An Evaluation of Kerry Social Farming 2017

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Department of
**Agriculture,
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An Roinn
**Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara**

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Foreword

Kerry Social Farming embodies, harnesses and advances so much of what is great about rural Ireland. It recognises the importance of farming households in our rural communities. It demonstrates that farms are not just places where food is produced, but that they also have significant social functions. Therefore, sustainable rural development needs to include policies and practices that support maintaining the maximum number of farming families in rural Ireland. As this Report clearly demonstrates, farmers have opened-up their homesteads and farms in a spirit of generosity, and are delivering a service to society that promotes the well-being and development of others. Farmers are acting as mentors, advisers, teachers, guides, and above all as friends to people with various physical and emotional needs. They are doing so in a way that is progressive and person-centred. I salute them, and all those who are contributing to the work of Kerry Social Farming.

This person-centred approach and an emphasis on the progression of participants are integral to the success of social farming. Thankfully, in Ireland we have come a long way with respect to protecting the rights of all our citizens. However, we still have a journey to travel in respect of ensuring that many of our most vulnerable citizens enjoy the same rights as the rest of us, and that our society genuinely and fully reflects the principles and vision of equality and fairness envisaged in the 1916 Proclamation. Government policy is moving in the right direction with respect to individualised budgets and progression plans for people with particular needs. However, much remains to be done to truly empower people, and there is a need for further cultural, attitudinal, institutional and organisational changes at many levels. Kerry Social Farming makes an important contribution to enabling such changes to happen. It offers real choice to people with particular needs and their families, and the model applied here in Kerry is clearly enabling people to realise their potential. Therefore, the mainstreaming of Kerry Social Farming and the advancement of the recommendations presented in this Report are essential to the further promotion of equality, social justice and citizenship.

As this independent Evaluation highlights, Kerry Social Farming does not, and cannot, exist in isolation. It operates as part of the suite of local development initiatives that are promoted by South Kerry Development Partnership. SKDP and the other local development companies throughout Ireland have very considerable experience in community and rural development. They pursue an area-based and bottom-up approach to development, and have proven themselves to be capable of innovating and trying new things. Kerry Social Farming is a clear example of innovation from the bottom-up. Given the need for ongoing innovation, creativity and flexibility in promoting social and economic development of rural areas, as articulated by CEDRA (Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas), it is essential that we invest in the local development companies and better equip them to respond to the needs of the communities they serve.

This Report presents the results of an independent evaluation, undertaken by Crowley Research, Mary Immaculate College and Limerick Institute of Technology. It contains a wealth of data and provides clear signposts with respect to promoting best practice locally and nationally. In Ireland, we have a great need for data to capture what is working well at local level and how our State and its agencies can better support communities. Policy and practice need to be citizen-centred and driven by evidence that includes economic and social indicators. This Report makes a valuable contribution in all these respects, and I welcome its analysis and recommendations in respect of growing Kerry Social Farming and advancing similar models all over Ireland.

Pat Spillane

Chairperson of CEDRA (Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas) and Ambassador for the Action Plan for Rural Ireland

Acknowledgements

Photographer: Valerie O'Sullivan

List of Abbreviations

CE	Community Employment
CEDRA	Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CEVAS	Countryside Educational Visits Accreditation Scheme
CLG	Company Limited by Guarantee
DAFM	Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs
F	Farmer
FET	Further Education & Training
FP	Female participant
G	Guardian
GMEA	General Medical Expenses Act (in the Netherlands)
HIQA	Health Information & Quality Authority
HSE	Health Service Executive
IDA	Industrial Development Authority
ITT	Institute of Technology Tralee
KETB	Kerry Education & Training Board
KPFA	Kerry Parents and Friends Association
KSF	Kerry Social Farming
LDC	Local Development Company
LEADER	Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Economie Rurale (EU initiative for rural development)
LECP	Local Economic & Community Plan
LIT	Limerick Institute of Technology
MIC	Mary Immaculate College
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MP	Male participant
NDA	National Disability Authority
NDSIG	National Disability Strategy Implementation Group
NEWKD	North, East & West Kerry Development
PO	Partner organisation
PR	Public relations
RCT	Randomised Control Trial
RSS	Rural Social Scheme
SICAP	Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme
SJoG	St. John of God
SKDP	South Kerry Development Partnership
SoFAB	Social Farming Across Borders
SoFI	Social Farming Ireland
SOLAS	An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna / Further Education and Training Authority
SROI	Social Return on Investment
STH	Social and Therapeutic Horticulture
SW	Support worker
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
Tús	Tús Community Placement Initiative
UCC	University College Cork
VAT	Value added tax

Executive Summary

An Evaluation of Kerry Social Farming (KSF) was commissioned by the KSF working group in 2016 to review the implementation of the Project to date and to help inform its future development. Established in 2013 and operating social farms since 2014, KSF was founded on principles of equality, social inclusion, voluntary community development and collaboration. It is currently the only voluntary model of social farming in Ireland in that farmers are not paid for their time with participants. It is a locally-led, community-based, shared service that provides farming and social inclusion opportunities to people with intellectual disabilities and acquired brain injuries, all within local communities.

Support for social farming in Ireland, including Kerry Social Farming, comes primarily from the Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine (DAFM) through its Commission for Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA) Rural Innovation and Development Fund. As well as its fit with CEDRA, KSF is also aligned with Kerry's Local Economic & Community Plan and receives support through the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP). HSE's *New Directions* provides the framework for the governance, planning and implementation of KSF based on person-centredness, community inclusion, active citizenship and quality.

This Evaluation set out to assess the implementation and outcomes of Kerry Social Farming, as well as its operation into the future. It explored the opinions of the diverse range of stakeholders and beneficiaries involved in the planning, development and implementation of KSF in terms of need, relevance and accessibility and in terms of benefits, effectiveness and challenges. It also assessed the steps required to continue to develop a sustainable model of social farming that addresses goals of equality, social inclusion and community development through an effective, collaborative and integrated multi-stakeholder approach. To do this, the Evaluation sought the views of KSF's five key stakeholder groups, namely: participants, host farmers, guardians, support workers from care service providers and representatives of partner organisations in the community, voluntary and statutory sectors. Partner organisations included local development companies, local government, the Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine and the Health Service Executive (HSE).

Social farming, or care farming as it is known as in some countries, is one of the most common forms of green care or nature-based interventions, where nature underpins the care service. It is based on concepts of multifunctional agriculture and community-based social and health care (Di Iacovo and O'Connor, 2009). The working definition of social farming used in the Evaluation is as follows.

Social farming is the therapeutic use of farming landscapes and practices on part or all of a working farm to provide health, social, educational and/or vocational supports to a small number of people at risk of social exclusion, e.g. due to disability, illhealth, age, addiction or crime, in a supervised, facilitated and structured programme of farming-related activities involving livestock, horticulture, crops, machinery or woodland[1].

The evolution of social farming in Ireland has paralleled the emergence of the social model of disability and is strongly rooted in the community and voluntary sectors. In 2007, just two private social farms were recorded in the first survey of its kind in Ireland. In 2014, 20 pilot farms were operating in the cross-border region. By January 2017, Kerry Social Farming had established nine social farms in the county. The farms in KSF in early 2017 were privately owned and managed, their services were commissioned through a placement model with a social rehabilitation orientation and all the farms fit with the concept of 'helping hand farms' whereby their focus remained on agricultural production.

International examples of social farming evolution show the importance of inter-departmental co-operation, especially between Agriculture and Health/Welfare, the need for an enabler (individual or group), strong support networks and sustainable funding mechanisms underpinned by an effective government strategy. The enabler in the case of KSF is South Kerry Development Partnership (SKDP) and the local supportive network is the working group, but the other three

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[1] Adapted from Bragg and Atkins (2016), Care Farming UK (2016), Di Iacovo and O'Connor (2009), Rural Support (no date)[1] and SoFAB (2014).

characteristics of success are lacking i.e. inter-departmental co-operation, sustainable funding and an effective government strategy.

New Directions calls for "a strong national vision, cultural change among providers and funders, support for innovation, funding systems that facilitate individual choice, and an expanded array of demand-led, individualised services that let service users exercise choice and control over decision-making about their service" (HSE, 2012: 15). Incentives that encourage innovation and create a more competitive market for services includes the personal budgets that help to pay for social farming in Belgium, the Netherlands and the UK. In Ireland, the introduction of personal budgets will entail aligning funding systems with *New Directions*. In terms of value for money, the cost of social farming in the cross-border project was found to be comparable to services delivered by HSE and non-HSE providers (Kinsella *et al.*, 2014c). In the UK, Leck (2015) found that for every £1 invested in care farming activities, more than £3 of social value was created.

For social farming to develop its full potential under *New Directions*, it needs to achieve acceptance and support as both a therapeutic and an occupational intervention from the Department of Health and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation, respectively. Such support would help to address two funding challenges to the development of social farming in Ireland seen to date, namely: the termination of projects, despite their potential, due to short-term funding and the shoe-horning of initiatives into employment progression templates to secure funding (O'Connor *et al.,* 2010). Recognition of the value of social farming and support for it beyond the Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine could emerge from the establishment of an inter-departmental committee at national level, along the lines of that found in the Netherlands or Norway. At the very least, the committee must include the Departments of Agriculture, Food & Marine and Health along with the Minister of State for Disability Issues at the Departments of Social Protection, Justice & Equality, and Health. As statutory involvement in green care in Ireland increases, it will be important to achieve a pragmatic balance between the flexible, local models that are evolving out of the community and voluntary sector and any future State requirements for regulation and standardisation. Since 2015, Social Farming Ireland (SoFI) has been operating out of Leitrim Development Company with support from the DAFM and its CEDRA Rural Innovation and Development Fund to support the development of social farming across the State and to facilitate local projects.

An independent research team from Mary Immaculate College, Limerick Institute of Technology and Crowley Research conducted the Evaluation of Kerry Social Farming. The data collection methods used to gather feedback on KSF comprised conversations with participants, interviews with host farmers, a postal survey among guardians and online surveys among support workers and partner organisations. All interactions with participants with severe communication limitations were facilitated by support workers. Initial analysis of the data was presented to groups of stakeholders and the working group in negotiated feedback sessions to explore the emerging results and inform their interpretation by the researchers.

Twenty-one participants (78%) took part in the Evaluation, six females and 15 males ranging in age from their 20s to their 60s. One-third have been in KSF since social farms began to take in participants in 2014, while another half joined in 2015.

All 10 host farmers in KSF were interviewed (including one couple who farm together) comprising three females and seven males. The nine farms included a wide range of livestock, some horticulture and forestry, and three farms were either organic or chemical-free. Farms ranged from 0.3ha to 45ha and from intensive market gardening to extensive hill farming. Other sources of farm household income included rural tourism, tree cutting services, a garage, food production, teaching, jobs in the care sector, Carers Allowance, Rural Social Scheme, pension and investments.

Fourteen guardians (58%) responded to the survey, the majority of whom were 56 years or older, either female or a parent, and had been guardian of the participant for over two decades. Most of the participants known to them had been attending social farms for more than one year and attended a farm once a week.

Eight support workers (73%) completed the online survey, two-thirds of whom were female and almost all had been involved with KSF for at least one year. Support workers (also called job coaches) accompany and work alongside participants to help them to settle into the social farm and they also advise the farmers. Some higher dependency participants require continuous support on a long-term basis. All of the support workers who responded to the

Evaluation assist the participants while on the farm, most liaise with both participant families and farmers, while half identify and match participants to the farms, check-in with them on the farms, and help with records and reporting.

Fourteen representatives from partner organisations (67%) participated in the online survey. Two-thirds were male and had been involved in KSF for at least two years. The most common ways their organisations collaborate with KSF are by supporting another organisation in the Project, supporting farmers, providing funding, and supporting participants or with project co-ordination.

Host farmers cited the influence of SKDP, experience with a family member with a disability, volunteering with a care organisation or working with people with intellectual disabilities as the triggers that sparked their interest in KSF. One farmer thought it would help to increase farm income. Project facilitation is enabled by the SKDP as the lead agency in the Project, as well as through support from the service providers (Kerry Parents and Friends Association and St. John of God), and the input of the voluntary working group. When asked if they are getting enough support in KSF, the farmers were generally positive. The farmers describe the risk assessment entailed in the KSF as straightforward. Host farmers value the input of support workers: they depend on their advice, especially when participants are new to KSF, and they learn from observing the support workers communicate and work with the participants.

When it comes to farming with participants, the host farmers in KSF explained their practices in terms of: farming as usual; health and safety; flexibility and seasonality of activity planning; working to suit participants; and appropriate farmer disposition. While the host farmers keep the farming day as normal as possible, they actively manage the participants' health and safety during their social farm sessions. They adapt their farming routine to suit participants' abilities and wishes as well as in response to the weather and seasonal cycles on the farm. Some cited examples of spontaneous changes to their planned farm session activities in response to an opportunity or the expressed wish of a participant. The emphasis is on participant learning at their own pace, and mutual enjoyment of social farming, allowing relationships and confidence to grow over time. The emphasis is not on completing farm work or working under time pressures. Host farmers discussed the importance of being patient, understanding, kind, caring, interested, disability aware and sociable.

Participants talked about doing everyday farm tasks, being aware of the need to mind their health and to stay safe while farming. They told the researcher about the variety of experiences that they have on the farms and how they are kept busy. Participants reported that they find the support that they need when on the farms. Participants especially noted how they enjoyed spending time in the company of farmers.

While host farmers made positive comments about information sharing and communication in the KSF, some responses indicated room for improvement. Specifically, farmers sought:

- allergy information in relation to participants;
- a feedback channel from guardians;
- improved two-way communication with KSF;
- greater clarity regarding drawing down the farm improvement grant; and
- more meetings for host farmers e.g. regular farm walks for host farmers as a platform for knowledge exchange and to help promote social farming more broadly amongst the farming community.

Farmers are confident of how to solve an issue with a participant. They address it with (1) the participant, (2) the support worker and (3) SKDP. With the new Kerry Social Farming facilitator in place, farmers believe they have someone who they can turn to at any time. Participants also know who to turn to if they encounter a problem on the farm.

Most guardians and all support workers and representatives of partner organisations agree that they have a good knowledge of what happens at the social farms or on the Project. The results show that more information could be shared with guardians about what happens at the social farms and regarding what is in participants' activity plans. Farm open days would provide an opportunity to build awareness of social farming among participants' families. Most support workers and representatives from partner organisations believe that information sharing and collaboration among the organisations involved in the project are good. While the level of engagement with guardians, support workers and

representatives of partner organisations is good in terms of seeking their input and involving them in discussions about the participant or KSF decision-making processes, there is room for further improvement, especially for support workers who accompany or check in with participants during their social farming sessions.

Similarly, some farmers call for stronger engagement with host farmers and with participants with respect to decision-making in KSF, especially among service providers. Host farmers would like to be more informed about participants' personal progression goals to help them to tailor the farming activities to their wishes. This is particularly important in relation to optimising person-centredness in KSF.

Guardians are generally satisfied with the support that KSF gives the participants, with its knowledge of participants' needs and with how it addresses those needs. Three-quarters of guardians and all support workers are positive about participants continuing in KSF, while over half of guardians and nearly all support workers agree with participants having the opportunity to spend more time each week in social farming. Both male and female participants wish to continue on their social farms, and those with severe communication limitations demonstrated how they too make their preferences known. A number of participants would like to spend more time in social farming.

There is also interest in different community-based activities. One-third of guardians and all support workers agree with participants having the opportunity to do something different to social farming or to try out other activities in the community. But most participants are not seeking other activities. Many of them consider farming to be the best job and only two expressed alternative suggestions. All support workers and representatives from partner organisations agree that KSF is a positive addition to what is available for service users. Almost all guardians and support workers would recommend KSF to others and approximately half of them would do so strongly.

Social farming encompasses the five daily actions recommended for well-being and mental health, these are to: connect, be active, take notice, keep learning and give (Aked *et al.*, 2008). Health benefits from social farming are associated with three characteristics: the natural environment, meaningful activities and social context (Bragg and Atkin, 2016). The extensive international evidence of the benefits of social farming for participants is predominantly qualitative and can be summarised into four themes: physical health, mental health, social benefits and educational/vocational benefits. In terms of the outcomes of KSF for participants, the most frequent ways in which it helps participants in the ranked opinion of all or nearly all guardians, and according to all support workers (where the rank of the answers of support workers is given in parentheses) are as follows:

1. Treating them with dignity and respect (1)
2. Supporting their emotional stability (5)
3. Variety (2)
4. Stimulation (4)
5. Suiting abilities (6)
6. Meeting interests (4)
7. Making friends (8)
8. Useful training (7)
9. Education and skills (3).

The most frequent types of improvement seen among participants in Kerry Social Farming, in the opinion of all or nearly all support workers, are:

1. Independence
2. Communication skills
3. Confidence
4. Memory
5. Responsibility
6. Mood
7. Dexterity.

Guardians, support workers and representatives from partner organisations gave many examples of what, in their opinion, the participants got out of their involvement with KSF. These are classified thematically according to the categories established in the literature review, namely:

1. Physical health benefits – being active, being outdoors in fresh air, sleeping better, improved motor skills;
2. Mental health benefits – enjoyment, calm, therapy, confidence, independence, stimulation, meaningful activity;
3. Educational benefits – learning, skills, progression; and
4. Social benefits – friendship, bigger social circle, social inclusion, community integration.

Guardians and support workers report physical health benefits ranging from increased activity, being outdoors in the fresh air, tiredness resulting in improved sleep, and even improved motor skills (use of and control over muscles). Some report participants' enjoyment and happiness while farming or being around animals. Improved well-being and reduced anxiety are also noted. Social farming is described as a form of therapy, and not just for the service users participating in it. One partner organisation reports that it is also having indirect benefits on the wider group back at the Day Centre. Others note improvement in participants' confidence and independence. Some participants are clearly stimulated by and excited about social farming, throwing themselves into the work and life of the farms and telling their guardians or fellow residents all about their experiences in KSF. Social farming is an opportunity for participants to try something new or different and to do meaningful activities. Participants learn through social farming, develop new skills and can experience progression. This includes participants who come from a farm family but did not have the chance to do farm work themselves. Even those who get to help out on the home farm can learn something new as each farm is different. Participants experience a range of social gains through their involvement in Kerry Social Farming from direct benefits of making friends, extending their social circles and taking part in team work to broader gains of social inclusion and community integration. The last two indicate benefits at a societal level also because communities can be enriched by the greater visibility of participants and by their contributions to society through realisation of their full potentials. McGloin and O'Connor (2007: 9) noted that social farming participants are more likely to be male highlighting the "cultural biases of gendered work roles" associated with farming. Conversely, the care professions are dominated by females and this is reflected among service providers involved in social farming initiatives also (Di Iacovo and O'Connor, 2009). Therefore, social farming offers participants the opportunity to spend time in male company as the farmers and participants are more likely to be male, while guardians and support workers are more likely to be female. This is the case in KSF also and both guardians and support workers welcome the availability of new male role models in the lives of participants as another positive aspect of Kerry Social Farming.

The participants echo these findings. Some repeatedly discuss the benefits of outdoor activities for them. Others talk about enjoying farming and explain what they like to do on the farms. Participants express their own growing confidence on the farm and with farm work. They speak enthusiastically about KSF, describing the new experiences they are having on social farms, including challenges and hard jobs. For some participants, farming is familiar to them from their past or current experiences. Participants see what they do on the farms as important and of help to the host farmer. They describe what they have learned on the social farms and for one participant, Kerry Social Farming has revealed an aptitude for farming and led to a new job. Participants frequently mention team work and working with others on social farms. They refer to their interactions with members of the extended farm family, other farmers, neighbours and tourists as well as excursions off the farm.

Kerry Social Farming not only provides benefits to the participants but can also have positive implications for farmers, guardians, support workers and representatives of partner organisations. Over half of the guardians agree that KSF has had a positive effect on their own health and on their family life while two-thirds say it is beneficial for their caring role. This suggests that the benefits of KSF can extend to participants' families in some cases. 'Peace of mind' is the common theme in the guardians' responses. Among support workers, all agree that KSF has had a positive effect on their support work and almost all agree that it has a positive effect on their workload and on their job satisfaction, such as observing participants' progression in KSF or seeing a new side to them in the different environment of a farm. The support workers also comment on the physical and mental health benefits for themselves, along with educational, social and vocational benefits due to KSF. Representatives from partner organisations report the benefits from KSF for themselves as satisfaction on behalf of the service users, with the Project overall and its success, as well as with its partnership approach.

Social farming offers benefits to the host farmers involved in the voluntary model of social farming. Kerry Social Farming gives host farmers the opportunity to deliver alternative services and new types of activities on their farms. Buist (2016) described social farming as a way to counter society's negative view of the agricultural sector. For example, Wilcox (2008) considered that farmers show a spirit of altruism in adopting social farming. The Evaluation records a range of evidence of the benefits from KSF for host farmers and their families. Similar to the findings from the cross-border project (Walsh, 2014), the key benefits for host farmers in the KSF are:

1. Personal development (especially disability awareness);
2. Personal satisfaction; and
3. Farm improvements.

First and foremost, farmers praise the abilities, attitudes and knowledge of participants. Farmers get satisfaction, enjoyment and learning opportunities from their involvement in KSF. And participants help the host farmers to make farm improvements. Ballyhoura Rural Services (2015) cautioned against the needs of the farm superseding the needs of the social farming component so that clients become just labour inputs. What is clear from what the host farmers in KSF say is that they recognise the abilities and contributions of participants and they place a high value on the participants enjoying and benefitting from their time on the farms. It is also apparent that while most participants are enthusiastic workers, some of them are very capable as well.

There are benefits for the farm families and the wider communities too. Walsh (2014) described how social farming in the cross-border region improved disability awareness among farm families and enhanced the social connectedness of community with participants. This is reflected in Kerry Social Farming too and the host farmers document the ways in which the participants engage with children, older people and their neighbours. Friendships are formed or rekindled, older people have company, children have positive role models and new life is breathed into rural neighbourhoods. Another positive aspect that emerges from the Evaluation is the entrepreneurialism that KSF can generate among farmers and other stakeholders in terms of farm and rural diversification. It encourages them to broaden and diversify their role in the community. In particular, it reveals the capacity for innovative social service delivery in rural areas. This is borne out by the host farmers who explain how social farming is complementary to small-scale farming and that it may lead to farm diversification that integrates with the wider economy. Hine *et al.* (2008) noted that it is important for farmers, the farming industry and agricultural policy makers to recognise this multifunctional feature of agriculture in order to encourage social farming. Support from the CEDRA Rural Innovation and Development Fund through the Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine has been essential so far.

Through their interviews and surveys, the stakeholders talk about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) to Kerry Social Farming from their perspectives. Several themes emerged from the responses of guardians, support workers and representatives of partner organisations that point to the **strengths** of Kerry Social Farming, namely:

1. Person-centredness
2. Positive and targeted intervention
3. Realisation of farm family social capital
4. Partnership approach and collaboration
5. Innovation and potential to mainstream
6. Community integration
7. Social inclusion.

In terms of **weaknesses**, guardians and support workers were asked if any issue had resulted from participants attending a social farm, and representatives from partner organisations were asked if they encountered any problem with the Project. Data collected during the course of the Evaluation point to several issues encountered in the three years of KSF to date. Some of them relate to the nature of farm work – its physicality or suitability for females and working in inclement weather – while others are about the quality of the social farming offer – farm standards and on-farm engagement with participants. In the cross-border project, Kinsella *et al.* (2014) and Walsh (2014) outlined similar issues there. Partner organisations also list a number of issues in terms of the management and future development of KSF, especially in

terms of effective working group meetings and challenging the limitations of service providers. During the Evaluation, it emerged that one service provider avails of social farming for its service users as a group activity. Participants travel together to one social farm where they all engage in social farming and are accompanied for the duration by a support worker. During an interview with this group of participants, the support workers present discussed an alternative way of programming social farming by scheduling it over an 8-week period in the spring and again in the autumn. There are several reasons behind programming social farming in this way: participant interest, participant and support worker activity/work preferences, competing activities during busy summer period, staff resources, and avoiding winter weather. But several issues arise when social farming is offered as a group activity. It is less flexible and not tailored to individual participants' needs, wishes nor abilities and it reduces the opportunity to attend social farms during the summer when farming is most varied and pleasant. Therefore, individual participation in Kerry Social Farming allows for a more 'person-centred' approach that can prioritise the interests, abilities and schedule of each participant.

With regard to **opportunities** to grow Kerry Social Farming into the future, some host farmers are open to the possibility of taking on another one or two participants in time, depending on (a) the needs of the individuals, (b) the availability of support workers and (c) the time commitment required from the farmer. Host farmers explain how each additional participant means less time available for farming and thus there are financial implications. One farmer cautions that social farms risk losing their unique advantage over institutions if the number of participants per farm grows too much. Another farmer mentions the option of periodic group activities for particular farming activities, like a 'meitheal'. Farmers recognise the need for experience or skills to work with some participants and the importance of support workers. The Evaluation gauged the interest and opinions of host farmers regarding four additional groups of potential participants:

1. Children and young people up to 18 years with troubles or behavioural disorders
2. People with psychological ill health
3. People experiencing alcohol or drug addiction
4. Older people with dementia

Overall, the host farmers are particularly amenable to the potential for having (a) people with psychological ill-health and (b) children and young people up to 18 years with troubles or behavioural disorders on their social farms. They recognise that this would require appropriate training for farmers, suitable farming activities, adequate staff support and payment depending on the time and resource commitment required of farmers. Some host farmers are also amenable to providing social farming opportunities for people experiencing alcohol or drug addiction but one farm family with children would not consider this group. Older people with dementia is seen as the most challenging group of participants to have on social farms due to the labour intensive nature of their support needs and higher demands in terms of health and safety. In addition to these four groups, one farmer believes that Kerry Social Farming could also help people seeking work experience.

Turning to the **threats** to Kerry Social Farming, respondents identify a number of areas to address for its future development. They highlight the need to expand KSF in terms of the number of social farm sessions available to participants, the number of participants availing of the Project, the number of host farmers (particularly outside of South Kerry) and the number of support workers. All of these changes are required to meet the rising demand for social farming in Kerry. Other problem areas in KSF include the lack of suitable funding, excessive bureaucracy and over-regulation. This reflects the experience in the UK also. Care farmers there identified funding, securing care contracts and recognition for the value of care farms and care farming as their top three challenges in care farming (Care Farming UK, 2016). In Ireland, the lack of funding for social services has meant that projects are shoehorned into labour market participation initiatives while successful social farming pilot projects have been left stranded after their short-term funding streams ended (McGloin and O'Connor, 2007). In Northern Ireland, long-term, sustainable funding is also one of the main barriers to social farming and Johnston (2016) suggested that direct payments be explored for subsidising social farming as a form of farm diversification there. Wilcox (2008) recommended adjusting the Single Farm Payment in the UK to support farmers for achieving social objectives, such as inclusion through social farming. Corporate Social Responsibility is another potential funding source whereby companies could be called upon to provide funding for social farming to fund placements or hours per year (Wilcox, 2008). But while sponsorship and support from corporations or a philanthropic model is good in the development phase, those experienced in social farming believe that it needs sustainable funding long-term. Respondents in the Evaluation highlight the temporary nature of SICAP funding support and frustration with

bureaucracy and a lack of recognition for the value of KSF from influencers in policy making and funding. There is also fear of over-regulation weakening social farming in Ireland and a call for a holistic approach from regulators. The logistical challenge of transport affects participants' access to Kerry Social Farming. At present, the KSF is confined to Kerry, but one participant travels from Baile Bhuirne in Cork. Those who cannot avail of public transport depend on either service providers (support workers or drivers provided by the Tús scheme) or family members to help them to get to and from the social farms. To help address the transport challenge, Kerry Social Farming is collaborating with Local Link Kerry (Kerry Community Transport CLG) to develop a Social Car model. The Social Car is whereby host farmers use their own vehicle to transport participants to and from farms. This offers a flexible solution to access and the normalisation of transport for participants.

With regards to strengthening and improving Kerry Social Farming into the future, recommendations have emerged from stakeholders who participated in the Evaluation process and especially out of discussions held with various stakeholders to interrogate the findings, informed by both the international experience and the ongoing national debate. Below are the resulting recommendations that are supported with evidence in this report.

1. Enhance the input of participants – with respect to person-centredness, respondents highlight that participants are the ones who must decide whether they go social farming or not and that this decision should relate back to their personal plan. One partner organisation also calls for tailoring social farming supports to participant needs. Ultimately, the advance of government policy on individualised funding and personal plans will help to drive person-centred approaches at a faster pace than seen to date and this will benefit innovative projects such as KSF.

2. Expand training opportunities for host farmers and participants – stakeholders call for improved training opportunities for both farmers and participants. Social farmers and/or their partners, at least in pilot projects and at the early stage of development in countries, tend to have had personal or professional experience of people with disabilities, other defined needs or in the education sector as found in the Netherlands, Northern Ireland and Norway. Reflecting the fact that the KSF is a voluntary model of social farming, this Evaluation found that an additional factor in Kerry is a background in volunteerism and community activism. Across the nine farms, every host farm family, farmer or spouse exhibits at least one of the following characteristics: relatives with intellectual disabilities; employment involving people with a disability; and a history of community activism or volunteerism.

As part of the Evaluation, host farmers were asked about the training they received from Kerry Social Farming. Their comments show that they receive guidance from SKDP, training in health and safety and support workers provide help with participants. But farmers also talk about the value of learning by doing, such as taking the time to get to know the participant, being open to what they want and allowing things to develop naturally.

The main training sought by the host farmers is to learn more about: working with participants' needs and abilities; and how to communicate effectively, especially with participants who are non-verbal. While most host farmers would be satisfied with sufficient training to meet their current requirements, two of them are interested in vocational training leading to a qualification. Partner organisations identify the need to include educational institution partners for participant and farmer training, and these are currently being explored by the Social Farming Facilitator.

Many respondents highlight the need to develop training for participants, such as a qualification in social farming for adults with learning disabilities to teach farm skills and life skills through farming. Support workers recommend that KSF showcase and celebrate participant progress by highlighting their achievements through certificates and a Day of Recognition.

3. Improve monitoring and evaluation processes – host farmers are key stakeholders when it comes to recording the activities, progress and achievements of the participants on their farms. The host farmers recognise the importance of tracking information about the social farming sessions and the role of such data as evidence to demonstrate KSF outputs and participant progression. The farmers recommend that they liaise with the KSF to devise improved farm-based record-keeping tools and methods for recording and tracking participant progression.

4. Enhance the Kerry Social Farming offer – one support worker recommends that all farms have indoor work areas to improve conditions for both participants and support workers during inclement weather. Guardians suggest ways to expand the range of activities offered through KSF including going to marts, attending agricultural shows and participating in farmers' markets. Expanding social farming activities out into the community in these ways would help to answer calls to enhance community integration.

5. Clarify the roles of service provider and implement protocols – respondents note the need to clarify the roles of service providers and to develop protocols for social farming arrangements. This would help to address the insufficient number of support workers evidenced in the Evaluation and allow farmers to structure their week around regular social farming sessions, as almost all do in KSF.

6. Explore payment pathways for participants and host farmers that complement the voluntary model of social farming – a number of respondents suggested that KSF explore payments for participants and host farmers. The majority opinion among host farmers is that they do not want to receive a payment for their services under the voluntary model of Kerry Social Farming. At least one host farmer would welcome a payment. This dichotomy of payment preferences was mirrored among participants. Therefore, the subject of payment for participants and for host farmers reveals a very strong commitment to the voluntary model and some interest among a minority in the opportunity of a payment pathway for social farming.

7. Maintain locally-led structure – stakeholders in this Evaluation note the key enabling role of local development companies, in particular the SKDP. Given the positive association between social farming and community and rural development, it is recommended that in expanding, mainstreaming and further promoting social farming, initiatives ought to reside within, and be driven by Local Development Companies. Inter-LDC networking and collaboration will be important in promoting knowledge transfers. KSF is ideally placed to offer a consultancy/mentoring role here.

8. Improve participatory governance and enhance collaboration from management – in order to improve participatory governance of KSF through its working group, it is recommended that all working group members provide written reports to their respective agencies, and seek written feedback and commitments from those agencies. Such two-way feedback and accountability mechanisms are conducive to good governance and the further promotion of inter-agency collaboration in Kerry Social Farming. In other jurisdictions, host farmers have described a lack of understanding and awareness of social farming among service providers as a challenge for social farming. In the Evaluation, partner organisations highlight the importance of involving high-level managers, especially from service providers. Stakeholders recommend improving partners' mutual understanding through collaboration, information sharing, visiting social farms and meetings across the county.

9. Invest in the KSF working group – the pooled expertise and collaborative approaches that characterise the working group of Kerry Social Farming represent important strategic assets that merit further and on-going investment and strengthening. As membership is likely to rotate, in line with best practice in organisational governance, it is recommended that there be on-going investment in training and capacity-building for members, with a specific focus on meeting the needs of people with disabilities. Other advances to the working group would include representation from the agriculture sector and the establishment of sub-committees to address contentious issues.

10. Continue to actively promote Kerry Social Farming – individuals in key positions, such as those in charge of funding decisions within the statutory and the healthcare sectors, have a significant impact on social farming and tend to show greater support when familiar with the practice and positively predisposed to it. This highlights the role of farm open days, demonstration projects and research to build awareness and prove the effectiveness of social farming to those with influence. It highlights the importance of KSF's ongoing knowledge sharing within the working group and its public relations (PR) work through its Facebook page and press releases boosted by its success in winning the 2017 Kerry Community Awards Scheme, being a finalist in the upcoming 2017 National Pride of Place Awards, and reaching the top 50 applicants in the 2017 Social Entrepreneurs Ireland Awards Programme. The PR work will continue with the public launch of this Evaluation at an open day on a host farm in July 2017 and the dissemination of its findings.

11. Secure additional, sustainable funding and guard against over-regulation – these are key concerns for the future of KSF. Respondents acknowledge the need for additional and sustainable funding without over-regulation. In order to move towards mainstreaming, stakeholders in KSF highlight the need to generate multi-departmental engagement with *New Directions* and secure multi-stream funding. Minority views are that the Project should seek to engage with just one Department and that direct private payments by service users be explored. The Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine is examining the potential to develop a network to enable a more co-ordinated approach to social farming across government departments. Based on the evidence presented in the Evaluation, it is recommended that the voluntary model of social farming in Kerry be funded appropriately and fully mainstreamed. Given the success of KSF farm walks, and the desire among host farmers for more of them, it is also recommended that host farm walks be mainstreamed through the DAFM Knowledge Transfer Programme.

12. Seek the support of Social Farming Ireland and local public representatives – to address the challenges of social farming projects in Ireland, stakeholders called for collaboration and co-ordination at national level, including through Social Farming Ireland and some respondents suggest that the Project engage with local government representatives to specifically support Kerry Social Farming.

13. The Kerry Social Farming Facilitator plays a vital role – stakeholders recognise the key role of the Kerry Social Farming Facilitator in driving on the Project into the future in partnership with them. The facilitator is a new post with the employee in place since the start of 2017. The positive feedback from host farmers in particular highlights the value of having an experienced and solutions-focused full-time facilitator available to address issues quickly, to respond to emerging ideas and to help drive the future development of KSF. However, the 12-month cycle of funding for this post, and for Kerry Social Farming more generally, creates uncertainty and risks undermining the ambitions and potential of the Project evidenced in this Evaluation. Again, the appropriate funding and mainstreaming of KSF is recommended to address this.

14. Solve the bottleneck of insufficient support workers – in the short-term, the immediate concern is the need for more support workers in Kerry Social Farming to allow it to grow in 2017. On the demand side, there is a waiting list of interested service users who wish to avail of the Project. On the supply side, there is a growing number of farmers interested in delivering social farming supports in Kerry. A barrier to expansion lies with the limited availability of support workers from the service providers to help the participants settle into the social farms and to provide job coaching to them, especially during the initial months. Insufficient support workers for Kerry Social Farming poses a barrier in particular to participants with high levels of dependency who need continuous assistance. Host farmers recognise the bottleneck that has arisen in KSF in terms of support workers and have identified ways to increase the number of local people available to support participants on farms. In cases where agency staff members are not available for KSF and where suitable training is available locally for interested farmers or other rural dwellers, a number of host farmers are asking if they can be trained to the point of being able to fill the role of support workers. Other sources of support workers could come from participants in the RSS and Tús, and volunteers either recruited directly by service providers or in Kerry Volunteer Network. Tús and RSS workers already supply labour to Kerry Social Farming to make the necessary farm improvements. Based on SKDP's experience of engaging with farmers through a range of programmes, it is recommended that the mainstreaming of social farming take place as part of a wider set of farm-oriented initiatives including the Rural Social Scheme. The suggestion that experienced participants could become mentors for new participants points to a pathway for participant progression that could justify a payment for service users who advance through Kerry Social Farming.

Introduction

> "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed [and organised] citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." Margaret Mead (1901-1978), cultural anthropologist[2].

Throughout Ireland, peripheral rural and marginal farming areas are vulnerable to population loss, economic decline and the contraction of social services. At the same time, there is increasing recognition for the particular riches of these areas – for their high nature value landscapes and the wealth of cultural heritage that have survived agricultural restructuring, along with their indigenous communities that persist despite rural restructuring in a modern economy: these twin assets of rural landscapes and people together form the top draws for visitors to Ireland (Crowley *et al.*, 2016). These characteristics are typical of peripheral rural and marginal farming areas in Kerry, such as the Iveragh uplands (Kramm *et al.*, 2010)[3]. Their research highlighted how farmers produce the primary product for Kerry's international tourism sector yet few of them benefit from it financially. While farmers want to continue farming, their incomes are in decline, fewer family members remain to help them with farming and farmers are aging as successors are harder to secure, leaving farmland at risk of undermanagement and rural areas vulnerable to land abandonment and rural depopulation. As a result of low farm incomes and limited employment opportunities in rural areas, some farmers and farm family members have been working in the Rural Social Scheme (RSS), and rural residents more generally have joined the Tús community workplace initiative or Community Employment schemes to secure work in local community and voluntary projects that benefit rural areas and provincial towns.

More recently, an assessment of rural vibrancy in South Kerry from 2013 to 2015 found that community and voluntary organisations in the region are increasingly active, with larger membership and more responsibilities than ever (O'Keeffe, 2016)[4]. The survey of some 100 groups recorded over 240 groups in operation in the region with more than 4,000 members by 2014 (up from some 1,200 members in 1990). The groups identified such challenges as funding cutbacks, increasing bureaucracy, structural issues and managing the growing demand for their services. A survey of 1,000 citizens in the region found that the main challenges facing localities included cutbacks to public services and isolation, with the former compounding the latter. Outside of the main urban conurbation of Killarney, residents considered that the levels of public service provision were inadequate.

Kerry Social Farming – the beginning

The research findings from the Iveragh uplands and South Kerry more widely point to the broader value of farming to society and the economy as well as the strength of rural vibrancy demonstrated by rising volunteerism through a time of austerity. It is within this context that in 2013, a working group was formed of members from families of people with a disability, farmers, service providers, community development organisations and local government to create the Kerry Social Farming project or KSF. During the 6-month planning phase, members attended conferences on social farming as part of the cross-border SoFAB Project and visited social farms in the Irish border region to learn from national and international models and to apply those learnings to a locally-led project in Kerry.

The KSF is a voluntary, community-based, shared service that provides farming and social inclusion opportunities to people with disabilities, all within their local communities. The **Vision of Kerry Social Farming** is "to promote and operate Social Farming in Kerry as a viable option for achieving improved quality of life, greater inclusion and community networking for people with disabilities". And the **Mission of Kerry Social Farming** is to achieve this "through working collectively in a shared service with the social care service providers, people with disabilities, local communities, local development companies, national and local government, the business community, farm organisations and farm families to develop and provide social farming opportunities in Kerry" (SKDP, 2016) and "to pilot a voluntary sustainable social

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[2] Lutkehaus, N. (2008: 261); insertion in parenthesis from organisational architect Leandro Herroro, source https://leandroherrero.com/the-missing-word-in-the-famous-margaret-mead-quote/, accessed 11 June 2017.
[3] Science Foundation Ireland-funded project conducted by researchers from University College Cork in Iveragh in the 2000s.
[4] This EU Interreg research in North-West Europe was conducted locally by South Kerry Development Partnership and Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick.

farming model with national benefits" (SKDP, 2017). The project seeks to include participants in society by involving them in the real life of their own community rather than simply placing them in a community setting. Figure 1 sums up the inclusive, wrap-around service encapsulated in the mission of KSF.

Figure 1: The mission of Kerry Social Farming.[5]

The Kerry Social Farming working group oversee project development and implementation on the ground following steps of (1) vision, (2) review and (3) change/improve. It works with other social farming initiatives in Ireland and overseas. Members of the working group are drawn from the local service providers of Cúnamh Iveragh, Down Syndrome Ireland Kerry Branch, Enable Ireland, Kerry Parents and Friends Association (KPFA) and St. John of God Kerry Services (SJoG) along with host farmer representatives, social farm participant representatives, the local development companies of South Kerry Development Partnership (SKDP) and North, East & West Kerry Development (NEWKD), as well as Kerry County Council and the Health Service Executive (HSE). The working group operates out of SKDP and reports to its management and board. It holds monthly meetings and an Annual General Meeting. An annual Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is developed based on lessons learned from the previous year's work to clarify roles and responsibilities.

KSF funding and labour inputs comes from a number of sources. The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) overseen by Kerry County Council and administered by SKDP and NEWKD is used to make any necessary improvements or upgrades on new social farms to address health and safety or access issues, to purchase safety clothing and footwear for new social farm participants and to cover some transport costs. The Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine finances an expansion of the variety of activities available on social farms out of the Rural Innovation and Development Fund of CEDRA (Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas), while a proportion is match-funded by the host farmers themselves. The service providers – Down Syndrome Kerry, KPFA and SJoG – contribute €1,000 annually for costs such as transport and insurance. Workers in the Rural Social Scheme and Tús, both funded by the Department of Social Protection, help to transport some participants to or from the social farms. The relationships built between participants and community workers in this way are seen as the first step towards participants progressing on to work in community projects in the future if they wish.

In 2016, Kerry Social Farming secured funding from the DAFM's CEDRA Fund to pilot a Social Farming Project in Kerry with national benefits. Through that funding, a full-time Social Farming Facilitator was hired to enhance the delivery, development and expansion of the project through 2017. It also funded this Evaluation to independently review the project to date across its various stakeholders.

When a participant first attends a social farm, they are accompanied by a support worker from one of the service providers. Support workers are also known as job coaches and these care professionals work alongside the participant and the farmer, helping the participant to settle into their new environment and learning experience. Support workers provide advice to the farmers in how to communicate and work with people with a range of abilities and communication styles. While most participants go on to attend their social farm without the assistance of a support worker, a number of service users with higher levels of need require a job coach on a continuous basis. One of the unique features of Kerry Social Farming is that farmers are not paid for the time that they spend with social farming participants. In this way, it is classified as a voluntary model of social farming. The KSF model emerged out of its founding principles of equality, social inclusion, voluntary community development and collaboration. The KSF ethos is to support people with disabilities to

achieve full and meaningful lives of their choosing within their own local communities. Similarly, participants are not paid for their time on the farm. Thus, the focus of the initiative is to develop genuine relationships and promote social inclusion in ways that are not underpinned by any form of payment for services rendered by either the host farmer and their families or the social farming participant.

Policy context

Kerry Social Farming is designed to fit with the objectives of a number of strategic plans.

The vision of the Commission for Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA) in *Energising Ireland's Rural Economy* is that: "Rural Ireland will become a dynamic, adaptable and outward looking multi-sectoral economy supporting vibrant, resilient and diverse communities experiencing a high quality of life with an energised relationship between rural and urban Ireland which will contribute to its sustainability for the benefit of society as a whole" (CEDRA, 2014: 14). CEDRA (2014: 22) recommended that a Rural Innovation and Development Fund should be developed to support "innovative, small scale pilot initiatives that explore the diverse range of potential identified through the CEDRA process". The Minister for Agriculture, Food & Marine provided for this fund in his 2015 and 2016 budgetary allocation. The 2015 allocation was utilised to fund a number of pilot initiatives, including funding for social farming. The 2016 allocation built on learning from the pilot scheme. In 2016, the Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine sought proposals from suitable, experienced economic operator(s) who have the capability and vision, to develop a substantial social farming model project. The criteria were for:

- Proposals which have a national reach/benefit;
- Proposals which are open and visible to the public and will thus raise awareness of Social Farming;
- Proposals which can establish a best practice model for social farming;
- Proposals which promote the concept of social farming to a wider audience, as well as supporting individuals who are already involved in social farming nationwide.

South Kerry Development Partnership won the tender to provide such a project.

Kerry Social Farming is a response to its call for bottom-up, locally-led and community-based action projects to complement national plans. Locally-led social farming projects including KSF encapsulate a 'learning by doing' approach characterised by diversity and flexibility but also fragility (Di Iacovo and O'Connor, 2009). Networks and co-operation are vital to such projects, an element captured in the concept of connexity' – "the increasing interconnectedness of all aspects of rural economic and social activity" (ESPON, 2010: iv). This is why local development companies offer a sound 'home' for social farming projects, due to their extensive networks and cross-sectoral co-operative relationships throughout their catchment areas. As KSF prepares its 2017 tender to renew its funding for another 12 months, key criteria will include:

1. Co-operative and co-ordinated initiatives for developing or expanding social farming;
2. Integration, where possible, with service provision strategies (e.g. health and social care);
3. Focus on large-scale with long-lasting benefits and/or wider impacts (DAFM, 2017a).

A strategic plan of central influence to KSF at a local level is the *Local Economic & Community Plan* or LECP (Kerry County Council, 2016). Kerry County Council supports the development of KSF through participation in the working group and the approval of funding through SICAP. KSF fits with High Level Goal 3.7 identified by the Local Community Development Committee and their public consultations 'to create an environment where people with disabilities can participate in communities with equal rights to live life to their full potential' (Kerry County Council, 2016). At a national level, the Government committed to the National Disability Strategy Implementation Plan with its aim being "the promotion of an inclusive Irish society where people with disabilities can reach their full potential and participate in the everyday life of the community" (NDSIG, 2013: 6). The local development companies and Kerry County Council who are partners in Kerry Social Farming work to this national plan in their management and delivery of a range of programmes through SICAP, the RSS and Tús to support KSF's objectives via project funding and participant transport.

