

Social farming on family farms across Ireland and Northern Ireland has embarked on a journey to realise its' potential as a new and cost effective opportunity that provides a range of benefits to all involved. It connects people and ultimately improves lives through the activities of day to day farming.

This Handbook is a product of the SoFAB Project which was implemented in the cross border region of Ireland and Northern Ireland between October 2011 and September 2014. It aims to assist providers and users of social farming services to understand what is involved in establishing, managing and using social farming services and shares lessons gained through the experience of 1,600 person days of piloted social farming on 20 farms over a fifteen months period.



# Social Farming Handbook

Guidelines for considering, planning, delivering and using social farming services in Ireland and Northern Ireland

Based mainly on the experience and lessons of the Social Farming Across Borders (SoFAB) Project (2011-14)



New Opportunities + Connecting People + Improving Lives



*The views and opinions expressed in this handbook  
do not necessarily reflect those of  
the European Commission  
or the Special EU Programmes Body*

# Social Farming Handbook

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# Handbook for Social Farming

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# Preface

Social farming, delivered on family farms across Northern Ireland and Ireland, has started on a journey to realise its' potential as a valuable and cost effective option that provides a range of benefits which connect people and ultimately improves lives. The Social Farming Across Borders (SoFAB) Project has raised awareness in social farming and stimulated an interest among farm families, health and social care services, voluntary organisations and potential users of services.

This Handbook is a product of the SoFAB Project which was implemented in the cross border region of Northern Ireland and Ireland between October 2011 and September 2014. The main purpose of the Handbook is to assist providers and users of social farming services to understand what is involved in establishing, managing and using high quality and effective services. It shares lessons gained through the experience of piloting social farming services on 20 farms over a fifteen months period with 66 adults who had either special needs or mental health issues. The experiences of the pilot farmers and the participant service users in planning, delivering and using social farming services was captured through the ongoing monitoring by the project while the experience from social farming practice across Europe was considered in setting out many of the guidelines.

The Handbook is structured so as to initially help the reader understand the background to social farming and to appreciate that it is underpinned by core values which distinguish it from other services and commodities derived from farms. It also shows that social farming is neither a new nor isolated activity and is widely practiced across Europe. Social farming is recognised by the EU as a valued activity on farms that *'makes a contribution in the ambit of agricultural production to the wellbeing and the social integration of people with particular needs'*. The Handbook then proceeds to guide the reader on the stages in planning and delivering social farming services and draws on the combination of: international experiences, the Delivering Social Farming Training Course materials and the documented

lessons from the SoFAB Piloting experience. Sections dedicated to the experience of the SoFAB Project piloting phase are clearly identified throughout the Handbook.

Many inspirational stories from participant service users, farmers and others are associated with the experience of the SoFAB Project. Too many to recount in this Handbook but can be best summed up in the words of one participant who said: *"I can say this is the happiest I've ever been and my family will say that, here on the farm"*.

*Jim Kinsella*  
Project Manager SoFAB  
School of Agriculture & Food Science, UCD

# Acknowledgements

The SoFAB Project Team acknowledges and thanks all those who contributed to the development and writing of this Handbook. It has drawn on a number of sources of information including: training materials used in the Delivering Social Farming Training Course (June - August 2014); and data collected from monitoring and assessment of piloting of social farming (April 2013 - June 2014).

The contribution of Fiona Meehan and Pat Bogue in compiling the Handbook is acknowledged as well as the work of the editing committee which comprised: Jim Kinsella, Deirdre O'Connor and Paul Henry of University College Dublin; Brian Smyth and Helen Doherty of Leitrim Development Company; and Roy Nelson and Aoibheann Walsh of Queen's University Belfast. In compiling the Handbook, information and images on the SoFAB project were provided by project staff: Paul Henry, Helen Doherty and Aoibheann Walsh while additional images were provided by some of the pilot farmers.

The 20 pilot farmers and their families provided invaluable experiences and insights that were captured by the project and contributed to the Handbook. It is also acknowledged that there would not be a project upon which to develop guidelines for social farming without the participation of the 66 people who visited the pilot farms on a weekly basis to experience the social farming services which were offered to them.

The support of the Special EU Programmes Body and contributions of the members of the Project Advisory Committee and Project Steering Committee in ensuring the effective delivery of the SoFAB Project is also acknowledged.



**SoFAB Project Team (2011-2014):** Brian Smyth, Aoibheann Walsh, Roy Nelson, Paul Henry, Helen Doherty and Jim Kinsella

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## Section 1

# Introduction to Social Farming

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## 1.1 What is Social Farming?

Social Farming offers people who avail of a range of services including mental health, learning /intellectual disability, and other aspects of care supports or social marginalisation to engage and contribute by choice in the farming and social activities of rural Ireland. This is offered through the medium of ordinary farms and families acting in partnership with services and the people who avail of supports. It provides disadvantaged groups of people with an opportunity for inclusion, to increase their self-esteem and to improve their health and well-being. Social farming also creates an opportunity to further connect farmers with their local communities through opening up their farms as part of the social support system of the community.

People using social farming services have chosen to work on a farm as part of their day support service. Social farms provide additional choice to service providers in terms of the options available for clients and to develop more person-centred opportunities. In return, the farmer is rewarded for the provision of the service through the opportunity to expand and diversify their income with a new service on the farm.

This handbook draws primarily on the experience of the Social Farming Across Borders (SoFAB) Project which was implemented in the cross border region of Ireland from 2011 to 2014, with a mission to:

***“Promote Social Farming as a viable option for achieving improved quality of life for people who use health and social services and for farm families, through enhancing social inclusion and connecting farmers with their communities”***





You will not find any one, single, internationally recognised definition of social farming, but the below definition by Di Iacovo and O'Connor (2009) captures the main characteristics:

“Social Farming (SF) is both a traditional and innovative use of agriculture. It includes all activities that use agricultural resources, both from plants and animals, in order to promote (or to generate) therapy, rehabilitation, social inclusion, education and social services in rural areas. However, it is strictly related to farm activities where (small) groups of people can stay and work together with family farmers and social practitioners.”

Di Iacovo & O'Connor, 2009

Therefore social farming:

Is always about use of agriculture and agricultural resources;

Has a value based purpose with social objectives promoting rehabilitation, inclusion, expanded choice for its participants;

Is based around close interaction and relations between those availing of social farming services and the farming families.

Just as there is no single definition of the term social farming in use, you will find that the practise of social farming also goes by different names in different countries, and among different institutions. All of the following names have been used in various places and contexts to describe the range of aims and activities associated with social farming.

**Social farming**

**Care farming**

**Farming for health**

**Social agriculture**

**Green care**

**Green therapies**



Whatever the diversity in definitions the common elements in all are:

The activities take place in a farm setting, usually involving physical activities and tasks related to farm production of some kind, whether crops, horticulture or livestock.

The clients<sup>1</sup> are people who experience social and other barriers in leading a full and active life because of either social, physical, learning and/or mental health needs they face

<sup>1</sup> The term client is used throughout this handbook to refer to the person who is directly using and availing of the social farming service(s) and is the primary focus and beneficiary of the service(s). The term 'participant' is used to refer to the clients who participated in the SoFAB Project, particularly in the piloting of services on farms in the April 2013 to June 2014 period.

There is social interaction with the farming families and others, i.e. it is not 'just a job' or work placement, and these social relationships are recognised as an important part of the social farming experience

While people are not coming to the farms for therapy, the experience is generally expected to have a therapeutic dividend or benefit

Social Farming is the term used throughout this handbook, as an umbrella term referring to the range of social farming arrangements and activities as practised under the different terms noted above.

## 1.2 Where did Social Farming come from?

While use of the term social farming might be relatively recent, the activities it encompasses go a long way back. Farming in rural communities was traditionally a social practice, with intricate community linkages forged by economic relations of production and exchange, the ebb and flow of the seasons and related food and livestock production, harvest and other celebratory rituals and festivals.



Before the age of mechanisation and industrialised food production, farming was a highly labour intensive occupation, providing full time and seasonal employment for local people with a wide range of abilities and skills, including opportunities for some people of limited ability who would have had little chance of finding employment elsewhere.

The first social and health care services, including hospitals, throughout Europe, were established by religious congregations. Community members and short and long term occupants were all expected to work, as part of farming for self-sufficiency and income, as well as contributing towards care and services received. While not originally intended as therapeutic activities, the health benefits and impact on the well-being of those engaged on these farms were increasingly recognised.

With the expansion of institutional care provision and practice, work in farming and horticulture was seen as part of vocational and occupational rehabilitation and training, as well as therapeutic in nature. Religious communities while still involved in social and health care provision have largely moved away from the traditional institutional care model. Dunfirth Farm in County Kildare, founded by the Irish Society for Autism in 1981, is an example of the more contemporary approach to mental health care, incorporating social farming elements.



## Irish Society for Autism

The philosophy and ethos of the services provided to People with Autism recognises the individuality of the person with autism and their capacity to benefit from education, training and care, and their entitlement to participate in the development of Society in accordance with their individual capacity and dignity as human beings.

Dunfirth Farm, a model in social care, is a 70 acre farm situated 30 miles from Dublin in north Kildare. It has a population of 34 People with Autism supported by approx. 60 well trained dedicated staff. The society also runs Cluain Farm, a 30 acre farm at Cluain, Kilwarden, Kinnegad, and Sarshill House, Kilmore, Wexford.

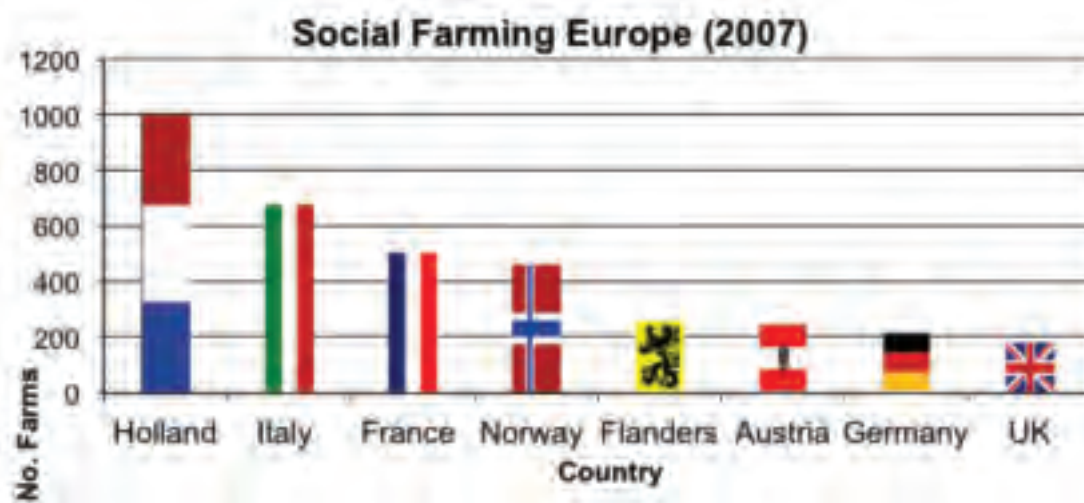
<http://autism.ie/>



## 1.3 Social Farming in Practice

The approach and focus of social farming varies throughout Europe. It is more developed and more mainstream in some European countries, such as Netherlands and Belgium than it is in UK and Ireland, although this is changing slowly.

A report by Di Iacovo & O'Connor (2009), based on the work of an eight country EU funded research project entitled Social Services on Multifunctional Farms (SoFAR), found social farming being practised throughout Europe, particularly in Holland with almost 1,000 social farming services, followed by Italy with over 600 and France with 500.



The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in Northern Ireland report on Social Farming in Northern Ireland (2010) noted that there were 126 care farms across the UK registered with the National Care Farming Initiative (later known as Care Farming UK). Of these farms just two were registered in Northern Ireland. It was also pointed out that given the diversity in activities and structures related to social farming activities, there were likely to be related initiatives and practice which was not registered or widely known or networked. As of 2014 there are for instance four Camphill Community Centres in Northern Ireland <http://www.camphillni.org/> established by the Camphill Movement, which has also established communities in 23 countries in Europe, North America, Southern Africa and Asia.

O'Connor and McGloin's 2007 report entitled 'An Overview of Social Farming in Ireland – The State of the Art', reported an estimated 90 social farms existing in the Republic of Ireland ranging from private care farms to residential communities. As of 2014 there were 18 Camphill communities with around 500 people, mostly farm-based, in the Republic of Ireland <http://www.camphill.ie/>.



## Camphill Clanabogan, NI

Camphill Clanabogan was started in 1984 and is situated on approximately 150 acres outside of Omagh. The farm itself includes 15-20 dairy cattle that are also used for beef. Dairy products are strictly for community use with excess milk being used for butter and cheese. The farm usually has poultry and pigs, while growing field vegetables and a garden. Larger crops include grain, rye, kale, silage, and hay.

Besides the farm products, the community maintains a bakery, a weaving shop, and a wood-working crafts shop, all of which sell their goods to the general public. The community also actively uses renewable sources of energy. In 1998, they installed the first wood/biomass heating system in Ireland.

The community has between 80 and 90 residents. Approximately 30 of the residents have some form of a learning disability. Residents choose to come by a mutual agreement with a gradual move in process. The care provided ranges from nonresidential day care to one-on-one supervision. Members of the community work on the farm as a volunteer with their needs taken care of.

DARD NI, 2010



## Arrangements to deliver Social Farming

Institutions engaged in social farming type activities include:

institutional service providers such as mental health services, prison services, day/occupational services;

voluntary sector providers including religious and privately run support organisations and services, often targeting specific groups of individuals such as people with autism and people with Down's Syndrome;

private family farms which can be specialised or mixed in terms of enterprise and services;

cooperative farms and communities;

social enterprises offering training, occupational and educational services for the public, specifically including or focusing on people with special needs

Three broad institutional approaches to delivering social farming services are evident from the practice across Europe, namely:

- A public health institution approach which is the main approach in Germany, France, Slovenia and Ireland
- A private farms based approach as in the cases of the Netherlands, Belgium and UK
- Mixed approach of social co-operatives and private farms as in the case of Italy

### Social Farming Approach - Italy

Colombini Family Farm, Tuscany Italy

<http://www.agricolturacapodarco.it/>



## 1.4 Social Farming Across Borders Project (SoFAB)

### The SoFAB Experience



The SoFAB Project worked in collaboration with state and voluntary sector service providers to pilot social farming experiences on private, family run farms in the period April 2013 to June 2014.

Social Farming across Borders (SoFAB) was a three year project, Oct. 2011 to Sept. 2014, which operated in 12 counties in the cross border region of Ireland: Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan and Sligo in the Republic of Ireland and Armagh, Antrim, Derry, Down, Fermanagh, Tyrone in Northern Ireland.

Funded under Priority 2: *Cooperation for a more sustainable cross-border region* of the EU INTERREG IVA Programme, the implementing partners were:

University College Dublin

Queen's University Belfast

Leitrim Development  
Company

*The objectives were to:*

- Establish social farming services on 20 farms in the region on a pilot basis and to learn from the experiences gained;
- Enable networking of farmers and health/social care personnel towards the establishment of sustainable, high quality social farming services in the region;
- Build capacity of farmers and health/social care service providers in delivery of social farming services through training courses and network visits;
- Disseminate information on social farming throughout the region and share the lessons learned from the pilot farm practice; and
- Increase public awareness of the potential of social farming services and contribute to the debate on how public policy might support such services in the future.



At the time of writing this Handbook (November 2014) the SoFAB Project is finishing, and disseminating the experience and learning from the project is one of the the main purposes of this handbook. While the project engaged in a lot of activities around networking and promotion of social farming, the key focus for the purposes of this handbook is the first objective, the provision of social farming services with individual farming families on a pilot basis.

A total of 20 farming families were selected to pilot social farming practise, 10 in Northern Ireland and 10 in the Republic of Ireland. Training and orientation for farming families was provided as part of the project, and the SoFAB management worked with the relevant Health and Social Care Trusts, HSE authorities, service providers and voluntary organisations to identify and recruit individuals with needs who were willing and able to participate in social farming activities on the pilot farms. The farming families' and the participants' experiences were documented by themselves and SoFAB management and researchers throughout the project, along with feedback from service providers. This handbook is based on the participants' voices and recorded experience.



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## Section 2

# Who and What is involved in Social Farming?

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## 2.1 Who is Social Farming for?

Social farming can be delivered by any farming family which wants to do something different with their farm, and in particular those who want to get involved in more community or socially beneficially oriented activities. Potential users of social farming services, i.e. the clients, are diverse and come from a wide range of situations.



People who do or could potentially benefit from engagement in social farming, along with the farmers and their families are for example:

- ✓ Adults and children with disabilities (physical, sensory, intellectual)
- ✓ People recovering from mental ill health / burn out
- ✓ Elderly people
- ✓ Recovering addicts (drugs, alcohol)
- ✓ Youth and long-term unemployed
- ✓ Prisoners, ex-prisoners and those in offender rehabilitation programmes

## 2.2 What does social farming include?

Social farming encompasses a wide range of functions and activities, including:

### Rehabilitation and therapy

Therapeutic and rehabilitation institutions, residential and day care, may include gardening and/or farming activities as part of their treatment programmes. These might encompass addiction treatment centres; psychiatric and mental health facilities; transitional accommodation for those leaving institutional care; and prisons services as part of rehabilitation policy, as in the case from Norway.



## Farming and Prison Life

Farming is a common part of prison life throughout Norway. It is part of a progressive, trust and responsibility focused approach to rehabilitation which has led to some Norwegian prisons being described as the world's first "human ecological prisons".

Norway has the lowest reoffending figures in Europe, less than 30%. This is less than half the rate in the UK, where in 2007 for instance, 14 prisons in England and Wales had reconvictions rates of more than 70%.

These services are highly valued and the announcement in 2014 of the closure of the prison farm at Ana Prison in Norway, reportedly caused intense upset among inmates. It prompted a campaign against its closure led by the prison staff union and some ex-prisoners, including Patrick who believes the hard, regular work helped him overcome drug dependence as well as spending his prison time more productively. "Something happens to us addicts when we come into contact with animals," he says. "It leads us to open up to other people."

### Inclusion (social and community interaction)

Social isolation and loneliness are reduced by the social interaction with farming families, other clients, and becoming more involved in community activities and events.

### Day occupational services

Social farming can be included as an alternative choice among the range of day and occupational services offered by statutory and voluntary service providers.

### Recreational services (physical activity)

The benefits of working in farming, horticultural or forestry activities can be enjoyed by all community members, not just those with special needs. Community gardens, volunteer labour and experience on farms, are all ways in which people of all and mixed abilities come together to enjoy working outdoors together.

### Vocational training, work readiness and work

Social farming experience is used to help clients back into the workplace by developing social and practical, technical skills, and capacity to deal with responsibility and routine. The Wild Goose Training Centre in Worcester, England for instance (see page 11) offers day opportunities, therapeutic experiences and training, with accreditation if required, in land based subjects.

However the enterprises are structured and legally registered, social farming is essentially about working on the land, offering opportunities to people who are socially, physically, mentally or intellectually disadvantaged, to work in a healthy, supportive and inclusive environment.

## Wildgoose Rural Training



School leavers and pupils, adults and young people with learning difficulty and mental health problems are among those who avail of the services here.

[www.wildgooseruraltraining.org/](http://www.wildgooseruraltraining.org/)

This centre was established 12 years ago on a brown field site in the middle of a family farm. On a site of 0.7 hectares, it offers organic farming, farm livestock, woodwork and greenwood crafts activities for up to 40 students/day.



## The Slí Eile Farm, Cork

Founded by the Cork based Slí Eile Housing Association, the Slí Eile Farm offers a place where people experiencing mental health difficulties can find safety, acceptance and support to recover.



The Slí Eile's approach to recovery through community living is to provide another way of supporting people to recover from their experience of mental distress:

- Creates an environment which fosters hope and instils belief that change is possible.

- Creates opportunities for individuals to participate actively in life choices and decisions.

- Promotes the support of each individual in their recovery journey, employing a non-labelling and non-judgemental approach.

- Fosters an environment where individuals are respected and listened to.

<http://www.sliele.ie/>

For some, as for example the Sli Eile farm shown above, it is a long term way of life, rather than an interim or short term strategy.

While some activities will take place indoors, spending time out of doors, interacting with nature, and animals is a central part of the experience.

While the range of activities and arrangements is wide, and people choose to get involved for many different reasons and with diverse objectives, it is important to recognise that social farming is not in itself a therapy. While those participating in social farming activities may derive therapeutic benefit from it, this is not the main purpose or aim, and the farmers are not playing the role of therapists. Social farming supports people in living ordinary lives, interacting with their community and environment, developing their potential.

The SoFAB Project makes this very clear in identifying that:

***“the farm is not a specialised treatment farm; rather it remains a typical working farm where people who use support services can benefit from participation in farm activities in a non-clinical environment”***

SoFAB website <http://www.socialfarmingacrossborders.org>

## 2.3 SoFAB Project activities

### The SoFAB Experience

**Examples of the activities undertaken during piloting of social farming services (April 2013 to June 2014)**



### Animal husbandry, feeding and care

Working with animals proved to be one of the most popular and rewarding areas of work for clients, both in terms of the knowledge and skill development involvement, and the relationships forged with the animals.

Participants worked with cattle, sheep, horses, donkeys, pigs, and poultry, engaging in feeding, mucking out, grooming, milking, and specific skills and tasks such as dipping sheep, herding them, taking care of fleeces and hooves.



### Farm Areas and Buildings

There are always lots of jobs need doing around the farmyard and surroundings, as part of learning about livestock care and maintaining safe and sanitary farm areas.

Mucking out barns and animal accommodations, keeping farmyards cleared and swept, tidying away and keeping tools and equipment in order, were all included in basic, regular tasks to be carried out as normal farm maintenance.

Renovating and maintaining farm buildings, barns, outhouses, stores, brought good dividends for the farms as well as skill development for the participants.



Participants were usually happy to spend time and eat with the farming family. Some also said they would like a space which was their own. So on one farm the family worked with them to renovate a room in an old family cottage, and that became their place to 'hang out in'.



## Machinery

Learning to use farming machinery was a valued skill development area for participants, including using strimmers, driving tractors, and operating milking equipment.

