

Social Farming Newsletter – Issue No. 2

SoFAB Staff

Welcome to our second edition of the SoFAB Newsletter from the Project team. We hope you find it useful and informative. We have had a very busy number of months since our last issue and we will give you an update here on our activities to the end of the year and a preview of our plans for 2013. In the newsletter you will find:

- A Report on our Project Launch.
- Our first Network meetings.
- How we are progressing towards Piloting.
- Events in Winter 2012.
- Social Farming is discussed in Europe.

Project Staff attend the National Ploughing Championships 2012 in New Ross, Co. Wexford



Cross Border Ministerial Launch of New Social Farming Initiative

Agriculture and Rural Development Minister Michelle O'Neill MLA alongside Minister of State Fergus O'Dowd jointly launched a new cross border Social Farming initiative. As host to the launch at Loughry College in Cookstown Minister O'Neill warmly welcomed Fergus O'Dowd TD: "Our respective Departments recognise and support the potential of this innovative cross border project. We understand how experiencing farming at first hand, combined with physical activity has been shown to help a broad range of vulnerable people suffering from mental health problems, physical and learning disabilities and drug or alcohol addiction."

She added "Social Farming is particularly relevant to my department on two counts. It complements our work on tackling rural poverty and social isolation while also providing an opportunity for farmers to generate additional income by developing a Social Farming enterprise." Minister O'Dowd further added his recommendation to farmers and farm families across the Region to take the time to consider the potential benefits of Social Farming to their business and local community.

Pat Colgan Speaker from SEUPB also welcomed the project by saying:

"Social Farming is an innovative project and one which the SEUPB is delighted to be supporting. It addresses one of the core objectives of the INTERREG IVA Programme to contribute to a more sustainable cross-border region. Upon completion, this project will have helped build capacity among service providers and through its pilot programme it will gather crucial information on how best to implement this new concept of service delivery in the eligible area."

Representatives from the farming and health sectors heard from a number of speakers, including Gaynor Tate from Care Farming UK and Richard Nicol of West Midlands Care Farming and Paul Henry of the Community of Practice Group. The event had a cross sectoral attendance of almost 90 and was a resounding success.

The National Rural Network (www.nrn.ie)

The National Rural Network ran a feature on the Social Farming Across Borders Project. Dr Jim Kinsella was quoted as saying "In countries such as Holland, Belgium and Italy, working family farms are used as part of the care programme for people with intellectual disabilities or mental health issues. There are over 1,000 such farms in Holland and the process is also being adopted within the British health policy. Our research shows that it can be an effective and viable component of Irish policy."

"These farms will not be specialised treatment units. They will be typical working farms where people in need of support can benefit from participation in farm activities in a non-clinical environment. The farm family must have a real commitment to spending time with people while at the same time maintaining the economic viability of the farm."

Paul Henry, the Project Co-ordinator spoke about the participants "The participants will be people who already have a preferred choice of being involved in rural, farming or outdoor activities or who wish to experience farming as a potential life option."

Jim Kinsella believes the process could be a more cost-effective way to deliver health services as well as providing an opportunity for farmers to generate additional income by developing a social farming enterprise. Ultimately, we could see several hundred such farms around the country.



Minister for Agriculture, Michelle O'Neill, Minister of State, Fergus O'Dowd, Pat Colgan, SEUPB & Project Management Team at the launch of Social Farming Across Borders

SoFAB Network Development

During the Autumn of 2012 we held two Network meetings. We chose Enniskillen and Armagh as central locations in the region. We were delighted with attendances at these meetings with both having around forty attendees. We had a variety of excellent speakers from the healthcare sector and also Social Farmer Gerry Browne from Roscommon. Gerry captivated everyone with the story of his journey with Social Farming.



A section of the crowd at Enniskillen.



And the gathering in Armagh.

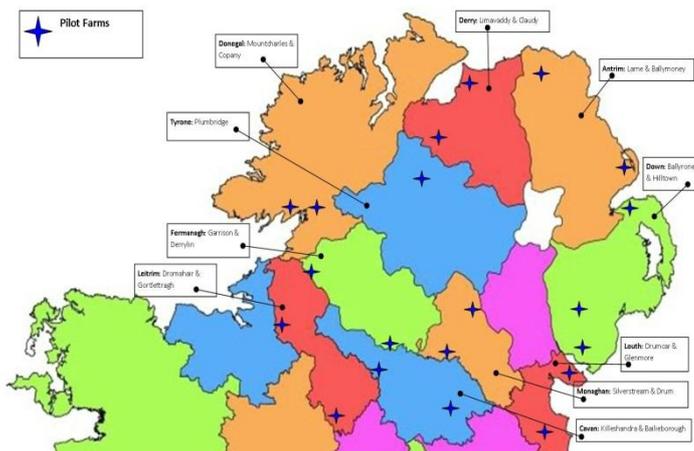
European Economic and Social Committee

On 19 January 2012, the European Economic and Social Committee, acting under Rule 29(2) of its Rules of Procedure, decided to draw up an own-initiative opinion on Social farming: green care and social and health policies.

This article focused on the spread of Social Farming in different guises across Europe and the lack of a regulatory Framework for the practice. They also looked at the research taking place and how this can be best supported.

“The EESC is very pleased to note that the Commission's proposals for the 2014-2020 period open up new avenues for social farming. Nevertheless, it would still seem to need better support in the future programming period. To this end, the EU and the Member States should coordinate recourse to the different policies relevant to social farming. The EESC thinks that the Member States and the various authorities (national and EU) tasked with and responsible for the management of EU funds should work more closely together in order to remove barriers to access structural funds and to facilitate this access for those in the front line.” Check out the full article on our website: www.socialfarmingacrossborders.org.

Under the Spotlight: Our Pilots



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 phase (spring – winter 2013).
- There is a small amount of capital support to assist the operation of the pilot
- Lessons learned from the pilot will contribute towards the second phase of training, and will influence the content of a Social Farming Guide



Minister for Agriculture, Michelle O'Neill, Minister of State, Fergus O'Dowd, Pat Colgan, SEUPB Gaynor Tate, Care Farming UK, Richard Nichol of Care Farming West Midlands & Project Management Team & at the launch of the Social Farming Across

Check out our Website for regular updates on the Project.
We are also on Facebook & Twitter 'like' and 'follow' us.