

SOCIAL FARMING NEWSLETTER

Year in Review 2022



New Opportunities + Connecting People + Enhancing Lives

January- December 2022



Social Farming Ireland has had one of its busiest years to date. Our active farm network had grown to over 120 farms in 2022, with farms available in every county. Social farming participants come from many different support sectors, with majority of placement activity being with people who have an intellectual disability, mental health support needs or are in full time education. However there has been significant growth in participants who are supported by services including - youth, homelessness, addiction, eldercare and refugees, all achieving excellent outcomes.

The success of our network comes from the wide participation and support of many, from participants and those directly supporting them - both families and support workers - to managers who continue to value the benefits that Social Farming has for participants, to the great farmers and their families who provide this support at local community level.. Well done to all!!

In this Newsletter we reflect on the year just gone - here's some of our content

Stories from social farming

Our Research and International activity

Roadshow 2022

Training

In the News

Snapshot from the Regions

Meet the team



Social Farming Stories

My name is Bernard, I started going to Mary and Niall's farm in 2022. I travel independently on the train from Ballinasloe to Athenry every Thursday morning to attend my Social Farming placement.

My day starts with breakfast, I then help with feeding the ducks and geese and cleaning out their houses. I help out with the different tasks on the farm, one day I could be helping with the sheep or donkeys. The other day I was helping with the fencing or getting the cattle ready for testing. I like taking care of the animals, feeding them, keeping an eye on them and helping out on the farm.

I have a lovely bowl of soup and sandwiches for lunch and I get on really well with the host farming family who have a warm welcome for me every week. In the evening I return by train to Ballinasloe feeling good that I've had a good days work done.



Participants from Prosper Meath were welcomed on Philip Morgan's Farm in Co. Cavan. There are lots of activities on the farm such as caring for and feeding the ponies, as well as cleaning and exercising the ponies.

Everyone really enjoyed the placement and was looking forward to coming back to the farm each week and since it has been completed, are really missing it.

One of the participants, at the beginning of the placement, had not returned to her job since the start of COVID-19, however, after only 4 weeks into social farming her confidence grew, and she headed back to work. Philip created positive working relationships with the participants to help them reach their goals.

Busy Times on Hope Springs Farm Cork

Fridays are Social Farming days for "J" with James and Emer in Dungourney. There is always plenty of activity happening around this busy Social Farm.

First off is to greet the farmers, then the dogs, and a quick cuppa before they head out onto the farm.

The hens are the next activity, and they need to be fed and the eggs collected. "Where's the measure for the feed?" In the same place as always.

Off then up the fields to count the sheep and cattle? It's a long walk but it gets easier every day. Are all the cattle still there and well. Let's have a look and don't forget to give Phoenix a rub, he's a big Friesian but very friendly.

Out to the garden then to do some harvesting and a tidy up, what's on the list today? Peas, beans, courgettes, cabbage, everything green. And a bag full of vegies to bring home.

These are just some of the activities "J" enjoys on the farm



National & International

SOCIAL FARMING CONFERENCE 'KEY VALUES AND NEXT STEPS'

Our Social Farming Conference highlighted that Social Farming really works, for participants and their families, for support services, and for social farmers.

This theme of mutual benefit was one of the key messages to come out of a major national conference run by Social Farming Ireland and held in the Killashee Hotel in Co Kildare on June 1st.

For participants, the sheer variety of activities naturally available, the family environment in which they can become part of, the 'realness' of what happens on the farm: are all of tremendous value and impossible to replicate in an institutional or clinical context. This was made very clear in multiple contributions from front-line staff from service and range of national and international speakers and most importantly, from people who have had the opportunity to experience Social Farming themselves

Marjolein Elings and Maarten Fischer discussed social farming from the Netherlands perspective where Social or Care Farming is "fully embedded within the Health and Social Care system". They spoke of how at least 30,000 people choose to avail of Social Farming as a support every year out of a population of 17.1 million. Translated to the Irish context, this would indicate that at least eight to ten thousand people would avail of this support if it were more easily available.

Indeed, in a country with such strong agricultural and rural roots and traditions - and a vastly higher number of family farms - the potential might be greater still.