In one case, getting an old, classic tractor working again, became an absorbing and challenging project for one participant and his successful achievement of it proved to be a great confidence boost as well as expanding technical skills.



## Horticulture

This was a very popular and common area of activities for the SoFAB participants.

They got involved in all stages of growing vegetables, from ground preparation, through planting, thinning out and transplanting seedlings, weeding, watering and harvesting.

Some went along to local markets to help sell what they had been part of producing. A few participants worked on fruit production, learning about caring for fruit trees and harvesting the fruit.



## Conservation, woodland management and woodwork

Woodland management and conservation activities were practiced on many of the SoFAB pilot farms, and participants were involved in learning about practice for conservation of native woodlands and peatlands and related skills, including thinning, wood harvesting, coppicing, live hedging.

Some participants were engaged in working directly with wood, developing carpentry and craft skills. Other participants constructed a great treehouse during their time on the farm.



## Indoor activities

Given our climate, having some alternative activities which can be carried out indoors in very bad weather proved to be important in keeping participants occupied and interested.

Working indoors in the farm kitchen, baking or cooking or making jam, proved to be popular with participants, not just for the company and the craic, but for the confidence boost in learning new skills, and in producing something which could be brought home and shown off.

Improving cooking skills especially had an added value in enhancing independent living and social skills and competence.



## 2.4 Core values in Social Farming

People drawn to social farming, including farmers and clients may be coming with different aims, motivations and expectations. So your main motivation in terms of social farming may be:

- Wanting to make positive changes in your own and other's lives;
- Farm business diversification and developing multifunctional farm enterprises;
- Promoting inclusive rural community development;
- Implementing people centred services, facilitating choices.

You may also be coming from a very broad range of perspectives and philosophies, associated with your own beliefs and values. The Camphill Community philosophy (outlined below) for instance draws on the anthroposophical philosophy of Rudolf Steiner integrated with Christian beliefs.



### The Camphill Philosophy

The Camphill philosophy is that *“no matter what an individual's disability may appear to be, the spirit - the essential core that makes us all human - always remains whole. So everyone deserves equal respect and opportunities in life so that all may be able to fulfil their potential”*

Christian community focus, also biodynamic farming and production principles

<http://www.camphill.ie/index.php>



This reflects a commonality of values around sustainability, care for the environment, social and community links and inclusion.



## Earth's Best enterprise

“Yes, we paid growers more, and yes, this ultimately made Earth's Best more expensive, but this was the price of a fair reality built upon what we valued most and wanted Earth's Best to stand for: ‘relationship,’ relationship to the earth, to children, to growers, to employees, to investors, and to ourselves.”

Ron and Arnie Koss, Aug 2012

Earth's Best, an American organic baby food company, for instance paid growers more than competitors did, trading off potentially higher profits against principles around fairness and respect for relationships, with the earth and with people.

The commonality of values underlying the practice of social farming, illustrated by the Camphill and Earth's Best philosophies, could be said to encompass the following:

### ✓ **Community Focused**

Social farming is not just about individual participants or individual farms, but about these individuals as part of a community, and the role of the farm in the context of rural community life and networks.

### ✓ **Inclusive**

Individuals with needs are full members of the community, and entitled to be fully integrated and accepted into community life and affairs, not segregated and treated as ‘other’, or as a problem to be solved.

### ✓ **Self-Direction and Choice**

Whatever needs they are facing, all are entitled to have a say in what direction their lives are taking and to make choices about what they want to do with their lives. Social farming expands the choices available to people with mental health and learning/intellectual difficulties and other needs.

### ✓ **Contributing Citizens playing Valued (real) social roles**

Social farming in this respect is seen as ‘real’ work, with clients playing a real role in contributing to the local economy and community, not just being kept occupied for the sake of therapy or convenience.

## Socially valued roles

Social Role Valorization (SRV) is a concept that has influenced disability policy and practice in the US and Canada and is relevant to how we appreciate values attached to social farming. It has evolved from the Principles of Normalisation and recognizes that society often tends to label groups of people as fundamentally “different.” This label often means that society regards these as having less value than others. The goal of SRV is to create and support socially valued roles for people in their society, because if a person holds valued social roles, that person is highly likely to receive from society those good things in life that are available to that society or at least the opportunities for obtaining these. In other words, all sorts of good things that other people are able to convey are most likely to be accorded to a person who holds societally valued roles, at least within the resources and norms of his/her society (<http://www.socialrolevalorization.com>).

The values and principles of SRV underpin many of the models of person centred planning which are in application today. These are currently evolving to models of Self Directed living such as Supported Self Directed Living (<http://www.genio.ie/learning-skills/collaborative-learning-ongoing-practice-development>).



# The SoFAB Experience



## Core Social Farming Values for the SoFAB pilot project

### What?

We place a significant emphasis on relationships between people. We use the existing relationships of the farm, the family, and the community to build new social roles for people.

### Why?

A belief that farms and farm families are uniquely placed as natural community connectors through their enterprise, business, family, social & cultural roles in their locality

### How?

We work in collaboration with people who use services, their advocates and representative bodies. We work in partnership with 'Service Providers' and professionals who provide supports to people

### Who?

We represent people who share this vision and want to work in creative ways in community using their farms as places for people to work, learn, live, and grow; or to simply be part of a 'way of life'



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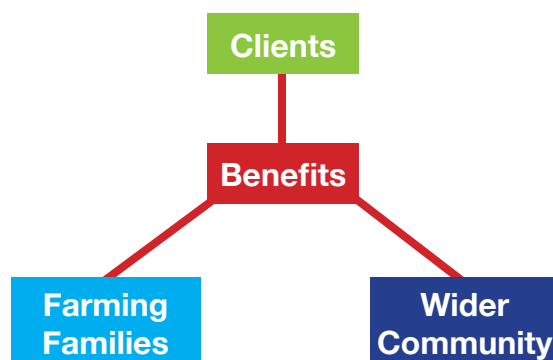
## Section 3

# Why Social Farming?

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The main reason for engaging in social farming is the way in which the majority of those involved benefit from the experience.

Evidence of benefits is not just anecdotal, or based on personal ‘feel-good’ stories. Reported benefits from engaging in social farming documented throughout the history of social farming practice are many and varied, with positive impacts for the farmers, and for the clients, as well as for the community as a whole.



The SoFAB Project report on ‘Costs and Benefits of Social Farming’ (September 2014) documents the evidence available on many of these benefits. Some of this evidence is summarised in the following sections, along with the experience of the SoFAB project, which documented personal testimonies through many conversations with participants and the farming families, along with the impressions of service providers and support workers.

### 3.1 Benefits as a farm family

Benefits for farming families are both economic and social. Many farm families get involved in social farming for reasons other than financial, while many farms and organisations engage in farming for therapeutic and holistic reasons rather than economic motives.

As a farm family providing social farming services, documented experience and research from other providers suggest the kind of social benefits you can expect to experience would include achievement and fulfilment through:

- seeing the effects on the people who spend time on your farm;
- making a difference in their lives; and
- helping typically excluded people to become more included.

While the capacity and work output of clients will vary a lot, you and your farm may also benefit from the extra labour provided by service users. The economic reality dictates that your social farming activities should at least generate sufficient income to cover your costs. In this respect, social farming can provide an opportunity to diversify the income earning capacity of the farm and rural economy. Sources of funding, and payment arrangements vary hugely, but there are potentially opportunities to make a living income from social farming enterprises.

# The SoFAB Experience

## The social farmers' perspective



Farmers who engaged in the SoFAB project spoke of their own increased awareness both of the needs of those with disabilities/ill health, and of their capabilities.

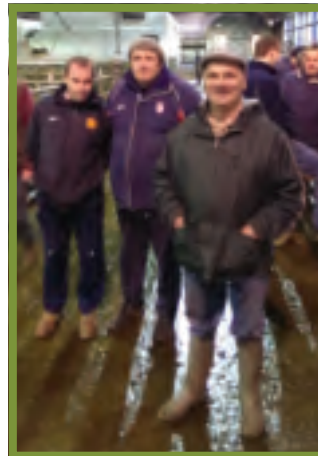
They talked about a sense of personal achievement in how they worked with participants, built relationships (working and friendships) with them, and learned new skills in managing and supporting them in their daily work.

Some farmers said the pilot project had made them more aware of farm safety while others said that they themselves slowed down to keep pace with participants and became less rushed/stressed in their own work.

Most of the farmers talked about how they enjoyed the company and camaraderie of working with participants as a team on the farm. *'I would look forward to the company, farming is a lonely occupation'... 'It's nice to have someone to work with'.*

While social farming participants had varying levels of ability and capacity to undertake activities on the farm, farmers reported benefits in terms of labour on the farm and *'getting jobs done'*. Some said they had become more organised in planning their work and that having clients working with them as a team helped motivate them in taking on the more tedious or more mundane tasks around the farm. Overall, farmers felt that the farm was better maintained and looking better as a result of the service users working on the farm. As one farmer said of the tasks undertaken with her participants: *'All these small jobs I had on the long finger, I'm getting done'*.

There were also benefits for the wider farm family from participation in the pilot programme. Children and other members of the host farm families interacted with services users and learned to see beyond their disability. *'It enriches our lives and the children's lives too'... 'The children see them too, not as people with a disability, they see them as farmers'*.



## 3.2 Benefits as a client

When you look at the documented impact of social farming on the health and wellbeing of clients you can divide the benefits broadly into physical, mental health and social benefits.

### Physical Health Benefits

Some of the physical and related health benefits for clients identified in studies on social farming include: general physical fitness; improved farming and other skills; the farming routine provides natural structure and clarity which serves to motivate clients; the farm provides a safe and peaceful environment which leads to less aggression; and physical work can lead to an improved diet (and healthy eating) and physical tiredness which contributes to better sleep patterns.

### Mental Health Benefits

Some of the greatest benefits of social farming appear to be related to mental health including: improved self-esteem and well-being; restored feelings of worth and increased self-confidence. Social farming gives people an opportunity to engage in an activity which interests and motivates them, and can complement more conventional treatments.

The farming family can provide continuity and stability which increases feelings of security, safety and confidence. It is also evidenced that farm work can distract from symptoms of ill health, leading to: reduced feelings of anger, confusion, depression, tension and fatigue; improved social behaviour; increased self-responsibility; and reduced need for medical intervention and hospitalisation.

### Social Benefits

The main social benefits for those who use social farming services are the increasing social skills as clients come into contact with others with similar needs as well as the farm family and others who visit the farm; the acceptance of clients by others is greatly valued by them; greater self-confidence in general and greater willingness to try new things and meet new people and make friends; greater independence and personal responsibility; formation of work habits which provide stepping stones for the future; and integrating people and de-stigmatising services which can be effective in tackling social exclusion.





# The SoFAB Experience

## The SoFAB Participants' perspective



### Personal Health and Well-Being

Many of the participants talked about how they felt better in themselves, physically and mentally, after the social farming. They particularly enjoyed working with the animals, and being given jobs and responsibilities to carry out.

*"I like doing it all, it's keeping you healthy doing things. And it keeps your mind occupied...you have more confidence when you're working, other things like that too"*



### Social Inclusion

The social aspects were a big issue for all participants. They talked about enjoying meeting new people, making friends, especially interacting with the farming family and their neighbours, and getting involved in community events. Celebrating birthdays and festivals like Christmas with the farming families meant a lot to them.

*"I was stuck at home, I didn't have anyone my own age to talk with. Yeah I made lots of new friends; it does feel more like family, a tight knit community"*



As well as by the participants themselves, increased social confidence and interactions was also noted by family members and client support workers: *"I think it gave them a bit more confidence and ability to talk to other people...our people don't get much of an opportunity to meet new people, to mix with other people"* (Support Worker)

### Skills Development

Learning new skills was an important gain for most of the SoFAB Project participants. They mentioned social as well as farming skills, especially working with animals, as learning they enjoyed and valued.

*"I learnt something different every day on the farm. How to feed animals... how to split sheep up, boy and girl and lambs. Moving them in the fields.. all different stuff"*





## Purpose/Routine

Participants said they felt the social farming had helped them develop and keep to a regular routine and that their energy and sense of purpose in life had been increased by the experience.

*"...I'd be more energetic, it's something to be living for, to get up for on a day, coming here. It's working but you still don't class it as work".*

*"I thought it was great for them, it gives them something to do, something they did do all their lives, getting to keep at it really" (Care Assistant)*

## Progression

Progression meant different things to different participants, including social changes, as well as skill development and employability. Some clients felt they had progressed significantly as a result of their time on farms.

*"They were very slow at the start getting out to the fields...Then they were changing electric fences, doing everything, once they were in the swing of it, they were doing all jobs"... "They came out of themselves a good bit".*



Almost 90% of the SoFAB Project participants, said that they would like to continue Social Farming. When asked what they liked most about their time on the farms, on a scale of one to ten, 'just being on a farm' was rated the most enjoyable part of it, followed by 'being out of doors'.

The interaction with animals, and learning skills in working with animals and caring for them came out time and again as a highly valued part of the experience. Other reasons for wanting to continue social farming included: the enjoyment factor i.e. having 'craic', development of life skills, and having a purpose to their days.

*"I just hope I continue with what I'm doing because I'm enjoying it. And I feel very proud of myself at what I do" (SoFAB participant)*

## Activity rating by SoFAB participants

Rating of Activities 1= 😞 10= 😊

ACTIVITY	All	LD/ID Group	MH Group
Being Outdoors	8.23	8.19	8.28
In contact with animals	7.93	7.85	8.06
Meeting new people	7.66	7.81	7.44
Being on a farm	8.36	8.32	8.42
Horticulture (gardening)	7.3	7.12	7.54

### 3.3 Benefits to the wider community

Social farming represents an opportunity for further social inclusion of clients as well as strengthening and forging new community connections. For farmers, many may already be integrated into a range of community networks from neighbourhood groups to local voluntary groups to various associations representing professional, political or other interests.

As social farmers, you can expand your connections with sectors of the community who are frequently excluded from full participation in community life, and play a role in expanding their connections with and acceptance by other community members and networks, so contributing to a more inclusive and people-focused society which benefits everyone.

The growing popularity of community gardens (such as the Twin Towns Community Garden in Donegal) is an example of how community inclusion and cohesion is enhanced by people of different backgrounds, ages and abilities working together out of doors creating something to benefit the community as a whole.

Clients of social farming can be encouraged and supported to get involved in community gardening and other community activities which can complement the social farming engagement and help extend their network of contacts in the community.

There are benefits to the rural economy from more diversified farm incomes and new employment opportunities. The involvement of clients in activities on farms reduces the isolation for farmers and provides them with work companions in the daily farm activities. Experience gained in social farming enhances the employability of participants and increases their potential availability to participate in the general workforce.

#### The Twin Towns Community Garden

Located in Ballybofey, Co Donegal, the Twin Towns Community Garden is 2 years old and in the past year the members have added another Polytunnel; held a Grow It Cook It day with Chef Ian Orr; added more raised beds in the other Polytunnel; a biodiversity hedgerow; a terraced garden and an extended composting area.



## 3.4 The Challenges

While social farming can be very rewarding for most of those engaged in it, that does not mean that it is easy. It is a challenging, and sometimes energy draining activity. Below are some of the challenges identified by the SoFAB Project pilot farming families and participants.

### The SoFAB Experience

#### Challenges Experienced



#### Challenges in working with participants identified by the farm families included:

- **Farming Week**

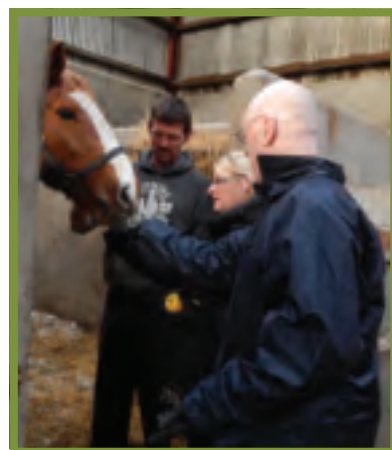
All found that having participants on the farm took up a lot of time and focus, and it was sometimes challenging to keep up with all the necessary work of the farm. Most farmers found that they got used to scheduling different kinds of jobs on days with, and on days without participants, as routines around what they would and could do together became more established.

- **Participant Attendance**

While attendance by participants on the pilot farms was generally very good (averaged 83% attendance rate for all 66 participants), non-attendance by some clients was frustrating in relation to time wasted and disruption of planned activities for the farm families.

- **Relationship between farmer and participants**

Relations could sometimes be challenging, particularly in the early stages of participants time on the farm, for example, getting a good balance between maintaining careful supervision of activities and health and safety control, and encouraging participants to take on responsibilities and tasks on their own as part of their skill development and progression.



#### Challenges identified by the participants included:

- **Weather and muddy ground**

For participants unused to working or spending much time out of doors, farming work was a bit daunting initially. Some found the mud and muck of the farmyard difficult to tolerate, although most got used to it as they grew accustomed to the livestock and absorbed in the work involved in caring for them.

- **Suitable Activities**

Some activities suited some participants more than others. Most tried out and learned a range of tasks and skills, and it is almost always possible to find a couple of jobs which participants are comfortable with, even if there are some jobs they really do not want to do.

- **Personal protection equipment**

Using protective clothing and equipment, can prove difficult for some participants. If they are not used to farms, they may not readily understand the importance of using it, and some may find it difficult to use masks and heavy gloves for instance, or as with some few SoFAB participants, be uncomfortable with wearing wellington boots.

- **Busy market**

One participant found attending a busy market day, with livestock and lots of people being around both confusing and disorienting. Some participants may not be used to crowded spaces, or may have issues with claustrophobia or being in very close physical proximity with other people, especially strangers.



- **Early morning starts**

For those who were not used to regular working days, and for some with depressive and other mental health issues, getting up early in the morning on a regular basis proved very challenging for some participants.

- **Communication**

Establishing good communications between participants and farming families was slower in some cases than others, linked to speech impairment and social interaction skills. Generally these eased with familiarity as all relaxed into the relationship. In one case, for a participant with severe hearing impairment, the lack of interpretation/ signing support caused frustration and impacted negatively on his experience. Making sure the necessary supports are in place before starting can be challenging, but makes a huge difference to the quality of the experience for all.

- **Payment**

There were some issues around what had to be paid for, and amounts charged for the service, mainly in relation to direct payment participants. Taking time to ensure all potential issues are identified and clearly explained and agreed with the participant as part of establishing the service contract helped to avoid confusion.

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## Section 4

# Social Farming: the Policy Context

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Social farming as practised in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland is still evolving, and if you are interested in becoming involved in using or providing social farming services, it is useful to have some knowledge of the policy context and regulatory frameworks governing the practice of social farming, and how these vary between the two jurisdictions.

The policy context within which social farming operates is complex, crossing over a range of sectors and areas of focus, and so there is no single policy which covers social farming practice, or specific regulations relating to it. Service providers, including the farmers, are required to adhere to regulations relating to health and safety, environmental management and risk minimisation, and farmers must insure their service for public liability.

The policy areas of most direct relevance to social farming are:

- Social and health care policy
- Rural development policy



## 4.1 Social and Health Care Policy

Most potential social farming clients are already engaged with health and social care service providers, and many will be referred to social farming services through their service providers, who may be involved throughout the process.

So as potential social farmers, you may find it useful to have some overview of the main policy directions shaping the delivery of health and social care services in both jurisdictions in Ireland, and to see how and where social farming can fit in.



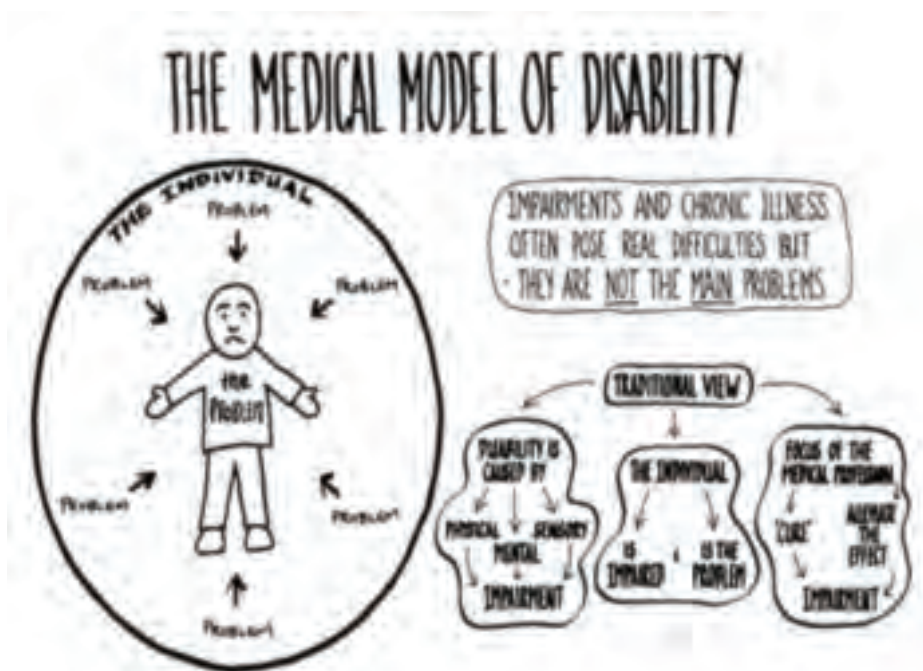
### 4.1.1 Changing approach and direction in service delivery

The growing interest in the practice of social farming reflects the evolution of attitudes and practice in social and health care, from a medicalised, institutional approach, to a more people-centred approach embracing personal choice and inclusiveness.

#### Evolution of service provision approaches for people with support needs



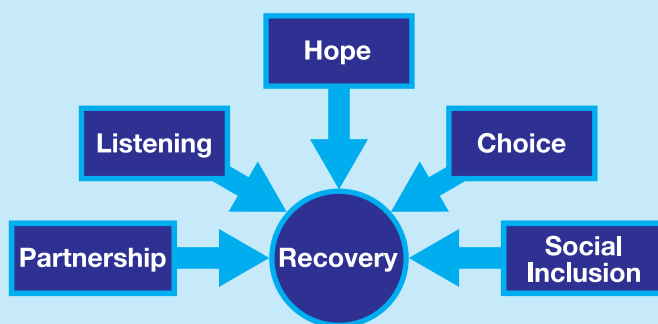
The changing approaches and attitudes over the past few decades towards people with physical and learning/intellectual difficulties has been readily observed within communities as well as from health care services.