The governance, planning and implementation of Kerry Social Farming, as for the National Disability Strategy, is steered by the framework of the HSE's *New Directions* (2012) with its core values of:

- Person-centredness – the rights of a person with a disability to live their own life according to their wishes, competencies and abilities;
- Community inclusion and active citizenship – doing ordinary things in ordinary places and making a contribution as part of one's mainstream community; and
- Quality – including monitoring, evaluation, staff training and work procedures.

Person-centred planning

Consultations of service users and their families conducted to inform the National Disability Strategy found that people want to (HSE, 2012):

- do worthwhile things;
- do ordinary things in ordinary places;
- have services that suit their individual needs;
- be and stay healthy;
- be independent;
- be able to make choices and plans;
- have access to desirable training and work opportunities; and
- have their say in service policy and practice.

The 12 personal supports of *New Directions* are designed to enable adults with disabilities to (HSE, 2012: 20):

- make choices and plans to support personal goals;
- have influence over the decisions which affect their lives;
- achieve personal goals and aspirations; and
- be active, independent members of their community and society.

Person-centred planning puts the individual at the heart of the Service. The 12 individualised and outcome-focused supports were developed as a new approach for delivering day services for people with disabilities in a move away from seeing the individual as a client to th e more inclusive view of the whole person (figure 2).

Figure 2: The 12 personal supports of New Directions[6].

This is vital for achieving the aims of *New Directions* by helping to (HSE, 2012: 72):

- Grow in relationships, especially in natural community settings with people who are not paid service providers;
- Make meaningful social contributions;
- Make informed and real-life defining choices;
- Have the experience and dignity of holding valued social roles; and
- Share in the ordinary places of typical associational life.

The HSE's *New Directions* presents clear arguments for moving to flexible, person-centred services and provides service providers with a roadmap for designing and delivering them at a local level. "Person-centeredness challenges organisations to move away from segregated service practices that limit people's social roles. It places a premium on community inclusion, on supporting people to build their capacities and competencies, and on helping people to discover and make use of their unique abilities so that they can make a valued contribution to their community" (HSE, 2012: 15). A key advantage of a new initiative like Kerry Social Farming is that it can develop in line with *New Directions* while the community-led local development ethos of local development companies such as SKDP and NEWKD fits well with the person-centred planning approach. For example, Kerry Social Farming encompasses a core service focus on community inclusion (engaging with the farm family, their neighbours and friends and the wider community through everyday interactions), seeking the input of service users and families in planning and evaluation, overseen by a collaborative working group of representatives from all stakeholder groups.

In a discussion on the need for local coordination, the HSE (2012: 116) noted that:

"A key task for the service provider will be to work closely with mainstream services, with other specialist providers and with the wider community to build a joint approach to community inclusion. In the future, specialist service providers should see the provision of education and advice to community leaders and influencers as an important part of their role. To facilitate these vibrant linkages, local structures for co-ordination and collaboration will be needed. Such structures will in part facilitate joint service planning at local level. These local structures should also be used to determine how best to use the overall resource allocated to meeting the needs of people with disabilities."

The voluntary multi-stakeholder working group of Kerry Social Farming is a good example of a structure for local co-ordination where people with disabilities and their families along with specialist service providers, local development organisations and the statutory sector are collaborating on an innovative service for the county.

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[6] Source: HSE (2012: 75).

External Evaluation of Kerry Social Farming

Terms of reference

In 2016, the working group of Kerry Social Farming commissioned an independent research team to evaluate KSF to assess its implementation and outcomes, as well as its operation into the future. Specifically, the Evaluation explored the opinions of the diverse stakeholders and beneficiaries involved in the planning, development and implementation of KSF in terms of need, relevance and accessibility and in terms of benefits, effectiveness and challenges. It also assessed the steps required to continue to develop a sustainable model of social farming that addresses goals of equality, social inclusion and community development through an effective, collaborative and integrated multi-stakeholder approach. To achieve these aims, the Evaluation sought the views of the following stakeholders:

1. Host farmers;
2. Participants with intellectual disabilities or acquired brain injuries;
3. Guardians of participants;
4. Support workers; and
5. Representatives from partner organizations.

The Evaluation is comprised of the following parts.

Part 1 – presents a review of the literature on care farming internationally and social farming in Ireland.

Part 2 – outlines the methodology used to collect data for the Evaluation, the approach employed to deepen its interpretation and the tools for its analysis.

Part 3 – records the results of the Evaluation and discusses their interpretation.

Part 4 – summarises concluding remarks.

Part 5 – lists the recommendations from the Evaluation.

Part 1 – Social Farming – Learning from the Literature

Green care

There is a diversity of practices where nature underpins a care treatment or programme. To encapsulate them, Bragg and Atkins (2016: viii) devised an overall term of "green care" with a strapline of "nature-based interventions for individuals with a defined need". Green care has a long history; farms or gardens were often associated with monasteries, hospitals and prisons for therapeutic as well as practical reasons but recognition for the role of nature in health and well-being declined during the 20th century with the rise of pharmaceutical and technological healthcare interventions (Hine *et al.*, 2008). This is now being reversed as awareness grows of the value of a holistic and well-being approach to health.

Following a systematic review of nature-based interventions for mental health care in the UK, Bragg and Atkins (2016) concluded that the most common forms of green care are:

1. Social and therapeutic horticulture (STH);
2. Environmental conservation; and
3. Care farming.

Figure 3 shows where care farming, known as social farming in Ireland, fits within the broader green care sector.

Figure 3: Nature-based interventions in the green care sector.[7]

Source: Adapted from Hine et al., 2008; Bragg et al., 2013 and Bragg 2014
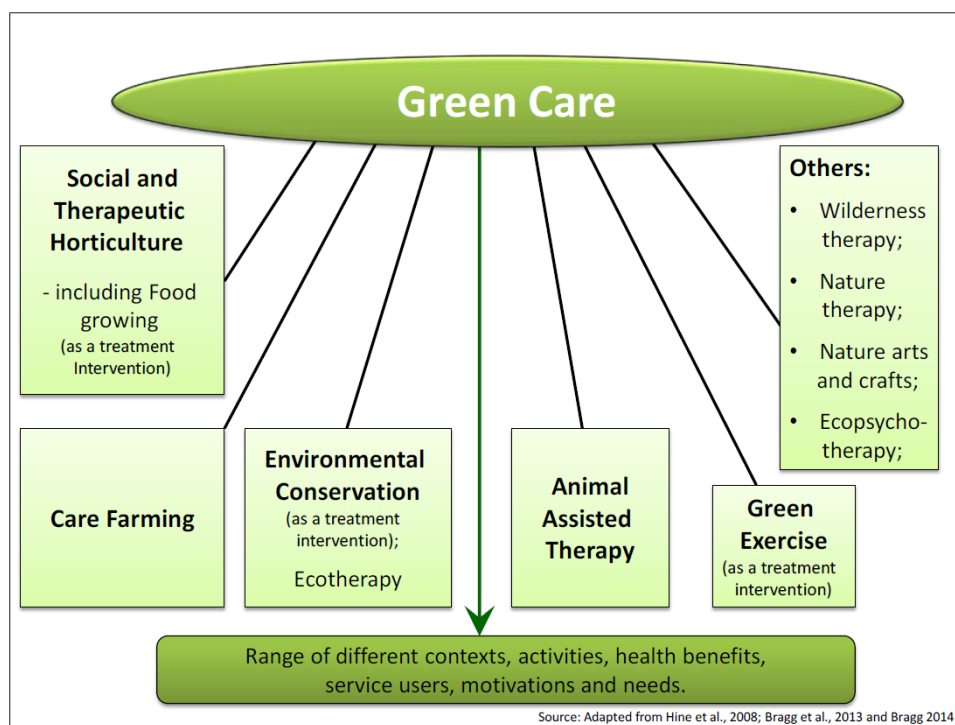
Kerry Social Farming is one such 'green care intervention' because it is as Bragg and Atkins (2016: 20) put it "specifically commissioned for an individual with a defined health or social need as part of their care or treatment package".

Defining social farming

Bragg and Atkins (2016) surveyed over 250 service providers, researchers, health and social care practitioners and other interested parties to reach a consensus on what to call the range of nature-based interventions on offer in the UK. The result was 'green care: nature-based interventions for individuals with a defined need'. Agreeing terminology and definitions is an important stage in developing awareness in an area such as social farming that is emerging and cross-sectoral (O'Connor *et al.,* 2010). While in Ireland, care farming is known as social farming, other terms found throughout Europe include 'farming for health', 'green care farming' and even 'farming on prescription', which is where general practitioners in the UK prescribe care farming for the treatment of psychological ill-health (Buist, 2016). Social farming is based on the concepts of **multifunctional**

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[7] Adapted from Bragg and Atkins (2016: 20).

agriculture and **community-based social and health care**, reflecting the rural tradition of self-help networks (Di Iacovo and O'Connor, 2009). Di Iacovo and O'Connor (2009) describe the concept as combining services based on agricultural resources with informal social networks in the local welfare system. Such networks are known as 'communities of interest' and are made up of public and private stakeholders, such as those who comprise Kerry Social Farming. Ballyhoura Rural Services (2015) has identified its potential as a form of social enterprise[8].

Hine *et al.* (2008) expanded on social farming's fit with multifunctional agriculture in terms of how it recognises the various uses of farmland. While primary production remains the focus of farm resources, they also provide conservation and environmental services, make up landscape character, and offer opportunities in recreation, history, heritage, and – through social farming – care, health and education provision. The European Economic and Social Committee (2012: 4) called for a definition of social farming that offers a framework allowing for the flexibility "to encompass social farming's multitude of activities and bottom-up approach." While models of social farming vary, they share two features: activities take place on a farm and they are designed for people with specific needs (EESC, 2012). Figure 4 gives a definition that summarises the overall method of service provision, site of practice, goals, target groups, structures and activities.

Figure 4: Definition of social farming.[9]
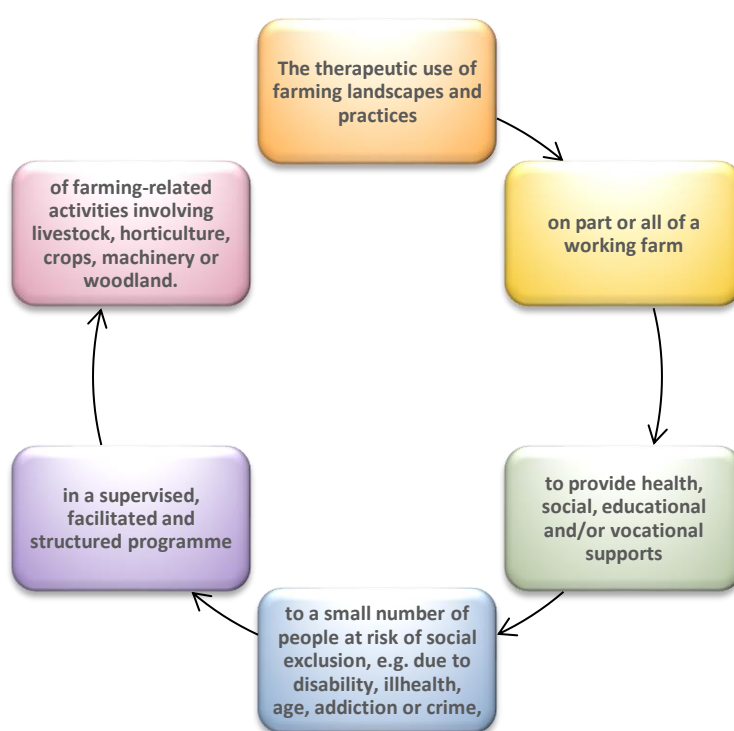
A social farm "remains a typical working farm where people in need of support can benefit from participation in the farm's activities in a non-clinical environment. It also creates the opportunity to reconnect farmers with their local communities through the opening up of their farms as part of the social support system of the community" (Rural Support, no date). The focus is not on agricultural production during the sessions for service users, but rather on their needs, be they therapeutic, care, educational or vocational. This means that the farmers engage with participants and lead them through the activities at their own pace (Johnston, 2016). In other words, the focus is on person-centred outcomes (Di Iacovo and O'Connor, 2009). While some care farms in the UK can have hundreds of service users per week, social farming in Ireland has evolved around a small number of participants per family farm, in many cases just one or two.

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[8] As will be seen later, social farming in Italy is strongly associated with social co-operatives.
[9] Adapted from Bragg and Atkins (2016), Care Farming UK (2016), Di Iacovo and O'Connor (2009), Rural Support (no date)[9] and SoFAB (2014).

Classifying social farms

There are different ways of classifying social farms. Di Iacovo and O'Connor (2009) identified three types of social farms based on farm ownership or management:

1. Private – on the rise in Ireland e.g. farms in Kerry Social Farming and independent operations like the Galtee Clinic;
2. Third sector – common in Ireland where the founding organisation owns and operates the farm e.g. Camphill Community, Cuan Mhuire network for addiction and Autism Ireland;
3. Institutional – prominent in Ireland where farms are run and/or funded by public bodies e.g. Brothers of Charity Belmont Park Farm is on the land bank of a former psychiatric hospital with core funding from the HSE.

Sempik *et al.* (2010) and Di Iacovo and O'Connor (2009) identified up to four orientations of green care interventions including social farms (figure 5):

1. Healthcare, e.g. sheltered workshops and therapeutic farms;
2. Social rehabilitation, e.g. Kerry Social Farming;
3. Education
   a. Primary children e.g. Camphill schools in Ireland
   b. Special education e.g. the Galtee Clinic caters for the educational needs of children and young people who have been in institutional care; and
4. Employment e.g. community gardens and other social inclusion projects.

Figure 5: Different elements of green care.[10]
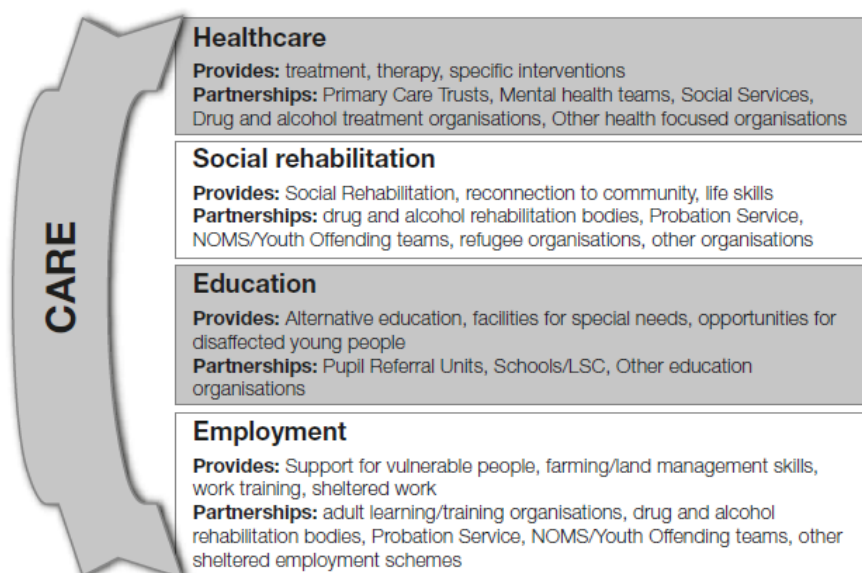
Kerry Social Farming fits with the social rehabilitation orientation, that of reconnection to community and development of life skills. The focus of KSF is social inclusion; participants join a farm within the farm's locale and, as such, participants

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[10] Source: Sempik *et al.* (2010: 22).

become members of the farm community, free to encounter family members, neighbours and interact with other farmers, business people and acquaintances through the everyday exchanges of farming and rural life.

Ballyhoura Rural Services (2015) identified three models of social farm in Ireland based on how their services are commissioned:

1. Farmer model e.g. Galtee Clinic, where the farmer negotiates a contract directly with the Health Service;
2. Placement model e.g. KSF, where a social farming agent or advocate liaises with the host farmer and the service provider to place participants on farms; and
3. Organisation model e.g. Brothers of Charity Belmont Park, where an organisation or institution uses its own farm to help deliver services.

Finally, Hassink (2015) described three types of care farms in the Netherlands according to how much emphasis is on farming and how much is on care:

1. Helping Hand Farm (A+c) where the focus is on agriculture (20% of care farms; KSF farms fit with this type);
2. Integrated Care Farm (A+C) (40% of care farms). Camphill communities are an Irish example; and
3. Care Focus Farm (a+C) (30% of care farms). In Ireland, the Galtee Clinic falls into this category.

Thus, in terms of these classifications, the social farms in KSF in 2017 are privately owned and managed, they have a social rehabilitation orientation, their services are commissioned through a placement model and they are 'helping hand farms' where the focus remains on agriculture.

Qualities of social farms and social farming

There is abundant evidence for the benefits of physical activity, the natural environment and positive social interactions to health and well-being. Aked *et al.* (2008) concluded that five actions enhance well-being and mental capital, and should be carried out daily (figure 6); social farming encompasses all five.

Figure 6: Positive feedback loops with well-being and mental capital.[11]

1. **Connect** – with people around you;
2. **Be active** – exercise and being outdoors makes you feel good;
3. **Take notice** – be curious, including in nature;
4. **Keep learning** – challenge yourself; and
5. **Give** – help a friend or a stranger.

Hine *et al.* (2008) sum up the known benefits that come from combining

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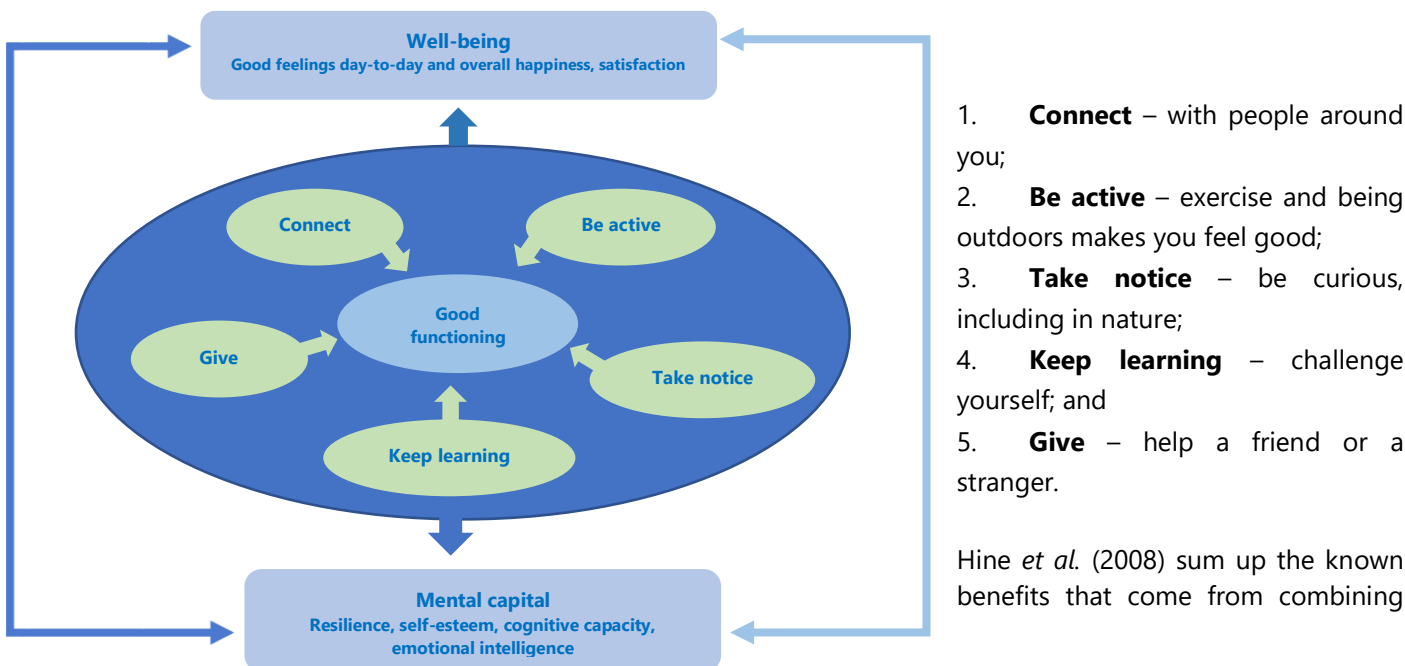
[11] Redrawn from: Aked *et al.* (2008: 13).

physical activity, exposure to nature and social connectivity as found in 'green care' interventions like social farming (figure 7).

Figure 7: Green care.[12]
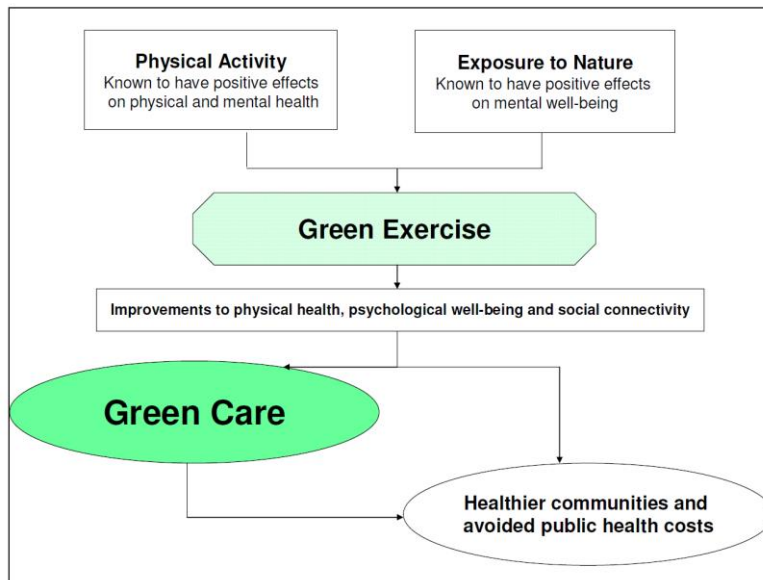
Green care interventions involve more interaction with nature than simply spending time outdoors. Three characteristics give rise to their health benefits (Bragg and Atkins, 2016), namely:

1. **natural** environment;
2. **meaningful** activities; and
3. **social** context.

These characteristics all feature in social farming: participants are (1) active in the environment, (2) undertaking tasks as part of daily and seasonal farming cycles through which they develop personal and/or work skills, and (3) working alongside the farmer and possibly other members of the farm family or employees in an ordinary setting of everyday life. Social farming is a positive way to integrate people in communities and remove the stigma of care services (McGloin and O'Connor, 2007), what Elings (2012: 13) calls "socially embedded care". Thus, social farming combines natural, agricultural and social elements that contribute to its beneficial effects for participants in the paradigm of green care (figure 8).

Figure 8: Three key elements of social farming.[13]

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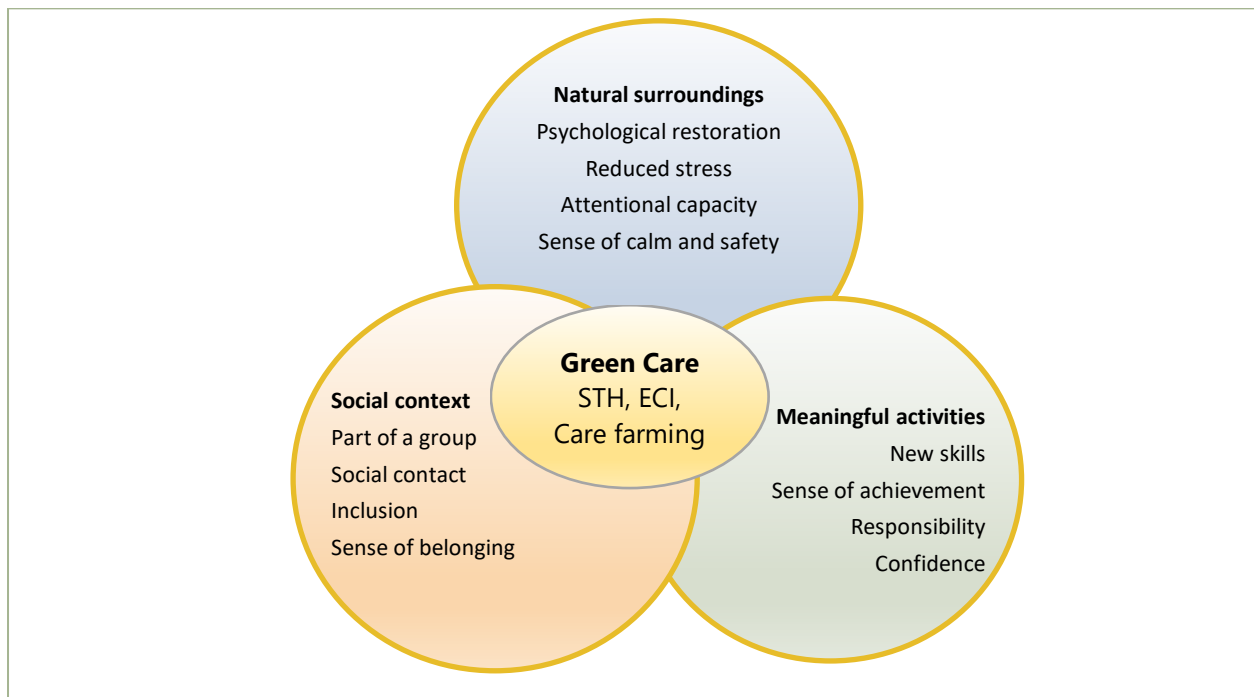
[12] Source: Hine *et al.* (2008: 24).
[13] Redrawn from: Bragg and Atkins (2016: 46).

Next, we turn to what participants in social farming have said that they enjoy about it. Di Iacovo and O'Connor (2009) summarised the aspects of social farms that are appreciated by service users from interviews across seven EU states and these fit with the three characteristics listed above, namely:

1. The green environment – quiet, space, experiencing nature and contact with animals → *natural surroundings*;
2. The type of work – working to their capacity, doing real work, the structure offered by daily and seasonal cycles and diversity of work → *meaningful activities*;
3. The attitude of the farmer – the personal relationship and the farmer's concern for them → *social context*; and
4. The community on the farm – feeling safe, at home, accepted and respected → *social context*.

Similarly, aspects of social farming enjoyed by participants in Northern Ireland (Johnston, 2016) were:

1. Outdoor environment → *natural surroundings*;
2. Animal handling, physical work, maintenance tasks, learning new skills → *meaningful activities*; and
3. Making friends and farm family hospitality → *social context*.

Aspects not enjoyed were:

1. Mud and farm smells (the same dislikes as found by Leck (2015) in England); and
2. Short-term nature of the project as they wished to continue participating.

From Elings (2012) interviews with participants with learning difficulties, she identified five important qualities of social farms for them (box 1):

1. Clients are addressed based on abilities and possibilities – the focus on the individual is considered a priority where suitably challenging work helps to build confidence → *person-centred*;
2. Small scale – associated with close and personal attention offered to participants → *many family farms*;
3. Farmer as a role model – participants recognise the seniority and the knowledge of a 'real' farmer, while farmers have the experience to offer appropriate guidance and to react to the unexpected → *farmer involvement*;
4. Meaningful work – gives participants satisfaction and offers a stepping stone to work where applicable → *progression*; and
5. Social network – contact with a range of people, especially the farm family, team work and solidarity → *community-based interactions*.

Box 1: A model of social farming attractive to participants with learning difficulties.

This offers an overview of what a model of social farming attractive to people with learning disabilities would look like. It would take a person-centred approach, enable the progression of participants, have strong involvement by farmers, a philosophy of 'working together', be spread across many family farms and enable diverse interactions within the community. The KSF reflects this model of social farming.

For those with mental health issues, Elings (2012) listed the following qualities of social farms as important:

1. Different environment – peace and space to think;
2. Work and distraction – varied work as a distraction from one's problems;
3. Structure and routine – developing work habits, a sense of responsibility and achieving goals;
4. Small-scale – helps to encourage team-work and solidarity;

5. Attitude of farmer and care workers – the welcome provided and the acceptance of the participants by those on the farm; and
6. Social community – the farm offers a safe environment to help a return to society or work.

Again, the qualities for social farms important for those with mental health issues revolve around the family farm, the farmer and the community, as well as the benefits of the natural environment, meaningful work, and routine. Small-scale family farms spread across the countryside can meet these criteria.

Social farming statistics

To understand the social farming sector, it is helpful to look at some statistics. Care Farming UK issued its first report on care farming statistics in Britain and on social farming on the island of Ireland for 2015 (Care Farming UK, 2016). It estimated that there were 20 social farms in the Republic of Ireland (hereafter, Ireland) in 2015 at various stages of development. Elsewhere, there were 15 care farms in Northern Ireland, 12 in Scotland, eight in Wales and 205 in England. Of these 240 care farms in the UK[14], some 140 took part in a survey conducted by Care Farming UK.

Surveyed farms catered for between one participant and 300 clients (five care farms had over 100 clients per week)[15]. Some 94% of farms provided 10 sessions or fewer per week, one quarter offered services just 1-2 days per week, and three-quarters were not operating at full capacity. Most clients (88%) attended a care farm 1-3 times per week. Thus, even though there are a few large operators in the UK, the majority appear to be working farms where agricultural production continues alongside care farming. In Ireland, social farming tends to be a subsidiary activity on family farms that complements the main focus of agricultural production. While the UK census offers some insights into how the sector could evolve in Ireland, it will be valuable for Social Farming Ireland (SoFI), the national social farming network, to develop a nationwide registration system to track the development of the sector. This is planned for 2018 (SoFI, 2017). Ireland's decennial Census of Agriculture next due in 2020 could include questions regarding activities on Irish farms to reveal the extent of social farming. It would also be useful to record any relatives or neighbours with identified needs who participate in farm work and/or farm life. Traditionally, in Ireland and internationally, it is not uncommon for people vulnerable to social exclusion to find a home and/or attain meaningful work on farms.

In the UK, the care farming sector catered for an estimated 8,400 people per week in 2015 representing a contribution of some £17m to the rural economy annually. With mean operating capacity at 57%, the potential figures could have reached 14,500 participants and £29m annually. In Ireland, Di Iacovo and O'Connor (2009) estimated that there were 2,000 service users of green care interventions across 106 facilities that included 92 institutions (directly funded, third sector and Camphill Communities) and just two private farms. A wide range of groups are catered for on care farms in the UK (figure 9a) with most farms offering services for those with learning difficulties (95%), autistic spectrum disorders (85%) and mental illness (71%). In the Netherlands, participants with learning disabilities are also the largest user group followed by those with mental illness, while youth and elderly clients are increasing (figure 9b). Throughout Europe, social farms offer places to a range of groups dealing with social exclusion including early school leavers, the long-term unemployed, older people with dementia, young offenders and people experiencing addictions (Di Iacovo and O'Connor, 2009). Generally, a mix of target groups attend social farms and farmers have reported the benefits from people with differing specialist needs working together (Wilcox, 2008). That is one of the strengths of social farming, its potential to meet the varied needs of a range of participants (Leck, 2015). As social farming grows in Ireland, it will be useful to track trends in the number and type of service users availing of this support.

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[14] An increase of 33% from an estimated 180 care farms three years earlier in 2012 (Bragg, 2013).
[15] The most frequent number of service users per facility in a pan-EU survey was three (Di Iacovo and O'Connor, 2009).

(a)

(b)
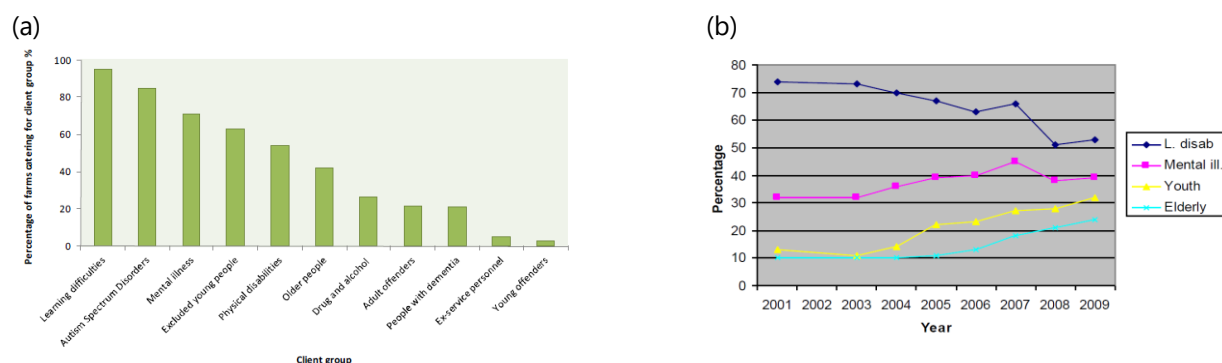
Day services and service users in Ireland – a profile

A census of day services for people with disabilities in Ireland was conducted in 2008 (HSE, 2012). It profiles the day service landscape in Ireland and suggests the significant proportion of the population who may be interested in social farming supports. Day services and programmes were classified according to a range of descriptors (table 1).

Table 1: Classification of day services for people with disabilities, 2008.

Type	Description
Day Care Programme	High support healthcare service for specific needs.
Day Activation/Activity	Support and therapeutic service with individual plans across a range of skills and activities, excluding work.
Active Community Participation/Inclusion	Targets inclusion and active participation in mainstream community programmes and activities – education, sport, recreation, social events, local partnership projects and advocacy initiatives – through supports for access, liaison, planning, co-ordinating, attendance and active participation.
Sheltered Work Therapeutic	Centre-based programme of constructive occupation with no third-party involvement (contract work or public access). Service users may receive allowance or top-up payment.
Sheltered Work Commercial	A work activity programme with contract work conducted for a third-party and with public access to product or service for a charge. Service users may receive allowance or top-up payment.
Sheltered Work 'Like Work'	Service users work within HSE or service provider organisation with discretionary top-up payment.
External Work 'Like Work' (below minimum wage)	Service user works in external placement e.g. supermarket, usually with a discretionary top-up payment to them or the service provider.
Open Employment (no supports)	Service users work in the open labour market. Service provider may have supported them in securing their job.
Supported Employment	Service users are full employees who work in the open labour market with ongoing supports and are in receipt of minimum wage.
Sheltered Employment	Employment in an enterprise established for people with disabilities that is HSE-funded where workers have employment contracts and receive minimum wage.
Rehabilitative Training	Approved programmes where participants secure places through the HSE's Training and Occupational Support Services to develop personal, social and work skills to improve their independence and integration in the community, usually up to four years. Service users receive a weekly training allowance top-up.
Education Programme	Department of Education & Skills programmes to enhance day services.
Voluntary Work	Volunteers work in the community or natural environment for altruism, quality of life, giving back, duty or religious reasons.

Adapted from HSE (2012).

The survey recorded 25,302 service users in 817 locations (70% voluntary sector and 30% HSE services) using services provided by 81 organisations. The large number of locations was explained by the trend of care provision moving from large, segregated centres towards smaller community-based services. Figure 10 shows the participation of service users

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[16] Source: Care Farming UK (2016: 8).
[17] Source: Hassink (2015: 11).

in the different types of day services nationally with the highest numbers in Day Activation/Activity followed by Active Community Participation/Inclusion, Day Care Programme, Sheltered Work Commercial and Rehabilitative Training. In 2007, HSE-funded programmes totalled almost €307m with an additional €21.5m sourced by providers from non-HSE funds (HSE, 2012). By 2008, some 4,600 people took part in Active Community Participation/Inclusion day services and 400 were in External Work 'Like Work', both comparable in some ways to social farming. If just 40% of these 5,000 service users were interested in social farming, the resulting 2,000 participants would require some 1,000 operational social farms throughout the State or 40 per county. The true number of potential participants is likely to be greater.

Figure 10: Number of service users in day services, 2008.[18]
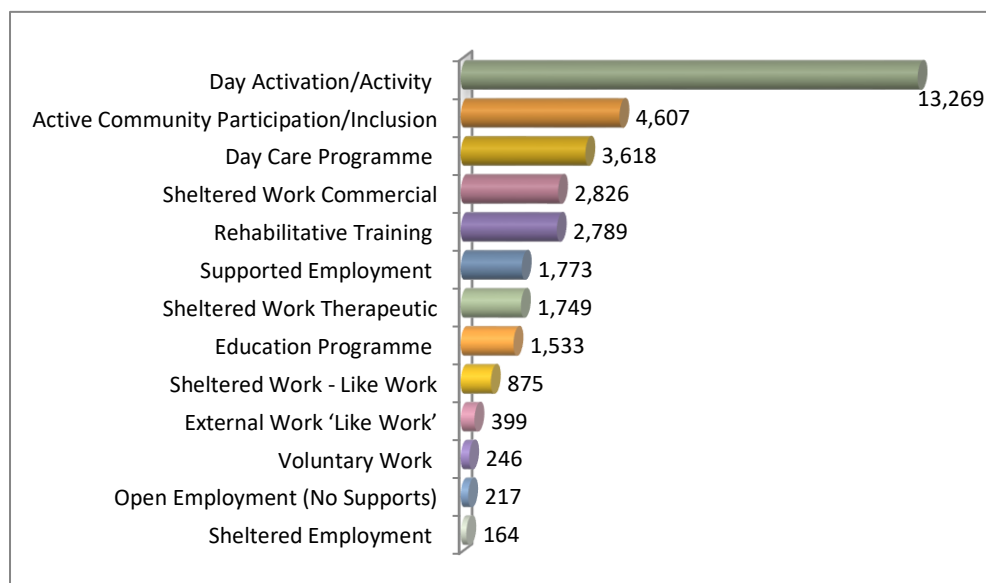
For instance, figure 11 shows the 2008 profile of service users availing of day services in Ireland according to their type of disability. The largest group were people with intellectual disabilities (13,720), followed by those with mental health issues (7,301), physical and sensory problems (3,924) and autism (357). Over 60% of service users were aged 26 to 55 years.

This snapshot of day services in Ireland and their service users suggests the extent of the population of potential participants and families that could benefit from the opportunity to avail of social farming supports within their own community, even in the most remote rural areas such as uplands and islands. Small-scale family farms distributed throughout the countryside are uniquely placed to deliver such a local, community-based service.

Figure 11: Day service users classified by type of disability, 2008.[19]

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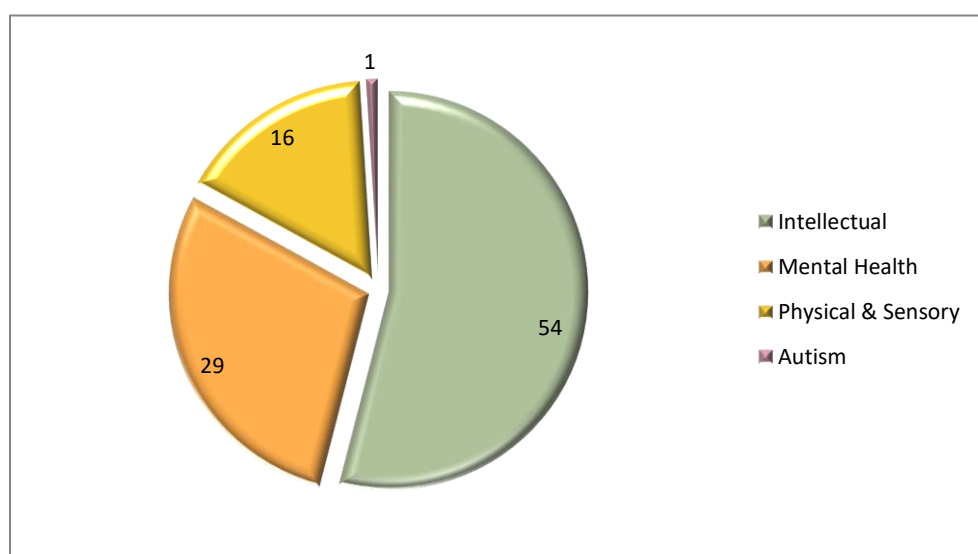
[18] Based on data in HSE (2012).
[19] Adapted from HSE (2012).

Evolution of green care and social farming in Ireland

McGloin and O'Connor (2007) traced the evolution of green care in Ireland and it parallels the emergence of the social model of disability. The Disability Act 2005, defines a disability as "a substantial restriction in the capacity of the person to carry on a profession, business or occupation in the State or to participate in social or cultural life in the State by reason of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment" (Department of Health & Children, 2009: 3). Care provision in Ireland was historically based in religious institutions that could be far from people's homes and communities and entailed practices that limited their social roles and citizenship. Modern green care interventions in Ireland began in the 1960s with the emergence of the Cuan Mhuire network of six addiction treatment centres. The 1970s saw an expansion of green care, such as in Camphill communities, Rehab and the prison service. The Camphill Community network numbering 18 in Ireland and four in Northern Ireland comprises farm-based communities made up of both independent and dependent residents who live and work together. The Rehab Group, with its strong focus on vocational rehabilitative programmes[20] began offering green care interventions in horticulture in the 1970s in its facilities spread throughout the country while animal husbandry is currently a practice at Ireland's open prisons. Since the 1980s, the Irish Society for Autism has developed three farm-based residential facilities for people with autism[21]. From the 1990s, new initiatives have been supported through LEADER and social inclusion programme funding from community-based Local Development Companies. More broadly, the concept of green care has expanded through social movements, quality-of-life initiatives and public health projects from allotments and Grow It Yourself (GIY) to community and school gardens. Thus, **green care in Ireland is strongly rooted in the community and voluntary sector**.

While social farming is at a more advanced state in a number of EU countries, interest in Ireland is growing. It began with the participation of researchers from University College Dublin in the EU SoFAR Project 2006-2008 that spanned the seven countries of Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands and Slovenia. Their 2007 survey, the first of its kind in the State, recorded some 10 social farms and 80 institutional farms or sheltered workshops in Ireland (McGloin and O'Connor, 2007). These included social, therapeutic or vocational applications of horticulture or farming across a range of groups such as residential facilities for those with intellectual disabilities and day facilities for mental health clients, along with programmes for community training, addiction recovery, older people and peace building projects along the border with Northern Ireland. Only two of the 90 facilities were private working farms and both focused on participants with intellectual disabilities.[22] Of the activities represented, 70% were horticultural and 30% included livestock; the low proportion with animal husbandry was attributed to the 9am-5pm schedule of standard care services. Almost half (47%) of service users had intellectual disabilities.

The SoFAB (Social Farming Across Borders) project emerged out of SoFAR[23] (Kinsella *et al.*, 2014a). It was an EU Interreg project that piloted social farming on an all-island basis across the border counties in Ireland and all of Northern Ireland from 2011 to 2014[24]. Between 2013 and 2014, it established 20 pilot farms in the cross-border region that supported 66 participants with intellectual / learning disabilities (56%) or in recovery from mental health issues (Walsh, 2014). Farms supported 2-5 participants for between 2.5 to 8 hours. Participants spent an average of 24 days in social farming (Kinsella, 2014). Farmers and/or members of the farm family reported backgrounds in care, community and voluntary activities, and/or family members with disabilities (Kinsella *et al.*, 2014a). This corresponds to the beginning of Kerry Social Farming when representatives from Kerry liaised with staff in the SoFAB project, visited farms in the border area and attended conferences to help inform a locally-led project for Kerry.

Kinsella *et al.* (2014a) concluded that because social farming cannot happen exclusively within the farm gate, networks are key and support structures for social farming operate at three levels: the farm; local/regional; and national.

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[20] http://www.rehab.ie/about/history49-99.aspx, accessed 12 Feb. 17.
[21] http://autism.ie/archives/, accessed 11 February, 2017.
[22] O'Connor *et al.* (2010) updated the total to 133 initiatives, the vast majority still based in institutional or community facilities.
[23] And a subsequently formed Community of Practice Group on Social Farming in Ireland.
[24] The organisations involved were University College Dublin (lead partner), Queen's University Belfast and Leitrim Development Company along with the Department of Agriculture & Rural Development Northern Ireland and the Colleges of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise.

Operationalising social farming supports in Ireland happens at the local / regional level in co-operation with the HSE and service providers, while policy and strategic development occurs at national level (figure 12).

Figure 12: Social farming 'agents' on the island of Ireland.[25]
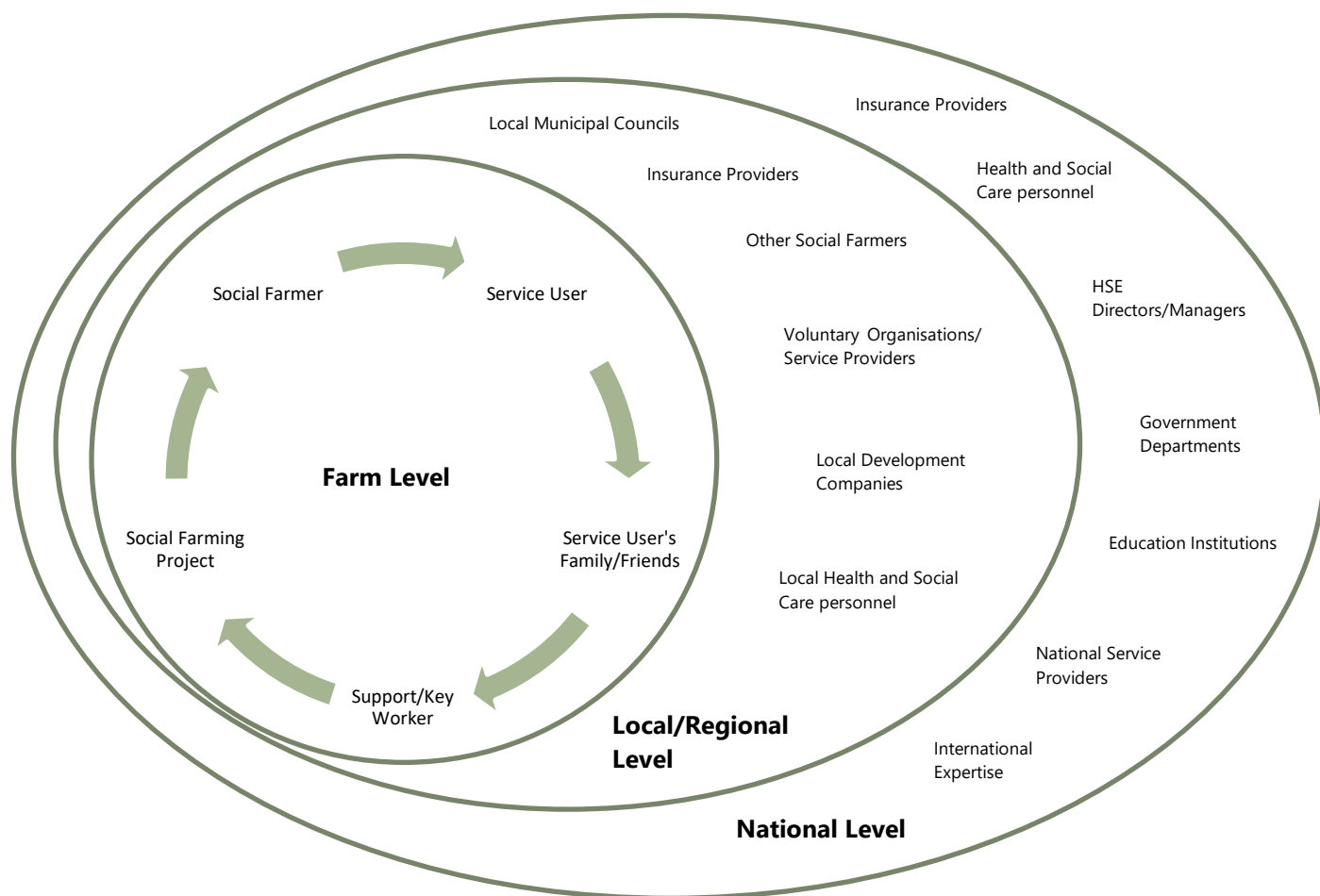
SoFAB led to the opening of Social Farming Support Offices on both sides of the Border. The Irish office was opened in 2015 by Leitrim Development Company, the LDC, with DAFM funding through its CEDRA Rural Innovation and Development Fund. Its remit is to support the development of social farming across the State through Social Farming Ireland (SoFI) and by facilitating local projects. As outlined earlier, while SoFAB was operating in the cross-border region, Kerry Social Farming began operating in 2013 in the south-west of the country. Di Iacovo and O'Connor (2009) concluded that under liberal welfare regimes, social farming is likely to be seen as an activity for charities and the community and voluntary sector. Certainly, the community development sector has taken a lead in promoting social farming in Ireland ong a pathway based on multifunctional agriculture within a broader context of social inclusion and rural development. Since social farming is still a relatively new service in Ireland, it is useful to look at how it has developed in other countries.