Over 150 people attended the Conference either in person or online, testament to the tremendous support for and goodwill towards Social Farming as an ordinary activity with extraordinary outcomes. But there was also strong agreement that the support to date from the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine, the huge demand for it from individuals and services and the increasing availability of social farmers opening up their farms needs to be matched by mainstream funding from within core health and social care budgets

Evidence shared from the research undertaken showed the multiple benefits arising from social farming to not just the participants and their families but also to farm households, rural communities and service providers – A WIN – WIN – WIN outcome that cannot be matched by conventional services



National & International

SoEngage Plus

October 2022, saw the conclusion of the SoEngage Plus Project.



Our colleagues in the Social Farming Support office based in Rural Support invited us to speak at the Social Farming Conference in Northern Ireland. Helen shared our experience and progress and we continue our collaboration with Northern Ireland from our piloting days in 2011.



Social Farming Ireland held an dissemination event to showcase the training materials on video making, video editing and Podcast to Social Farmers. These materials will help farmers promote and raise awareness of the work they do with participants.

Social Farming Ireland was delighted to welcome visitors from Área de Empleo e Inclusión Social de Fundación Santa María la Real Rural Employability Network in Spain to hear about and discuss Social Farming!

In September, Helen was one of the international speakers at the discussion on Care Reimagined: Social and Therapeutic Farming - Global Perspectives. The purpose of this event is to collaborate, network, learn, promote discussion, engage in dialogue, share ideas and to provoke reflection. Helen shared the journey of Social Farming in Ireland to date.



Disability Matters- Oireachtas Committee
Helen Doherty and Brian Smyth presented & answered questions at Houses of the Oireachtas Committee on Disability matters, discussing Social Farming and how it can be a stepping stone to employment.

Research and Policy Activity

Aisling developed a really useful summary paper on "Key Findings from a Cost-Benefit Analysis: The Value and Values of Social Farming." This paper was launched at our Social Farming Conference in June.



EIP Agri are convening a European-wide Focus Group on Social Farming and Innovations to meet between January and July 2023. Aisling has been appointed as Expert Convener of this Focus Group, a prestigious appointment and testament to the regard in which the model of Social Farming being developed in Ireland is held.

Aisling delivered a number of university seminars throughout the year, including to Occupational Therapy students in Galway University and UCC, to Masters in Social Work students in Maynooth University and to students in the UCD Masters programme in Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development



Aisling and Brian continue to participate in the Erasmus + SoFarTEAM Project, with our partners from the Netherlands, Germany and the Czech Republic. The Project is all about developing teaching and other materials on different target groups in Social Farming.

As Social Farming continues to grow and develop it is crucial that we maintain our capacity to assess practice, create an evidence base for social farming, and, most crucially, advance mainstreaming and full commissioning as social farming continues to expand and evolve.

SOCIAL FARMING ROADSHOW

Social Farming Ireland attended a number of Agricultural Shows around the country that concluded with a stand in the Organic Village at the National Ploughing Championship



Social Farmers Mike O'Connell & Michael Callinan along with the Southwest Regional Officer Eadaoin attended a number of Agricultural Shows on the Southwest, including Limerick and Clare & Cork shows. It was a great opportunity to meet other farmers and the communities to discuss the Social Farming and grow our Network

In the Midlands, a number of Social Farmers, and the Social Farming team attended agricultural shows in Virginia, Ballyshannon, Castleblayney, and Tullamore.

During the shows we had the opportunity to speak to farmers and potential participants who were interested in finding out more about Social Farming. We also had the chance to speak to Ministers Heather Humphreys and Pippa Hackett.



There has already been a social farming placement for participants who approached us at an Agricultural Show in Summer 2022

SOCIAL FARMING ROADSHOW

We finished up our Agricultural Roadshow at the National Ploughing Championship in Ratheniska. It was an exciting and busy couple of days. We enjoyed meeting so many different people and speaking about the benefits of Social Farming.



The Minister for Agriculture, Food and Marine Charlie McConalogue dropped by the Social Farming stand to launch our new "Social Farming A Quick Guide for Farmers". This guide is a great overview of the key points for prospective Social Farmers. Minister McConalogue said that it was "so important" to bring the information to a wider audience and to expand the understanding of what social farming offers.