Traditional approaches to disability, focusing on the person as the problem, and medical solutions rather than social support, have given way to what has been called ‘a new paradigm of disability’ focusing on what people can do and want to do rather than on their limitations.

Current approaches in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland reflect a model based on principles of inclusion, choice and personal control, as evident in current policy on health care, disability, and other service provision both in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland. One such approach is reflected in the Recovery Model of the HSE’s Vision for Change.

“In order to fulfil the ‘recovery’ principle in A Vision for Change, mental health services need to respect the personal recovery perspective of each service user and adopt an approach to service delivery that supports both personal and social recovery...



There are some differences in policies between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and, as is sometimes the case, gaps between policy vision and intentions and the reality of implementation, as experienced both by users of services and frontline health and social care staff.

## Republic of Ireland

Public health services are delivered through the Health Service Executive (HSE). Each of the HSE’s four administrative areas has a Regional Health Forum, which includes representatives from the city and county councils within that area.

In Ireland there is a mix of models and approaches operated by a wide range of providers from the public, private and voluntary sectors including: institution-based services, community homes; outreach services; as well as day and community-based support services.

Despite the diversity within the health and social care services sector, there is a strong emphasis throughout on the recovery model, with many value-based organisations particularly lobbying for progressive change and more people-centred provision of services.

- In 2001 the new Health Policy “Quality and Fairness A Health System for You” placed the principle of “Person-Centredness” at the heart of national health and social care policy, along with Quality, Accountability, and Equity.
- A Vision for Change: Report Of The Expert Group On Mental Health Policy was published in 2006, arguing that: “Every citizen should have access to local, specialised and comprehensive mental health service provision that is of the highest standard.”
- The HSE in setting out guidelines on day services, New Directions - Personal Support Services for Adults with Disabilities (2012), again stressed three key values:
  - Person-Centredness
  - Community Inclusion & Active Citizenship
  - Quality

## Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland the National Health Service (NHS) is referred to as HSC or Health and Social Care. Just like the NHS, it is free at the point of delivery but in Northern Ireland it also provides social care services such as home care services, family and children's services, day care services and social work services.

Services are commissioned by the Health and Social Care Board and provided by five Health and Social Care Trusts - Belfast (the largest of the five), South-Eastern, Southern, Northern and Western.

- In 2001, the U.K launched their new Disability Strategy: "Valuing People", with person-centredness as its core principle and intended driver.
- The Bamford Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability (DHSSPS, 2007) sets out a clear vision of how an excellent service for those with mental health problems, their families and carers, can be provided, with the user experience at the heart of development and improvement.
- Delivering Excellence: Supporting Recovery, the nursing response to the Bamford Review, sets out a road map for the mental health nursing service to deliver the aims and the vision of "A Partnership for Care: the Overarching Northern Ireland Strategy for Nursing and Midwifery (2010- 2015)".
- Transforming Your Care: Vision to Action was launched in Northern Ireland in October 2011, setting out proposals for key service changes, and an Action Post Consultation Report published in March 2013.

### 4.1.2 How does social farming link in with health and social care policy?

Drawing on previous research into the benefits of social farming (see Section 3) and on the experience of the SoFAB Project, social farming has the potential to complement and contribute to mental health and social care policy and services by:

- Promoting overall mental health and wellbeing
- Linking with therapeutic service provision
- Supporting user-determined health plans and budgets

Themes running through current health and social care thinking and policy frameworks which link strongly with social farming include:



- **Person-centred** - social farming fits in well with the person-centred philosophy and recovery model approaches at the core of policy in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, with its focus on recognising the whole person and their living situation and environment, and developing what the individual can do, rather than focusing on limitations.
- **Choice** – personal choice and control over the lives and service provision for people with support needs lie at the heart of person-centred care and the recovery model. As health and social care policy moves further along the path of self-directed care and service user choice, social farming has an important role to play in widening choices and expanding the range of services available. Along with widening choice, social farming, by its nature, strengthens existing skills and develops new capabilities which enhance independent living and employment options.
- **Social inclusion** – social farming has a potential role as part of community-based rehabilitation and care services, expanding social contacts and promoting greater involvement in community life and events for people who might otherwise be socially isolated or marginalised because of physical, mental or learning/intellectual needs.

### Local entry points for social farming

Growing awareness about the practice and potential benefits of social farming among service providers in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, many of whom were directly involved in or informed by the experience of the SoFAB Project means there is increasing potential to consider



social farming activities among the range of services offered to clients. A significant and growing number of voluntary sector service providers include social farming-type activities in their range of activities and recovery programmes, including residential and day care services. In Northern Ireland, progression towards personalised budgets will offer opportunities for social farmers to be contracted directly by clients for provision of social farming services.

## 4.2 Rural Development Policy

Awareness of rural development policy and how it is implemented may be relevant for potential social farmers, as social farming practice fits within a range of rural development policy aims, including promotion of social inclusion; rural community development; and diversification and sustainability of farm enterprises.



Since 1991, following reform of the European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), Rural Development policy in EU Member States has been established at European level, with countries developing their own national policy and strategy around the agreed main aims and priority areas. So whichever part of Northern Ireland or Republic of Ireland you live in, rural development policy is set within the same EU policy framework with similar priority areas of focus.

## 4.2.1 How is Rural Development Policy implemented?

The main rural development measures in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland are the respective Rural Development Programmes (RDPs). These programmes are funded by a combination of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and national funding. While broadly similar, the Rural Development Programmes in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland are based on the EU Framework for rural development but differ in terms of national strategies, priorities and needs. These programmes are focused on improving: the competitiveness of agriculture; the natural environment; and the development of rural areas.

The most recent Rural Development Programmes (2007-2013) have reached their end points while the next programmes (RDP for the period 2014-2020) are expected to be rolled out from 2015 onwards. While the 2014-2020 programmes are not yet approved, they will be broadly similar to their predecessors in terms of their overall direction with some adjustments in policy priorities at EU level and in specific measures/schemes at national level.

In the Republic of Ireland, the overall RDP is managed and delivered by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine delivers agricultural measures/schemes directly to farm families. The LEADER Programme which is a key part of the Rural Development Programme, is administered by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government. LEADER supports for the 2007-2013 Programme were delivered on the ground by 36 Local Action Groups.

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) is the managing authority for the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme (NIRDP). DARD delivers specific agricultural supports and schemes directly to farm families while the LEADER element was delivered by 7 Local Action Groups (NIRDP 2007-2013). The LEADER programme for 2014-2020 will be delivered by Local Action Groups in 10 geographic areas.

## 4.2.2 Rural Development Supports for Social Farming

While there are no specific social farming policy measures or support programmes within Rural Development Programmes, there are other measures available to farmers and rural dwellers that are relevant to social farmers. As the Rural Development Programmes (2014-2020) for both jurisdictions are currently being considered by the EU Commission, the specific elements where social farmers could gain access to supports are not yet agreed. However, an indication of possible supports available can be gained by reflection on the most recent Rural Development Programmes 2007-2013. Some of the relevant measures included:

- Supports for the improvement of farm facilities (including farm safety);
- Environmental measures included options relating to conservation and biodiversity e.g. hedgerow rejuvenation and planting, stone wall maintenance, orchard conservation, bird boxes; and
- Specifically under the LEADER programme supports were provided for: diversification; business creation and development; basic service provision; conservation of rural heritage and training.



In the absence of specific policy support for social farming, those interested need to explore the potential within the wider rural development policy measures. This may require seeking support for a specific aspect of social farming rather than the overall concept. Social farmers should examine the supports that become available under the Rural Development Programmes and LEADER in their own area.

It is worth remembering that the SoFAB Project was managed through the Leitrim Development Company and other Local Development Companies in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland are considering supporting social farming activities in their own areas.

## Policy and institutional linkages

As social farming crosses a number of different policy and institutional sectors, you need to be aware that engagement in social farming can entail linking in with a wide-ranging and diverse mix of people and organisations.

The number and mix of linkages you as a social farming family might be involved with can vary depending on location, what kind of services you are offering, what kind of clients you are interested in taking on, and how your activities are going to be funded. Below is an example of the institutional linkages made by one farming family from the SoFAB project.

### *Example: Institutional Linkages on a SoFab Pilot Farm*

#### **The Campbell Farm, Co Tyrone**

The Campbells created and fostered a wide range of contacts, networks and links to promote and develop the overall concept and to undertake their social farming activities. Some of the main contacts made included: Western Health and Social Care Trust; Ashdale Care; and other interested farmers in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area.

The initial link with the Western Health and Social Care Trust was facilitated through SoFAB and the Public Health Agency (PHA). Through this contact they identified possible participants for the farm from both the mental health and learning disability areas.

However, the local demand for supports came from those involved with mental health issues. There has been ongoing dialogue between the Trust and the farmers with the aim of developing services for the future. The Campbells have met with the Trust Director of Services, local Mental Health Services Director and Occupational Therapy Manager in addition to the Community Mental Health nurse and the local Occupational Therapist to explore the options for the future and they also participated in the Western Trust Mental Health Day in 2014.



The key contacts developed by the SoFAB Project and the Pilot Farmers are listed in Appendix 1.

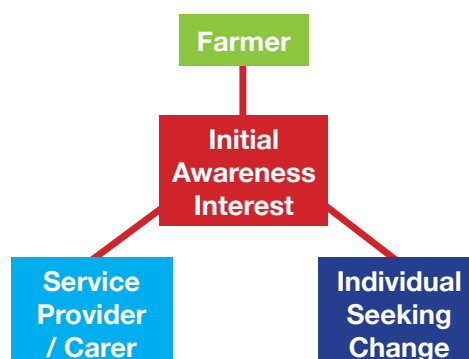
## Section 5

# Planning for Social Farming

## 5.1 Beginning the journey

The social farming journey can start with you as a farmer, as a service provider, as an individual looking to make changes in your life, hearing or reading about social farming and thinking “that sounds interesting, I’d like to know more about that”.

As a farmer, you may be looking at ways to diversify your family farm income, you may want to express your own values more explicitly in how you and your family earn a living, to expand community involvement and connectivity. You may have an interest in working with people with particular needs, arising from your own family experience and situation.



As an individual service user seeking change, you may be looking for ways to address and move beyond challenges limiting your social and economic life, to expand your involvement in socio-economic and community life. You may just be looking for something different to do, something more interesting, more challenging, to broaden your sphere of activities and skills. Maybe you are on a path of recovery from mental or physical breakdown, problems with addiction, periods of imprisonment and feel that a period of time outdoors and in your own community would be of benefit to you. Whatever perspective brings people to choosing social farming as an option, the clear focus of provision will be on supporting the progression of the person, be that through life skills, social role development, work skills and work opportunity. Direction and planning around this focus are led by the person, their ‘circle of support’ and other key supports in people’s lives.

As a service provider, you may be looking to broaden choices and opportunities for your clients, to expand the range of day activities and occupational services available to them.

### Common Purpose

Whatever the variety of issues to address, decisions to take, and roles you have to play, you will all have at least two things in common:

- You are all seeking change, something different in your daily or professional lives, and
- Whatever path you are following, you will all go through the same essential stages along your journey to and through social farming.



**Figure 1: Stages in becoming a social farmer**

The following sections of the handbook take you through these different stages, with information and guidelines to help you along the way.

## 5.2 Exploring possibilities

### 5.2.1 Where can I get more information about Social Farming?

There are a number of sources where you can get more information about social farming, what it is about, and what it involves, including the increasing number of networks established by practitioners of social farming such as the Social Farming Across Borders Project (SoFAB) [www.socialfarmingacrossborders.org/](http://www.socialfarmingacrossborders.org/); Care Farming UK [www.carefarminguk.org/](http://www.carefarminguk.org/); Care Farming Scotland [www.carefarmingscotland.org.uk/](http://www.carefarmingscotland.org.uk/); and Care Farming West Midlands, <http://carefarmingwm.org.uk/>.

Section 2 included information about some voluntary and other organisations which are practising social farming or engaged in similar activities. Many of these have their own websites and publications where you can access further information about their activities. See the Social Farming Resources Section of this handbook (Section 7) for contact details for these and other networks and organisations, along with references and links for a range of research and policy documents and reports which you might find interesting and informative.

#### Organisation formed by SoFAB Pilot Farmers

The farmers who delivered social farming services on a pilot basis under the SoFAB Project have come together to form a social farming organisation. This organisation is called Social Farming Across Boundaries LTD. At the time of publishing this handbook (November 2014), this organisation had just been incorporated as a company limited by guarantee and a first meeting of the Board of Directors had taken place. It will maintain a strong association with the SoFAB Project team (2011-14) enabling it to build on the relationships established through the work of the project.



**This newly formed organisation aims to promote and develop social farming for all who are interested across the island in The Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.**

Further information on the organisation can be accessed on the SoFAB website [www.socialfarmingacrossborders.org/](http://www.socialfarmingacrossborders.org/) or by email to [socialfarmingacrossboundaries@yahoo.com](mailto:socialfarmingacrossboundaries@yahoo.com)

## 5.2.2 How do I identify and access Social Farming opportunities?

There is no one straightforward route for those seeking a point of entry for social farming, and whether you are a farmer wishing to become involved in social farming, or a potential client seeking services, you will need to do some research before finding a suitable opening.



**As a farming family**, you may find it useful first of all to develop some understanding of health and social care policy approaches and service provision arrangements. You might find the Policy Context, Section 4.1., a helpful starting point for this.

A good approach then is to conduct a survey of your locality and wider geographic area with regard to services and potential clients, including which services are provided by whom in statutory and voluntary health and social care sectors, and how and by whom they are funded. Potential providers or partners to explore as part of your market research into current service provision and identification of potential social farming opportunities could include:

### Statutory Service Providers

In Northern Ireland, social farming-related services as part of occupational or rehabilitation care would generally be contracted with or through one of the five Health and Social Care Trusts. The Centre for Independent Living NI (CILNI) provides support for individuals who manage their own care budgets. This means they are allocated a budget and receive payments with which they contract and pay for their own support services. Some of the SoFAB social farming services were contracted in this way.

In the Republic of Ireland, while the practise of individual managed budgets is part of current health care policy, this is not yet widely implemented or available. Many services under the Health Services Executive and other state providers are contracted out, and direct provision is the exception rather than the norm.

There is a possibility that you might, as a social farmer, be able to establish yourself as a registered service provider with the HSE, and enter into contractual arrangements for provision of social farming services. Such arrangements are still unusual, and you would need patience and persistence to be successful, but social farming is an innovative sector and pursuing innovative provision arrangements and mechanisms is an important part of expanding provision and choice in the ordinary places of community life.

### Voluntary Sector Organisations

Many voluntary organisations, particularly residential service providers, include outdoor work and activities among their range of services and treatment programmes. They may be able to introduce you to potential clients among their members. You might find that some of these organisations are open and willing to discuss expanding social farming services for their members and there may be scope for you as a farmer to establish yourself as a service provider contracted by them, or to engage with them in developing project proposals and funding applications for social farming activities.

So if you are a farm family looking for a point of entry into social farming, or if you are a potential client, seeking social farming opportunities, it is worth contacting representative and service provision voluntary agencies such as REHABCare, [www.rehab.ie/care/](http://www.rehab.ie/care/); the Irish Society for Autism, <http://autism.ie/>; Camphill communities, <http://www.camphill.ie/>; North West Parents and Friends Association <http://www.nwfp.ie/>; Down's Syndrome Ireland <http://www.downsyndrome.ie/>. Even if they are not engaged in or offering social farming as an option, they can be useful sources of information and advice for you.



## Local Action Groups

Local Action Groups throughout the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland are involved in implementing the LEADER and social inclusion elements within national rural development policies. Some are already involved in facilitating and promoting social farming activities - Leitrim Development Company for instance managed the Social Farming Across Borders project as part of its rural development remit.

So it is always worth checking in with your Local Action Group to see if they are either engaged in social farming in any way or willing to consider it. They may have information about others who are involved even if they themselves are not.

Another possibility you might want to consider as part of diversifying your farm enterprise to include or focus on social farming and related activities and services, is the establishment of a social enterprise.

Social enterprises are businesses with a social purpose, and may suit those who wish to adopt an entrepreneurial approach to achieving social or environmental change. Social enterprises share a number of common features which distinguish them from other businesses:

- They have a social, community, ethical or environmental purpose
- They generally operate using a commercial business model
- They are not run for personal profit (but do aspire to make profit)
- They operate on the basis of a set of values
- They have a legal status appropriate to these characteristics

The social enterprise sector is incredibly diverse, encompassing co-operatives, development trusts, community enterprises, housing associations, football supporters' trusts, social firms and leisure trusts, and uses a wide variety of legal forms. If you are thinking of setting up a social enterprise, it is wise to seek advice from an appropriate support agency.

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*Further information and advice:*

Social Enterprise NI <http://www.socialenterpriseni.org/>

DIY Committee guide <http://www.diycommitteeguide.org/article/setting-social-enterprise>

Irish Social Enterprise Network [www.socent.ie/](http://www.socent.ie/)

Social Entrepreneurs Ireland <http://socialentrepreneurs.ie/>

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**As a client** wanting to check out possible social farming services, you might first of all talk to your care support team, and find out if they are aware of social farming, and if they have information about possible opportunities. If they are not aware of social farming, it might be useful for you to gather some information yourself, maybe with support from family and friends, and bring it to their attention.

It may also be worthwhile exploring what kind of services and support might be available from voluntary sector organisations, particularly those operating within your area. See the references to voluntary organisations in the section above addressed to farmers. Even if they do not offer any social farming-type services, they might be able to offer some support, such as help with transport, if you can access opportunities elsewhere.

If you are a participant with your own individualised care budget, you may be able to allocate part of your budget to purchase social farming support. The Centre for Independent Living NI <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/centre-for-independent-living> provides support for members in managing their own budgets. Even for those of you with your own budget, this can still be a time-consuming and complex process, so be prepared for this - you may need a lot of patience and perseverance!

## 5.2.3 Who can consider Social Farming?

### The Farming Family

Farmers who are operating any type or mix of farming activities can consider social farming practice. In the SoFAB Project the participating farmers included dairy farmers, drystock farmers and tillage farmers as well as some who operated small mixed enterprise holdings. Partner organisations and service providers may use different criteria to assess the eligibility and suitability of farmers to provide different services. The criteria used by the SoFAB pilot project are shown below. These were assessed through farming families completing application forms initially, then by farm visits to shortlisted farmers and discussions with the farming families.

### The SoFAB Experience



#### Criteria for farmer selection

Apart from being practicing farmers, the key criteria on the basis of which farmers were shortlisted and selected from applicants to the SoFAB Project were:

**Farm situation and capacity to meet needs:** A central criterion was to what extent an applicant farmer's farm would be able to accommodate the safety, comfort and welfare needs of people with a range of needs coming to work on them. What changes or adjustments might need to be made and were farmers able and willing to make these?

**Relevant work, life and/or community engagements and activities:** This was about the kind of work conducted on the farm, and the overall life and work arrangements of the farming family, and to what extent they could easily and practically accommodate the time, energy and work commitments required in meeting the needs of social farming participants. Involvement in community affairs and activities was considered as an important element, in terms of facilitating and encouraging more social and community engagement for potential participants.

**Relevant supporting skills and experience:** This was about identifying whether farming family members might have skills or life experience which would be of benefit and relevance for supporting social farming participants. Some members of farming families for instance were or had been engaged in health and/or social care work, some had experience of close or extended family members with mental health or learning/intellectual difficulties. While these experiences were not an essential requirement for entry into the project, or to undertake social farming overall, they were considered to be an advantage.

Whether operating solo or as part of a project or group, any farming family offering or considering offering social farming services should be ready to meet the following requirements.

### **As a farming family interested in pursuing social farming, you need to be ready and willing to:**

- ✓ Open up your farm and home to engage with and support people with health, social, and personal support needs.
- ✓ Commit yourself and your family to provide social farming services for a specified period of time and for specified hours and days.
- ✓ Engage fully with service providers and clients in planning and agreeing a clear programme of activities and support.
- ✓ Facilitate and promote social engagement between clients and local communities.
- ✓ Comply with all relevant regulations, including those relating to health and safety; protection of vulnerable adults; insurance; police vetting and clearance.

## **The Clients**

Social farming can accommodate a wide range of persons with different abilities and needs, through a process of carefully matching the individual with an appropriate context and programme, and ensuring the necessary supports are in place.

## **The SoFAB Experience**



### **Participant profile and criteria**

Participants for the SoFAB pilot project were identified mainly through engagement with statutory and voluntary service providers and support organisations.

Prospective participants, with assistance from support personnel if necessary, completed an application form explaining why they were interested in social farming and what they hoped to gain from the experience. They were also asked to say something about themselves and their interests and support needs.

A total of 66 adults participated in the piloting of services, 37 with learning/intellectual needs and 29 with mental health challenges. Participants were selected on the basis of their motivation; basic physical and mental capacity to take on some tasks in a farm setting; what kind of support needs they would have and to what extent these could be and were likely to be met during the social farming period.

Whether you are applying for a place on a project or other organised training or rehabilitation scheme, or exploring possible opportunities for new experiences with service providers or family members, there are certain commitments you will have to take on if you want to get involved in social farming activities.

### **As a potential social farming client, you need to be able and willing to:**

- ✓ Commit to a regular day or days and times for a mutually agreed period
- ✓ Take on tasks which would include working on the land and/or taking care of animals and/or helping out with maintenance and other physical work
- ✓ Engage socially with the farm family members and others working on and around the farm
- ✓ Comply with any required health and safety practices including use of protective clothing and equipment

## 5.2.4 Is Social Farming for Me?

Now you've got more information, you feel you know a lot more about what social farming is and what might be involved, you have established what kind of opportunities there might be around and who you need to contact and how to take it further.

Social farming does take time, and commitment, and can be challenging for clients and farmers. Only you can decide if this is right for you and your family in your situation and at this particular stage of your life.

**So, do you go for it or not?**



So, it is important for everyone who might be involved to take time to reflect on and talk about all the information they have got, whether there is anything else people need to know, what would getting involved entail, what are the implications of taking this on, what worries or concerns people might have, before coming to a definite decision to go ahead.

## The Farming Family

Embarking on social farming is a decision which affects not just the individual farmer considering it, but the whole farming family, and others working on the farm. It is important to discuss the implications of a decision to go forward with all those who will be directly involved or affected in one way or another, to ensure that all are fully informed, and willing and able to take on such a commitment and make the necessary changes to accommodate it.



Some family members may be nervous about bringing people with physical, learning/ intellectual needs and/or mental health issues into and around their home, and be unsure of how to communicate with, and relate to them. It is important that everyone concerned has the space to be open and honest about questions and worries they might have, and has the opportunity to get information and support from others to address these issues.

*As a farming family exploring the possibilities of social farming, you might consider the following questions and issues before making a decision to apply:*

- Is everyone in the family agreeable to giving it a go, are there any worries or issues which still need to be talked about?
- Are the family members ready and willing to make the regular time commitment over the period of however many weeks or months, involved in a social farming contract?
- Are there any kinds of physical, mental, social and learning/intellectual needs which you as a family are particularly interested in working with, and any you do not feel comfortable or confident to work with?
- What kind of activities and services can you offer on the farm, within your current range of operations, for the groups of individuals you feel would be a good match for you?
- Are you ready to ensure full compliance with all health and safety requirements, and to take whatever additional measures may be necessary to safeguard potentially vulnerable adults, who may have limited capacity, and little or no experience of farms or farming activities?



## The Clients

*Questions for potential users of social farming to consider, and discuss with family, carers and service staff, before making a definite application might include:*

- Why would you like to try social farming?
- What do you hope most to gain from it?
- How do you feel about working outdoors, about working physically, maybe in mucky conditions, or in bad weather?
- How do you feel about interacting and working with animals? Are there any kinds of animals you would particularly like to work with, or would definitely not want to work with or be around?
- How do you feel about working with soil and plants and getting your hands dirty?
- Are there any aspects you think you might find difficult, or feel nervous about?
- What kind of support and assistance do you think you might need, including practical areas such as transport, mobility, health and other issues?
- Do you think you will be ready and able to give the necessary time and commitment to make it a success for you?
- What emotional and practical assistance can you expect to get from family, friends, care assistants or other service staff?



## The Social or Health Care Provider

A discussion on seeking social farming services may be initiated in some cases when a client comes to you as their care provider asking for information about or assistance in accessing social farming opportunities.

In other cases you may already be aware of social farming as an option, and you might feel it is a potentially appropriate option for one or more of your clients, and be interested in identifying possible openings and opportunities.

Bearing in mind that the ultimate decision on whether a client can or cannot take on social farming would rest with the client, as a care provider you still have a clear responsibility to consider to what extent social farming might be appropriate or feasible for your client at that moment in their lives, and to advise accordingly.

- Has the client been given all the information they need to be able to make an informed decision?
- Is there a potentially suitable match for the client, within the client's locality, or at a reasonable distance from it?
- Is there a reasonable expectation that all appropriate and necessary supports can be put in place?
- Are there sufficient budgetary/financial resources definitely or at least potentially available to cover any costs?



## 5.3 Taking it further

While it contains information relevant for anyone interested in getting more involved in social farming practice, this following section is particularly focused on the process a farming family might follow in pursuing social farming opportunities.

Once you have identified a potential opportunity to offer social farming services as a farming family, the next step is gathering the information you need to put a proposal or application together and submit it.

Different service providers and agencies will have their own requirements for social farming and consequently negotiating a social farming service with them will initially require dialogue with them in order to be clear on what it is they require from a service. The examples given below are taken from the SoFAB Project. While these are particular to the SoFAB Project, you will generally find that most organisations will require the same information in order to engage with and support social farming.

### 5.3.1 Preparing a Farm Profile

Starting out as a social farmer is very much the same as commencing any innovative farm diversification activity or service provision. This always involves the development of a business plan for the service or product which is being provided by the diversification activity.

A good starting point in business planning for social farming is to prepare a farm profile - an overall picture of the farm and farming activities, the farming family's interests and background, and the locality.

If you are a farmer and want to get started in social farming, the farm profile would be an important part of your preparation. The profile would be shown to potential clients, who would be considering which farms, locations and activities might be of most interest for them.

There is no right or wrong way to prepare a profile, but as an example, the profiles prepared by all SoFAB pilot farmers included the following headings and content:

- **Your Details – Photo, Location**

This includes farming family names, address of the farm, contact details, and who and where to contact for more information or enquiries.

- **About My Farm**

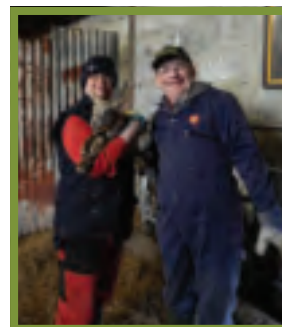
Describe your farm, how big is it? What does the farm and surrounding area look like? How do you use the land? What kind of livestock do you have? What kind of crops do you grow on your farm? What other kind of activities are there? Do you make cheese for example, or jam?



- **Activities of the farm throughout the year**

What are the main activities, jobs, carried out at different times of the year?

Some people might be particularly interested in being around for lambing time, or for harvesting. Some may feel they prefer to be around a farm during the warmer, brighter months of the year. It is also helpful to outline what kind of activities you are proposing, and for whom it might be appropriate, in terms of what kind of physical and other capacity and skills would be called on.



- **Projects on the farm**

This would include specific projects you are currently engaged in, or planning to take on, which might be of interest for prospective social farming clients. Examples might be:

- drystone walling around a farm area;
- establishing a herb or organic vegetable garden;
- establishing a bog garden;
- diversifying into fruit production, cheese making;
- installing solar power or a windmill

- **My Locality and Community/Local services**

Map out your locality and community, including for example: schools, health centre, government offices and services, churches, pubs, shops, post office, sports facilities, agricultural co-op, cinema.

This can be a useful planning tool as proximity of different institutions and services can be important in deciding which type of clients to target, what activities are most appropriate, and what kind of social and community interaction clients might potentially get involved with.

- **About me/my family - 'our story'**

This is a profile of the farming family, where you might describe how or why you got into farming, why you are interested in social farming, whether you have children, what kind of interests you have. Include enough of whatever you feel comfortable sharing with others, to give some idea of what kind of people you are.

The more complete and attractive the profile, the more likely it is that potential clients will feel interested and confident enough to want to know more and come and check out the farm.

Pictures of the farm, the family, the livestock and surroundings are a great way of helping clients to visualise your farm. They can imagine themselves in that context, think about whether they find the idea attractive, and see practically what kind of activities would be involved if they were to work with you.



*A sample farm profile prepared by one of the SoFAB pilot farmers is included as Appendix 2. You can access further profiles on the SoFAB website <http://www.socialfarmingacrossborders.org>*

## 5.3.2 The Business Plan

You may or may not already have a business plan for your farm in place. If you are proposing to get involved in social farming, it would be advisable to prepare one. Even if you decide not to carry on with social farming, you may still find it a very useful tool in planning out your farm business.



### What is a business plan?

A business plan is a formal statement of a set of business goals, the reasons they are believed attainable, and the plan for reaching those goals. It may also contain background information about the organisation or team attempting to reach those goals.

### Why a business plan?

If you are seeking finance from any financial institutions, or putting forward funding applications, a business plan will almost certainly be requested, whether as a separate document or integrated into a funding proposal, and access to finance would commonly be dependent on approval of a business plan.

A business plan however is much more than a funding application. It is a tool which can contribute enormously to the effective implementation and success of your enterprise. It maps out what you want to do, the route you need to follow. It allows you to track your own progress, and to make adjustments as necessary in response to changing circumstances and markets.



It serves as an important tool in convincing others that you and your idea are worthy of support. Others with a stake in your business plan include:

- Organisations, service providers, who you may wish to partner and work with you, and who will pay for your service.
- Advocates, clients, who are choosing and willing to engage in your Social Farming services.
- Organisations to whom you may wish to apply for grants, e.g. government departments, enterprise and other business development agencies.
- Banks, and other financial institutions to whom you may apply for establishment or operational loans.
- Investors from whom you wish to attract capital, if you are developing social enterprises.
- Professional advisors, such as accountants and solicitors.



## What should I include in a business plan?

Business plans vary enormously in size and complexity. If you are applying for funding or loans to financial or other institutions, some may have specific formats they want you to follow, detailing exactly what information they require from you.

Whether you are using a preset format or developing your own, the core elements of any business plan are:

- **What kind of business you are in and your model of service provision**  
How you are structured, organised, registered as a legal entity; whether you are a multifunctional farm, a social enterprise, engaging in social farming as part of farm diversification.
- **What activities you want to pursue over the number of years covered in the plan**  
Describe the activities, associated range of abilities, horticulture, agriculture, indoors & outdoors, physical & non-physical elements of the services you are offering
- **Current assets and resources**  
financial, human and material assets
- **What further resources you need to enable you to carry out your planned activities**  
financial, human and material resources
- **Where and how you propose to get these resources**  
Access to credit, reinvestment of income back into business, proposed purchase of equipment, recruitment of personnel
- **Financial information**  
What your costs are; your anticipated income; your anticipated profits, i.e. your projected income less your costs; summary budgets for the period of the plan

Your farm profile is a good start for your business plan, in particular the description of your farming activities, current and proposed projects and what assets and resources you have, what services you can offer, and your mapping of your locality and existing services.



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**For a business plan incorporating or predominantly about social farming, it is important to ensure that you:**

- ✓ Describe the benefits of what you can provide to those who pay for your services, and to your clients who come to the farm.
- ✓ Describe the practicalities of how logistics/transport issues for example can be explored and dealt with, and what you can contribute in this regard.
- ✓ Describe the elements of reporting, recording quality control, monitoring, which you can offer.
- ✓ Show how your business will be organised, how it will be managed and by whom.
- ✓ Detail and address: health and safety, insurance, supervision, supports, Garda vetting or Police clearances (AccessNI / Garda Vetting, etc).

## Pricing policy

So how do you decide what price to put on the service you are offering, ensuring you are being fair to yourself and the time and effort going into the service, as well as being fair to the client?

When you are proposing to work in an area like social farming which encompasses a range of very diverse activities and services and contractual arrangements, working out your pricing policy can be a challenging exercise.



You will need to:

1. Calculate your costs
2. Calculate any value from your clients' inputs to offset against your costs
3. Set your price for the services you are offering

## Calculating your costs

Identify and analyse the costs associated with what you are doing, making sure to include all of the costs: capital costs, one-off expenditure; running or operational costs; and labour.

**Capital costs** would include any work carried out as part of preparation for engaging in social farming, for example renovating/installing new washing and toilet facilities; adjustments to farm buildings and/or equipment to make them more user-friendly and minimise risk, as well as purchases of equipment or tools for specific use with social farming clients.

**Running or operational costs** would commonly include utilities such as heating, light; provision of refreshments; insurance premia; telephone and other communications

**Labour costs**, whether included as a separate item or under running or operational costs, should be included. This would usually be based on calculating the number of hours the farmer and/or family members envisage spending per client/per day or week, multiplied by an hourly rate or fee. The hourly rate is a matter for your own judgement, perhaps drawing on your own research of the labour market, in arriving at a fair approximation of your labour value.

# The SoFAB Experience



## Social farming costs

The SoFAB Project report on Costs and Benefits of Social Farming <http://www.socialfarmingacrossborders.org> reported average core costs for the pilot farms of €14.16 in Northern Ireland and €10.84 in the Republic of Ireland (range from €4.14 to €24.10 per service user per day) and an average total cost (including notional labour costs) of €65.68 in NI (range from €33.15 to €107.20) and €69.11 in ROI (range from €34.20 to €113.79). Core costs include capital and running costs only.

## Calculating value of clients' contribution

Against the costs calculated you may also consider offsetting the value coming from the work carried out by the clients.

- On the basis of the services you are offering, and the activities in which you envisage clients engaging, decide what contributions to the farm enterprise your clients can be expected to make such as products for sale or other benefits to you and your family.
- Put a value on the incoming benefits, such as number of hours and value of labour; percentage contribution to market prices of goods produced for sale. Some social benefits as well as economic can be included and valued here.

## Pricing your service

To arrive at a price for the services you are offering, you:

- Offset the estimated value of your clients' contributions against your calculated costs
- Decide on a profit margin which satisfies your circumstances and is realistic in accordance with your market research
- Calculate your price per hour, per day, per person

In quoting prices for your services, make sure you clarify what this price includes - for example if meals are provided - and if appropriate, calculate and quote prices with and without additional or optional items. Identify also any additional costs such as transport or special clothing to be covered by the client or service provider. If your social farming enterprise is to be sustainable, it is important to be realistic in pricing, while at the same time ensuring that you are giving value for money.

## Costs for service providers

The above section focused on business and financial planning for prospective social farmers. For further information on farmer costs, and information on comparative costs for service providers, see the SoFAB report on Costs and Benefits of Social Farming, <http://www.socialfarmingacrossborders.org>

Advice and support on preparing business plans related to social farming can be obtained from a variety of organisations and web sources (See Section 7).

### 5.3.3 Finding the Right Match

Successful outcomes in social farming practice rest on ensuring so far as is possible, that there is a good match between the individual client's interests, needs and capacity, and the services offered by the farm and the farming family, leading to a mutually beneficial relationship and positive experience for all.



The farm profile as described in the previous section provides a lot of information which can help the potential clients to assess if this particular farm might be suitable for them. The information profiled on the farm family and on the potential client, detailing their interests, and what they hope to gain from the experience, is key in matching up potential partners in the enterprise.

However well-matched people appear on paper however, it is only when people come face-to-face that it is possible to assess the personal dynamics and how the relationship might work. So before any agreement is reached, or contracts drawn up, the first step in planning is to arrange personal introductions, between the farming family and the prospective clients.

This can happen wherever people are most comfortable to meet initially, but often starts with a visit to the farm, usually accompanied by important support people, where both farmer and clients can get to know each other a little in the setting where they would be working together in the future.

In some cases, this introduction may not be successful, and one or other of you may decide this is not the right place or client for you. This does not mean social farming is not the right activity for you, it means that the particular dynamic and match did not work, but others may do.

Matching a social farm and a client is a two-way process. It is not like a job application, with the farmer setting out a list of jobs to be done and only clients who can efficiently take on all of these tasks being considered.



The jobs or activities to be included in the arrangement are based on what are appropriate, realistically do-able, and of interest for that particular client with their particular needs, interests, and capacity.

Everyone has ability, everyone has skills and those coming into social farming are doing so because they want to do something meaningful and enjoyable with their time and to develop their potential further. The focus is not on what people cannot do, but on what they can currently do, and how they can be supported to further expand their sphere of skills and ability through the social farming programme.

## 5.4 Service agreements and support plans

Whoever the referral or partner agencies may be, there will always be a formal agreement or contract to be signed by all parties. There are two main areas to be discussed and agreed on as part of entering into social farming practice:

- Legal contractual obligations will be established identifying and describing roles and responsibilities of all parties concerned, describing the expected services to be provided and identifying expected outcomes
- Establishing a support framework which sets out the parameters and ground rules for how the social farming practice will work on a day-to-day basis, what the mutual expectations are, and most importantly, what kind of support the client may need to fully benefit from the experience, and how these needs will be met.

In some situations, depending on the context and parties involved in the proposed social farming engagement, these two aspects may be established as separate agreements, at different stages in the process. In other situations, all of these aspects will be included in one contract or service agreement.

### 5.4.1 Contractual agreement

In the case of SoFAB project, the social farming activities were implemented within a coordinated and facilitated pilot project and the project management took on the legal responsibility of signing an agreement with statutory agencies. SoFAB established a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which was signed by SoFAB project management, and service providers for each client, as the guiding framework agreed for the pilot practice engagements.

The MoU set out expected roles and the responsibilities of each party to the agreement, including risk-sharing issues and respective responsibilities for this. It also described the operational process, the procedure for withdrawal from the project, and identified expected outcomes. The full template is attached as Appendix 3, as an example of the kind of issues to be considered and included. The support framework was then established at a later stage as a participatory process with specific farmers and clients.

Since social farming in Ireland is in its infancy it is too early to define the nature or types of contracts which will be entered into by farmers and commissioners. Many of the Pilots for the SoFAB Project are at the time of writing this Handbook (November 2014) at the stage of negotiating contracts, MOUs, or service level agreements.

In many cases however, it would be you, the farmer, who would be expected to sign up to a specified agreement or contract, which would likely combine most elements of the SoFAB MoU and the support framework components.



## 5.4.2 Client support framework

Whether developed as a separate document, or incorporated into the contractual service agreement, establishing a support framework is a key part of the planning process.

Even where the main elements of a support framework are included in the service agreement or contract, it may still be useful to establish a more specific and detailed support framework in discussions between the service provider and the farmers with the clients. This can serve as a working blueprint for the social farming experience. There are five key elements which should appear in any comprehensive support framework, as described below, and these should be discussed and agreed between the farming family, the client and the service provider.

### A comprehensive support framework should clearly set out:

1. Key contact information for the social farmer
2. Personal goals
3. Support issues for clients and how these will be met
4. Logistical issues
5. Key relationships

## 1 Key contact information for the social farmer

Relationships and communications are at the centre of a successful social farming experience. Ensure that all concerned have the necessary information about who they should contact regarding various issues - and under what circumstances. Key contact details should be stored in the farmer's mobile phone and should also be kept in an accessible location on the farm (ie. at a specific place in the farmhouse, beside a 'phone etc.)

Contact information to keep to hand would include:

- The key worker contact for the person
- Family/Home contacts where applicable
- The Service Manager
- Contacts for transport arrangements
- GP or other medical support contacts as appropriate
- The Service Contact for reporting incidents/accidents including abuse/suspected abuse

## 2 Personal goals and targets

An important part of the planning process and the establishment of a support framework is talking about what the participants want to get out of the project. What do you as a farmer, or as a client, hope to gain from social farming? What do you want to change, to achieve? How would you describe a successful outcome?

For those engaged in a journey of recovery, for those of you who want to expand your horizons or life skills, for those who want to expand and change your lives beyond their current limitations, spending some time thinking and talking about the specific changes you want to make, and setting some goals or targets around these, is an important part of the process.

For the farmers and their families, it is important for you to be involved in this process of identifying and establishing goals. This helps you to:

- Incorporate goals into the support framework and activity plans
- Ensure that service-users choose activities that have meaning and are directed towards engagement in their chosen roles and the aims they want to achieve.
- Allow for periodic review during the social farming process, and be ready to refocus goals and targets as necessary, after exploration and experience

It is also useful for you, as the farming family, to talk about and clarify your own goals and expectations and to explore how these can be met through the mutually-agreed support framework.

As a client, you may already be engaged in a recovery or life-planning process and have established some personal goals which you will now want to apply to your social farming engagement.

For those of you who have not yet done so, or who would like to establish a specific plan for this new experience, there are many different tools and methodologies which can be used by clients and farming families, with service-provider's input as appropriate, to assist in the identification of goals and setting of targets and how to assess them.

The Mental Health Recovery Star is one tool which can be used by clients and farmers with support from service providers, as part of planning and establishing the support framework. It was developed with service-users and is recommended by the UK strategy on mental health, New Horizons.

## The Mental Health Recovery Star

The Star identifies 10 areas of our lives where we might want to make some changes, and each of these life areas are further detailed in 10 sequential stages, where progression towards recovery, towards living more independent, more fulfilled lives, can be identified and tracked. It can be helpful to identify where clients would locate themselves along the 10 stages of the arms of the star, and interesting for the farmers and others to do the same. All of us have areas in our lives where we might like to make some changes. For the purposes of measuring



progression, clients can be encouraged to identify the areas of their lives (i.e. along which arms of the star) they would most like to make changes. This then allows for identification of specific goals in moving further along the 10 progression stages for each of these areas. See <http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk/mental-health/>

### 3 Support issues for clients, and how will these be met

Social farming clients come from a broad spectrum of backgrounds and needs, and many will have particular support needs related to these challenges. It is important that any Special Support Needs, Medical Needs and Particular Known Risks are identified before the on-farm engagement starts, and clients' own insights into, and perceptions of, their particular support needs are central to this process. Discussions around how these needs can be met, and by whom, would also include service providers and other relevant individuals and institutions.

Some of the issues identified in this discussion, and ways to address them, were highlighted in the previous section on goals and target-setting. The key questions are:

- How can the service provider or referral agency help meet the needs?
- What does the farming family need to know and to do?
- Who is responsible for what?
- Is there budgetary or other support assistance available to help meet the clients' needs?
- Are there any physical adjustments or changes which need to be made on the farm, for example to facilitate communications, mobility, access to/use of equipment and tools?

## The SoFAB Experience



### Basic checklist established for support issues

- ✓ Mobility (steadiness/accessibility)
- ✓ Communication methods used by person
- ✓ Likes/Dislikes
- ✓ Dietary issues
- ✓ Health Issues (Have these been checked with the person's G.P.?)
  - Diabetes
  - Epilepsy
  - Personal care/intimate care needs
  - Allergies
  - Medication
  - Tetanus vaccine history
- ✓ Sensory issues (Visual, Hearing, other...)
- ✓ Road and traffic awareness
- ✓ Smoking

*Below are a few examples of the type of support issues included in the SoFAB Project Support Frameworks, and how they might be addressed*

Support issue for Client:	How will this be met during pilot practice?
Help with transport needed	Family member can bring client in the morning, farmer will bring client home at the end of the day.
Maintaining daily medication regime	<p>Ensure farmer has full information on type and timing of medication to be taken.</p> <p>Farmer to make sure client has necessary medication with them and a contact/designated person(s) if any problem arises.</p> <p>Build reminders into working day schedule, for example linking up with scheduled breaks, and installing time alerts on phone.</p>
Allergic to insect bites	<p>Client to always wear protective cream out of doors.</p> <p>Anti-histamine tablets/ointment to be accessible indoors and outdoors in common work areas.</p> <p>Check if client has prescription for epinephrine injection and keep one available for emergencies.</p>
Significant hearing /speech impairment	Client will be accompanied on farm days by care assistant with signing and interpretation skills.

