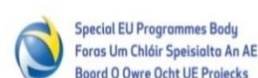


# ***Institutional Arrangements for Promoting and Enabling Social Farming in Ireland and Northern Ireland***



## **Report of the Social Farming Across Borders (SoFAB) Project**

**October 2014**



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

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## **BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT**

The Social Farming Across Borders (SoFAB) Project was funded under the *Cooperation for a More Sustainable Cross-Border Region Priority* of the EU INTERREG IVA Programme. It was a project of 3 years' duration beginning October 2011, administered through the Special EU Programmes Body and delivered through the partnership of University College Dublin, Leitrim Development Company and Queen's University Belfast.

The Project aimed to increase public awareness of the opportunities that social farming offers and ultimately expand the availability of the service in the cross border region. At the same time it also aimed to positively influence public policy in agricultural and rural development as well as health and social care service delivery with the purpose to maintain and expand social farming services in communities.

During the period April 2013 to June 2014 piloting of social farming services was undertaken on 20 farms in the project region which covered the six counties of Northern Ireland and the six border counties of the Republic of Ireland. Through organising placements for the 66 people who used the social farming services during the piloting period the SoFAB Project identified the institutional arrangements for social farming that existed at the time and shares the experience gained from practice in this report.

This Report considers the institutional arrangements identified through the SoFAB Project in the region in relation to arrangements elsewhere in certain EU member states. It recognises that enabling social farming in Ireland and Northern Ireland will require substantial discussion and negotiation between a range of stakeholders in an effort to sustain support to these on-farm services. The experience of the SoFAB Project has identified both individuals and organisations interested in establishing and expanding social farming in the region. This report outlines the key actions which are necessary to consider for the establishment of social farming and relates these actions to stakeholders involved.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The SoFAB Project Team would like to thank Pat Bogue for his work in putting together this report based on the information provided through the project. The editing committee of this report comprised: Jim Kinsella and Deirdre O'Connor of University College Dublin; Brian Smyth of Leitrim Development Company; and Roy Nelson of Queen's University Belfast. In compiling the report, the SoFAB Project information was provided by project staff: Paul Henry, Helen Doherty and Aoibheann Walsh. The valuable contribution by Aideen McGloin to this report is also acknowledged.

This report is based primarily on the experience of the 20 pilot farms and the willingness of the farmers to share this information over the course of the project is acknowledged.

Health and Social Care Trusts and the HSE Services in the project region as well as a number of health and social care service organisations who formed the bridge between the pilot farms and the service users contributed hugely to the lessons learned through the project and which underpin this report.

The SoFAB Project recognises that there would not be a project upon which to identify and assess institutional arrangements for social farming services without the participation of the 66 people who visited the pilot farms on a weekly basis to experience the social farming services available during the period April 2013 to June 2014.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Social farming provides opportunities to individuals to engage with agriculture/horticulture as part of their care, therapy or work programme. Social farming in Ireland is relatively new and not as well developed as in other countries such as the Netherlands, Belgium and Italy. The Social Farming Across Borders (SoFAB) Project which is the basis for this report, involved 20 farms engaged in the piloting of supports to 66 people in the 2013-2014 period. This report sets out the project findings in terms of structures, supports and linkages which are necessary to promote and enable social farming in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

### **Structures and Supports for Social Farming in Other Countries**

There is a range of structures in place for social farming (also referred to as care farming, green farming and farming for health) in other EU countries. In this report examples are explored from the UK, the Netherlands, Belgium and Slovenia. With the exception of Slovenia, the other countries mentioned have social/care farming organisations which coordinate activities in this area. For example Care Farming UK was established by care farmers and supporters while the Dutch and Belgian support centres were established by their respective Governments.

### **Developing and Progressing Social Farming**

In addition to the information on structures to support social farming in other countries, previous research and reports also provide insights into the development of social farming in Northern Ireland, Ireland and other countries.

In order to develop social farming in Northern Ireland, Harbison (2010) made a number of key recommendations including the need for: a champion organisation/individual for social farming; a social farming network; a guidebook, training and support for farmers; pilot/demonstration projects; and an integrated engagement and marketing strategy.

Previous research on social farming in Ireland (McGloin and O'Connor, 2007) indicated that there were no formal networks promoting social farming. McGloin (2014) analysed the institutional relationships involved in supporting social farming in Ireland and found that the level of support was variable. Based on this analysis McGloin concluded that there are many other 'actors' who could potentially contribute in this area but who were not involved in social farming.

Recommendations to further develop care farming in England include: development of an integrated strategy; strengthening the networks of care farmers; increased promotion; inclusion of referral to care farms in health and social care referral systems; and closer contact and sharing of information with other countries (Bragg et al., 2014). Lessons learned from Care Farming West Midlands, include the necessity to: promote the overall concept, develop supports for farmers and establish care standards; and specifically develop links between care farmers, commissioners and service users (CFWM, 2014).

Some of the main recommendations in reports on care farming in Scotland and Wales included the need for: greater proactive engagement by social farmers to promote the

service and inform decision makers; increased awareness and linkage with commissioners; increased knowledge and understanding of local needs; the establishment and maintenance of high quality standards; a greater role for coordinating/support organisations; the establishment of pilot monitor farms; and the development of a '*toolkit*' of information and guidance for farmers (Homer, 2011; Williams and Randall-Smith, 2011).

In 2002, social farms were essentially novelties in Italy with very few farmers involved but over time and as a result of the efforts of a range of stakeholders, social farming has developed to a stage where in 2014, the first national law on social farming was passed (Di Iacovo, 2014). Essential to this development path was the high level of cooperation among stakeholders at all stages in the process from planning to delivery.

### **Structures Involved in Social Farming: Lessons from SoFAB**

Based on the experience of the SoFAB Project, the actual structures/supports/links involved in social farming services operate at three levels, namely: farm level; local/regional level; and national level. In practice there is a complex interplay between the individuals/institutions both formal and informal which impacts on the supports delivered to individual service users at farm level. The '*Farm Level*' is specifically focused on the direct link between the service user and the social farmer and the associated contacts of the extended farm family, service user's family and the support/key worker. The '*Local/Regional Level*' is essentially about operationalising the social farming supports at local level, making them happen and ensuring delivery. The '*National Level*' is more related to policy and strategy regarding social farming and '*buy-in*' at a higher level in organisations/agencies.

In many ways, SoFAB played a role similar to that of a social farming collective group over the lifetime of the project. The main actions of SoFAB were to: provide guidance and support; support the development of networks and linkages; provide training; and to capture learning and evidence on social farming. Considerable effort was placed on promoting the concept of social farming to interested parties and the wider public. In the absence of a SoFAB Project support in the future, these roles will need to be undertaken by others.

### **Promoting and Enabling Social Farming**

The SoFAB Project brought both focus and energy to social farming in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The completion of the SoFAB Project means that the project team and resources are no longer available to promote and support social farming. The purpose of this report is to document lessons from the pilot phase and international experience and to outline actions which can be taken to ensure the social farming has the opportunity to develop and prosper. The main actions are set out below.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Involving</b>
Coordination of Social Farming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Social farming organisation important to coordinate development, without an organisation, other actions are neither realistic nor possible</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farmers, SoFAB partner organisations and other stakeholders</li> </ul>
Promotion, Awareness Raising and Information Dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ongoing need to raise awareness and profile of social farming</i></li> <li>• <i>Promotion required at local and national/regional levels</i></li> <li>• <i>Champion(s) for social farming to endorse concept and promote it</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social farming organisation, farmers, service users &amp; their families, local providers and healthcare agencies, local development companies and universities</li> </ul>
Planning and Development of Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ensure that supports are ‘person-centred’ and responsive to individual needs</i></li> <li>• <i>Develop and support capacity of service users and families to become involved in planning individual care plans</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social farmers, service users and their families, social farming organisation and care professionals</li> </ul>
Quality Standards and Best Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Development of and adherence to quality standards and best practice is necessary</i></li> <li>• <i>The SoFAB Social Farming Handbook (Nov. 2014) provides guidance in this area</i></li> <li>• <i>Considerable experience could be gained from Care Farming UK and others</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social farmers, service providers, healthcare agencies/organisations, social farming organisation, service users and their families</li> </ul>
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ongoing training required for existing farmers, new entrants and other interested parties</i></li> <li>• <i>Current training curriculum may also need revision in the future</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social farming organisation, universities, healthcare agencies, local development companies, DARD/ CAFRE and Teagasc</li> </ul>
Development of Wider Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Other target groups could engage in and benefit from social farming activities</i></li> <li>• <i>Need to forge links with relevant stakeholders and convince on benefits of social farming and capacity to deliver</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social farmers, social farming organisation, universities and healthcare providers (statutory and voluntary)</li> </ul>
Building the Evidence Base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Important that the ongoing development of social farming is documented and researched</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SoFAB partner universities, social farming organisation, individual farmers and service users</li> </ul>
Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Potential for ongoing networking of ideas, practices and a forum for both collective learning and problem solving</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social farmers and social farming organisation</li> </ul>
Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mutual alliances could be formed where social farmers support service users and their families on issues and families support the cause of social farming</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social farming organisation, social farmers, service users and their families</li> </ul>

Action	Detail	Involving
Liaising with Health and Care Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of supports at farm level requires cooperation with healthcare providers</li> <li>• Important to have <i>buy-in</i> at a higher level in national agencies/organisations</li> <li>• Consideration required to develop, maintain and nurture these relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social farmers, social farming organisation and health and social care services</li> </ul>
Funding for Social Farming and Inclusion into Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Politicians and decision makers (local, national and European) should be informed about social farming and efforts made to convince them of the value of the concept to individuals and society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social farmers, social farming organisation, service users/families and all other stakeholders</li> </ul>

Specific areas for action are identified in this report in order to promote and enable social farming in Ireland and Northern Ireland. With the ending of the SoFAB Project, it is critically important that all stakeholders work in partnership to deliver on the necessary actions. In doing so, it will ensure that more individuals are provided with the opportunity of social farming as an option in the future.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Social farming provides individuals with the opportunity to engage with nature and work in an agricultural or horticultural environment. Social farming is not just about agriculture/horticulture but can also have health, social community inclusion and education dimensions. Social farming is offering choice to people who use health and social care support services to engage with ordinary farms and the farming community. Social farming is as much a philosophy and a belief as it is an actual farm practice. From a farming perspective it is very different from other enterprises/activities as it cannot be delivered in an isolated manner within the farm gate. Engagement with others beyond the farm gate is essential for social farming to happen. Therefore, linkages, networks and working in cooperation with others are critical to the success of social farming.