International models of support for care or social farming

Hine *et al.* (2008: 39-41), Wilcox (2008) and Buist (2016) describe various international models of support for care or social farming. Unless otherwise stated, the following is drawn from their accounts, particularly Buist (2016), as well as from Bragg *et al.* (2015) for the UK.

[25] Adapted from: Kinsella *et al.* (2014a: 16).

The Netherlands

Care farming in the Netherlands originated with entrepreneurs in the care sector. As **multifunctional agriculture** was being promoted around the turn of the millennium, care farming grew among farmers, especially where their spouses had a background in care. It has since become the fastest growing sector in multifunctional agriculture, with the number of care farms rising from fewer than 80 in 1998 to over 800 by 2007.

After two national conferences on care farming in the late 1990s, a group of researchers and farmers successfully lobbied the departments for **Agriculture** and for **Welfare and Health** to establish the **Support Centre for Agriculture and Care** in 1999 "to stimulate the development and professionalism of care farming".[26] The roles of this centre that emerged from **inter-departmental collaboration** are:

1. accreditation/certification – the centre runs a **Quality Assurance Scheme** that increased the legitimacy of care farming and interest from care organisations;
2. **National Care Initiative** – negotiating care contracts nationally and sub-contracting to regions or farms[27]; and
3. support e.g. national care farm open days, website, handbook.

The centre drove the development of care farming networks such as the **national federation for care farms** and **local support organisations** (co-operatives of 30-40 care farmers). It secured **VAT exempt status** for care farming income. From 2002, more opportunities for care farms to achieve accreditation (and thus legitimacy) gave them access to funding through the General Medical Expenses Act (GMEA). This compulsory insurance for Dutch citizens now funds the largest proportion of services on care farms. Another funding stream is **healthcare personal budgets** for service users, introduced in 2003. By 2005, care farming in the Netherlands was funded in the following ways:

1. From clients – service users have their own Personal Linked Budget and decide how they spend it. They make direct agreements with a care farmer; this happened on 37% of care farms in 2005;
2. From care service providers – funds are allocated to the care organisation supporting the client (32% of farms) or farmers are sub-contracted by the care organisation (13% of farms and declining);
3. From the Local Authority – the care farm becomes an official care organisation recognised under the GMEA and receives funds directly (7% of farms); and
4. No funding – 3% of farms provide services on a voluntary basis.

Hassink (2015) considers that all of these factors – inter-departmental collaboration, increased legitimacy of care farming, personal budgets for service users, care farming support organisations and increased interest among farmers and care organisations – combined to make care farming the fastest growing sector of multifunctional agriculture with accompanying job growth.[28] In the 2010-2014 period, the number of care farms had risen to 1,100 with some 20,000 clients (Hassink, 2015).

Norway

Interest in care farming in Norway originated from **multifunctional agriculture** to support farm incomes. The development of care farming has occurred regionally (county level) and primarily entails providing services to **children** on farms. The **care farmer is often a trained teacher or nurse**. While there is no national support centre, there are **local care farming support networks** comprised of private and public stakeholders from farming, health, welfare and local government. The **national farmers' association** actively promotes care farming. Farmers either provide services directly to the service user or sub-contracts to local organisations and schools. Contracts last months or years and, as in

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[26] Initially funded by the government departments for three years, this non-profit organisation cost €300,000 per annum in 2008 for five staff, mainly part-time.
[27] Help with devising social farm business plans comes from private consultants or the national farmers' organisation.
[28] For example, it resulted in 600 additional jobs by 2006 (Hassink *et al.*, 2007 in Hine *et al.*, 2008) while a UK survey found that the average number of care staff on privately-run farms were 3 FTE, 3 PTE and 5 volunteers (Hine *et al.*, 2008).

other countries, **uncertainty of funding** is an issue and has given rise to a high turnover rate among care farmers. Government at regional (county) and municipal (local) level is responsible for the budgets for social services, including care farming. At county-level, care farming is under the regional departments of **Health & Welfare** and **Agriculture**, overseen by a green care contact person. Locally, those in municipalities responsible for commissioning care services exert a high degree of influence on the uptake and support of care farming in Norway. Another key factor is the efficacy of the local care farming support network. In some cases, the commissioning agency hires the farmers as employees rather than contracting their services, thereby giving farmers income security independent of the number and attendance of clients, along with sick pay, pension benefits and holiday leave. Care farms numbered 5-600 by the late 2000s, while a more recent estimate puts them at 1,100.

The cross-cutting nature of social farming is recognised at national level in Norway. In 2007, this led to the establishment of an **inter-departmental committee** chaired by **Agriculture & Food** with representatives from **Education & Research, Social Affairs, Health, Children & Family Affairs**, and **Local Government & Regional Development** to help drive the national development of care farming. This committee was encouraged by the **Green Care Council** within Innovation Norway (an organisation that is the combined equivalent of Local Enterprise Offices, IDA and Enterprise Ireland). A **national strategy for green care** was developed by the departments of Agriculture & Food and Local Government & Regional Development to progress quality assurance, research and division of responsibilities. In 2010, a **quality assurance system** for care farming was developed in co-operation with the national farmers' association and the national food production quality scheme (akin to Bord Bia). Although quality assurance is important, Norwegian farmers worry about increasing paperwork burdens and a national expert in care farming cautioned against over-regulating and over-professionalising the sector as this could jeopardise the attributes of care farms and turn them into another institution.

Enhancing public awareness through demonstrations of care farming is seen as important for stimulating a greater understanding of the value of care farming. Another suggestion is to incorporate modules on green care into healthcare education in Norway.[29]

Flanders, Belgium

In 2000, the **Farmers' Union** in Flanders began to link farms with service users on a small scale. In 2004, a **national support centre for care farming** was established through a collaboration among the Department of Agriculture, the Farmers' Union and Cera Bank. Support for care farming came from the 2000-2006 **Rural Development Programme** initially. Since 2006, the national support centre has been funded by the provinces and some other subsidies. It has four main roles:

1. Matching service users to farms;
2. Advocacy and promotion of care farming;
3. Knowledge and research; and
4. Training and information.

Since 2005, farmers receive a **subsidy** from the **Department of Agriculture** for "time that cannot be spent farming" in recognition of the value of their participation in care farming and most have just 1-3 clients. By 2015, the care farming subsidy paid to farmers nationally was €1.4m; based on the 2014 total of 569 care farms, this is an average of €2,460 per farm annually. Farmers can also access **grants** for 40% of the cost of capital projects to improve their facilities for service users. From 2017, people with a disability will receive **personal budgets** that they can spend as they choose, including on care farming.

In seeking to narrow the gap between predominantly urban demand versus the rural supply of care farming in Belgium, and to develop a connection between the agricultural and health and welfare sectors, legitimacy underpinned by quality

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[29] An example of this in Northern Ireland is where medical students from Queen's University Belfast participated in study visits on social farms in 2016 organised through Rural Support in association with the Ulster Farmers' Union.

assurance is seen to play a key role (Buist, 2016). The national support centre for care farming has worked to build awareness in the Department of Welfare of the benefits of care farming to help secure an additional stream of funding but without success. The quality of local relationships and the level of co-operation between the care organisations sending participants and the care farmers varies. Like the Dutch observation about safeguarding the unique attributes of care farms, a national expert in care farming in Belgium advised that it was important to keep the farming experience authentically agricultural and oriented around the farm family. This embeds the participant in that ordinary world, away from the medical or welfare narrative they experience elsewhere in their lives. Figure 13 shows how the number of care farms in Flanders has grown since the early 2000s.

Figure 13: Expansion of care farming in Flanders, Belgium.[30]
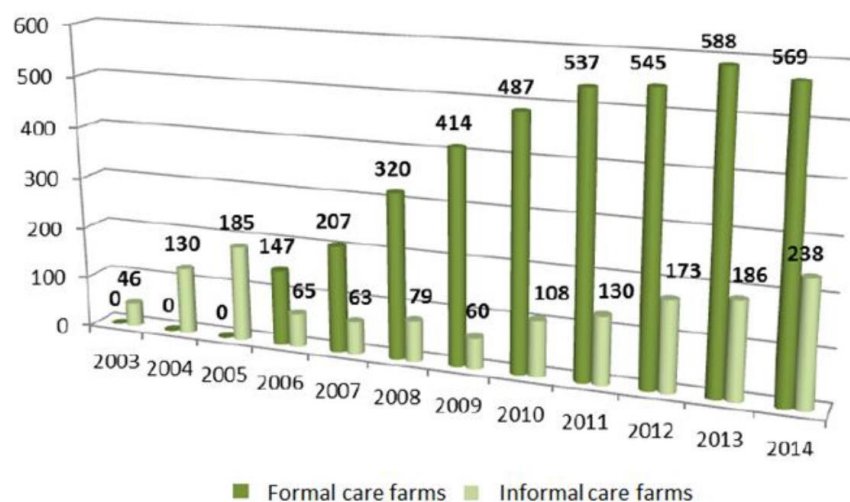
Formal care farms are officially registered as farms and eligible for the subsidy from the Department of Agriculture. Informal care farms such as those run by a retired farmer, a horse riding school or someone with a garden are not eligible for funding. While the number of formal care farms has plateaued, the number of informal care farms continues to grow.

Italy

As in Ireland, the term social farming is used in Italy. Di Iacovo (2014) and Wilcox (2007) traced the evolution of social farming there. It has strong links with **social enterprise** and **emerged at a regional level**, led by social farming pioneers of the 1970's social co-operative movement. It appears to be **most developed in Tuscany**, central Italy. Research and training interest comes from the University of Pisa, funded by the **Regional Agency for Development and Innovation in Agriculture**. Public awareness of social farming grew in 2002 because of a **debate on the lack of social services in rural areas**. A 2003 survey in Tuscany revealed that some 60 projects existed that fit with the description of social farming. These were being run by **farmers, social co-operatives** and **agricultural co-operatives**. Social co-operatives use agriculture for green care (known as service or Type A co-operatives) and for occupational therapy (work integration or Type B co-operatives) (Finuola, 2011). Each social farm in Italy visited by Wilcox (2007) seemed to have emerged from a person or group interested in combining agriculture and care. Whereas green care such as social farming originated with farming practitioners in Tuscany, it is more likely to come from health and social care professionals in the more urban Lazio region.

Italy does not have a national support centre for social farming. In 2003/04, **local social farming networks** were formed in Tuscany comprising farmers, participants, care professionals and social farming supporters. In 2004/05, networking by **third-level institutions** and **local government** helped to promote the concept and **local health authorities** became interested. In almost every region, patients of the Department of Mental Health within local health authorities access horticulture, farming and gardening activities.

During the **Rural Development Programme** 2007-13, social farming was supported to:

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[30] Source: Buist (2016: 20).

1. Improve the quality of life in rural areas by meeting social needs; and
2. Diversify the rural economy by creating new job creation or income generation opportunities (Finuola, 2011).

In 2009, Tuscany approved the first regional law on social farming. From 2010-14, discussions of social farming extended to **farmers' associations** and the **third sector**. The number of social farming enterprises reached 2,000 and other regions approved **regional laws on social farming**. In 2014, the first **national law on social farming** was approved by the Italian parliament. Kinsella *et al.* (2014a) described how at the point of delivery of social farming supports in Italy, **co-operation among health services, farmers, social co-operatives and voluntary associations** results in **shared planning and provision of services** such as rehabilitation, education, training, employment, therapy and social inclusion.

United Kingdom

Support for care farming in the UK began with the **National Care Farming Initiative** in 2005. Based at Harper Adams University College, it was formed by **representatives from organisations in health, welfare, education, agriculture and rural affairs** to help build connections across the relevant sectors. Since 2011, it has become the charity **Care Farming UK** led by care farmers and care farming experts with one full-time employee. **Regional support groups** include Care Farming Scotland, Care Farming West Midlands, East Anglian Care Farming and the Social Farming Support Office in Northern Ireland run by the charity **Rural Support** (launched in 2015[31]). A Welsh care farming network is being explored. Care Farming UK has four strategic objectives:

1. Support care farmers with care provision quality;
2. Develop supportive networks of care farmers and build relationships with local care commissioners;
3. Increase the profile of care farming and build public awareness of its impact; and
4. Expand and disseminate evidence of its impacts.

Funding sources for care farming include **charitable trusts, client fees, local authorities** and **health trusts**. Care Farming UK lobbied the **Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA)** and secured funding for farm-based education and engagement with the natural environment. As in Ireland, the UK suffers from a lack of joined-up thinking in policies relating to agriculture and health. A **Code of Practice** was introduced in 2014 to increase the legitimacy of the sector. It is a set of guidelines for care farmers to sign up to by 2018 that ensures their farms offer safe, professional and effective services[32]. It has broad support from care farmers, as does training under the Countryside Educational Visits Accreditation Scheme (CEVAS)[33] to help ensure standards across farms in the sector. Healthcare commissioners consider this Code of Practice the minimum standard required on care farms.

Promoting care farming and demonstrating its effectiveness is considered important but challenged by an apparent lack of interest from some healthcare commissioners. Despite the work done to date, healthcare commissioners remain largely unaware of care farming and its benefits, as do many service users and their families. **Support networks** play a key role in developing positive relationships between care farmers and commissioners to encourage access to care farming opportunities among service users. Healthcare commissioners prefer to access care farming services through a consortium that offers a range of care farms and care offers (Bragg *et al.*, 2015). Such consortia allow small-scale operations to access large-scale health and social care funding opportunities. In response, a **Green Care Coalition**[34] was established by Care Farming UK in 2016 and comprises representatives from organisations delivering nature-based interventions for people with a defined need. It is hoped that this **voluntary collaboration of organisations involved**

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[31] Work in 2016 included offering taster sessions to new participants (funded by the Public Health Agency), capital grants to care farmers for on-farm adaptations (funded through the Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs) and social farm visits by medical students from Queen's University Belfast (through a module offered in association with the Ulster Farmers' Union).

[32] See the overview at: https://www.carefarminguk.org/care-farming-code-practice, accessed 21 March, 2017.

[33] CEVAS trains people to work with groups of school children, young people or clients with additional needs. Source: http://www.visitmyfarm.org/cevas-farmer-training, accessed 13 March, 2017.

[34] https://greencarecoalition.org.uk/

in green care will become **a single point of contact for healthcare commissioners** more used to dealing with large service providers.

These international examples show that care farming begins as a niche innovation along a continuum between the agriculture and healthcare sectors, often driven by a key person or group, with support from an educational institution. Later, the establishment of support networks, strong engagement from the healthcare sector, as well as an effective government strategy that is adequately funded create the conditions to develop the sector among farmers and healthcare service providers.

New Directions for disability service funders, providers and regulators

As already outlined, social farming is an emerging sector within the disability care provision system in Ireland. According to the HSE (2012), care provision systems are based on five pillars:

1. Culture e.g. the social model of disability versus the medical model;
2. Policy e.g. the structural environment in which services are planned and designed;
3. Infrastructure e.g. the service delivery system that includes organisations delivering services and overseeing its implementation;
4. Funding / payments e.g. incentives to provide the infrastructure; and
5. Quality e.g. compliance with the law and policy, and performance in achieving desired service outcomes.

Their research found that the last three pillars – infrastructure, funding mechanisms and quality – are slower to change than the first two. This difference in the speed of change across the five pillars can be seen in the evolution of social farming in Ireland. Locally-led social farming projects fit well with the new culture of the social model of disability and Di Iacovo and O'Connor (2009: 185) described projects such as Kerry Social Farming as "a radical innovation in rural, agriculture and social services". However, innovative projects like KSF are taking place within the constraints of established systems of infrastructure and funding – and these have been slower to change. In order to continue to innovate in the disability service sector and in order for long-established service providers to embrace the person-centred approach, the following is required: "a **strong national vision**, **cultural change among providers and funders**, **support for innovation**, **funding systems that facilitate individual choice**, and an expanded array of **demand-led, individualised services** that let service users exercise choice and control over decision-making about their service" (HSE, 2012: 15). This points to the vital role of key government departments in helping to drive the changes required in the pillars of infrastructure, funding and quality in Ireland's care provision system, particularly in terms of incentivising appropriate changes to the service delivery system established under the medical model of disability.

The HSE (2012) highlighted how services that fit with the **established** system of infrastructure, funding and quality have little incentive to reform and are instead more inclined to settle for improvements to what is already in place e.g. by adding person-centred planning to their existing range of supports. HSE (2012) research recommended *a service delivery system where innovation is rewarded*, and where an increase in the range of demand-led, individually customised services is incentivised. Incentives that encourage innovation and create a more competitive market for services includes the personal budgets for social services or health care used in Belgium, the Netherlands and the UK that help to pay for social farming in those countries. In Ireland, the introduction of personal budgets will entail aligning funding systems with *New Directions*.

Co-operation and multi-disciplinarity in social farming

Buist (2016) assessed the evolution of care farming internationally in terms of the actors or groups involved. Her work showed how it originates as an innovative niche in farming among entrepreneurs from either the care or agricultural sectors. It then gains recognition through influencers in various levels of government in multifunctional agriculture and/or in health care. These influencers help bring about regime changes to varying degrees depending on the country, including the establishment of support centres or organisations (considered institutional entrepreneurs), the

development of government strategies for care farming, the securing of funding to help drive the development and expansion of the sector among farmers, and the recognition and acceptance of the legitimacy and effectiveness of care farming among healthcare professionals and social service commissioners through promotion and research evidence.

The establishment of support organisations and networks for care farming leads to increases in the number of care farmers. More broadly, support organisations help to stimulate government interest, connect the agricultural and healthcare sectors to increase mutual understanding, and promote, legitimise and professionalise care farming. Regions and countries where care farming is most developed – Flanders in Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway and the UK – are characterised by strong national and/or regional support networks (figure 14).

Figure 14: Social and care farming networks.[35]

Belgium, Netherlands, Norway, UK
• *Strong national and regional network*

France, Germany, Italy
• *Separated networks, regions, target groups*

Ireland, Slovenia
• *National network at an early stage of development*

Equally important are the roles played by healthcare organisations in commissioning care farming for their service users and the funding mechanism of personal budgets with which service users can avail of their preferred service themselves. Ultimately, social farming support organisations and centres play a 'boundary spanning' role to build relationships, interconnections and interdependencies in order to accomplish collaboration across organisational boundaries[36].

Social farming – a cross-cutting issue

The multi-disciplinary and cross-cutting traits which make social farming so innovative and exciting can also hold back its development and, as Hine *et al.* (2008) highlight, it remains under-funded and 'under the radar' for the most part. In all countries, the statutory sector has an important role to play in encouraging it. Di Iacovo and O'Connor (2009) highlighted that social farming is a cross-cutting issue with a need for co-operation among local authorities, health organisations and a range of government departments to ensure that measures are 'framed' and 'joined-up' in ways that are mutually reinforcing. In regions and countries that have seen the greatest uptake in care farming – Flanders in Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway and the UK – a lead role has been taken by the national or regional government (Hine *et al.*, 2008). The national government role is led in Belgium by the Department of Agriculture, in the Netherlands by the departments of Agriculture and Welfare & Health, in Norway by an inter-departmental committee led by Agriculture that includes Education & Research, Social Affairs, Health, Children & Family Affairs, and Local Government & Regional Development, and in the UK by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs.

In Ireland, funding for social farming comes from the Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine (CEDRA Rural Innovation and Development Fund) and the Department of Housing, Planning, Community & Local Government (LEADER measure of the Rural Development Programme[37] and SICAP). There is indirect support from the Department of Social Protection that funds the RSS and Tús initiative as workers play important roles locally, such as providing transport solutions. However, the main source of funding for health and care services in Ireland is the Department of Health, distributed via the public health service (the Health Service Executive – HSE). The ongoing process of mainstreaming services in Ireland means that labour market services for people with disabilities lies with yet another department, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation, distributed through SOLAS, the state organisation responsible for funding, planning and co-ordinating Further Education and Training (FET). For social farming to develop its full potential under *New Directions* (HSE, 2012) it needs to achieve acceptance and support as both a therapeutic and an occupational intervention from the

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[35] Adapted from Hassink (2015: 25).
[36] Source: http://www.phab.us/about/what-is-boundary-spanning/, accessed 13 March 2017.
[37] In the current RDP 2014-2020, support for social farming is possible through the Social Inclusion theme of the LEADER measure for community-led local development.

Department of Health and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation, respectively. Such support would help to address two funding challenges to the development of social farming in Ireland seen to date, namely: the termination of projects, despite their clear potential, due to lack of funding continuity and the shoe-horning of initiatives into employment progression templates in order to secure available funding (O'Connor *et al.*, 2010).

An inter-departmental committee for social farming

The 2004 National Disability Strategy is a whole-of-government approach to advancing the social inclusion of people with disabilities in Irish society and includes the mainstreaming of public services. The strategy entails sectoral plans across departments that support children, communications, employment, enterprise, environment, family, health, social protection and transport[38]. The National Disability Strategy Implementation Plan (NDSIG, 2013) has four high-level goals that *focus on the rights of citizens with disabilities* instead of departmental responsibilities. These are:

1. Equal citizens e.g. equality, respect and access;
2. Independence and choice e.g. supported to live the life of their choosing;
3. Participation e.g. enabled to live ordinary lives in ordinary places as part of their community;
4. Maximising potential e.g. enabled to reach their full potential through education, training, wellbeing and independence.

In 2011, the National Disability Strategy Implementation Group (NDSIG) was established as a forum of government officials and disability stakeholders to help drive the strategy despite limited resources in a time of austerity. Table 2 shows the diverse groups represented on that forum (NDSIG, 2013).

Recognition of the value of social farming and support for it beyond the Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine could emerge from the establishment of an inter-departmental committee at national level, along the lines of that found in the Netherlands or Norway. The committee would include representatives from departments with remits in health, social care, welfare, education and employment, as already found in the NDSIG, to help realise the potential of social farming, a care sector where there is a very strong case for collaboration. At the very least, it must include both the Departments of Agriculture, Food & Marine and Health, as well as the Minister of State for Disability Issues at the Departments of Social Protection, Justice & Equality, and Health. For example, in the Netherlands, a decade of inter-departmental collaboration between the Agriculture and Health departments resulted in 0.9% of Dutch farms providing care services by the late 2000s (Hine *et al.*, 2008). With almost 140,000 Irish farms recorded in the 2010 Census of Agriculture, a similar proportion in Ireland would number 1,260 social farms – an average of fifty per county.

Table 2: Membership of the National Disability Strategy Implementation Group.

Government Departments	Other Bodies and Groups
Health	National Disability Authority
Social Protection	Disability Federation of Ireland
Transport, Tourism & Sport	Inclusion Ireland
Environment, Community & Local Government	Mental Health Reform
Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation	National Federation of Voluntary Bodies
Communications, Energy & Natural Resources	National Service Users Executive
Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht	Not-for-profit Business Association
Agriculture, Fisheries & Food	A number of service users
Education & Skills	County & City Managers Association
Children and Youth Affairs	
Public Expenditure & Reform	

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[38] Affordable, accessible transport is a key enabler of community inclusion and active citizenship for people with disabilities.

Support from the Department of Health for community-based and locally-led projects like Kerry Social Farming can be drawn from a key action of the National Disability Strategy Implementation Plan – the "reorientation of services towards supporting persons with disabilities to live independently in the community" (NDSIG, 2013: 10). Under Goal 2 of the plan, the Department of Health and the HSE, along with stakeholders, are charged with overseeing the effective implementation of new strategies and programmes that support people with disabilities to:

- Move from congregated settings to live in the community and
- Have access to new models of support and activities in the community to replace traditional adult day services (NDSIG, 2013: 21).

Local government also has a key role to play in facilitating social farming. Goal 3 of the plan recognises the importance for people with disabilities to be active citizens in the ordinary life of their communities and this points to the need for funding from local authorities for community development projects that improve access and inclusion, such as KSF.

Social farming and the regulatory environment

The European Economic and Social Committee (2012: 1) has called on EU institutions, national governments and regional authorities to encourage social farming with a supportive regulatory framework along with implementing a range of measures (table 3). To date, France, Italy, the Netherlands and Norway have developed sector regulations at regional and/or national level.

Table 3: A supportive framework for social farming.

Measures that support social farming
Collaboration among health, social, farming and employment policy/administrations at EU, national, regional and local levels
Targeted support from public authorities to give it sustained funding
Better collaboration between national and EU authorities responsible for managing EU funds to improve access to structural funds, especially for frontline service providers
Member states referring to social farming in plans and taking an integrated approach to designing programmes to enable access to various structural funds as part of the multiple financing strategy possible under the Common Strategic Framework
Supporting social farming networks to share knowledge and experiences and raise awareness
Training for participants and for service providers to ensure high quality and skills

Di Iacovo and O'Connor (2009) highlighted the need to continue to support the bottom-up approach and pioneering spirit of locally-led social farming projects while at the same time protecting the vulnerable members of society who benefit from those projects; this calls for the development and application of **appropriate regulations**. As statutory involvement in green care in Ireland increases, it will be important to achieve a pragmatic balance between the flexible, local models that are evolving out of the community and voluntary sector and any future State requirements for regulation and standardisation. It is important not to stifle innovation in social farming through excessive regulation (McGloin and O'Connor, 2007), nor "lose sight of its original spirit and values, such as solidarity and social responsibility" (Di Iacovo and O'Connor, 2009: 13).

HSE (2012) showed the need for a new way of assessing risk in relation to service provision. The current situation entails professionals assessing risk for individuals, taking responsibility for decisions and preventing the person with a disability from taking a risk if there could be consequences for the organisation. Instead, a person-centred approach to risk enables the individual to have control over their own life. This has implications for such innovative projects as Kerry Social Farming that welcomes people with disabilities on to family farms in the community and into working environments that may be challenging to current models of risk assessment (such as HIQA). Currently, while there are no specific social farming regulations in Ireland, providers of green care in receipt of public funding must comply with regulations in relation to health and safety, environmental management and risk minimisation, and private farms must have public liability insurance (Di Iacovo and O'Connor, 2009). Kinsella *et al.* (2014) advise those entering social farming in Ireland to carry out a risk assessment to thoroughly identify hazards and risks on their farm and to complete a Safety Statement for the farm in recognition of the fact that responsibility for farm health and safety lies with the farmer in the first

instance. Farmers involved in social farming projects undergo Garda vetting for clearance to work with children, youths and vulnerable adults, and complete health and safety training. Their farms are assessed for health and safety with work carried out to level paths or install safety rails where needed. In Northern Ireland, social farmers undergo similar checks (Johnston, 2016). During social farming sessions, low risk activities are pursued that exclude the use of large machinery, entail the supervised use of equipment and participants are taught how to be safe around animals. Farms carry appropriate insurance for social farming while a Memorandum of Understanding details the responsibilities of the various stakeholders involved in the project. Kinsella *et al.* (2014a) described how the UK process of developing a Code of Practice for social farming could provide a model for devising one in Ireland. There, a working group comprised mainly of care farmers and some specialist experts developed a set of baseline standards. Once these were agreed, they then determined how they should be administered and implemented.

Social farming outcomes

The concept of 'transition' is used to explain the development of social farming, where a transition is a change on multiple levels, initiated by multiple groups and affecting multiple groups in society; social farming is considered a transitional innovation as it connects two sectors (at least) to help provide solutions for each (Buist, 2016). Hine *et al.* (2008) framed their research into social farming within the context of solutions. They outlined how various sectors are under pressure due to the stresses of contemporary society: health and social care sectors are struggling to address a myriad of physical and psychological health issues; education and judicial systems are dealing with a diversity of challenges at the individual, family and community level; and the farming sector is under increasing economic, social and environmental pressures. Within this complex framework of modern problems lies social farming as a multi-disciplinary, cross-cutting practice that offers new opportunities for vulnerable members of society at risk of social exclusion to improve their physical and mental health, to continue their education in non-traditional programmes and to improve their life chances, all the while providing new options to service providers, to farmers and farm families, and to rural communities struggling to maintain a 'living countryside'. Leck (2013) drew these different strands of social farming into a holistic model that links public health, social inclusion and multifunctional agriculture (figure 15).

Figure 15: Social farming – a holistic model.[39]
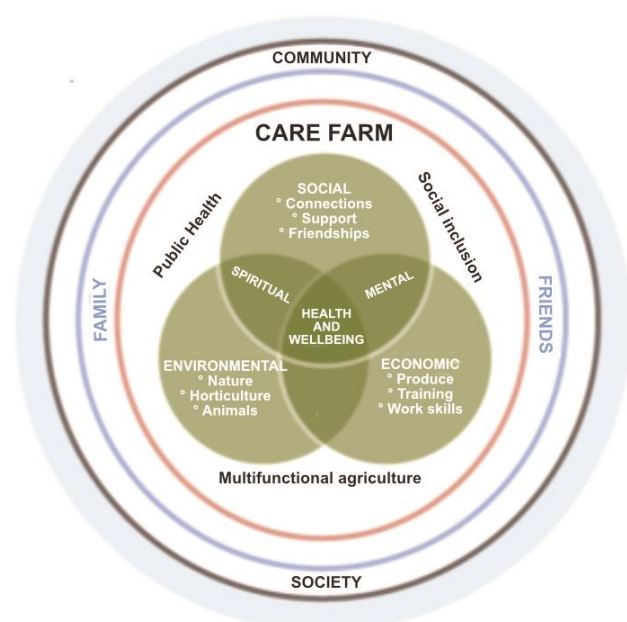
Measuring outcomes

The Department of Health sought the input of the National Disability Authority (NDA) to select outcome indicators that measure the *impact* of services on the lives of people with disabilities. This shifts the focus from indicators that measure *inputs* (e.g. staffing) or *activities* (e.g. hours of service delivered) to indicators that measure progress for the individuals availing of services. Following consultation among people with intellectual, physical and sensory disabilities, the NDA (2016) identified the following nine high-level outcomes that services should aim for in order to help disability service users attain independence, participation, self-actualisation, fulfilment, happiness, health and security (table 4)[40]. These suggest the type of indicators that could be used to measure the outcomes of social farming.

[39] Redrawn from: Leck (2013: 259).
[40] The NDA (2016) highlighted the need to include the perspective of people with disabilities to measure outcomes of person-centred services and pointed to the value of externally derived data, including evaluation (or special data collection) by an independent party. It will be useful to Kerry Social Farming in future evaluations to refer to the findings of the NDA's ongoing consultation for its final recommended set of indicators. See Bragg and Atkins (2016) for a list of outcome measures for green care used in published research to date.

Table 4: High-level outcomes for people with a disability in Ireland.

Outcome	Abbreviation
Are living in their own home in the community	Living in the community
Are exercising choice and control in their everyday lives	Choice and control
Are participating in social and civic life	Social and civic participation
Have meaningful personal relationships	Personal relationships
Have opportunities for personal development and fulfilment of aspirations	Education and personal development
Have a job or other valued social roles	Employment and valued social roles
Are enjoying a good quality of life	Quality of life
Are achieving the best possible health and well-being	Health and well-being
Are safe, secure and free from abuse	Safe and secure

In terms of evidence sought by healthcare commissioners, UK research shows that they want a mix of information on care farming generally and for the specific farms in their area with regards to clinical and generic health, wellbeing, social functioning, reduced service use and cost-benefit analysis (Bragg *et al.*, 2015). Care farms are seen to offer multiple outcomes for people with a range of needs and Wilcox (2008) noted that family farms offer participants the chance to experience not just green care aspects but the business and food supply chain side of farming as well. While care farmers understand the outcomes' focus of commissioners, they are unsure of how to go about generating the evidence. This points to the role of support organisations and researchers in helping to develop suitable evaluation tools and disseminating evidence to those with the funding and responsibility for contracting care services.

A challenge to proving the effectiveness of social farming to the healthcare sector is the importance that the sector places on the need for Randomised Control Trials (RCTs). Sempik *et al.* (2005) discussed the difficulty of using RCTs in social and therapeutic horticulture. Hine *et al.* (2008) outlined the ways in which RCTs are challenging in social farming as well. For example, in relation to the requirement for a comparative method using a control sample: "it is not possible to design an activity that is just like being on a farm, but isn't being on a farm at all"; or with regards to the use of 'blinding' where participants are uncertain whether they have received an intervention or a placebo: "farming activities cannot easily be blinded as it would not be possible for a patient to be honestly unsure whether they had been on a farm or not" (p.97). Therefore, the evidence for the benefits of social farming is predominantly qualitative. Leck (2015) does not see this as a problem to measuring the outcomes of social farming because he considers that subjective perceptions are key to understanding changes to health and well-being. Nevertheless, more quantitative methods adopted from subjects such as health psychology are being explored. Collaborations with researchers in disciplines such as health care, psychology and occupational therapy will play a role here. EESC (2012) highlighted Horizon 2020 as a vehicle for such interdisciplinary research into social farming (social, economic, health, etc).

Social farming benefits for participants

Leck (2013) discussed a number of theories that help to explain the link between well-being and relationships with the natural world (e.g. Biophilia Hypothesis, Attention Restoration Theory and Psycho-Evolutionary Stress Reduction Theory) and relations with other people (Social Cognitive Theory and the Mandala of Health). Leck (2013) went on to outline the various pathways by which a social farm could contribute to physical and psychosocial well-being and concluded that it was an intervention that combined the broadest range of potential benefits for participants. He summarised four **pathways to well-being** from his indepth analysis of a care farm in the UK through its natural, social, learning and physical spaces (figure 16).

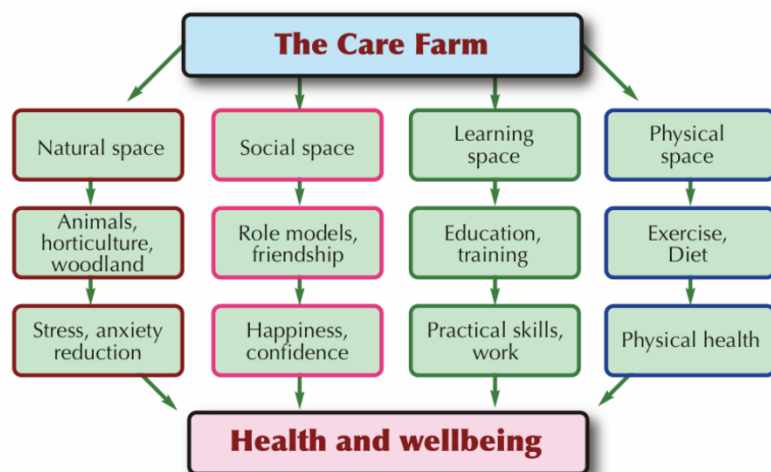Figure 16: Farm pathways to health and well-being.

Table 5 summarises some of the growing body of international evidence showing the benefits that green care interventions such as social farming offers participants. Benefits tend to be classified into four general categories:

1. Physical;
2. Mental (including behavioural and identity);
3. Social; and
4. Educational, vocational.

Sempik *et al.* (2005) surveyed the benefits documented in 836 projects across the UK that incorporated Social and Therapeutic Horticulture (STH). Both care farmers and participants in the UK reported benefits for participants (Hine *et al.*, 2008) while Hassink (2015) classified self-reported benefits among participants on care farms in the Netherlands. Participants, carers and teachers involved with an indepth study of an English care farm highlighted positive outcomes achieved by service users (Leck, 2015). In fact, Leck (2015) found that very few participants engaged in activities entailing a similar level of exercise as social farming. Bragg and Atkins (2016) conducted a systematic review of the international literature to appraise high quality research evidence for green care interventions (see p.99). They documented the benefits of social farming for participants in Britain, China, the Netherlands, Northern Ireland and Norway based on 32 published research papers. Walsh (2014) assessed the proportion of participants showing benefits from the SoFAB project on the island of Ireland based on interviews with participants, farmers and participant supporters (staff, parent or carer), while Johnston (2016) recorded benefits among 27 participants[42] during 6-week 'taster sessions' on eight farms in Northern Ireland from March to May, 2016.[43] These are all summarised in table 5.

Health science measures of benefits for participants

While the evidence for the benefits of care/social farming summed up in table 5 was gathered using qualitative methods such as interviews, surveys and observations, a range of measures from the health sciences have also been used. Leck (2013) lists a number of tests that he drew from in his in-depth research into the social return on investment (SROI) on a care farm in the UK, as follows:

- General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) – suitable for anyone over the age of eleven to measure self-efficacy or coping behaviour;
- Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) – to measure overall mental well-being;
- Shortened version of the WEMWBS (SWEMWBS) – overcomes the gender bias of the longer WEMWBS;
- Sense of Coherence – measures coping skills;
- The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale – assesses how people deal with adversity;
- Environmental Identity Scale – measures the importance of nature for individuals; and
- European Social Survey – elements from the 2006/07 well-being module.

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[41] Redrawn from: Leck (2013: 235).
[42] Of the 27 participants, 25 were male, 24 had learning disabilities and three had mental health issues.
[43] A questionnaire was administered to each participant by a key worker or family member and feedback was also sought from key workers and family members to substantiate the evidence. Farmers completed a log book to record the participants' experiences after each session.

Table 5: Benefits of green care interventions for participants.

Benefits observed or experienced		NI, border region (Walsh, 2014; Johnston, 2016)	UK (Hine et al., 2008)	Netherlands (Hassink, 2015)	England (Leck, 2015)	China, Netherlands, Norway, UK (Bragg and Atkins, 2016)
Physical	Activity				√	
	Fitness	√				
	Health	√	√	√		
	Fresh air		√			
	Skills		√	√		
	Dexterity	√	√			
	Motor function	√	√			
	Day/night rhythm			√		
Mental	Well-being, sense of belonging, coping ability	√	√			√
	Enthusiasm, enjoyment, happiness, calm, mood	√	√	√	√	√
	Self-esteem, self-confidence, self-value, self-efficacy	√	√	√	√	√
	Sense of place, awareness		√	√		
	Connection with nature, contact with animals[44]		√			
	Personal responsibility		√	√		√
	Cognitive functioning					√
	Addictive habits		√			
Social	Relationships, communication	√				
	Social skills development, social interactions, inclusion	√	√	√	√	√
	Independence		√		√	
	Teamwork		√			
Educational, vocational	Knowledge					
	Practical skills	√	√			√
	Meaningful work	√	√	√	√	√
	Progression, qualifications	√				
	Routine, time management	√	√			
	Formation of a work habit		√			
	Farming/horticultural skills		√			

After Hine *et al.* (2008) found significant improvements in physiological and psychological measures among research subjects who exercised in pleasant green environments or did recreational activities in nature, they ran the same tests (e.g. blood pressure and mood changes) on care farming participants to help gather scientific evidence for care commissioners. They tested the psychological health and well-being benefits of care farming among 51 participants on seven UK farms[45]. Participants included those with mental health issues, unemployed, experiencing homelessness, disaffected youths, recovering addicts, older people, offenders/ex-offenders and people who were recuperating from accident or illness. A questionnaire was completed by participants before and after their session on a care farm and the results were all statistically significant: 64% recorded improved self-esteem[46], 94% experienced a reduction in feelings of anger, 78% reported lower confusion, 74% had less tension, 70% had reduced depression, 70% had more vigour and 61% had less fatigue (figure 17) while 88% reported a better mood overall[47]. The researchers concluded from the test results that care farming helps people with a range of issues, both young and old, to feel better.

[44] Caring for animals allows participants to take on the role of caring for another being instead of being cared for themselves (Elings, 2012).
[45] Three that were privately run, two city farms and two linked to institutions.
[46] Leck (2013) highlighted that since high self-esteem can be a negative trait for some people with an identified need, that increases or decreases in self-esteem scores must be interpreted accordingly.
[47] The standardised questionnaire used to measure mood changes was not suitable for people with intellectual disabilities, therefore that group of participants were not included in the research.

Figure 17: Established health science measures to assess the benefits of care farming for participants[48].
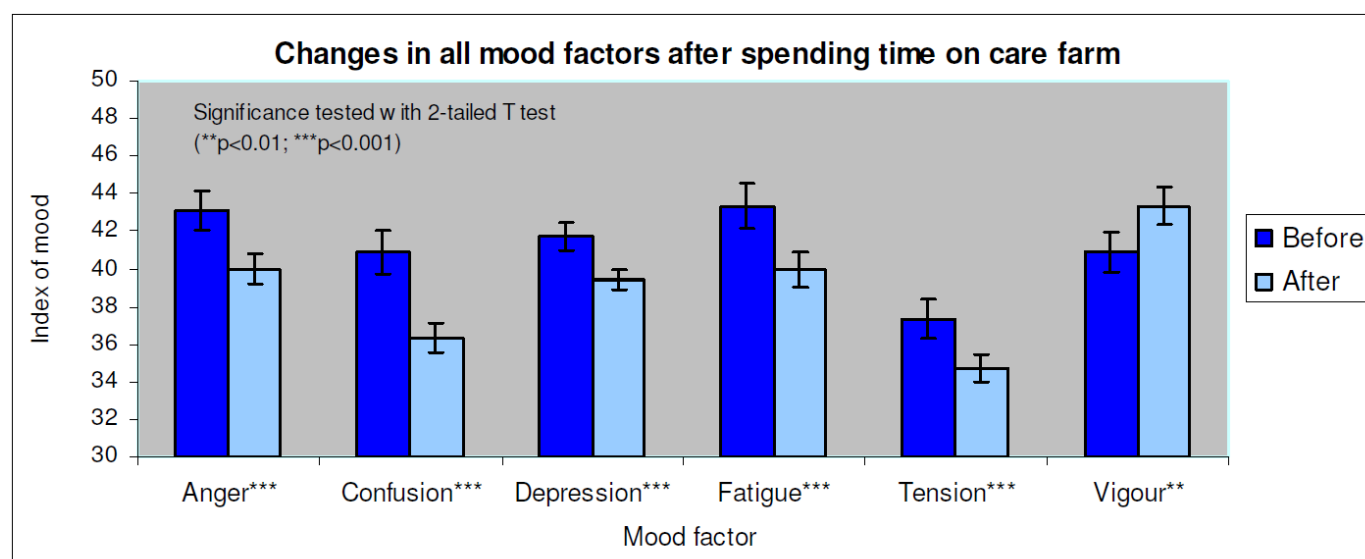
All of this research on the benefits of social farming for participants was used to formulate survey and interview questions in the Evaluation to help reveal the kind of benefits, if any, experienced by participants in Kerry Social Farming.

Social farming benefits for rural development

"Social farming focuses on one of the most important roles to be played by multifunctional agriculture: its potential for integrating, and providing care or therapy to people with disabilities and / or at risk of social exclusion. It revitalises the link between rural / urban areas, contributes to economic development, and can be indicated as a positive externality of agriculture on social capital" Multifunctional Agriculture in Europe (MAiE) (2013: 5).

Social services in Ireland have been increasingly centralised since the collapse of the Celtic Tiger economy in the mid-2000s and they are becoming concentrated in urban locations. The contraction of services reduces accessibility and this is most keenly felt by populations in less densely populated and remote areas. Rural communities have actively resisted changes such as the closure of health clinics, small schools, post offices and Garda stations while residual social services struggle with greater demand within constrained budgets.

At the same time, there is growing awareness of the rural development potential of social service provision and the contribution it can make to a living countryside (Di Iacovo and O'Connor, 2009). Social farming fits with the multifunctional view of agriculture where farms can produce not only outputs for sale but services in health, social care, therapy, education and work activation (Di Iacovo and O'Connor, 2009; Hine *et al.*, 2008). The extensive system of local informal relationships that characterises social farming complements the formal social service system. The flexibility of social farming across time and space allows tailor-made responses to the needs of individuals through local interactive groups of families and communities (Hine *et al.*, 2008). In addition to addressing social exclusion among vulnerable groups, social farming can also help to reconnect farmers with their wider communities and to reconnect rural communities with urban populations (Hine *et al.*, 2008) driving up social capital in the process.

Social farming - payment models

Kerry Social Farming is a voluntary model of social farming and its volunteer ethos is a core value. Since funding is a challenge for all social farming initiatives, it is helpful here to review some of the payment models in operation. Social farming is a combination of market and non-market values with financial support provided by the agricultural or

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[48] Source: Hine *et al.*, 2008: 71, 73.

healthcare sectors or even through premia paid by ethical consumers for farm produce (Di Iacovo and O'Connor, 2009). The availability of sustained funding has been identified as a key factor in boosting social farming in Flanders (through farm subsidies) and the Netherlands (from the personalised budgets of service users) (Di Iacovo and O'Connor, 2009). Di Iacovo and O'Connor (2009) outlined various models of payment. In Flanders, the farmer gets a grant of €40 for each day that participants attend the farm, regardless of the number of participants. This is compensation for the time that the farmer is with the social farming participant, rather than farming (Wilcox, 2008). In the Netherlands, farmers receive an average subvention of €50-77 per participant per day (Di Iacovo and O'Connor, 2009; Hine *et al.*, 2008). Ballyhoura Rural Services (2015) found a range of €60-100 for daily rates in Ireland depending on the client and their needs; this compares to €20,000 per user per year for non-residential care services provided by an institutional farm on a sub-contract basis to the HSE[49].