As well as launching the Social Farming: A Quick Guide for Farmers, Minister McConalogue marked the opening of the Social Farming Awareness week that ran from the 3rd October to the 7th October. While at the stand the minister noted that "Indeed there is so much more that we can do in terms of added value, in terms of farm families and their involvement in the wider community"

SOCIAL FARMING AWARENESS WEEK

Social Farming Ireland was delighted to have participated in the all Ireland Social Farming Awareness Week from the 3rd to the 7th October. During this week 5 Farms hosted exciting open days on their farms:



Clarke's Farm
Meath

- We started the week on Monday on a busy dairy farm near Ballyshannon in Donegal where Andrew and Elspeth host participants and offer many other activities on their varied farm overlooking the Erne estuary and Donegal Bay.
- On Tuesday we headed to Cork to the Batemans family farm. Michael, Shirley and their children run a large dairy farm and milk over 600 cows on a rotary milker. There is a vegetable garden and many other opportunities for inclusion with this couple who have much experience in helping people throughout their life together.



Vaughans Farm
Donegal

Murphys Farm
Galway



- On Wednesday a farm near Athenry in Galway opens, this is a sheep farm where Mary and her son Niall host participants who can engage in growing fruit and vegetables as well as with the animals which include some fancy fowl.
- Thursday it was over to Meath where Emma Jane hosts participants on her small holding where they offer activities with horses and also gardening.
- Friday, we wrapped up the week in Waterford on the O'Grady Farm. This is a sheep and cattle farm, and also has a garden and polytunnel for growing fruit and veg.



O'Grady's Farm
Waterford

Batemans Farm
Cork



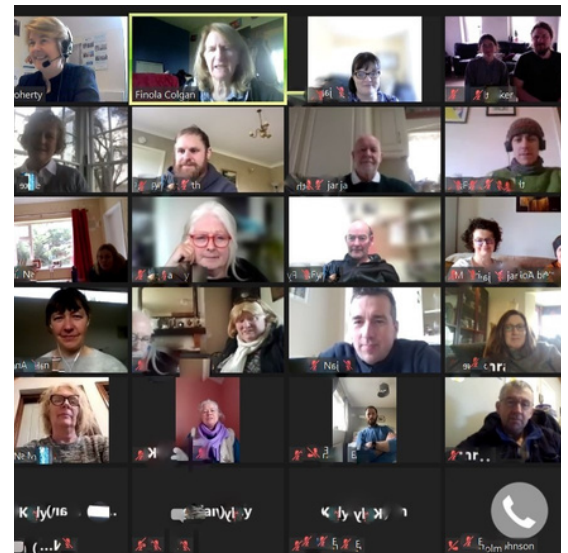
Training

We ran 11 training sessions catching up on some of our work made difficult in previous years due to Covid. Our training has been reshaped a little and we now deliver some sessions online but most continue in person and it was great to be able to run these in 2022. Over 100 farmers attended this past year. It was particularly great to get out onto a number of our practicing and experienced farms for some peer learning.

Some of this years cohort of farmers have already commenced practice and accepted their first participants while others will begin practice in 2023. All are joining the network of fantastic farms and enhancing the social farming offering all over Ireland.



Our network continues to grow and evolve with some farmers also stepping back after a number of years activity to retire or in some cases care for family members



IN THE NEWS

2022



THE IRISH TIMES

RTE Radio 1 Countrywide's Della Kilroy was out at Tommy Earleys Farm in October to discuss the Ukraine Refugee Harvesting on his social farm

Social Farmers Jeremy & Claire Haworth talk to the **Farming Independent** about their journey to producing, gardening and connecting with Social Farming Ireland on their farm Charis Garden, Co. Laois

In October the **Irish Times Mag** spoke to Brian Smyth, Social Farming Ireland manager about the benefits of Social Farming

Farming Independent

The Farming Independent featured Social Farmer in Roscommon Shane Keaveney about the benefits of Social Farming

Social Farmer Michael Callinan spoke with Claire Champion about 'Forging connections on the land with Social Farming' on their farm.

Changing Ireland attended our recent Social Farming Ireland conference which they feature in their summer edition.