Social farming in Ireland and Northern Ireland is relatively new and not as well developed as in other countries such as the Netherlands, Belgium and Italy. The Social Farming Across Borders (SoFAB) Project which is the basis for this report, involved 20 farms engaged in the piloting of supports to more than 60 people in the 2013-2014 period. This report sets out the findings from the project in terms of the structures, supports and linkages which are necessary to promote and enable social farming in Ireland. The report is developed based on international experience and the on the ground learning from the pilot project.

The context for social farming and the SoFAB Project is set out in Section 2. The structure and supports for social farming in other countries are presented in Section 3. This international experience is important in understanding the context of social farming but also the mechanisms which have facilitated development in other countries. Section 4 includes suggestions for developing and progressing social farming from previous research in a both Ireland and abroad. The structures involved in the SoFAB Project are outlined in Section 5, including two case studies of farm families who were involved in the pilot project. Suggestions for promoting and enabling social farming are presented in Section 6. Conclusions on the process of promoting and enabling social farming in Ireland are outlined in Section 7.

## **2. SOCIAL FARMING AND THE SOCIAL FARMING ACROSS BORDERS PROJECT**

Social farming commonly also known as care farming, green care and farming for health, is a growing concept across Europe. The concept is open to a range of interpretations depending on the experience and perception of social farming.

Social farming is defined by Di Iacovo & O'Connor (2009) in a European study of social farming as being:

*"both a traditional and innovative use of agriculture frequently introduced from 'grassroots level' by both new and established farmers. Social farming includes all activities that use agriculture 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 and O'Connor (2009) further suggest that social farming (with its origins in farming) adopts a multifunctional view of agriculture where health, employment, education and therapy are products of farming similar to traditional agricultural outputs.

While social farming can involve a range of activities, there are two common elements: activities take place on a farm; and are designed for people who have specific needs. Social farming benefits those individuals in achieving goals in their life's and the development of rural areas (EESC, 2012).

Social farming is the practice of offering activity on family farms as a form of social support service. The essential aspect of social farming is that the supports provided to participants are delivered in the context of a farm by members of the farm household. The farm is not a specialised treatment farm but remains a working farm where people in need of support can benefit from participation in farm activities in a non-clinical environment. The person availing of the social farming support has selected 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 plans. In return, the farmer may be rewarded for the provision of the service through the opportunity to expand and diversify their income with a new service on the farm. These services provide disadvantaged groups of people the opportunity for inclusion, to increase their self-esteem and to improve their health and well-being. Social farming also creates an opportunity to reconnect farmers with their local communities through opening up their farms as part of the social support system of the community.

In Ireland, care was traditionally provided within an institutional setting, often a distance from the service user's home and family. Government policy is now moving towards a more person centred focus and re-integration of services back into the community. In the past, social farming in Ireland was primarily targeted at those with intellectual disabilities (67%), mental ill health (19%) and physical disabilities (9%) (McGloin and O'Connor, 2007).

Social farming in Ireland and Northern Ireland is far less developed, established and recognised than in other EU countries such as Belgium and the Netherlands. The potential of

care farming in the Netherlands was recognised and supported by the Dutch Government and has led to considerable growth in the numbers attending care farms (over 10,000 people attended in the region of 800 farms) in 2005 (80% were non-institutional farms) (Hassink et al., 2007; Hine et al., 2008). Similarly in Belgium, there has been considerable growth in the number of private care farms (from 43 in 2003 to 200 in 2008) as a result of the setting up of the Support Centre for Green Care and the introduction of a Government subsidy for farmers to compensate them for the time that cannot be spent farming (Hine et al., 2008; Di Iacovo and O'Connor, 2009).

The Social Farming Across Borders (SoFAB) project was undertaken in the region encompassing the Border Counties of Ireland and all of Northern Ireland between October 2011 and September 2014). It was an EU INTERREG IVA funded project and was led by the School of Agriculture & Food Science, University College Dublin in partnership with Queen's University Belfast and Leitrim Development Company. The project had its origins in a previous EU project, known as the SoFAR Project<sup>1</sup> (Supporting Policies for Social Farming in Europe, 2006-2008), in which the status and potential for social farming was examined across seven EU countries and in so doing stimulated debate amongst stakeholders on how social farming might be established in countries such as Ireland. Arising from this debate and consequent formation of a Community of Practice Group on Social Farming in Ireland the SOFAB Project was proposed and focused on adults who were already availing of support services who were interested in participating in social farming.

The mission of the SoFAB Project was 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'.*

The SoFAB Project set out 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Funded by the European Union as part of the research priority in the VI Framework Programme.

### **3. STRUCTURE AND SUPPORTS FOR SOCIAL FARMING IN OTHER COUNTRIES**

The structures for social farming<sup>2</sup> in many EU countries have been described as a puzzle due to the range of different approaches and the fact that they have generally been developed outside the framework of existing regulatory systems (Di Iacovo, 2008). Di Iacovo further states that: *'there is considerable diversity of social farming across Europe in terms of its structures (public, private or third sector), orientations (main target groups), goals (such as rehabilitation, social inclusion, labour integration, education, therapy, services) and regulations (payments, compensation, projects, alternative food markets)'*.

There is also debate over where social farming fits in terms of what sector it belongs to. It is generally perceived as being within the agriculture sector and part of multifunctional agriculture. However, it could also be seen as part of the health care sector (such as in Germany and Austria). Social inclusion is the main focus of green care in Italy (often delivered by cooperatives which have a voluntary element to the work (Dessein and Bock, 2010)).

It is obvious from practice in many countries and research that social farming extends across many sectors and needs cross-sectoral cooperation, policies and actions. Development and expansion of social farming requires favourable policies and direct policy support. In particular, close cooperation is required between relevant Government departments (Hine et al., 2008).

The cross sectoral nature of social farming was also addressed in the SoFAR research (Di Iacovo and O'Connor, 2009). They highlighted that social farming can be impacted on by agricultural, health, rural development, environment, education and social policies. The lack of a coherent policy has resulted in *'no home'* or no lead department on social farming in many countries. The result for social farmers is a wide range of uncertain funding sources, and an ad-hoc development of social farming. In countries such as Netherlands and Belgium where there is more coherence in policies at local or regional level, more success has been achieved.

Social farming in Ireland is a relatively new concept and there are no specific regulations relating to it, however, service providers are required to adhere to regulations relating to health and safety, environmental management and risk minimisation. Farmers must insure their service for public liability which is expensive and may have to restrict the extent of services provided as a result (Di Iacovo and O'Connor, 2009).

Social farming whether viewed as social inclusion, agriculture or health care, fits into the realm of long term progression and care. Some of the challenges facing the development of

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<sup>2</sup> Different terms are used to describe broadly similar concepts in the provision of care supports to individuals in agricultural or horticultural settings. For example, the concept is described as: social farming in Ireland and Italy; care farming in the UK; and green care in countries such as the Netherlands and Belgium. There are variations in the specific definitions of each: social farming is described as ways of using agriculture to respond to situations of social need (Di Iacovo et al., 2006); care farming is used to describe businesses which focus on health; and green care is often associated with environmentally friendly forms of care (Relf, 2006). While the term *'farming for health'* is used to describe the range of these broad concepts (Hassink and van Dijk, 2006).

social farming in this mix of sectors were summarised by Driest (2006) as follows: no good link between sectors of care, welfare, services and social security; responsibilities of different partners are not clear; there are gaps and overlaps where sectors meet; sectors are divided into parts relating to different target groups; and systems are complex and few have a full understanding of the system.

### **3.1 Care Farming in the United Kingdom**

In the UK, care farming has primarily originated and is rooted in agriculture and has developed links with health, social care and other sectors such as probation services (Bragg et al., 2014). Care farming therefore crosses many areas of policy and responsibility (e.g. health, education, justice, agriculture) which adds to the complexity of making progress in this area (Skerratt and Williams, 2008). In the UK, the majority of farms have service users referred to them by: social services; mental health services; education services; families; and individuals who are self-referred. Similarly, there is a range of funding sources for care farms including: service users' fees from personal budgets; Local Authority Social Services; self generated funds; charitable trust donations; and other sources (Bragg, 2013; Bragg et al., 2014). Secure, predictable sources of funding are important for the development of care farming (Skerratt and Williams, 2008).

*Care Farming UK* was set up in 2005 (originally called the *National Care Farming Initiative*) to 'provide a voice and supportive services for care farmers, to inspire decision makers and to develop policies to support care farming' (CFUK, 2014). It is a membership organisation led by care farmers and care farming supporters and has four strategic aims: supporting the quality and provision of services to care farms; enabling care farming networks to develop across the UK; increasing the profile and awareness of care farming; and developing the evidence-base for the effectiveness of care farming (CFUK, 2014). Regional and county networks have developed across the UK which are supported by *Care Farming UK*.

#### **3.1.1 Care Farming in England**

One of the local support organisations which operated for a number of years in England was *Care Farming West Midlands* (CFWM)<sup>3</sup>. CFWM was established in 2008 out of a need for a regional support service to operate at a more local level. CFWM provided support, advice and guidance to a network of 50 care farms in England. CFWM worked with farmers, commissioners and service users to promote care farming as a viable care option across a number of counties (CFWM, 2014).

Essentially CFWM operated at two levels: on the ground developing links between care farmers, commissioners and service users; and promoting the overall concept, developing supports for farmers and establishing care standards. In particular, CFWM sought to ensure that commissioners and service users were aware of the care farm services available in their own area. By supporting farmers to achieve high standards of care service delivery, CFWM provided reassurance to commissioners and service users.