Comparative cost of social farming

Kinsella *et al.* (2014c) explained that the SoFab project covered core costs on each social farm comprising material costs (tools and consumables), utilities, insurance, light refreshments, some miscellaneous once-off costs and capital costs in excess of the €2,500 capital grant available. The average core costs per participant per day were calculated at €10.84 in Ireland and €14.16 in Northern Ireland across 20 pilot farms. While farmers were not paid for their labour input, the time spent preparing for and delivering social farming sessions was measured; it averaged 3.81 hours per participant per visit in Ireland and 4.65 hours in Northern Ireland[50]. Based on selected HSE (care assistant) and NHS (healthcare assistant) pay scales, an hourly rate of €15.30 was allocated for Irish farmers (€58.29 per visit) and €11.08 for Northern Irish farmers (€51.52 per visit). This resulted in total core and labour costs per participant per farm visit of €69.11 in Ireland and €65.68 in Northern Ireland in 2013/14.

Kinsella *et al.* (2014c) then compared these social farming costs with the cost of other services in Ireland (while acknowledging the challenges of comparing costs for different years across widely varying services and service providers). In 2005, the cost of day support programmes per place per day was estimated at €64 while employment support / sheltered employment was €81 per day (in National Federation of Voluntary Bodies, 2005). In 2012, activation and day support and work-like activities delivered across HSE and non-HSE providers were estimated at €66.50 per day (minimum and low support) and €76.10 per day (minimum, low and moderate support) (in Department of Health, 2012). Therefore, the core and labour cost of social farming delivered by the SoFAB project in Ireland in 2013/14 of €69.11 per participant per farm visit, fits within the range of activation, day support and work-like activities delivered by both HSE and non-HSE providers in 2012 of €66.50 to €76.10 per place per day.

Johnston (2016) suggested a *daily fee* for social farmers in Northern Ireland of £180 for a short- to medium-term service (based on attendance of three participants over a 6-20 week programme averaging £60 per participant), and of £160 for a long-term service (20-40 week programme averaging £53 per participant). Her reckoning of fees included a proportion of total insurance and material costs (equipment and consumables used by participants during their social farming sessions), along with a salary for the farmers' time but did not account for capital investments or the need to hire farm labour to replace that of farmer during social farming sessions. The salary for social farmers was based on the NHS band 3 salary of £9.44 per hour with the time per session including time spent preparing for sessions.

Social return on investment

Leck (2015) did an in-depth assessment of the social return on investment of a care farm in the UK and found that **for every £1 invested in care farming activities, more than £3 of social value was created**. 'Social Return on Investment' or SROI accounts for the understanding that much of the value provided by social farming is not readily quantified financially and thus the true 'value' of social farming to participants and society is likely to be under-estimated. SROI works to take all the social, environmental and economic aspects of social farming into account for a more accurate

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[49] And €36,000 per user per year for residential services.
[50] Made up of preparation (18%), delivery (70%) and follow-up (12%).

cost-benefit analysis[51]. From 2013 to 2014, research was conducted on a 200-acre working farm in North Herefordshire with mixed livestock and fowl, woodlands, orchard, polytunnels, indoor work and social spaces and 20 acres set aside exclusively for social farming. The farm offers learning opportunities in animal care, bushcraft, construction, cookery, horticulture and landscaping. Short courses are delivered on the farm in basket making, carpentry, cookery, metalwork, woodcarving and woodland crafts as well as mending, recycling and reusing. Course certificates are used to demonstrate success and encourage further education and training. Participants in the research ranged from 13 to 68 years with a range of needs but primarily learning disabilities, mental health issues and young people struggling with mainstream education[52]. Leck's (2015) work highlights that while participants are the main beneficiaries of social farming, other stakeholders benefit too including families and carers, employees and volunteers, support organisations and society in general through improved relationships and reduced demand for statutory support services. But as Leck (2015: 56) warned in his conclusions, there is a risk of too much emphasis being placed on the 'return on investment' including the SROI ratio and not enough "to what is really happening for people".

Having explored the international literature to gain an understanding of social farming models and practices in other jurisdictions, as well as having an overview of some of the funding and regulatory challenges encountered by other social farming projects down through the years, the next section of the report describes the methods used to evaluate Kerry Social Farming in 2017.

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[51] SROI takes account of attribution (how much of the outcome was due to other interventions), deadweight (how much would have happened anyway), displacement (how much other positive outcomes were displaced), duration (how long the outcome lasts) and drop-off (the reduction in outcomes over time since original intervention).
[52] Other needs included acquired brain injuries and adults seeking specific supports for personal progression.

Part 2 - Methodology

Data collection methods

The research team attended several meetings of the KSF working group in late 2016 to discuss methods for gathering feedback from the range of stakeholders involved in the Project. A mixed-methods approach following Leck (2013) was agreed in order to collect data from the different stakeholders (table 6).

Table 6: Data collection methods.

Group	Method
Farmers	Face-to-face, semi-structured interview
Participants	'Walk and talk' conversation supplemented with photos; focus group
Guardians	Postal survey
Support workers	Email survey
Partner organisations	Email survey

The working group provided input to the design of questions for conversations with participants, interviews with farmers, and of the questionnaires for guardians, support workers and representatives from partner organisations. This ensured that the Evaluation would address their specific information requirements. The contents of the data collection tools were also informed by the literature review.

Research ethics for evaluation of Kerry Social Farming

The working group assumed the role of the Research Ethics Committee. The research team devised a Research Ethics Approval Application Form based on templates from Mary Immaculate College (MIC) and Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT). The form outlines the following:

- goals of the Evaluation;
- the researchers conducting it;
- the subjects contributing data to the research;
- methodologies to be used;
- suggested timeline; and
- addressing and minimising risks, confidentiality and data protection.

The draft Research Ethics Approval Application Form was presented to the working group at their meeting in November 2016, where it was approved. The research team then completed and submitted it to South Kerry Development Partnership (SKDP) in December 2016 for the files of KSF.

The researchers who conducted the 'walk and talk' conversations and the feedback sessions with participants completed garda vetting through the Irish Local Development Network prior to commencing their fieldwork. Fieldwork began in January 2017, coinciding with the KSF's new full-time Social Farming Facilitator, Irene Kavanagh, beginning her role.

Data collection process

'Walk and talk' conversations with participants

Staff at the service providers, Kerry Parents and Friends Association (KPFA) and St. John of God (SJoG), helped the research team to design an information sheet about the Evaluation (appendix 1) and a consent form for the participants in Kerry Social Farming. They then distributed these materials to the participants. Signed consent forms were forwarded to the research team.

When the researcher visited social farms to interview the host farmers, they also did a 'walk and talk' with social farming participants on the farms. Appendix 2 shows the interview schedule used to frame those conversations. The day of each farm visit was scheduled to coincide with the social farm session of its participants, as far as possible, to minimise any disruption to their routines. The researcher conducted a focus group with some participants in their Day Centre as they were not attending a social farm at the time.

Researching with participants with severe communication limitations

A number of participants have severe communication limitations and a support worker works alongside them on their social farms. Their interactions with the researcher were facilitated by a support worker (SW) from KPFA. Using photographs and images of farm tasks, tools and animals, the participants were able to show the researcher the work that they performed on the farm (box 2).

Box 2: Interactions with participants with severe communication limitations.

During the exchanges with MP3, photographs were scattered randomly on the table. Most of the photographs are from his home farm. The support worker asked several questions and MP3 pointed out the most appropriate image. MP3 was asked to outline the tasks completed on the social farm.

- SW: "What were you doing this morning? [Name], where were you working? Where did we work?"
- MP3: "Tunnel."
- SW: "Can you show me a picture of the tunnel? What did you do in the tunnel? What did you bring into the tunnel? What did we bring to the tunnel?"
- MP3: "Dung."
- SW: "Can you show me the dung? Where was the dung?"
- MP3: "In the shed."
- SW: "How did we get the dung? Where did we put it in?"
- MP3: "Gator." [Gator™ is an off-road 4-wheel utility vehicle manufactured by John Deere.]
- SW: "What did you use for putting it in? What tools did you use?"
- MP3: "Pike."
- SW: "Where is the pike?"
- MP3: "There" [he points out the photograph of the pike].
- SW: "Then we drove the Gator to the tunnel and did you use the pike to put dung into the raised beds? You were also helping [the farmer]. What did you put into the wheel barrow?"
- MP3: "Soil."
- SW: "There is a picture of how we load the dung. So, we fill the raised beds with dung and on top of it we put the soil."
- MP3: "Yes."

In relation to MP7 and MP10, the support worker explained that the individuals live in the present and would have extreme difficulties in remembering past activities. During the researcher's visit to their social farm, both participants were helping to clean manure from a shed. The participants were engaged in forking manure into a wheel-barrow and moving it to a compost heap. These tasks took a considerable length of time to complete and were guided by the support worker and the host farmer throughout the entire process. MP7 was asked to outline the tasks completed this morning on the farm in a logical order.

- SW: "What did we do on the farm today?"
- MP7: "Went down to feed the horse."
- SW: "What did we do then?"
- MP7 pointed out the sequence of cleaning the farm shed with the wheel barrow and pike: "Broom, pike."
- SW: "What did you do after the wheel barrow was full?"
- MP7: "Emptied the wheel barrow."

The support worker showed the researcher another method for helping participants to communicate. She uses an affordable Mobile Computer Application (App) on a Tablet personal computer (Tablet) to create stories related to the activities completed on the farm by MP7 and MP10 (box 3). Both participants are very comfortable around Tablets and the researcher used a Tablet during his work with them. The App contains story boards (digital stories) and images of various farm implements, animals and tasks as well as imagery and videos of MP7 and MP10 participating in activities on the farm. The participant can press an audio button underneath an image to hear the word associated with it and then repeats the word after hearing it.

Box 3: Technological communication tools in Kerry Social Farming.

Using the App, MP7 articulated the following words and phrases:

- "Scraping."
- "Tidying up."
- "Brushing."
- "Feeding cows with silage."
- "MP10's going to feed the animals."
- "Putting nuts into a bucket with a scoop."

The support worker reminded MP7 that he completed these tasks that morning on the farm. A conversation with MP10 about the morning's activities went as follows:

- SW: "What did you put into the bucket?"
- MP10: "Nuts."
- SW: "Did you use a scoop?"
- MP10: "Yes."
- SW: "What was MP7 doing?"
- MP10: "Feeding the horse."

MP10 found it difficult to understand the activity if someone other than himself was shown in the images used.

Interviews with host farmers

SKDP distributed an information sheet to host farmers explaining the Evaluation, along with a consent form. Signed consent forms were returned to the research team. In January 2017, a researcher visited the social farms to interview the host farmer or farming couple. Appendix 3 shows the interview schedule used. One interview took place in March 2017.

Postal survey of guardians

Staff at the service providers, KPFA and SJoG, distributed an information sheet about the Evaluation and a consent form to one guardian of each participant, where applicable[53]. Signed consent forms were returned to the research team. A questionnaire was then mailed to guardians (appendix 4) together with a cover letter from the SKDP reiterating the rationale behind the Evaluation and highlighting the importance of input from guardians. The mailing included a stamped addressed envelope to return the completed questionnaire directly to the research team. During the 4-week

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[53] One guardian chose not to participate in the survey as the participant in the family was not currently availing of social farming. In addition, three participants either did not wish for their guardian to receive a questionnaire or did not have a guardian.

period of the postal survey, staff at the service providers phoned guardians of participants in their service to encourage them to complete and return the questionnaire. The survey was concluded by the end of February 2017.

Online survey of support workers and partner organisations

Online surveys were conducted to obtain input from (1) support workers of KPFA and SJoG who accompany participants to the social farms during their initial weeks or continue to accompany them long-term, depending on need (appendix 5) and to get feedback from (2) representatives of all partner organisations collaborating on the Project (appendix 6). Table 7 classifies the partner organisations by sector. The online surveys were completed by the end of March 2017.

Table 7. Partner organisations surveyed for the Evaluation.

Community	Voluntary	Statutory
• North, East and West Kerry Development Partnership • South Kerry Development Partnership	• Cúnamh Iveragh • Down Syndrome - Kerry Branch • Enable Ireland • Kerry Parents and Friends Association • St. John of God	• Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine (Economic Planning Division) • Health Service Executive • Kerry County Council

SurveyMonkey® was used to conduct the online surveys as it is a reliable and cost-effective tool. The support worker questionnaire and the partner organisation questionnaire were uploaded to *SurveyMonkey*. Invitations to participate in the surveys were sent to the email addresses of each support worker and each representative of the partner organisation who engaged with Kerry Social Farming. To assure online respondents of the anonymity of the survey, and to encourage them to answer as fully and honestly as possible, the following steps were taken:

1. SKDP emailed the support worker and partner organisation contacts initially to inform them of the Evaluation and its objectives, to invite them to participate in the survey and to advise that the survey was being conducted by an independent team of researchers;
2. A researcher then emailed all contacts with a request to participate along with a link to the online survey; and
3. As an extra measure to ensure the anonymity of participants, email addresses were not recorded with the online survey response and contacts were advised of this fact.

Collating and interrogating the research data

Elings (2012) has pointed out that although people with learning difficulties are the largest group who make use of social farms, the effects on them are the least researched. The KSF working group identified participants as a key stakeholder group and emphasised the importance of recording their own opinions about their experiences of it. Enquiries about the effects of social farming on participants were also made with (1) host farmers, (2) guardians and (3) support workers. In this way, corroborating evidence was acquired from the other three stakeholder groups most familiar with participants and/or their experience of social farming to help validate or expand the understanding of information provided by participants themselves.

The available population for each stakeholder group was small, which led to small sample sizes. Nevertheless, the combination of semi-structured interviews with farmers and conversations with participants, together with surveys of guardians, support workers and staff or members of partner organisations provided a rich supply of quantitative and qualitative data. Photographs were used to supplement the story of the participant as it allowed the researcher to take snapshots of what the participant highlighted as being important to them such as animals they liked, jobs they enjoyed and other people on the farm. The different methods used (interviews, conversations, surveys and photos) and the diverse groups of stakeholders involved allowed the researchers to achieve:

- Convergence – arriving at conclusions through different research methods; and
- Triangulation – reaching an understanding of phenomena through the perspectives of differing stakeholders.

Data collection took place concurrently: farmer interviews were done at the same time as the conversations and focus group with participants; the surveys of guardians, support workers and partner organisations overlapped in time. This stage of the research was completed within a 2.5-month period – mid-January to end of March 2017 – to help ensure the strength of convergence and triangulation.

Table 8 shows the codes used to identify the source of data, including quotes, classified by stakeholder group. Each individual source was allocated a unique number along with this code. The researchers considered it important to denote the gender of participants because the survey of guardians in particular suggested a gender bias regarding the suitability of social farming for some participants. Data from questionnaires completed by support workers online are denoted by 'SW' followed by a number. Data from interviews with support workers present during interactions with participants are denoted by 'SW' followed by a lower case letter.

Table 8: Codes for data from stakeholder groups.

Group	Code
Farmer	F
Guardian	G
Participant - female	FP
Participant - male	MP
Partner organisation	PO
Support worker	SW

Feedback sessions with stakeholders were held in April and May 2017. These sessions provided the researchers with the opportunity for expansion – a deepening of understanding through probing.

The farmer feedback session was conducted following a scheduled farm walk for host farmers on one of the social farms in April 2017. During that session, the researcher interrogated several topics with the six farmers and members of farming couples present. Topics included future training needs, their opinions on voluntary and paid models of social farming, and their interest in opportunities to progress from voluntary host farmer into paid roles. The thematic classification of the anonymised farmer interviews was also circulated to all host farmers at this stage for their own information and to give them the opportunity to query it.

Two participant feedback sessions were held: one in a Kerry Parents and Friends Association Day Centre in Killarney and another in a St. John of God Day Centre in Tralee. Support workers were present at both sessions and a guardian was present at one. The researcher gave a PowerPoint presentation showing photographs from the participants' social farms along with quotes from their anonymised conversations. In both feedback sessions, the researcher reminded participants that the information would be shared with other people and asked if that was still acceptable to them. They confirmed that it was.

A feedback session was then held during a meeting of the working group to which representatives of all stakeholder groups had been invited. The draft findings emerging from the feedback of participants, farmers, guardians, support workers and various organisations were presented to the working group. The working group discussed these findings in relation to challenges and opportunities for the future development of Kerry Social Farming.

Following the recommendation of the working group, a final feedback session was sought with representatives from the HSE and senior management of the three main service providers involved in the project – Enable Ireland, Kerry Parents and Friends Association, and St. John of God – along with the lead co-ordinating agency for the Project, South Kerry Development Partnership. The research team shared the draft findings of the Evaluation and an ensuing discussion

explored challenges and opportunities for Kerry Social Farming from the perspective of the HSE, service providers and SKDP.

Results analysis

The quantitative results of the interviews, conversations, postal survey and online surveys were analysed and visualised using MS Excel. A thematic approach was used to synthesise qualitative responses.

Part 3 – Results and Discussion

Profile of host farmers

All 10 host farmers (including one couple who farm together) from the nine farms in the Project in 2016 were interviewed in January 2017 (**100%**) and comprised three females and seven males. One interview also included the farmer's spouse.

Across the nine social farm enterprises, no two farms are the same. There are suckler cows (six farms), sheep (five farms), dairy cows (three farms), fowl or pigs (two farms), and one also includes goats, horses and a donkey. Dogs and cats are common on the farms. Two enterprises are organic and a third is pesticide- and chemical-free. All farms include livestock apart from one that specialises in market gardening. One farm has forestry. Farm sizes range from less than 0.3ha (1 acre) with intensive horticultural production up to 45ha (111 acres) of extensive hill farming; land resources vary from wide to limited uses. Figure 18 shows the locations of the eight farms that were actively hosting participants by spring 2017.

Figure 18: Locations of host farms with participants in Kerry Social Farming, 2017.
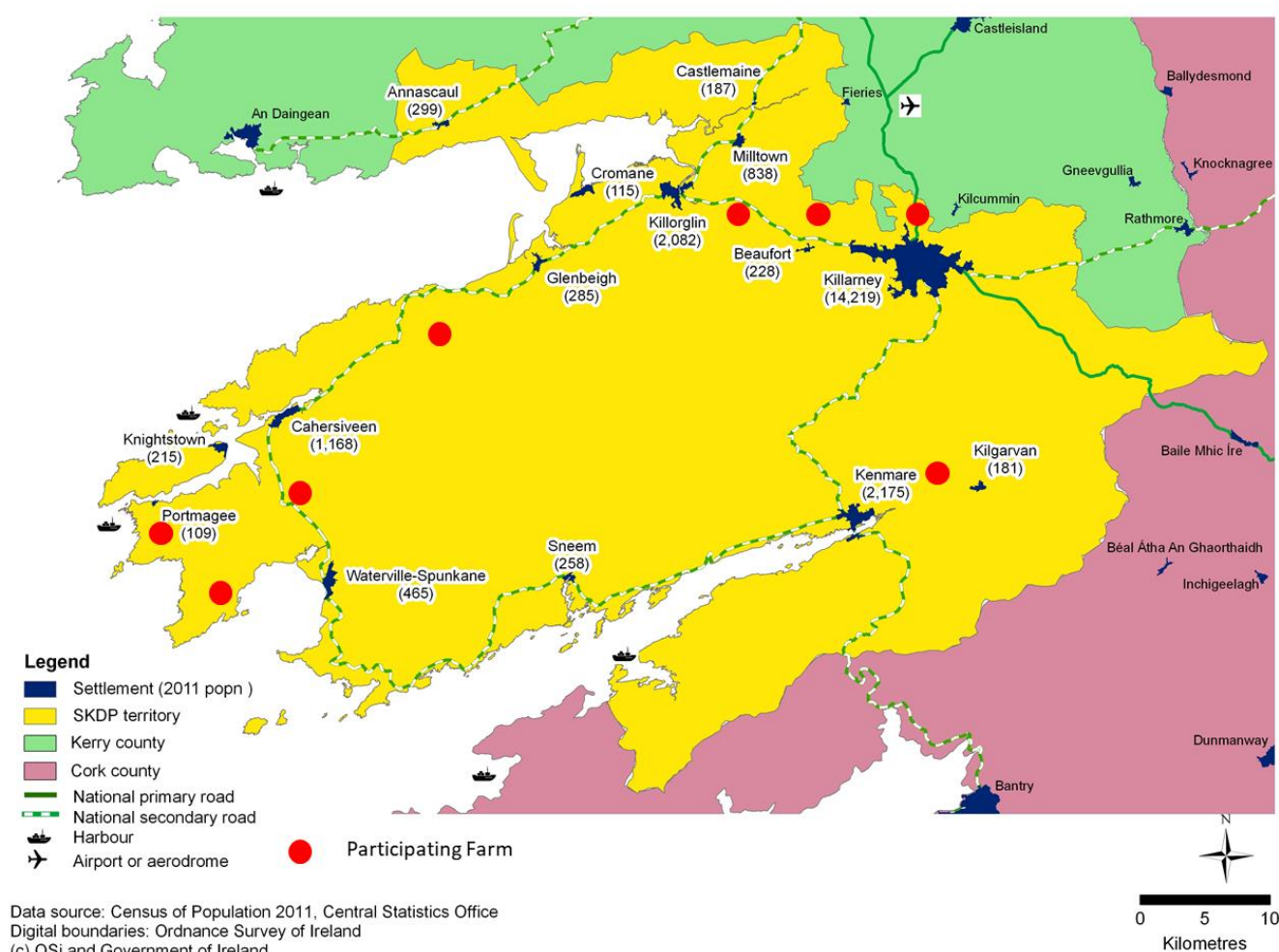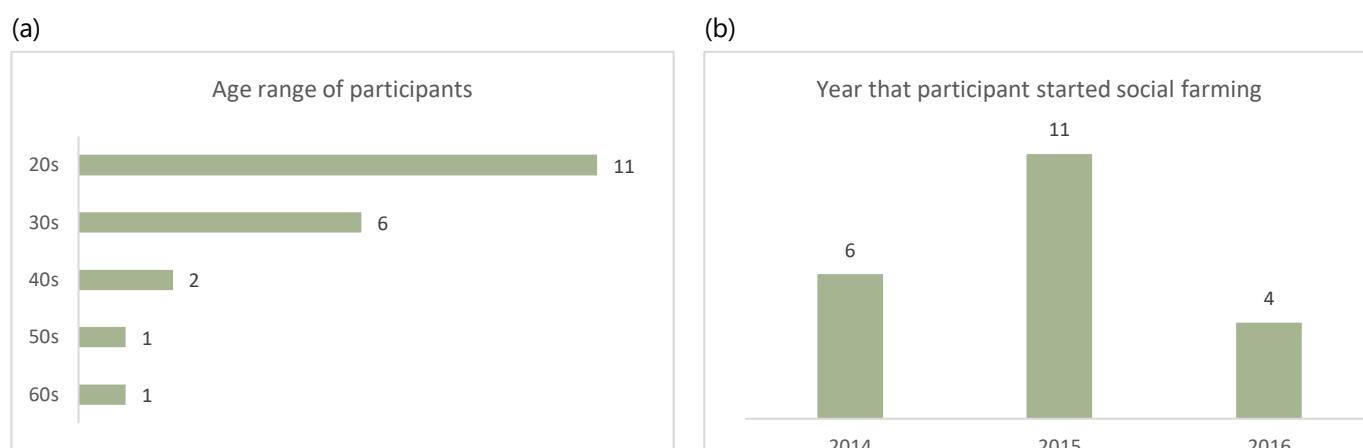

Farming is usually not the sole source of income in the nine farm households. Other sources of income among the host farmers and/or their spouses included rural tourism, tree cutting services, a garage, food production, teaching, jobs in the care sector, Carers Allowance, Rural Social Scheme, pension and investments. One farmer employs a farm worker.

Profile of participants

Of the 27 participants in the Project in 2016, a total of 21 (**78%**) took part in the Evaluation in January 2017. Fifteen met with the field researcher on their social farms. A group of six participants took part in a focus group at their Day Centre.

Six female and 15 male participants took part in the Evaluation. While over three-quarters of participants are aged in their twenties or thirties, the Project also attracts older participants (figure 19a). One-third of participants have been involved with the Project since it began in 2014 and another half joined it in 2015 (figure 19b). The duration of social farm sessions ranges from three to six hours. Almost every participant also attends the day centres of KPFA or SJoG and nearly half of them work in jobs ranging from farms/stables (three participants) and supermarkets (three) to hotels/restaurants (two) and vet clinic (one). One of the participants has secured paid weekend work on a neighbour's farm from the experience gained through KSF.

Figure 19: Participants' (a) age range and (b) year they began in KSF.

(a)

Age range of participants

20s	11
30s	6
40s	2
50s	1
60s	1

(b)

Year that participant started social farming

2014	2015	2016
6	11	4

Profile of guardians

Twenty-four guardians were invited to participate in the postal survey for the Evaluation and 14 responded (**58%**). The majority of guardians in the survey were 56 years or older[54] (figure 20a), either female or a parent (figure 20b) and had been guardian of the participant for over 20 years (figure 20c). Most guardians had learned about Kerry Social Farming from a service provider (figure 20d).

[54] The remaining respondents gave the age of the participant.

Figure 20: Guardians' (a) age group, (b) relationship to participant, (c) years as guardian and (d) first learned of KSF.

(a)

Age group of guardians (n=7)

Over 75 years	
66-75 years	1
56-65 years	4
46-55 years	2
36-45 years	

(b)

Guardian's relationship to participant (n=14)

Mother	10
Father	2
Sister	1
Brother	1

(c)

Years as guardian of the participant (n=12)

Over 20 years	11
16-20 years	1
11-15 years	
6-10 years	
1-5 years	

(d)

How guardians learned of the Project (n=14)

St. John of God	9
Kerry Parents and Friends…	3
Down Syndrome Kerry	1
SKDP	1
Guardian is on KSFP board	1

Most of the participants known to the guardians who responded to the survey had been in the project for over one year (figure 21a) and the majority attended a social farm once a week (figure 21b). Most also attended other day care, education or training activities in the community (figure 21c). Kerry Social Farming was the only formal activity for three participants.

Figure 21: Participants' (a) years in KSF, (b) weekly attendance and (c) participation in other activities.

(a)

Duration of participation in the Project (n=12)

<1 year	3
1-2 years	6
up to 3 years	3

(b)

Attendance of participant on social farms (n=14)

2/week	1
1/week	12
1/month	1

(c)

Does the participant attend any other day care or education / training activity in the community? (n=14)

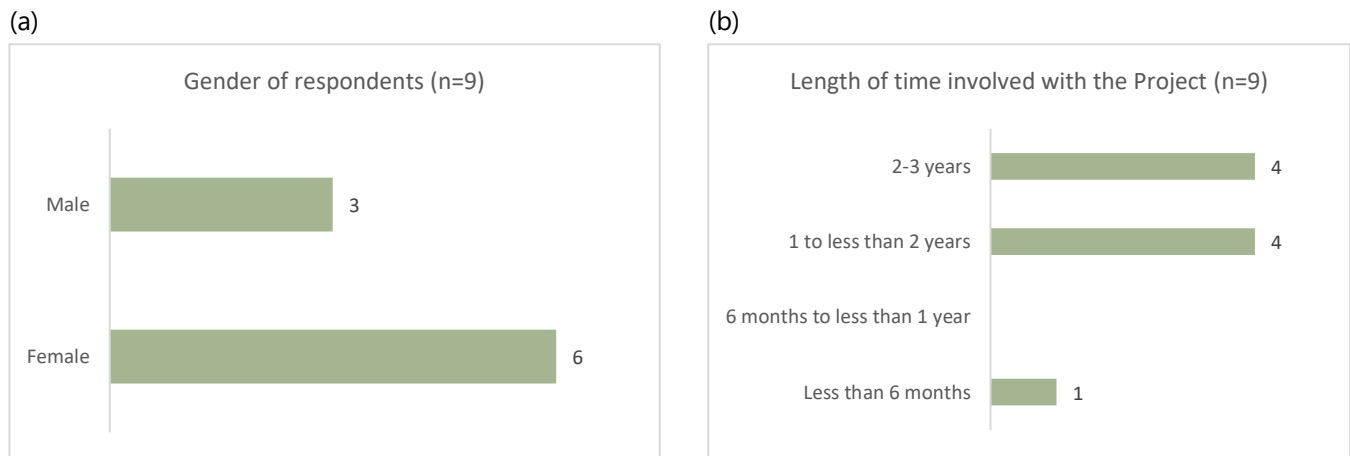|	
Yes	11
No	3
Maybe	
I don't know	
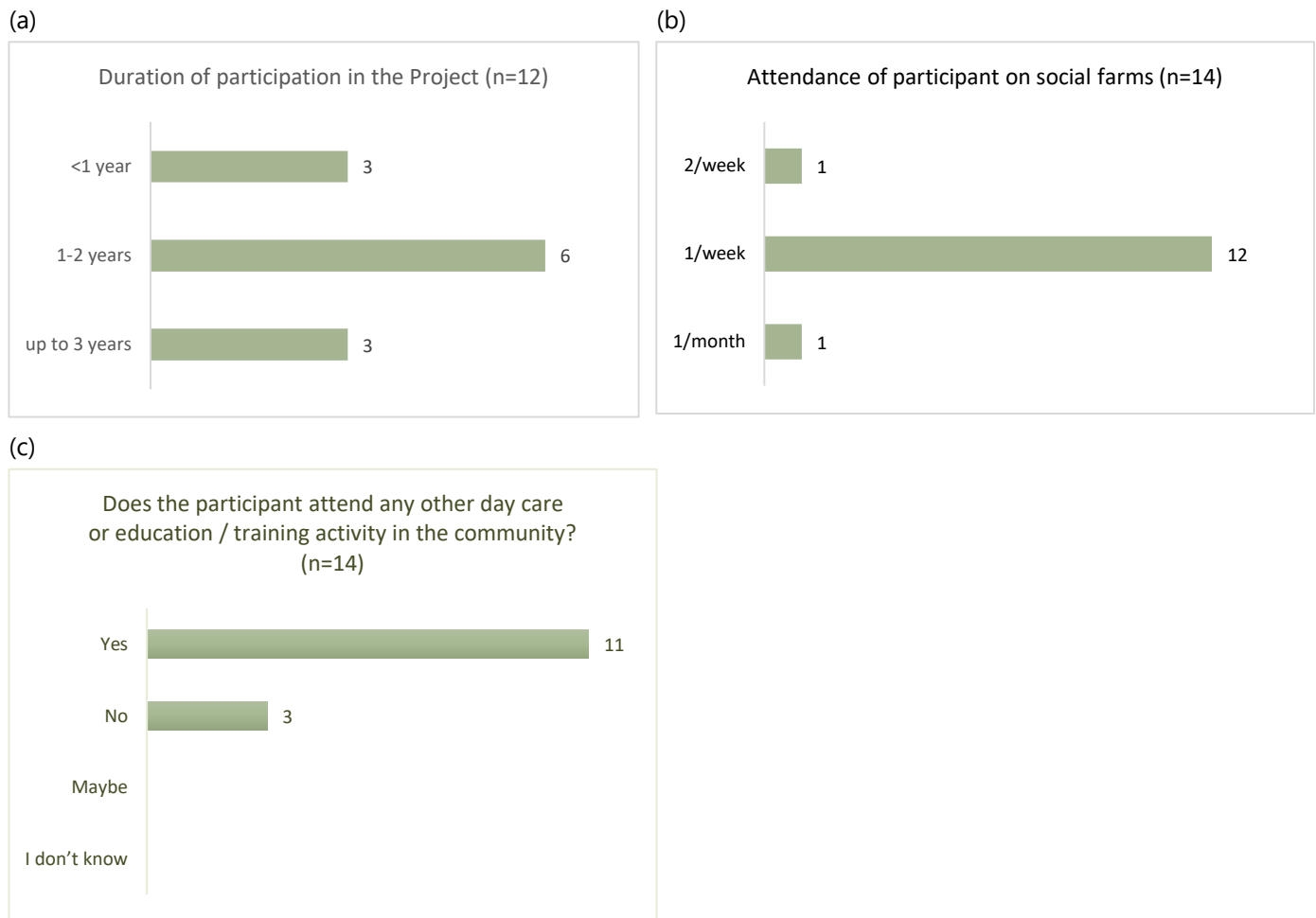
Profile of support workers

The eleven support workers from Kerry Parents and Friends Association and from St. John of God currently involved in social farming were invited to participate in an online survey and nine responded (82%). Since one survey was incomplete, the completed response rate was **73%**.

Two-thirds of support workers who took part in the survey were female (figure 22a) and almost all have been involved with the Project for at least one year (figure 22b).

Figure 22: Support workers' (a) gender and (b) time involved with KSF.

(a)

Gender of respondents (n=9)

Male	3
Female	6

(b)

Length of time involved with the Project (n=9)

2-3 years	4
1 to less than 2 years	4
6 months to less than 1 year	
Less than 6 months	1

Support workers documented a variety of ways in which their organisation was involved in Kerry Social Farming (figure 23). All supported the participants while on the farm, most liaised with both participant families and farmers, while half identified and matched participants to the farms, checked-in with them on the farms, and helped with records and reporting.

Figure 23: Service providers' involvement with KSF.

Nature of your organisation's involvement with the Project (n=8)

Accompanying and supporting participants while on farms	8
Liaising with farmers	5
Liaising with participants' families	5
Checking-in on participants while on farms	4
Record-keeping and reporting	4
Identifying & matching participants to farms	4
Farm health and safety	3
Liaising with other organisations	2
Devising farm activity plans	2
Farm logistics (e.g. transport, scheduling)	2
Project administration	2
Regulatory oversight of the project	1
Funding provision for the project	

Box 4 offers some insight into what a support worker does on a social farm.

Box 4: Work of a support worker on a social farm.

Initially, support workers accompany and work alongside participants to help them to settle into the social farm and to advise the farmer.

- SW(a): "I am a job coach so when I do come out to the farm I would be assisting … [participants]. I would do anything that [the farmer] would have requested to do so that would be mainly feeding the animals, mucking out stalls, painting fences and gates, moving animals from one field to another, stacking wood and drinking tea by the fire when the day is not good. So, it is about gathering as a group."

Sometimes support workers continue to accompany participants for their own safety.

- SW(a): [The participant] does not really want to be part of a team and that's partly why myself or a member of staff would be here. If [they] want to go off on [their] own, we go off with [them] because a farm is not a safe environment to be wandering around on your own."

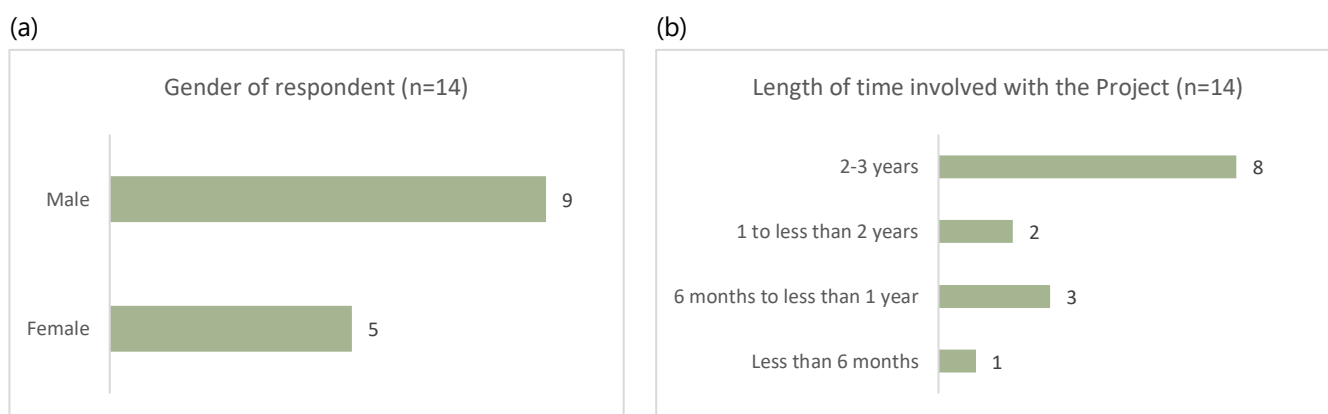Other participants are quite independent and do not need a support worker on the farm.

- SW(a): "[The participant] is very capable of working independently. He comes in and just gets off the bus at the gate of the farm and then gets back on the bus …. He is completely independent."

Over time, most participants develop a relationship with the host farmer and learn the appropriate skills that allow them to attend the social farm without being accompanied by a job coach. In those cases, the job coach is available remotely and checks in periodically on social farm sessions. Some higher dependency participants require continuous support from their job coaches.

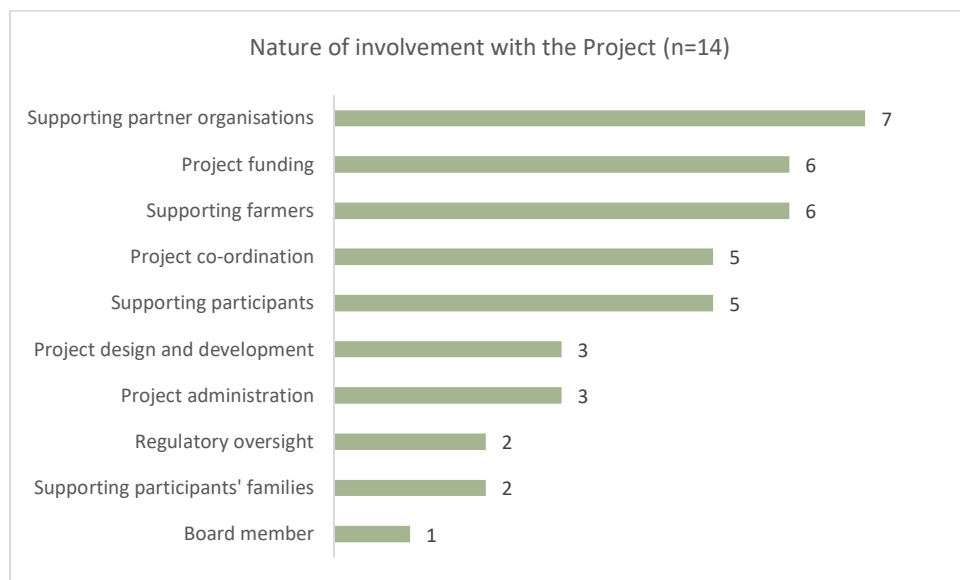**Profile of staff / members of partner organisations**

Of the 21 representatives from 10 partner organisations invited to take part in the online survey, a total of 14 responded (**67%**). Two-thirds of respondents were male (figure 24a) and had been involved with the project for at least two years (figure 24b).

Figure 24: Representatives of partner organisations' (a) gender and (b) time involved with KSF.

(a)

Gender of respondent (n=14)

Male — 9
Female — 5

(b)

Length of time involved with the Project (n=14)

2-3 years — 8
1 to less than 2 years — 2
6 months to less than 1 year — 3
Less than 6 months — 1

Respondents documented a variety of ways in which their organisation collaborated in Kerry Social Farming (figure 25). The most common ways are by supporting another organisation in the Project, supporting farmers, providing funding, supporting participants or project co-ordination.

Figure 25: Partner organisations' involvement with KSF.

Nature of involvement with the Project (n=14)

Involvement	Count
Supporting partner organisations	7
Project funding	6
Supporting farmers	6
Project co-ordination	5
Supporting participants	5
Project design and development	3
Project administration	3
Regulatory oversight	2
Supporting participants' families	2
Board member	1

Host farmer experience of Kerry Social Farming

Motivation

The SKDP is a key enabling organisation when it comes to KSF. For farmers learning about Kerry Social Farming in the beginning, the **influence of the SKDP** and "knowing Joe" was a common reason for their initial interest. The regard which the farmers have for Joe McCrohan, a Rural Development Officer with SKDP, came through in four responses. Other SKDP staff, including Lisa Murphy, Tús Supervisor, helped the farmers to get started in the Project. **Experience with a family member**, **volunteering with a care organisation** or **working with people with intellectual disabilities** were other triggers that sparked the interest of seven farmers. One farmer thought it would help to **increase farm income**.

- F2 got involved through "knowing [a local care organisation] and knowing Joe." He participated in some of the rural men's outings, and "sure we'd be talking about this and that, and somebody mentioned social farming to me." F2 describes Joe McCrohan as a "motivator" and acknowledged his role in initiating projects and supporting them before moving on. F2 is driven as a host farmer by "the idea of it," and he describes it as "fabulous". He is optimistic about the future, and says, "people would amaze you."
- "I read about it in the *Kerryman* …. when farming, work and things in general at this side of the country were at the rock bottom at the time and I said there was something new that would increase the income of the farm and things, I suppose, I read into that …. Then I met Joe. I suppose, it was Joe really; Joe McCrohan and Lisa Murphy were the two people I met. And, I suppose, if I had read about social farming somewhere else, would I have given it serious thought? Probably not. I suppose the fact Joe McCrohan was involved … and he is a serious and genuine operator and that drew me in …. At the start, I thought it would be a money earner and I took up social farming then. And I know, down the road, funding will have to come on stream but at the moment I am delighted that I took it up. I suppose, what I say to fellas who would have doubts about social farming is, don't be outside looking in and saying '*well, it was a pity I didn't take it up*'; just go for it because it's huge amount of benefits, both for the farmer and to the people coming onto the farm."; "… Joe McCrohan really would be the person that really, do you know, he motivated me. Then, I suppose, I met Lisa Murphy. Lisa was filling in more

on the details, like, and it was kind of 'look, go for this and that's that', do you know? I am delighted. I didn't know anything about social farming, what it was about or anything but, like you know, only for the [SKDP] and that they were behind it; I felt, like, that with Joe McCrohan involved in this that…it would be very secure." F3

- "I was talking to my boss Joseph McCrohan and he told me all about it. We discussed it at home and thought it would be a good idea"; "I drive a bus for [people with intellectual disabilities]. I seen the need that there should be [other options such as social farming]. Bringing [people] from one house and bringing them to another house, I didn't seem to like the idea of it. But if there is an option to get them out into the country, to get out into the air, I found it would be better." [F-ID on file]
- F7 were approached by Joe McCrohan, who invited them to participate in the project. A farm family member has a moderate intellectual disability, and F7 states that their experience with the family member was a factor in motivating them to participate in the Social Farming project.
- "I know about it because my [spouse] is involved in a day unit in [town] for people with special needs and told me about it. I just thought to myself, 'well, it would be a nice thing to do' …. I am into this kind of work now myself because I am a trained carer as well. So, I just like it. You know, the farm is there; it might be used for something." [F-ID on file]
- "I saw an ad by South Kerry Development Partnership in the *Kerry's Eye*"; "[A family member] had a bit of [a defined need] and we just got a lot of help from all of the services and we just wanted to give something back"; "I think it's a good programme for people that are interested in helping and that are interested in participating and I would like to see it grow, do you know. It is, I think, it is a very good programme, anyway"; "It is very beneficial"; "We see a reward out of it by watching [the participant] coming here …"; "I looked at it as a challenge, do you know, to help ourselves as well and to help other people as well. I don't see a problem … once you know what the illness, what the disability is, there would be no bother." F4
- F5 reports that he is involved because "social farming makes a difference."
- "Somebody sent me an email with information on it … Actually, it was beyond the application date, so I just … sent them an email and it just kicked off from there"; "When I was in England studying horticulture there, the farms there had people resident on the farm. I think farming is a community thing and I think everyone should be involved in it. The more, the merrier." [F-ID on file]

Project facilitation and risk assessment

Farmers shared their experiences when joining KSF and becoming established in social farming. Their comments below highlight the **key enabling role of the SKDP** as the lead agency in the Project, as well as the **support from service providers** (KPFA and SJoG), and the **input of the voluntary working group**. In terms of farm health and safety, farm safety statements and risk assessment reviews are updated and reviewed on each farm to take account of new work practices in a collaborative process that involves participants, host farmers, SKDP personnel and the service provider.

- "We are still crawling. Social Farming is in its infancy." F2
- F5 recalls that getting started was a particular challenge, as "apart from Joe, we had nobody to talk to us. It was a bit of a theory exercise."
- "… we are lucky to have the [SKDP] to get [KSF] off the ground"; "… the vetting was something that has to be done…. but we are lucky to have someone like the [SKDP] with us in the social farming … everything is form filling now …" F3
- When establishing his farm as a social farm, F5 liaised with SKDP. He negotiated the days and the times with the participants directly: "We have a schedule that suits them and suits me." F5
- "Having Irene [SKDP social farming facilitator] on board is a major plus." F5
- "There was great support"; "There was a great acceptance"; "Excellent and great support from [SKDP] and from the group that are in the farming now"; "I'd say Joe McCrohan and Lisa Murphy and St. John of God's, and the Tús worker they had at the time as well when [the participant] came out first"; "I just wrote a letter to [SKDP], to Joe McCrohan at the time, saying that I was interested and I think then they had a meeting and from there, really, it started"; "I think we filled out a form alright, just to name out what we would be doing on the farm"; "And what type of farming we would be doing, how we would be doing it and stuff like that." [F-ID on file]
- "… I would not get too worried: a bit of courage, not to get too bogged down or too worried about dealing with the different organisations. Now, if it was some other part of the country maybe that would be different. … the

people we are dealing with, whether it be Angie Kissane [SJoG] or Clare Vinten [KPFA] or Marie Linehan [KPFA] or any of them, they would be very helpful people to deal with and very understanding, in fairness, and I suppose, look, we are blessed to have South Kerry Development Partnership." [F-ID on file]

- "... the people I work with ... be it the 'Joe McCrohan's or the 'Lisa Murphy's or Irene here or George Kelly [KSF working group] or, well we say, the 'Kevin Griffins' [KSF working group] or any of them, it has been an excellent experience. And, do you know, the first group of people, you will always find a group of people and there be two or three that would be fine and the rest would be hard work but I believe it is going to be a success, this social farming ... they are a great group that is set up, they are a great group to work with, in fairness." [F-ID on file]
- F2 wonders if the working group would continue to be as motivated in the event of Joe going on to other projects. One of F2's fears is "losing Joe."