The Avondhu reported on a successful open day on Mary Cooke Connolly's Farm in Cork

The Dungarvan Leader showcased the open day on Ger O'Grady's farm during our Social Farming Awareness week.



Farming Independent

The Clare Champion

CHANGING IRELAND

The AVONDHU

Dungarvan Leader



'Seeing the farm with fresh eyes': Social farming' 25th September

'McConalogue meets Ukrainian refugees on Connacht social farm' 11th June

'Donegal farmer showcases social farming benefits to McConalogue' 6th February

'Mayo social farm visit 'extra special' says Hackett' 8th January

Social Farming Around the Country

Southwest

There are 9 new Social Farms in the South West ready to deliver Social Farming Placements in 2023



Social Farmers in the Southwest had the opportunity to meet and network at a talk by Teagasc and George Graham in Rathkeale hotel in April. It was great to meet up in person after all this time.



Mary Cooke Connolly in Cork, Michael Callinan in Clare and Shirley Bateman also in Cork all hosted open days during the year. The farms welcomed service providers, farmers and potential participants



We worked with over 20 organisations in the Southwest region in 2022

Minister Frank Feighan visited another one of our Social Farming Ireland Farms - Mary T Cooke in Cork, where participants from St. Joseph's Foundation were supported by the Healthy Ireland programme to experience Social Farming



Social Farming Around the Country

Border Midlands & South Midlands

52 Active Farms that are available to participants



On January 31st Minister for Agriculture, Food and Mairne Charlie McConalogue visited Social Farmer William McLoughlin with students from Carndonagh Community School



Participants from Drumlin house at John & Martina's Social Farm in Cavan



Participants from St. Christopher's Services on Whytes Farm in Longford



Social Farmer Ciaran Duggan attended a talk representing Social Farming in County Kildare Leader Partnership along with Minister Frank Feighan. Through collaboration with County Kildare Leader Partnership CLG., many participants were supported through the Healthy Ireland programme to experience Social Farming placements.



Farmer Patrick with participant in Monaghan

Social Farming Around the Country

WEST

19 active farms available for Social Farming in the West



There was three very successful open days held on Social Farms in the West on Barbra McNally's Farm in Mayo, Shane Keaveney's Farm in Roscommon and on Niall and Mary Murphy's Farm in Galway

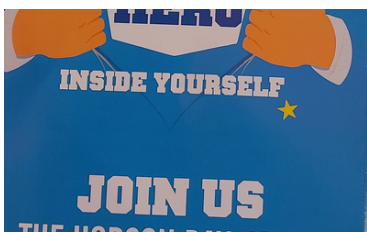


In 2022 we have worked with over 20 organisations in the West with participants from schools and the youth sector as well as the core area of activity of Mental Health services and Intellectual Disability supports

Participants from Creagh Training Centre on Sean Butlers Farm



A new social farm became available in Mayo in 2022- Alan & Vivienne Woods farm!



Regional Development Officer Deidre Fahey was invited to attend the recent Brothers of Charity Conference Search for the Hero in October. It was a really inspiring event for everyone involved.

Social Farming Around the Country

Southeast

Bernie Murphy & Gerard O'Grady's farms were our hosts for Social Farming Open Days in the South East. The open days saw participants, service providers and farmers come to see the farms and to learn more about Social Farming with great crowds turning out.



On the 29th of September Social Farming South East were invited to St. Raphael's Centre in Youghal to celebrate with them the end of their decongregation. The Social Farmers who provided placements were also in attendance. It was a great opportunity to meet up with the participants and their families. Social Farming was very visible on the day as the room was filled with pictures from the farms.

There are currently 21 farms open for Social Farming participants in the Southeast Region



Social Farmer Mike Hale showing participants how to train the pony to a bridle

MEET THE TEAM



Brian Smith
Social Farming Project
Manager



Helen Doherty
Social Farming
National Coordinator



Dr. Aisling Moroney
Social Farming Policy
Officer



Charlotte Kelly
Border Midlands
Regional Development
Officer



Emma Owens
South Midlands
Regional Development
Officer



Eadaoin O'Connell
South West Regional
Development Officer



Gillian McCarthy
South East Regional
Development Officer



Deirdre Fahey
West Regional
Development Officer



Caoimhe McKeon
Social Farming
Administrator