least the basics. As a climate ambassador for An Taisce, I'm a very strong believer in supporting local, and buying local as a way to reduce food miles and food waste. Myself and Jude got chatting and we came up with the idea of a food market as a way for suppliers to sell their goods on Cape Clear.'*

**Cork West Islands (18-7)**

Further meetings were held, and it was decided that the idea of a local farmers market was definitely worth pursuing, and could potentially be of great benefit to the local area.

**Setting Up the Market**



As with all community projects it is important to gauge the level of local interest, and to also allow people to express their views on how the project should proceed. It was decided that the best way of doing this was to carry out a local survey on how people in the community felt about setting up a local farmers market, and what they would like to see from it.

The survey was circulated in a number of ways via the community e-mail, community WhatsApp and through text messages. There were also paper copies left for people to fill out in the community development offices. Posters were also left out in various locations such as the local shop, the ferry as well as the local Co-op. Meetings were also held with interested locals both virtually and personally.

**Fig 1: The Aims of the Local Farmers Market**



Create Activity/Social  
Activity



Additional Income  
Stream For Local  
Producers



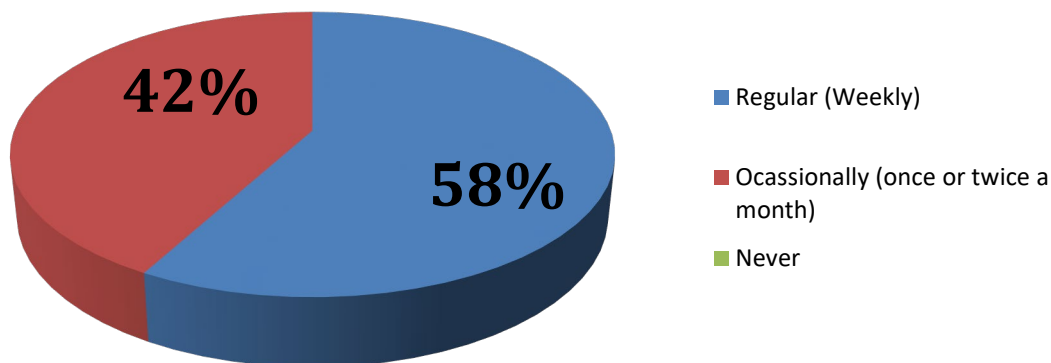
Healthy & Competitive  
Market



Broaden Out & Supply  
The Mainland

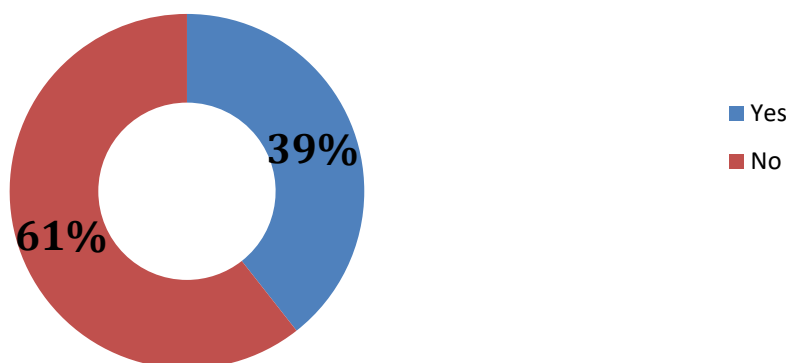
A total of thirtyone individuals completed the survey, and once the data had been compiled a meeting was held to discuss the figures and how to proceed.

### Would you be interested in purchasing Cape farm produce from a central location



The above table shows that all survey participants would be interested in purchasing Cape farm produce at least once or twice a month, and that 42% of those surveyed would be interested in purchasing local produce once a week.