When asked if they were getting enough support in KSF, the farmers were generally positive:

- "Oh God, we are." F3
- "Oh yes, very good." F4
- "Yes, I am happy with it." F6
- "They are second-to-none. It's a new project anyway. There would be a lot of tweaking to do on it." F8
- "I think everyone who I have dealt with is more than thorough and if I need anything or if I have any questions there is three or four people there who I can ring to get clarification"; "I think they are doing everything they can." F9

The farmers describe the **risk assessment** entailed in the KSF as **straightforward**.

- "It was very easy because Joe McCrohan was my first point of contact. He told me what to do and how to fill out the form. He came out to the farm and he checked it, to make sure there was nothing too dangerous, like"; "he was very helpful, really"; "It was straightforward enough, really, in fairness; it was very straightforward." F8
- "It was Lisa Murphy who came to me first and spoke to me about it. She came here to the farm and had a chat. So, it was very early on and it was the pilot series stage of it ... it was taking one step at a time and seeing how it would work .... Initially, they would have given me a form and you would have to just go through it and look at the areas on the farm where there might be risks and how you could limit them. It was John McCrohan [SKDP Rural Development Officer] who went through it with me." F9
- "We have a risk assessment every year. John McCrohan comes out and does that with [the participant] and ourselves." F4

Input from support workers

Host farmers highly value the input, advice and expertise of support workers on the farms and the level of help received is described as appropriate. They **depend on their support**, especially when participants are new to KSF, and they **learn from observing** the support workers communicate and work with the participants. As relationships between participants and farmers develop that allow them to work together on a one-to-one basis with the farmer as skills instructor and the participant as the trainee, the support worker may only be required remotely. In other cases, the participant requires the support worker long-term, while learning new skills and making progress at a slower pace.

- In one farmer's experience, the support worker [Irena] is fantastic. "She knows how to deal with [the participants]." [F-ID on file]
- "Very good because they know [the participant] ..." F4
- [So you still have a support worker?] "Not any more, only at the start, I suppose it was only two to three months until he settled in and they knew that he was fine; and he was fine." F4
- One host farmer believes that on a day-to-day basis, the support worker [Dominic, SJOG] "does a great job." [F-ID on file]
- "Angie Kissane [SJOG] is excellent." [F-ID on file]

- "... any question I had, there was no problem. Very helpful at the beginning because even though I knew [the participant] from years beforehand, I found her very helpful. At least I had someone to ask a question if required. She came about three months and then see'd how we went on our own and it went without a problem." F6
- "She is very good. They are very talented people to be working with people with special needs. She directs [the participant], like, and, you know, it's kind of helping me too because I don't kinda know what he can do or what he can't do. Would he understand me when I'm telling him do a thing. She's very direct, like." F8
- "Clare [KPFA] is great. She comes every couple of weeks, it might be every week. She is very easy to get on with and if you have a problem, even something small, you can say it to her and it's grand"; "I think Clare is great because she is always at the end of a phone if I need her. She does call here once a month or something like that. I think it would be nearly worse if there was too much support because it has to be very natural. My relationship is between [the participants] and them feeling comfortable and meeting new people and having different challenges on the farm. So, I think that's the beauty of it. There is support there but it is not on top of you." [F-ID on file]

Farming with participants

Kinsella *et al.* (2014) and Walsh (2014) listed the challenges reported by cross-border farmers in the SoFAB project as:

1. Farming week – finding the right balance between farm work and supporting participants;
2. Participant attendance – non-attendance led to farm schedule disruption; and
3. Balance in relationship between farmer and participants – e.g. between supervision / health & safety and participant responsibility / progression;

These considerations were found among KSF host farmers also. When it comes to farming with participants, the host farmers in KSF talked about:

1. Farming as usual;
2. Health and safety;
3. Flexibility and seasonality of activity planning;
4. Working to suit participants; and
5. Appropriate farmer disposition.

Farming as usual

- "Everyone works away and does their own thing and there is no show put on; what happens today in social farming happens every day. It is done as normal. There is no show put on for the particular day and it doesn't change for the other days. Everyone works away as if they were there all the time." F3
- "The jobs are done. Well, we wait until [the participant] comes, otherwise we would have done the job earlier"; "Unless we are going to go somewhere. We brought him to the farm walk there one day …. It was about calves and stuff like that and it was very good and he was delighted with it"; "It makes no difference, just starting a small bit later, nothing that is causing major problems because the cows won't be complaining, they will be fed anyway." F4
- "... we do as we were told at the beginning: to do as we always do and let them be part of everyday life on the farm …. we carry on as normal …. Work practices not changes on the farm." F6
- "... if you are a farmer, you do it as part of your daily duties and whereas I also own my small garage over there and I deal with bits and pieces in between and if there was a wet day, I would bring [the participant] into the garage with me and we does our own, he holds something for me, show him some spanners, bits and pieces." [F-ID on file]
- "No, I do the same, like, whatever; when we are doing a job, we are doing a job the same. Sure, he is only like having a workman on for the day. I keep it as natural as possible." F8

- "I suppose, because they are coming here, it's what I am doing from day-to-day, week-to-week." F9

The participants do everyday farm tasks.

- "I have to do whatever has to be done"; "Just helping out, basically. These are all the fences we have been painting with the special oil paint''. FP1
- "I feed the cows and feed the dogs and we go down, picks up woods, timbers, trees and throws them into the trailer and brings them up for the fire; feed the horses and donkeys." MP2
- "I would feed the ducks, feed the hens, feed the pigs." FP5
- MP6 brushes and power-washes the yard – "Keeping it nice and tidy." He brings timber up to the house and goes to the creamery to buy feed for the animals – "I feed cows. I do milking of the cows and go out in the van with him, with [the farmer]. He says I am good worker."
- "Digging, weeding, watering". FP4.

Health and safety

While the host farmers keep the farming day as normal as possible, they actively manage the participants' health and safety during their social farm sessions.

- "… I have been doing farm safety anyway for my cross-compliance for a number of years, for inspections and things anyway. As part of Bord Bia, you have to have a safety statement and stuff like that up-to-date. And, yeah, like, safety is something you have to be aware of every day whether it be going out to the field to the animals or driving a quad or thing. I wouldn't leave off anyone on their own, off on a quad or a thing; you have to be aware of all of those things every day." F3
- "No problem, we do risk assessments every year"; "[The participant] is very understanding, like"; "He would follow instructions; he has cop on, you know"; "He knows danger." F4
- "I would put off slurry that day because I wouldn't go near slurry if he was on the farm, just in case of an accident. Or, if I am at silage, I would either cancel for that day … or work around it some way. If I am doing anything with slurry or anything, I wouldn't, we wouldn't operate that day with [the participant]. I try to keep everything as simple and safe, safe as possible …. You have to be extra careful on the day that when you have somebody, especially when he is with you and be always on top of your game and safety comes first." F6
- "We have to be very safety conscious. He can't be inside the barriers with cattle or with calves. You have to be very careful." F7
- "I would be very careful of [the participant], just in case anything would happen to him …" F8
- "I suppose, once you do the risk assessment it makes things a lot more aware for you. It makes you more conscious of it and then once it is in the back of your head, you, kind of, go 'well, the most that can happen is that they could trip over a shovel'… you know when they are coming to put away all of the tools or just slow down; what is great, it makes me slow down as well when they are here. I am going somewhere between that pace and my pace. You are more conscious." F9
- The participant "has a better sense of danger around machinery." G6

Participants are also aware of the need to mind their health and stay safe while farming.

- FP1 needs help with lifting heavy items: "I am not used to picking up heavy things, you know."
- "Well, I am older and it's harder. Like you well know, you are not as strong as you were"; "There is a lot of bending down. You have to do a lot of bending when you are picking the weeds off the ground …. bending down, maybe, probably, the hardest because you are kind of straining your back the whole time, bending"; [And the participant identified a solution to this problem.] "If I had kind of a stool or chair so that I could keep the pressure off my back so that I would not be bending down the whole time." MP9
- "Make sure the wheelbarrow is not heavy." MP9
- "You have to watch your back because when you have the pike or shovel, your back, you can pull a muscle in your back. But it's alright because you just get used to it, just throw it in and stuff." MP2 informed the researcher that he has learnt the appropriate techniques.
- MP15 "I think [the farmer] and I do really good. I think we have a pretty good understanding with each other, you know. We take our time with it and the way we do it. It's all safety, you know, because I know there is a lot of farm accidents but I do not have to worry about stuff like that here because we watch things very carefully about that, when it comes to farm safety, you know; so that is why she is, like, a bit protective, so that I make sure do things the right way."
- MP9 has issues with his eyesight and has to take precautions: "I need to work with goggles, just to cover the eyes, like, so that the dust would not go underneath the eyes."
- "I wouldn't be the greatest with machinery now." MP8
- MP14 has learned about dangers on the farm: "Being aware of bulls coming, oh yeah."

Flexibility and seasonality

- "The main challenge - …. If I couldn't take him on a [social farm session day], well, could I have him on a [different day], or something? …. If something pops up that I have to go somewhere on [the assigned day], I don't like cancelling him, changing the date, if I wouldn't be around …. So, if we could shift it for, be flexible for another day during the week that he is available." F6
- "I would have jobs, of course. I suppose, could I say to [the participants] … we are going doing such a job next week? The first thing you would have to work around, firstly, weather permitting … we get a lot of fine weather but there is an awful lot of rain as well and, I suppose, if you say to them going driving stakes in the fence next week and it is pouring rain, well, I mean, common sense will have to prevail and then you can't take them out in the rain." F3
- "We done a good bit of wiring outside and he is very helpful with drawing stakes, handing up stakes and fencing. And on wet days, we would split logs inside the shed. We have a job for the dry day and the wet day." F6
- "I know, of course, you have to have some sort of planning. But, for instance, one day we had planned doing something, myself and [the participant]. He was just passing by a trailer that was needing to be repaired at the time and he said can we go at that today. So, like, whatever we were going on went out the window, which was grand; the job needed to be done and I was happy to do it. He was delighted to do it as well." F3
- "… for instance, today now, [the participant] came to go for feeding the pigs and hens and I was operating the power washer. Do you know, I said: '[Name], have you used the power washer?' and she said: 'I have' and she was delighted to go off power washing, something we hadn't planned at all." [F-ID on file]
- On working with the participants, F5 observes, "You have to plan your day differently… If I were absent for a day, the participants would not come." He asks about farmers' holidays, and what possibilities might be put in place for such arrangements. He states that working out a long-term schedule is not generally practical due to seasons and weather variability.
- "… it was left to our discretion because they really wouldn't know what we would be running. So, what they told us was, kind of, like, do out a little, kind of, activity plan for [the participant] …. when he comes now in the morning, we go to the yard, we will feed the bucket-fed calves, their milk has to be warmed up and that

would be one thing, and feed the rations"; "We generally have made up our own routine"; "Depending on the time of the year for it." [F-ID on file]

- "Well, with farming, you see, there is something different to be done every day. Between wintertime when it's feeding sheep or cattle or whatever and summertime, there is something different to be done every day. There is a good mix as it is already." [F-ID on file]
- "Sometimes in the polytunnels, people would have ewes in the poly so they would have the bedding inside for them and the dung and all that, they would just cultivate it into the ground for the following spring and plant their plants there. It could be a dual purpose"; "I would be thinking of loads of ideas [laughs] …. down the road we might have another [polytunnel] and do you know, like, we could be planting stuff during the wintertime, to be planting in the springtime …. Shrubs could go out and put another lot in." [F-ID on file]

Participants experience variety in their work and are kept busy.

- "And I know everything is different; every time I come out here, I might be doing something a little bit different but basically it is taking care of the cows." MP15
- "I love the job and kept going and stuff." MP2

Suiting participants

- About social farming participants who have limited verbal abilities, the farmer states, "I am not saying they are hard work, but they need attention… From my point of view, they have made great progress." [F-ID on file]
- In terms of on-farm activities, F2 points out "we stick to repetition, and that helps them. They tend to improve with that… working on simple steps."
- In terms of organising the work, the farmer [F-ID on file] and a support worker alternate among the two participants, and sometimes, all four work together.
- F2 speaks about some work we observed on the farm earlier that morning, when [the participant] was taking the wheelbarrow across the yard to empty it. This task would be straightforward for most people, but it required a lot of effort by the participant. F2 says, "you might clean the yard in half an hour, but when the lads are here, you have to forget about that, and do it at their pace."
- "Work slowly"; "I be the believer that if you had a job to do today and if you didn't get it done, it wasn't the end of the world. Once they were happy with their day and whatever they had done, do you know? Work away at the end of the day and whatever they wanted to do." F3
- "I suppose it is working with them, men and women, working with them, getting to know them and I suppose to get up to speed with their ways of working and understand their ways of working and things because you have to work with them rather than you calling on after them all the time. You, sort of, have to work with them, for them to gain confidence at the job they are at … I have learnt a huge rate that way." F3
- "What I find is, we start a routine at the start of the year and they can get used to it and they can build up a skill and they get comfortable and confident with it." F9
- "As you know, we have a good share of dogs and I wouldn't have them out when [the participant] would come because you know they might frighten him, especially when there is a pack of them together. They would be friendly alright, they would be very friendly dogs." F8
- F5 recalls that he was a little apprehensive at the beginning. He asked himself, "was it for me? Would it suit my place? Would my place suit them? But now, I would say to anybody: 'Have no fear.'"
- "It can be hard to quantify [the participant's] progress. He can forget things, and you have to bring him around and show him how to do whatever; like we were feeding a lamb, and [the participant] had forgotten how to hold the bottle, but when we showed him, it came back to him." [F-ID on file]

- F7 recognise that hosting a social farming participant obliges farmers to make changes with respect to work practices. "This is not for everybody."
- "On some farms it's all busy, busy, busy and with those farmers and fellas running on top of their heads, this scheme would not work at all." F7
- Re: challenges meeting their needs: "At times yeah, at the beginning, yes, but do you know, as time goes on, you would get used to it." F6
- "He is very easy going, just to be fair, there is no bother with him at all in the world. You see him coming in the morning smiling. Once he comes smiling, there is a good chance he is enjoying himself and he would be fine out." F8
- "Polytunnel is wheelchair accessible. You would need that too; you wouldn't know down the road who you would be dealing with. Places aren't accessible enough for wheelchairs. A lot of places aren't wheelchair accessible at all." [F-ID on file]
- "I think at the start as well, we had [a current participant] and [former participant]. It didn't really work out with [the former participant] because her energies would go from very high to very low in a space of five minutes. So, then [a new participant] came in and it took a little bit of transition because [the current participant] and [former participant] are still best friends; but it took a year for them to get really comfortable with the farm and with me. Once that happened, they grew in confidence, they grew being comfortable as well and having the craic." [F-ID on file]

Participants find the support they need on the farm.

- "If I need help, they are just there." FP5
- "I have a little hard time remembering things"; "Before I even start a project, I want to make sure I do it right, so I'll ask [the farmer]: *How do you want it done? Is this the right procedure? Is this the right way?*" MP15
- "I get plenty of help from the farmer, make sure that I get plenty of help from them, not afraid to ask them." MP9
- MP2 understands the tasks to be completed: "[The farmer] tells me what to do."
- MP14 does not always understand the tasks to be completed on the farm: "but I can talk to [the farmer] again and he repeats them back to me, like." "[The farmer] is always good that way."
- The farmer shows MP6 the tasks to be completed on the farm. He is "a very nice man."

Farmer disposition

Research into the relationship between clients and care providers highlights the importance of such qualities as empathy, understanding, engagement, warmth, friendship and sincere interest, and this is mirrored in the farmer-participant relationship too (Elings, 2012). In fact, the relationship developed between the participant and the farmer or farm family repeatedly emerges as a desirable feature of social farming (Skerratt and Williams, 2008). So is the fact that since farmers are not care professionals, they may not be seen with preconceived negative views by service users (Elings, 2012). But, it is a particular kind of farmer and farm family that will be suited to social farming according to the host farmers in KSF.

- "They would have to be engaging and understanding and, do you know, and are willing to help, you know, and time." F4
- "The farmer has to be more on the easy-going side …. farmers need to be kind …. the farmer must have patience and an understanding of disability. We had that from [a family member]." F7
- "You would have to be patient; yes, well, yes, you would have to have that anyway. I mean, if you would ask him can you pass that [tool] there and if he doesn't do it, you are not going to lose the head over it. You would just have to explain to him, you know; it might take you five minutes." F6
- "Well, I think people have to be caring, first of all. And they would have to be patient and understanding. And they have to have no other outstanding things in their mind for the day other than the social farming. Or not be: *I have to be there for 4 o'clock* or… To give the person your whole day and to take it nice and

handy. Social farming, it isn't slave driving. We are going to be, like, you know, it's social for ourselves as well, for the day, like, it works both ways." F8

- "The farmers that are on it … they are people that are passionate about their job, passion will get stuff done always …. They have an interest in the participants. Any [farm] walk I went to, I went to [another social] farm there, the last meeting. I just went to it, as I was saying … any one of the lads who were at that meeting, they were passionate and very careful of the clients that are coming into them, which is lovely to see." F8

- "Just to be open to it"; "You have to be patient, but really it's fun"; "Have an interest and to see it as a social thing, not as 'I am getting people to do a load of work'." F9

Participants enjoy spending time in the company of farmers.

- MP14 said that working with [the farmer] is "unreal". "He makes me laugh every day I come down, like, he is unreal, he is a great laugh, like."
- "[The farmer] is actually the best boss I ever worked for." MP14
- "Everything, like, … talking with [the farmer] and his family. I love it all." FP5
- "I really enjoy working with [the farming couple]. They take care of me and [the farmer] is very good with me. I can always ask him a question." MP15
- "Right around 1 o'clock, we have lunch in there [the farmhouse] every [social farming session day]. [The farmer] puts out a big spread of food and it takes a little time to eat as there is so much of it." MP15
- "It is fun." FP3 says about being with the farmer.
- "I like [the farmer]." "[The farmer] is very good." MP5
- "I like spending time with [the farmer]. She is very good and she is a good helper. She helps us out if you were stuck out for something, and she is very good, [the farmer] is." MP9
- FP4 prefers to "work with just [the farmer]".
- "They help me no bother. They are nice people. They are lovely people." MP6
- "I would like to stay on this farm with [the farmer] to keep [the farmer] company." MP6

Knowledge, information sharing and collaboration

The Evaluation explored such topics as information sharing, communication and collaboration in Kerry Social Farming with the host farmers, guardians, support workers and representatives of partner organisations.

While host farmers made positive comments about information sharing and communication in the KSF, some responses indicated room for improvement. Specifically, farmers sought:

1. **allergy information** in relation to participants;
2. a **feedback channel between farmers and guardians**;
3. improved **two-way communication between the farmers and KSF**;
4. greater **clarity regarding drawing down the farm improvement grant**; and
5. more **meetings for host farmers** e.g. regular farm walks for host farmers as a platform for knowledge exchange and to help promote social farming more broadly amongst the farming community.

- "There is one thing that do bother me, really. I would be thinking to myself, for the participants coming onto the farm, I don't think if it is the right thing or the wrong thing, but you would want to know a bit about their background. Because if they were allergic to something and we didn't know it and some of the people are not so good at giving you the right answer, they mightn't give you the answer at all; they might just say what comes out of their mouth. In some instances, it might only be a simple thing as a plaster. If they cut their hand and you put the plaster on them, there could be an allergic reaction to it, if they had allergies, like; we wouldn't know …. we would like to know about these things in advance." F8

- When speaking about the participants' progress, F2 says, "I don't know if their carers see this." He also points out that the host farmers do not have much contact with the parents. He recommends some feedback, possibly through Irene.
- F5 hears positive feedback about social farming from third-parties (e.g. participants' extended family and neighbours), and he would welcome a more formal mechanism for providing feedback to farmers.
- F5 stresses the importance of on-going communication and feedback channels – so that farmers learn from what is going on across the programme and so that they can also give their feedback and inputs. He states that there should be no surprises, that there have been some surprises to date. He referred specifically to the Christmas party, and that participants had been expecting one, but that farmers did not know if they should organise one. "Small things fester."
- One farmer highlighted poor communication in terms of KSF funding supports. "Unclear about how to expend the grant money. Difficult to draw down, was out of pocket. Cash flow problems." [F-ID on file]
- F2 would like to see more communication in general: "Communication all round would be useful."
- Regarding getting information, F6 says: "... you would have to enquire and find out about it. But, yeah, once you enquire, once you ring up about it, you get whatever you need."
- "I think [communication] is very good." F9
- "Excellent, 10 out of 10, I couldn't complain. I suppose, Joe or Irene is the new girl on board, Angie Kissane, I suppose, who is a wonderful worker. To be honest, it's very important for any project but for Kerry Social Farming … to assure people, like, that would think of taking it up in the future, like, that we have a wonderful bunch of people on board from all the [service providers]. Whether it would be Kerry Parents and Friends, Mary of the Angels or any of them, they are wonderful people. You pick up the phone and you ring them; if they won't answer then, they will call you back and they are wonderful people to work with." [F-ID on file]
- "We would have the meetings. You can meet John [SKDP] or when the care worker would come out, we would talk to them. They would always fill you in, anyway, on what's going on. Well, it's good, like." F4
- Regarding communication with the KSF, the host farmer describes it as: "Very good, I find them very helpful. Any questions I ask, there is no problem. Irena [KPFA] and Irene [SKDP] since she has come on board; she would be the one I would be talking to." [F-ID on file]
- "Clare [KPFA] is the first point of contact." "They [Joe McCrohan and John McCrohan of SKDP] are great also; they are ringing me throughout the year, making sure everything is ok and letting me know if something is happening. So, I am very happy with it to be fair." [F-ID on file]
- F2 favours more communication and information, more farm walks and "seeing what is happening." F2 recommends that the host farmers get together more and talk. "They need to have their own chat." He lauds the open day in Killarney, saying "that was very productive." He anticipates more communication, now that Irene is on board.
- "We need to improve inter-farm networking"; "We need regular meetings for the farmers, about every quarter, so that we can give farmers answers. Farmers need to be able to contact Irene and their representatives [on the KSF working group], so that issues are relayed to the working group." F5
- F7 believes that farmers need to have more contacts with other farmers and more opportunities to learn from one another. F7 explains that when farm visits are organised, the spouse and other members of the household should be invited and encouraged to get involved. The participant has a relationship with the whole household and the neighbours and not just with the farmer.
- Usefulness of the farm walks: "Oh, yeah, of course because we learn from each other too. It is not only the likes of [the participant] who are participating in the learning. The farmers will be learning and the lads that are presenting it, like [the researchers], will be learning as well. It's a total learning facility." F8
- ".... we don't have that many meetings"; "Well, we had one inside in Killarney, like, it was to see how things were going." F4
- "… in the last couple of months there has been different stuff going on. We have been trying to meet up more often but sometimes I am too busy and I don't make enough time. So, sometimes it is on me." "You get to see what the other farmers are doing as well and getting to hear what they are doing." F9

Farmers are confident of how to **solve an issue with a participant**. They address it with (1) the participant, (2) the support worker and (3) SKDP. With the new social farming facilitator in place, farmers believe they have someone who they can turn to at any time.

- "If something happens with [the participants], I would talk to them first. But if any situation like that would happen, everything would go back to Clare [KPFA] as well, if there was any problems." [F-ID on file]
- "Yes, I would send it back to the care worker that comes to collect him, do you know, if he was … Do you remember one day, one day after Christmas, he was all over the place? Do you know, he didn't know where to feed or what cow it was or whatever it was. Well, I said it to [the service provider] and they said he had gone through a [period of illhealth] but he is back on track again"; "You wouldn't notice, you wouldn't notice [the participant's] mood changing." F4
- "Joe is very good. Irene is a great asset because she understands the 'ins and outs' of intellectual disability. She would be like a bridge between us and the participants because she would understand both sides …. She would be good for contact but, yet, at the moment, like, we didn't come up against any cross thing that we couldn't figure out … "No, we have had no issues yet anyway." F8
- "If I had an issue I would ring Irene now. I always have a contact number if anything did happen to go wrong." F6

> **Participants also know who to turn to if they encounter a problem on the farm.**
>
> - If FP3 experiences any difficulties: "I go to [the farmer]."
> - If MP8 encounters a problem, he informs the farmer or farm worker: "They always help out."
> - "I probably would talk to [the support worker] or [the farmer], whoever is in charge. If I got into serious trouble or something, like, if I was too unsure what to do, I would go to any one of them." MP9
> - If FP5 has a problem, she reports it to her support worker.

Most guardians and all support workers and representatives of partner organisations agreed that they have a good knowledge of what happens at the social farms or on the Project (figure 26).

(a)

(b)

(c)
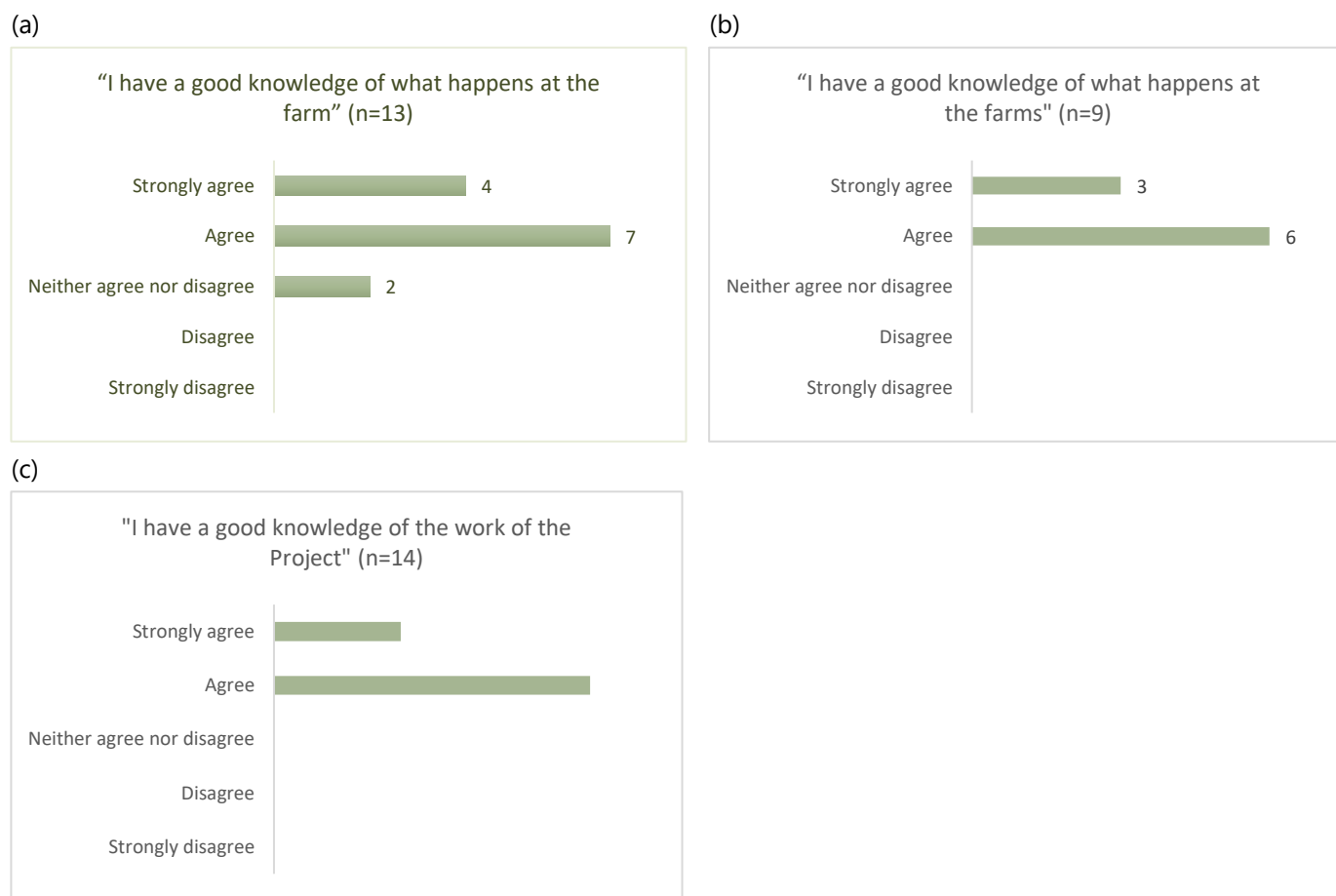
Some guardians are also host farmers and/or on the working group helping to develop the project into the future:

- "At the moment, my son goes to two different farms and is very happy. I am also a social farmer and part of the working group." [F-ID code on file]

Other guardians are at a remove from the project:

- "The group leader would be in a better position to know the answer to most of the questions as she is with him on the farm and my son tells me nothing about his day there. I must rely on the group leader for my information." G3
- "This project happens outside of me and I have no real involvement as my son attends the Social Farming Project within the hours of his Day Service - once a week." G12

Most guardians know that participants have an activity plan for the farm (figure 27). Over half of them know what is in the activity plan (figure 28a) and most consider it important that they have this information (figure 28b). The results show that more information could be shared with guardians about what happens at the social farms and what is in participants' activity plans. **Farm open days** would provide an opportunity to build awareness of social farming among participants' families.

Figure 27. Guardians' awareness of activity planning.

"I know that the participant has an activity plan for the farm" (n=14)

Yes	12
No	1
Maybe	1
I don't know	
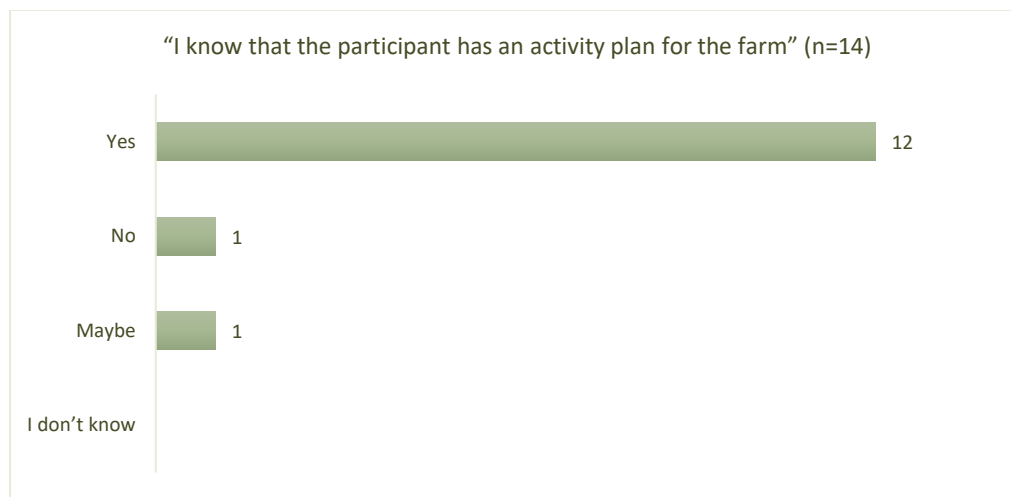
Figure 28: Guardian's (a) knowledge of activity planning and (b) the importance of knowing.

(a)

"I know what is in the activity plan for the farm" (n=14)

Strongly agree	
Agree	8
Neither agree nor disagree	5
Disagree	1
Strongly disagree	

(b)

"It is important for me to know what is in the activity plan for the farm" (n=14)

Strongly agree	4
Agree	6
Neither agree nor disagree	4
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

Most support workers and representatives from partner organisations believe that information sharing and collaboration among the organisations involved in the project is good (figure 29 and figure 30). One support worker disagreed (figure 29a); when asked for suggestions on how to improve this, the respondent wrote:

- "Would be nice, but I don't know how to improve that. Support workers are stretched these days, anyway, already."

Figure 29: What support workers think of (a) information sharing and (b) collaboration in the KSF.

(a)

"Information sharing among the partner organisations involved in the project is good" (n=8)

Strongly agree	2
Agree	5
Neither agree nor disagree	
Disagree	1
Strongly disagree	

(b)

"Collaboration among the partner organisations involved in the project is good" (n=8)

Strongly agree	1
Agree	6
Neither agree nor disagree	
Disagree	1
Strongly disagree	
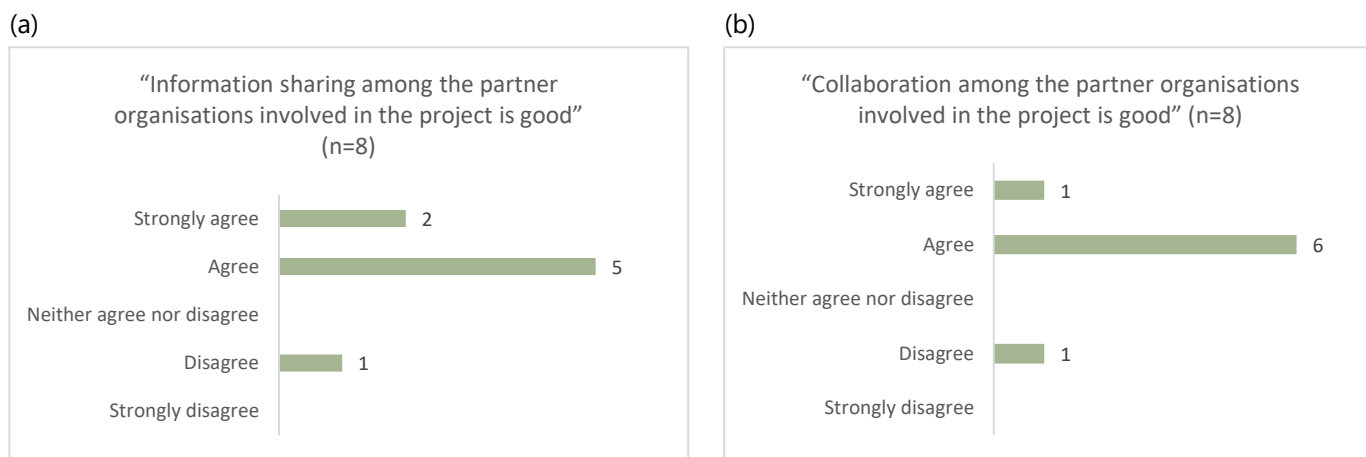
Figure 30: What partner organisations think of (a) information sharing and (b) collaboration in the KSF.

(a)

"Information sharing among the partner organisations involved in the project is good" (n=14)

Strongly agree	3
Agree	8
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

(b)

"Collaboration among the partner organisations involved in the project is good" (n=14)

Strongly agree	3
Agree	9
Neither agree nor disagree	2
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	
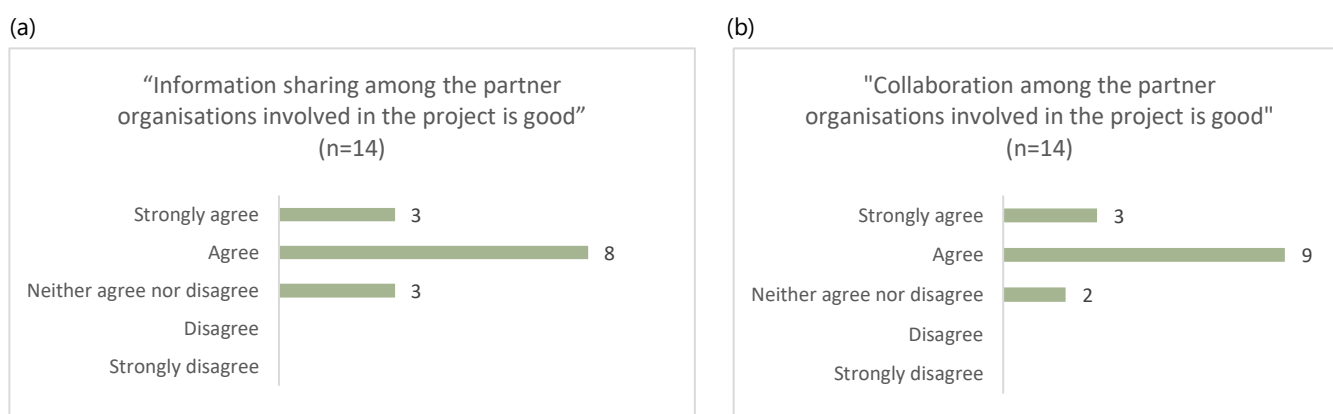
Engagement from Kerry Social Farming

Three-quarters of guardians and of representatives from partner organisations agreed that they felt the Project welcomed their input and that they were involved as much as they want to be in discussions about the participant or decision-making processes in Kerry Social Farming (figure 31 and figure 33). Approximately half of support workers also agreed with these statements (figure 32). This suggests that while the level of engagement with all three groups of stakeholders is good in KSF, there is room for further improvement, especially among support workers who accompany or check in with participants during their social farming sessions.

Photographer: Valerie O'Sullivan

Figure 31: Guardians views on how KSF (a) welcomes their input and (b) involves them in discussions.

(a)

"I feel that the project welcomes my views and opinions" (n=14)

Strongly agree	7
Agree	3
Neither agree nor disagree	4
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

(b)

"I am involved as much as I want to be in discussions about the participant in the project" (n=14)

Strongly agree	6
Agree	3
Neither agree nor disagree	5
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	
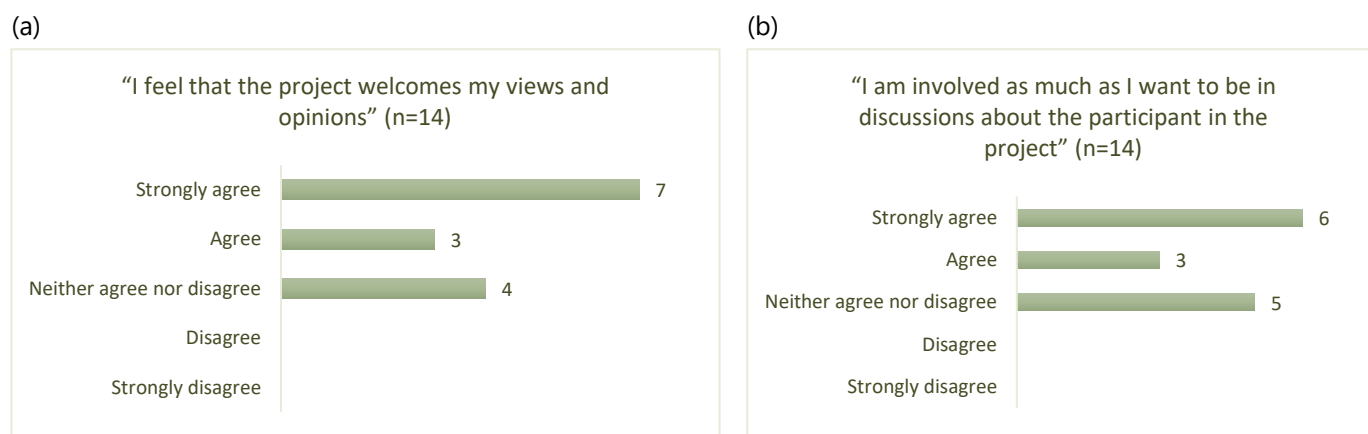
Figure 32: Views of support workers on how KSF (a) welcomes their input and (b) involves them in decisions.

(a)

"I feel that the project values my views and opinions" (n=8)

Strongly agree	2
Agree	3
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

(b)

"I am involved as much as I want to be in decision-making processes in the project" (n=8)

Strongly agree	
Agree	4
Neither agree nor disagree	4
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	
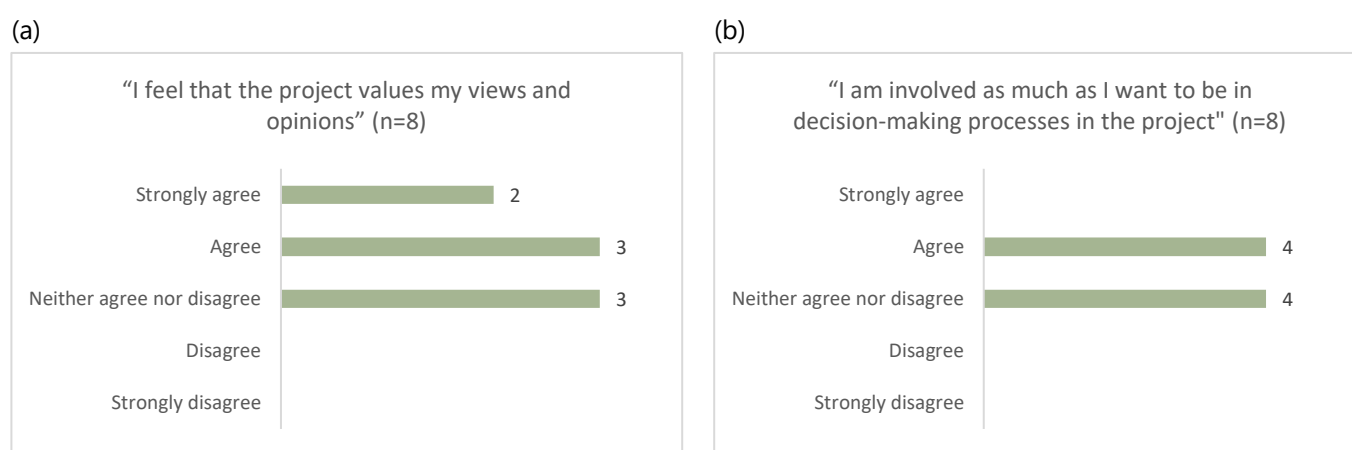
Figure 33: Views of partner organisations on how KSF (a) welcomes their input and (b) involves them in decisions.

(a)

"I feel that the project values my views and opinions" (n=12)

Strongly agree	3
Agree	7
Neither agree nor disagree	2
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

(b)

"I am involved as much as I want to be in decision-making processes in the project" (n=12)

Strongly agree	4
Agree	6
Neither agree nor disagree	2
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	
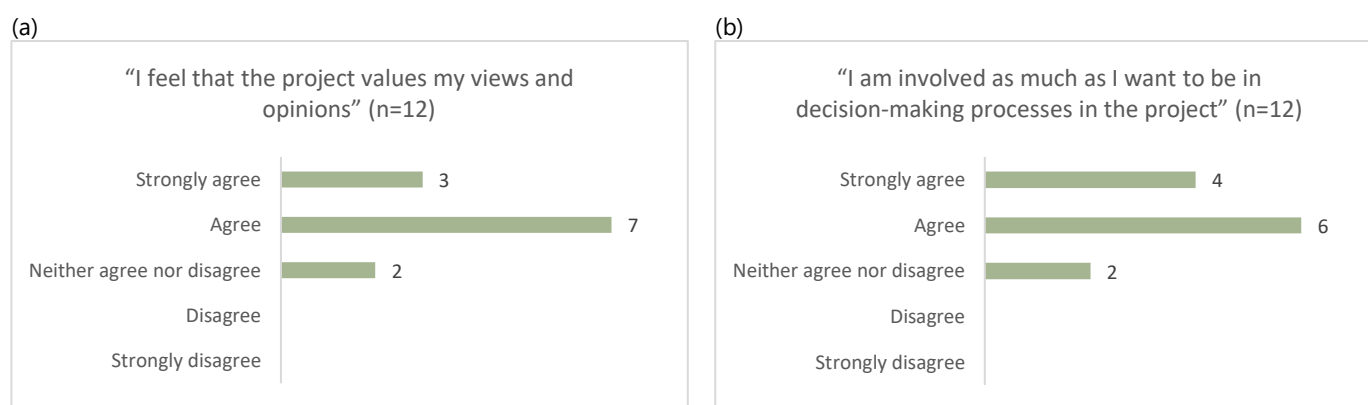
Similarly, some farmers called for **stronger engagement with farmers and with participants in decision-making** in KSF, in particular among service providers. This includes a desire among host farmers to be more informed about participants' personal progression goals to allow them to help tailor the farming activities to their wishes. This issue was also found in Northern Ireland, where farmers reported that because they did not know the expectations of some participants who engaged with social farming, activities were not tailored to them and their personal goals were not met (Johnston, 2016). This is particularly important in relation to optimising person-centredness in KSF.

- F5 emphasises the importance of treating everybody fairly and to "be inclusive". "Never take anybody for granted"; "Always involve the farmer and the participant in decision-making"; "It is a good thing to have the participants on [the working group]."
- F1 believes that the farmers should be consulted more, that there should be some recognition for the farmer in terms of being more hands-on in the decision-making and progression for the participant.
- "[The service provider] brings people the wrong time of year." Currently, the farmer is willing to take participants but "the service provider is not allocating people to the scheme" [F-ID on file]. Participants were brought to the farm in the winter whereas it would be better for them to come in the spring and the summer when there is a greater variety of activities, more opportunities and when the work is more meaningful e.g. harvesting, processing, cooking or selling.
- "Everything here is about the service provider and not the person they are supposed to serve" [F-ID on file]. An example is given of a participant being brought to the farm one day with inappropriate footwear and it seemed to the farmer that attending the farm was seen to be about the participant's 'routine' rather than the participant's 'progression'.

Satisfaction with Kerry Social Farming and recommending it

Guardians were, in the main, satisfied with the support that the Project gave the participants (13 guardians), satisfied with its knowledge of participants' needs (n=12) and with how it addressed participants' needs (n=11) (figure 34).

Figure 34: Guardian satisfaction with (a) support for participant, (b) knowledge of participants' needs and (c) consideration of those needs.

(a)

"I am satisfied with the support that the participant receives through the project" (n=14)

Strongly agree	7
Agree	6
Neither agree nor disagree	1
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

(b)

"I am satisfied with the project's knowledge of the needs of the participant" (n=14)

Strongly agree	7
Agree	5
Neither agree nor disagree	2
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

(c)

"I am satisfied with how the project takes their needs into consideration" (n=14)

Strongly agree	5
Agree	6
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

Two guardians noted their happiness with the Project overall:

- "Very happy with project." G4

- "The social farming project is fantastic"; "This project is fabulous. Whoever started it should be highly commended"; "I think the social farming programme should be rolled out across the country. I can't say enough about it." G10

Another two guardians recorded their satisfaction with the Project in relation to the participants:

- "… thank you for giving [the participant] such a great boost in his life …" G5
- "Thanks for the opportunity for him to [participate in social farming]. I am grateful to you all." G13

As guardians and support workers tend to live or work closely with participants, these two stakeholder groups were asked a similar set of questions about participants' involvement with social farming or other activities in the future[55]. The purpose of these questions was to gauge their attitudes with regards to the Project rather than for them to answer on behalf of participants. The researchers asked participants themselves for their own preferences. Three-quarters of guardians and all support workers agreed with participants continuing in the Project (figure 35). One guardian did not want to see the participant continue in the Project but would recommend it to others. In that case, the participant had left the Project after six months because, according to the guardian, they did not enjoy the physical work and inclement weather.

