

Social Farming First Newsletter

Welcome!

This is the first edition of the SoFAB Newsletter from The Project team. We hope you find it useful and informative. This newsletter aims to keep you informed of the events, signpost you to examples of best practice of Social Farming and create a platform for discussion, with a view to enhancing the provision of Social Farming in the Region

In this first, of several newsletters we have news on;

- Information on becoming a pilot farm
- Under the Spotlight feature report from Annagh Care Farm. Aghnacloy, Co Tyrone.
- Round up of our participation in the Agricultural shows across the Region
- Notification of the Official Project Launch
- Web site development

Over the next two years the Social Farming Across Borders project will raise the profile of Social Farming, as well as enhance the potential of Social Farming in the Region. There are a number of key ways the project will achieve this including;

- Establish a cross border network of farmers, health/social care personnel and others.
- Implement 20 on farm based pilot projects across
- Network visits to established Social Farms in Ireland and the UK
- Provide training to farmers and health care professionals
- Share the learning through conferences, network and web site
- Publish a guide book to assist establishment of Social Farm partnerships.

SoFAB covers the counties of:

Antrim, Armagh, Cavan, Donegal, Down, Fermanagh, Leitrim, Londonderry, Louth, Monaghan, Tyrone and Sligo.

Engrossed in the SoFAB information at Bailieborough Cavan.



SoFAB Mission

“The Social Farming Across Borders Project promotes Social Farming as a viable option for achieving improved quality of life for people who use health and social services as well as farm families, through enhancing social inclusion and connecting farmers with their communities.

Social Farming Across Borders

Project and Network Launch

**11am Wednesday 12th
September 2012**

**At
Loughry College Campus
Dungannon Road
Cookstown
Co Tyrone**

**To make a booking
Contact Helen@ldco.ie**

**Website Live
September 2012
www.socialfarmingacrossborder.org**

SoFAB Network Development

Project Team Helen and Teresa pictured with Minister for DARDNI, Michelle O'Neill at Balmoral Show



Attendance at Balmoral Show in May marked the beginning of the SoFAB information road show at local shows aimed at raising awareness of SoFAB. It also marked the start of meetings to help develop the Network.

Since Balmoral, the SoFAB Project Team has attended Castlewellan, Clogher Valley, Enniskillen and Virginia Shows. The team gave out thousands of information leaflets and registered interest and support for Social Farming by farm families and others. The next major event is the National Ploughing Championships in Wexford later in September.

Over the summer there was a series of Network development meetings, these took place in Cavan, Derry, Donegal, Sligo, Antrim, Down and Louth. These events offered the opportunity to discuss issues relating to Social Farming, participation in site visits to local day support projects and to formally express interest in the network. Currently there are over 100 farm families across the Region who have expressed an interest in SoFAB.

During these meetings there was much discussion on participation in the pilot programme, a summary is included below, more information can be found in due course on SoFAB Web site or by contacting the SoFAB Cross Border Project Office.

SoFAB Project seeks 20 pilot farms during Autumn 2012

- Participating pilot farmers will receive training and mentoring before and during the pilot.
- SoFAB Project Staff and Social and Health Care personnel will support the farms during this time.
- Each farm will host a number of people who use services for a total of 30 visits during the pilot (spring – winter 2013).
- There is a small amount of capital support to assist the operation of the pilot
- Lessons learnt from the pilot will contribute towards the second phase of training, and will influence the content of a Social Farming Guide Book and SoFAB conferences.

Under the Spotlight Annagh Care Farm Co. Tyrone

Annagh Care Farm is owned and managed by Simon and Jennifer Bullock. It is located near Aughnacloy in Co Tyrone. The SoFAB Project Team visited the farm at the beginning of the summer 2012 and met with the Bullocks, DARD Farm Diversification staff and personnel from the Southern Trust as well as Alyn Jones from Alliance for Youth Works.

Annagh Care Farm includes a large garden surrounding a Georgian house, barns and a farm worker's cottage known as Peg's Cottage, which is used as the day base for the visiting groups. In a partnership approach with the Southern Trust and Alliance for Youth Works; adults with learning disabilities have been working at preparing the site and making it an even more accessible destination for other service users in the future.

Over the winter of 2011 the old orchard was restored and bird/bat boxes were created. Spring saw the creation of new paths to give access to the orchard and flower beds. Plans for the summer months included getting a green house on site so that vegetables, herbs and flowers could be grown for the local market.

When asked about the future Jennifer and Simon said there were plans to create a pond, rockery and further development of the wildlife garden as a whole. They told the SoFAB team of their long term plans to convert the Georgian House near Peg's Cottage and barns into sheltered housing for those who choose to live and work on site. Once people are living at Annagh Care Farm it would be their aim to have more farm animals on site.

It is obvious that the Bullocks have their own vision for Social and Care Farming at Annagh. We had one final question. What advice would they give to others contemplating developing Social Farming? This was their reply;

"Visit other Social Farming Projects, decide who you would like to have working on your farm and what you would like them to do, then get in contact with all relevant people who would normally support this grouping and explain your Social Farming Project. Hopefully doors will start to open for you, but it takes time. We wish SoFAB had have been around sooner to help us"