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<sup>3</sup> Care Farming West Midlands was not providing these services in October 2014 due to a lack of funding.

The main services provided to care farmers included: help with setting up or developing a care farm; a quality standards framework; access to labour saving resources; promotion of care farm businesses to commissioners; peer support; training; lobbying support; and funding for research into effectiveness of care farming (CFWM, 2014).

### **3.1.2 Care Farming in Scotland and Wales**

*Care Farming Scotland* is a company which is a registered charity whose main aim is to support and promote the development of care farming in Scotland so that its social and economic potential is understood and exploited by policymakers, land managers and providers of care and support services. *Care Farming Scotland* has strong links with *Care Farming UK*. *Care Farming Scotland* supports care farmers through awareness raising, provision of information and advice, developing network opportunities, training, lobbying and policy development. It acts as a link between health care commissioners and interested farmers. It helps to build a shared understanding of the opportunities available in care farming. *Care Farming Scotland* involves a range of stakeholders including: farmers; care practitioners; voluntary sector; Government; agricultural organisations; academics; and church groups (CFS, 2014). Further roles suggested for *Care Farming Scotland* in a study on the sector include: acting as an intermediary between farmers and commissioning bodies; facilitating better networking; demonstrating the impact of care farming; and lobbying policy makers (Homer, 2011).

Homer (2011) also identified a range of issues of importance for the future of care farming in Scotland and of wider relevance to other countries. He highlighted a number of factors which impacted on care farmers securing business including: personal motivations and professional background; the nature of clients supported; capacity to capitalise on existing networks/contacts and develop these further; whether the care farm is well established or newly founded; and the local funding/political climate.

In a report on care farming in Wales, Williams and Randall-Smith (2011) stated that care farming had not developed to the same extent as in England and Scotland and there was no coordinating mechanism to facilitate the development of a coordinating network and representative body specifically in Wales (however *Care Farming UK* does provide supports). The Institute of Rural Health undertook this action research project in 2010-2011 to examine the nature and development of care farming in Wales. The project involved a survey of stakeholders and commissioners; a meeting with care commissioners; and a care farming conference organised in conjunction with the Amelia Trust and University of Wales. These research efforts brought together a range of stakeholders and provided recommendations on the development of care farming in Wales.

Individual care farms have undertaken specific initiatives for their own and collective benefit of care farming in Wales. One of the farms undertaking initiatives is the aforementioned Amelia Trust which has hosted training events and meetings on care farming. The Amelia Trust is a charity operating a working farm which provides support and education to vulnerable and disadvantaged young people (Amelia Trust, 2014).

### **3.2 Green Care in the Netherlands**

The Dutch model of social farming or green care is well developed and structured due to a large number of participants, official recognition and good rewards in terms of fees however, this model is not common in other EU countries (Elings & Hassink 2006; Hassink et al. 2007; Dessein and Bock, 2010).

Social farming in the Netherlands originated from farmers who engaged in these activities voluntarily and over time developed them into commercial operations. The farmers receive payments from health care activities, health insurance and directly from clients using their own personal health care budget (all of which have their origins directly/indirectly from health insurance) (Elings and Hassink, 2006).

The Dutch Ministries for Agriculture and Health subsidised the development of the *Support Centre for Agriculture and Care* which stimulates, supports and promotes green care farms (Dessein and Bock, 2010). Farmers are members of the national association of care farmers and also regional groups. The regional groups share information and learning and support each other in the provision of care supports (supported by an external advisor). Regional groups also have a role in negotiating with health institutions and insurance companies on price for services. There are a wide range of other organisations and people involved in social farming in the Netherlands including: Ministries for Agriculture and Health; local and regional government; clients and representatives; health institutions; educational organisations, insurance companies; advisors; and many others. The most important stakeholders are illustrated in Figure 1, these stakeholders interaction individually and collectively with care farms and the national support centre (Elings and Hassink, 2006).

Despite the level of organisation of social farming in the Netherlands, policy in this area is still the remit of a number of Government Departments. Local authorities also have differing policies in this area and as a result care farming is better developed in some areas than others. The step by step approach to supporting care farming at local level typically involves: initial support for investment in facilities; provision of point of contact support; encouraging and supporting through coaching for the achievement of quality standards; encouraging farmers to be self-supporting; and developing regional associations (Elings and Hassink, 2006).



**Figure 1 Organisations/Stakeholders Involved in Green Care Farming in The Netherlands**

**Source:** Elings and Hassink, 2006

### **3.3 Green Care in Belgium**

Social farming in Belgium typically takes place on regular family farms. Farmers receive a subsidy for care services (irrespective of the number of users) from the Ministry of Agriculture to compensate them for the loss of production income from the time devoted to care services. The Ministry promotes social farming but there are no institutional arrangements with the health sector (Goris et al., 2008).

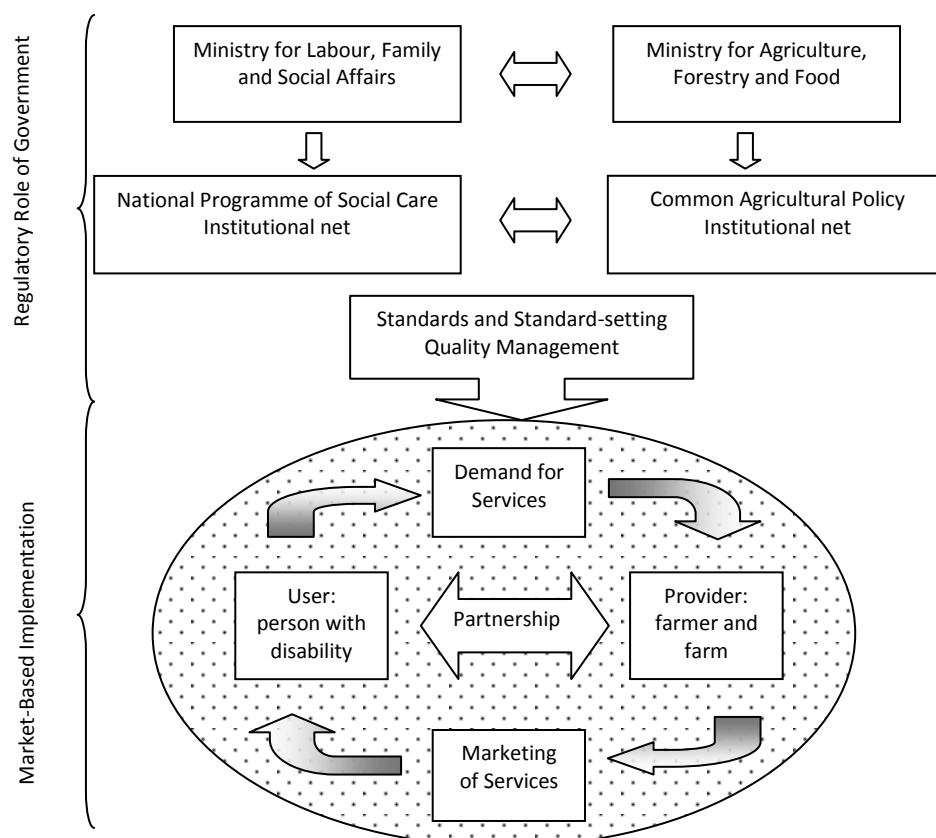
Similar to the Netherlands, the *Flemish Support Centre for Green Care* was established with the primary goal of promoting green care. Care organisations, farmers and those considering the activity avail of the support centre to: gain information; make contacts with organisations and farmers; get support on starting up; organise information events; promote the concept; input into policy; consult with authorities; and organise quality standards (Goris and Weckhuysen, 2006). There are also regional organisations providing supports at a more local level.

### **3.4 Social Farming in Slovenia**

An analysis of the development of social farming in Slovenia (Vadnal, 2006) identifies three specific aspects for focus, namely: system; awareness; and practice. System relates to inclusion of social farming into national programmes/policies. Awareness raising is required

on all aspects of social farming with the wider public, decision makers, farmers and service users. Practice relates to the development of good practice at farm level and includes training for farmers. The delivery on these aspects is recognised as requiring cooperation among all stakeholders at local and national level.

Vadnal (2006) provides an informative model of social farming in Slovenia (Figure 2). This model is centred on a partnership between the provider (farmer) and the user (person with a disability). At a regulatory level, the Ministries of Labour, Family and Social Affairs through the National Programme of Social Care and Agriculture, Forestry and Food CAP set standards and quality for social farming.



**Figure 2** Model of the Provision of Social Services as an On-Farm Supplementary Activity in Slovenia  
**Source:** Vadnal, 2006

## **4. DEVELOPING AND PROGRESSING SOCIAL FARMING**

In addition to the information on structures to support social farming in other countries, previous research and reports also provide insights into the development of social farming in Northern Ireland, Ireland and other countries which are outlined in this section.

### **4.1 Northern Ireland**

In a study on the opportunities for social farming in Northern Ireland, Harbison (2010) identified a number of barriers to the development of social farming including: a lack of awareness and understanding of the concept among politicians, public agencies, farmers and the wider public; funding for establishing and maintaining initiatives and access by service users; bureaucracy and ability of farmers to meet regulatory requirements; a lack of skills and support for farmers to train; and the difficulty of matching supply and demand.

In order to develop social farming in Northern Ireland, Harbison (2010) made a number of key recommendations including: the need for a champion organisation/individual for social farming to be the main point of contact, engage with all stakeholders and plan/promote the concept; a social farming network to bring stakeholders together, share learning, foster links and provide a unified body to develop social farming; a guidebook, training and support for farmers so that they can deliver the best quality service to users; pilot/demonstration projects to help to promote the concept and demonstrate the supports in practice to interested parties and the wider public; develop and finance a business model which would serve to inform and guide in this area as funding for social farming is a challenge due to the multiplicity of sources and pressures on budgets; and an integrated engagement and marketing strategy is essential for the development of social farming and to make connections between farmers, potential service users, social service providers, politicians and the general public<sup>4</sup>.

### **4.2 Republic of Ireland**

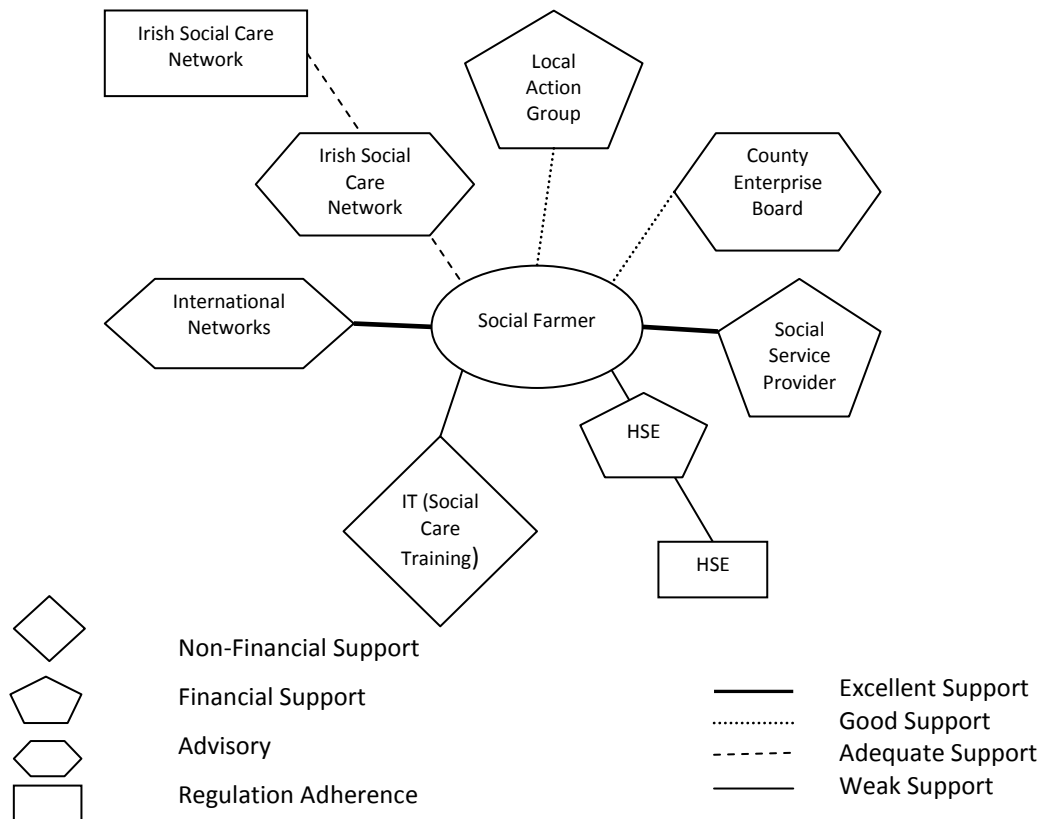
Previous research on social farming in Ireland (McGloin and O'Connor, 2007) indicated that there were no formal networks promoting social farming. However, there were good links and cooperation both within and between the religious, community and charity groups involved in the provision of social farming. For instance the Camphill Communities who operate in 16 locations are a network in themselves. They also found that there was no evidence of a coherent policy to support social farming in Ireland. As a result, initiatives have been ad hoc with no standard approach.

McGloin (2014) analysed the institutional relationships involved in supporting social farming in Ireland (Figure 3). At the time of her research in 2009 she found that financial support was typically provided through Local Action Groups (Local Development Companies), Social Service Providers and the HSE. Advisory support was accessed through international networks, the Irish Social Care Network and County Enterprise Boards. The level of support provided varied from weak to excellent. Based on this analysis McGloin concluded that

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<sup>4</sup> Some of the issues highlighted by Harbison were subsequently addressed by the SoFAB Project.

there are many other ‘actors’ who could potentially contribute in this area but who were not involved in social farming (e.g. Government Departments, Farm Organisations, Disability Organisations). This outcome from McGloin’s research highlighted the need to bring the different organisations together to progress social farming.



**Figure 3 Social Farmers: Institutional Analysis of Relationships**

Source: McGloin, 2014

McGloin and O’Connor (2007) suggested that the lack of adequate funding to develop and maintain social services is highlighted by the plethora of training programmes developed in this area and squeezed to fit into programmes aimed at increasing participation in the labour market. Often in practice the project promoter or social care provider may not be interested in employment progression *per se* but rather finding the means to keep an initiative alive or establish a new project. Another difficulty that hinders development in this area is when a project which may have been able to secure funds for a pilot initiative from, for example the LEADER Programme, was left with no clear path to follow once the initial funding was exhausted as there is no clear home for social farming initiatives.

#### 4.3 England

Recently published research on care farming in England commissioned by Natural England (Bragg et al., 2014) provides recommendations for the development of the sector which are also of relevance to the Ireland. Some of the main recommendations include:

- Involvement of all stakeholders in developing an integrated strategic approach to care farming;
- Strengthening of the network of care farmers across the country;

- Increased efforts to promote awareness of care farming particularly among commissioners;
- Need for referral to care farms to be incorporated into health and social care referral systems;
- Better quality evaluation on the benefits of care farming to individuals; and
- Closer contact with other countries to share best practice and approaches to address common challenges and opportunities.

There are also lessons to be learned from the work of *Care Farming West Midlands*, there is a necessity to: promote the overall concept, develop supports for farmers and establish care standards; and specifically develop links between care farmers, commissioners and service users (CFWM, 2014).

#### **4.4 Scotland and Wales**

In his report on care farming in Scotland, Homer (2011) identified a number of critical issues for the future which are relevant to the Irish situation:

- Care farming needs to exert an influence on the health and social care market and to clearly present the services available. Individual farmers need to proactively promote the service and engage with decision makers;
- Care farmers need to improve their awareness and knowledge of commissioning of services in Scotland and their ability to interact with commissioners. Similarly, commissioners were not aware of what care farming had to offer.
- Care farmers need to build their knowledge and understanding of local needs and demands for services, develop networks, engage effectively and have strategic leadership in order to foster the links with commissioners/providers so that they are better informed;
- The diversity between farms makes it difficult to market and promote and hence there is a need for clarity and consistency around key aspects of the services offered;
- The principles and values of health and social care policy and quality services must be embedded in the social farming approach;
- There is a need to engage in monitoring and evaluation to build the evidence base to demonstrate the benefits of the services provided and the suitability for particular groups and needs;
- Care farmers need to demonstrate a business capacity in terms of developing the service and understanding of the needs in their areas;
- Business models should reinforce the role of service users in developing the service; and
- There is potential for a greater role for *Care Farming Scotland* (subject to funding) to compile a development strategy, raise the profile, lobby, strengthen governance arrangements, build the evidence base on what care farming can deliver and further act as an intermediary between farmers and commissioners.

The Institute of Rural Health research in Wales (Williams and Randall-Smith, 2011) recommended a number of key actions to develop care farming including:

- Essential to have a care farming coordinating body to provide leadership and coordinate activities;

- Provision of a single point of contact and facilitate information exchange;
- Development of a '*toolkit*' of information and guidance notes including: basic information; steps to be taken in developing a care farm; possible supports and funding; and training requirements and opportunities; and
- Facilitate the development of care farms by way of pilot/monitor projects.

#### 4.5 Italy

The development of social farming in Italy provides a worthwhile insight into the possible development path for social farming in Ireland (Di Iacovo, 2014) (Table 1). In 2002, social farming was very much a novelty activity in Italy with a small number of farmers providing supports in response to a lack of social services in rural areas. Evidence collected in Tuscany in 2003 indicated that social farming was a growing niche for a small number of farmers. Networking activities among social farms increased awareness of the concept and health authorities started to recognise the benefits of social farming practices. The SoFAR project (2006-2008) which operated across 7 EU countries further improved the profile of social farming through networking of actors. The recognition of social farming was further enhanced with the approval of the first regional law on social farming in Tuscany. In recent years, social farming has become part of the farming and care landscape in Italy with increased numbers of farmers engaged in the activity, enhanced public discussion, inclusion of a social farming measure in the Rural Development Programme and the passing of the first national law on social farming.

**Table 1 Development of Social Farming in Italy 2002-2014**

<b>2002</b>	<b>Novelties</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New concept due to lack of social services in rural areas</li> </ul>
<b>2003</b>	<b>Niches</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence collated on 60 existing farms in Tuscany</li> </ul>
<b>2004/5</b>	<b>Paradigm</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networking activities increase attention on concept</li> <li>• Some health authorities start to recognise SF practices</li> </ul>
<b>2006/9</b>	<b>Regime</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SoFAR project promotes networking</li> <li>• Surveys on farms</li> <li>• Tuscany approved first regional law on Social Farming</li> </ul>
<b>2010/14</b>	<b>Landscape</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased debate and focus</li> <li>• Increasing number of farms</li> <li>• More regional laws</li> <li>• Rural Development Programme includes Social Farming measures</li> <li>• National law on Social Farming</li> </ul>

Source: Di Iacovo, 2014

Cooperation at a number of levels has facilitated the development of social farming in Italy, as described in Table 2 by Di Iacovo (2014). National and regional authorities, health services and unions work together in the planning of social farming supports. At the point of delivery there is cooperation between health services, farmers, social cooperatives, voluntary associations and others to provide services to clients. As result of the shared planning and provision, a range of services are provided to clients including: rehabilitation; education; training; job and social inclusion; social services and therapy. The outcome in Italy is: more

services in rural areas; greater networking, social capital and better resilience; new concepts and attitudes; and social and economic sustainability.