Figure 35: Attitudes to participants continuing with KSF among (a) guardians and (b) support workers.

(a)

"I would like the participant to continue in the project" (n=14)

Strongly agree	7
Agree	4
Neither agree nor disagree	2
Disagree	1
Strongly disagree	

(b)

"Participants should be able to continue in the project if they wish" (n=8)

Strongly agree	5
Agree	3
Neither agree nor disagree	
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	
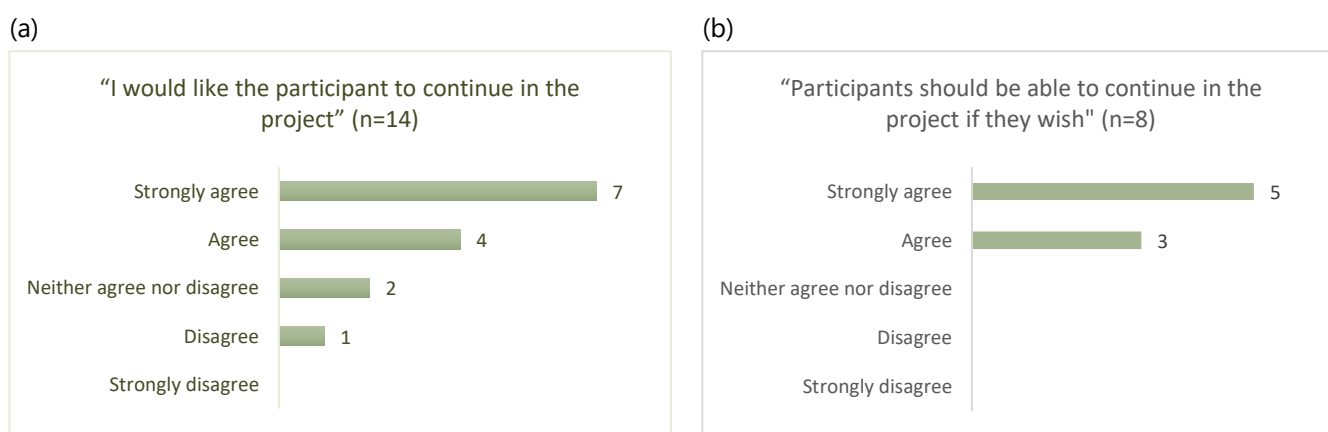
Participants, both male and female, want to continue on their social farms.

- "I like working on this farm, it keeps me going, feed the animals, keep me going"; "I would love to stay working on this farm." MP2
- If MP5 could choose to work on this farm or another farm, he said: "Stay with [the current farmer]."
- "I love working on this farm"; "I would like to stay here for good." MP6
- MP14 mentioned repeatedly "Love to stay working on this farm."
- "It's a nice set-up here"; "I am very happy here." MP15
- "I like being here." FP1
- "I like working here": FP3 would be reluctant to move to another farm.
- "Yeah, I would [like to stay working on this farm]"; [Would you like to work on another farm?] "No, this farm". FP4
- "If someone told me that I had to change places, I would be saying – *No, no, no way*." FP5

---

[55] In future questionnaires, the researchers would add the phrase 'if they wish' to the end of each statement presented in these questions to clearly acknowledge that what happens should be determined by the participant, according to their own preferences.

Over half of guardians and nearly all support workers agreed with participants having the opportunity to spend more time each week in the Project (figure 36).

Figure 36: Attitudes to participants spending more time in KSF among (a) guardians and (b) support workers.

(a)

"I would like the participant to have more time each week in the project" (n=14)

Strongly agree	6
Agree	2
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Disagree	3
Strongly disagree	

(b)

"Participants should be able to spend more time each week in the project if they wish" (n=7)

Strongly agree	2
Agree	4
Neither agree nor disagree	1
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

A representative from a partner organisation shared their enthusiasm for the Project as follows:

"My role in this project is to give support to one of the farmers involved. It has been a huge success and I hope it will be expanded further." PO3

There is also interest in programmes other than social farming or different community-based activities. One-third of guardians and all support workers agreed with participants having the opportunity to do something different to social farming or to try out other activities in the community (figure 37).

- "I feel that's up to [the participant] as he is extremely happy at farming"; "If happy in project maybe something new to try on an extra day." G5
- "Bring back garden centre" [guardian's emphasis]; "When St. John of God were geared years back to horticultural needs (like garden centre) it was better, as this kind of work was easier but still interesting to participant …. Bring back garden centres like one in Kerry Parents and Friends in Listowel. Ample room in St. John of God in Tralee for it. It would give users of such centre something to do!" G11

Figure 37: Attitudes to participants doing other activities among (a) guardians and (b) support workers.

(a)

"I would like the participant to do something different to social farming" (n=14)

Strongly agree	1
Agree	4
Neither agree nor disagree	7
Disagree	2
Strongly disagree	

(b)

"Participants should be able to try out new community-based activities" (n=8)

Strongly agree	4
Agree	4
Neither agree nor disagree	
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	
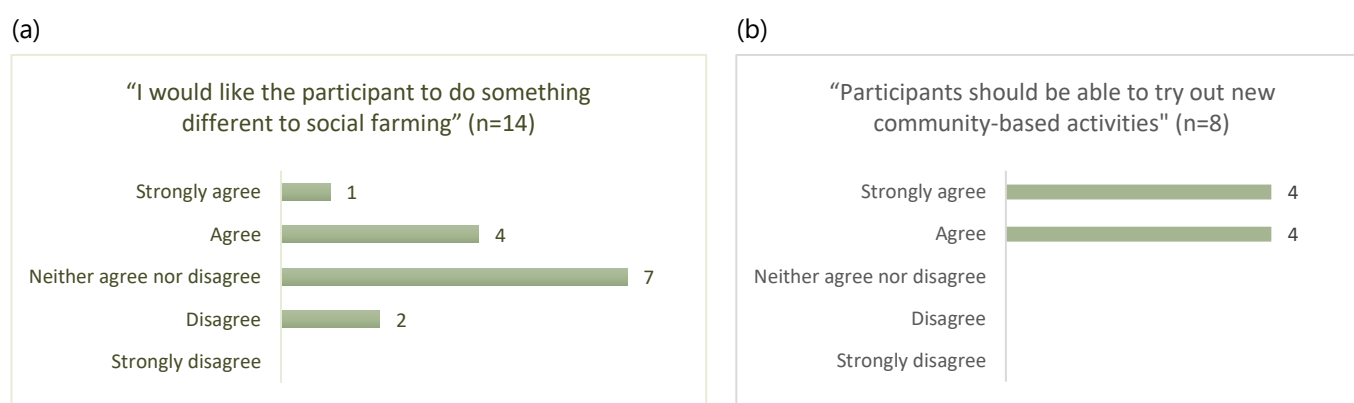
Most participants are not seeking other activities.

- When asked if she would like a different type of job, FP3 said: "I like being here".
- "No, I like the farm here and stuff. I like the company with [the farmer] and the animals." MP2
- MP14 does not want to work in a different job: "Not for the moment anyway."
- "I would rather be doing this anyway because I would otherwise be just sitting at home doing nothing. I really enjoy this." MP15
- Regarding her work on the social farm or in the hospitality sector, FP4 said that she likes working indoors and outdoors and that: "I like doing both."
- FP1 "I am looking for an animal care job"; "I would like to have another job … like an animal care job … looking after animals, you know, looking after cats, dogs, rabbits …"

And many participants consider farming to be the best job.

- If MP6 could choose any job in the world, it would be a farmer – especially feeding cows.
- If MP14 could choose any job in the world, it would be: "[The farmer's] farm – it is the best thing ever."
- MP15 considers this placement to be his ideal job.
- If FP5 could choose any job in the world: "Outdoors, animals and spending time within the community."

Two participants expressed other preferences.

- When asked if she could choose any job in the world, FP3 said: "I would like to work in a music store".
- MP8 told the researcher that he would like to "rule a country".

All support workers and representatives from partner organisations agreed that the Project is a positive addition to what is available for service users (figure 38).

Figure 38: Attitudes to KSF as a new option for service users among (a) support workers and (b) partner organisations.

(a)

"The project is a positive addition to the range of choices available to service users" (n=8)

Strongly agree	4
Agree	4
Neither agree nor disagree	
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

(b)

"The project is a positive addition to the range of choices available to service user" (n=14)

Strongly agree	10
Agree	4
Neither agree nor disagree	
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	
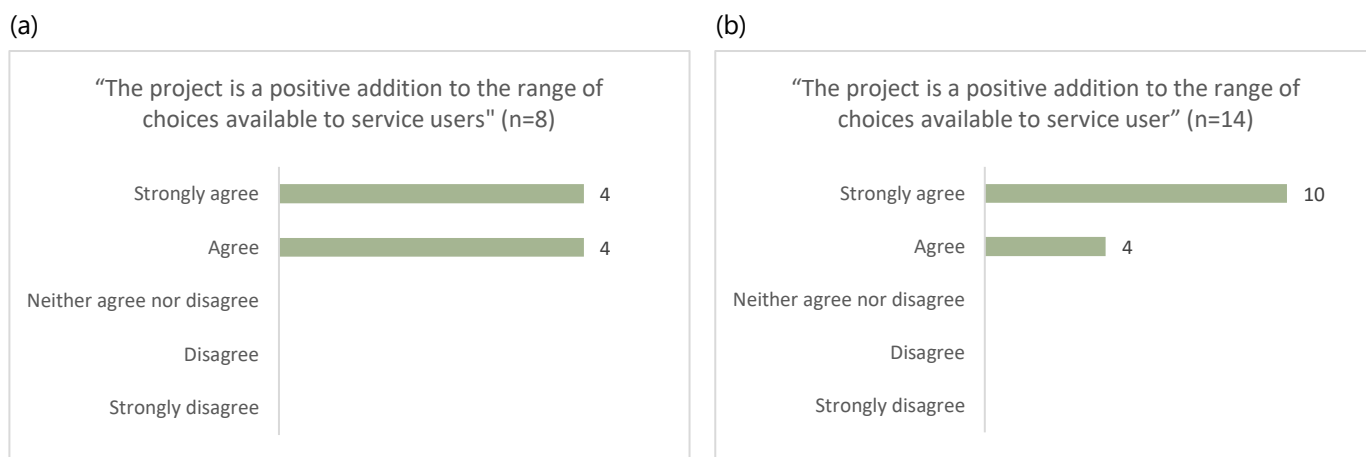
Almost all guardians and support workers would recommend the Project to others and approximately half of them would do so strongly (figure 39).

Figure 39: Recommending KSF among (a) guardians and (b) support workers.

(a)

"If another guardian said they were considering the project for their loved one, I would ..." (n=14)

Strongly recommend the project	7
Recommend the project	5
Neither recommend nor advise against the project	2
Advise against the project	
Strongly advise against the project	

(b)

"If I thought it appropriate for a new participant, I would ..." (n=8)

Strongly recommend the project	3
Recommend the project	4
Neither recommend nor advise against the project	1
Advise against the project	
Strongly advise against the project	

Benefits for participants

Kerry Social Farming was established to provide people with disabilities with the opportunity to engage in farming and farm communities in order to promote social inclusion and improve their quality of life. The progression of participants on KSF farms entails addressing their individual needs and developing new skills in a collaborative capacity-building process that includes the participant, the host farmer, the service provider and the working group.

To begin to assess what benefits, if any, accrued to participants in Kerry Social Farming, guardians were asked to choose from a list of ways in which KSF may have helped their loved one and by how much (figure 40). Similarly, support workers were asked the same question in relation to the participants that they support in the Project (figure 41). This question

drew from the findings of national and international research into the impacts of social / care farming on service users and from the objectives of Kerry Social Farming. Impacts are listed from top to bottom in order of those most frequently recorded. The most frequent ways in which the Project helped participants in the opinion of all or nearly all guardians, and according to all support workers, were as follows (the rank of the answers of support workers is given in parentheses):

1. Treating them with dignity and respect (1)
2. Supporting their emotional stability (5)
3. Variety (2)
4. Stimulation (4)
5. Suiting abilities (6)
6. Meeting interests (4)
7. Making friends (8)
8. Useful training (7)
9. Education and skills (3).

Figure 40: How the KSF helps participants according to their guardians.[56]

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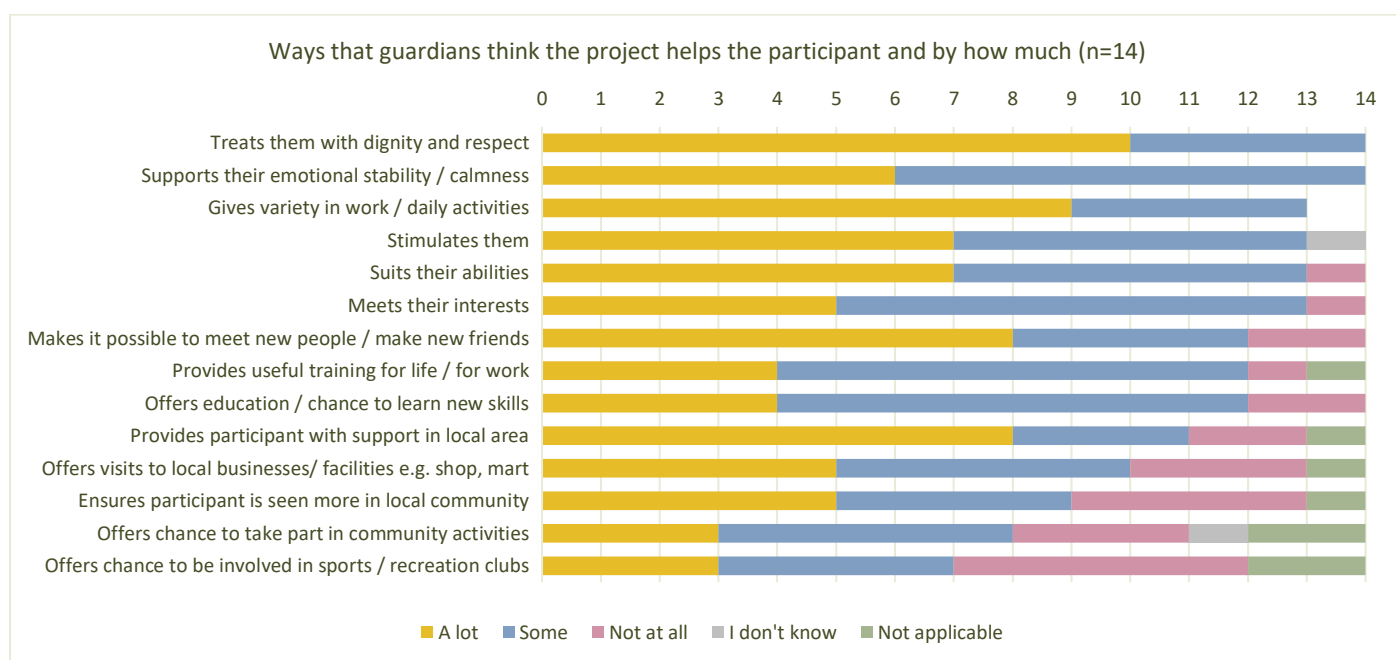
[56] Only 13 guardians gave their feedback on 'Gives variety in work / daily activities' resulting in the truncated bar in the graph.

Ways that support workers think the Project helps participants and by how much (n=8)
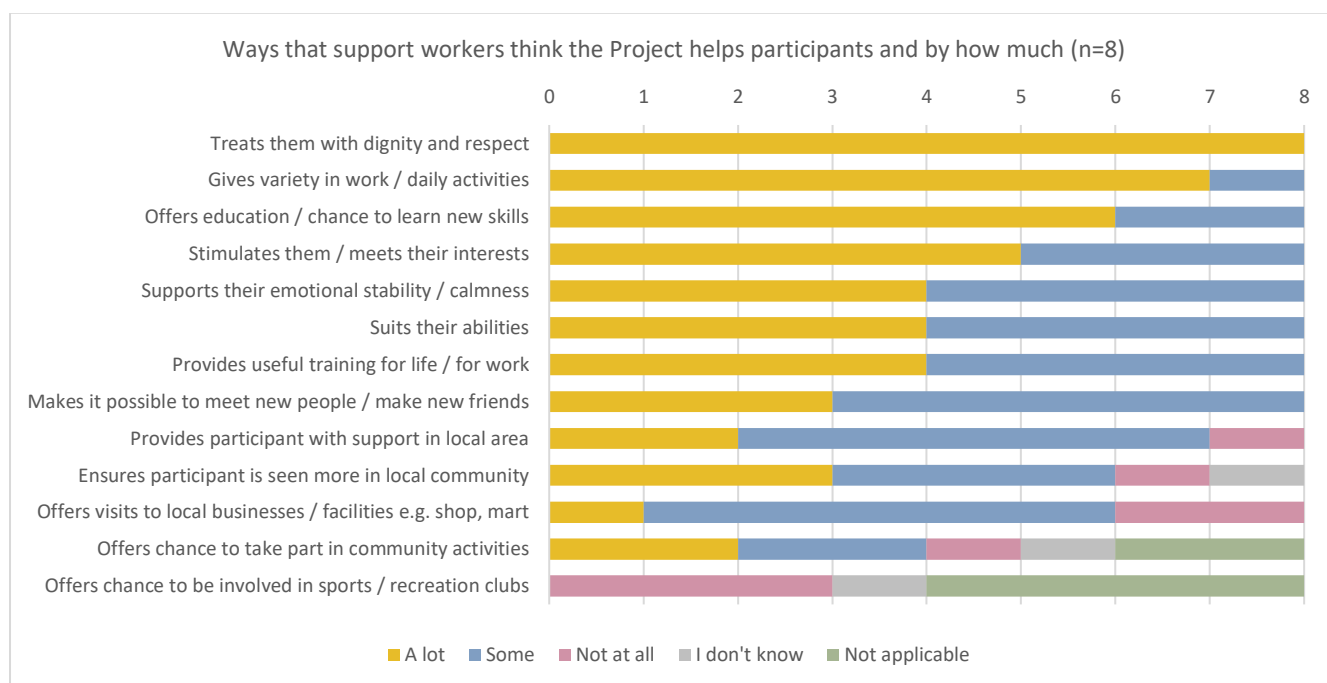
These graphs give a snapshot of the range of mental health, educational and social benefits that accrue to participants from Kerry Social Farming, in the opinions of their guardians and support workers.

The support workers were then asked, in their capacity as trained professionals who work closely with a number of participants and are experienced in evaluating their progress, to choose the types of improvements they had observed among participants in Kerry Social Farming with whom they are familiar (figure 42). The pre-determined list of improvements presented to the support workers drew from the findings of the literature review. Improvements are listed from top to bottom in order of those most frequently selected by support workers. The most frequent types of improvement seen among participants in Kerry Social Farming, in the opinion of all or nearly all support workers, were as follows:

1. Independence
2. Communication skills
3. Confidence
4. Memory
5. Responsibility
6. Mood
7. Dexterity.

The following excerpt from the researcher's field notes following an interview with a host farm couple gives a snapshot of benefits for the participant:
F7 are very positive and enthusiastic about KSF, and the benefits accruing to the participant. F7 were very keen to talk about him as a person, and about his development. F7 state that variety is very important for the participant. They report that he loves animals and the outdoors, and that he has progressed and gotten more involved in farm life. F7 talked a lot about how the participant's self-esteem has progressed, and they recounted how he likes to have his picture taken when he is engaged in farm work.

Figure 42: Improvements observed in participants by support workers.

Types of improvements seen by support workers among participants in the project (n=8)

When guardians (G), support workers (SW) and partner organisations (PO) were asked to describe what, in their opinion, the participants got from their involvement with Kerry Social Farming, they gave numerous examples. These were classified thematically according to the categories established in the literature review, namely:

1. Physical health benefits – being active, being outdoors in fresh air, sleeping better, improved motor skills;
2. Mental health benefits – enjoyment, calm, therapy, confidence, independence, stimulation, meaningful activity;
3. Educational benefits – learning, skills, progression; and
4. Social benefits – friendship, bigger social circle, social inclusion, community integration.

Physical health benefits

Guardians and support workers reported physical health benefits ranging from **increased activity, being outdoors in the fresh air, tiredness resulting in improved sleep, and even improved motor skills** (use of and control over muscles).

- "Getting active." G11
- "Outdoor activity in a rural setting." G12
- "He loves the outdoors"; "He loves the open air." G13
- "He is very tired after being out in the fresh air." G7
- "Fresh air - outdoors makes for more physical exercise." G10
- "… it got her out in fresh air …" G11
- "Exhausted at the end of the day. [The participant] sleeps well." G10

- "It's great to get feedback from family members of participants about how … the participants sleep so well the night after farming." SW4
- "Healthy lifestyle." SW3
- "Outdoor activities." SW5
- SW(a): "He loves this type of environment. He loves outdoors and he loves physical work. He is the best man with a wheelbarrow I have ever seen. But it is also about taking the individual into account."
- SW(a): "Yes, this farm is perfect for her but she is not so keen on any other physical labour. But [the farmer] is very understanding about that …"
- F2 has observed improvements in respect of their movement and coordination.
- "Developing skills (motoric, etc.)." SW5

Two participants discussed the benefits of outdoor activities repeatedly.

- When asked which of his jobs he prefers, garage or farm, MP8 said: "On the farm. Better there, not as constricted, fresh air, like, better fun."
- "I like the outdoors – it is better for you …" MP8

- FP5 has no interest in doing a different job: "When I have this, it is like, when I am outdoors, I am happy."
- "Everything, like, being out in the fresh air and the mountain airs and just being surrounded by the scenery, like, …. I love it all." FP5
- "I love when I am outdoors. I like to be outdoors. I don't like being inside." FP5
- "Every time I come home, I just feel lighter and fresher because I am out in the fresh air and the mountain air just listening to animals"; "That is the reason why I do not want to leave this place." FP5

Mental health benefits

Mental health benefits from social farming were noted by farmers, guardians, support workers and partner organisations. Some reported **participants' enjoyment and happiness while farming or being around animals**.

- "When they came, we had great fun …." F1
- "You can have the craic with them"; "Sometimes, they will try winding you up"; "I know they are happy." F2
- "When he comes, you can see the happiness on his face. He is full of beans." F7
- "I asked him, one time, what does he like. He said, he loves giving the cattle their shots, the injections." F4
- "Totally, he is a natural, [the participant] is a natural. He likes that kind of work anyhow, you could see it – massive difference of course, big ask to be born into farming. Anyway, he likes that type of work, you would know it, you could see it in him …. He enjoys the work here alright. He looks like it anyway." F8
- "He loves social farming"; "He is happier when on the project." G4
- "Great enjoyment"; "How happy [the participant] is doing the rural farming. He gets such enjoyment …" G5
- "They loved the calves and piglets." [F-ID on file]
- F5 observes that [the participant] is very much an animal lover, and spoke at length about the mental health and therapeutic benefits associated with contact with animals. "[The participant] has a particular affinity with the animals." He reports that she particularly likes feeding the calves.
- "He enjoys the work"; "He loves animals so he enjoys feeding them and cleaning sheds, and it makes him so happy." G13
- "She likes playing with the dogs." G6
- "She seemed happy in the environment but has her moments." G11
- "Enjoyment." SW2
- "It's great to get feedback from family members of participants about how the participants enjoy going farming …" SW4

- "[Participant] loves going to [the farmer's] farm every [day of social farming session]." SW8
- SW(a): "… he just loves coming. If he can't come because the weather is bad or, you know, mother was sick and couldn't assist him in the morning, then he would really miss it."
- SW(a): "Well, I can honestly say that both of them have [benefited from social farming], yes, because they both love animals."
- SW(a): "[The participant] just adores all animals, but especially dogs and smaller animals"; "[She] is very clear and honest and says she just wants to be here for the animals. It is not a learning curve for her, it is just pure pleasure; pure pleasure."

Participants talked about enjoying farming and what they liked.

- "Yeah, I like farming." MP5
- MP8 learned that he "likes working with animals"; "I like … feeding the animals, going to the mart." His favourite job is "feeding the calves".
- "I like all of the work on the farm"; "It's nicer working here because you see all the animals and stuff"; "I like all the animals and feeding them." MP2
- "I am happy and I am proud of what I do." FP5
- "It has helped me a lot, anyway. I enjoy coming out here, anyway"; "I like doing vegetables and picking the flowers and the weeds." MP9
- FP4's favourite job is "watering".
- "I have made friends with all the animals, basically." FP1
- MP6's favourite job on the farm is feeding and milking the cows.

Improved well-being and reduced anxiety were also recorded.
- "They are more at ease." F2
- "Good for [the participant]'s mental health and well-being." G6
- "… it calms his anxieties in the open air." G13

Social farming was reported as a **form of therapy**, and not just for the service users participating in it. One partner organisation reported that it was also having indirect benefits on the wider group back at the Day Centre.

- The farm is ideal, therapeutic." F1
- "Farming gives him therapy." G13
- "Weekly visits to the farm by the participants acts as a form of therapy for some of our service users and gives them a break outside of the centre. It also gives the other service users at the centre a break and helps the overall harmony of the house." PO6

Others noted **improvement in participants' confidence and independence**.

- "Self-esteem …. it has improved his confidence immensely." G5
- "Increase in confidence." SW1
- SW(a): "[One participant] has become very confident. He is, kind of, like the foreman of the group and he really enjoys that because he is very confident and capable … he has been coming here now for almost three years so that has gradually developed over the three years."
- "Travel is good for [the participant] and makes him more independent using the buses." G5
- "Independence." SW6

> **Participants expressed their own growing confidence on the farm and with the farm work.**
>
> - "When I came here I was introduced to [the farmer] and [the farm worker]. I was a nervous wreck when I first came here." [And now?] "I am great looking after all of those dogs and cows and horses." FP1
> - FP5 has become more confident: "I, kind of, got more confidence while I am doing this because at the start I had none but now I know what to do. [The farmer] does not need to tell me; I just come in and I do the work."
> - "I think I got more confidence in myself …" MP15
> - "It's way easier now, yeah." MP14
> - "It got easier after a week or two, anyway; I got used to weeding then." MP9
> - "Yeah. Sure, it is not rocket science: feed the cows, brush out after them." MP8

Some participants are **stimulated by and excited about social farming**.

- "And he wants to come again [on a second day]. He wants to go, go, go. Hopefully we can get him up to us on another day, if we can …. He is mad for it, mad for it, in fairness." F4
- "He looks forward to going on a [social farm session] day and it's easier to get him up that morning." G5
- "He loves going to the farm"; "…. and is all excited to go every [social farm session day]." G13
- "He is interested in participating and looks forward to it." G12
- "… it got her … motivated …" G11
- "He tells us all about it when he comes home." G7

> **This enthusiasm comes through in the participants' comments too.**
>
> - "I love farming." MP5
> - "I love farming." MP14
> - "I love to feed the animals, the cows." MP2
> - "Everything, like, … working with animals … I love it"; "If I had to pick one, dealing with the pigs. I love the pigs. I don't know why but I just love them." FP5
>
> **And they tell others about their social farming experiences.**
>
> - MP14 enjoys telling family and friends about his experience on the social farm and tells them that "[the farmer] has loads of cows and he has tractors and quads and all that."
> - MP8 tells family and friends "Yeah, what you did all day. You are not on the doss all day - you are doing a bit; you deserve your cup of tea"; "I'm flat out – I tell them. It's enjoyable work."
> - "I tell them what I do. They ask me how was my day – generally good." FP4

Social farming is an opportunity for participants to **try something new or different and to do meaningful activities**.

- "During the winter, when the cows are in, he would be feeding, cleaning"; "Piking up silage, feeding them nuts"; "During the summer, when the cows are out … Like, we have only two seasons: they are either in or they are out. During the summer, he is out fencing. If you are cutting timber, he would give you a hand. If you ploughed the field, he would be picking stones with us. He is mad for work"; "We see a reward out of it by watching [the participant] coming here …"; "He has grown more." [F-ID on file]
- "Last year, it was just [one participant] who was here and we were doing a box scheme on a Tuesday. So, when she would come, we would finish off harvesting – it could be spinach, salads or digging spuds – and then we would go down to the house and we would bag up everything. So, we would have a list, we might need 20 bags

of salad. They would be all done and put them into the boxes and [the participant] would normally put them into the front of the house for collection. Helping out with the deliveries as well afterwards." [F-ID on file]

- "[The participant] really gets a lot out of the social farming… He helps with various jobs." F5
- "She sees what life is like on working farm." G8
- "Hands-on work with animals." G8
- "Avoid being bored. Something to do." G11
- "… it is great outlet for them and learning opportunity." SW2
- "It's an opportunity for our lads to see the kind of work that's done on a farm." SW7
- "To experience a different working environment." SW7
- "To see and work with animals." SW7
- "It is a good way for our service users to try out new activities …" SW8
- "Valuable opportunities …. valuable experience for service users." PO1
- "Choice for our participants." PO9

Participants are having new experiences on social farms.

- "Everything." FP4 – Her support worker explained: "It was a totally new experience for FP4. This was FP4's first time on a farm as she is originally from [an Irish] City. This was a new environment for her."
- "Giving the cattle their shots [vaccines], watching cattle being born." MP15
- "Dealing with the cows when I had to tag them. It was OK when I got shown what to do and I had to write the numbers down and get the right tag and pass them onto [the farmer]." FP5
- "Shearing the sheep as well." FP5
- "Seeing all the horses." FP3 did not grow up on a farm "… but my mother grew up on a farm" and she was never on a farm prior to this work experience.

- "Sense of fulfilment." SW2
- "Meaningful activity." SW5
- "… [they] are much happier and content in themselves as they have a purpose for the day." SW8
- "It is a fulfilling day for some of the clients …. Those who do like farming would like to go back during the summer." SW8
- "Pride of work completed." SW4
- The group enjoy being given a project by [the farmer] and have it completed before they go home …" SW8

Participants are challenged by some of their work on the farms and they described the hardest jobs.

- "The cattle – putting your arms out, so that we can direct them into the right place". FP1
- "Watching for the bull." MP14
- For FP3, the hardest job on the farm is "giving the cows some hay" whilst the easiest job is "feeding the ducks".
- The hardest job on the farm is "dealing with sheep. Dealing with sheep. They are very stubborn because I was trying to bring the sheep down from the field with [the farmer]. But two were left behind and they were stubborn out and I was like – *Come on, sheep, will you move!*" FP5
- "I would have to say taking the tyres off [the silage pit] and moving the silage back because it is pretty hard, but then everything else is fine." MP15
- "The hardest job is cleaning out the dung after them. It's fair hard." MP2
- The hardest job on the farm for MP5 is "cleaning out the barn".
- The hardest job for FP4 is "digging".
- MP8 explained that there are very few hard jobs on the farm as machinery can be used for those tasks: "You use the tractors for the hard jobs, like spreading manure and spreading fertilizer."

> **Participants see what they do on the farms as important and of help to the farmer.**
>
> - During the farm walk, MP5 showed the researcher all the timber which he and the other workers have chopped and stacked.
> - FP1 considers the work she does important: "It can be, yeah … whatever needs to be done, we just do it."
> - "Yeah, I love the job. It is important for me here because I do – You see, here on the farm, I do painting of the fences and we would be making gates." MP2
> - "Sometimes we have to move the goat, to give more grass to the goat – the goat need more grass." MP2
> - MP9 believes that the work he does on the farm is important and wants to write about his experiences: "I might write a story about what goes on in the farm here, if I got someone to help me out with the story. If I could write a story about all these kind of tents and the flowers and the watering can. I could show everyone what to do."
> - "Farming is different altogether than what I was used to doing and everything, stuff like that, because you are dealing with animals. And you have to make sure these animals are really well kept care of, because people are going to eat the food. You want to make sure everything is perfect." MP15
> - "I help [the farmer] and [the farm worker]". FP1
> - "Yeah, I am helping [the farmer]." MP2
> - "He is always glad that, you know, that things are done and he is happy out. If he is happy, then I'm happy." FP5
> - "They say I am a good worker." MP6

Educational benefits

Participants learn through social farming, develop new skills and can experience progression.

- "They learned a lot, for example, how to take hedge cuttings." [F-ID on file]
- "When we are doing up the steel gates now, as well, [one person] welds them, he measures them with him and he will notch them and he will cut them and he will show how to do it, like"; "We will get him working in construction now"; "He will paint them and he will, well, brush them first and paint them, and he will do all that, like." [F-ID on file]
- "He is learning about filling the raised beds because he knows that, like … the sods went in the bottom and he knows the dung is in the middle and the soil is in the top. He is doing different jobs on different days because some days we would be digging out the sods and more days we would be drawing in the dung and of course as time would go on, we would be planting stuff." [F-ID on file]
- "It is important to bring everybody along"; "A little thing is a big thing"; "They have improved immensely." F2
- One farmer recounts that when [the participant] came to the farm initially he had a fear of animals. He was reluctant to enter the shed in which the sheep were housed in the beginning but, gradually, he developed the ability to do so. [F-ID on file]
- The support worker revealed that the participants were very frightened of animals prior to being in Kerry Social Farming. It took them nearly a year to be able to rub and pat a horse or to get close to the other large animals such as cattle and cows on the farm.
- The service provider is adamant that the participant treats the experience [on F7's farm] as if he were going to work, and he brings his own lunch with him each day.
- "Learn something new." G11
- "Getting instructed in farming." G7
- "She's learning about safe lifting/handling." G6
- "Learning /education." SW2
- "Educational." SW3
- "Increase in skills base." SW1
- "Learn new skills." SW6

- "Progression"; "New skills." PO9

This includes participants who come from a farm family but did not have the chance to do farm work themselves.

- "… I believe some people who attend day centres would really benefit from social farming. One example, some people we support come from a farming background, but never got to do any work on their own farm as family members may not have the time or skills to teach them how to do some tasks. With social farming, the support team have the time, skill and tools to teach people farm skills." SW4
- "She is a farmer's daughter. Some of [the] work on working farm would not be suitable to a girl, especially girl with disability. G11

Participants described what they had learned on the social farms.

- MP15 has learned "a lot of stuff". He has learned the various breeds of cattle on the farm. Through his work on the farm and in a supermarket, he sees the links between farming and food: "When you really think about it, you see the meat process from the cow as it is, you see in the store, and the same thing with the bacon, you see it all."
- "[The farmer] showed me how to put on a fence, like, how to turn off a fence." MP14
- New tasks learned on the farm include caring for animals and maintaining the farm yard. "I keep the yard nice and tidy." MP6
- On the farm, FP3 has learned new skills: "Feeding animals and looking after the dogs."
- FP4 said that "pulling weeds" is a new skill that she learned on the farm.
- MP9 learned how to compost: "a new thing for me."
- "I have learned a lot. I have learned about picking the strawberries and just ripping the string off them and if there was any bad tomatoes, or if you see anything that is bad, just throw them out and they would be put into the compost with the wheel barrow." MP9
- "… picking the weeds and putting them onto the compost – out in wheelbarrows and hang vegetables on the strings here"; "We used to normally put manure on them"; "You have to know which weeds, what kind of weeds you are going to pull first, if you get confused about the weeds, you have to make sure before you picked the right weeds, before you start pulling up." MP9
- "I like learning new skills, like skills working on a farm." MP6

For some participants, farming is familiar to them from their past or current experiences.

- MP8 does not live on a farm but his parents grew up on farms and he used to take part in farming activities "when Nana and Grandda were alive."
- FP5 grew up on a farm and enjoyed the experience initially: "I did but then I got bored when I got older…. "
- "I grew up on a farm with my father and mother"; "We used to grow potatoes and all vegetables and everything, apples and everything. We had cows on the farm. No longer have farm"; "I enjoy it because I used to do a bit of farming with my father …. when I was a teenager, I started growing cabbage and all that kind of thing and setting spuds and everything." MP9
- "Yes, I have farmed at home. Dad has a farm at home." MP2
- MP5 lives on a farm: "Work on a farm at home – cows and lots of sheep". He also works in the food sector: "I like both".

And for one participant, Kerry Social Farming has revealed an aptitude for farming and led to a new job.

- MP14 did not grow up on a farm but since participating in Kerry Social Farming, he has begun to work on a neighbour's farm: "I work on a farm …. It's my next-door neighbour hired me." MP14 has already seen cows calving: "It is an unreal experience."

Even those who live on a farm and get to help out on the home farm can learn something new:

SW(a): "... each farm is different, so even [some] participants have their own farms but [the social] farm is different from their own home environment, so they have different animals, different ways of dealing with them, I guess, different rules."

Social benefits

Participants experienced a range of social gains through their involvement in Kerry Social Farming from direct benefits of **making friends, extending their social circles and taking part in team work** to broader gains of **social inclusion and community integration**. The last two indicate benefits at a societal level also because communities can be enriched by the greater visibility of participants and by their contributions to society through realisation of their full potentials.

- "Social farming is about meeting, it is about communicating, it is about socialising ..." F3
- "Like one of the family now, nearly, even the kids get on well with him. Oh yeah, they mix very well with him." [F-ID on file]
- "Yeah, I think there is [a good atmosphere]. Again, it's the social thing; you want to make sure they are having a good time, so I am more jokey and more 'having the laugh' with them because I really want them to have a good experience here for those couple of hours. It's a bit lighter when they are here." F9
- "The company of [the farmer] (get on great)." G5
- "Meeting and friendship with the farmers." G10
- "He gets to know the host farmer and will stop for a chat if he sees them out shopping, for example." G12
- "The service users feel welcomed on the farms and have created meaningful relationships with the farmers." SW8
- "One service user likes working with [the farmer] on his own or with another service user of high ability like himself." SW8
- "The participant likes helping [the farmer] with different jobs on the farm ..." SW8
- "On [the farmer's] farm, the group likes the banter between the group and [the farm worker] who helps [that farmer] on the farm too. [The farm worker] is very patient and understanding with all individuals in the group..." SW8
- "Lovely to see the new bond that is created between the farmer and participant." PO6
- "Mixing with other people." G7
- "Involvement outside his immediate circle." G10
- "He meets friends from other St. John of God centres who are participating and would not meet every day." G12
- "Socialising." SW6
- "Meeting new people." SW1
- "Working as part of a team." G12
- "Working with other people." G8
- "Working with different people"; "Working with people he would not normally meet." G14
- "Being part of the team." SW4
- They like doing group activities on [the farmer's] farm ..." SW8
- "It was left up to myself, I suppose, what could we do together. And, like, as well as that, the polytunnel is only after being built so he was participating in the days that the RSS lads were here digging out for the poly. [The participant] was here too some of those days, we were all working together." [F-ID on file]
- SW(a): "... where possible, we try to get people to work as a team. There have been some challenges in the past but she is not a team player. She does not really want to be part of a team and that's partly why myself or a member of staff would be here. If she wants to go off on her own, we go off with her."
- "[The participant] loves the social aspect, such as going to the local mart and co-op." SW8
- When asked to illustrate ways in which the participant has 'progressed,' F7 pointed to his improved communication and social skills. They claim that he is more outgoing and approaches people whom he recognises, although he may not know or remember their names. F7 told many stories about his interaction with them and with their neighbours. "He likes the banter"; "He loves visiting and meeting people."

- F1, whose kitchen is very open with people coming and going, describes the benefits to participants of opportunities for interaction with neighbours and relationship formation with the local community.
- "… really it is a social thing because I have people coming here in the summer who are volunteers[57]. The guys like being in their company and being around people from different countries." [F-ID on file]
- One farmer believes that the KSF is a valuable model because it enables people with intellectual disabilities to spend more time with non-disabled people, rather than being with their peers all the time. Referring to his own family member's experience on a social farm, he stated, "[The family member] going to [a social] farm is far better for him than going to a farm for people with disabilities." [F-ID on file]
- "Excellent, it is, like, excellent. Not alone the farm, in the community, like, do you know? [The participant] would have to go and see [one neighbour] and he would have to go and see [another neighbour] and he would have to call into the shop. Everyone knows them now at this stage, enquires about them, when they are coming down, so yeah …. When [the participant] comes in the morning, the biggest bother is getting him out of the village because he would want to meet all of the locals first. They would be great for socialising and meeting people." [F-ID on file]
- One farmer places a high value on the participants' interactions with other people e.g. visitors to the farm, neighbours and people in the local village / town. He recounts how they particularly enjoyed watching a tourist catching a salmon on the [river]. "It was a great thrill for them." [F-ID on file]
- One participant gets on very well with F7's neighbours and with [a farm family member with an intellectual disability]. They state that "it is a big thing for him to have extra people in his life …. The neighbours make him feel welcome, and he counts them among his friends."
- F7 gave several examples of the participant's social interaction as a result of his participation in the social farming project e.g. going to matches and going to town. Essentially, wherever F7 is going, the participant goes too. He accompanied F7 on a visit to [a public facility] recently, and "chatted all the way up and all the way back down."
- He exchanged Christmas presents with F7 and with their neighbours and phoned F7 on Christmas Day.
- "The participants are way better off to meet the boys at the creamery and the neighbours. They learn to stand on their own two feet." F7
- "I have [family members] who are coming and going all the time and even [the participants] will recognise them when they are in town now." F9
- "Social inclusion." SW3
- "Being integrated." SW5

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[57] This farm has WWOOFers (Willing Workers on Organic Farms).

- "Community integration." SW4

McGloin and O'Connor (2007: 9) noted that social farming participants were more likely to be male highlighting the "cultural biases of gendered work roles" associated with farming. For example, of the 66 participants in the cross-border project, 64 of them (97%) were male (Walsh, 2014). Conversely, the care professions are dominated by females and this is reflected among service providers involved in social farming initiatives also (Di Iacovo and O'Connor, 2009). Therefore, social farming offers participants the opportunity to spend time in male company as the farmers and participants are more likely to be male, while guardians and support workers are more likely to be female. This is the case in KSF also and both guardians and support workers welcomed the availability of new male role models in the lives of participants as another positive aspect of Kerry Social Farming.

- "Male company." G4
- ".… [The participant] looks up to [the farmer] as a male role model in his life. [The farmer] gives [the participant] good guidance and [the participant] would often ring him during the week to get an update on how things are on the farm." SW8

One guardian summed up the fit of social farming for their participant:

"When I win the lotto, it's a farm for him for sure!" G13

Kerry Social Farming not only provides benefits to the participants but can also have positive implications for farmers, guardians, support workers and representatives of partner organisations. The findings from the Evaluation in relation to these benefits are summarised next.

Benefits for guardians

Over half of the guardians agreed that KSF had a positive effect on their own health and on their family life while two-thirds said it was beneficial for their caring role (figure 43). This suggests that the benefits of KSF can extend to participants' families in some cases. '**Peace of mind**' was the common theme in the guardians' responses.

Peace of mind

- "… to know he is happy and safe in the rural farming scheme." G5
- "Knowing that currently she likes going there"; "Knowing that she is safe." G6
- "Seeing him happy to go to the farm"; "Knowing he is in a safe environment." G14
- "The farmer is a true gent, so chatty and enjoys [the participant] (my son) so much. I do not have to worry about him then." G13

Figure 43: Benefits from KSF reported by guardians for their (a) health, (b) caring role and (c) family life.

(a)

"The project has a good effect on my own health"
(n=14)

Strongly agree	4
Agree	4
Neither agree nor disagree	5
Disagree	1
Strongly disagree	

(b)

"The project has a good effect on my caring role
or my responsibility for the participant" (n=14)

Strongly agree	4
Agree	5
Neither agree nor disagree	5
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

(c)

"The project has a good effect on my family life"
(n=14)

Strongly agree	4
Agree	4
Neither agree nor disagree	5
Disagree	1
Strongly disagree	

Benefits for support workers

The evaluation explored what impact, if any, the Project had on the support work, workload and the job satisfaction of support workers in relation to their work with the participants. All agreed that it had a positive effect on their support work and almost all agreed that it had a positive effect on their workload and on their job satisfaction with regards to the participants (figure 44).
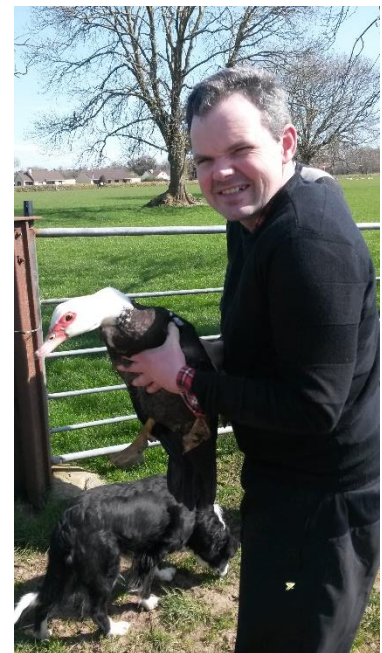
Figure 44: Benefits from KSF reported by support workers in terms of their (a) work with participants, (b) workload and (c) job satisfaction.

(a)

"The project has a positive effect on my support work with participants" (n=8)

Strongly agree	1
Agree	7
Neither agree nor disagree	
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

(b)

"The project has a positive effect on my overall workload with participants" (n=8)

Strongly agree	1
Agree	6
Neither agree nor disagree	1
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

(c)

"The project has a positive effect on my job satisfaction in relation to participants" (n=8)

Strongly agree	2
Agree	5
Neither agree nor disagree	1
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

In terms of **job satisfaction** from participants' progress or behaviour, the support workers noted such positives as:

- "Seeing those I support progress." SW1
- "People I support are more relaxed and open up to me more on [the] farm than attending the Day Centre." SW4
- [Social farming] "benefits the person I support." SW6
- "I see the clients work in a different environment, which can bring out a side I haven't seen before." SW7
- "I enjoy watching the service users learning a new task." SW7

The support workers also commented on the **physical and mental health benefits** for themselves, along with **educational, social and vocational benefits** due to the Project.

Physical and mental health benefits

- "Outdoor activity." SW5
- "The fresh air and being out and about is good for all our well-being and general mood." SW8

Educational benefits

- "Learn from new projects." SW6
- "I learn about the work on the farm." SW7

Social benefits

- "Part of a team." SW4

- "Meeting locals." SW5
- "Develops connections." SW6
- "Making new connections." SW1

Vocational benefits

- "Interactions with other agencies / organisations." SW2
- "Opportunity to represent our service and its users." SW2

Benefits for partner organisations

Representatives from the partner organisations reported benefits from the Project for themselves as **satisfaction on behalf of the service users, with the Project overall and its success, as well as with its partnership approach**.