Some support issues, such as transport, can be addressed more easily than others. Some issues require specialist assistance and it is vitally important that any essential assistance be clearly agreed and organised in advance.

For example, in one case during the SoFAB project, a client with hearing difficulties did not receive the expected support, which made communications with the farming family difficult and frustrating for all, and significantly affected the quality of the client's experience with social farming.

## 4 Logistical Issues

These issues relate to all practical arrangements to be considered and agreed before starting to engage with the farm. They are the kind of issues which can cause anxiety and frustration when they are not clarified, or do not work out as planned. Establishing and maintaining routines and regular attendance can be a significant achievement for some clients, and all involved can support this achievement by being clear and consistent in their own logistical arrangements.

You will find that the time and effort put into identifying, clarifying and agreeing concrete arrangements, is time well-spent, and will contribute hugely to making the social farming experience a positive one for all. The following are the key issues to be considered as part of logistical planning.

- **Agreed days**

How many days, and which days, will be spent on the farm? What happens if these coincide with bank holidays, or over Easter, Christmas? Are there particular dates known in advance when the arrangement is not possible for either the farmer or the client?

- **Time**

What are the agreed arrival and departure times each day? As transport arrangements can sometimes be complicated, it is important to be as punctual and consistent as possible with regular time arrangements.



- **Transport arrangements**

Transport needs to be discussed at an early stage in the planning process. Many farms will not be directly served by public transport, so even where clients are comfortable with independent travel, some support arrangements may be necessary.

- Is there transport assistance available from the service provider, or any local voluntary organisations, who might have their own minibus or other transport?
- Can the client's family or care support team help?
- Is there any way farming family members might be able to help?
- Is there a budget for transport costs?
- Regular transport arrangements need to be clearly arranged and agreed and in place before engagement with the farm starts.

## The SoFAB Experience



### Transport arrangements for clients

*The range of transport arrangements for clients in the SoFAB Project included:*

- Local community transport schemes and initiatives
- Transport assistance from organisations such as the Irish Wheelchair Association and Rehab Care
- Social farmers picking clients up from home or care centres or other pre-arranged pick up points
- Family members, support personnel or care provider staff dropping clients off and picking them up afterwards
- Some participants used public transport for part of the journey or drove themselves

- **Meals and refreshments**

What are the arrangements in place regarding food? Is there a lunch provided? Are clients expected to bring their own? Where will they eat? Are there refreshments/beverages available? Is there any charge for this?

Some Social Farms offer additional services such as the provision of food. This can be as simple as providing tea, coffee and biscuits on arrival to providing full, cooked meals. The decision to offer food options within a social farming package will again depend on the circumstance at the farm, the requirements of the clients and also the facilities at the farm for cooking and eating. Eating is a social activity and gives people an opportunity to interact and can provide an important break in the day's activities or mark the start or finish to a day's social farming.

Check in advance if there are any dietary issues to be considered, particularly if meals will be provided on the farm. Does the client have any food allergies? Are they



vegetarian/vegan? Knowing about dietary preferences in advance, and taking these into account, can help enhance the pleasure and sociability of sharing food.

Bearing in mind the importance of social interaction as part of the social farming experience, try to incorporate at least one meal and/or break per day where people can gather socially around a table.

Basic good practice on food safety and hygiene, and the associated guidelines and regulations, need to be both understood and adhered to when providing meals to clients. For more information on this, see the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland (see <https://www.food.gov.uk/northern-ireland>) and the Food Safety Authority in Republic of Ireland (see <http://www.fsai.ie/>).



- **Ground rules for your farm**

Clarify any issues relating to behaviour and routines on the farm. For example: specify areas which are not accessible or out of bounds; agree a clear routine for the timing of breaks and where these will be taken; clarify which animals can be touched or approached and which should not; specify smoking arrangements if relevant. These issues are explored further in the sections on induction and health and safety issues.

- **Clothing and equipment**

Clients need to be clearly informed about what kind of clothing and footwear they should wear on the farm. In some cases, protective equipment or clothing, such as goggles or overalls, will be needed and this needs to be specified by the farmer. Providing this protective equipment will usually be the responsibility of the farmer but in some cases, where equipment such as overalls or wellingtons is solely used by the clients, it may be necessary for them to purchase their own. In addition, clients are usually expected to equip themselves with personal care supplies such as sun block and insect spray, but the requirement for these may need to be explained. What is most important is that any requirements concerning equipment, clothing or personal protection items are clearly specified before the on-farm experience starts, with exactly who is expected to provide what. Storage space for these personal items needs to be considered so that clients know where to find them on arrival, or during the visit, and are clear where to return them at the end of the visit.



## 5 Key Relationships

Clients may have strong connections with family members and others in their community who are interested and supportive of them. It can be helpful to involve them a little, by inviting them to visit the farm and making them more aware of logistical arrangements, activities and health and safety issues. If they are more informed, they can be in a better position to support their family member or friend in having a positive social farming experience. Deepening social connections where possible is a valuable part of the experience.

However, remember also that it is up to the client how much they want to share with their family and friends, and expanding communications and contacts beyond the client/s and their immediate care assistants should only be done with their agreement and participation.

## The SoFAB Experience



### Maintaining the Support Framework

- Complete a personalised Support Framework for each client coming to your farm, even though some elements may be similar for all.
- Updating and amending: The Support Framework is a live document, and you may want to amend and add to it as you go along. You may find new issues emerging as the relationship between client and farming family evolves. There may be changes in preferred activities to be undertaken, as capacities and skills evolve. Changes to ground rules or logistical arrangements may also be required.
- Any changes should be discussed and shared with all who participated in establishing the original framework and communicated to any relevant family, support personnel or others involved in the social farming engagement.
- Keep a copy of each person's original support framework, along with any subsequent amended framework, safely on the farm.

## 5.5 Health and Safety

### 5.5.1 Regulatory and Legal Framework

Health and safety and risk management are common concerns and are raised by potential and practicing social farmers, by referring commissioners and other agencies.

As a practising farmer, you will already have some familiarity with health and safety regulations and practice on the farm.

In embarking on social farming, be aware that you are opening up your farm to people who often have little or no experience of farming environments - or practice - including clients and their support people and service providers.

Therefore, it is crucial that you ensure not only compliance with the statutory regulations, but that you can provide health and safety orientation for people with limited farming experience and skills, and in some cases physical and learning needs. You also need to ensure continuing oversight and supervision as part of risk management and accident prevention.

In taking on social farming, you will need to look at your farm through the eyes of someone less experienced and perhaps less able than yourself and recognise the potential hazards and risks which are inevitably part of any working farm environment.

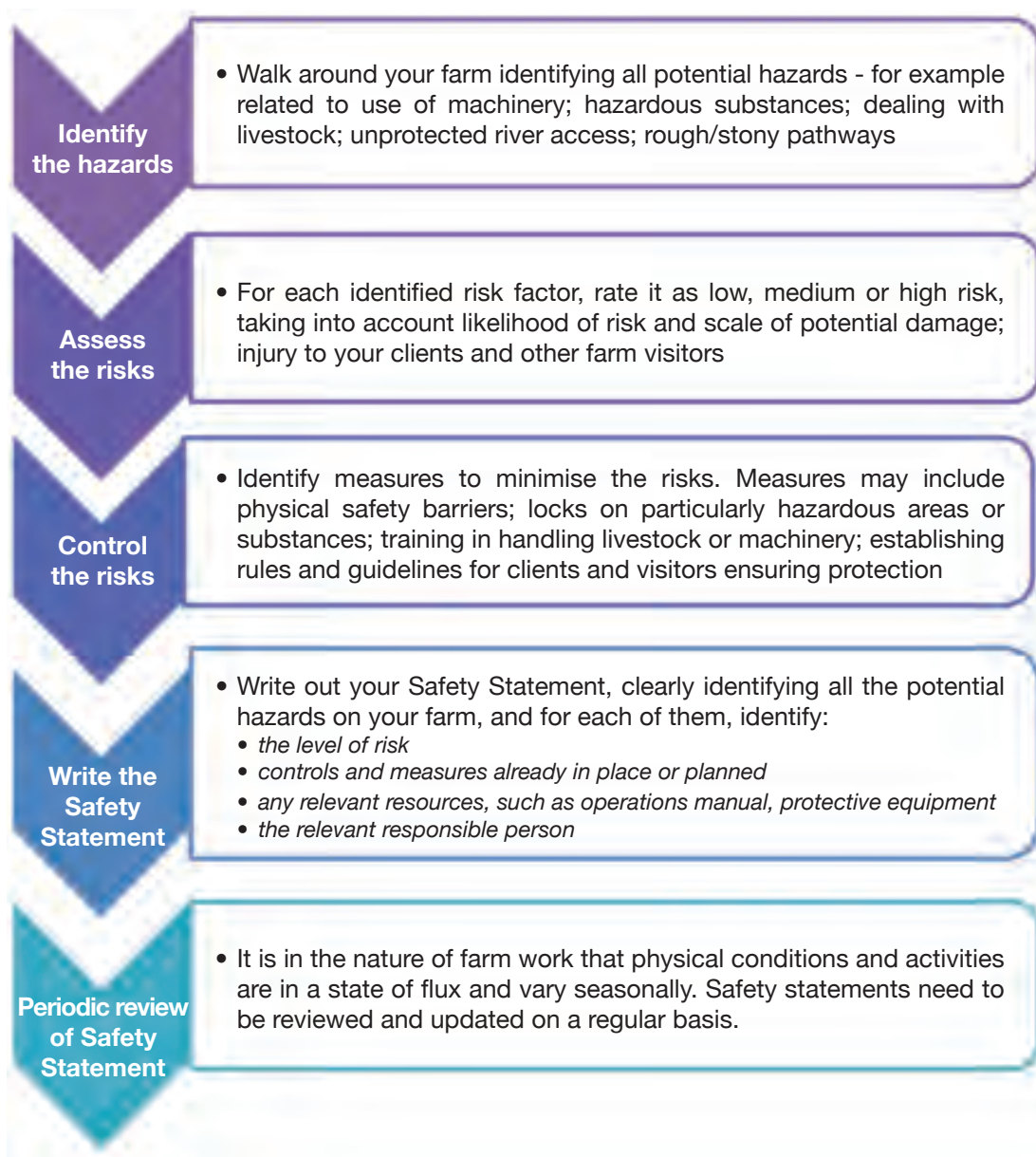
Ultimately this means a thorough hazard identification and risk analysis must be carried out and a Safety Statement completed for the farm. Responsibility for farm health and safety rests first and foremost with the farmer, as clearly established by law in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

### 5.5.2 Carrying out a Risk Assessment and preparing a Safety Statement

The Safety Statement is a plan for assessing and managing risk on your farm. All farms engaged in or considering engagement in social farming would be advised to establish a new Safety Statement, from the perspective of hosting clients, their support assistants and other visitors as social farming service providers.

The process shown below is a generic risk assessment outlining the stages to be followed in preparing a farm Safety Statement in any jurisdiction. However, you should check the specific requirements in your particular jurisdiction to ensure that your Safety Statement is sufficiently comprehensive and legally compliant.





Remember that hazards and risks are not limited to substances labelled officially as 'hazardous'. For example, fumes from slurry tanks and inhalation of petrol fumes from grass mowers would be relevant in risk assessments.

Risk assessment and management is a continuing process and should be incorporated into the induction process and on-going training.

## Understanding the terminology

**A hazard:** anything with the potential to cause harm in terms of human injury or ill-health, damage to property, damage to the environment or a combination of these, e.g. chemical substances, machinery or methods of work.

**A risk:** the likelihood, great or small, that an undesired event will occur due to the realisation of a hazard. Risk is dependent on the likelihood that a hazard may occur, the severity of the harm suffered/consequences, and the number of people who might be exposed to the hazard.

See [http://www.hsa.ie/eng/Topics/Managing\\_Health\\_and\\_Safety/Safety\\_Statement\\_and\\_Risk\\_Assessment/#Whatdoesthelawrequire](http://www.hsa.ie/eng/Topics/Managing_Health_and_Safety/Safety_Statement_and_Risk_Assessment/#Whatdoesthelawrequire)

Some activities on the farm may not be appropriate or safe for your social farming clients for a variety of reasons related to their skills, experience or capacity. These should be identified and listed alongside the reasons for their exclusion, as in the examples below.

## Exclusion List of Activities

Activity to be excluded	Reasons for exclusion
Direct assistance in calving pens	Lack of training / Inexperience
Driving tractors and using tractor-driven equipment	Lack of training / Inexperience
Using a 4 stroke petrol mower	Excluded until experience and competence are assessed
Using a chain saw	Certified independent training required to operate

While the basic requirements concerning health and safety in the workplace are similar in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, there are some differences in the regulatory processes and compliance requirements.

### Republic of Ireland

In the Republic of Ireland, the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) (see [www.hsa.ie/](http://www.hsa.ie/)) is the responsible body for regulating health and safety in the workplace - including the agricultural sector.

The Health, Safety and Welfare at Work Act 2005 is the primary relevant legislation and sets out:

- General duties of employers
- Duties of employees and persons in control of places of work
- Duties of manufacturers, suppliers & designers
- Protection, Prevention & The Safety Statement
- Consultation and Representation



**The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act** requires that a risk assessment and Safety Statement be prepared for all workplaces, including farms.

You may find it helpful to review *A Farm Safety Action Plan (2013- 2015)* which sets out targets in relation to improvements required in occupational safety and health in agriculture. See [http://www.hsa.ie/eng/Publications\\_and\\_Forms/Publications/Agriculture\\_and\\_Forestry/farm\\_safety\\_action\\_plan\\_2013-2015.pdf](http://www.hsa.ie/eng/Publications_and_Forms/Publications/Agriculture_and_Forestry/farm_safety_action_plan_2013-2015.pdf)

**Agriculture Code of Practice:** Under the 2005 Act, farmers with three or fewer employees can comply with the terms of a Code of Practice as an alternative to preparing a written Safety Statement. The Code of Practice for Agriculture includes a Risk Assessment Document and a Safe System of Work Plan - (SWWP). However, as a social farmer, you may find service - providers and other agencies require a full written Safety Statement. You will probably find it advisable to prepare one even if you are not legally bound to do so.

## Health and Safety in the Republic of Ireland

### Further information and guidance:

A Short Guide to The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005. See [http://www.pointofsinglecontact.ie/download/short\\_guide\\_to\\_shwwa\\_2005.pdf](http://www.pointofsinglecontact.ie/download/short_guide_to_shwwa_2005.pdf)

Teagasc (the Irish Agriculture and Food Development Authority) has guidelines for health and safety practice on the farm and templates for preparing Safety Statements. See [www.teagasc.ie/newsletters/safety/farmsafetyguide.asp](http://www.teagasc.ie/newsletters/safety/farmsafetyguide.asp)

The HSA has a free online tool which can guide you through the process of preparing a legally compliant Safety Statement - see [BeSMART.ie](http://www.hsa.ie/eng/Topics/BeSMART/#sthash.aGIpuN5P.dpuf) : Free Online Risk Assessment and Safety Statement Tool for Small Business. See <http://www.hsa.ie/eng/Topics/BeSMART/#sthash.aGIpuN5P.dpuf>

Agriculture Code of Practice. See [http://www.hsa.ie/eng/Your\\_Industry/Agriculture\\_Forestry/Overview/Agriculture\\_Code\\_of\\_Practice/#sthash.1grR5dE7.dpuf](http://www.hsa.ie/eng/Your_Industry/Agriculture_Forestry/Overview/Agriculture_Code_of_Practice/#sthash.1grR5dE7.dpuf)

## Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) (see <http://www.hseni.gov.uk/index.htm>) is the responsible body for regulating health and safety in the workplace, including the agricultural sector.

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (NI) 2000, the farmer has a duty to assess risks to the health and safety of anyone who may be affected by their work activities. It is the responsibility of the farmer to ensure that no-one is put at risk from any activities under their control.

Under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (NI) 2003 (COSHH), the farmer has a duty to assess the risks from both hazardous substances that are used (e.g. chemicals, solvents, paints and oil) and hazardous substances generated from work activities (e.g. dust, fumes, vapour etc.). So as a social farmer, you may be required to include a COSHH assessment as part of health and safety regulation compliance in Northern Ireland. The main steps involved are shown below.

## Steps in conducting a COSHH Assessment

- **Walk around your workplace.**

*Where is there potential for exposure to substances that might be hazardous to health? Examples include processes that emit dust, fumes, vapour, mist or gas and skin contact with liquids, pastes and dusts. Substances with workplace exposure limits (WELs) are hazardous to health.*

- **Consider in what way are the substances harmful to health?**

*Get safety data sheets and read your trade magazines. Some substances arise from processes and have no safety data sheet. Examples include fumes from welding or soldering, mist from metalworking, dust from quarrying and gases from silage. Look at the HSE web pages for your trade or industry.*

- **What jobs or tasks can lead to exposure?**

*Note these down. Note down what control measures you already use. For these jobs, how likely is any harm to workers' health?*

- **Are there any areas of concern, e.g. from the Accident Book?**

*Examples include burns from splashes, nausea or lightheadedness from solvents, and so on.*

The Health and Safety Information for Employees Regulations (NI) 1996 requires the farmer to display a poster telling employees what they need to know about health and safety.

## Health and Safety in Northern Ireland

### Further information and guidance:

Health & Safety Executive NI, Farmwise: Your essential guide to health and safety in agriculture. See [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg270.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg270.htm)

The Guide to Health and Safety in Agriculture. HSE NI.

See [http://www.healthandsafetyworksni.gov.uk/the\\_guide\\_to\\_health\\_and\\_safety\\_in\\_agriculture-2.pdf](http://www.healthandsafetyworksni.gov.uk/the_guide_to_health_and_safety_in_agriculture-2.pdf)

Guidelines for a COSHH assessment.

See <http://www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/basics/assessment.htm>

## The SoFAB Experience



### Checklist for Farm Risk Assessments

A Social Farming Checklist for Farm Risk Assessments was developed by the SoFAB Project for completion by all participating farmers, ensuring that all those involved in the pilot project were fully aware of their roles and responsibilities under Health & Safety requirements. This checklist is included as Appendix 6 to this document.

Also included, in Appendix 5, is a sample risk assessment relating to the use of common equipment by participants on the farm.

### 5.5.3 Police checks and clearance

Police clearance is mandatory in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland for any person working with vulnerable adults, whether as a volunteer or an employee. Many potential social farming clients would be classified as vulnerable and police clearance for the farmer would normally be required before entering into any social farming projects or contracts.

The process for obtaining police clearance differs in the two jurisdictions, as outlined below.

#### Republic of Ireland

The Garda Central Vetting Unit conducts Garda Vetting for organisations which have been registered with it. The Unit is the single point of contact in An Garda Síochána for conducting Garda Vetting.

Garda vetting is conducted in respect of personnel working in a full-time, part-time, voluntary or student placement capacity in a registered organisation, through which they have unsupervised access to children and/or vulnerable adults.

**Garda Vetting is conducted only on behalf of registered organisations and is not conducted for individual persons on a personal basis.** In other words, you cannot apply for Garda clearance for social farming on your own behalf. You must obtain this through an organisation which applies on your behalf.

This process can be a lengthy one. There is generally a significant backlog of applications waiting for clearance, so it is advisable to get this underway as early in the process as possible. The new social farming organisation may be able to advise those who wish to become social farmers on obtaining such clearance, based on the experience of its members.

**You will find more information on the Garda Vetting Procedure at:** <http://www.garda.ie/Controller.aspx?Page=66>

#### Northern Ireland

Police vetting in Northern Ireland is conducted through AccessNI.

If you apply for certain jobs or voluntary positions, an employer will ask you for an AccessNI check, for the purpose of disclosing any criminal history. Employers are responsible for knowing when a job or volunteering role requires an AccessNI check and which of the three check levels is necessary - basic, standard or enhanced.

**You can apply for a basic check yourself. Only an employer registered with AccessNI can apply for standard and enhanced checks.**

Social farming activities generally involve some form of payment for services, which means you would need to have a security check conducted through a registered organisation, even if there is no significant income or profit involved. Even if you are proposing to provide some services on a voluntary basis, you will still need to have a standard or enhanced check.

**You can obtain more detailed information on the AccessNI check application process from:** <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/information-and-services/employment/employment-terms-and-conditions/starting-a-new-job/accessni-criminal-record-checks/accessni-individuals.htm>

## 5.5.4 What about insurance?

Legal obligations associated with working with vulnerable adults and children include the obligation to be fully insured for any activities undertaken. You may find that your current farm insurance does not fully cover you for taking on social farming clients.

What you need to do depends on the context in which you are engaging in social farming and your legal organisational situation.

If you are working within a particular project or with a registered organisation, you may find that you are covered under their insurance policy. If you operate independently, i.e. outside the “extended insurance cover of a service-provider”, you will probably need to expand your current farm insurance cover.

### The SoFAB Experience



#### Insurance for Social Farming

The SoFAB project, in advance of piloting practice on 20 farms, undertook extensive discussions with insurance companies providing farm insurance cover in the project region. It managed to get agreement with the insurance companies regarding their recognition of social farming as an insurable activity on farms and an acceptable level of premium for the new activity.

All of the farmers engaging in social farming for the first time through the SoFAB project found they had to increase their insurance cover before bringing social farming participants onto their farms. They were required to take out Employers' Liability and Public Liability insurance, and indemnity cover (protection against being found at fault and claims arising) for others involved. In the case of the SoFAB Project, a range of organisations with potential legal responsibility were involved in the project and all of these had to be indemnified. In other situations, indemnity might be required for only one or two partner organisations, such as service providers, or not at all. But in all cases, in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, Employers' Liability and Public Liability insurance are mandatory.

While farmers were responsible for their own insurance cover, the SoFAB project team assisted in the negotiations with insurance companies. The two main insurance companies used by the SoFAB Project farmers were FBD Insurance in the Republic of Ireland and the NFU Mutual in Northern Ireland. However, some insurance companies and brokers, including Aviva, Royal Sun Alliance and Towergate also provided cover. Most farmers were able to expand their policy cover through their existing insurance providers. Additional annual insurance premia for Employers' and Public Liability averaged 200 euro for the farmers in the Republic of Ireland and 300 euro for those in Northern Ireland.