**Table 2 Key Stakeholders in the Delivery of Social Farming in Italy**

<b>Acting Together to Provide</b>	Co-therapy, Rehabilitation, Education, Vocational Training, Job Inclusion, Social Inclusion, Social Services
<b>Co-projecting/providing</b>	Health Services, Third Sector, Farmers, Volunteers & Associations, Social Cooperatives
<b>Co-Planning</b>	State, Regions, Provinces, Municipalities, Health Services, Unions

Source: Di Iacovo, 2014

#### **4.6 European Union**

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC, 2012) of the EU provided recommendations for the development of social farming within the EU including:

- Developing appropriate regulations and policy measures;
- Targeting support from authorities and use of structural funds to underpin social farming;
- Promoting and supporting research, communication and exchange of experience;
- An organisational structure created and supported by the EU to encourage development of social farming and encouragement of similar arrangements at member state level;
- Interdisciplinary research that analyses the impact and the benefits of social farming from various perspectives (social, economic, health, individual), ensuring the transfer of knowledge gained and involving people on the ground;
- Training for service users and providers to ensure a high level of quality and skills; and
- Establish and strengthen social farming networks to share experiences, create awareness and promote best practices.

## **5. STRUCTURES INVOLVED IN SOCIAL FARMING: LESSONS FROM SOFAB**

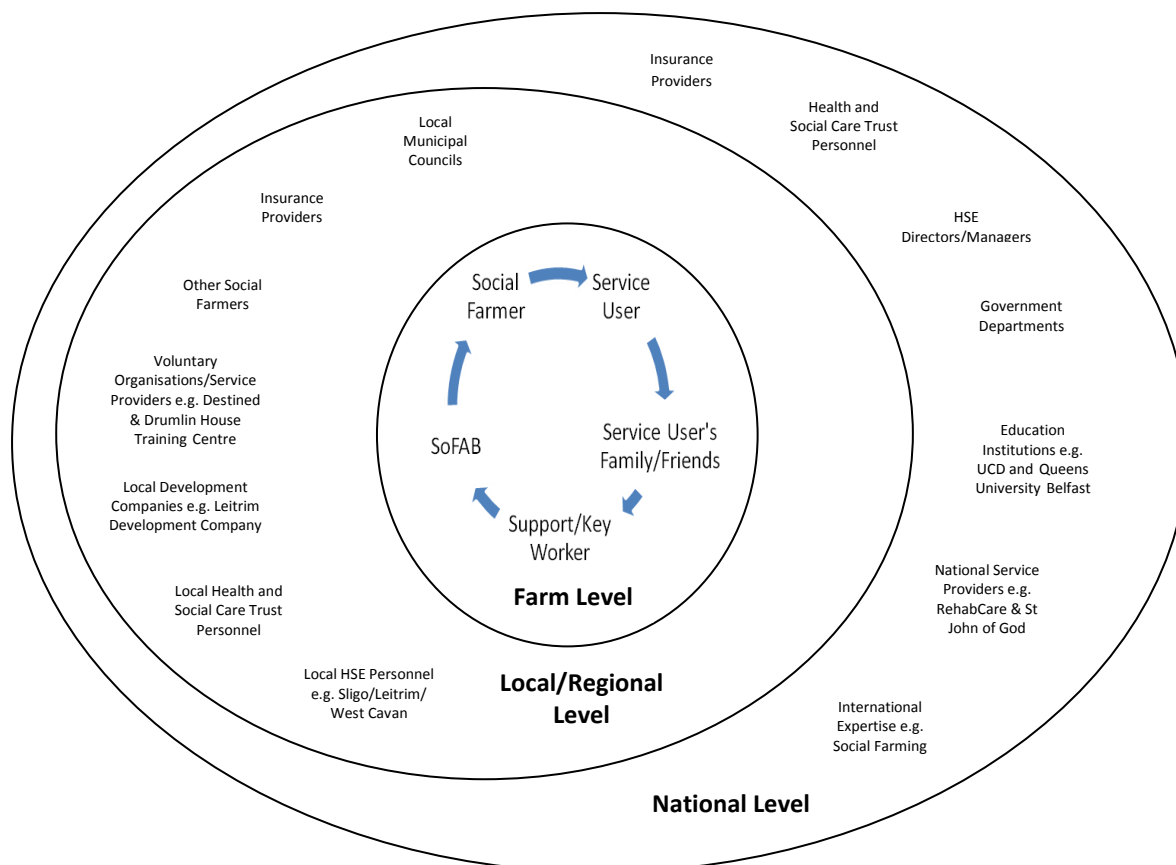
Based on the experience of the SoFAB Project, the actual structures/supports/links involved operate at three levels: farm level; local/regional level; and national level. Essentially these are the key levels in social farming in Ireland and Northern Ireland which are illustrated in Figure 4. In practice there is a complex interplay between the individuals/institutions both formal and informal which impacts on the supports delivered to individual service users at farm level.

The '*Farm Level*' is specifically focused on the direct link between the service user and the social farmer and the associated contacts of the extended farm family, service user's family and the support/key worker. This is the most critical area in terms of the delivery to the service user, meeting their needs, supporting and encouraging them. However, this area is outside of the remit of this report which is focused on the institutional arrangements to support social farming.

The '*Local/Regional Level*' is essentially about operationalising the social farming supports at local level, making them happen and ensuring delivery. For example in Ireland this involves direct contact with the HSE personnel at local level (e.g. HSE Sligo/Leitrim/West Cavan) and in Northern Ireland, it is direct contact with the local Health Trusts (e.g. Western Health and Social Care Trust). Linkages at this level also involve working relationships with organisations such as Destined (NI) and Drumlin House Training Centre (ROI).

The '*National Level*' is more related to policy and strategy regarding social farming and '*buy-in*' at a higher level in organisations/agencies. It involves promoting the concept to health care authorities at national level and seeking to influence managers/decision makers as opposed to working at a more operational level in local/regional areas. The SoFAB conferences sought to provide information, opportunities for networking but critically opportunities to inform and influence decision makers at national level in both Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The actual main contacts/linkages developed by SoFAB and the individual pilot farmers are presented in Appendix 1. The depth and the extent of the contacts and links established highlights the importance of forging links at all levels from farm level up to Government/EU level.



**Figure 4 Simplified Overview of the Main Individuals, Agencies and Institutions Involved in Social Farming in Ireland and Northern Ireland**

### **5.1 Case Study Examples of Linkages in Action**

Two case study examples are presented to better illustrate the actual linkages and networking that pilot farmers in the SOFAB Project engaged in, to promote and develop their social farming activities. It is not possible to demonstrate the full extent of the networking that has taken place but these are real examples of what has happened and continues to happen at local level.

#### **Mabel and John Campbell, Co. Tyrone**

Mabel and John Campbell run a 60 acre sheep farm in Co. Tyrone. In addition to sheep, they also have poultry, pigs, cattle and ponies on their mixed mountain and low land farm. The farm has been passed down through generations of the family. Outside of the farm, Mabel has worked with and supported a wide range of people including those with mental health problems, disabilities, older people, youth and vulnerable adults. John is a full-time farmer and has a lifetime of agricultural knowledge and experience. They both have an active involvement in a number of local community groups and activities.

They got involved in social farming as they saw it as a natural extension of their interests and skills in both farming and social care. They see their farm and their abilities as having potential to provide supports to a range of people including: people in recovery from mental

health issues; people with disabilities; elderly; and youth at risk. They have also opened the farm outside of the SoFAB pilot days to schools, with a particular focus on children with special needs. As farmers they have a keen interest in the environment and conservation and see a fit between their farm and the recreational and educational use of the local amenity of the Sperrin Mountains and countryside. The main activities they provide to service users include:

- Sheep and animal care;
- Land and environment conservation;
- Growing vegetables and potatoes; and
- Farm maintenance.

The Campbell's have created and fostered a wide range of contacts, networks and links to promote and develop the overall concept and their social farm activities. Some of the main contacts made include: Western Health and Social Care Trust; Ashdale Care; farmers in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area; SoFAB working group; and a number of others.

The initial link with the Western Health and Social Care Trust was facilitated through SoFAB and the Public Health Agency (PHA). This contact identified possible participants for the farm from both the mental health and learning disability areas. However, the local demand for supports came from mental health. There has been ongoing dialogue between the Trust and the farmers with the aim of developing services for the future. The Campbell's 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 local Occupational Therapist to explore the options for the future and they also participated in the Western Trust Mental Health Day in 2014. These links will be critical for the future.

The Campbell's like other pilot farmers held an open day on their farm to promote themselves and the supports that they provide. As a result of the open day, contacts were established with a number of other agencies/organisations. One of these was with Ashdale Care which provides services to youth and children. Ashdale Care see potential benefits for their target group in engaging in activities on the Campbell Farm. Discussions have been held regarding the provision of services to Ashdale Care clients. The open day also facilitated contact with local special needs schools that have subsequently visited the farm and are exploring ways of linking with each other on an ongoing basis. They have also developed links with children's and older adult's projects which have possible potential for the future.

The Campbell's have developed links with other social farmers, particularly in the Western Trust area. These links were primarily developed at the training events and at the on-farm open days. The pilot farmers in this area have availed of resources to assist them in promoting their supports individually and collectively. They participated in a SoFAB working group of pilot farmers focused on a process of '*deepening the network*' and planning for the '*post-pilot stage*'.

As the pilot project ended, the Campbell's were focused on continuing to: build the links with other farmers; support the development of a social farming organisation; foster the links with other agencies; build the relationship with service users, their families and the Health and Social Care Trust.

### **Robert Wilson, Co. Monaghan**

Robert Wilson runs a 60 acre beef farm in Co. Monaghan. The main farm enterprise is a suckler cow herd. His farm is typical of many Irish farms with a combination of modern and old traditional farm buildings. There is an old forge on the farm as his grandfather was a local blacksmith and an array of old farm machinery. The farm also has a vegetable garden, an orchard and a small area of woodland.

Robert inherited the family farm from his father and has a wide range of agricultural knowledge and skills. Robert worked as an agricultural consultant and as a community development worker for a number of years and is still working part time in community development. He has also been involved in a voluntary capacity with a local youth club and local church. The family cared for his father who had Alzheimer's disease and for his uncle who had an intellectual disability on the farm for many years. This experience encouraged him to become a pilot farmer under the SOFAB Project.

