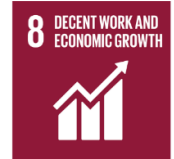




**Chambers
Ireland**
Advancing business together



Public Consultation on draft Bioeconomy Strategy 2026-2030

Submission by Chambers Ireland

August 2026

About Chambers Ireland

Chambers Ireland is an all-island business organisation with a unique geographical reach. Our members are the Chambers in the cities and towns throughout the country – active in every constituency. Each of our member Chambers is central to their local business community and all seek to promote thriving local economies that can support sustainable cities and communities.

Questions

What does a successful bioeconomy in Ireland look like to you by 2030 and 2035?

Chambers Ireland is an all-island business organisation with a unique geographical reach, representing a nationwide network of affiliated Chambers. Our Network has pledged to support and advance the UN Sustainable Development Goals and Chambers Ireland has been recognised as an SDG Champion and Ambassador in recent years. We use the Goals as a framework to identify policy priorities, communicate recommendations and ensure cohesion across our advocacy activities, with a particular focus on SDGs 5, 8, 9, 11 and 13.

A successful bioeconomy for the future is one that supports Irish business competitiveness, strengthens regional economies, improves energy and resource security, and helps enterprises decarbonise in a commercially viable way, objectives that align with the Sustainable Development Goals.

By 2030, success would mean that Ireland has created a clear pathway from innovation to commercial deployment. Businesses should be able to access investment, navigate proportionate regulatory processes, secure sustainable supply chains, and bring bio-based products, services and energy solutions to market.

Biomethane provides a clear example of the kind of bioeconomy opportunity that can deliver for Irish business. In our previous submission on the Draft National Biomethane Strategy¹, we welcomed the 5.7 TWh production target by 2030 because it can help reduce reliance on imported energy, support hard-to-decarbonise sectors and provide new opportunities for the agri-sector to diversify. Gas Networks Ireland's analysis further indicates significant market

¹ https://chambers.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Chambers-Ireland_Biomethane-Strategy-Submission_Final.pdf

interest, with 176 prospective producer responses identifying potential annual production of 14.8 TWh by 2030, more than two and a half times the current national target².

By 2035, success would mean that Ireland has developed a mature, regionally distributed and commercially credible bioeconomy. Agricultural residues, animal slurries, food waste, forestry by-products, marine resources and other organic streams should be treated as valuable economic inputs rather than waste. This would create new markets for primary producers, SMEs and processors, while supporting a more circular and resource-efficient economy.

Our previous biomethane submission³ stressed the importance of operational supports, medium- to long-term certainty, sustainable feedstock practices, market development and infrastructure investment. The same principles apply across the wider bioeconomy. Businesses need clear rules, predictable timelines, practical sustainability standards, access to finance, skilled workers and reliable demand signals if they are to commit capital and scale production.

Chambers Ireland would therefore define a successful bioeconomy as one that should help Irish firms reduce emissions, manage costs, develop new products and services, and compete in growing international markets for sustainable and bio-based solutions.

What actions should be prioritised (in terms of time to delivery) over the lifetime of the strategy?

Action A3 is an important action as it is key that the Strategy place strong emphasis on creating the conditions necessary to attract private and public investment into commercially viable bioeconomy projects. Businesses require a clear pipeline of opportunities, supportive infrastructure and long-term policy certainty before committing capital to emerging sectors. Biomethane is one of the most immediate and scalable bioeconomy opportunities, with the

² <https://www.gasnetworks.ie/network/biomethane/report>

³ https://chambers.ie/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/260304_CI-Green-Growth-Industrial-Strategy-Submission_Final.pdf

potential to strengthen energy security, reduce reliance on imported fossil fuels and support enterprise competitiveness.

Strong industry interest already exists, and there has been an identification⁴ of potential biomethane production significantly above current national targets, demonstrating that the challenge is increasingly one of delivery and investment rather than ambition alone.

