

During the first half of 2019 Social Farming Ireland has delivered new experiences on many farms through engaging with new sectors in new areas and with new farmers. In this newsletter we hope to give our readers a flavour of the diverse range of activity and opportunities being offered on the ever increasing number of farms across the country.

All the time aiming for our key goal—Enhancing Lives

Spring 2019 saw the launch of two new research reports from Social Farming Ireland.

Social Farming and Mental Health Services

Social Farming in Ireland is proven to deliver a wide range of benefits and positive outcomes for people in recovery from mental ill health and it does this in a way that is convivial, community-based, non-clinical and rooted in every-day life. This was the clear message from the launch of the report “Social Farming and Mental Health Services” launched on the farm of Liam and Simone Webb in Rathoe, Co. Carlow in March, in conjunction with Mental Health Ireland’s “Smiley Pancake Day”. Social farmers and Social Farming participants from the region, staff from a range of mental health and other services and those interested in finding out more gathered on the farm to hear all about how Social Farming continues to grow and evolve and how beneficial it is for people experiencing mental ill health.



[\(Click here to download the report\)](#)

Social Farming and the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)

A report on the benefits and relevance of Social Farming to the SICAP Programme (Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme) was launched on the farm of Corrina and Matthew Corrigan in Co. Monaghan in January. Speaking in front of an audience of over 100 people – social farmers, participants, staff from a range of services – Paul Geraghty of the Social Inclusion and Communities Unit of the Department of Rural and Community Development asserted that more individual and person-centred approaches such as Social Farming have a real role to play in meeting the needs of clients with multiple needs and challenges. He also looked forward to further development and growth of Social Farming in the context of the SICAP Programme.



Patrick and Corrina spoke of their passionate belief in the power of opening your home and your farm to others, and of giving people who may be socially excluded or who face challenges in life the opportunity to grow and connect with other people in the ordinary environment of the family farm. They also spoke of the great satisfaction they as farmers are getting from sharing their farm and knowledge with others and of enjoying company and life on their farm.

[\(Click here to download the report\)](#)



Social Farming Supports Social Integration of Syrian Refugees in Mayo

The Resettlement programme and Social Farming Ireland recently coordinated the placement of two Syrian refugees on a social farm in County Mayo.

Abdul was an olive farmer in Syria before conflict forced him to flee. Now resettled in Ireland, the 73-year-old farmer was given the chance to put down new roots in the community and get an opportunity to rekindle his love of trees and the land as part of Social Farming. He was joined on the farm by another refugee, Faisal who was a milking sheep farmer in Syria.



The initial ten-week placement on Ahena Organic Farm in County Mayo was so successful they had a second placement for 15 weeks supported by Healthy Ireland. In addition to taking care of apple trees, Abdul and Faisal feed the cattle, cut firewood and tended to the gardens and plants that grow in a poly-tunnel. Social farmers Oliver and Anna Dixon say they have learned as much from the men as the men from them. It was a real skill and information exchange that benefited all in the community and increased social integration

“I love to think I can give someone the opportunity to come on to a farm that they may never get,” says Oliver. “They get to show us a different culture and we can show them how we do things here. Every farmer should get involved with social farming”.



The initiative was featured [RTEs Ear To the Ground](#) by Ella McSweeney, which aired in January. It was also chosen as one of five stories from Ireland to feature on the [United Nations High Commission for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#) website.

“They get to show us a different culture and we can show them how we do things here. - Oliver Dixon, social farmer

Social Farming was highlighted at the RDS Spring Awards.



Two of our farmers were nominated for Social Farming in the sustainable living category—Marie & Jimmy Barlow from Galway and Evie Connolly from Waterford. A great day was had by all and another one of our farmers picked up an award on the day for his endeavours in converting to forestry. Gerard Deegan from Mullingar won the forestry award at the RDS

Farming awards—and was subsequent featured in “Agriland” and also on “Countrywide”.



Food is not the priority – I'm farming for air'. - Gerard Deegan

Social Farming and Healthy Ireland



This year we are pleased to again have the support of the Healthy Ireland Programme.

Support was received from seven healthy county initiatives: Leitrim, Louth, Kildare, Mayo, Tipperary, Waterford & Limerick. People who benefited from this support came from a wide range of services.

We are in the final stages of preparing a report outlining how Social Farming interacts with the Healthy Ireland programme throughout the different counties across Ireland and the benefits to participants. We look forward to reading Aislings report in late Autumn and hearing the scope of the experience had through this program.



Social Farming In Practice in the Midlands

“T” is a 67 year old participant from the HSE Psychiatry of later life team in Longford Westmeath. On his induction day visit to the farm, during the farm walk, he visited the cattle shed. On spying a grape, he promptly grabbed this and begun forking silage in front of the cattle, and he wouldn't rest until the task was complete. What made this most interesting is that the following week, the planned activity was planting potatoes into ridges – due to age and a hard youth, T is not as supple as he perhaps once was. He refused to quit which led to some creative thinking from the farmers perspective which (hilarious) but brilliant results – planting spuds with fire tongs!



Social Farming event in the Midlands



Participants from St Cronan's in Birr celebrated the end of their block on Catherine and Brian's farm in Offaly getting their certificates of participation and doing a radio interview with MJ Cleary for Midlands 103 radio station.

Network Development

Open Days & Network Events were held across the country welcoming current and prospective service providers, service users, a variety of local and national government representatives and fellow social farmers.



Newport: West Regional Meeting & Get Together

In June the farm of Fania Ellison hosted participants from Western Care. They had an open day / coffee morning at the end of their latest placement block followed by a regional network meeting.