### Would you or anyone in your household be interested in selling food/farm produce through a central location on Cape?

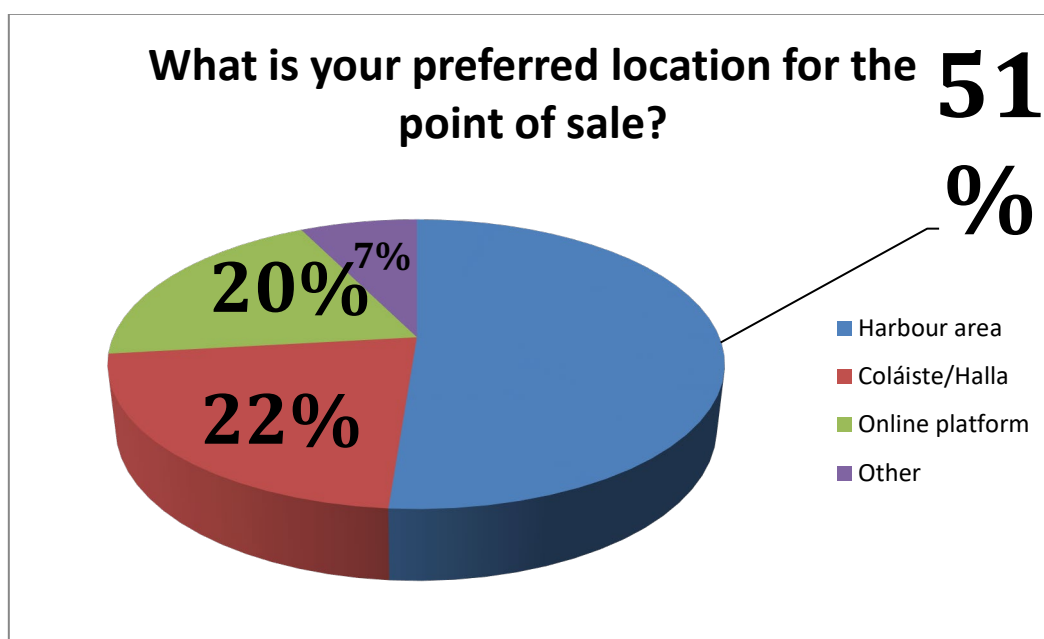


As can be seen from the above table, just fewer than 40% of those surveyed would either be interested themselves, or have a member of their household willing to sell food or farm produce through a central location on Cape Clear.

Choosing the correct location is important to any enterprise. The table below shows that there were differing views amongst the survey participants as to where they would like to

**Cork West Islands (18-7)**

see the market located. Just over half of the participants wanted to have the harbour area as the main location, whilst 22% preferred the local Coláiste/Community Hall. Interestingly, a fifth of survey participants wished to see the market held on an online platform. This high figure in favour of an online platform was a surprise to us, and it is tempting to believe that it could well be as a result of fears surrounding the spread of Covid-19.



The main aim of this survey was to gauge how supportive the local population on Cape Clear would be in the establishing of a farmer's market. From the results of the survey, it was clear to us that local people would definitely be interested in purchasing from a local farmers market, and that a significant number would also be interested in providing food and produce. In the end, it was decided that the market would be called Margadh Feirmeoirí Chléire, and that a four-week trial of the market would begin on Wednesday the 8<sup>th</sup> of July.

During this time, Covid-19 restrictions eased, and islands were opened up to allow for visitors. As a result of this an increased stream of potential income was made available to us, and there were extra market days added in to capture a slice of this market. In all, we had about thirteen market days between the 8<sup>th</sup> of July and the 6<sup>th</sup> September.

### Funding & Support

Comharchumann Chléire Teoranta was one of the main sponsors of the market, and they kindly provided the space for the stall holders, providing them with electricity and access to their services for the stall holders. SICAP provided a development worker for support, and co-ordination of the project, as well as providing tea and coffee for all.

We have also been talking with the Department of the Marine, and Údarás na Gaeltachta in regards to procuring a future site for the market. An enquiry has also been made with the local county council in regards to obtaining a casual trading licence.

The group are also looking at funding options in conjunction with Comharchumann Chléire Teoranta for coverings so as to ensure that they can trade regardless of the weather.

We will also be talking to the ferry providers early next year in an attempt to match our market times with the ferry schedule on the busiest days. The Fastnet Ferry service can often bring in an extra one hundred people on Sunday's, which would mean a significant amount of extra potential customers for the market.

Social media can play an important role in promoting a business and if you would like more information on the farmers market please follow the links below.