Action A10 is also an important action to focus on as a successful bioeconomy will depend on effective coordination across agriculture, climate, energy, enterprise and research policy. From a business perspective, confidence is built through predictable regulatory environments, transparent decision-making and efficient approval processes. Investors, project developers, farmers and industrial users need certainty regarding planning timelines, permitting requirements, support mechanisms and market arrangements.

Regarding Action 5, with particular emphasis on 5.4.1, the success of Ireland's bioeconomy will depend on ensuring that farmers, rural communities and regional enterprises are active participants in its development. Biomethane and anaerobic digestion have the potential to create new commercial opportunities for farm businesses, generate additional value from agricultural by-products and support more diversified and resilient rural economies. The bioeconomy also offers opportunities to strengthen regional supply chains, encourage collaboration across value chains and support the development of locally rooted enterprise activity.

Actions 1.2.2 and 1.2.4 will also be critical to moving the bioeconomy from demonstration to commercial deployment. The successful development of a biomethane sector offers a practical opportunity to convert indigenous biological resources and suitable organic by-products into renewable energy while supporting emissions reduction, energy security, circular nutrient management and regional economic development. Action 1.2.2 is particularly important in ensuring that the infrastructure and technologies required to support anaerobic digestion,

⁴ <https://www.gasnetworks.ie/network/biomethane/report>

biomethane production and wider biomass valorisation are developed at scale. Action 1.2.4 is equally important in addressing the gap between research, demonstration and commercial operation. Investment certainty, access to finance, supportive infrastructure and practical deployment mechanisms will be essential if Ireland is to realise the economic and environmental opportunities presented by biomethane and the wider bioeconomy. The Strategy should therefore prioritise measures that support commercialisation and help bring viable projects to market more quickly.

Are there any actions or priorities within the draft bioeconomy strategy where you believe your organisation, sector or community could act as a lead or supporting partner.

Chambers Ireland would be happy to support the proposed annual bioeconomy business forum and wider market-development initiatives where possible. This aligns with Action 2.2.1, which seeks to establish a forum bringing together bioeconomy businesses and potential customers.

Chambers Ireland could also assist in identifying emerging skills needs and promoting bioeconomy-related training opportunities among businesses, particularly SMEs. Through engagement with employers across sectors, Chambers could contribute to discussions around bioeconomy skills requirements and support uptake of training, micro-credentials and upskilling programmes. This would complement Actions 3.2.1 and 3.3.1.

Does the draft strategy reflect the key opportunities and challenges for Ireland's bioeconomy? If not, what changes would you recommend?

The bioeconomy will require new technical, commercial and operational skills across agriculture, manufacturing, construction, marine industries and the wider economy. We support the development of targeted education, training and upskilling programmes that are aligned with

labour market needs and regional economic development opportunities⁵. Skills development should be delivered alongside investment and enterprise supports rather than as a standalone policy objective.

Ireland should explore all possible opportunities for collaboration around the Global Bioeconomy Summit in Dublin later this year, as well as other opportunities as part of Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

How should progress under the Bioeconomy Strategy be measured, and what outcomes or indicators should be used to assess whether the strategy is delivering on its objectives?

The Strategy proposes a 'Bioeconomy Statistics and Evidence Partnership'⁶. We would like to see if evidence could be gathered as to whether the bioeconomy is generating new economic opportunities and supporting business growth.

Possible indicators could include the number of bioeconomy enterprises established or expanded, the number and value of commercial bioeconomy projects reaching market deployment, and regional distribution of bioeconomy investment and enterprise activity. These indicators would help assess whether the Strategy is improving national competitiveness and creating sustainable economic opportunities.

How can the strategy encourage greater public awareness and understanding of the bioeconomy? What information, education or engagement activities would be most effective?