#### **For information and advice:**

Insurance Help! Sheet:

See <http://www.diycommitteeguide.org/article/insurance-help-sheet>

Irish Brokers Association - Insurance Information:

See [www.iba.ie/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category](http://www.iba.ie/index.php?option=com_content&view=category)

NICVA - Advice Note 12: Insurance Contact 028 9087 7777 [9]

or email [charityadviceofficer@nicva.org](mailto:charityadviceofficer@nicva.org)

SCNI - Insurance Information fact sheet Contact 028 2564 5676 [12]

or email [info@supportingcommunitiesni.org](mailto:info@supportingcommunitiesni.org)

Volunteer Now - Volunteers and Insurance infosheet. Contact 028 9023 2020

or email [training@volunteernow.co.uk](mailto:training@volunteernow.co.uk)

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## Section 6

# Delivering Social Farming

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### 6.1 Getting off to a good start – The Induction Process

The first days are extremely important in establishing a good relationship and setting the scene for how the social farming experience is going to work for all concerned. A well thought out and prepared induction process on the first day can make all the difference in establishing a smooth relationship and process for the weeks and months to follow.

The induction process is about:

1. Making people feel welcome
2. Helping people to get their bearings, find their way around
3. Assisting people to know what the normal routine and schedule is
4. Helping people to understand safe practice on the farm (Farm Safety)

The induction is also very important for any support workers accompanying new clients – this may be a new experience for them too, and they may not be familiar with farms and farming activity.

#### 6.1.1 Making people feel welcome

While the clients will probably have visited the farm before, as part of the application and matching up process, it is a good idea to spend some time on introductions again, and to reintroduce them to the farm itself. Sitting down over a cup of tea or other refreshments is a good start, with everyone introducing themselves again, talking about how they feel, what are they looking forward to about getting started, just getting more comfortable and relaxed together.





## 6.1.2 Getting their bearings, finding their way around

Show new clients around where they will be eating and taking breaks, the bathroom facilities and if they have a separate space for themselves to sit and keep their possessions. Make it clear in a simple, friendly way what places they are welcome to use and explore and if there are any areas which are private to the farm family and other areas where they should not go.

Introduce them to some of the basic health and safety issues, and reintroduce them to the farm, and the livestock and practically showing them what they will be working on, particularly for that day and week.

Be especially careful in introducing clients to livestock if they are not previously used to farms and having been close to large animals.



***Remember even the gentlest of animals can be intimidating for those who are not used to them!***

Take it slow and easy, and make sure they are relaxed and comfortable before encouraging them to handle animals, or to take on any jobs involving feeding or other care of livestock.

Some may be particularly nervous around dogs, so take a little time to introduce them to any farm dogs, and let them know if it is ok to pet them or not, and how to handle them.

Make it clear also if dogs and other domestic animals are allowed into the house or not, and how you feel about clients sharing food with them, or feeding them leftovers. On one of the SoFAB pilot farms for instance, a participant became very attached to the farm dog and brought it presents of bars of chocolate!

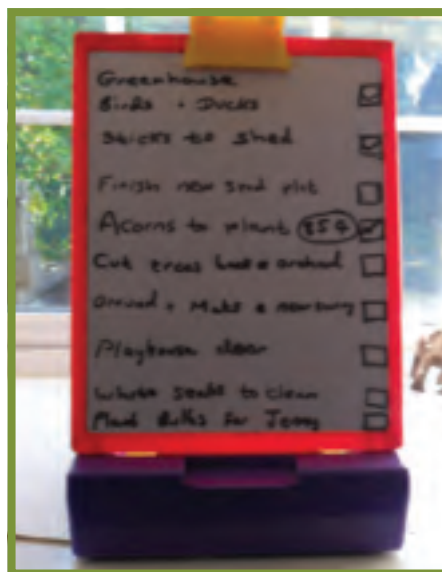


### 6.1.3 Knowing what the normal routine and schedule is

Clearly established routines, and consistency in keeping to them helps to settle people in and know where they fit and what is expected from them.

This doesn't mean that every day has to be the same. But it is useful to plan out each day ahead, with a clear set of planned activities and timing, maybe written out on a board. If this is being done some days ahead, you might find it useful to identify alternative activities depending if the weather is fine enough for outdoor work or not.

While activities will change during the weeks or months of the clients' time on the farm, it is still important to establish a basic daily schedule with some regular times and activities. These can provide a consistent framework to help shape the clients' days on the farm.



## The SoFAB Experience



### Daily routine established for one social farming experience

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| 9.15 am  | Pick up at bus stop<br>Call to local shop<br>Check sheep on way back to house  |
| 10.00 am | Arrive at Home Farm<br>Men say hello to Clodagh, bring lunch into fridge, change footwear/ reflector jackets<br>Untie sheep dogs and put them in Jeep<br>Feed and water hens geese ducks, collect eggs<br>Brush yard |
| 10.30 am | Have cup of tea - discuss the plan for the rest of the day   |
| 10.45 am | Planned morning activity – cleaning sheep trailer  |
| 12.30 pm | Back to farmhouse for lunch  |
| 1.15 pm  | Planned afternoon activity – hoof care for sheep   |
| 4.00 pm  | Back to base for cup of tea and collect bags etc.  |
| 4.15 pm  | Leave for travel back to Dundalk / bus stop / local man left at his house  |



It is also a good idea to identify a detailed list of all the activities which you feel the clients may be able and interested to take on or help with, and to discuss these with them and amend it as necessary as you go along.



Some of these may represent a learning progression, for instance in gradually training clients in how to care for sheep, or horses, guiding them through a sequence of different tasks and skills development. See the example below for one farming family's list of identified potential activities to carry out with their clients.

## The SoFAB Experience



### Activities identified for participant engagement at one SoFAB pilot farm

- Loading sheep into trailer for transport to another field
- Gathering sheep into pens and foot bath
- Catching lambs and ewes for dagging, clipping, dosing, marking tails etc
- Putting wool into wool bags and bringing to local wool merchant
- Checking sheep in different fields
- Feeding sheep nuts and hay
- Cleaning trailer
- Tiding and brushing yard and sheds
- Planting cabbage, construct piling to protect from animals
- Visiting local hardware, merchant stores and animal supplies
- Painting old cart for National Potato Day
- Attending National Potato Day Launch and Event - helping with cart setup & collecting - prepared food from restaurants, Selling Cabbage, Meeting people!
- Shovelling soil to fill up drain
- Painting walls of the new area for eating and relaxing (in this case an outside toilet was installed and washing facilities which meant men can come and go without removing footwear and can relax and become more independent deciding on their own breaks when they feel they need to take a rest)

## 6.1.4 Farm Safety Orientation

Farm safety 'Induction Training' is conducted on the first activity day, and it is an on-going process, requiring continuing attention and review as activity, seasons, circumstances, and people change.

It is important to include family members, farm workers and visitors in farm safety induction training. If new support staff (e.g. someone from services) becomes part of the activity during the programme you will need to go over it again to ensure they are familiar with safe practice on the farm. It is important that anyone present on the farm during social farming activities has been well briefed on health and safety procedures.

You may need to take some time to ensure that health and safety issues and rules are well understood, and you cannot depend on handing over written information. For example, while provision of an operator's manual is a standard part of risk management, handing over the manual is not sufficient in social farming practice. Capacity to understand, absorb and apply complex written instructions may be limited. So it is important that you:

- clearly communicate to the clients about risks and how they can avoid any harm to themselves or others as well as damage to property and equipment as part of the induction process
- carefully monitor and constantly supervise use of any equipment, particularly during the early days of the working relationship

Points to include in your farm safety induction should arise out of the farm and activities risk assessment that you previously carried out. Common issues to include are shown in the list of topics drawn from the SoFAB pilot farms' experience (see page 69).

**Remember** managing safe practice on the farm is the farmer's role. There is a fine balance sometimes between facilitating people to develop self-reliance and exercise choice, and your responsibilities for safeguarding them on your premises.

For example, what do you do about smoking? You cannot really insist that someone stop being a smoker, but you can set ground rules for what happens on your own premises, such as requesting that people do not smoke in the farmer's house.

It is probably safer in the long run to establish a safe, sheltered area where smokers can go, rather than try to ban smoking completely. This runs a greater risk that smokers might sneak off to have a cigarette in areas of the farm where it might be more of a fire hazard.





## Induction Training Topics covered:

### House rules

- Meals
- Welfare
- Hand washing
- Time keeping
- Work wear
- First aid

### Livestock

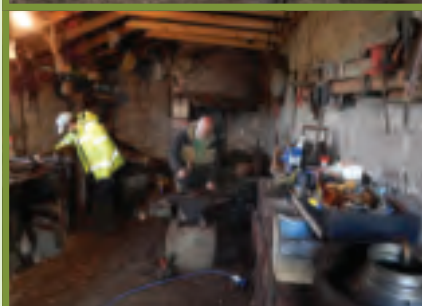
- Dangers outlined
- Where to stay
- Clothing/footwear
- Hygiene
- Close contact risks
- Loading/unloading
- Handling in crush
- Feeding calves/lambs
- Milking

### Machinery

- Dangers
- Staying in a safe location
- Noise factors
- Work wear/foot wear
- 'No Go' areas
- What work you can do

### Gardening

- Handling products
- Using hand tools
- Lifting boxes/plants/loads
- Bending /stretching
- Watering
- Care of tunnel cover
- Closing doors/vents
- Care of plants
- Use of power tools
- Making products





## Tips for ongoing farm safety management

- ✓ Continually check and advise on any personal protective items people will need to use (e.g. steel toe cap boots).
- ✓ Remind people about hygiene precautions particularly before eating and keep an eye on supplies of soap and towels etc. if using yard based toilet facilities.
- ✓ Prompt and remind people about safety.
- ✓ Make a point of keeping open communications with your service contacts and check in with them if unsure on any particular issue for a client.
- ✓ When planning a new activity you may need to check with the key contact person to see if there are any particular points to note for the client e.g. bringing client to a local agricultural show – is this likely to be suitable?
- ✓ If you haven't yet addressed a point from your safety review you exclude that activity from social farming until it has been addressed.
- ✓ If an unplanned circumstance arises for a day of social farming activity always take the safe option and postpone rather than compromising safety.
- ✓ Update and deliver farm safety induction as 'on-going training' as activities change.

## 6.2 Relationships and Communications

### 6.2.1 Relationships

#### *The Heart of the Social Farming Experience*

Establishing and developing relationships are at the heart of the social farming experience, and the values underlying the practice of social farming.

Some clients may be coming to social farming from a context of limited friendship and social contact, and perhaps have experienced great loneliness.

*"I was stuck at home, I didn't have anyone my own age, any peer to converse with. Yeah I made lots of new friends; it does feel more like family, a tight knit community"* (Participant)

As a farmer, you may also find yourself appreciating more social contact. *"I would look forward to the company, farming is a lonely occupation"* (Farmer)

New friendships are formed between clients themselves as well as between clients and farming families.

Where possible and appropriate, you could encourage emerging friends to expand their contact outside of the farm experience, and beyond the contract period, in collaboration with family and support people.



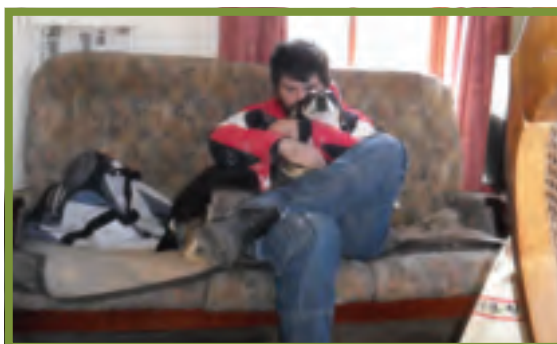
For some clients, the relationships developed through their social farming experience will be a warm memory or perhaps a continuing friendly presence in their lives as they move on to the next stage.

For others, these relationships may be of great intensity and significance, and you may need to be careful about setting some boundaries on the kind of relationship you have with your clients, and their expectations of your role in their lives.



### Avoid:

- Making promises or commitments about activities or social engagements outside of the farm which you may have difficulty in keeping
- Raising expectations about continuing friendships and plans for the future beyond the social farming contract period, unless you are very sure that you are able and willing to commit to these
- Crossing the boundary between friendly support and taking on responsibility for someone else's life, their well-being, their choices and needs



Be particularly careful around clients' fondness for animals which might be destined for sale or the table.

Be prepared for clients to invest a greater degree of sentiment and emotion into relating to dogs, horses, and other farm animals than might be the norm on a working farm, and be ready to handle their feelings for these animals with respect and sensitivity.



Remember, while people may well get great therapeutic benefit from their engagement with social farming, they are not coming to the farm for therapy, you are their host farmer, not their therapist. They are coming to your farm as part of leading ordinary lives and linking into their communities, as ordinary people everywhere have the opportunity to do.

*While enjoying the new friendships formed through the social farming engagement however, you do need to be aware of and operate good practice relating to issues around confidentiality and protection in working with vulnerable adults, as discussed in section 6.2.3.*

## 6.2.2 Communications

Communications with people who have intellectual and learning difficulties may be constrained, particularly in the early days when you are not well acquainted or accustomed to their way of expressing themselves.

This can create frustrations on both sides, for the client who is struggling to make themselves understood, and for the farmer who is anxious about how to converse comfortably with their clients, and how to ensure they are taking in and understanding the necessary information and guidance.

One comment which emerged often from discussions with farmers who piloted social farming services in the SoFAB Project was the extent to which they found themselves having to slow down, in every way, in communicating and working alongside their clients. Most reported that they found the slowing down a positive experience for themselves, and that communications and understanding improved hugely as the time passed.



### Some tips for smooth communications

- Establish a calm, relaxed space and time in which to communicate, over food, during breaks, when no one is in a particular hurry or under stress.
- Try and make sure all who come to the farm feel safe and comfortable enough to voice concerns or complaints or requests, knowing they will get a calm hearing and fair response, and that they can do so without jeopardising their programme with you.
- Slow down to give the client time to understand, think and respond to what is being said to and asked of them.
- If the client still doesn't understand then apologise for not making yourself clear and continue as appropriate. This should be followed up later by seeking advice on how to better communicate the particular message.
- For particularly important conversations, plan what you want to say beforehand, and think about how to get points across using strategies that help the client understand.
- Keep in touch with key family members and support personnel, and get their assistance in facilitating communications.



People with understanding problems are more likely to have difficulty with long sentences or a lot of speech delivered at once, complex language structures and abstract concepts. Try to avoid:

- Words with negative suffixes e.g. the “n’t” in “wouldn’t” is harder to hear than for example “would NOT” where the “Not” is particularly stressed in the sentence
- Long sentences with subordinate clauses e.g. ‘Tell me about what happened yesterday, before you went to see your doctor. This could be changed to ‘Tell me what you were doing yesterday. Tell me what you were doing before you spoke to your doctor
- Abstract concepts such as “legal rights”, “truth”, “trustworthy”, “personal privacy”

- Sarcasm, jokes and ambiguous language
- Some questions words e.g. who, what, where are easier to understand than when, how and why

For further information see the Adult Support and Protection Communication Toolkit [http://www.rcslt.org/speech\\_and\\_language\\_therapy/Adult\\_Support\\_and\\_Protection\\_Communication\\_Toolkit](http://www.rcslt.org/speech_and_language_therapy/Adult_Support_and_Protection_Communication_Toolkit)

### 6.2.3 Confidentiality and protection

Along with health and safety issues around potential hazards and accidents, as a social farmer you have a certain duty of care when working with those who may be classified as vulnerable adults.

Safeguarding vulnerable adults is about supporting everyone to feel safe and comfortable, about guarding people from the risk of abuse of any kind, and guarding yourselves as farmers, carers and associates from any risk of misinterpretation or misunderstanding of your behaviour.

#### ***When working with vulnerable adults...***

- Information should be shared on a need to know basis
- Photographing and/or filming should only be done or shared afterwards with people's permission
- Never agree to keep secrets
- At induction inform participants that if they report or if you observe an issue of real concern, be it about the farm or something that is happening elsewhere, that you will need to share this with their key service contact
- Confidentiality must not be confused with secrecy... A rule of thumb is: would I want someone to tell other people that about me?
- Always try and ensure you have the person's permission to share with staff and family before you do so and always let them know who you are sharing their information with
- Disclosure should always be in the interests of supporting and protecting the client
- If in doubt, ask...

#### ***When around vulnerable adults...***

The following conduct should be avoided where possible:

- Spending excessive amounts of time alone with vulnerable adults away from others;
- If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable, let someone know where you are going and what you are doing.

The following conduct should never take place:

- Engaging in rough, physical, or sexually provocative games;
- Giving vulnerable adults inappropriate drugs or other inappropriate substances;
- Allowing or engaging in any form of inappropriate touching;
- Making sexually suggestive comments to vulnerable adults, even in fun;
- Allowing allegations made by a vulnerable adult to go unchallenged, unrecorded, or not acted upon;
- Doing things of an intimate nature for vulnerable adults that they can do for themselves.

*Protection of vulnerable adults is enshrined in law and many organisations have children and vulnerable adult protection policies in place, and are committed to following guidelines on good practice.*

## Main legislative framework for further reference:

NI	Regulated Activity- Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007 (amended 2012) <a href="http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/svg">http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/svg</a>
Rol	Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences Against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 <a href="http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2012/en/act/pub/0024/">http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2012/en/act/pub/0024/</a>  National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 <a href="http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2012/en/act/pub/0047/">http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2012/en/act/pub/0047/</a>

## 6.3 Monitoring Progress and Evaluating Outcomes

### 6.3.1 Expected outcomes from Social Farming

Expected social farming outcomes are the results or consequences people anticipate seeing emerge from the social farming experience. Those engaging in social farming: i.e. farmers, families and clients coming to the farms, have their own motivation, hopes and fears about how it is going to go and what they might or might not gain from the experience.



For farmers interested in social farming, your main focus would be on your own goals and expected outcomes, and on contributing to monitoring progress on those of your clients.

So what are your hopes and expectations as a farmer delivering social farming services to clients? As you are embarking on this new venture, stop and reflect on your own motivation, what you hope to get out of the experience; what you would like to have achieved, gained, at the end of the social farming contract; what do you think might have changed for you and your family.

All stakeholders, including service providers, have their own expected outcomes to be monitored and assessed.

Expected outcomes for farming families could be related to expected benefits, as described in Section 3.1, and might include development of new associated skills and confidence in dealing with people with a range of needs; personal satisfaction from supporting clients to achieve their goals; completion of planned on farm projects; and increased income from work based on social and ethical values.

Clients expected outcomes would relate directly to the goals established as part of planning and establishing a support framework before starting the on-farm experience. Examples might include development of specific desired skills; increasing social roles and interaction and confidence; increased capacity to take on responsibilities and to keep to a regular routine.

For service providers, anticipated outcomes are likely to include specific improvements in clients' mental and physical health and well-being, such as improved mood, less reliance on medication, increased sociability, and on clients reaching their own personal progression goals established as above. Expected outcomes may also include increased capacity to offer choices in the range of services and support available for their clients.



## 6.3.2 Tracking Progress

### ***So how will you know how it is going?***

You cannot know what progress has been made if you have not clearly established where the starting point was. Tracking progress for yourselves and your clients effectively means:

- ***Establishing goals and targets for the clients at the beginning of the engagement***

This process, including some goal setting tools, has been discussed as part of establishing the support framework, in the planning and preparation section (Section 5.4).

Regardless of what tools or approaches are used, what is important is that some goals are identified towards which the client can work, building up confidence and self-esteem in the process of realising them.

So refer back to the client's support framework, to the discussions on the client's hopes and expectations, and clarify again his/her goals and targets and what achieving these would mean for them and what changes exactly would they like and expect to experience. Work with them to establish ways of monitoring how they are progressing towards achieving these, and how you can help with this process.

Identify your own goals and expectations, and think about how you will know if these have been reached or not.

- ***Establishing ways to assess how people are progressing towards reaching those goals, i.e. establishing indicators***

Establishing indicators is about identifying how to recognise and measure change, i.e. what would indicate that change has occurred. These indicators can be:

#### **Quantitative**

- Number of new skills acquired
- Number of days attendance as planned
- Proportion of planned tasks completed
- Number of new social roles
- Change in level of direct support hours

and/or

#### **Qualitative**

- Optimism about the future
- Confidence in ability to work
- Confidence in social situations

Identified indicators might be based on the Recovery Star (Section 5.4.2) or other specific tools, or based on discussions with the clients around their Support Framework and Plan, and their own personal goals.

### ***Remember, it is always important to ensure that clients:***

- know what information you are gathering about them, how you are going to use it and what access they and anyone else will have to your records
- have given their consent to being photographed, recorded or filmed
- have given their permission for any subsequent publication or other use of these records and images

There are a range of well-being measures and indicators which you may find useful to consider along with clients, and their families and carers as appropriate.

This kind of assessment can be conducted at the beginning and end of the social farming period, and at regular times during, depending on how long the contract is for. The table below assesses mood as well as sense of confidence and achievement in a simple ranking exercise.

**Table of Statements to Assess Client's Mood (✓ as appropriate)**

Statements (for clients to respond to)	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
<i>I've been feeling optimistic about the future</i>					
<i>I've been feeling useful</i>					
<i>I've been feeling relaxed</i>					
<i>I've been dealing with problems well</i>					
<i>I've been thinking clearly</i>					
<i>I've been feeling close to other people</i>					
<i>I've been able to make up my mind about things</i>					

Reference: *Measuring Well-being: A guide for practitioners - the dynamic model of well-being*  
[http://b.3cdn.net/nefoundation/7a378df45fafa612cc\\_a3m6i6g49.pdf](http://b.3cdn.net/nefoundation/7a378df45fafa612cc_a3m6i6g49.pdf)

Comparing results at the end of a period of time with those at the beginning will give some measure of change in client's own perception of their state of mind and self-confidence before and after the experience, and checking it out during the period can serve as an indicator of how the client is finding the experience, and identifying potential problems as well as areas of progress.

