



New Opportunities + Connecting People + Enhancing Lives

# Social Farming

...nurturing mental health and well-being  
using ordinary farms

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**Teagasc Farm Business Options**

**2<sup>nd</sup> March 2020**

**[www.socialfarmingireland.ie](http://www.socialfarmingireland.ie)**



# Introduction to Social Farming

- Social Farming is the practice of offering family farms as a form of social support service.
- The farm is not a specialised treatment farm; rather the farm remains a typical working farm where people in need of support can benefit from participation in the farms' activities in a non-clinical environment.
- The placement is outcome based in the natural setting of the family farm, around participant goals.
- It also creates the opportunity to reconnect farmers with their local communities through the opening up of their farms as part of the social support system of the community.



# Who can benefit from Social Farming?



- People in recovery from mental ill health
- People with an intellectual, physical or sensory disability
- Long term unemployed
- Asylum seekers/refugees
- Young people at risk
- People with an acquired brain injury
- Older people
- People accessing homelessness services
- People accessing addiction services
- People with dementia
- ---and more



# Four main areas of benefit to participants



## Mental Health

## Social Connection

# Benefits

## Physical Health and well-being

## Education/Skills



# Social Farming Benefits- Mental Health



“Where could you spend a better day?”



# Social Farming Benefits – Skills/Education



*Meaningful activities*

*"It's helped me get my confidence back, just from working with other people, doing different things, cutting timber, working with cattle, fencing.."*



# Social Farming Benefits— Social Connection



"I just felt really at home here. & [the farmer] is lovely, great craic"



# Social Farming Benefits - Physical Health and Wellbeing



*Caring For...*



*"I feel absolutely wrecked after it, but you know.... good tired"*





# Who we are.... Social Farming Ireland Network

**National  
Support Office  
& 4 Regional  
Hubs**

*Collaborative  
Partners*

West

South West  
Mayo Dev. Co.

South  
West

West Limerick  
Resources  
Dev.Co.

Social Farming  
Ireland  
National-Office  
Leitrim Dev. Co.

Border  
Midlands

Leitrim Dev.  
Co.

South East

Waterford  
LEADER  
Partnership



# Our Network



## Is there a **TYPICAL FARM**?

A large diversity of farms, farmers and activity offerings:

- ✓ Farms range in size from 1 acre up to several hundred acres and across all sectors.
- ✓ Activities range from horticulture only to mixed farms, equine, woodland, dairy etc.
- ✓ Qualities and characteristics of the farmer, the farm family and the community around the farm complete the offering
- ✓ Accessibility for all nationally for this support
- ✓ Farms from Malin to Bantry, almost 100 nationally

# Social Farming: What's involved?

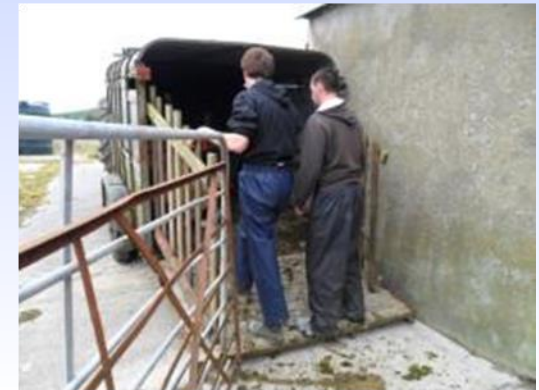
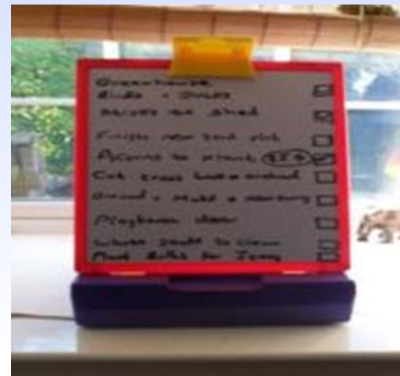


- ❑ Participants usually go one day per week for a period of time (typically between 8 and 20 weeks but can be more). We refer to this as a **social farming placement block**.
- ❑ And spend an average of 4-5 hours on the farm on the day
- ❑ The numbers of participants varies between 1 and 4
- ❑ The farmer supports and works alongside the participants all the time
- ❑ There is always an induction day where participants and the farmer meet, the participant gets to see the farm and they both ensure they want to go ahead with the placement
- ❑ Social Farming is very social! There is always plenty of time for tea and chat 😊



# Farmers Development - Process

- Contact us
- Farmer EOI
- Farmer Application
- Farm Visit by SoFI Regional Officer
- Training – delivered regionally



# Training... is essential



- 9 sessions (c. 30hrs) training programme for Delivering Social Farming
- Partially delivered online in 2020 due to Covid
- *Social Farming Handbook* – On the website



## Typical Activities



### PERSON CENTRED

*Farm activities vary from farm to farm and will be different every day, depending on factors such as:*

- ❖ Respond to the capacities, interests and goals of the participants
- ❖ The weather and the time of year
- ❖ The type and scale of farm
- ❖ The stage in the placement (capacity grows....)
- ❖ Getting the balance between everyday tasks (e.g. feeding animals) vs more periodic tasks (e.g. painting)
- ❖ What's important or interesting on a particular day – the farm is a live environment!



- Care of animals (feeding, grooming, cleaning sheds, collecting eggs, etc.)
- Growing vegetables and fruit (sowing, weeding, watering, harvesting)
- Tidying, sweeping, etc. in the yard
- Woodland activity (cutting brambles, sowing, pruning, clearing paths, etc.)
- Collecting and chopping firewood
- Walking the land
- Painting
- Fencing
- Working with wood/crafts
- Going for supplies
- Environmental improvements
- Meeting neighbours and friends and other people coming onto the farm
- Cooking, preserving, baking etc.
- Stopping for tea and lunch

# Who are Social Farming Ireland



**Leitrim Development Company (Network contract holder with DAFM)**

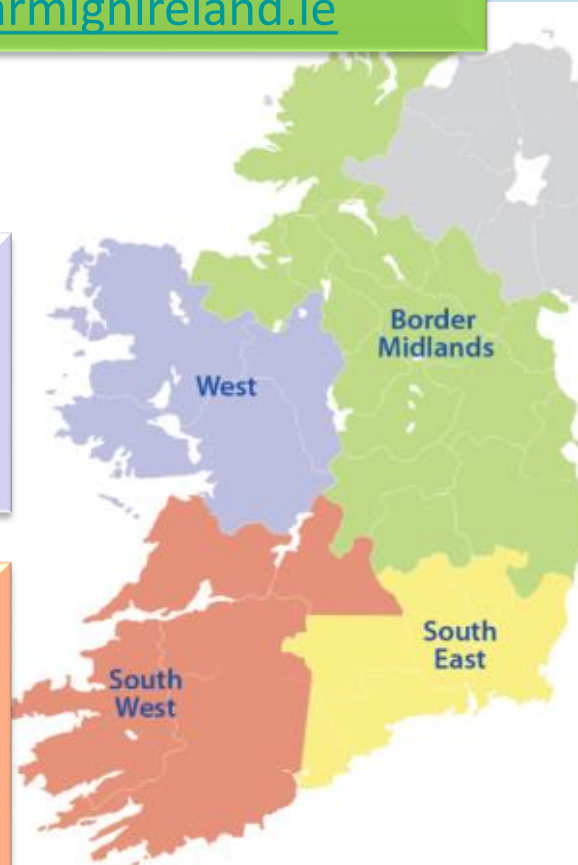
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Want to find out more?



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