Satisfaction

- "Happy to see the service users getting experience on the farm." PO6
- "Happy to see people with disabilities having new experiences." PO10
- "Satisfaction that alternative choices are provided to young adults with intellectual disabilities." PO14
- "The knowledge that this project is assisting people." PO4
- "Satisfaction with the success of the project." PO3
- "Satisfaction of supporting a really great initiative." PO8
- "Success of the project ..." PO12
- "The knowledge that I can do my bit by being involved." PO4
- "Great stories / feedback." PO5

Partnership approach

- "Reassurance that the bottom-up, partnership [approach] really does work!" PO8
- "Getting to know the service users .... getting to know the farmers." PO3
- "Networking." PO7

Benefits for farmers

Social farming offers benefits to the host farmers involved in the voluntary model of social farming. Kerry Social Farming gives host farmers the opportunity to deliver alternative services and new types of activities on their farms. Buist (2016) considered social farming as a way to counter society's negative view of the agricultural sector. For instance, Johnston (2016: 4) emphasised that "although Social Farming should provide benefits for the facilitators, it is primarily an altruistic venture, which is often a lifeline for the vulnerable adults who avail of their services." In Flanders, Belgium, the most common motivation for farmers to adopt social farming is the social goal and it has been a successful model as farmers are enabled to integrate this social contribution into their farm enterprise (Di Iacovo and O'Connor, 2009). Wilcox (2008) agreed that farmers show a strong personal motivation and a spirit of altruism in adopting social farming and that financial implications only come into play later on. Research in the UK by Hine *et al.* (2008) found that the main motivations for farmers to take up care farming were to make a difference, extend a service, provide opportunities for vulnerable or disadvantaged groups and offer a connection with nature. The UK farmers surveyed identified their successes as seeing the effects of care farming on people, helping those who feel excluded become engaged with others or with work, and the positive feedback they receive from participants, families and service providers. Farmers in Northern Ireland reported the benefits to being part of a 6-week social farming project as personal satisfaction and a

satisfactory remuneration rate (Johnston, 2016).[58] In Ireland, farmers reported the following benefits from their involvement in social farming through the SoFAB project in the cross-border region (Walsh, 2014):

1. Personal development – understanding disability, improved communication, relationships;
2. Work environment – help, company, slowing down, team work; and
3. Farm – restoring, developing.

The Evaluation recorded a range of evidence of the benefits from KSF for host farmers and their families. As a representative from a partner organisation (PO15) noted, farmers benefitted from their involvement in the KSF through "mutual reciprocity" and one host farmer summed it up as follows:

- "I suppose, this social farming for me at the start was, I found it slow to, well, we say, to get around it. But now it has huge benefits, like, and it is huge and to be recognised as a social farmer, farm and things, it has huge benefits." F3

Similar to the findings from the SoFAB project, the key benefits for host farmers in the KSF are:

1. Personal development (especially disability awareness);
2. Personal satisfaction; and
3. Farm improvements.

First and foremost, **farmers praised the abilities, attitudes and knowledge of participants**.

- "You can bring in different levels of disabilities and things, like. I suppose, I am always preaching like that; we talk so much about disabilities and things, and when the people came on to me, the participants came on to me with disabilities and things, my God, you know, the amount of abilities they had, and the amount of whatever they were able to do, how well they were able to do it"; "... I said it at the beginning: we have heard so much about disabilities and things like that. I suppose the abilities of these service users to be able to do the different jobs is just unreal. Like, at times, you feel you know they shouldn't be classified as having a disability because there are so many positive abilities. I have seen it on the farm myself and at work and at things, they are outstanding." F3
- "[The participant] cops on very fast"; "Very quickly"; "Definitely, he just clicked: his manners, his courtesy, his generosity, his help, you know. And nothing is a bother ..."; "He never refuses"; "He rarely refuses and he always explains to you, like. People can do it, like, do you know"; "He does everything on the farm bar driving. He will hop up beside me if I was doing something and that is it. As he says to me, "don't let me drive." I say, "I won't let you drive." .... it is the first thing he would say when he would see a tractor starting." [F-ID on file]
- "Because he is coming from a farming background himself, he has a fair idea, like." F6

Farmers get **satisfaction, enjoyment** and **learning opportunities** from their involvement in KSF.

- "I do, I enjoy [teaching the participant]. I like him to learn the breeds and I enjoy telling him because I like the cattle myself and I like him to know .... He is getting to know the names of the fields now as well, like, because [I tell him] *I am going to send you down now to the Point someday to close the gate* and he will be able to do it; I know he will." The farmer proceeds to name out all of the fields on the farm and provides a brief history of the farm: "This is our family farm. It's two generations." [F-ID on file]
- "... it is for the better, do you know, like, to get involved"; "It betters us as people as well"; "We have learned to understand more of the needs of people, their needs, and very happy that we did join it actually"; "Yeah, that is true." F4
- "I am involved in a lot of things, but this is one I get real satisfaction from"; "It makes a real difference." F5

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[58] Farmers were paid £180 per session lasting 3-6 hours with three clients.

- "I find it a worthy cause. I find it benefits them …. It makes us feel glad about what we have because at least when you can help someone like [the participant], you feel good." F6
- "I do because it is nice to be giving something back anyway; it's nice to be working with [the participants] …. Great experience for all of us." F8
- "I have great fun when the lads are here. I have great craic with them"; "They are very easy-going. … it's nice when they come because I have to slow down. Because, normally, there is ten different things you need to do and when they come, they are the priority"; "… the guys, when they are here, they really bring me back to doing things mindfully, which I really appreciate." F9
- "It a change in your life too. Every [social farm session day], this is part of your life and I don't mind it. I'm happy with it. It's just like a change in your life every [social farm session day]." F6
- "I think it is just the more people start doing it, then they will realise how good it is because it is really good for the farm and the farmer, and it is really good for the participants. It is a win-win for everybody." F9
- "… we are still learning from [the participant] …"; "… they have opened our eyes to more things"; "Another world" F4

Participants help the host farmers to **make farm improvements**.

- "First and foremost, I have tidied the place up and it badly needed a good tidying and I have had to keep it tidy from there on. It certainly has and a lot of jobs have been done around the yard and around. It has made huge improvements, of course, yeah, without a doubt in the world." F3
- F6 works by himself on the farm: "We have done a few jobs that I would probably have not done without having the help of [the participant]." For example: "I had a trailer that was left there for two years and the floor was bad in it. When we started first, that was our first job and we put a timber floor in the trailer; and at least I am able to use it now, put lights in it. We would keep it for [the day the participant was scheduled for the farm] and at least I have a trailer up and running."
- "We like [the participant] too. He is a help; he is an extra pair of hands as well around the place"; "He is no burden, like, he will do his work, there is no problem"; "He is not a burden. It is as if he was always here actually. It was like it was meant to be. That is how I feel." F4
- "Well, do you know something, it do make a big difference. You wouldn't think it but any day I have [the participant] here, I would be delighted in the evening. It gives me great satisfaction, first of all, having him working with me. But, as well as that you would get a lot of stuff done. You would be surprised, a lad with you there now. He is very well able, very capable of doing work. As I told you already, he does understand, you know, he could understand because he mightn't talk it out like me but he do understand, like." F8
- "I would be learning bits and pieces about understanding the way raised beds were put up, the idea you know of putting corrugate on the sides of them and stuff, from talking to other people. They would tell you what to do." The support worker on the farm has a polytunnel too and shares tips with the farmer. [F-ID on file]

Ballyhoura Rural Services (2015) cautioned against the needs of the farm superseding the needs of the social farming component so that clients become just labour inputs. This has negative connotations with the exploitation of vulnerable members of society historically. On the other hand, there is also the long-standing tradition of farms providing safe havens for people with learning disabilities where they could achieve a level of independence and self-actualisation that may not have been possible in other settings, an informal practice that continues today. What is clear from what the host farmers in KSF say above is that they recognise the abilities and contributions of participants and they place a high value on participants enjoying and benefitting from their time on the farms. It is also apparent that while most participants are enthusiastic workers, some of them are very capable as well.

Benefits for farm family and community

Walsh (2014) described how social farming in the cross-border region improved disability awareness among farm families and enhanced the social connectedness of community with participants. This is reflected in Kerry Social Farming too and the host farmers documented the ways in which the participants engage with children, older people and neighbours. **Friendships are formed or rekindled, older people have company, children have positive role models and new life is breathed into rural neighbourhoods**.

- "I have ... kids myself. They went to school with [the participant] and they are happy to see him; they are happy to see him here and they know him of old"; "[The participant] is very friendly and gets on very well." [F-ID on file]
- "Oh, he has [made a difference to the farm family]; he has interacted with our [children] very well"; "Yeah, with the kids"; "And with [name] there"; "My mother"; "They talk away"; "My mother is 90, plenty of chat for her, but it shows the kids, do you know, I suppose, to be more understanding, patient." [F-ID on file]
- One farmer reports how people such as neighbours and nieces and nephews enjoy interacting with the participants. He says that the experience has also been good for the farm employee, who works on the farm. He gave examples of [the participant] going to the shop with the worker to buy *The Kerryman* to check the sports' results. [F-ID on file]
- It is very evident that there is a strong bond and a friendship among the farm family, the participant and the neighbours. F7 recounted several stories and incidents that demonstrate how [the participant] has become part of the neighbourhood.

Benefits for rural economies

Another positive aspect that emerged from the Evaluation was the thinking that KSF generated among farmers and other stakeholders in terms of farm and rural diversification. It encourages them to broaden and diversify their role in the community. In particular, it reveals the capacity for **innovative social service delivery** in rural areas.

- "Showing agencies that rural areas can help provide services." PO10
- "Rural community diversification." PO11

This is borne out by the host farmers who explain how social farming is complementary to small-scale farming and that it may lead to farm diversification that integrates with the wider economy.

- "The farm – it would hardly keep itself going." F8
- "It gives me a connection to the community which I think is really important for agriculture to be sustainable and then the financial support which I get from them takes a burden off me, so those two reasons actually make it sustainable." F9
- "I would like to see it becoming more community based as time goes on and to bring more people in and maybe have it as a more therapeutic place or have a centre here where different workshops can be held." F9
- One farmer believes that: "Social farming has a role to play in the rejuvenation of rural Ireland" including in [parts of] Kerry where marginal farming exists and there is potential for further multifunctional agriculture and rural economic diversification. But: "KSF has been reactive rather than proactive." The farmer feels that there could be more innovation in the KSF e.g. in terms of taking a strategic approach, equality opportunities, synergies with rural development more widely and promoting a community enterprise for farmers. For instance, the host farmer is interested in setting up a farm café, which participants could run. [F-ID on file]

Hine *et al.* (2008) noted that it is important for farmers, the farming industry and agricultural policy makers to recognise this multifunctional feature of agriculture in order to encourage social farming. This process has begun in Ireland with support from the CEDRA Fund through the Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine.

Kerry Social Farming – a SWOT analysis

The following section assesses the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to Kerry Social Farming that the stakeholders identified in their interviews and surveys during the Evaluation.

Strengths of Kerry Social Farming

A number of themes emerged from the responses of guardians, support workers and representatives of partner organisations that point to the strengths of Kerry Social Farming. These are:

1. Person-centredness
2. Positive and targeted intervention
3. Realisation of farm family social capital
4. Partnership approach and collaboration
5. Innovation and potential to mainstream
6. Community integration
7. Social inclusion.

Person-centredness

- "The farmers are very patient with the service users and there is a natural respect for each other." SW8
- SW(a): "… [the farmer] understands that people would want to come to the farm for different reasons. Not everyone wants to get the same thing out of it."
- "The host farmers have become great advocates for the participants." PO13
- "Farmers are advocates for the people with disabilities." PO15
- "The commitment of the farmer and the support staff to the wellbeing of the participants." G14
- "People are driven to support participant." PO13

Positive and targeted intervention

- "The host farmer learns that it is ability not disability that matters. Skills, within reason, i.e. understanding and safety, can be learned." G12
- "The project concentrates on the abilities of the participant and not the disabilities." PO9
- SW(a): "This is completely separate from their work placements or work experience – it's a separate project, a social farming project, it's just another experience which is positive."
- "Targeted intervention." PO5

Realisation of farm family social capital

- "The farmers volunteering their time and supporting the individuals on the programme into their family home and business." PO7
- "Getting farmers involved with supporting people with disabilities"; "The voluntary effort of the farmers …" PO10
- "The extent of community involvement by the host farmers." PO12
- "The willingness of farmers to participate as host farmers on a voluntary capacity. It must be recognised that many would already have involvement with people with disabilities." PO14
- "The relationship that forms between the farmer and participant and their extended family." PO6
- "The [social farm] family treat [the participant] exceptionally well." G10
- "Friendship between farmer and participants." SW3
- "The friendliness of the farmers and their families." SW7
- "Enthusiasm of the farmers and how most of them enjoy having our service users." SW2
- "The willingness of the farmers." PO1
- "How well it has worked for both the farmer and the service users." PO3

Partnership approach / collaboration

- "The level of dedication and determination from participants, their families, the farmer and support staff to make this a positive experience for the people who participate in social farming." SW4
- "Opportunity to collaborate with partner organisations, local communities and host farmers." PO14

- "Good collaboration already in place. An MOU has been developed - this should be reviewed and updated as required by all project partners." PO14
- "The importance of collaboration between service providers." PO12
- "Willingness to make the project work." PO13
- "It's great to see the commitment of [SKDP] in developing this inclusive project." PO13
- "Staff at St. John of God Killarney are so good to [the participant] and all clients, and I am grateful [the participant] got a placement thanks to their efforts." G13
- "... their helpers [are] <u>brilliant</u>." [emphasis by guardian] G11
- "... the support of service provider staff on the ground." PO10

Innovativeness and suitability to mainstream project

- "The fact that it was thought of as a working area where different working methods and skills are needed and subsequently learned." G12
- "Before the project, I was surprised how little importance was laid on meaningful activities in the area of special needs any longer. So, this is a very welcome move in that area." SW5
- "Great initiative; wish it would exist in more areas. It is difficult to integrate people with different abilities in the productive work market. This project is more appropriate as reward is based on personal experience and not on the level of productive experience, which often goes along with the level of ability." SW5
- "Novel service development and provision." PO11
- "Opportunity to pilot an innovative project in Kerry." PO14
- "... the capacity to mainstream." PO12

Community integration

- "Community-based activity for individuals using our services." PO7
- "Insight into rural and community life and values." PO7
- "The strength of community/County involvement in this project and its development." PO11
- "Long-lasting impacts and wide benefits to community." PO11

Social inclusion

- "How organized and nice and inclusive the project is." G10
- "I prefer to see clients interacting with people." PO15
- "Social inclusion opportunity." PO5
- "Community inclusion and social value." PO13
- "Integration of the project with social inclusion programme." PO12
- "The 'love'!" PO8

Weaknesses of Kerry Social Farming

Guardians and support workers were asked if any issue had resulted from participants attending a social farm, and representatives from partner organisations were asked if they encountered any problem with the Project (figure 45).

Figure 45: Issues with the KSF experienced by (a) guardians, (b) support workers and (c) partner organisations.
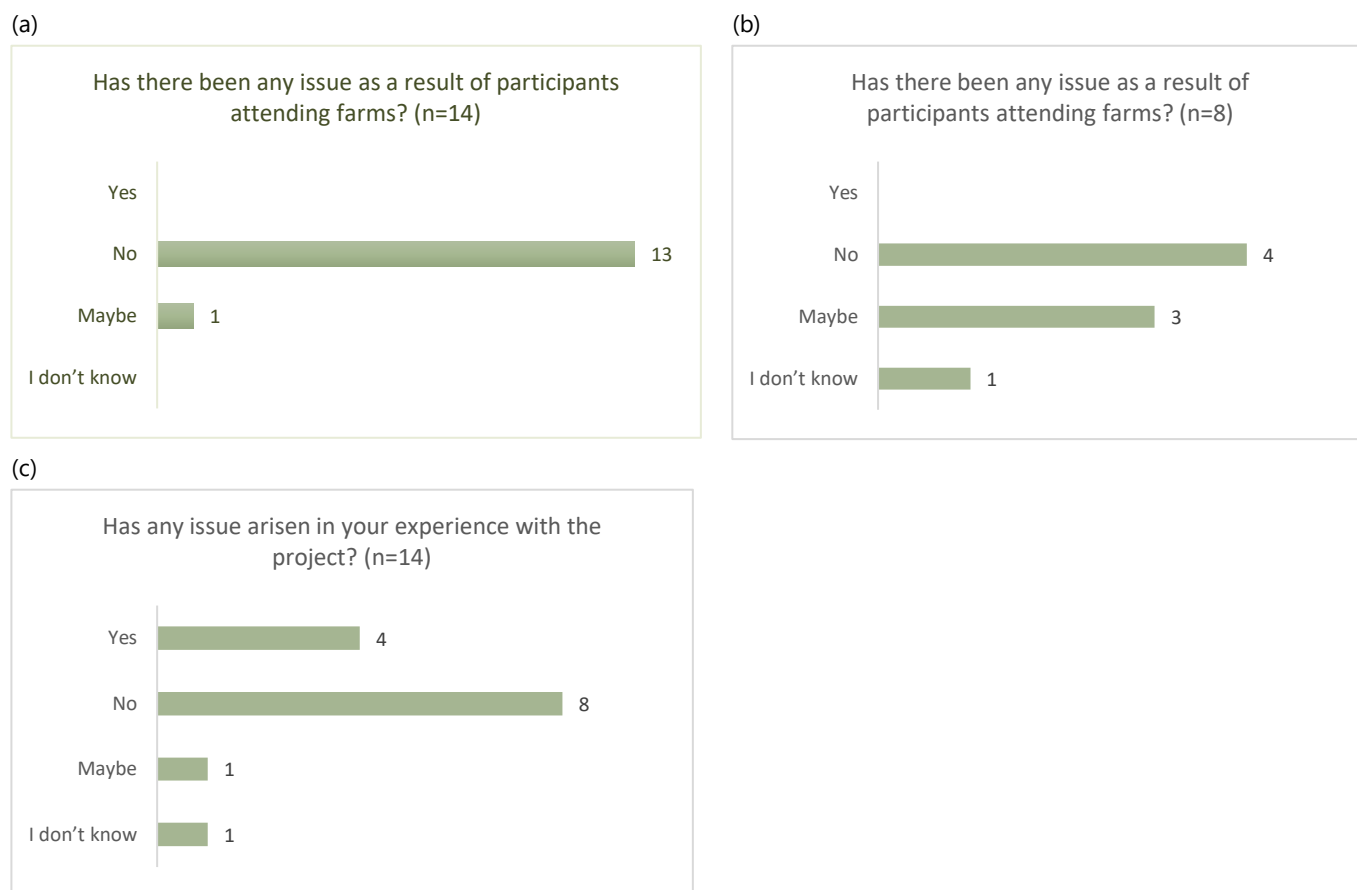
(a)

Has there been any issue as a result of participants attending farms? (n=14)

(b)

Has there been any issue as a result of participants attending farms? (n=8)

(c)

Has any issue arisen in your experience with the project? (n=14)

Data collected during the course of the Evaluation point to several issues encountered in the three years of the Project to date. Some of them relate to the **nature of farm work**, while other are about the **quality of the social farming offer**. In the cross-border project, Kinsella *et al.* (2014) and Walsh (2014) outlined similar issues there such as inclement weather and muddy ground, and devising suitable activities e.g. learning what individual participants like to do or not[59].

Physical nature of the work / suitability for females

- "Participant wasn't very happy with this outdoor physical work …" G2 [Participant has finished with the Project.]
- "She is a farmer's daughter. Some of the work on a working farm would not be suitable to a girl, especially girl with disability"; "Think that a lot of work would require the ability of a man, whereas girls with different disabilities will find it hard." G11

Outdoor work in cold or wet weather

- "Participant wasn't very happy [working] in poor weather conditions." G2
- "Sometimes cold if outdoors. But it's on farm, I suppose? Would prefer if it was garden centre and under cover." G11
- "I just think they should rest for a while in an open shed if the weather is raining instead of working under it because it may cause colds and flus." G13

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[59] Different challenges found in the SoFAB project were learning the important role of personal protection equipment despite initial discomfort, getting used to crowded and noisy spaces full of people and animals and early morning starts.

- SW(c): "... weather-wise you could be lucky ... but if it was wet, windy and cold weather, it is not the best. We don't want to take people out in those weather conditions."

Farm standards

- "Farm should be more modern, more hygienic. I know farms have muck, etc, but [social farms should be] up-to-date and well run"; "If the project were to continue, find farms that are good working farms and hygenic? I know a farm is a farm but farms differ!!" G11
- "I have supported clients on two farms: one of which I found excellent - wide variety of work, learning new skills, client has made new acquaintances; the other, unfortunately, is much poorer overall." SW1

Other issues relate to **on-farm stakeholder engagement with the Project** among:

- *Participants* – "Minor incidents around attendance, behaviour and injury." SW2
- *Farmers* – "Scheduled activities were sometimes poor at the farm; this was brought to the farmer's attention." SW1
- *Support workers* – "Inappropriate level [of] support of service user by support worker. Addressed by both organisations with both parties." PO1

Respondents also listed a number of issues in terms of the **management and future development of the Project**.

General

- "Normal development issues." PO10

Effective working group meetings

- "Board members understanding of remit and function"; "Understanding the remit and roles of all stakeholders." PO13
- "... need to get away from the focus on the HSE as the statutory body." [PO-ID on file]
- "A space could be created at each meeting to inform all concerned about other initiatives that could be of interest / benefit to clients or their organisations." PO5

Challenging the limitations of current service delivery infrastructure

- "Key is the service providers' attitudes"; "Have to take risks. Service providers are too risk averse ..."; "Agencies have gone backwards and are preventing people from moving forward. They are worn out from regulations and covering their backs." PO15

A comparison of group-based versus individual participation in Kerry Social Farming

During the Evaluation, it emerged that one service provider availed of social farming for its service users as a group activity. Participants travelled together to one social farm where they all engaged in social farming and were accompanied for the duration by a support worker. During an interview with this group of participants, the support workers present discussed an alternative way of programming social farming by scheduling it over an 8-week period in the spring and again in the autumn, as follows:

SW(c): "I was talking to SW(d) as well. We thought it might be wise for us to do perhaps an 8-week stint .... it would lead us into the summer. And then with holidays and everything coming up and all of the various summer activities – And then we might start again in the autumn for another eight weeks and probably start again in the spring. We think that

works better for the lads, for attention. They like tons of variety, you know, so …. Last year we, kind of, kept going straight …. I finished at the start of December. We said then we would leave it go until March. So, weather-wise you could be lucky but – Today now was a good enough day but if it was wet, windy and cold weather, it is not the best. We don't want to take people out in those weather conditions."

SW(b): "To keep up the interest and the motivation, I suppose, you know, it might be better to do it in an 8-week block …. I suppose, we all hear of different posts coming up and activities and people might like to try different things as well."

SW(d): "I suppose, when you go, it is the whole day gone … I know with our timetables from, say, September to December, every day was full of activities so we didn't actually have a free day to get out. I just hope that for the summer we would have a free day. Actually, hopefully a Monday because, you know, you are committed to it, so, and you don't want to be saying you are going out and then not being able to …. but again, you know, it is the whole day and it is a staff member so that is why it is hard to commit to it all year round. Even if they want to go 52 weeks of the year, you couldn't commit to it."

SW(b): "We balance it off with the rest of the groups as well, I suppose, making sure they get enough activities."

SW(d): "Not everyone wants to do this, you know …. '[*Participant], you don't have much interest in farming. You have tried it.*'"

Participant: "Right."

SW(d): "[Participant] did not grow up on a farm. You can see where it, kind of, naturally, how it happens."

SW(c): "And physically as well, like, you have to get a lot of physical work with …"

SW(b): "We work when we are there. You can work up a sweat too, you know. It's great, we enjoyed it."

SW(c): "Well, if you came from a farming background or, you know."

SW(d): "It's more second nature."

This exchange reveals that there are several reasons behind programming social farming in a different way: participant interest, participant and support worker activity/work preferences, competing activities during busy summer period, staff resources, and avoiding winter weather.

1. The 8-week period is seen as an adequate length of time to maintain participants' attention, interest and motivation.
2. Social farming must be balanced with the interests and activities of non-participants.
3. Not every participant or support worker likes social farming. A number of support workers referred to it being a better fit for those from a farming background.
4. Social farming would not be scheduled during the summer period as it is a busy time for service providers with a variety of summer activities available. People hear of different opportunities becoming available and would like to be free to try them out.
5. Social farming takes up the whole day. It is hard to find a free day during which to schedule it and a staff member to dedicate to it, and it is challenging to commit to that schedule and staffing resource on a regular basis. This becomes more challenging during the summer period when staff take extents of annual leave.
6. Social farming would not be scheduled during the winter period to help avoid the most inclement weather.

This discussion reveals that several issues arise when social farming is offered as a group activity.

1. Group-based social farming is a less flexible option than that seen when individual participants attend farms. The group moves between the same day centre and the same farm, altogether. This leaves them constrained by the routines and the interests of all the participants in the group. In contrast, individual participants are free to try out different farms to find the right 'fit' for them and they also get to mix with different people to those at the day centre while on the farm.
2. The group of participants requires accompaniment by a support worker, regardless of individual ability. In contrast, individual participants of sufficient ability can experience greater independence and self-actualisation (realising their potential) and one-to-one time with the farmer or other farm workers.
3. The constraints of group-based social farming peak during the summer period. Even though the weather is warmer and sunnier, and life on the farm is at its busiest and most varied, service provider staffing resources are limited due to annual leave and this makes it difficult to schedule social farming as a group activity then. In addition, other summer activities compete with the opportunity to attend the social farm.

Host farmers were critical of this approach:

- "[The service provider] brings people the wrong time of year." [F-ID on file]
- "You have to question how some [agencies] shut down for the summer. Having participants in social farming for the summer can be more pleasant for them." F5

Therefore, **individual participation in Kerry Social Farming allows for a more 'person-centred' approach** that can prioritise the interests, abilities and schedule of each participant.

> The value of individual participation is exemplified in the following participant's description of **trying out different social farms**.
> "I tried [x's] farm but I did not like it and then I came to [y's] and I loved it here, like." MP14

Opportunities for Kerry Social Farming

The evaluation sought the opinions of host farmers regarding to what, if any, extent they could expand their provision of current social farming services for people with intellectual disabilities or acquired brain injuries.

In terms of expanding the provision of the current social farming services, most host farmers were satisfied with the number of participants they had now. While some were open to the possibility of another one or two participants in time, it would depend on (a) the needs of the individuals, (b) the availability of support and (c) the time commitment required from the farmer. Host farmers explained that each additional participant meant less time available for farming and thus there are financial implications.

- "I think for the work here, the one person is enough unless we get bigger.'' F4
- F5 is currently operating at capacity in terms of the number of participants and the scope of what they can do on the farm.
- "I probably would [take on more participants] maybe in time, when I get more used to working with him and getting to understand him." F8
- "I think, at the moment, two is probably enough. Maybe, further down the line, I would like to [take on more participants] but because during the summer months, it is my really, really busy period, so, it is very hard to take any more people on." F9
- "So, I would, yeah, I could take three people on the farm. It would go down to their needs; it would go down to their disabilities. Like, if I had three or four like [the current participants], no problem in the world. They are well capable and they are great workers. Yeah, you would have to look at the participants' abilities and … their needs, and so you have to, kind of, measure from there, I suppose." F3

- "Just hopefully we can carry on and help the best way we can; as long as everything runs smooth. I don't have a problem with it and long may it last"; "Yes, I wouldn't mind another one or two as time goes on anyway." F6
- "I only have one at the minute. We seem to be fine but I believe if we had an extra [participant], there would be different things I would need. It would be something that I would have to look into. Dependent on the needs of the person coming onto the farm and that he would feel comfortable"; "If more lads were to come on board on the farm, I suppose, it would depend on their needs and I would have to talk about that at the time." F6
- "The only disadvantage I would see with some of the cases, you would need to give more time to that and you would have to be probably financially supported for doing that"; "For every hour on this farm, it is really important so if I have someone coming for three or four hours that can have a detrimental effect on what I am doing so because at the end of the day, this is a business." F9

One farmer cautioned that social farms risked losing their **unique advantage over institutions** if the number of participants per farm grew too much.

- F7 believe that participants are better off interacting with people who don't live in institutions: "There is no point replicating the institution. The farm has to be real, not just like an open-air institution."

Another farmer talked about the option of **periodic group activities** for particular farming activities, like a 'meitheal'.

- "What could work, if there was a big task to do, I have spoken to, I think, [staff member] from [service provider] and she said, look, if I had a job where I need a couple of strong fellas to come along that they would love it. So, there is an opportunity for that." F9

Farmers recognised the need for experience or skills to work with some participants and the need for support workers.

- In terms of participants with high needs: "You wouldn't have the experience for it..." F4
- "... we'd manage ourselves with one [participant] but if you had, maybe, two or three people, we would probably need help ... you would need an extra person there with you to give a hand. Not with one; maybe two you would get away with it." F4
- "Couldn't do that on your own." F6 would require extra people to work with him on the farm for the other categories of potential participants discussed next.

The Evaluation gauged the interest and opinions of host farmers regarding four additional groups of potential participants:

1. Children and young people up to 18 years with troubles or behavioural disorders
2. People with psychological ill health
3. People experiencing alcohol or drug addiction
4. Older people with dementia

People with psychological ill health

- One host farmer who is also a guardian and a member of the working group said: "I think we should look at the possiblity of expanding the project to include those with mental health issues, etc." [F-ID on file].
- "Include the mental health service providers as well, with HSE as the conduit." While currently the participants on the farm are those with high levels of dependency, F1 sees social farming as being well suited to more independent people in need of milder therapeutic interventions.
- F2 would have no problem taking other participants, e.g. with mental health issues.
- "Isn't it a lot better, I mean, to go out into the open countryside or into the open air. I couldn't see what would be wrong with it. I would have no difficulty with it and I think it is another thing social farming should explore." F3
- "No problem." F4

- "Yeah, but sure, there is only one way I think, to have to get them out and see, because inside a building, house every day … once they are able to get out, to do a bit of work and I think it is, well, better for their mental health. If they have a disability, if a day they goes out, they feel better. Even [the participant's] father says to me now, he would sleep well on a [social farm session] night when he goes home. It's that he is out all day and we do what we do. He seems to be little more tired in the evening. If it helps him, it helps him." F6
- "Yeah, I would understand that very well." F8
- "Yeah. Again, I think it would come down to proper training and then if it is taking away time from your work then there would have to be something for that. I would be completely open to it." F9

Children and young people up to 18 years with troubles or behavioural disorders

- "If they only came for a day or a week for work experience; that is a massive thing to look into as well." F3
- "Oh yes, yeah"; "Children, fine, yeah. But I don't know would we have the stuff for children, small children, like?"; "Well, this time of year we would with calves"; "But only for a little while. Would they be able to feed the calves?"; "They need to be able to interact with the animals." F4
- "I wouldn't mind, once they are okay and keep them under control for a few hours. You would need extra support." F6
- "Yes, I would of course, I would be open to anything." F8
- "Yeah I would love that. I would probably need more training but again I think that would be perfect." F9

People experiencing alcohol or drug addiction

- "… if you were asked to take one of them on and if one of them wanted to come onto the farm and was genuine about helping himself or herself, I wouldn't see any problem in that; once they were genuine about what they were doing …. I wouldn't see any problem if he is genuine to come on and help himself and if he finds a bit of freedom … to build up his confidence and he would be doing something and be able to look at it and things and say *I have done this and contributed to this* and, do you know? If it would mean a recovery for him, of course; but, like, if he was wasting my time and wasting his own time he would be well to stay where he is." F3
- "Well, it is something I have never thought about; they needs a place to go to too, you know, to recover. Just because, I have [children] myself and if they made a mistake and went off the track, I would be delighted if somebody would bring them back on." [F-ID on file]
- "Yeah." F8
- "Yeah." F9
- "No, not with the kids"; "Definitely not with the kids living on the farm." [F-ID on file]

Older people with dementia

- "Well, I suppose, when you go into a certain age level … you are probably going back into a bracket of support workers again. But if a support worker wanted to bring someone like that onto the farm, no problem …. I would have no problem with them coming onto a farm if the support worker came on with them, no problem in the world. But, everyone would have to work at it together." F3
- "They would be fine but very labour intensive, like"; "You would need an awful lot of assistance." F4
- "Well, it's a question I couldn't answer you, not right now. I wouldn't know that would work on a farm here." F6
- "Well, they wouldn't be as easy to manage on the farm, I suppose, would be one thing. You would want things closed-up because I would have worked with them in the past; we experienced that in the past. So, you would like to have things, you would have to have a very controlled environment for that kind of person. And maybe, like, if you had one-to-one because you couldn't manage two of them, because one of them might go one way and the other might go the other way"; "Another setting would probably be more suitable. It would be a dangerous environment; farming wouldn't be the safest environment anyway." F8
- "I think it would be problematic. I would probably need a bit more, you would have to change things … you could have raised beds but they would have to be much higher. You would possibly need more support and you would probably be able to take one or two, again, with proper training and proper supports." [F-ID on file]

Overall, the host farmers are particularly amenable to the potential for having (a) **people with psychological ill-health** and (b) **children and young people up to 18 years with troubles or behavioural disorders** on their social farms. They recognise that this would require appropriate training for farmers, suitable farming activities, adequate staff support and payment depending on the time and resource commitment required of farmers.

Some host farmers are also amenable to providing social farming opportunities for people experiencing alcohol or drug addiction but one farm family with children would not consider this group. Older people with dementia is seen as the most challenging group of participants to have on social farms due to the labour intensive nature of their support needs and higher demands in terms of health and safety.

One farmer believes that Kerry Social Farming could also help people seeking **work experience**.

"The next place I'd like to see social farming opening out into .... we need to open out to ... work experience. I see my wife inside now, she goes out into different places maybe a day to a hardware store stacking shelves or something for work experience and she goes with the student going out. We could open out into that. There is a massive benefit there as well – like the Department of Education, now, where we could open our farm to the same ... let them come onto our farm, whether it be doing a bit of gardening or something like that, or feeding a few animals; because ... no matter where we live, inside the middle of Dublin or up in Carrantuohill, nature is our natural thing at the end of the day and gardening or farming or whatever it is." [F-ID on file]

Threats to Kerry Social Farming

In terms of the future development of Kerry Social Farming, respondents identified a number of areas to address. They highlighted the **need to expand the Project** in terms of the number of social farm sessions available to participants, the number of participants availing of the Project, the number of host farmers (particularly outside of South Kerry) and the number of support workers. All of these changes are required to meet the rising demand for social farming in Kerry.

- "I just wish he could attend another day"; "I would love if he got another spell, some other few hours, it would make him so happy ..."; "If he got another half day there, or somewhere else, he would love it, he keeps asking to go to the farm on his day off, bless him." G13
- "More service users to use the project." PO9
- "The hope that the project will further expand." PO4
- "Difficulty in recruiting host farmers." PO5
- "The issue right now is the limited number of farms involved outside of the SKDP area, this requires action." PO4
- "Need to get social farmer up and running in North Kerry." PO7
- "Kerry is just too large an area to cover." One farmer recommends that NEWKD runs its own social farming project in North Kerry [F-ID on file].
- "On [one farmer's] farm, the service users rely on our organisation to provide staff to transport and supervise and assist them during their time on the farm. This can prove difficult at times due to staff shortages, familiar staff on holidays/leave, etc." SW8
- SW(a): "There is more people coming on line, more people need support and currently it is just myself and [another support worker], the two job coaches."
- "Support workers are stretched these days, anyway, already." SW5
- For one support worker, the project entails: "Extra workload." SW2

Other problem areas in KSF to address for the future include the **lack of suitable funding**, **excessive bureaucracy** and **over-regulation**. This reflects the experience in the UK also. Care farmers there identified funding, securing care contracts and recognition for the value of care farms and care farming as their top three challenges in care farming (Care Farming UK, 2016). Similarly, nearly a decade earlier, care farmers' top challenges all related to funding (sourcing and accessing secure streams of funding and justifying care farming costs to referring bodies) and regulatory concerns (a perceived lack of legitimacy, health and safety requirements, insurance and tax issues) (Hine *et al.*, 2008). In Ireland, the lack of funding for social services has meant that projects are shoehorned into labour market participation initiatives

while successful social farming pilot projects have been left stranded after their short-term funding streams ended (McGloin and O'Connor, 2007). In Northern Ireland[60], long-term, sustainable funding is one of the main barriers to social farming. Johnston (2016) suggested that direct payments be explored for subsidising social farming as a form of farm diversification in Northern Ireland and Wilcox (2008) recommended adjusting the Single Farm Payment in the UK to support farmers for achieving social objectives, such as inclusion through social farming. Corporate Social Responsibility is another potential funding source whereby companies could be called upon to provide funding for social farming to fund placements or hours per year (Wilcox, 2008). But while sponsorship and support from corporations or a philanthropic model is good in the development phase, those experienced in social farming believe that it needs sustainable funding long-term[61].

- There is a threat that SICAP funding might not be maintained. "If participant numbers double, SICAP funding will not double." F5
- "SICAP does not encourage this type of project as there are few outcomes that 'satisfy' programme requirements especially where targets are excessive, etc." PO8
- "Frustration that such initiatives are not appreciated by policy makers, programme implementers, etc." PO8
- "Amount of red tape that groups insist on." PO5
- F2 states that farmers are in the project for the right reasons. However, he has a fear that if the project were to be mainstreamed or go "chasing public money", it would become over-regulated. Being over-regulated is one of F2's fears. He points to a HIQA report on Camphill, stating that "Camphill were hard hit by HIQA. Now, I know HIQA has to be there ... there is a need for regulation, but there has to be an appropriate way."
- With respect to over-regulation, F2 states that as a result of regulation, "Camphill have fewer animals." He is fearful that if HIQA got involved with social farming that there could be a reduction in the participants' opportunities to interact with animals.
- F5 also reports being very disappointed with a recent HIQA report on Camphill, which he describes as not being "holistic enough." He states that "any review of social farming needs to be holistic and not get tied up in smaller or technical things."

The **logistical challenge of transport** affects participants' access to Kerry Social Farming. Cost-effective transport arrangements are also a challenge in Northern Ireland[62]. At present, the KSF is confined to Kerry, but one participant travels from Baile Bhuirne in Cork. Those who cannot avail of public transport depend on either service providers (support workers or drivers provided by the Tús scheme) or family members to help them to get to and from the social farms. The most frequent method reported by the guardians is travel provided by the service provider (n=7) (figure 46). The next most common mode according to guardians is public transport (n=5). Other participants rely on family transport (n=4). Some use a mix of transport modes.

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[60] http://www.ruralsupport.org.uk/social-farming-northern-ireland/social-farming-frequently-asked-questions/, accessed 7 February 2017.
[61] Personal notes from the DAFM Information and Discussion Session on Social Farming in Agriculture House, Dublin 2, 28 March 2017.
[62] Johnston (2016) uncovered disorganisation with the transport for participants that were arranged between the social farming facilitator and the service providers.

Figure 46: Transport modes.

Methods of transport used by the participant to access the social farm (n=13)

Mode	Value
Service Provider	7
Public transport	5
Family	4
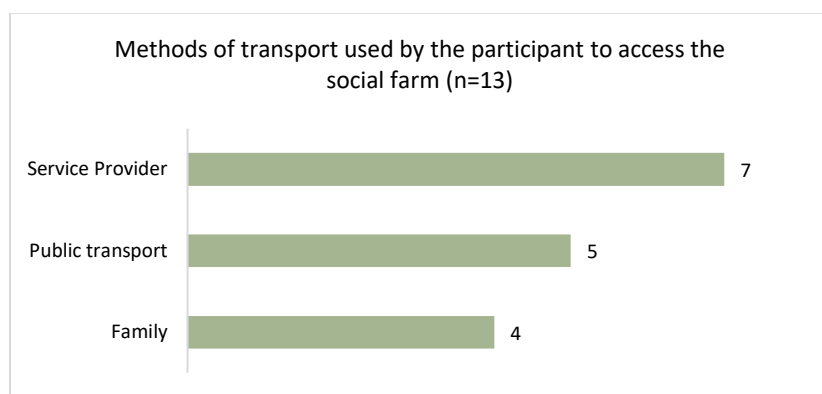
Almost all the guardians in this survey either agreed or strongly agreed that the transport arrangements worked well for the participants and for them (figure 47).

- "It works out well for me bringing [the participant] to bus stop and collecting him in the evening." G6

Figure 47: How the transport arrangements work for (a) participants and (b) guardians.

(a)

"The transport arrangements to and from the farm work well for the participant" (n=14)

Response	Value
Strongly agree	9
Agree	5
Neither agree nor disagree	
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

(b)

"The transport arrangements to and from the farm work well for me" (n=14)

Response	Value
Strongly agree	7
Agree	6
Neither agree nor disagree	1
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	
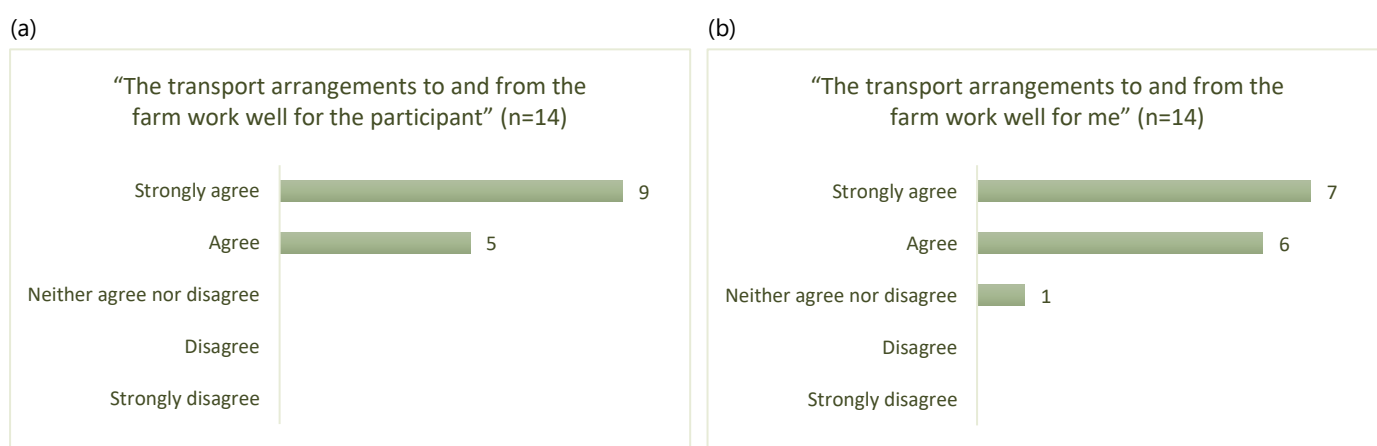
But some host farmers and support workers have concerns about transport.

- "More transportation needed." SW4
- SW(a): "Transport is definitely an issue; we could really do with some assistance, either through transportation or a driver."
- Transport is an issue, especially in places like Glencar that lack a bus service. "We want to expand, but how do we get participants to remote locations? It is often in the more rural areas that you find the most suitable farms." F5

The following example highlights the transportation challenge faced by some participants, the logistics involved and the negative impact it has on the time a participant gets to spend on a social farm.

- "… the only way we can get [the participant] here, because he lives [30 minutes bus ride from Killarney], is to wait for him to come in on the public bus, pick him up from the bus station and drive him back again to the bus station. And his bus leaves at 14:30 in the afternoon, so that is a very small window really, he is not here till … we got here today 10:30 or 10:45 and you have got to leave at 14:00, so it cuts the day very short. So, transport is an issue for us." [SW-ID on file]

To help address the transport challenge, Kerry Social Farming is collaborating with Local Link Kerry (Kerry Community Transport CLG) to develop a Social Car model. The **Social Car** is whereby host farmers use their own vehicle to transport participants to and from farms. This offers **a flexible solution to access** and the **normalisation of transport** for participants.

Strengthening Kerry Social Farming

Respondents in the Evaluation outlined a number of ways to strengthen and improve Kerry Social Farming into the future.

Enhance input from participants

To **improve person-centredness**, respondents highlighted that participants are the ones who must decide whether they go social farming or not and that this decision should relate back to their personal plan. One partner organisation also called for tailoring social farming supports to participant needs.

- "The project can be suitable to some service users." SW7
- "However, some do not like farming and have no interest in going back farming." SW8
- "… social farming is not for everyone …" SW4
- "Agencies need to look at the outcomes." PO15
- "Project supports for the service user should be based on individual needs with regards to supervision, support etc. It should not be a one-size-fits-all approach." PO7

Host farmers showed an awareness of person-centredness and the need to respond to the wishes of participants when describing their approach to working with participants in the following comments.

- The farmer notes that on his farm, he has to take his time observing the participants for the first while so as to see what they would like and what they best enjoy. He states that those with Down Syndrome generally like to work for about two hours and then take a break. [F-ID on file]
- "I think at the start what needs to happen is the participants need to get used to you and you need to get used to them because it's not something I had done before and you need to see … what they are capable of and go with their pace, to make them more comfortable and to build that relationship." F9
- "We know his abilities, do you know, like? And he tells us, in fairness to him, …"; "He doesn't want machinery and that is the first thing he said when he came here. He said, he can't drive a tractor and can't do this. That was all put to one side and so long; he can't do this and can't do that. We all know that when he came first, anyway, and it's like routine when he comes. He just gets out, puts on his wellingtons and straight to the yard." [F-ID on file]
- "We give him the time"; "You must devote time to [the participant]"; "For us, we see [the farm session day] as [the participant's] day. We do things to suit [the participant]." F7
- "Just take it nice and slow, nice and handy, let them get comfortable with it. It's all about them enjoying it. It is not really actually about getting too caught up on getting something done. Allowing them to do something and get comfortable with it and get a sense of achievement at the end of it." F9
- F7 believes that all participants should be treated according to their needs and abilities; there has to be flexibility. Not all disabilities are the same.
- "There is no one-size-fits-all approach to disability. There are many types and a big range." F5
- F5 anticipates that "having a broader base of farms will give participants more choice" and that "such decisions should not be made by the agencies or by the farmers, but by the participants."
- One farmer gave an example of a participant who had been attending the farm through a service provider and this ended. He was relatively independent and not reliant on care workers and he chose to return to the farm himself, with the support of his parents. [F-ID on file]

Stakeholders called for **improved training opportunities for both farmers and participants**. Social farmers and/or their partners, at least in pilot projects and at the early stage of development in countries, tend to have had personal or professional experience of people with disabilities, other defined needs or in the education sector as found in the Netherlands (Buist, 2016), Northern Ireland (Johnston, 2016) and Norway. Reflecting the fact that the KSF is a voluntary model of social farming, this Evaluation found that an additional factor in Kerry was a background in volunteerism and community activism. Across the nine farms, every host farm family, farmer or spouse exhibited at least one of the following characteristics:

1. relatives with intellectual disabilities (at least five families);
2. employment involving people with a disability (two farmers and two spouses); and
3. a history of community activism or volunteerism (at least five farmers).