### • Keeping records

In the SoFAB Project the pilot farmers were asked to complete a log book (journal) for each day the participants visited their farm.

This log book serves as a record for yourself and your family of your journey through social farming, and facilitates assessing progress for both yourselves and other participants.

As an example of practice which you might find useful, a copy of the format and guidelines for the log book kept by pilot farmers during the SoFAB Project is in Appendix 7 of this Handbook.

It is also very important to document and keep in this log book, details of any: problems; complaints made by the clients; falls and other accidents, even if no-one is really hurt; incidents where clients may be distressed by something happening around them, or something someone said or did. Any such incidents should be recorded and communicated as accurately as possible on a daily basis.

First and foremost, communicate. As a farmer, your own observations and perceptions are of great importance and value in assessing how things are going, and of course, in keeping track of your own journey and its outcomes. But you will only really know how it is working for anyone else by making time and space for them to communicate their thoughts and feelings about their own experience.

Beyond recording your own and your clients' progress for your own benefit however, your records and documentation of your experience may be invaluable in contributing to evidence of outcomes for others, and to the overall body of research into the practice and outcomes of social farming as an evolving and expanding sector.

So it is worthwhile putting some time and effort into establishing a framework for monitoring progress in achieving goals and expected outcomes which would be intelligible and clear to others as well as to yourselves.

Remember, whether you are a potential social farmer or a potential client, those who have found their way into social farming practice have generally found it a highly rewarding and beneficial experience, so don't be discouraged by the challenges or the time and effort it may take to establish the service either as a provider or user.

Do talk to others who are, or have been practicing social farming and are willing to share their experience. Their advice will be invaluable and their stories will keep reminding you how much it will be worth it in the end.



## Section 7

# Social Farming Resources

This section lists some of the networks and organisations engaged in social farming which could be of interest and value for you. Following these is a references section with documents and internet links and sites for further information on the following areas:

1. Health and Safety Issues
2. Health and Social Care Policy and Practice
3. Safeguarding vulnerable adults and children
4. Social Enterprises
5. Social Farming and Insurance
6. Social Farming and Rural Development
7. The Nature and Practice of Social Farming

## Social Farming Across Borders (SoFAB)

<http://www.socialfarmingacrossborders.org>



### SoFAB Reports:

*Costs and Benefits of Social Farming: Report of the Social Farming Across Borders Project* (September 2014).

*Promoting and Enabling Social Farming: Report of the Social Farming Across Borders Project* (October, 2014).

See the SoFAB website for information about the project, farm profiles of the farmers who participated in it, and continuing information about the Social Farming Across Boundaries Organisation which is in the process of being established as this Handbook is being written.

## Social Farming Networks and Organisations

Camphill Communities of Ireland <http://www.camphill.ie>

Camphill Communities Northern Ireland <http://www.camphillni.org/index.php>

Care Farming Scotland <http://www.carefarmingScotland.org.uk/>

Care Farming UK <http://www.carefarminguk.org>

Care Farming West Midlands <http://carefarmingwm.org.uk/>

Cuan Mhuire, Ireland <http://www.cuanmhuire.ie>

Down's Syndrome Ireland <http://www.downsyndrome.ie/>

Growing Connections Bangor (SoFAB pilot) <http://www.growingconnectionsproject.org.uk>

Farming for Health Community of Practice <http://farmingforhealth.wordpress.com/>  
Irish Society for Autism (Dunfirth Farm) <http://autism.ie>  
North West Parents and Friends Association <http://www.nwpf.ie/>  
REHABCare [www.rehab.ie/care/](http://www.rehab.ie/care/)  
Sli Eile (Community farm Co Cork) <http://www.sliele.ie>  
Wildgoose Rural Training Centre, Top Barn Farm, Holt, Worcester, WR6 6NH  
[www.wildgooseruraltraining.org/](http://www.wildgooseruraltraining.org/)

## Reference Materials

### 1 Health and Safety Issues

#### Republic of Ireland

Agriculture Code of Practice: [http://www.hsa.ie/eng/Your\\_Industry/Agriculture\\_Forestry/Overview/Agriculture\\_Code\\_of\\_Practice/#sthash.1grR5dE7.dpuf](http://www.hsa.ie/eng/Your_Industry/Agriculture_Forestry/Overview/Agriculture_Code_of_Practice/#sthash.1grR5dE7.dpuf)

A Short Guide to The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005 [http://www.pointofsingletcontact.ie/download/short\\_guide\\_to\\_shwwa\\_2005.pdf](http://www.pointofsingletcontact.ie/download/short_guide_to_shwwa_2005.pdf)

A Short Guide to The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005 [http://www.pointofsingletcontact.ie/download/short\\_guide\\_to\\_shwwa\\_2005.pdf](http://www.pointofsingletcontact.ie/download/short_guide_to_shwwa_2005.pdf)

Garda Vetting Procedure <http://www.garda.ie/Controller.aspx?Page=66>

Teagasc (Irish agriculture advisory service) has guidelines for health and safety practice on the farm, and templates for preparing safety statements [www.teagasc.ie/newsletters/safety/farmsafetyguide.asp](http://www.teagasc.ie/newsletters/safety/farmsafetyguide.asp)

The HSA has a free online tool which can guide you through the process of preparing a legally compliant safety statement. BeSMART.ie : Free Online Risk Assessment and Safety Statement Tool for Small Business - See more at: <http://www.hsa.ie/eng/Topics/BeSMART/#sthash.aGipuN5P.dpuf>

#### Northern Ireland

AccessNI police check application process <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/information-and-services/employment/employment-terms-and-conditions/starting-a-new-job/accessni-criminal-record-checks/accessni-individuals.htm>

Health & Safety Executive NI, Farmwise: Your essential guide to health and safety in agriculture [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg270.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg270.htm)

The Guide to Health and Safety in Agriculture. HSE NI [http://www.healthandsafetyworksni.gov.uk/the\\_guide\\_to\\_health\\_and\\_safety\\_in\\_agriculture-2.pdf](http://www.healthandsafetyworksni.gov.uk/the_guide_to_health_and_safety_in_agriculture-2.pdf)

Guidelines COSHH assessment: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/basics/assessment.htm>



## 2 Health and Social Care Policy and Practice

### Republic of Ireland

Dept of Health RoI (2012) Future Health: A Strategic Framework for Reform of the Health Service 2012-2015 [http://www.dohc.ie/publications/Future\\_Health.html](http://www.dohc.ie/publications/Future_Health.html)

Gol, 2006 A Vision for Change: Report Of The Expert Group On Mental Health Policy [http://www.irishpsychiatry.ie/Libraries/External\\_Events\\_Documents/vision\\_for\\_change\\_full\\_document.sflb.ashx](http://www.irishpsychiatry.ie/Libraries/External_Events_Documents/vision_for_change_full_document.sflb.ashx)

Gol, Mental Health Act 2001 <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2001/en/act/pub/0025/>

Gol, Oireachtas Library & Research Service, Spotlight: The Mental Health Act 2001: Delivering on best practice? No. 5, 2012 <http://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/media/housesoftheoireachtas/libraryresearch/spotlights/SpotlightMentalHealthAct2001Final3.pdf>

HSE, New Directions: Review of HSE Day Services and Implementation Plan 2012 – 2016 Personal Support Services For Adults With Disabilities, Working Group Report February 2012 [http://www.inclusionireland.ie/sites/default/files/documents/Reports/new\\_directions.pdf](http://www.inclusionireland.ie/sites/default/files/documents/Reports/new_directions.pdf)

McDaid, Shari, Recovery: what you should expect from a good quality mental health service, Mental Health Reform 2013 <http://www.mentalhealthreform.ie/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/MHR-Recovery-paper-final-April-2013.pdf>

Mental Health Commission, A Vision for a Recovery Model in Irish Mental Health Services, December 2005 <http://www.mhcirl.ie/File/discpapvforarecmod.pdf>

### Northern Ireland

An approach to quality and safety for micro social care and support services, Think Local Act Personal Network [http://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/\\_library/Resources/Personalisation/Localmilestones/Addendum\\_to\\_the\\_Practical\\_Guide\\_\\_4.pdf](http://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/_library/Resources/Personalisation/Localmilestones/Addendum_to_the_Practical_Guide__4.pdf)

Commissioning for Provider Diversity 2013, Shared Lives Plus <http://sharedlivesplus.invisionzone.com/index.php?/files/file/184-commissioning-for-provider-diversity/>

Dept of Health UK (2010). Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Our Strategy for Public Health in England, London: HM Government <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/healthy-lives-healthy-people-our-strategy-for-public-health-in-england>

Dept of Health, UK (2011) No Health without Mental Health, London: HM Government <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-mental-health-strategy-for-england>

DHSSPSNI (Dept of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, NI) (2011), Service Framework For Mental Health And Wellbeing [http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/service\\_framework\\_for\\_mental\\_health\\_and\\_wellbeing\\_-\\_consultation\\_version.pdf](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/service_framework_for_mental_health_and_wellbeing_-_consultation_version.pdf)

DHSSPSNI Delivering Excellence: Supporting Recovery, A Professional Framework for Mental Health Nursing in Northern Ireland 2011-2016 [http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/mental\\_health\\_nursing\\_framework\\_-\\_delivering\\_excellence\\_d6.pdf](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/mental_health_nursing_framework_-_delivering_excellence_d6.pdf)

DHSSPSNI, 2005, Equal Lives Report: Review of Policy and Services for People with a Learning Disability In Northern Ireland accessed 13/8/14 [https://www.google.ie/search?sourceid=navclient&hl=en-GB&ie=UTF-8&rlz=1T4DSGQ\\_enIE495IE497&q=Equal+Lives+Report%3a+Review+of+Policy+and+Services+for+People+with+a+Learning+Disability+In+Northern+Ireland+%28DHSSPS+2005%29](https://www.google.ie/search?sourceid=navclient&hl=en-GB&ie=UTF-8&rlz=1T4DSGQ_enIE495IE497&q=Equal+Lives+Report%3a+Review+of+Policy+and+Services+for+People+with+a+Learning+Disability+In+Northern+Ireland+%28DHSSPS+2005%29)

DHSSPSNI, Bamford Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability (NI) [www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/bamford.htm/](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/bamford.htm/)

## General

UN, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, <http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml>

## 3 Safeguarding vulnerable adults and children

Dept of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, NI, (2006) Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults, Regional Adult Protection Policy and Procedural Guidance

Gov UK: Protection of Freedoms Act, 2012 (sections on definitions/safeguarding of vulnerable groups) <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/9/contents/enacted>

Office of the Public Guardian, UK, Safeguarding Policy, May 2013 <https://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/protecting-the-vulnerable/mca/safeguarding-policy.pdf>

Society of St Vincent de Paul, (2013) Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults: Republic of Ireland Summary Guide - National policy and procedures for the protection and welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults <http://svp.ie/Files/Child-Protection/SVP-Safeguarding-Children-and-Vulnerable-Adults-Su.aspx>

Regulated Activity - NI <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/regulated-activity-adults.pdf>

Republic of Ireland - Legislation [http://www.homs.ie/whatsnew-publication-368-New\\_Child\\_and\\_Vulnerable\\_Adults\\_Protection\\_Legislation](http://www.homs.ie/whatsnew-publication-368-New_Child_and_Vulnerable_Adults_Protection_Legislation)

Safeguarding Adults at Risk Information Hub <http://www.volunteernow.co.uk/fs/doc/publications/saarih-a5-leaflet-vol-sector-cs4.pdf>

## 4 Social Enterprises

DIY Committee guide <http://www.diycommitteeguide.org/article/setting-social-enterprise>

Eustace Patterson Ltd, 'Exploring Social Enterprise in nine Areas in Ireland', A. Clarke & A. Eustace, FINAL REPORT, September 2009 <http://www.dublinpact.ie/new/Doc%2004%20-%20PLANET%20Exploing%20Social%20Enterprise.Oct.09.pdf>

Gov UK: Setting up a social enterprise <https://www.gov.uk/set-up-a-social-enterprise>

Irish Social Enterprise Network [www.socent.ie/](http://www.socent.ie/)

Social Enterprise NI <http://www.socialenterpriseni.org/>

Social Entrepreneurs Ireland <http://socialentrepreneurs.ie/>

## 5 Social Farming and Insurance

FBD – Insurance Rol <http://www.fbd.ie/farm/farm-insurance/>

Insurance Help! Sheet <http://www.diycommitteeguide.org/article/insurance-help-sheet>

Irish Brokers Association - Insurance Information [www.iba.ie/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category](http://www.iba.ie/index.php?option=com_content&view=category)

NICVA - Advice Note 12: Insurance Contact 028 9087 7777 [9] or [charityadviceofficer@nicva.org](mailto:charityadviceofficer@nicva.org)

NFU Mutual Farmers Insurance NI [www.nfumutual.co.uk/farming/insurance/](http://www.nfumutual.co.uk/farming/insurance/)

SCNI - Insurance Information fact sheet Contact 028 2564 5676 [12] or email [info@supportingcommunitiesni.org](mailto:info@supportingcommunitiesni.org)

Volunteer Now - Volunteers and Insurance infosheet. Contact 028 9023 2020 or [training@volunteernow.co.uk](mailto:training@volunteernow.co.uk)

## 6 Social Farming and Rural Development

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, NI (2010), Social Farming: An Opportunity for Northern Ireland, [www.ruralnetworkni.org.uk/](http://www.ruralnetworkni.org.uk/)

European Network for Rural Development (EN RD), O'Connor, D et al, (2010) Overview of Social Farming and Rural Development Policy in Selected EU Member States.

European Union, (2011) A short guide to the European Commission's proposals for EU rural development policy after 2013 <http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/Community/RuralDevelopment/FileDownload,35200,en.pdf>

Flemish Rural Network: Conference on Linking Rural Development and Social Farming, 30 September and 1 October 2010 in Mechelen, Belgium <http://www.ruraalnetwerk.be/activiteitenverslagen/activiteiten-vlaams-ruraal-netwerk/report-conference-linking-rural-development>

National Economic and Social Forum, Rural Renewal, Combatting Social Exclusion, Forum Report No 12 [http://files.nesc.ie/nesc\\_archive/nesc\\_reports/NESF\\_12.pdf](http://files.nesc.ie/nesc_archive/nesc_reports/NESF_12.pdf)

OPINION of the European Economic and Social Committee on Social farming: green care and social and health policies <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.nat-opinions.25458>

The Future of Disability and Rehabilitation in Rural Communities: An Emerging Narrative, Foundation Paper No. 3, July 2011, RTC: Rural, Rural Institute, University of Montana

## 7 The Nature and Practice of Social Farming

Dept Agriculture and Rural Development, (2010) Harbison, A, Social Farming: An Opportunity for Northern Ireland [www.ruralnetworkni.org.uk/](http://www.ruralnetworkni.org.uk/)

Di Iacovo, F., and O'Connor, D. (Eds), 2009 Supporting Policies for Social Farming in Europe – Progressing Multifunctionality in Responsive Rural Areas. Firenze: Arsia.

Effects of care farms: Scientific research on the benefits of care farms for clients (Netherlands) [http://www.carefarminguk.org/sites/carefarminguk.org/files/Effects\\_of\\_care\\_farms\\_Elings.pdf](http://www.carefarminguk.org/sites/carefarminguk.org/files/Effects_of_care_farms_Elings.pdf)

McGloin, A, and O Connor, D, (2007) An Overview of Social Farming in Ireland: The State of the Art, SOFAR Project, University College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland

Skerratt S., Williams, F., (2008), Scoping Study: Establishing the state of play of Care Farming in Scotland, and the implications for policy, Rural Society Research Scottish Agricultural College, Edinburgh [http://www.sruc.ac.uk/downloads/file/37/care\\_farming\\_in\\_scotland-a\\_scoping\\_study](http://www.sruc.ac.uk/downloads/file/37/care_farming_in_scotland-a_scoping_study)

SoFar project: Introductory paper on Social/CareFarming [http://sofar.unipi.it/index\\_file/SOFAR%20introductory\\_paper%20.pdf](http://sofar.unipi.it/index_file/SOFAR%20introductory_paper%20.pdf)

SoFAR research project book [http://ec.europa.eu/research/agriculture/pdf/sofar\\_book.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/agriculture/pdf/sofar_book.pdf)

Supporting policies for Social Farming in Europe: Progressing Multifunctionality in Responsive Rural Areas, Francesco Di Iacovo, Deirdre O'Connor editors

# Appendix 1

Listed below is the range of contacts/linkages made by farmers who participated in the SoFAB Project with individuals and institutions involved in Social Farming in Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland.

## Northern Ireland

Health and Social Care Trusts  
National Learning Network (cross border)  
Destined (service provider)  
Rehabcare (service provider) (cross border)  
Special needs schools  
North West Parents & Friends (cross border)  
Beacon Mental Well-Being (service provider)  
HSE (cross border)  
The Base Ballycastle (service provider)  
Autism Initiatives  
Something Special (service provider)  
IOTA Business Supports  
Volunteer Now  
Positive Futures (service provider)  
Cruse Bereavement Centre

Outdoor Well-Being Network  
Omagh Enterprise Centre  
Sure Start  
Ashdale Care  
Banbridge Enterprise Agency  
Alliance for Youth Works  
Other Social Farmers  
Farm Organisations  
NFU Mutual (Insurance)  
Service Users and Their Families  
Key Support Workers  
Public Health Agency  
Health and Social Care Board  
College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE)

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Northern Ireland (DARD)  
Cooperation and Working Together (CAWT)  
National Learning Network  
Willowbridge Special School

## Republic of Ireland

RehabCare  
St John of God  
HSE (Local offices)  
National Learning Network  
Praxis Care  
Drumlin House Training Centre  
Health and Social Care Trusts (cross border)  
HSE Mental Health and Disability Services  
Autism Services  
St. Christopher's Longford (cross border)  
Education and Training Boards  
Breffni Addiction Support Project  
Steadfast House (cross border)  
Clogher House (cross border)  
Community Development Board  
– Social Inclusion Measure

Family Resource Centres  
Genio Project  
Cooperation and Working Together (CAWT)  
Local Enterprise Boards  
Probation Service  
Willowbridge Special School  
Active Aged Groups  
Rossinver Organic Centre  
North West Parents Friends  
Brothers of Charity  
Caphill Communities  
Other Social Farmers  
Farm Organisations  
Local Development Companies

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM)  
Teagasc  
Service Users and Their Families  
Key Support Workers  
FBD (Insurance)



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## Appendix 2

**SoFAB Pilot Farm Profile:** This is a sample farm profile prepared by one of the farming families which participated in the SoFAB Project.

You can view others on the website [www.socialfarmingacrossborders.org](http://www.socialfarmingacrossborders.org)

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### Section 1 – Your Details

**Name:**

Matthew and Clodagh McGreehan



**Address:**

Riverstown, Dundalk, Co. Louth



### Section 2 – Your Farm

**About my farm:**

Creag Ard Sheep Farm

The farm and farm yards are based at the foot of Sieve Foy mountain in the Cooley Peninsula. We are predominately sheep farmers with four hundred of a flock. The farm comprises of 70 acres of lowland and 80 acres of mountain commonage. We breed a horned black-face ewe which is suited to the hills. Busy times of the year are April - August and October. Ewes are scanned and those with multiple births are kept in the lowlands for extra feeding and monitoring. Lambing season begins the end of April. In June we will begin clipping the sheep and preparing them for their return to the hills. We frequently shepherd the sheep on the hills to ensure that they kept to their own pasture. They are then gathered in October and some are housed over the winter.

The farm is suitable for participants with a moderate to high level of physical agility and fitness but farm activities can be adapted and graded to suit the clients and provide a safe and purposeful environment.





There are several sheep dogs, hens, ducks, cows, donkey, and pig that also need feeding daily. We have two farmyards and some small fields are close by which frequently can involve a short walk. When weather is permitting and during non busy times these other fields involve a 5-10 minute cycle during which sheep are fed and monitored. At busy times and when required participants can travel with the farmer in his Jeep to complete these farm activities. There are 10 acres along the Cooley Coast which provides a scenic contrast from the mountain hillside.



### **Farm Activities offered to the Participants:**

- Daily activities include attending and feeding farm animals.
- Participants on the farm can help in opening / closing gates, rounding up and loading sheep into pens for various handling activities and transportation.
- Annual activities include injecting ewes, cleaning wool, foot baths, marking fleeces, tagging lambs, shearing sheep and rolling their fleeces, feeding pet lambs.
- Farm maintenance activities include: Piling and fencing, painting piling posts, brushing yards.
- Cleaning out sheds.
- Building and repairing stone walls.
- Annual power washes of machinery Inc tractor and sheds.



### **Preferred days of the week:**

Thursday or Friday

### **Projects on-going at the moment:**

- Painting Traditional Farm Machinery
- Restoring two High Nelly Bikes
- Growing organic vegetables
- Restoring the piggery



## Section 3 – Your Locality & Community

### Nearest Services:

Bush service station: fuel etc, Martins pub and Riverstown Chinese; Omeath Village

### Nearest town:

Newry and Dundalk both eleven miles away

### Nearest public transport or rural transport initiative:

Omeath 4 miles, Bush 4 miles approximately

### My locality and community interests:

I have an active involvement with the Irish Farmers Association

I have a historical interest in farming and in the old field names and ways of prolonging our ancestral history. I have restored old farm buildings to their previous glory. I have attended courses in genealogy and have built up a large collection of vintage farm machinery over the years.

In 2000, my wife Clodagh and I opened a B&B and incorporated farm activity demonstrations for some guests during the Summer months which included hand-milking Kerry cows and butter-making, shearing sheep by hand, feeding pet lambs, collecting eggs. We no longer continue the B&B as we have four children aged 5-10 yrs. In 2004, we won a Rural Tourism Award for Farmhouse Accommodation.

## Section 4 – You, the Farmer

### Me and my Farm:

From a young age I loved farming, learning the skills of sheep farming from my uncle and grandfather. My father has a small cattle farm. In 2000 we lost the entire flock to the foot and mouth cull and had to start from scratch sourcing sheep from the west.

