



Social Farming Across Borders Pilot Farm Profile:

Section 1 – Your Details

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Section 2 – Your Farm

About my Farm:

Our farm in Castlethomas is situated in mid Louth with views of the Cooley peninsula and Mourne Mountains. The townland 'Castlethomas' first appeared on a freehold list in the 1822. The townland of Castlethomas was listed as the place of abode of Thomas Woods, Castlethomas, Dunleer. We believe that the place name may have been created as a form of legacy. According to the land registry deeds, the farm was originally in the estate of Baron Rathdonnell, the owner of Drumcar House. The land passed through various owners until it was purchased by my family in the 1960s.



You can still find old crab apple trees, roses and daffodils in parts of the hedgerow which would have been planted by previous owners who once lived on the farm, but these buildings are no longer visible.

Farm Activities offered to the Participants:



Throughout the year, the main activity involves caring for the suckler herd. When the cows are indoors, which is usually from November to March, they have to be feed twice daily with silage and rolled barley. The straw bedded area for the calves needs to be bedded with fresh straw on an ongoing basis.



The calves are given hay and meal in their pen. In our suckler herd, the cows are split between spring and autumn calving. Cows are moved to separate calving pens before they are due to calve. They will rejoin the main herd when the cow and calf are ready, usually a few days after calving.

Weather permitting the cows and calves are put out to the fields in the spring time. They are then moved to fresh pasture as needed. Some larger fields are strip grazed; this means that temporary fencing is placed in the fields to allow the cattle access to a certain amount of fresh grass each day, therefore making best use of the grass based diet.

Spring

- Checking livestock.
- Put clean straw bedding in for calves.
- Check water drinkers.
- Feed silage/minerals/meal to cows/calves.
- Assembly/planting of raised herb beds.
- Fence maintenance.
- Collect rushes/make St Brigid's crosses.
- Planting/staking/labeling of native Irish fruit trees.
- Grafting of old crab apple trees and roses from the hedgerow.
- Transplant daffodils from hedgerow.
- Plant fruiting hedge: blackcurrants/raspberries, etc.
- Installing bird boxes around the farm.



Summer

- Checking livestock.
- Hedge maintenance.
- General farm yard maintenance.
- Check water drinkers/clean out water if necessary.
- Moving cattle to fresh pasture.

Autumn/Winter

- Checking livestock.
- Put clean straw bedding in for calves.
- Check water drinkers.
- Feed silage/minerals/meal to cows and calves.
- Collect crab apples.
- Make crab apple wreath and place outside for birds to eat.
- Make crab apple jelly.
- Maintenance of new hedgerow (300 meters) planted in 2010.



Projects on-going at the moment:

We are in the process of clearing an area to put up a poly-tunnel in the farmyard. We will have raised beds in this poly tunnel which will contain many native varieties of traditional Irish vegetables. In the yard we will also create raised herb beds and plant some native Irish fruit trees. Over the course of the year we will take cuttings from the old roses and graft the old crab apple trees. In the autumn, we make crab apple jelly from the crab apple trees in the field.

Preferred Days of the week:

Fridays

Section 3 – Your Locality & Community

Nearest Services:

The village of Dunleer is located within 1.5 miles of the farm and has supermarkets, a doctors' surgery, pharmacies, gift shops, flower shop, library, post office, cafes, service station and fire station. There is a community library which is located in the old Station Master's House on Station Road.

The coastal villages of Annagassan and Clogherhead are just a short drive away. As we are located in mid Louth, both Drogheda and Dundalk are easily accessible via the M1 motorway. These towns contain shops, tourist offices and hospitals.

My locality and community interests:

We have a local mart, near Ardee where animals are bought and sold. There is an agri store beside this mart where we can buy various items for the farm.

Section 4 – You, the Farmer

Me and my Farm:

While growing up, I helped my family on the farm before taking over with my husband around 10 years ago. In the past my family were involved in mixed farming with tillage, sheep and cattle. We now operate a small suckler cow enterprise. We keep and rear the offspring on the farm until they are ready for the factory. I am actively involved in a Teagasc beef discussion group which involves around 5 meetings a year. Each meeting takes part on a farm belonging to one of the discussion group. The main tasks on our farm involve the usual daily activities of feeding and taking care of the cows and calves, maintaining fencing and sheds. Most of the activities on the farm can be carried out as team activities. I work part time outside of the farm in an office administration role. In this role, I carry out certain Human Resources and Health and Safety tasks. I am a trained fire warden and first aider in the workplace. As both my husband and I have jobs outside the farm, we appreciate the different pace of life that farming can give. Working outdoors and with animals in general is a challenging but very rewarding way of life.