This day brought together service providers and social farmers for a farm walk and a chance to meet the two women Fania hosted since last Christmas who access services from Western Care.

Cork: Dungourney Farm

There was a great turnout at the farm of James Leahy and Emer O’Keeffe in Dungourney in March. Attended by services throughout the Cope Foundation from the City and County of Cork. There was great excitement on the day as two new additions were added to the farm that week - Nellie the goat had given birth to two kids. Everyone enjoyed feeding and petting the new kids in town!



Carlow: South East Farmer Network Meeting

A group of 19 southeast social farmers gathered together in Carlow in April at a networking and sharing event. The discussion centred around the unique social farming experiences of each farmer and sharing of best practices.

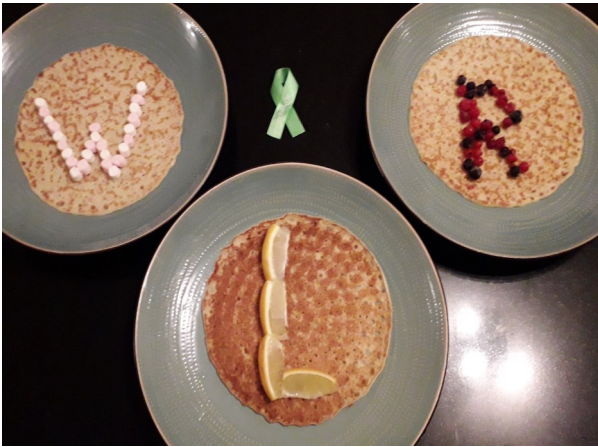


Kildare;

Val & Una Cross in Kildare opened their farm to all interested in Social Farming in springtime. Val and Una run a calf to beef enterprise on the farm and also breed horses. They have been working very successfully with a number of disability services in both Kildare and Dublin over the course of the year to date.

The South West hub of activity

Springtime was a hive of activity spinach planting at Rebecca's farm in County Clare. The spring spinach was planted under the watchful eyes of the two beautiful Percheron workhorses, Quaroba & Qualité.



Our South West Hub— in West Limerick Resources supporting Mental Health Ireland's Pancake Day



The *Experiences of Social Farming in Homeless Services in the Mid-West*, has been assigned a short presentation at the Irish Street Medicine Symposium on Friday 27th September 2019 in the Metropole Hotel, Cork.

Martin Hogan, Community Mental Health Nurse in the Homeless Action Team will introduce the section while both Mike, a social farmer and the programme participant speak about their experiences.

This is a great opportunity to bring social farming in a homeless context to a social inclusion audience and whet the appetite for



more Social Farming in social inclusion. This was supported by Healthy Ireland and also continues to build our experience of working with this sector having already had similar participants on farms in the South East.

Open days and network events...

are also happening in the West Region in October and in the Border Midlands in the Autumn, also the south West later in the Autumn of 2019. Watch our social media for more information.

We also email our database with details of any open days, once you have signed up you will get notification.

Email Maryanne for an Expression of Interest:

admin@socialfarmingireland.ie



New Farmer training in Kells 2019



New Farmer Training in Nenagh 2019

Check out this fantastic video produced by [Sligo LCDC](#) highlighting all the great work done under Sligo [@HealthyIreland](#) Program, at 7.40mins the Social Farming piece starts... click here to view it -[SligoHI](#)

Sunny Enniskillen was the venue for a meeting of the UK & Irish partners in the **SoEngage Erasmus+ Project**. This was a follow on to an earlier meeting of the pan European group in Granada Spain where we shared the significant knowledge and skillbase that been built up on the Island with European counterparts.



A Tweet can travel along way....

Jennifer from Roscommon travelled to the Teagasc Dairy Open Day in Moorepark and found her tweeted image from Social Farming on display!!



Irelands Farmers is a twitter account which has in excess of 22,000 followers from across the world and Evie Connolly from Cullenagh Stables was posting for a week in June, Social Farming got great exposure! Thank you Evie!

“From tomorrow we welcome Evie Connolly @cullenaghfarm. Evie is based in Kilmeadon, Co. Waterford and runs a farm and livery yard with arena and riding trails and also facilitates social farming on her property involving horse riding therapy. For more see <https://cullenagh.com>”

“As a social farm, we love to put together videos highlighting daily activities. These range from exercising the horses to fencing paddocks, mucking out, feeding & bedding to fishing & foraging. We plan the week ahead with our social farmers!”



Social Farming Training

Nine training modules have already been delivered in 2019. Held in locations across the country over 80 current and prospective social farmers participated.

Five of these sessions were devoted to Peer Learning which took place from May through July. These sessions, giving farmers an opportunity to meet peers, exchange ideas, and chat with experienced social farmers proved very informative and successful.

All social farmers undertake full training including: on-site Health and Safety Mentoring, Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons, Operational Framework for Social Farming and Peer Learning



Geoffrey training in Limerick



Tommy in Roscommon



Richard training in Kilkenny

What participants have to say about Social Farming...

"I would recommend the Social Farming Programme because, it was a totally new experience for me. I got to meet new people and I got to communicate with new people such as the farmer and others, along with the animals. It was outdoors on a farm with nature and beauty all around us. It was lovely to hear the sounds of the animals and the noises in the background such as the tractor, the cows mooing, chickens clucking, horses neighing and whinnying, the sounds of running water." -

ID Services participant after 10 week placement



Stay in touch with what's happening at Social Farming on our social media accounts and website



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(@lairdhse06)



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