When I was a teenager I became a farm worker for a neighbour's farm of the late Tom MC Cann. I inherited his farm, when he later required care in the home. I developed my interest in the caring profession and I became employed with the HSE as a home help and completed a FETAC course in health care. The original homestead is the centre of the farm and a few years ago we restored the outhouses that came from the Famine era, which will be home to our donkey, cow and pig.



### Other information:

My wife Clodagh is also a sheep farmer and an occupational therapist working in rehabilitation. She has an interest in mental health and has completed a certificate in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy and various other modalities.

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## Appendix 3

This is a copy of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by parties to the SoFAB pilot programme, setting out the legal responsibilities and roles of all stakeholders, and expected outcomes of the project. This MoU can be used as an example of the elements to be included in a contract or service agreement for social farming.

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### Memorandum of Understanding

#### Pilot Practice Phase of Social Farming Across Borders (SoFAB) Project

#### SoFAB Project Mission

*‘We promote Social Farming as a viable option for achieving improved quality of life for people who use health and social services and for farm families, through enhancing social inclusion and connecting farmers with their communities.’*

#### Context of project:

The SoFAB project is an opportunity to offer choice to people who use health and social care support services to engage with ordinary farms and the farming community in meeting their personal life choices, or exploring new options within ordinary rural community settings. The project is informed and directed by current Irish, U.K. and International policy on the inclusion, participation and engagement of people who avail of on-going health and social support services. The project acknowledges that policy in this regard was informed in consultation with people who use support services. The project acknowledges that ‘social farming’ partnering includes ‘service users’, farmers / farm families, professions, services, agencies and authorities who have significant voluntary or statutory roles within people’s support framework.

The project which commenced in October 2011 and runs until September 2014 (Piloting Practice Phase in 2013) and is funded under Interreg IVA and administered by the Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB). The project is managed by representatives of the three partner bodies of University College Dublin, Queens University Belfast and Leitrim Development Company with UCD being the lead partner. The project steering committee is advised by an advisory committee with membership drawn from the above partner agencies, the Health and Social Care Statutory Bodies in both jurisdictions and international practitioner agencies in Social / Care Farming.

The SoFAB project is acknowledged and supported as a new community inclusion initiative by the Departments of Health and Agriculture in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland.

#### The four key deliverables of the SoFAB Project

- (i) Dissemination of information: On the concepts of ‘Social Farming’ the ‘Social Inclusion’ agenda of current policy. And to explore the opportunities this presents to offer people choice to engage in a wide range of activities within the ordinary community places of rural life.

- (ii) **Networking:** Develop a network which shares information, builds relationships and supports learning through practice among all interested stakeholders
- (iii) **Pilot Practice:** To learn how to support people who use services, farm families and support agencies to respond to peoples' personal choices or wish for new opportunities through drawing on the concept of 'Social Farming'.
- (iv) **Training:** To provide training to farm partners in the values and practices underpinning the delivery of quality safe experiences for people who use services. To provide training to service partners and interested parties based on the piloting experience and international practice in delivering social farming experiences to people who choose it.

## Purpose of Pilot Phase MoU

All Partners described below are voluntary participants in a developmental project focused on evolving learning through pilot practice. The purpose of the MOU is to give clarity on the key roles and responsibilities of the various partners.

## Core Party Details

<b>Party (A)</b>	SoFAB Pilot Practice 2013 Named Contact
<b>Party (B)</b>	Statutory Health and Social Care Body
HSE West	Named Contact
HSE Dublin NE	Named Contact
South Eastern Trust	Named Contact
Northern Trust	Named Contact
Southern Trust	Named Contact
Western Trust	Named Contact
Commencement date:	Day 1 of pilot practice in each Trust / HSE region
End Date:	Last day of Pilot Practice in each Trust / HSE region



**Key Responsibilities In Pilot Practice Phase of Project:**  
**Table 1 Governing Parties A and B (signatories to the MOU)**

<b>SoFAB (A)</b>	<b>Statutory Health and Social Care body (B)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion of concept of Social Farming within the Social inclusion policy context.</li> <li>• Work with the input of the Project Advisory Committee in developing pilot criteria (Trusts (N.I.), HSE (RoI), International Social Farming Representatives.).</li> <li>• Recruit potential pilot Social Farmers.</li> <li>• Screen applicants via agreed selection criteria.</li> <li>• Ensure all pilot farmers have Access N.I. / Garda clearance advised pre piloting.</li> <li>• Acquire and verify two personal character references per pilot farmer.</li> <li>• Train Pilot Farmers (from pre practice).</li> <li>• Support Practice – through promoting effective working between all parties, (information sharing, communications plans, activity planning, additional information resources to farmers).</li> <li>• Administer the small grant with pilots in prioritising Health &amp; Safety, access, welfare facilities, activities preparation.</li> <li>• Capture significant learning on (i) quality of outcomes for all parties and (ii) associated cost of support (Value For Money).</li> <li>• Apply best practice principles to collection of information within the project as guided by both partner Universities (University College Dublin and Queen's University Belfast and the National Disability Authority Guidelines.</li> <li>• Report and disseminate learning.</li> <li>• Support sustainability and progression via linking pilot practice to the Social Farming Network.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the interest of lead Government Departments in evolving a learning experience on Social Farming in both jurisdictions.</li> <li>• Identify local partner agencies (statutory and voluntary / private) in your region with a vision of connecting with ordinary community opportunities.</li> <li>• Support a partnering and learning working relationship for the pilot practice.</li> <li>• Support 'personal choice' or valid interest as a core (client) selection principle for participating in pilots.</li> <li>• Support family leadership / independent advocacy roles as positive contributors to partnership working.</li> <li>• Identify a 'key contact person' as the SoFAB link to your Trust / HSE area.</li> <li>• Advise opportunities for sharing learning and practice as it evolves within piloting phase.</li> </ul>

**Table 2 Parties to the local implementation of Social Farming**

<b>Local Service Provider Agency</b>	<b>Local Pilot Farmers</b>	<b>Participants to project (with, Advocate, Family member, Friend as appropriate)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select participants based on criteria advised for project</li> <li>• Share relevant information to assist personal planning for (i) quality and (ii) safety of outcomes for participants.</li> <li>• Inform as a project requirement (applicants General Practitioner of intent to engage in this new activity and advise any subsequent recommendations in support plan.</li> <li>• Work in partnership (farmer, person using the service, family, community resources) on logistical support – transport etc.</li> <li>• Identify a personal key contact for each participant for communication at a specific participant level.</li> <li>• Identify the service key contact (if different) for formal communication with service (adult protection / other).</li> <li>• Advise and apply your local policies and procedures as applicable in other ordinary community settings.</li> <li>• Advise SoFAB project office of issues or concerns that may arise during practice.</li> <li>• Participate with the organisational research aspects of the project.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide details for police and reference checking requirements.</li> <li>• Inform SoFAB if since the date of signing the Access NI/ Garda clearance forms you are under investigation, charged or convicted for / of a criminal offence.</li> <li>• Identified lead person participates in activities on days of pilot practice.</li> <li>• Complete SoFAB training requirements pre and during pilot practice.</li> <li>• Complete external guidance training on farm safety management.</li> <li>• Document and revise farm safety plan as necessary.</li> <li>• Provide suitable welfare and comfort facilities for participants on site.</li> <li>• To provide 30 days of social farming opportunity in 2013.</li> <li>• Manage personal information in keeping with advised local agency policies and procedures.</li> <li>• Apply the advised level of farm insurance during piloting dates with appropriate indemnifications associated with the project.</li> <li>• Have a plan for activities reflective of participant interest, farm opportunities, seasonal change, and flexibility on the day.</li> <li>• Maintain brief records of pilot activity as advised by project.</li> <li>• Report and document any issues of concern as per training and support documentation provided.</li> <li>• Work to relevant policies and procedures as agreed with the local service agency.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with the project as an identified personal choice or an opportunity you would choose.</li> <li>• Identify other key people you want to involve in your decision and support.</li> <li>• Get information about the project, expectations, length of time, end of project.</li> <li>• Get to know the social farmers involved before making a final decision to start.</li> <li>• Follow all safety guidance that is in place on the farm.</li> <li>• Purchase your own personal work and safety wear.</li> <li>• Participate in the collection of information (Including photos and video clips) about your experience of social farming. (Give consent for information to be gathered and shared (anonymously if desired) to support learning).</li> <li>• Participate in identifying your needs and preferences throughout the pilot experience.</li> <li>• Share your experience with others</li> </ul>

## Operational Process

The two parties A and B agree to the above as key responsibilities which will underpin the emergence of local working arrangements between, all parties: Provider Agencies, Participants and the local pilot 'social farmers'.

The governing principle of this Memorandum of Understanding is that all partners that participate in the pilot will work in collaboration towards achieving the commonly held outcomes described earlier.

It is expected that local operational arrangements will emerge and be put in place between local partners based on the above principles and responsibilities. Agencies have existing policies and procedures for supporting Participants (clients) connection with community opportunities, places and people. These will be used as the existing developed practices of the Provider Agency in supporting its Participants (clients) with the social farmers.

All parties will be given a copy of this MoU as the guiding framework agreed between the parties A & B for the pilot practice engagements.

The MoU begins at the start of practice (Farm 1; day 1 in a Trust / HSE area) and ends on the last day of practice for a farm in a Trust / HSE area.

## Risk Sharing in Pilots Practice

**Table 3 Risk Sharing in Pilot Practice**

1. Risk Domain	Responsibility in identifying hazards	Responsibility for planning & remediation	Acceptable to proceed
2. Farm Environs	Farmer	Farmer	A
3. Current enterprises and farm activity	Farmer	Farmer	A
4. Information associated with Participants	B	B with A	A & B
5. Planned Social Farming activities	A & B	A & B	A & B
6. Logistical	B	B with A	A & B

### **Note in respect of Table 3:**

Table 3 is to be read as a reflection of the principle and responsibilities described above as they will operate locally 'on the ground'.

**Party A** being SoFAB with the pilot farmers.

**Party B** being the Statutory Bodies / locally commissioned services.

## Outcomes for Partners

Table 4

<b>For Statutory Bodies (Health and Social Care Trusts N. I. / Health Service Executive Rol</b>
Evidence of action on implementation of current key inclusion focused Health and Social Care Policies.
Evidence on Value for Money considerations of Social Farming
Evidence on inter- departmental opportunities and barriers in meeting social policy objectives.
<b>For Participants (Adults with Learning Disability, or Mental Health support need)</b>
Opportunity to experience Social Farming as support option
Evidence of benefits in quality of life outcomes through participation in Social Farming.
Experience to inform future life plans and support needs.
Evidence of inclusion and citizenship.
<b>For Service Providers (Commissioned) Organisations</b>
Evidence of personal outcomes in reporting to commissioner: Quality, Safety, Value for Money (VFM).
Evidence to inform statutory reporting requirements such as the Bamford Returns (NI)
Strategic information on developing services through community partnerships.
<b>For Farm Families</b>
Experience and evidence on which to plan Social Farming services for the future
Experience of working in partnership in provision of Social Farming service
New and applied skills.
<b>For Rural Communities</b>
Evidence of Social Farming within both the Irish and Northern Irish contexts.
Evidence of inclusion and relationship potential in rural communities
Demonstrable capacity building through networking and new partnerships.
Evidence on quality and Value for Money (VFM) of new community based Partnerships.

## Exiting the Project

- The project wishes that once identified, participants are supported to engage fully with the opportunity provided by the project.
- Where a participant requests to disengage from the project, this should be brought to the attention of the Provider Agency who are asked to inform the SoFAB project office within 5 working days. If possible a place may be made available to another participant.
- An agency deciding to exit early should contact the SoFAB project office and ask that its intention to exit be notified to the Project Manager within 5 working days. An offer to explore any difficulty and assist with remaining in the project will be made by the Project Manager.

- Social Farmers wishing to withdraw from the project are asked to give a minimum of 2 weeks' notice. Please note: there may be implications for the retrieval of dispersed monies in relation to payments of the small grant and Farm Relief vouchers.

### **Problem Solving:**

- Where a Participant / their key contact raise an issue in respect of the farm this should be brought to the attention of the Provider Agency and the SoFAB office within 5 working days.
- Where a difficulty cannot be resolved at local level between the parties. The SoFAB coordinator and the service provider (the key contact person for SoFAB project) will meet with parties to progress a resolution.
- If resolution is not possible parties will be asked to apply the exit procedure above.



## Appendix 4

This is the format for a Support Framework used for the SoFAB Project, completed as a fictional example for illustration purposes.

### Framework for Participant Support Plan

Progressing from the participant 'expression of interest' to support plan.

The key contributors to this support plan are the Participant (family/advocate), the Farmer and the Local Service Provider.

This support plan needs to cover the following:

(There may already be a support plan which can assist this process)

#### 1. Local Service Provider

Contact Name:	The Boss
Address:	Jolly Training Centre, Co. Cavan.
Agency Key Contact for project:	The Boss
'Incident of Alleged Abuse' Contact (if different)	The Boss' Boss (Centre Manager)
Phone:	086-00223311
E-Mail:	The boss@eircom.net

#### 2. Participant

Name:	Louise
Address:	2 the Manor, Co. Cavan
Contact No.:	086-22335511
Overview of Participant's goals in relation to this opportunity:	To get to meet new people To learn more about growing vegetables, gardening and farming
Additional supports in meeting goal(s): (Identified by the participant, the farmer and the service provider)	Farmer to be mindful Louise has a learning / intellectual disability when teaching new skills

#### 3. Local Service Provider 'Key Contact' for the participant

Contact Name:	The Boss
Address:	Jolly Training Centre, Co. Cavan.
Contact Number:	086-00223311
Out of Hours Contact Number:	086-700500

## 4. Significant Shared Information

(From: e.g. Local Service Provider, Person/Advocate, Key Contact, Day Opportunities Placement Officer).

What are the Participant's Special Support Needs, Medical Needs, Risks (as identified by Referrer) and how will the Local Service Agency and Social Farmer partnership meet these support needs?

Support issue for Participant:	How will this be met during Project?
Communication/Literacy	Louise has very good communication and literacy skills
Sunblock	Louise to bring sunblock as required
Health/Medical	No health / medical issues
Tetanus Vaccine History	Louise has not had Tetanus vaccine
Allergies	Louise has no known allergies
Lunch	Farmer will provide lunch - tbc
Road & Traffic Awareness	Louise's road & traffic awareness is good
Smoking	Louise does not smoke
Health & Safety	Health & Safety Induction on first day on farm – Louise has good comprehension and will follow health and safety rules when explained. She has a very keen interest in machinery.

Support issue for Participant:	How will this be met during Project?
Date Activity will start:	
Date Activity will finish:	
Hours/Days Activity will happen:	Mondays 10am-4.30pm

### Transport Arrangements

Detail on how the Participant will travel to the farm:	Louise's parents Patricia and Brendan will drive him to the farm
Name of contact with responsibility for the weekly coordination/planning of transport:	Mrs Patricia YYYYY

### Support Requirements

Level of support required by Participant:	Louise is quite independent and should require minimal support from service. Marie will be available for initial visits if required
Agreed time when this level of support will be reviewed (between Local Service Provider and Farmer):	The Boss will attend first day on farm for health and safety induction
What will inform this? (Feedback from the Participant, Local Service Provider and Farmer)	Feedback from Louise and Marie & Bob

## 5. Family, Friend, Advocate, Circle of Support:

Where appropriate and chosen by a client, has the person discussed this opportunity with the above people?

Please indicate YES or NO:	Yes
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Will they engage with the experience?

Please indicate YES or NO:	Yes
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In what way(s) will they engage?

Louise's parents Patricia and Brendan will drive Louise to the farm and be available to listen to any concerns if they arise.
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## 6. In the event of any emergency; untoward incident; allegation; and/ or accident please contact: (add local contact)

Name	Contact Details
1. The Boss (Job Coach)	086-00223311
2. The bosses Boss (Centre Manager)	049-5555555
3. Patricia (Louise's Mother)	087-2233444

Where there is an incident of alleged abuse the Social Farmer must immediately inform the Local Service Manager (as identified at point 3 on this plan). This identified person will contact the appropriate Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Co-ordinators. This should be followed up in writing within two days of the alleged abuse being disclosed / observed.

Contact details for the Vulnerable Adults Co-ordinators in the Trust / HSE Region may also be provided to the pilot farmer as deemed necessary.

**This should be a live operational process and copies of the support plan will be held by all parties during the project period.**

## Appendix 5

This is an example of a risk assessment from the SoFAB training documentation relating to use of common equipment by participants on the farm.

Hazard	Lawn Mowers (wheel driven) Strimmers Hedge Trimmers
Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High risk of cutting fingers or possible lacerations to legs and feet.</li> <li>• Medium risk of hearing loss</li> <li>• Low risk of fume inhalation if used outdoors in a</li> <li>• Well ventilated area</li> <li>• High risk of burn injury from handling engine exhaust</li> <li>• High risk of eye/face injury with Strimmers</li> </ul>
Controls in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good well minded machines in reasonably good condition</li> <li>• All operators are made aware of the operators manuals.</li> </ul>
Further controls needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wear ear protection when using these machines</li> <li>• Do not touch hot components unless when wearing suitable gloves or wait until it has cooled down</li> <li>• When using ensure adequate ventilation.</li> <li>• Do not allow anyone to place fingers or toes near the cutting edge while in operation</li> <li>• Hedge cutter is only to be used to shoulder height.</li> <li>• Take due care when refuelling with petrol to avoid spills</li> <li>• Wear suitable clothing such as overalls.</li> <li>• Replace cables on mowers once wear occurs and tighten and adjust as required, sharpen blades where necessary.</li> <li>• Take due care to protect yourself when handling oils to avoid possible dermatitis</li> <li>• Operators using Strimmer needs to ensure the harness is fitted correctly and balance the machine to allow best posture for the user,</li> <li>• Avoid using for prolonged periods due to its weight; always wear face shield ear protection and helmet and steel toecap boots.</li> <li>• Cover exposed skin if using on warm sunny days</li> </ul>
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hearing defenders Ear protection</li> <li>• Additional PPE as required</li> <li>• Operators manuals</li> </ul>
Responsible persons	Mr/Ms A Sample

## Appendix 6

Below is a Social Farming Checklist for Farm Risk Assessments developed and used within the SoFAB Project. It can serve as a useful reminder of issues to be considered and addressed.

Item No.	Topic	Tick
1	I/we have completed a risk assessment for each area of work activity for my farm and this document is available for inspection as requested.	
2	I/we will complete a Safe System of Work Plan (SSWP) for each day that So FAB participants are on my farm	
3	I/we have a First Aid box available if required and its content is updated as necessary.	
4	There are suitable welfare facilities available on this farm for SoFAB participants	
5	I/we will carry out induction training for visitors to my farm as required where there is a particular risk with an activity	
6	I/we have an list of Exclusions of particular activities available please see attached list ( include this document with this form)	
7	I/we have available as required the relevant Personal Protective Equipment(PPE) required by participants to do their work safely	
8	I/we have appropriate signage in place to warn visitors to my/our farm of particular dangers or areas of note that they should not enter/ go near.	
9	I/we will set out a plan of activities for each day we have participants on our farm, this plan of activities will be written or printed and held on file by me on the farm for inspection by SoFAB	
10	I/We will discuss the house rules with participants at induction and as necessary to ensure they are fully aware of same	
11	Due to the location of our farm we /I will brief the participants on all areas of road safety such as riding on trailers, wearing seat belts, moving animals etc at induction and throughout their term on our farm	
12	I/we will endeavour to ensure that all participants coming onto our farm will be included in all social activities.	
13	Participants will be made aware of meal arrangements on day one and facilities will be made available so participants will have a proper place for having their meals	
14	Where unforeseen circumstances arise I/we will ensure the safety of the participant takes priority, and at no time will they be put at risk or exposed to danger.	
15	If a situation develops where a day with the participants has to be cancelled where it can't be avoided, I/ we will notify all relevant parties as soon as possible on this matter, and re arrange next suitable date.	
16	Where activities are planned and weather conditions do not permit these activities to go ahead, alternative arrangements/activities will be put in place	
17	Where members of the public are coming onto the farm, I/We will ensure the participants are briefed at induction and are aware of how to behave and handle this situation.	
18	I/We will demonstrate awareness of safety on this farm by ensuring we keep a regular check on all areas of the farm and that if an area of concern is highlighted it will be documented and recorded and that an action deadline will be put in place and this will be kept on file for inspection.	
19	I/We will use whatever methods we can to explain to the participants all elements of Health & Safety, this may be in the form of Photos sketches, drawings, verbal and non-verbal methods of communications	
20	In the event of an accident occurring with a participant we will notify all relevant parties as soon as possible to inform them of the event.	



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## Appendix 7

**Farmer Log Book:** This is the outline and guidance notes for the farmer log book kept by farming families participating in the SoFAB Project.

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### Guidance Notes

1. Complete an entry for each visit.
2. List the participants' names in the attendance box. Beside this box, indicate the length of visit in hours.
3. List the key supports present on your farm on the day and the organisation they are from.
4. In the 'Activity Planned' box describe the activity you have planned to undertake during the visit. You can fill this box in before the visit.
5. In the 'Main Activity Today' box outline the activities the participants were engaged in during the visit.
6. In the 'Progress on Relationships with all parties' you can give an update on how you feel relationships are developing with those involved in your pilot experience.
7. PART B is to be filled out as required. Indicate the significant issue(s) or concern(s) you have as a result of the visit, who and when you communicated this to within the service and if you feel this is being followed and acted on.

**PART B is intended as a record of communication, to be kept as part of the log book and not as an incident report that requires more detailed information.**

## Part A

Date of Visit: _____	Visit Number: _____
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Start Time: _____	End Time: _____
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Participant Attendance:	Hours Attended:	Key Supports on Day:
1. _____	_____ hours	1. _____
2. _____	_____ hours	2. _____
3. _____	_____ hours	3. _____
4. _____	_____ hours	4. _____

Activity Planned:
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Main Activity Today:
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## Part A (continued)

What worked well:	What was difficult:

Learning Points:

Progress on Relationships with all parties:

## Part B

Significant Issue(s) or Concern(s):

This was communicated to:

Date and Time:

Is it being followed and acted on? Yes ☐ No ☐

**If No, please contact the SoFAB Project Office.**

Reported to:

Date and Time:







