



A QUICK GUIDE FOR THOSE SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

- Social farming gives people with a range of support needs the opportunity to spend time and carry out activities on ordinary family farms.
- It uses the natural assets of people, place, environment, and community found on farms, to support people to achieve their own goals and derive benefits and positive outcomes across many dimensions of health and well-being.
- Social farming enables people to do 'ordinary things in ordinary places'. It is an opportunity for people to be active, independent members of their communities and consistently challenges and helps overcome societal barriers and assumptions about capacity. With its focus on a person-centred approach, inclusion, and community, Social Farming both implements and promotes the vision and specific aims of the UNCRPD and of key national policies on disability.



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS & OUTCOMES?


- **Improvements in mental health and well-being** from spending time in the fresh air, in nature, and working with plants and animals.
- A **wider social circle** and the development of real and warm connections with the farmer, their family, and the wider community.
- A **sense of achievement, purpose, and meaning** from making a positive contribution and having a valued role in the community. The opportunity to 'care for' rather than be cared for is particularly important.
- Opportunities for positive risk-taking in a lively, **real-world environment**.
- Improved **physical health, fitness, and vitality** from being active but in a very natural way.
- Personal Development - **talents and skills** are often **discovered** through the farm environment and meaningful activities, building self-esteem and confidence.
- Can **create pathways** towards other opportunities for self-development and fulfillment, including voluntary work, training, employment, and the pursuit of new interests.
- Has a role to play in **building** many participants' **capacity** to live independently and well in their homes and communities.



WHAT HAPPENS ON A SOCIAL FARM?

- Social farms are not **specialised 'treatment' farms**. They are ordinary working farms but the farmer is trained and receives ongoing mentoring to provide support to participants. Lots of different types of farms offer social farming opportunities, it is the personal qualities of the farmer that are most important!
- Social farms provide an ever-changing **mix of activities** and opportunities for personal growth, for learning, and for simple enjoyment in a natural and 'live' environment. What happens will depend on the season, weather, type of farm operation, and the needs of the farm on a given day but also on the interests and choices of the participants.
- Everyday ordinary farm activity in a **community** setting is what makes the farm special and is the most valuable thing it has to offer. So a typical day might include activities like these.

WHAT MIGHT WE DO

- checking the stock
 - feeding and bedding animals
 - sowing seeds
 - weeding or watering plants
 - walking the land
 - doing a new project like a raised bed
 - power-hosing
 - sweeping the yard
 - chopping wood
 - making jam
 - meeting the neighbours and wider family
 - going for supplies
 - having tea and chat in the farm kitchen....
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HOW DOES SOCIAL FARMING WORK

Our Social Farming model is flexible and always aims to respond to individual needs. For example, placements can be as part of a group or one-to-one; or participants may attend on a short or long-term basis - often referred to as an enduring placement.

Participants usually come to a social farm one day per week. We call this a 'placement block', it is usually time-limited over a number of months but is flexible and reviewed.

There are usually between two and four participants present each day, providing opportunities for social connection, friendship, and peer support amongst participants and with the farmer and farm family.

Each participant has their own **Individual Support Plan (ISP)** which sets out their SMART goals for the placement and which can link in with their person-centred care plan. This ISP is developed in a collaborative way and also aims to identify support needs or particular risks or challenges.

The value embedded in Social Farming is substantial and multi-dimensional and farmers are paid for the valuable support they provide on their farms, usually on the basis of a daily rate to cover costs. Working through Social Farming Ireland, placements can be commissioned by a person, a family, support services, agencies, or advocates working on behalf of the person.



The level of support provided by support staff to participants is highly individual and will largely depend on the needs and capacities of participants at a given time. Some participants may attend independently but, in all cases, a support worker or advocate will need to be contactable by phone for the duration of the placement. Often the participant is heavily supported at the start of the placement, but this support lessens as confidence grows.

BEST PRACTICE

Social Farming Ireland has developed a **rigorous set of best practice processes and procedures** which are designed to:

- Ensure safe, meaningful, and enjoyable engagements/experiences.
- Provide continual opportunities for participants to shape their own placement experience.
- Provide a high level of governance and quality assurance for commissioners of placements and for participants themselves.

Key pillars of good practice include: farmer training, including on-farm health and safety mentoring; induction days on farms for all (potential) participants; the use of ISPs, the drawing up of a Memorandum of Understanding for placements; and end-of-placement reviews. All farmers we work with must meet our standards for practice.

HOW CAN I MAKE SOCIAL FARMING HAPPEN FOR THE PERSON/PEOPLE I SUPPORT?

As a first step, contact the Social Farming Ireland National Office or the Social Farming Ireland Regional Development Officer in your area. See our website - www.socialfarmingireland.ie for details or email admin@socialfarmingireland.ie or phone us at the National Office @ 071-9641772



This contact will be your gateway to exploring and gaining information on:

- Social Farming generally (how it works, benefits, outcomes).
- Whether Social Farming might be a good choice for the person/people you support.
- The social farms which are in your area and what they individually have to offer.
- How the placement can be funded and supported (placement costs, transport, staffing, etc.)
- Any other questions or concerns you might have.

SOCIAL FARMING IRELAND

Social Farming Ireland provides a range of services that support the development of Social Farming nationally. They provide training and developmental supports to social farmers to provide safe and effective opportunities for participants; work with health, social care, and other services to activate placements on farms throughout the country; provide financial and operational governance for the development of Social Farming; and research and promote the practice and values at a national level. Social Farming Ireland is based in Leitrim Development Co, Drumshanbo, Co. Leitrim, and is funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.



Regional Development Officers (RDOs) are based in four regional hubs, ensuring that there are local sources of support to social farmers, services, participants, and their families and to those interested in Social Farming. These 4 hubs support activity in every county in Ireland and are based in - **Leitrim Development Company CLG (Border-Midlands-East), West Limerick Resources CLG (South-West), South West Mayo Development CLG (West), Waterford Leader Partnership CLG, (South-East).**



An Buidéil Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine

