

### In this Newsletter we reflect on the first half of this year!

- Farmer Networking
- Social Farming Ireland Roadshow
- Farm Open Days
- Training Programme
- Policy & Research Activity
- National & International Activity

The New Year was off to a busy start with all regions experiencing growth in interest in, and demand for, social farming placements! With awareness levels increasing and the positive impacts experienced by so many participants being shared near and far, interest levels continue to grow apace. Our active farm network expanded to include over 130 farms, ensuring that farms are available in every county. We have facilitated many more new and many returning participants with placements on farms. It's great to welcome new organisations, new farmers, and new participants into our Network!





# Farmer Networking

## Border Midlands Farmer Meet-Up's



The Border Midland's Social Farmers gathered in three clusters - Donegal, Cavan, and Meath, during March. This provided space and time for farmers to meet and discuss Social Farming, and network and learn together.

At the meet-up in Donegal, there was an excellent talk given to farmers by Marina Devaney from the Alzheimer's Society of Ireland. Marina shared lots of great insights into Dementia & Alzheimer's which will help the farmers who have participants from this sector.

These events offered a great opportunity to exchange valuable insights about ongoing placements, share success stories, and address any queries with our farming network. Amidst the discussions, plenty of laughter echoed through the air.

A vibrant gathering took place in the Southwest as social farmers came together for a collaborative event hosted by Social Farming Ireland and West Limerick Resources on Áine Ní Chonail's Farm close to Limerick city.

The event began with an enlightening talk delivered by Mental Health Ireland and Make a Moove, sharing valuable insights to both Social Farmers & RSS participants.

Throughout the afternoon, social farmers had the opportunity to engage in conversations with each other, exchanging ideas, and sharing their experiences. The event also provided a platform for them to seek guidance and support from the Social Farming Ireland team, and address any questions or concerns that arose.

The collaborative atmosphere, coupled with the informative talks and open dialogue, created an uplifting environment where social farmers were able to connect, learn, and grow together.

## Southwest Farmer Meet-Up





# FARM OPEN DAYS

Social Farming Open Days create an interactive environment where farmers, services and participants can engage with each other and with Social Farmers and their farms. Open days offer a chance to witness first-hand the positive impact social farms have on individuals who are socially, physically, mentally or intellectually disadvantaged.

The open days provide an opportunity for Social Farmers, participants and the Social Farming Ireland team to share their experiences, successes, and challenges



Mental Health Professionals from Kildare & West Wicklow attend an open day in the South Midlands on Una & Val Cross's Farm in Kildare



One of the most compelling aspects of Social Farming Open Days is the opportunity for participants to share their stories and experiences. They serve as living testaments to the positive impacts of social farming. Visitors have the chance to hear first-hand accounts of how social farming has improved participants' lives, fostered personal growth, and facilitated a sense of belonging within the community. These testimonials are both inspiring and enlightening, illustrating the profound impact that social farming can have on individuals' health & well-being.

South Midlands Open day with St. John of God's Support workers and Participants on Ciaran Duggan's Farm in Kildare

The Social Farming Ireland Open Day in the South West got underway in May, at Mike O'Connor's Farm in North Tipperary. A warm welcome and hospitality for everyone was provided by Michael, Oonagh and the extended O'Connor family. New and existing services attended and experiences were shared. It was a day filled with invaluable learning experiences, engaging discussions, and a farm walk that showcased the beauty of Mike's farm.



South West Open day on Michael O'Connor's Farm in North Tipperary



The Vaughan's Farm welcomed participants and support staff from Bluestack's Foundation for an great open day on their farm in May. At Campview Farm, everyone got to experience a range of activities that are offered on the farm, including Llama Trekking. It was a day of fun, laughter, and engaging conversations all about Social Farming and Fun!

Border Midlands Open day with Bluestacks Foundation on Campview Farm



# FARM OPEN DAYS



Border  
Midlands  
Open Day on  
Patrick  
Harley's Farm  
in Donegal

In early May, Patrick Harley's farm hosted a Social Farming Open Day that drew a large crowd of over 150 people, including, Minister for Agriculture Charlie McConalogue. During the event, the Minister passionately emphasized the transformative potential of social farming, underscoring its positive impact on rural communities, participants, and social farmers alike. An inspiring day that recognised the remarkable benefits that social farming brings to all involved, with participant voices being heard loud and clear.

Bright May sunshine and a seat in the yard set the scene for a fabulous day at Aine Ni Chonaill's family farm in Ballysimon. It brought together Social Farming participants, service providers, and farmers from County Limerick, with the extensive farm walk and real farm experience being the highlight for all. And the Photographer from the Limerick Leader was on hand to capture the experience!



