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True Cost of Healthy Food Basket Revealed

*New study reveals low income households need to spend
1/3 of weekly income to eat healthily*

9 June 2015: Low income households in Northern Ireland need to spend at least one third (1/3) of their take home income in order to purchase a basket of healthy food.

The cost of a healthy food basket for a pensioner living on their own is £59 per week, while for a family of four – two adults and two children - is £119 per week.

These are the main findings from Northern Ireland's survey on the Cost of a Healthy Food Basket conducted by **safefood** in partnership with the Food Standards Agency in NI and the Consumer Council for NI.

The consumer-led research is the first time a cost has been put on a healthy food basket for two of the biggest household types in Northern Ireland.

It asked consumers to select a realistic food basket from a taste and menu point of view, whilst meeting the social needs of a household, such as hosting visitors or special occasions.

The food baskets were then reviewed by nutritionists from Ulster University to ensure they met nutritional guidelines of the UK Eat Well plate and were then price-checked accordingly.

Dr Clíodhna Foley-Nolan, Director, Human Health & Nutrition, **safefood** explained how being unable to access a healthy diet due to affordability and

accessibility (known as food poverty) can have both short and long-term effects on adults and children.

“The effects of compromising on food spending can impact on people’s lives in a number of ways, from difficulties in concentration and poor energy levels in children, to wellbeing issues in everyday life for adults.

“On a longer-term basis, the health consequences for those households living in food poverty are higher rates of diet-related chronic diseases such as osteoporosis, Type 2 diabetes, obesity and certain cancers. In trying to make a limited household budget go further by compromising on healthy foods, some households are ending up nutritionally poor.”

Sharon Gilmore, Head of Standards and Dietary Health at the Food Standards Agency in NI said: “Those people experiencing food poverty and having difficulty eating an adequate diet will continue to be the focus of our work. For the first time, we have sound evidence on the real cost of an essential food basket and how food issues relate to poverty and economic hardship. We need to take this evidence and develop an action plan to tackle food poverty in Northern Ireland.”

Consumer Council NI Quote:

-Ends-

For more information or to request an interview, please contact:

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Editor’s Notes:

The household types identified for the research were:

- A Pensioner, living alone on State Pension
- A two-parent, two-child household with the following income scenarios
 - One parent working full-time and earning the national minimum wage
 - The family in receipt of Jobseeker’s Allowance

	Pensioner living alone	2 parent & 2 children (3&10y)	2 parent & 2 children (3&10y)
	State Pension	Job Seekers Allowance	Minimum Wage (£6.50/h)
Total food spend (£)	59	119	119
Take home Income (£)	164	338	415
% Household Budget	36	35	29

*The average spend on a more general weekly food basket in Northern Ireland was around £70-£75 for a low income family or £30-£35 for a single pensioner (ONS, Family Spending 2013).

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