Public engagement should clearly communicate how the bioeconomy contributes to economic growth, job creation, sustainable business opportunities, resource efficiency, climate action and

⁵ https://chambers.ie/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/260216_CI-Apprenticeship-Action-Plan-Submission_Final.pdf

⁶ https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/62c24e7c/Bioeconomy_Strategy_for_Ireland_for_CONSULTATION_Updated.pdf
p.53

regional development. Communication efforts should emphasise tangible examples of bioeconomy activity already taking place across Ireland, including in agriculture, food production, construction, manufacturing, and marine industries.

How should Ireland ensure sustainable, efficient and circular use of biomass from land, sea and organic waste streams?

Ireland should ensure sustainable, efficient and circular use of biomass by prioritising high-value uses of biological resources from land, sea and organic waste streams, supported by clear sustainability safeguards for biodiversity, water quality, soil health and responsible land use. Biomethane should be recognised as a priority near-term pathway because it can convert agricultural residues, slurries, food waste and other suitable organic by-products into renewable gas while supporting emissions reduction, energy security, farm diversification and regional enterprise. Anaerobic digestion should also be valued for its wider circular economy benefits, including digestate, nutrient recovery and potential future use of biogenic CO₂.

Are the proposed five key sectors the right areas of focus for Ireland's bioeconomy to 2030?

The proposed five sectors are broadly the right areas of focus and provide a coherent framework for Ireland's bioeconomy. In particular, the Agri-Bioeconomy and Circular Nutrients sector and the Circular Bioeconomy sector strongly reflect the potential of biomethane and anaerobic digestion. However, the Strategy currently treats biomethane as one opportunity among many rather than as one of Ireland's most advanced and scalable bioeconomy pathways. Greater emphasis should be placed on the delivery of the National Biomethane Strategy, the role of gas infrastructure as a strategic enabler, the importance of operational supports and demand-side measures, and the practical deployment mechanisms required to achieve biomethane production at scale. These additions would strengthen the Strategy's focus on implementation, competitiveness, regional development and energy security while remaining fully aligned with sustainability objectives.

What opportunities exist for the key sectors that the draft strategy does not include?

The draft Strategy could place greater emphasis on the wider business opportunities created by the bioeconomy. Sustainably managed land, sea and organic waste resources can also reduce reliance on imported inputs and improve cost resilience for businesses. As global markets place greater emphasis on low-carbon and bio-based products, early Irish adopters could gain a competitive advantage, while Ireland could attract foreign direct investment into emerging bioeconomy sectors. This would help position the bioeconomy not only as an environmental policy area, but as a driver of enterprise growth, innovation and regional development.

What barriers are preventing these key sectors from moving from research and demonstration to wider deployment and commercial scale?

Infrastructure and regulatory barriers

Many bioeconomy opportunities are still constrained by a lack of enabling infrastructure, including processing facilities, logistics systems, certification mechanisms, testing facilities and routes to market. Businesses also need support to translate R&D concepts into ready-to-use technology and commercial infrastructure. Planning constraints, permitting delays and regulatory uncertainty can slow or halt progress, particularly for projects involving anaerobic digestion, biorefineries, biomethane injection, waste valorisation or new industrial processes.

Investment costs and access to finance

The cost of developing and scaling bioeconomy projects can be a significant barrier, especially for SMEs. Many businesses face high upfront capital costs, uncertain revenue models and the risks associated with immature markets. This can make it difficult to access commercial finance, particularly where technologies have moved beyond demonstration but do not yet have established demand, proven revenue streams or long-term policy certainty.

Skills gaps and workforce capacity

A shortage of technical, operational and commercial skills could limit deployment across the bioeconomy. Ireland will need to invest in upskilling and reskilling to ensure there is an adequate talent pool for areas such as anaerobic digestion, bioprocessing, engineering, logistics, sustainability certification, circular product development and industrial biotechnology. There may also be competition for talent from other green industries in Ireland and across the EU, so workforce planning should be treated as a core delivery issue rather than a supporting measure.