Robert provided the social farming opportunity to two men from a mental health supports background and one man with a learning disability. This worked well and there was a degree of sharing and support noted by Robert by the two men for the man with the learning disability. The main activities provided to service users include:

- Animal care;
- Land and environment conservation;
- Growing vegetables and an orchard regeneration project;
- Farm maintenance;
- Machinery restoration; and
- Learning skills in the old forge.

Robert's involvement in community development provided him with access to a range of contacts in his local area. The National Learning Network assisted in the identification of the participants to engage in social farming activities. It is intended that the Monaghan Office of the National Learning Network will be piloting the roll out of the '*HSE New Directions*' approach to adult day services. This will provide an opportunity for Robert to demonstrate the potential of social farming for providing supports, connecting with the community and providing opportunities for progression.

The open day on Robert's farm provided an opportunity to make contact with and demonstrate the supports available to local HSE and in particular Occupational Therapists and the Occupational Guidance Service. The links with the HSE need to be further cultivated and developed to realise the potential for support provision on the farm. Robert also has connections with the Southern Health and Social Care Trust in Northern Ireland with regard to providing cross border supports. Links have also been established with Drumlin House Training Centre which provides rehabilitative training, supported occupational services and supported employment programmes. Robert is building links with Drumlin House on the '*Step Right to Work*' project and following up on contacts in Rehabcare.

Robert is a member of the SoFAB working group focused on a process of '*deepening the network*' and planning for the '*post-pilot stage*'. He is also working closely with the pilot

farmers in the eastern region. He is also promoting the concept at a local level including the Social Inclusion Measures Group of the County Development Board.

## **5.2 Operation of Social Farming Across Borders Project**

As explained earlier in Section 2 the SoFAB Project was an EU INTERREG IVA funded project to promote and develop social farming across Northern Ireland and the Border Counties of the Republic of Ireland. There are lessons for the future from the project approach as SoFAB played a key role in the development of social farming during its operation.

SoFAB was ultimately managed by a Steering Committee comprising the three project partners (University College Dublin, Queens University Belfast and Leitrim Development Company) and was guided by an Advisory Committee which met every 6-8 months to provide advice to project management on the quality and direction of the project. The SoFAB Project team established and managed the piloting and coordinating of social farming supports (guided by the steering group and advisory committee) (see detail in Appendix 2). However, SoFAB had a finite timeframe (until September 2014) and therefore, thus a potential void now that the pilot phase has completed. The analysis of the institutional arrangements is complicated by the fact that SoFAB played a central role in this area. It is therefore important to outline the structure, roles and actions of SoFAB prior to identifying how those roles can be undertaken following the completion of the pilot phase.

In many ways, SoFAB played a role similar to that of a social farming collective or umbrella group over the lifetime of the project, with the advantage of external funding. In the absence of a SoFAB Project support in the future, these roles will need to be undertaken by others. SoFAB worked closely with the HSE (ROI) and Health and Social Care Trusts (NI) at local/regional level to deliver the project. To facilitate the efficient and effective delivery, a memorandum of understanding was agreed between the organisations. The main responsibilities of the partners are outlined as these are important for the ongoing development and delivery of social farming (Table 3).

**Table 3 Main Responsibilities of SoFAB Partners in the Delivery of the Pilot Project**

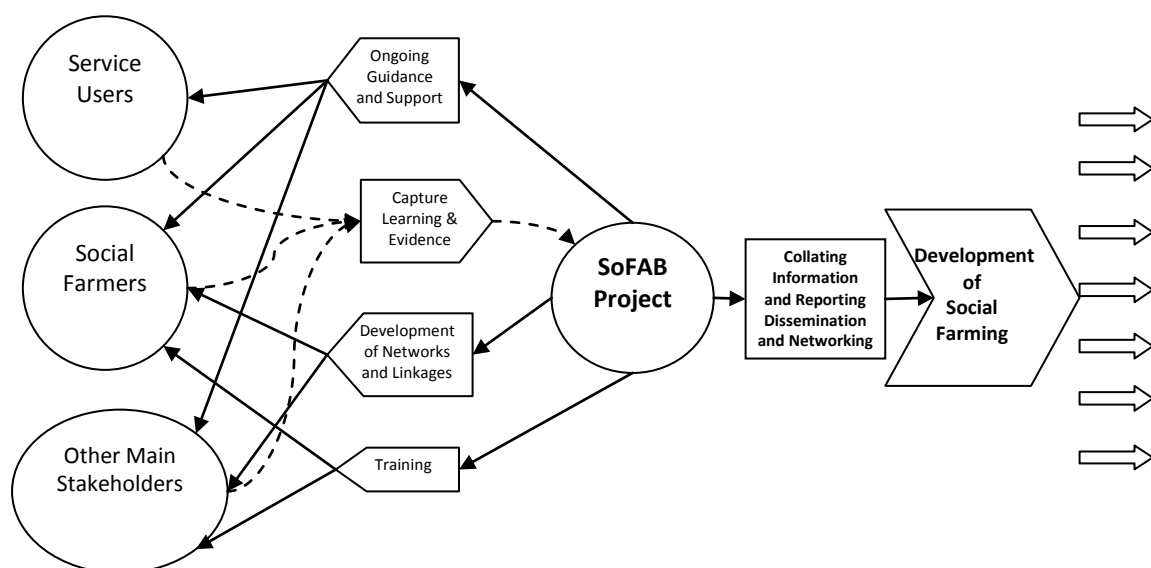
Statutory Health and Social Care Bodies	Local Service Provider Agency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting the interest of lead Government Departments in evolving a learning experience on social farming</li> <li>Identifying local partner agencies (voluntary/private)</li> <li>Supporting a partnering and learning working relationship for the pilot practice</li> <li>Supporting '<i>personal choice</i>' as core (client) selection principle for participation</li> <li>Supporting family leadership/independent advocacy roles</li> <li>Identifying a '<i>key contact person</i>' as the SoFAB link in each Trust/HSE area</li> <li>Advising on opportunities for shared learning and practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Selecting participants based on agreed criteria</li> <li>Sharing relevant information to assist personal planning for quality and safety of outcomes for participants</li> <li>Informing applicants' General Practitioner of intent to engage in new activity</li> <li>Working in partnership with others involved on issues e.g. transport</li> <li>Identifying personal key contacts for each participant for communication</li> <li>Identifying the service key contact for formal communication</li> <li>Advising and applying local policies and procedures</li> <li>Advising SoFAB of issues or concerns</li> <li>Participating in research aspects</li> </ul>
Farmers	Social Farming Across Borders Project
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complying with police and reference checks</li> <li>Identifying lead person for activities</li> <li>Completing SoFAB training requirements</li> <li>Completing external guidance training on farm safety management</li> <li>Documenting and revising farm safety plan as necessary</li> <li>Providing suitable welfare and comfort facilities for participants</li> <li>Providing a specified number of days of service</li> <li>Managing personal information in keeping with local agency policies and procedures</li> <li>Applying the advised level of insurance</li> <li>Having a plan for activities reflective of participant interest, farm opportunities, seasonal change, and flexibility on the day</li> <li>Maintaining records on pilot activity</li> <li>Reporting and documenting any concerns</li> <li>Working to relevant policies and procedures as agreed with the local service agency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting the concept of social farming</li> <li>Recruiting potential pilot social farmers and screening applicants</li> <li>Ensuring all pilot farmers had Access N.I. / Garda clearance</li> <li>Acquiring and verifying personal character references for pilot farmers</li> <li>Training pilot farmers</li> <li>Supporting practice through promoting effective working between all parties, (information sharing, communications plans, activity planning, additional information resources to farmers)</li> <li>Capturing learning on quality of outcomes for all parties and associated cost of support (value for money)</li> <li>Applying best practice principles to collection of information</li> <li>Reporting and disseminating learning</li> <li>Supporting sustainability and progression</li> </ul>

Some of the activities outlined relate specifically to the delivery of the social farming pilot project, however others relate to the overall promotion and development of the concept of social farming which are important in promoting and enabling social farming for the future. Some of the specific activities of SoFAB are further outlined in Table 4.

**Table 4 Some of the Specific Actions Undertaken by the SoFAB Project (2011-14)**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Action Undertaken</b>
Promotion of Social Farming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information events for farmers, agencies, public</li> <li>• Cross border launch and major conferences</li> <li>• Attending agricultural shows and events</li> <li>• Local and national media including TV</li> <li>• Social media and development/maintaining of website and online videos</li> <li>• Provision of farm profiles on website</li> <li>• Open days on farms</li> </ul>
Provision of Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of training curriculum</li> <li>• Recruitment, organising and delivery of training</li> </ul>
Capturing and Learning from the Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of a research framework</li> <li>• Collation of evidence at all stages</li> <li>• Analysis of data and extraction of learning</li> </ul>
Reporting and Disseminating the Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By way of promotional activities</li> <li>• By way of the media</li> <li>• Conferences, events, trips</li> <li>• Training and open days</li> </ul>
Supporting the Development of Social Farmer Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Network development meetings</li> <li>• Farm visits</li> <li>• Farmer representatives on advisory committee</li> </ul>
Supporting Linkages Between Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information sharing, communication and planning</li> <li>• Drafting documents and guidelines</li> <li>• Supporting ongoing relationships</li> <li>• Assisting in addressing issues as they arose</li> <li>• Guidance on best practice</li> </ul>

The main actions undertaken by the SoFAB Project are illustrated in Figure 5. The model is a simplified description of the actions and does not present the detailed interactions that occurred. However, it highlights the main actions were to: provide ongoing guidance and support to service users, social farmers and other stakeholders; support the development of networks and linkages among those involved; provide training to farmers and others; and to capture learning and evidence on social farming. The evidence on social farming was collated and reported. Considerable effort was placed on promoting the concept of social farming to interested parties and the wider public.



**Figure 5 Summary of the Main Actions Undertaken by the SoFAB Project in the Development and Promotion of Social Farming (2011-14)**

## **6. PROMOTING AND ENABLING SOCIAL FARMING**

The SOFAB Project brought both focus and energy to social farming in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties of the Republic of Ireland. The completion of the SoFAB Project by end of September 2014 means that the team and resources are no longer available to promote and support social farming in the region. The main purpose of this report is to both document lessons from the pilot phase and international experience and to outline actions which can be taken to ensure the social farming is adequately supported, maintained and has the opportunity to develop and prosper.

Based on a review and analysis of the experience under the SoFAB Project (Section 5) and international experiences (Sections 3 and 4), a number of key action areas emerge which are critical to the ongoing development and sustainability of social farming in Ireland. The list of actions is not definitive and others could be included but it provides the basis for the core actions required. For each action a suggestion is made as to who could be involved in achieving progress on that action (others may also have a role in progressing each action). It is also recognised that many of these actions are currently being undertaken to a greater or lesser extent.

### **6.1 Coordination of Social Farming**

SoFAB has played a coordination and organisation role for social farming over the 2011-2014 period. This role was somewhat similar to the roles undertaken by Care Farming Organisations in the UK and Scotland and Green Care Organisations in the Netherlands and Belgium. A central organisational structure is critically important to coordinate the development of social farming and to ensure that the other actions outlined in this section are undertaken by the organisation itself or by others either independently or in partnership. An organisation could provide a single point of contact which at the very least could put those interested in social farming in the right direction.

The level and sustained supply of funding available will determine the extent of activities that an organisation could engage in and deliver. Depending on the resources available, similar structures to those in place in other countries could be considered e.g. Care Farming UK and Scotland are registered companies and charities. While the Support Centre in The Netherlands was subsidised by government. At a minimum, a basic structure is required for Ireland and Northern Ireland. Without a social farming collective organisation, the other steps outlined in this section are neither realistic nor possible. In exploring such other steps, reference will be made to the social farming organisation on the assumption that an appropriate institution will be developed to address the function of enabling social farming in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

#### ***Who Could be Involved in the Coordination of Social Farming?***

- Work commenced on the development of a social farming organisation under the SOFAB Project. The further development of this organisation is likely to be best served if owned and driven by farmers who are committed to the delivery of the service. As the service providers, farmers are best placed to take the initiative on this

aspect. A suitable structure needs to be agreed such as a company or a cooperative. This structure, with the appropriate professional support, should take control of the core functions undertaken by the SoFAB team during the project period (see Table 4).

- The group of farmers could capitalise on the goodwill of partner organisations and stakeholders who were involved in the pilot phase and seek to keep them involved at some level.
- There is also a need for a wider collective consultative or steering group on social farming drawing from the wider stakeholder pool. The role of this group could be to reflect on practices and explore new opportunities for social farming at all levels. This group could be kept informed of activities/events/progress and brought together for collective thinking once or twice per year.

## **6.2 Promotion, Awareness Raising and Information Dissemination**

The SoFAB Project has succeeded in raising awareness on social farming at a number of levels including among: farmers; service users; care providers; health care agencies; and the wider public. However, there is considerable effort required to continue to raise the profile and awareness of social farming so that: the overall concept is better understood; individuals who could benefit from social farm activities and their families are aware of and seeking out opportunities; care providers and organisations are seeking out social farm experiences for those in their care; healthcare agencies and organisations recognise the benefit and potential of social farming; funding agencies and commissioners explore opportunities for resourcing individuals to engage in social farming; and policy makers consider ways of both channelling supports and funding to this area and developing programmes/policies to encourage social farming provision and uptake. Promotion and awareness raising are needed at local and national/regional levels which could involve a range of approaches including those successfully employed in the SoFAB pilot (open days, attendance at local shows/community events, public information meetings, social media, website, online videos, conferences/seminars, media features and one to one meetings). Consideration should be given to providing free one-day trials or taster days for individuals who could benefit from social farms. A high profile individual or organisation could be encouraged to act as an ambassador for social farming, endorsing the concept and promoting it.

### ***Who Could Be Engaged in Promotion and Awareness Raising?***

- At a local level, each farmer needs to take responsibility for promoting themselves as unique and individual farms providing care supports within their own communities. They could utilise all opportunities and contacts to promote themselves and the concept and provide clear and concise information material.
- The social farming organisation could potentially provide guidance on promotion and awareness raising to individual farmers and facilitate the sharing of experiences and knowledge in this area.
- The social farming organisation could undertake promotion and awareness raising at a national/regional level. This may involve engaging with national media and also possibly devising approaches/methods to gain media attention. They could also

coordinate the key messages to be communicated. The social farming organisation could have a role in organising larger events (conferences/seminars) and coordinate speakers to attend relevant events organised by others. The organisation could maintain overall social media activities and coordinate a strategy of promotion at all levels including the provision of information to and lobbying of politicians, civil servants in relevant departments and management/decision makers in healthcare organisations/agencies.

- Individual farmers and the social farming organisation should consider proactive engagement with the charitable and disability representative/advocacy organisations to inform them of the supports available and form strategic alliances for the development of services and supports for those who need them.
- Service users and their families could be involved (where appropriate) in the promotion and awareness raising efforts on social farming. Service users have a powerful and emotional story to tell about social farming but equally they could quell the concerns of others who may be considering social farming as an option.
- Local providers and healthcare agencies should be encouraged to take responsibility within their own organisations and network of contacts to promote the concept of social farming, the benefits to service users and the local availability of social farming opportunities. These stakeholders could also proactively seek out social farmers (and possibly service users) to make presentations at suitable fora within their organisations to provide firsthand experiences of social farming.
- Local development companies have a potential role in championing social farming in their catchment areas either through direct and/or indirect initiatives which support and encourage social farming activity.
- The SoFAB partner universities could assist in the promotion efforts by reporting on the experiences of social farming.

### **6.3 Planning and Development of Supports**

One of the objectives of social farming is the provision of person-centred supports. It is important in the development of social farming that the supports provided are '*truly person-centred*' and responsive to individual needs. Social farmers and healthcare providers should seek to ensure that social farming does not evolve into providing '*a set-menu*' of activities on a farm rather than in a traditional centre or workshop setting. In order to ensure that this does not happen, social farmers and care professionals should seek to achieve a high level (if possible) of involvement and choice by service users and their families (where appropriate) in the preparation of an individual care plan for each service user. Regular reviewing of goals and activities should be undertaken where service users engage in social farming for long periods. The capacity of service users and their families to engage in the planning of supports could be developed and supported.

#### ***Who Could be Involved in the Planning and Development of Supports?***

- Social farmers could be proactive in engaging with service users, their families and care professionals in developing suitable support plans and activities for service users.

- The social farming organisation and care professionals could potentially work together to encourage person-centred planning and in supporting service users and their families to engage in the process.

#### **6.4 Quality Standards and Best Practice**

The focus of social farming is on the provision of new opportunities for activities to individuals with particular care needs (ongoing or at a particular time). The needs and care of the service user are paramount as many are vulnerable. The development and adherence to quality standards and best practice is not only important for the service users but also for the farmers so that they do not expose themselves to problems through lack of suitable standards of care or safety on the farm. Appropriate standards also provide greater confidence to the families of service users and the commissioning agencies/organisations. SoFAB has provided guidance on this area to date. However as social farming evolves and develops particularly in scale (number of farms providing and number of service users) the promotion of existing standards, the development of appropriate new standards and the achievement of those standards is important. The SoFAB Social Farming Handbook (to be published November 2014) provides guidance on current good practice standards. Considerable learning can be gained from the experience of Care Farming UK in developing a Code of Practice for Care Farming (2012/13). A working group primarily involving care farmers supported by others with specific expertise firstly developed a set of Baseline Standards for the UK. Once the standards were agreed, the focus was placed on addressing how the standards could be administered and implemented. These now form the basis for the Care Farming UK Code of Practice (CFUK, 2014a).

#### ***Who Could be Involved in the Developing Quality Standards and Best Practice Guidelines?***

- Individual farmers have a responsibility to ensure that they engage in best practice in the provision of care supports and ensure that they adhere to agreed standards.
- Service providers and healthcare agencies/organisations could play a role in informing farmers on relevant regulations and providing guidance on achieving these standards. In doing so, the provider stakeholders could explain regulations in clear terms and assist farmers in identifying the best approach at farm level.
- Farmers could constantly explore areas for which standards are required, seek to contribute to the development of standards and sharing of them with other stakeholders. They could actively engage with *Care Farming UK* and learn from their experience in developing a Code of Practice.
- Farmers should attempt to seek the involvement of service users where possible in the development of standards.
- The social farming organisation could maintain a reference guide on best practice standards and other regulations which should be in place at farm level. The organisation could also engage in reviewing existing and developing new standards where necessary. There is also a potential role in sharing information and experiences of best practice between farms and also international experience.
- Service users, their families and service providers could play a role in ensuring standards are adhered to, by bringing them to the attention of the farmer (where possible) or consider the reporting of non-achievement either to the social farming organisation or other stakeholders (if necessary).

## **6.5 Training**

A key element of the SoFAB pilot programme was the development and provision of training to pilot farmers, trainees, stakeholders and other interested individuals. As social farming develops, ongoing training will be required for existing farmers, new entrants and other interested parties. The training curriculum, trainers guidelines and training materials developed for the 10 sessions' training course on '*Delivery of Social Farming*' offers a valuable resource to future training. This training programme was developed in such a way as to enable accreditation in both the Irish and Northern Irish vocational training systems.

### ***Who Could be Involved in Training?***

- The social farming organisation could potentially coordinate the organisation and delivery of training.
- Third level training institutes as well as CAFRE in NI and Teagasc in ROI could play a supporting role in the areas of training needs analysis, curriculum development, course evaluation and guidance on overall delivery.
- Stakeholders such as healthcare agencies/organisations may be willing to support the delivery of training by participating in the delivery of relevant aspects of training.
- Local Development Companies may be able to support the delivery of training subject to availability of resources under the Rural Development Programme.
- Farmers and other stakeholders need to be willing to commit to engage in ongoing training.

