

Social Farming Across Borders Pilot Farm Profile:

Section 1 – Your Details

<p>Name:</p> <p>Malachy & Miriam Dolan</p>		<p>Address:</p> <p>Garrison, Co Fermanagh</p>
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Section 2 – Your Farm

About my Farm:

Miriam and I along with our three children, operate an organic suckler herd on 50ha in South-West Fermanagh. The farm is in one unit and the farmhouse is adjacent to the farmyard.

The farm has been in the family for over 150 years and the remains of some old houses that belonged to family ancestors are still to be seen, one of which belonged to my grand uncle who fought in the Boer war in south Africa. The farm house has been remodelled a number of times in the intervening years, however it retains a lot of its original character. The old kitchen with original beams is used to this day. My mother, who is now 87, lives in a house on the farm about a kilometre from our house.



We switched to organic production in 2009 and became fully certified 2 years later. Our calves and stores are sold to other organic farmers to be finished for beef.

The garden and poly-tunnel occupy half an acre next to the farm house. Using the organic manure from the farm we grow a range of vegetables; potatoes, carrots, parsnip, leek, cabbage, sprouts, turnip, beetroot, onion, garlic, spinach, tomatoes and many more.

Our latest project is the completion of an orchard on one acre in front of the house. The orchard is planted with native breeds of apples from Irish seed savers in Co. Clare. These varieties are in danger of dying out.

Long ago every farm house had a few apple trees to supply fruit. These older breeds have largely been replaced in commercial production. In a few years watch out Bulmers!!

The farm itself has a very traditional feel as my father removed very few hedges in the 70s and 80s as was the thing to do at the time. In time the hedges became overgrown and encroached into the fields. Each winter we cut back sections of overgrown hedge and coppice the trees and bushes and replant any gaps with native hedging material. We then erect a stock proof fence to protect the hedge.

In terms of mechanisation we try and do all our own work at hay/silage. The use of contractors is very limited.

Farm Activities offered to the Participants:

The activities on this farm could be broken down season by season.

AUTUMN/ WINTER: Feeding cattle, animal husbandry, cleaning sheds, field boundary restoration (fencing & planting of hedges/trees), and machinery maintenance. Furthermore harvesting from the garden and preparation for next year with manure digging etc. We now have an orchard to maintain e.g. Pruning and grass cutting.

We have some Vintage tractors which require care. The more modern machines are all serviced on farm.

SPRING/SUMMER: Removing trees and wood from the fields where hedges and coppicing took place. Spread farm yard manure on the fields. Calving cows and ensuring health of newborn calves. Hay & silage making.

In the garden from propagating seeds & chitting potatoes to digging and planting in the garden and poly-tunnel.



These activities are a small part of what goes on the farm however they are an example of what takes place.

Preferred days of the week:

Thursday and Friday are the days that suit me best as Miriam is off work every Thursday and Friday so can be on the farm to help out.

Projects on-going at the moment:

We are currently calving cows, feeding the cattle as they are still housed.

The gathering of wood from the fields and removal of the branches from the fields, this is the aftermath of hedges we cut in early winter.

In the garden we have some things planted out with lots of seeds growing as we are getting ready for spring.

Machinery maintenance is always on-going.

Section 3 – Your Locality & Community

Nearest Services: Garrison

In Garrison there are two shops, two pubs, two churches, a post office, the holiday centre with a restaurant which also provides meals-on-wheels, a primary school, a pharmacist and a hairdresser.

Beleek has a GP practice a pharmacy and a bank.

Nearest town: Ballyshannon, Enniskillen.

Nearest public transport or rural transport initiative:

Rural Lift (daily)

Translink (limited service) in Garrison

Bus Éireann (Belleek)

My locality and community interests :

We live in South-West Fermanagh near the village of Garrison

Our three children go to the local Primary school and I am a member of the board of governors for the school. Our Children are also members of the local GAA club and rugby club based in Ballyshannon.

Most of my family and friends live in Garrison.

There is an active Social Community group that organises many cross-broader and cross-community events (eg. social outings).

Our area is synonymous for trout and salmon fishing (Lough Melvin).

We live very near Bundoran and other beautiful and peaceful beaches of Donegal.

Section 4 – You, the Farmer

Me and my Farm:

As Miriam is from the Netherlands I worked and lived in her country for a few years experiencing different ways of life. As I grew up in this local area I have strong community relations. I would often help family or neighbours on their farms. I also worked for many years as a technical manager in Quinn's cement working in a team.

As we are a young and active family we are connected to our community through contacts at the local primary school, through our family and eg. sport clubs.

Because of the close contact we have with our community we suspect that participants on our social farm will become part of this 'wider' family.

Miriam works as a local GP, and her professional experience will be invaluable to make our farm a 'social' farm.

Other information:

Because we live in a rural border area we understand the value of community in a general sense. It is our community that keeps us and this area alive. Living in an isolated rural area can lead to loneliness and social withdrawal and it is important that we as farmers reach out and be active members of this community both for our own benefit and for others.

See below some extra images of the farm!



Two of the old cottages on the farm.

