SOCIAL FARMING IRELAND

New Opportunities + Connecting People + Enhancing Lives

SOCIAL FARMING

A QUICK GUIDE FOR FARMERS

- Social farming is about giving people with a range of challenges in life the opportunity to spend time and carry out activities on working family farms.
- People get to connect with and experience farming, nature, and the rural way of life in a very ordinary but meaningful way that benefits them AND the farmer. They are supported to learn, to grow, to flourish, and to meet the goals they have set for themselves.
- Many different people benefit from taking part in social farming, including people with intellectual, sensory, and physical disabilities, people with mental ill-health, those who are long-term unemployed, young people experiencing challenges in life, refugees and people experiencing homelessness or dealing with addiction issues.

Leitrim Development Company

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

Some Activities

- 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

Could my farm be a Social Farm?

Lots of different types of farms can be suitable for social farming, from the smallest of growers right up to larger commercial operations. Some key things that we look for:

- The farmer is willing to open up their home and their farm to support other people. The farm is an active, working farm.
- The farm can offer a variety of activities to people, regardless of the weather. It is a safe environment with safe farming practices.
- There is time and space to offer social farming as part of the overall farm operation.
- The farm is broadly accessible, both within its own environment and geographically.
- Most importantly of all, the farmer has the kind of personal qualities and characteristics that would make them a good social farmer, such as patience and empathy.

How does Social Farming Work?

- Participants usually come to a social farm one day per week. We call this a 'Social Farming Placement' and it usually lasts between eight and twenty-four weeks.
- There are normally between two and four participants on the farm on each social farming day. Depending on their needs, some participants will have support staff with them while others will come independently.
- Most social farmers offer social farming one to two days per week. It is important that the farm remain an ordinary working farm where the normal business of the farm continues.
- Everyday ordinary farm activity and community interactions are what makes the farm special and are the most valuable thing it has to offer. So a typical day might include activities like these.
- We in Social Farming Ireland work with the social farmer, the participant(s), and whoever is supporting them to organise all aspects of the placement. Social farmers are paid for the valuable support they provide on their farms, usually on the basis of a daily rate to cover costs.

For the farmer, Social Farming is....

Rewarding

- A great sense of satisfaction and happiness from supporting people and seeing the difference they can make in their lives.
- An additional source of farm income, largely using existing assets. The main input is the farmer's time and social farming can co-exist with and even complement other farm and household activities.

Social

- Brings new people and renewed energy to the farm.
- Farmers make new friendships and connections with participants, with staff from services, with other social farmers, and with the wider community.
- More people than before get to know and understand the real importance and value of what happens on ordinary family farms.

Developmental

- It encourages farmers to see and pursue other opportunities to diversify and to open up their farms. This sense of possibility often extends to the next generation on the farm.
- Social farming activities can help improve the environment and biodiversity of the farm.
- Encourages improvements and good practices in health and safety.

How Social Farming helps participants.....

- Better mental health and a sense of well-being comes from spending time and working alongside others in the fresh air, in nature, and with plants and animals.
- Real and warm social connections and friendships are formed.
- Participants get a greater sense of belonging in their own local communities.
- New skills and interests can be discovered and developed.
- Physical health and well-being are improved from the kind of everyday activity which happens on farms.

How can I become a Social Farmer?

SOCIAL FARMING IRELAND

New Opportunities • Connecting People • Enhancing Lives

STAGE 1:

To register your interest, you can complete a Registration form online. This is available on our website at www.socialfarmingireland.ie or contact the Social Farming Ireland National Office at 071-9641772.

STAGE 2:

All aspiring social farmers must complete three days of Training for Practice provided by Social Farming Ireland. This includes online and in-person elements as well as peer learning on an active social farm. It is usually scheduled once a year and you will be notified of upcoming dates once you register with us. Our training and ongoing support are provided free of charge.

STAGE 3:

At this stage, our Regional Development Officer will visit you on your farm to explore its suitability and potential as a social farm.

STAGE 4:

The development process then continues through our Regional Development Officers with key elements including Health and Safety Mentoring on the farm, Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults training, and verification of insurance cover.

Social Farming Ireland provides a range of services which support the development of Social Farming nationally. We provide training and developmental support to social farmers, work with health, social care, and other services to activate placements on farms throughout the country and facilitate good financial and operational governance for Social Farming practice. We also carry out research on best practices and promote the values of Social Farming at a national level.

Social Farming Ireland is a national project led by Leitrim Development Co. 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 for social farmers, services, participants, and their families. These hubs are based at West Limerick Resources Ltd. (South-West), South West Mayo Development Co. (West), Waterford LEADER Partnership Co. (South-East), and Leitrim Development Co. (Border, Midlands, and East).

WWW.SOCIALFARMINGIRELAND.IE

071-9641772

Leitrim Development Company

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

UCD

West Limerick Resources

South West Mayo Development Company