## **6.6 Development of a Wider Range of Services**

The SoFAB pilot farmers focused on the delivery of services to adults with learning disabilities and mental health issues. There are many other target groups who could engage in and benefit from social farming activities including: children; youth; older adults; people availing of drug/alcohol rehabilitation services; and offender rehabilitation services. The potential to develop services for these wider target groups will depend on the ability of farmers to deliver to the current target groups and to forge links with relevant stakeholders. There will be a need to convince relevant stakeholders of the capacity of social farmers to deliver, the benefits of social farming and the cost effectiveness (where relevant) of providing supports in this way.

### ***Who Could Develop Services?***

- Individual farmers could explore the opportunities for developing wider services and seek out the necessary contacts to do so.
- The social farming organisation and universities may have a role to play in this area by undertaking scoping studies to inform on the potential of other areas.
- The social farming organisation could undertake exploratory discussions with key stakeholders in other areas to explore the broad potential in these areas.
- The social farming organisation could provide guidance on particular standards/requirements and appropriate training.

- Healthcare providers (statutory and voluntary) could proactively explore how social farming could benefit other target groups and work with farmers and the social farming organisation to develop supports for others.

### **6.7 Building the Evidence Base**

Social farming on individual farms is still at an early stage of development in Ireland particularly when compared to other European countries. Promotion and awareness raising are key elements in the development of social farming. Building the evidence base for social farming provides documented information on social farming and the benefits to individuals and society. It also serves to better inform existing farmers, potential farmers and others such as policy makers. Research was a key element of the SoFAB Project and it is important that the ongoing development of social farming is documented and researched particularly as more farmers and service users engage in social farming, as new target groups become engaged and as the supports develop and evolve. Future research could also explore issues relating to funding and impact of different funding sources on delivery and the development of quality assurance standards.

#### ***Who Could Build the Evidence Base?***

- The SoFAB partner universities and the social farming organisation could continue to work in partnership to build the evidence base by way of identifying areas for research, developing appropriate methods, seeking suitable funding sources for research efforts and disseminating findings. The SoFAB partner universities could continue to provide research credibility to the evidence base.
- Individual farmers and service users need to support the collection of evidence and engage in research efforts.

### **6.8 Networking**

As social farming is a developing concept, individual farmers are learning from training, practice and each other. SoFAB facilitated the networking of farmers during the pilot phase and the farmer's network may develop into a more formal structure to take on some of the roles delivered by SoFAB. However, there is potential for an ongoing network of ideas, practices and a forum for both collective learning and problem solving. This will be beneficial both to existing farmers and new entrants into social farming. An effective network could also be beneficial in promotion and awareness raising, developing and getting agreement on standards, delivery of training and many other areas. Networking can be viewed at two levels: farmers; and a wider network. The wider networking function involves engaging with other stakeholders not just farmers both formally and informally.

#### ***Who Could be Responsible for Networking?***

- As networking is of benefit to the social farmers themselves, they could collectively take on the role of organising and engaging in networking activities so as to engage with the other stakeholders.

- The social farming organisation would be well placed to facilitate networking through organising events to bring people together such as conferences, meetings and farm open days.

## **6.9 Advocacy**

Social farmers face ongoing challenges in the provision of supports, as do service users in accessing supports. Social farmers face challenges on aspects such as insurance, health and safety, funding and transport for service users. The lack of clear funding options for individuals is a barrier to some service users (potential users) for participation in social farming. Mutual alliances could be formed where social farmers support the service users and their families on issues (e.g. in seeking funding for individuals for engagement in social farming activities) and in turn these families support the cause of social farming.

### ***Who Could be Involved in Advocacy?***

- Social farming organisation, social farmers, service users and their families. Parent-led associations which give voice to the service users could have an important role as advocates of social farming.

## **6.10 Liaising with Health and Care Services**

Social farming is fundamentally based on a partnership between service users, farmers and healthcare service providers. Service users are principally in contact with healthcare providers who provide or organise services for them, some of whom have now experienced social farming. The delivery of supports at farm level requires cooperation with healthcare providers at local level (with approval where necessary at a higher level). The evidence from SoFAB is that this partnership worked well but needs ongoing support and guidance to ensure greater provision and engagement. While delivery requires working relationships at local level, it is important to have *buy-in* at a higher level in national agencies/organisations. There is an obvious overlap between this action and other actions identified in this section, however specific consideration should be given to developing, maintaining and nurturing these relationships.

### ***Who Could be Involved in Liaising with Health and Care Services?***

- At local level, it primarily involves the farmers and the families of potential service users in direct contact with the local services manager(s).
- At regional/national level, the contact could be through the social farming organisation supported by individual farmers. Health and social care services could be provided with information on the opportunities available in social farming, the training that farmers have undertaken, the level of safety and care in place on farms.

## **6.11 Funding for Social Farming and Inclusion of Social Farming into Policy**

Evidence from other European countries such as Italy, The Netherlands and Belgium indicates that policies to promote and favour social farming have been introduced and proven successful. The inclusion of social farming into policies in Ireland and Northern

Ireland may not be achievable in the immediate short term however this should be a medium-long term goal of those involved in social farming. This will require buy-in and a belief in the concept of social farming and recognition by policy makers of the benefits both to individuals and to society. The achievement of this goal is linked to other actions such as promotion, awareness, best practice and evidence collecting, however, it should be a clear objective for social farming. This recognition could lead to the provision of funding for specific measures relating to the development and promotion of social farming such as inclusion of measures in the respective Rural Development Programmes. The development of the services provided by a social farming organisation would also benefit from the provision of specific funding. Politicians and senior civil servants should be informed about social farming and efforts made to convince them of the value of the concept to individuals and society. The evidence on the costs and benefits of social farming provided in the report prepared by SoFAB (2014) could be utilised in: informing decision makers on social farming; encouraging the allocation of resources to social farming service users and providers; and lobbying them to introduce positive and supportive policies in this area.

#### **Who Could be Involved in Seeking Funding for Social Farming and Inclusion of Social Farming into Policy?**

- This action involves all stakeholders in the sector working to convince politicians and civil servants of the value and benefits of social farming and of necessity of specific measures, programmes and policies.
- Farmers, the social farming organisation and service users/families should play a key role in lobbying politicians for the introduction of appropriate policy measures.

## **7. CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

There is a greater awareness of social farming at local and institutional levels in Northern Ireland and the border counties of the Republic of Ireland as a result of the SoFAB Project. However, the evidence from the project also highlights the substantial efforts that are required to further promote and enable social farming to a level where there is widespread awareness of the concept, adequate recognition of the benefits to individuals and society and a desire to facilitate its development in practice at ground level, at commissioning/funding level and in policy measures. An ongoing challenge for social farming is the fact that it cuts across a number of sectors namely, agriculture, rural development, healthcare and social/community inclusion.

While social farming in Ireland and Northern Ireland is less developed than in a number of other EU countries, this provides an opportunity to learn from the experiences in these countries. Evidence from across Europe highlights the importance of involving a wide range of stakeholders in the process of social farming including: service users and their families; farmers; government departments; statutory agencies; health care providers (voluntary and statutory); support centres; education/research institutions; local development companies as well as and local/regional authorities.

It is evident from the experience of the SoFAB Project that a wide range of individuals and organisations are interested and willing to get involved at all levels from the ground up, to develop and promote the concept and facilitate and encourage the delivery of supports to social farming. The SoFAB Project acted as both the stimulus and a conduit in this regard.

The SoFAB Project successfully enabled the development of social farming, built an initial evidence base and promoted the concept and practice between 2012 and 2014. The role played by SoFAB was similar in a number of respects to that undertaken by coordinating organisations in other countries. The piloting of social farming within the SoFAB Project brought energy and a focus into social farming. With the ending of the project, it is critically important that all stakeholders work in partnership to deliver on the actions set out in this report to promote and enable social farming in Ireland and Northern Ireland. In doing so, it will ensure that more individuals are provided with the opportunity of social farming as an option and personal choice for the future.

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## APPENDIX 1

### Contacts/Linkages Made by SoFAB Pilot Social Farmers with Institutions Involved in Social Farming in Project Region

Northern Ireland	Republic of 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 and Rural Enterprise International Experiences Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Northern Ireland	RehabCare St John of God HSE (Local) National Learning Network Praxis Care Drumlin House Training Centre Health and Social Care Trusts (Cross Border) HSE Mental Health and Learning Difficulty 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 Camphill Communities Other Social Farmers Farm Organisations Local Development Companies Teagasc Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Service Users and Their Families Key Support Workers FBD (Insurance)

## APPENDIX 2

### Roles and Functions of SoFAB Project Entities

Entity	Participation	Roles/Functions
Project Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Project Manager (UCD)</li> <li>➤ Project co-ordinator</li> <li>➤ Project Administrator</li> <li>➤ Project Researcher</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Day to day management of project activities</li> <li>• Recruit pilot farms and support</li> <li>• Collate learning from project</li> <li>• Facilitate networking between farmers and health/social care services</li> <li>• Build capacity of farmers and health/social care services through farming and training</li> <li>• Disseminate information and share learning</li> <li>• Increase public awareness and contribute to debate on social farming</li> </ul>
Project Steering Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ University College Dublin</li> <li>➤ Leitrim Development Co.</li> <li>➤ Queen's University Belfast</li> <li>➤ College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise</li> <li>➤ DARD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall guidance to the Project Team</li> <li>• Review progress and agree priorities</li> </ul>
Project Advisory Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Care Farming West Midlands</li> <li>➤ Care Farming UK</li> <li>➤ Scottish Agricultural College, Edinburgh</li> <li>➤ Queen's University Belfast</li> <li>➤ South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust</li> <li>➤ HSE North West Region Mental Health Services</li> <li>➤ Breffni Integrated Development</li> <li>➤ SoFAB Network Representatives (4 Pilot Farmers)</li> <li>➤ University College Dublin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forum for wide range of stakeholders (regional, national and international)</li> <li>• Advice and support to Steering Committee and Project Team</li> <li>• Review project outputs</li> <li>• Link between project and own organisation</li> <li>• Raise awareness particularly within own organisations</li> </ul>