Southwest  
Open Day on  
Aine Ni  
Chonaill's Farm  
in Limerick



West Open  
Day on  
Angela  
Healy's Farm  
in Mayo

We went way out west for an open day in Mayo, with a view overlooking Blacksod Bay, Angela Healy's Farm won hearts and minds. It was a great opportunity for local service providers and potential participants to see first hand what activities that Angela has to offer on her Social Farm for participants. Busy days ahead for this great new farm!



Blatnaid & Niall Gallagher hosted an open day on their Murray Meadows farm in Galway. They opened their farm up to service providers, participants and farmers, as well as Minister Anne Rabbitte. We were honored to present Anne Rabbitte with our report on the outcomes and impacts of the Disability Participation & Awareness Fund 2021. This fund facilitated participant placements in seven counties, fostering significant progress in the lives of those involved. There were also great contributions from participants themselves telling their own stories and those supporting them and of course from our farmers!



West Open Day  
on Blatnaid  
Gallagher's Farm  
in Galway



# THIS YEARS ROADSHOW



Social Farming Ireland kicked off our 2023 Agricultural Roadshow at the Athenry Agricultural Show, Dundalk Show & Clonakilty Agricultural Show!

Great to have our Social Farming Ireland team out at the heart of Rural farming communities!

## We will be attending a number of other shows over the Summer



2nd July



13th August



16th July



26th August



7th August



27th August



7th August



3rd September

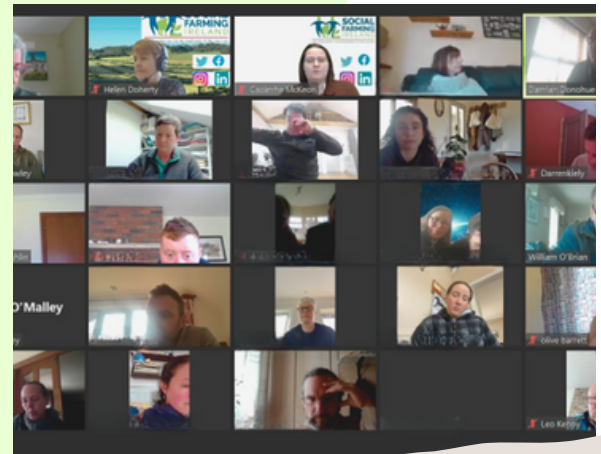
We couldn't be more thrilled to announce our participation in the National Ploughing Championship 2023 again this year, scheduled to take place from September 19th to 21st! We will be part of the Organic Village at the event



# Training

Social Farming Ireland has successfully ran 10 training sessions in 2023. These sessions have been designed to equip farmers with the necessary skills and knowledge to engage in social farming.

In March we ran an online training session, which is the starting point for all new farmers and is followed up with further in-person training. We then planned and delivered four in-person sessions. All our training (provided free) is aimed at enhancing farmers understanding of working with individuals with support needs, ensuring that they are well-prepared to provide a supportive and inclusive environment on their farms.



## Online Training



Over 130 farmers have attended our training programs this year. Some of the farmers who participated in the training have already had placements on their farms.

Additionally, we have a group of farmers who are diligently working towards becoming practicing social farms this year. They are actively applying the skills acquired during the training sessions, preparing themselves to welcome participants to their farms in the near future!



## Clare & Kildare

Through our training sessions, we aim to provide social farmers with the necessary tools and support to engage in social farming. We look forward to seeing the positive impact that these trained farmers will have on the individuals who participate in social farming placements!

Training new farmers is always rewarding and we are looking forward to their journey with us!



## Training - Cork & Roscommon



# NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL



Social Farming Ireland's National Coordinator, Helen Doherty, and Research and Policy Officer, Aisling Moroney, along with Social Farmers Marie Barlow, Mary Cooke-Connolly, and Catherine Molloy, had the privilege of attending the inspiring Women in Agriculture Conference on February 1st.

The National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture event held in Portlaoise served as a great source of inspiration, bringing together remarkable women who are making significant contributions to the field.



It was wonderful to connect with kindred spirits, Desiree Kameka Galloway and Jeff Galloway from Colorado, who are champions of person-centred support in everyday community settings in America .

We also had the pleasure of visiting Social Farmer Tommy Earley's farm, which further deepened their understanding of the positive impact of Social Farming.



We were absolutely thrilled to be featured on Virgin Media Ireland's Ireland AM, where we had the chance to speak about the incredible impact of Social Farming Ireland. It was an great opportunity for Helen, Richard, and Michael to share their experiences and shed light on Social Farming, which offers individuals the opportunity to spend time on ordinary working farms.

Michael's participation was made possible through the local support received from Cavan County Council's DPA fund, facilitated by Minister Anne Rabbitte TD. This collaboration exemplifies the importance of local support and community engagement in creating meaningful opportunities for individuals.

As a result of this support, Michael (who also attends Rehabcare in Cavan) has now embarked on a part-time role working on Moeran's farm. This remarkable outcome showcases the transformative power of Social Farming, where individuals can not only gain valuable skills and experiences but also find employment, on this occasion on the farm.

Social Farming works!



# NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL



Social Farming Ireland's Programme Manager Brian Smyth joined Eoin Beatty on the Kildare Today Radio Show to discuss Social Farming.

During the interview, Brian discussed the numerous benefits of social farming and provided insights into how people can engage and get involved with Social Farming. Listen back [here](#).

Social Farming Ireland was thrilled to be featured on RTE News in May, as it provided an excellent opportunity to raise awareness about the appeal for more farmers to become Social Farmers.

The segment included insightful interviews with Social Farming National Coordinator Helen Doherty, Social Farmer Richard Moeran, and participants from RehabCare who have had placements on Richard's Farm.

Being featured on RTE News allowed us to highlight the profound impact of social farming and the positive outcomes it brings to individuals involved. It was a fantastic platform to share our vision of expanding this initiative by encouraging more farmers to get involved and make a difference in their communities.

Increasingly Social Farming is being seen as a real diversification opportunity for many different types of farms. As we increase commissioning levels and seek to mainstream this support opportunity for many more participants it provides transformative experiences for people while opening the farm gate and using farms and farm life to benefit many.



Ahead of our Open Day in Donegal our Social Farming National Coordinator, Helen, had the pleasure of chatting with John Breslin on the popular "Around the Northwest Show" on Highland Radio Donegal.

During the interview, she discussed the highly anticipated upcoming open day at Patrick Harley's Farm, as well as the numerous benefits associated with Social Farming. Watch back [here](#).



# RESEARCH & POLICY ACTIVITY



Our Policy Officer Aisling Moroney, delivered a number of seminars to third-level students this year, including Occupational Therapy students in Galway University, University College Cork, University of Limerick & Trinity College Dublin, Social Work and Youth and Community Studies Students in University College Cork and to students in the UCD Masters programme in Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development. These have been amazing opportunities to increase knowledge and awareness of social farming amongst the next generation of professionals in both health/social care and rural development.

Aisling was appointed in late 2022 as the Coordinating Expert of the EIP Agri/EU CAP Network Focus Group on Social Farming and Innovation. This Focus Group brings together 20 experts from 13 different EU countries and provides an opportunity to share learning and insights on Social Farming and to highlight its importance as a social and economic innovation at EU level.

Brian Smyth, Social Farming Ireland Project Manager was selected as one of the experts who have met twice and who continue to work together on a series of mini-papers on key elements of practice.

A Final Report, bringing together the latest thinking and developments in Social Farming from an innovation perspective will be published in Autumn 2023. Having Social Farming Ireland involved to this extent places the model of providing supports to people on ordinary family farms right at the centre of the conversation at European level.



Aisling & Brian continue to participate in the Erasmus+ SoFarTEAM project, which is developing teaching and training materials for specific target groups in Social Farming. In March, they travelled to Wageningen University in the Netherlands, where they had the opportunity to visit a range of care farms and also got the chance to meet with the Dutch Federation of Care Farmers and leading researcher on Social Farming, Jan Hassink. The final Project meeting will be held in June in Ireland. We are looking forward to hosting our partners from the Netherlands, Germany and the Czech Republic and showcasing some of our brilliant social farms.

# IN THE NEWS

## 2023

THE  
**Clare Echo**

Eadaoin O'Connell, Regional Development Officer for Southwest, spoke with [Clare Echo](#) to raise awareness about Social Farming and encourage farmers in Clare to get involved. In the interview, O'Connell shared valuable insights into social farming, highlighting its benefits and the positive impact it can have on both farmers and the participants

IRISH  
**FARMERS JOURNAL**

Social Farmer Shane Keavney hosted a Roscommon Macra farm work on his farm, which he discusses with **Irish Farmers Journal** reporter Shane Dobson. He also discusses Social Farming and how he got involved three years ago. [Read it](#)

Limerick's Newspaper since 1889  
**LIMERICK LEADER**

The **Limerick Leader** featured Social Farming in a recent paper. They discussed Social Farming and how to get involved. They also promoted Social Farmer Áine Ní Chonaill's Open Day. Read the full article [here](#)

**AgriLand**  
THE HOME OF UK AGRICULTURE

"Behind every farm gate is a whole new world which can be opened up to benefit communities" according to Minister for Agriculture Charlie McConalogue at the recent Social Farming Ireland Open Day in Donegal. He expressed thanks to the host farmers for the great gift they give people through social farming. Hearing the lived experience of participants is so important, he said. Read the full AgriLand report [here](#)

**louthlive**

**Calls for more 'social farmers' in Louth:** Louth Live featured Social Farming Ireland's call for Farmers in Louth to become Social Farmers - more info [here](#)

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