Facebook @capeclearfarmersmarket

Instagram @capeclearfarmersmarket

Email [capeclearfarmersmarket@gmail.com](mailto:capeclearfarmersmarket@gmail.com)



### Market Day



The market has played an important role both socially and economically for the community on Cape Clear, especially since the closure of pubs and restaurants due to the Covid-19 outbreak. The market has been held every Wednesday since the 8<sup>th</sup> of July along with several 'bonus markets' during July and August. At the moment, there are at least eight regular stalls at the market, with everything sold on the market produced or made on Cape Clear. One local resident stated that for such a small population that it's *'been amazing and that you can do almost half your shopping on Cape'*.

As well as local farm produce a variety of local crafts are also sold from market stalls including pottery and knitwear. In continuing with their support for local produce, the wool used by the knitwear producers is all sourced from local sheep. This local craftwork has been particularly popular with visiting tourists who wish to purchase an authentic memento of their time on the island.

Currently, there are plans being made for next summer with a view to holding a market day every Sunday for the duration of the summer months. Organisers are also putting forward the idea of holding a Christmas market, as this can be traditionally quite a busy time with many islanders returning to the place of their birth for the holiday period.

The majority of stall owners had never participated in any market previously, and for many it has been a good way to generate some extra income on their surplus produce. One local producer who was selling their freshly baked bread stated that their reason for participating in the market was that:

*'It was something that I had always wanted to do and when the opportunity arose I took that opportunity to see where it went. The Covid-19 lockdown was obviously another, and as*

**Cork West Islands (18-7)**

*everybody knows the B&B's were forced to close, and a 100% of our income was wiped out which was quite devastating actually.'*

The above comment shows the impact that the Covid-19 lockdown had on the local economy but also the resilience of the local population in adapting to uncertain times. On a typical market day, you will find not only fresh farm produce but also hand-made arts and crafts, as can be seen in the picture below where a local woman is spinning wool to use for her knitwear.



One of the problems faced by the participants, and especially those involved with the tourism industry, was finding the time to tend a market stall once visitors were allowed back on to the island. One stall holder claimed, that due to the sudden influx of tourists that, *'they had to give it up in the end'*, which was a result of them being too busy running a tourist business, and also finding the time to prepare and maintain their market stall. However, this same participant also stated that they would be willing to keep a stall at future markets as long as there was some clarity around the next tourist season, and that they would even be willing to offer a person a job maintaining the stall.

Overall, the market days that have been held have been successful, and there is a general sense of optimism amongst organisers and stall-holders that the market has the potential to flourish and become a mainstay of the community. There are also plans afoot to broaden out and supply the mainland, and to also find a permanent site for the market on the island. Mainstream media coverage by the likes of the Irish Times, TG4 and Raidió na Gaeltachta has also boosted the profile of the market, and will hopefully help us to continue and expand well into the future.



### Conclusion

A farmers market was initially seen as being a good way for local producers to generate much needed extra income amid the Covid-19 lockdown. This year was initially a bit of a learning curve for people involved with the market, but we are hoping to continue the market for a number of days from now until Christmas. Additional markets are also being planned for the October bank holiday weekend, with the further possibility of a couple over the Easter break. We are also looking into a possible long-term site for the market with a view to attracting more customers from the tourist trade.



Our initial idea was to support local businesses, and to enable the community to shop local. The Island economy had been severely hit by the Covid-19 lockdown, and the outlook for the coming season looked bleak. We began the trial with five business's producing fresh locally grown produce such as eggs, baked goods, crafts, as well as meat from local producers. The only provision was that all products had to come from the island, or be made on the island. Of course, we had to be mindful of Covid-19 restrictions, and these were very carefully thought out to ensure both the communities safety, whilst still maintaining a comfortable environment for both the suppliers and attendees'. We decided to meet with the suppliers after the initial trial period to ascertain if business's found it useful, and if they wished to continue. The four-week trial proved to be successful for the suppliers as it created a buzz, and some positive outcomes from both the community and the suppliers' point of view. As a result of this, other businesses came on board, and in total the number of suppliers rose to eight. For a community of one hundred and twenty people this is a positive figure.

From talking to the organisers, as well as the stall holders, the general consensus was that the market had been a success, and that most participants felt that it would continue to operate into the future. As with any community project, there have been some problems such as finding a permanent location for the market, and being able to provide suitable cover for when the weather is bad. In saying that we remain optimistic that with the support

of the local community, and the good organisational skills of those involved with the running of the market, that these are challenges that can be overcome.

### Sample Poster

