

Social  
Democrats

# Holly CAIRNS TD

Representing West Cork



## Holly Cairns TD highlights the importance of sustainable local production in ensuring our food sovereignty

Speaking in the Dáil last week, Cork South West TD Holly Cairns, highlighted how the Covid-19 emergency has shown us that food needs to be treated as a public policy issue. She has called on the Minister for Agriculture, Food, and the Marine, to support small farms and fishing communities, re-open farmers' markets, and ensure workers rights to improve our national food security.

Deputy Cairns explained:

“CSO figures show that we import more seafood, milk, cereals, vegetables and fruit than we export. Government needs to take an active role in transforming our agricultural sector to ensure it is both balanced and capable of producing the food we need. This emergency - and future ones - demand that food systems move towards a more self-sufficient model. We know that unfortunately there will be more hard times like this, Brexit, the Climate and Biodiversity crisis. The bottom line is - Families need access to healthy and affordable balanced diets. Farmers and other producers need to be able to earn a living.”

In relation to markets, she stated:

“Thriving farmer’s markets in West Cork and nationwide create supply chains that help us secure food sovereignty and attract thousands of tourists. Many market traders are small-scale producers with extremely tight operating-margins who rely on the markets with direct access to customers taking out the middleman. Initiatives like box schemes and Neighbourfood have helped connect consumers and producers but what rural communities really need is the return of weekly markets. I am seeking the re-opening of markets and allotments as soon as possible.”

Holly also stressed the importance of treating all workers in the agri-food sector fairly:

“Respecting workers is also fundamental to a sustainable food model. Ireland, like the UK and other countries, relies on international seasonal and temporary workers who are often treated poorly. This situation is even worse in the developing world where agricultural workers are

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subjected to horrendous abuse and exploitation. We need an agri-food system that can support families and communities not only in West Cork and Ireland, but also globally.

ENDS

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