- "Yes. I work for the Irish Wheelchair Association. I am a health care assistant. I have done the training course and all of that but there is no training like being on the ground and doing the job. Nothing prepares you for it, like. I am used to it. I am with the Irish Wheelchair Association for two and a half years. I am constantly working with the same participants." [F-ID on file]
- "I drive a bus for [an organisation in the care sector] …. I have a [family member] myself, that is, who, well, we say is not very badly off but has just a bit of it. So, we grew up with that; I wouldn't be a beginner." [F-ID on file]
- Another farmer also claims that having a family member with an intellectual disability has better enabled them to understand the participant whom they host on their farm. [F-ID on file]
- "I suppose, the only thing that I knew with people with special needs was that my wife is [working with young people, including those with intellectual disabilities]. She would be working an awful lot with special needs and I would see them coming into the house and things like that." [F-ID on file]

As part of the Evaluation, host farmers were asked about the training they received from Kerry Social Farming. Their comments showed that they received **guidance from SKDP**, **training in health and safety** and **support workers provided help with participants**. But farmers also talked about the value of **learning by doing**, such as taking the time to get to know the participant, being open to what they want and allowing things to develop naturally.

- "There was no training as such"; "I was the only local one around here. Then, Joe got other farmers to come in." F2 also reports that KPFA got people together and that from this "I knew I would be better able to cope."
- F5 went through Garda clearance, but was not able to recall any specific training or induction, other than that provided by Joe.
- F7 are not aware of, and do not recall undergoing any induction or training for participating farmers.
- "There was, kind of … I was, kind of, told alright what it was about and Joe told me all about that on the day." F8
- "We have been getting some training as well from … on child safety and stuff, how to keep them safe and yourself safe." F9
- "We had a vulnerable adult training course done and there probably will be more training going down the road … but, look, you carry out your farming duties and you get to know the people coming on to the farm and, do you know, I wouldn't get bogged down on training. I know you have to do a certain element of training but for me, it is so simple to adapt to and everything falls into place"; "It is something I wouldn't get too worried about, dealing with them, because it is amazing how things fall into place, so simple, like …. Definitely, working with people with special needs and different disabilities, like, would wake you up and you get to understand people better." F3
- "… if I wasn't part of social farming and if I started out in the morning and said I wanted to work with people with disabilities and things like that, I would have to do about 25 different courses and give maybe about two to three years or three to four different levels of education. But, whereas, you know, the amount of learning, the amount of things I have learned about students and service users and people with disabilities is just unreal. I have learned a pile, you know, how to communicate and work with them and, you know." F3

- "Well, I suppose, it is, kind of, a learning curve from our side of it too"; "We learned it all by ourselves, anyway, do you know?"; "… how to communicate with people that have difficulties easier …. Before, you would be in no contact, you would take no notice of them. But now you would, like; you would know how to understand them"; "You have to slow down"; "Slow down, talk away with them and they are happy out. Definitely learned a lot." F4
- "I think it is one of those things you have to go straight in; as long as you have the interest in it and you know the idea, what it is that they want to get out of it. I think you have to learn as you go along; as long as you are open and willing." F9
- Staff from the service provider came to the social farm for the first twelve weeks in order to monitor one participant's settling-in and progress. The support workers still contact the host farmer by phone, and the farmer contacts them too, usually in relation to logistics, travel arrangements or to advise if the participant will be staying on with the [farm family] in the evening later than usual. [F-ID on file]
- "Yes, we had Irena [KPFA support worker] who used to come every day for about three months and to supervise, to see what was being done. She offered guidance and advice. We had another girl, Mary Lucey [KPFA support worker]; she was very helpful as well." [F-ID on file]
- "Clare [KPFA support worker] was with me at the start …. for the first couple of months." [F-ID on file]

Host farmer training needs

The main training sought by the host farmers is to learn more about:

1. Working with participants' **needs and abilities**; and
2. how to **communicate effectively**, especially with participants who are **non-verbal**. This echoes the cross-border experience where farmers found communication to be hardest initially and dependent on speech impairment and social interaction skills (Kinsella *et al.*, 2014; Walsh, 2014).

Training host farmers how to work with participants' needs and abilities

- "Well, there is always room for improvement. You have to learn as you go along"; "… there would be no harm in taking what's there; if it improves the way we can handle the special needs, by all means, yeah." F6
- "Well, I suppose, you would like to learn a bit more alright, do you know, like. There is obviously more to learn because, as they say, you are always learning, every day. But if there was a specific thing we didn't know about, it's handy to have a bit done"; "I thought that when we got [the participant] first that the only training that would be of 100% importance is to learn about whatever disability or intellectual disability or anything like that with him so that you would be able to say, 'oh, I have to slow down here', 'I have to give direct instructions and [the participant] is not able to do that', 'he doesn't like this', or 'he doesn't like that', do you know? That is the kind of training we should have; all farmers should have got basic training at the start because each person has different abilities to the next farmer's; they might have Down Syndrome or whatever. Just a little bit of, say: 'you have to slow down', 'they have to have clear instructions' or whatever." F4

Training host farmers how to communicate effectively with participants

- "The only thing is that we would understand the people with special needs. I don't know if there is any way for us to understand that, as opposed to, is there a course we could do? Anything they would be willing to give, to give us an insight on how to deal with him because there is bound to be more lads in the same boat"; "We would further our education with him, to be able to understand him better because some of them are not verbal"; "Communication is vital"; "The only things that would be, it would be hard for the host farmer, is probably communication with some people that are non-verbal; that would be the only thing. But, sure, it is like anything, if you were trained up. Training would help alright …"; "Training has been neglected, it's a new thing anyway, its new to everyone." F8
- "I suppose, at the moment, you know, with [the participants], it's just normal farming. We get on and we know each other and, you see, it is easy to communicate with each other and everything. I suppose, I'd like social farming to go a bit more, well we say, to adults … that wouldn't have as much speech or something like that to

... open social farming to them as well, like, and probably that's where training down the road would come in because the more people you open it to, the more, the greater success you will have with it." F3

- One farmer points out that [the participant] can get aggressive; "that's his way of expressing himself. You need to be alert and to be careful." [F-ID on file]
- F5 states that there were some communication difficulties initially as he and the participants did not always understand each other, only because of language or diction issues. "Now, we understand each other 100%."
- "[The participant] tends to say 'yes' to everything, and you can't be sure of what he is telling you." F7 gave some examples of the challenges the participant faces in recalling activities or places he has been. They spoke very lovingly about him, and outlined how they respond with reassurance. They also acknowledge that "he can surprise you with the things he comes out with."
- "He understands alright but sometimes he just can't get it out. He understands well but he can't talk it out verbally. I can understand then. Because on the first days that [the participant] was with me here, I didn't know would he drink tea. Sometimes those guys would say yes to everything but it takes time for us to get to understand each other." [F-ID on file]

The need to **develop disability training for host farmers** was also raised by a partner organisation.

- "Training for the farmer to be more focused on the participants' needs and not just on standard Health and Safety." PO9

While most host farmers would be satisfied with sufficient training to meet their current requirements, two of them expressed an interest in **vocational training leading to qualification** (box 5).

- "I suppose, that goes down to ... social farming would have to open out to, as I was saying, to different groups [other than people with disabilities]. If that happened, of course, you would have to have training, you would." F3
- "Yeah, I would like to know more about [a qualification], if there was something." F9

Partner organisations identified the need to **include educational institution partners** for participant and farmer training, with suggestions of Kerry Education Training Board (KETB), Institute of Technology Tralee (ITT) and University College Cork's (UCC) outreach programme:

- "Are KETB & ITT on board? If not they could be." PO8
- "Get involvement from KETB to support training requirements of the service users and farmers." PO7
- "UCC in conjunction with KCC and SKDP have opened a satellite campus in Cahersiveen. There is an opportunity for the project to develop links here and for a dedicated course on social farming to be developed." PO14

Kerry Social Farming is also exploring participant training opportunities with Mary Immaculate College and Teagasc to teach farm skills and life skills through farming.
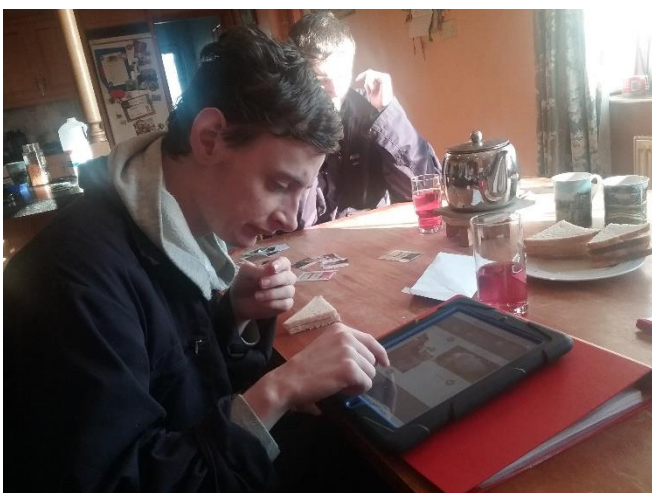
There have been a number of transnational projects that included training in social farming.

Name	Description	Period
DIANA – **D**isability **I**n sustainable **A**griculture: a **N**ew **A**pproach for training of practitioners	Project to develop a training course in social farming for practitioners in Europe	2010-12
MAiE – **M**ultifunctional **A**griculture **i**n **E**urope	A network and advisory project to establish training tools for social and ecological development on social farms in Europe	2011-13
INCLUFAR – **Inclu**sive **Far**ming	Transfer of concepts, experiences, skills and training tools for social farming and eco-social inclusion in Europe from German and Scandinavian programmes	2013-15

Adapted from van Elsen (2013: 2).

Farmers in the SoFAB project underwent eight days of training each; a 10-week training programme for potential social farmers and care workers was also delivered (Kinsella, 2014). MAiE (2013) has developed a training programme for entrepreneurship in social farming and a job profile for an entrepreneur in social farming. The training programme is designed for those with a foundation in farming and addresses the topics of:

1. Starting a social farm;
2. Adapting the farm and farming activities to social farming;
3. Organising care on a social farm; and
4. Financial management of a social farm.

Participant training needs

Many respondents highlighted the need to **develop training for participants**.

- "Offer appropriate training to participants, if they wish." SW5
- "Offer some training and certification for [participants]." SW2
- "Suggestions to be given to Irene Kavanagh to ensure training is carried out." PO6
- "Place, train, maintain"; "Don't call them participants. Using the term 'trainee' has connotations"; "Call the farmers 'job coaches'." PO15

Suggestions for participant training included one idea that could be implemented immediately:

- "How about a work-in-progress folder - pictures and headings or short descriptions that the participant could work on. Encourage participants to go through the Farmer's Journal, supermarket brochures for necessary headlines and images related to the project. Certificate presentations." G12

The type of training suggested to develop for participants included:

- "Devising a third-level / IT course related to social farming for adults with learning disabilities - mild to moderate capacity." G12
- "Look at Green Cert …. Apprenticeships …. Use modular model." PO15

Suggestions on how to develop the training for participants, who to deliver it and where were:

- "Communicate with individuals with intellectual disabilities through their own surveys." SW7
- "Training needs analysis drawn up by stakeholders." PO13

- "Form a group which would be interested in developing an appropriate training plan. Get recognition for the training plan and recruit people that have both experience in farming and special needs to train, preferably on the farm." SW5

Training for participants might include:

- "Teaching [participants] how to care more for farm animals." G6
- "Keep first aid and manual handling fresh." SW4

Training for participants could be tracked if:

- "Training log kept." PO6

Introduce awards and enhance monitoring, evaluation and record keeping

Support workers recommended that the Project **recognise participant progress** by:

- "Identifying and showcasing the participants' achievements." SW4
- "Certificates, Day of Recognition - putting more specific tasks and plans in place on each farm for individual [participants]." SW7
- "Certification days and get-togethers annually." SW2

Respondents flagged the **importance of monitoring and evaluation**.

- "Yearly evaluation of each individual's progression .... For example, has it reduced their anxiety, improved their moods." PO15
- "Regular multi-disciplinary review to look at individuals." SW5
- "Evaluations - possibly every six months or if someone exits it or a weekly comment sheet." SW7
- "Evaluation forms annually." SW2

Host farmers are key stakeholders when it comes to recording the activities, progress and achievements of the participants on their farms. This is vital evidence for monitoring the progression of participants and evaluating the outputs of the Project. In the following comments, farmers discussed their approach to record-keeping in the KSF.

- "Tis good, tis good .... my attitude to record-keeping would be, I suppose, for keeping records, of course, of tasks that they have done but I wouldn't be for, I say, '[The participant] had a bad day today'. I wouldn't be for that sort of record keeping. But there are tasks and things like that, of course, what we did and what they were able to do and things like that; yeah, it is nice to know what they did each week. If you had to look back over the last year's work, what we had done, it's nice to look back over it and say, 'these are the different things we have done'." F3
- "... I have a sheet, alright, from St. John of God's, like, and ... oh, what's in it? What time he comes and ..."; "The activities"; "And there is 'good', 'very good' and 'excellent' ... and it is mostly 'excellent'." F4
- "We have sheets there and we would do it out every day after them. Every evening after [the participant] going home, I would put down exactly what we were doing on that day." F6
- "Fill [the activity log] out and you would have your record for the week"; "It is very simple." F6
- "Yeah, it is very straightforward: what time did [the participant] get here; what we had planned for the day; what did we get done. It's just nice to have a record of what is happening too." F8
- "There are sheets we have to fill out but they only take a couple of minutes just to fill out, see how the day went. But, I think Clare [KPFA support worker] is probably doing a lot of the work as well: the record keeping or recording if anything happened that day." [F-ID on file]

The topic of record-keeping was discussed during the feedback session with host farmers. They recognised the importance of tracking information about the social farming sessions and the role of such data as evidence to demonstrate KSF outputs and participant progression. The farmers recommended that they liaise with the KSF to devise **improved farm-based record-keeping tools and methods**.

Enhance the Kerry Social Farming offer

One support worker recommended that all farms **have indoor work areas** for the sake of both participants and support workers during inclement weather.

- "An indoor area to work would be a great help during wet weather." SW7 (for participants)
- "An indoor work place during bad weather would be good." SW7 (for support workers)

Guardians suggested ways to **expand the range of activities** offered through the KSF.

- "Could the project involve other areas of farming e.g. attending marts, working with vets?" G2
- "How about local market stall - packing produce, setting up the stall and taking it down, helping with the customers, bagging their purchases …. Organise a day out for all participants to an Agricultural Show (they will love the machinery - milking, industrial and transport), Food Fairs, Local Guest Chef Cooking Demonstrations." G12
- "In summer, if the project is working then, how about getting the participants to paint faces on bales to keep the crows off, a guaranteed fun aspect! :-)" G12

Expanding activities out into the community would help to answer calls to **enhance community integration**.

- "More rural community integration is needed." PO10
- "Kerry Social Farming needs to stay community based." PO15
- "Get community groups to provide similar opportunities to people within their community projects." PO10
- F5 suggests that Kerry Community Transport give funding (e.g. 50% or so) towards transport costs to help improve accessibility for participants throughout communities.

Clarify the role of service provider and implement protocols

Respondents noted the need to **clarify role of service provider** and to **develop protocols for social farming arrangements**.

- "Greater clarity on what client organisations are bringing to the table." PO5
- "I think there should be greater clarity re: the role of the service provider and support worker." PO13
- "… it would need to be clear what roles the other service providers have, but the partnership approach to improving their quality of lives is vital." PO8
- "Need for protocols so that the agencies roll up their sleeves and are consistent." PO15.

For example, while one host farmer described a good working relationship with a service provider, another was critical.
- "Very punctual and [if] they are late, they will always inform you, anyway, of what is happening and what is going on, or if he is not coming, they will tell you the day before"; "Or [the participant] will ring"; "I find them very good. Communication is very good and the help is very helpful." F4
- "I gave up half a day every week", "they came in and were welcome"; but this farmer experienced a "lack of respect from the service provider." For example, "got last-minute phone calls cancelling and changing times." [F-ID on file]

A number of respondents suggested that KSF **explore payments for participants and host farmers** in ways that complement the voluntary model of social farming.

- F7 believes that there should be some form of payment to the participants. F7 give the participant money to buy [a treat] when he gets off the [transport service], and they put some money in with his Christmas present. They say the money "shows him that he is appreciated." They have heard from staff at the service provider that [the participant] tells the other service users a lot about his work on the farm and the money he 'is earning'. The staff report that this has been good for his self-esteem, and while F7 instance the ways in which they see [the participant] benefiting from having 'pocket money', they also state, "we don't know if we are doing the right thing or the wrong thing." "[The participant] likes to get a few bob, although he can't manage money."
- [Improve the Project for participants] "in getting paid opportunities from it." SW2
- "I think the farmers and participants should get paid an allowance/grant and the project should be seen as a stepping stone to employment." PO7
- "It's important at this stage that we get the sustainability question right. Voluntary effort of farmers versus paying farmers is a major question that must be answered now." PO10
- "As both farmers and participants are volunteering, the reward is the joy in the participation and shouldn't be undermined by any materialistic reward system, unless [it] is wished and agreed on by the individual farmer and participant." SW5
- "Funding to farmers for improvements." SW2

The majority opinion among host farmers is that they do not want to receive a payment for their services under the voluntary model of Kerry Social Farming.

- "The majority of farmers do not want to get paid." F5
- "Ah sure, I know, it is grand. But it's, how I put it to you, it's not all about money. It would be nice to give something back to them as well." F6
- "We need to stay as much as possible on a voluntary footing." "Keep the ethos we have." F2 acknowledges that, "in a perfect world, people should be paid, but I fear the consequences [of that]." He is in favour of payment for "genuine expenses" e.g. travel to a farm walk or a discussion group meeting. F2 favours the host farmers being able to access funding to make the farms safer and activities more accessible e.g. polytunnels, fencing, pathways.
- F7 believes that there should be no payment to farmers but that it is OK to cover specific travel expenses or the cost of making the farmyard safer or for activities for the participants.
- "[KSF financial support] helps us and [the participant] because the more we get, the more he gets and the more he is able to participate in new sections of the farm"; "So it helps an awful lot." F4
- In terms of financial support from KSF: "Great altogether, because we wouldn't have the polytunnel without them. I know I am offering a service too but at the same time I am willing to offer it anyway; but at least they gave me the polytunnel which was a big plus. It benefits everyone; like, we have something to do on the wet days in the polytunnel. You would get lots of stuff to do on a dry day but on the wet days ... You could be out of course with wet gear on you and stuff but it would be nicer if you were inside"; "That was like a big present straightaway." [F-ID on file]
- "... we have actually got something from them each year"; "They normally pay for the likes of compost and seed for me; it varies. So, [KSF] normally get the money from the Department of Agriculture for the last two years, so it enables me to keep on going with what I am doing and it takes a limited financial burden off me as well." [F-ID on file]
- "Toilets and changing room, we got supports for that from the [SKDP]. We have been looked after that way." [F-ID on file]

At least one host farmer would welcome a payment.

- "... but Kerry Social Farming is depending on South Kerry Development Partnership because, like, we are receiving no sort of funding at the moment from anybody ... None of the farmers are getting paid at the

moment"; "Well, I suppose, going forward, nothing will ever be a success on a voluntary basis and for to keep the thing going, of course, there would have to be some level of funding going down the road." F3

This dichotomy of payment preferences was mirrored among participants.

> One participant described how money was not the reward he sought from social farming.
>
> - "I don't get paid for this which is good because, you know money isn't everything. I would rather be doing this anyway because I would otherwise be just sitting at home doing nothing. I really enjoy this. As I said, money isn't always everything"; "There is a lot of love on this farm. Everything is not money to me …. I enjoy it, I really enjoy working here." MP15
>
> Another participant expressed an indirect interest by twice using the expression 'if the price was right' and a direct interest in a financial reward for work when he questioned the researcher about his wages.
>
> - Asked if he would like to stay working on this farm, MP8 replied: "If the price was right."
> - Responding to whether he would like to work in a different job, MP8 said: "I'll say it again, if the price was right and if I am able for it."
> - Later, MP8 asked the researcher if he gets paid for work and after the researcher told him that he did get paid, the participant said: "You are sorted, so."

Therefore, the subject of payment for participants and for host farmers reveals a **very strong commitment to the voluntary model and some interest among a minority in the opportunity of a payment pathway for social farming.**

Maintain locally-led structure and enhance collaboration from management to frontline levels

In Northern Ireland[63], host farmers described a lack of understanding and awareness of social farming among service providers as a challenge for social farming there. Stakeholders in this Evaluation noted the **key enabling role of local development companies** and the **need to involve high-level managers**, especially from service providers.

- "This project will require more commitment from other development companies similar to SKDP if it is to progress as it should. Alternatively, maybe SKDP should be awarded the running of the project entirely on their own within Kerry if the other development companies do not wish to step up to the mark!" PO4
- "More involvement from the CEOs / organisation directors." PO6
- F5 believes that the service provider is not inclined to support people who are not in their system. "Social Farming is not seen as a priority by the Kerry Parents and Friends."
- "There is some fear within the agencies that their funding might be threatened. They play a critical role, and they need to see social farming as part of what they do." F5

Stakeholders highlight the need to **improve partners' mutual understanding** through collaboration, information sharing, visiting social farms and meetings across the county.

- "Continued focus on the long-term collaborative development in Kerry and amongst other social farming providers." PO11
- One farmer noted that two service providers both have facilities in the local town, but that they need to work together [F-ID on file].

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[63] http://www.ruralsupport.org.uk/social-farming-northern-ireland/social-farming-frequently-asked-questions/, accessed 7 February 2017.

- "The 'new' project funding hopefully will assist in moving the entire project forward and evolve in a manner which ALL stakeholders will regard as satisfactory"; "Some partner organisations seem to be of the opinion that farmers involved are getting lots of money and not doing what they should. This is in fact totally incorrect and requires this segment be better informed so as to realise the error of their thinking." PO4.
- "[The service provider] views the farm as a free service." [F-ID on file].
- "Keep all agencies involved up-dated on where the project is." SW4
- "Visit each other's farms as a social event." SW4
- "Work and keep in touch with other support workers and families." SW4
- "Meetings throughout the county." PO8

Actively promote Kerry Social Farming

Individuals in key positions, such as those in charge of funding decisions within the statutory and the healthcare sectors, have a significant influence and tend to show greater support for care farming when familiar with the practice and positively predisposed to it. This highlights the role of farm open days, demonstration projects and research to build awareness and prove the effectiveness of care farming to those with influence. The owners of Clinks Care Farm in the UK emphasized the importance of organising visits to established care farms by interested farmers, healthcare professionals and social service commissioners, and evaluating outcomes and sharing findings through lobbying, seminars and roadshows at public events to engage new stakeholders and to increase public awareness (Roberts, 2012). In the SoFAB project, open days offered local HSE staff, and especially occupational therapists and the Occupational Guidance Service, the chance to learn about the practice (Kinsella *et al.*, 2014a). Ballyhoura Rural Services (2015) concluded from their consultations on social farms that relationships and demonstrations are vital to help secure funding; pilot programmes and study visits demonstrate the success of the social farm model and allow relationships to be built between social farming advocates and funders. In the UK, care commissioners identified a lack of information about care farming availability as a barrier to availing of such services (Care Farming UK, 2016). Thus, awareness-raising is a key element of any social farming project. It highlights the importance of KSF's ongoing knowledge sharing within the working group and its PR work through its Facebook page and press releases boosted by its success in winning the 2017 Kerry Community Awards Scheme and reaching the top 50 applicants in the 2017 Social Entrepreneurs Ireland Awards Programme. The PR work will continue with the public launch of this Evaluation at an open day on a host farm in July 2017 and the subsequent distribution of the report.

Stakeholders shared other ideas in the Evaluation in terms of how to **promote the project**.

- F5 recounts the positive impacts of media coverage to date and farm visits, and would like to see similar outreach activities in the future, as well as open days held on host farms.
- "Promotion of project at every opportunity." PO7
- "Possibly to produce a quarterly newsletter and have more contact with parents." PO9
- "Get in touch with other organisations and community-based projects." SW5
- "Have talks/workshops in service providers." SW2
- "Do surveys to identify interested participants." SW4
- "Advertising / open day in smaller communities." SW5

Secure additional, sustainable funding and guard against over-regulation

Respondents acknowledge the **need for additional and sustainable funding without over-regulation**.

- "My biggest fear in the morning is that we would be told we have to go and stand on our own two feet as Kerry Social Farming and that might well happen. But it wouldn't work without a guaranteed level of funding and there would be no point in getting funding this year and getting nothing next year. For a thing to sustain and to keep going, you would have to have a level of funding going forward." F3
- "[Improving accessibility for participants] requires additional funding from external bodies." SW7

- "Funding options in the short, medium and long-term should be continually reviewed and assessed in order that funding is maintained/secured." PO11
- "It would be great if funding for this initiative moved from pilot to mainstream, allowing those involved to develop a strategic plan without the worry of continued funding." PO5
- "A dedicated funding stream from the Department [of Agriculture] should be made available to support the project. This is not the type of project that can be stopped and started - we owe it to the project participants to provide continuity of supports." PO14
- "More sustainable funding stream through Government Dept." PO7
- "... funding in one way could come from under the Department of Agriculture funding from Europe .... could we ... get some funding under some sort of payment in your agricultural payments?" F3
- "Social farming needs to be on a more solid footing"; "I am fearful of getting too involved with the Department, but we need to do something about mainstreaming and the sustainability of social farming." F5
- "If you want to go ahead, you need money; but then you run the risk of over-regulation." F2

Generate multi-departmental engagement with *New Directions* and secure multi-stream funding

Stakeholders identified the **need for multi-departmental engagement with *New Directions*** as well as the **need for multi-stream funding**. The Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine is examining the potential to develop a network to enable a more co-ordinated approach to social farming across government departments (DAFM, 2017b).

- "Lobby the HSE to promote project within New Directions policy." PO7
- "The local development companies are ideally placed to roll out the *New Directions* policies. Locally-led scheme funding could be looked at." PO10
- "... the training [for participants, farmers or partner organisations] should be funded by the Department of Education; community inclusion project." SW5
- "Lobby external bodies and make them aware of the project." SW2
- "Needs multi-stream funding." PO9
- "Look at external bodies that could provide funding into the future." SW7
- "This requires commitment from the relevant department(s)." PO4
- "I am not so familiar with all departments, but whatever department is responsible for community projects, low populated rural areas, etc." SW5
- "... if you got a little from them all ... the Department of Health has to come on board, sooner rather than later .... of course, they have to come on board as well." F3
- "The HSE should not be seen as a primary mechanism for funding; there needs to be a holistic approach and engage other government departments." [PO-ID on file]
- "HSE is health and social, not transport, not farming. This is about equality." [PO-ID on file]
- "Dept of Agriculture, Dept of Community and Rural Development, Dept of Disabilities, Dept of Health." SW7

A minority view is that the Project should seek to engage with just one Department and one section:

- "... ideally with just Agriculture. We do not want a number of departments involved; don't want to end up like the Shannon catchment!" PO4
- "A dedicated person / section in the Department responsible and with the capacity to make decisions would be a major step forward." PO5

Explore private payment option for participants

One representative from a partner organisation raised the potential of **funding through payments from service users**.

- "Should / could service users contribute financially to the development of the project as they could see themselves as members of a 'club', getting further education / training, etc. This would increase ownership also!" PO8

Work with Social Farming Ireland and local public representatives

Stakeholders called for **collaboration and co-ordination at national level, including through Social Farming Ireland**.

- "Collaboration and co-ordination nationally is key to the long-term development of this mode of service provision." PO11
- "An open and constructive engagement should be maintained. A strategic look at how best organisations and key organisations interact, horizon scan and develop the national system of social farming is important." PO11
- "A social farming network has been established to support the development of social farming across the country. We need to work with the network and vice versa to ensure a strong and co-ordinated message re: social farming is delivered to key government departments or agencies. The network should have a clear brief here." PO14
- "The social farming network needs to bring all the relevant departments and state agencies together; new rural department has a role here." PO10
- "[Engaging with key government departments or agencies] has to be ongoing and every opportunity must be taken to pursue this." PO9
- "Knowledge transfer group needs to be established in each county." PO10

Some respondents suggest that the Project **seek the support of local government representatives**.

- "Speak to local government representatives." SW2
- "Carry out a deputation with local TDs for funding." PO6

The Kerry Social Farming Facilitator plays a key role

Respondents recognise the **key role of the Kerry Social Farming Facilitator**:

- "The recruitment of a dedicated project co-ordinator in Irene Kavanagh will help drive and develop the project and make it better for all project partners including SKDP." PO14
- "Would welcome very proactive animation by new project worker with our partnership's development workers." PO8
- "The social farm facilitator position needs to be long term. Government funding is required here." PO10

The positive feedback recorded earlier from host farmers in particular highlights the value of a full-time facilitator available to address issues quickly, to respond to emerging ideas and to help drive the future development of KSF. But this potential is undermined by the 12-month cycle of funding for this post and for Kerry Social Farming more generally.

Growing Kerry Social Farming

Kerry Social Farming is expanding. On the demand side, there is a waiting list of interested service users who wish to avail of the Project. On the supply side, there is a growing number of farmers interested in delivering social farming supports in Kerry. A barrier to expansion lies with the limited availability of support workers from the service providers to help the participants settle into the social farms and to provide job coaching to them, especially during the initial phase. This has impacted on one social farm in particular. The host farmer explained that public money has been invested on the farm for capital projects to facilitate the social farming participants but the service provider no longer sends participants. The farmer has been advised that the service provider does not have enough staff to accompany clients to the farm and clarification has been sought from the Local Development Company on when participants are to return, otherwise the farmer plans to pay back the SICAP money received from them [F-ID on file].

Insufficient support workers for Kerry Social Farming poses a barrier in particular to participants with high levels of dependency who need continuous assistance. Host farmers recognise the bottleneck that has arisen in KSF in terms of support workers and have identified ways to increase the number of local people available to support participants on farms. In cases where agency staff members are not available for KSF and where suitable training is available locally for interested farmers or other rural dwellers, a number of host farmers are asking if they can be trained to the point of being able to fill the role of support workers.

- "A question arises as to who will do the job-coaching?" F5 recommends that service providers use the tools they have e.g. CE to support social farming.
- F5 thinks that the KSF needs to investigate what type of training and qualifications are required for support workers, and if training courses could be provided locally.
- F1: "Could we not train people e.g. RSS / CE to support the participants?"
- F2 asks about the possibility of training RSS participants as carers / care assistants, or counting the hosting of participants as part of RSS hours.

Other sources of support workers could come from participants in the RSS and Tús, and volunteers either recruited directly by service providers or in Kerry Volunteer Network. Workers from the Tus community work placement initiative and the RSS already supply labour to Kerry Social Farming to make the necessary farm improvements.

These suggestions from the host farmers represent four innovations to the current voluntary model of Kerry Social Farming by;

1. Delivering local training for farmers or other rural dwellers interested in care provision and job-coaching;
2. Offering a pathway to payments for social farming;
3. Supporting farm and rural economic diversification; and
4. Strengthening the potential to deliver community-based care services in rural areas.

Another suggestion that experienced participants could become mentors for new participants points to a pathway for participant progression that could justify a payment for service users who advance through Kerry Social Farming.

"... because they wouldn't have an awful lot of support workers, like, they would be trying to use a support worker on a few farms .... if you had somebody with special needs that they could come onto the farm with a support worker for a few weeks and then you could have the [participants] filling in then as a support worker to them. It would give whoever, the St. Mary of the Angels and Kerry Parents and Friends a chance to take the support worker and do the same thing somewhere else. It would be giving [the **experienced participants] another role** as well. [One participant] would work well with people and I can see him working with lads and do you know he is well able. He has a great frame and a great vision of things in his own way as well." [F-ID on file]

Part 4 – Concluding Remarks

Among the factors that are contributing to the outputs and successes of Kerry Social Farming are:

- The embeddedness of social farming within a well-established local development framework;
- The pre-development work done through channels such as the Rural Social Scheme and the other farm-related interventions;
- An inclusive and participatory governance structure;
- The skillset and commitment of the key personnel;
- The appropriateness of the model to the local context and
- The scale and nature of farming in South Kerry.

Embeddedness within local development

Kerry Social Farming was conceived and operates as part of a suite of local and community development activities and interventions under the aegis of South Kerry Development Partnership. The Partnership has almost 30 years' experience in rural development, and has deep-rooted networks and credibility with agencies and with local citizens. Specifically, SKDP has been working with the farming community over many years, and farmers have always been directly represented on its Board of Directors. In addition, SKDP's Agriculture Sub-Committee is high-profile and has been engaging with farmers for over twenty years. This long-established background gives SKDP the ability to engage with, and provide a forum for a diverse range of stakeholders. Therefore, the organisation was strategically positioned to bring together the actors required for a social farming project, and has been able to sustain the momentum required to enable collaboration. SKDP's experience in managing programmes and public funds has also stood KSF in good stead, such that reporting procedures and mechanisms are already well-established. In initiating and driving the social farming initiative, SKDP was able to tap into its SICAP fund as a priming mechanism. This enabled the Partnership to begin the piloting of the concept and to get stakeholders on board in advance of applying for the DAFM funding.

Pre-development work

Relationships are integral to the successful delivery of social farming. In this respect, the relationship between SKDP and farmers has been an important factor in driving social farming. Many host farmers recorded their prior knowledge of the Partnership, and their admiration of its work, particularly in supporting smaller-scale farmers. Several farmers mentioned Joseph McCrohan as a champion of farmers, and as a person they could trust. This trust proved to be a factor in encouraging 'farmer buy-in' to the concept. In addition to many years of work on the Smallholder Programme, SKDP has been engaging with farmers through the Rural Social Scheme. This has further cemented positive relationships and enabled farmers to engage in activities that utilise their skillsets and knowledge as farmers, while promoting social interaction and income generation. Thus, social farming is not delivered as a stand-alone programme, but builds on and complements other forms of engagement with farmers.

Pre-development work with other stakeholders, such as service providers has also benefited KSF. As with farmers, existing relationships and experiences of other collaborations ensured that partner agencies already knew each other when coming to the table to devise and promote the social farming initiative.

Participatory governance

The main oversight body for KSF is a specially-convened Working Group that reports directly to the SKDP Board of Directors. This reporting mechanism is appropriate and has been enhanced by a parallel reporting mechanism for personnel, whereby Irene Kavanagh (Social Farming Facilitator) and Joseph McCrohan (Rural Development Officer) report to Noel Spillane, the Partnership's CEO. Reports to the Board of Directors are written and are scheduled. It is recommended that this practice continue, and that Irene's reports be appended to the minutes of working group meetings. It is also good practice for all working group members provide written reports to their respective agencies,

and seek written feedback and commitments from them. Such two-way feedback and accountability mechanisms are conducive to good governance and the further promotion of inter-agency collaboration.

The working group is chaired by a representative of SKDP, which is entirely appropriate given the Partnership's management and oversight role. It also includes representatives of civil society organisations with experience of, and a vested interest in, supporting and empowering people with special needs. These representatives bring real-life experience to the table and demonstrate a strong commitment to the project. The working group also includes representatives of support services, whose professional expertise and insights are of considerable value. In addition, the agency representatives know the participants and/or the settings from which they come. This knowledge has contributed to the smooth running of KSF to date, and underscores the merits of applying a localised or area-based approach to the organisation of social farming. The HSE representation on the working group brings valuable expertise in terms of policy, best practice, regulations and vision planning. Collectively, the pooled expertise and collaborative approaches that characterise the working group represent important strategic assets that merit further and on-going investment and strengthening. Over the course of the evolution of the current KSF initiative, the working group expanded to include direct representation from among the participants themselves. This is entirely appropriate and very laudable. As membership of the Working Group is likely to rotate, in line with best practice in organisational governance, it is essential that there be on-going investment in training and capacity-building for members, and that such training include a specific focus on meeting the needs of people with disabilities.

While the size and composition of the working group have generally been appropriate for the scale and activities of KSF to date, there is very likely to be change in the membership over the coming months and years as KSF develops further. Thus, representation from the agriculture sector, and from the Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine in particular, will be required on the working group.

While the Working Group dynamics are positive and constructive, there have been some protractions in respect of addressing the issue of payments to farmers. While this is a very important issue, it is more operational than strategic, and ought not to feature as strongly on the agenda or schedule as has happened at periods to date. Considering points made by respondents in the Evaluation, there are merits in the Working Group establishing designated, fixed term sub-committees to examine this or any other contentious issue that may arise.

Skillsets

The nature of the work associated with social farming requires personnel to have particular skillsets. Personnel also need to pursue a developmental, constructive and solution-focused approach in their engagement with farmers and social farming participants. The evidence from the data collected for this Evaluation is that the Social Farming Facilitator (Irene) and the Rural Development Officer (Joseph) have a strong rapport with the participants and the farmers, and have a demonstrable commitment to advocacy on behalf of the project's beneficiaries. Their approach, which is person-centred, is a major asset to the KSF initiative. This ought to underpin and govern all engagement with, and planning with or on behalf of people with disabilities. As government policy on individualised funding and personal plans begins to materialise and advance, person-centred approaches will become even more relevant. Consequently, some bodies will require systemic and cultural changes. Those need to effect such organisational change sooner rather than later. The international case studies referred to in the literature review in this Evaluation demonstrate the merits of Ireland advancing a more person-centred and rights-based approach to all our citizens.

In giving effect to the person-centred approach and community development principles and practices, personnel in South Kerry Development Partnership, the agency representatives and staff, and the farmers have focused consistently on empowering social farming participants. In many respects, the farmers have acted as providers of bespoke apprenticeships. Agency staff members have acted as advocates and enablers, with the SKDP team members complementing these roles, co-ordinating interventions and applying a jobs-facilitator model to enabling participants to devise and pursue progression plans. Considering the evidence here of the impacts on the participants' lives of this empowering approach, it is recommended that the current SKDP model be fully mainstreamed, rather than reliant on any truncated funding. As the initiative expands, and as farmers and participants become more accustomed to it, it is recommended that there be a more systematic template for recording and documenting participant progression.

The local context

Kerry Social Farming is not delivered as a discrete or standalone programme. Instead, it is firmly embedded within a suite of integrated development approaches. This context and the associated developmental approaches build on and strengthen inter-farm collaboration. Successive SKDP smallholder programmes have led to the establishment of farm discussion groups, and these provide conduits through which training can be delivered. Up to now, the discussion groups have focused on farm-related activities. Their agenda can be broadened to now include matters relating to social farming and promoting the progression of people with disabilities.

The discussion groups, rapport between farmers and SKDP, the Partnership's governance structure and inter-agency relationships represent elements of a conducive development context that can be further harnessed in enabling increased participation in social farming, by farmers and people with disabilities and acquired brain injuries. Moreover, the totality of these arrangements and current experience in social farming imply that SKDP has the capacity to expand the model to cater for additional beneficiaries that the farmers are interested in considering including children and young people up to 18 years with troubles or behavioural disorders, people with psychological ill health, those in rehabilitation, people on probation and ex-prisoners, among others.

Farming in Kerry

Farms in South Kerry and parts of North Kerry are more mixed and extensive, and are smaller in scale than is the case nationally. Pluriactivity is more prevalent. As a result, some farmers have greater capacity to devote time to mentoring social farming participants. As the farmer interviews clearly demonstrate, farmers organise and structure their working times and farming activities (weather permitting) to suit the participants' needs. The Evaluation also highlighted the ways in which farmers benefit from social farming. The research findings show that most of the farmers consider the social and psychological dividends that accrue from social farming to be more important than any financial payment they might receive. Indeed, several report that they would cease to be host farmers if hosting were linked to a payment. While this voluntary model is working in Kerry, it is clear that on-farm investments, particularly those relating to health and safety will need to be funded. Funding should also be provided to cover the costs incurred by farmers in travelling to social farming events. Indeed, all reasonable expenses incurred by host farmers must be covered. The continued operation of this voluntary model does not preclude other LDCs from pursuing other models (e.g. part-payment) in their territories. Furthermore, some stakeholders are open to exploring what pathways to payment opportunities might be developed for the minority of participants and farmers interested in them, in ways that complement and strengthen the voluntary model of social farming.

Overall winner of Kerry Community Awards 2017

Part 5 – Recommendations

With regards to strengthening and improving Kerry Social Farming into the future, recommendations have emerged from stakeholders who participated in the Evaluation process and especially out of discussions held with various stakeholders to interrogate the findings, informed by both the international experience and the ongoing national debate. Below are the resulting recommendations that are supported with evidence in this report.

1. Enhance the input of participants – with respect to person-centredness, respondents highlight that participants are the ones who must decide whether they go social farming or not and that this decision should relate back to their personal plan. One partner organisation also calls for tailoring social farming supports to participant needs. Ultimately, the advance of government policy on individualised funding and personal plans will help to drive person-centred approaches at a faster pace than seen to date and this will benefit innovative projects such as KSF.

2. Expand training opportunities for host farmers and participants – stakeholders call for improved training opportunities for both farmers and participants. Social farmers and/or their partners, at least in pilot projects and at the early stage of development in countries, tend to have had personal or professional experience of people with disabilities, other defined needs or in the education sector as found in the Netherlands, Northern Ireland and Norway. Reflecting the fact that the KSF is a voluntary model of social farming, this Evaluation found that an additional factor in Kerry is a background in volunteerism and community activism.

The main training sought by the host farmers is to learn more about: working with participants' needs and abilities; and how to communicate effectively, especially with participants who are non-verbal. While most host farmers would be satisfied with sufficient training to meet their current requirements, two of them are interested in vocational training leading to a qualification. Partner organisations identify the need to include educational institution partners for participant and farmer training, and these are currently being explored by the Kerry Social Farming Facilitator.

Many respondents highlight the need to develop training for participants, such as a qualification in social farming for adults with learning disabilities to teach farm skills and life skills through farming. Support workers recommend that KSF showcase and celebrate participant progress by highlighting their achievements through certificates and a Day of Recognition.

3. Improve monitoring and evaluation processes – host farmers are key stakeholders when it comes to recording the activities, progress and achievements of the participants on their farms. The host farmers recognise the importance of tracking information about the social farming sessions and the role of such data as evidence to demonstrate KSF outputs and participant progression. The farmers recommend that they liaise with the KSF to devise improved farm-based record-keeping tools and methods for recording and tracking participant progression.

4. Enhance the Kerry Social Farming offer – one support worker recommends that all farms have indoor work areas to improve conditions for both participants and support workers during inclement weather. Guardians suggest ways to expand the range of activities offered through KSF including going to marts, attending agricultural shows and participating in farmers' markets. Expanding social farming activities out into the community in these ways will help to answer calls to enhance community integration.

5. Clarify the roles of service provider and implement protocols – respondents note the need to clarify the roles of service providers and to develop protocols for social farming arrangements. This would help to address the insufficient number of support workers evidenced in the Evaluation and allow farmers to structure their week around regular social farming sessions, as almost all do in KSF.

6. Explore payment pathways for participants and host farmers that complement the voluntary model of social farming – a number of respondents suggested that KSF explore payments for participants and host farmers. The majority opinion among host farmers is that they do not want to receive a payment for their services under the voluntary model of Kerry Social Farming. At least one host farmer would welcome a payment. This dichotomy of payment preferences

was mirrored among participants. Therefore, the subject of payment for participants and for host farmers reveals a very strong commitment to the voluntary model and some interest among a minority in the opportunity of a payment pathway for social farming

7. Maintain locally-led structure – stakeholders in this Evaluation note the key enabling role of local development companies, in particular the SKDP. Given the positive association between social farming and community and rural development, it is recommended that in expanding, mainstreaming and further promoting social farming, initiatives ought to reside within, and be driven by Local Development Companies. Inter-LDC networking and collaboration will be important in promoting knowledge transfers. KSF is ideally placed to offer a consultancy/mentoring role here.

8. Improve participatory governance and enhance collaboration from management – in order to improve participatory governance of KSF through its working group, it is recommended that all working group members provide written reports to their respective agencies, and seek written feedback and commitments from those agencies. Such two-way feedback and accountability mechanisms are conducive to good governance and the further promotion of inter-agency collaboration in Kerry Social Farming. In other jurisdictions, host farmers have described a lack of understanding and awareness of social farming among service providers as a challenge for social farming. In the Evaluation, partner organisations highlight the importance of involving high-level managers, especially from service providers. Stakeholders recommend improving partners' mutual understanding through collaboration, information sharing, visiting social farms and meetings across the county.

9. Invest in the KSF working group – the pooled expertise and collaborative approaches that characterise the working group of Kerry Social Farming represent important strategic assets that merit further and on-going investment and strengthening. As membership is likely to rotate, in line with best practice in organisational governance, it is recommended that there be on-going investment in training and capacity-building for members, with a specific focus on meeting the needs of people with disabilities. Other advances to the working group would include representation from the agriculture sector and the establishment of sub-committees to address contentious issues.

10. Continue to actively promote Kerry Social Farming – individuals in key positions, such as those in charge of funding decisions within the statutory and the healthcare sectors, have a significant impact on social farming and tend to show greater support when familiar with the practice and positively predisposed to it. This highlights the role of farm open days, demonstration projects and research to build awareness and prove the effectiveness of social farming to those with influence. It also underlines the importance of KSF's ongoing knowledge sharing within the working group and its PR work through its Facebook page and press releases boosted by its success in winning the 2017 Kerry Community Awards Scheme and reaching the top 50 applicants in the 2017 Social Entrepreneurs Ireland Awards Programme. The PR work will continue with the public launch of this Evaluation at an open day on a host farm in July 2017 and the dissemination of its findings.

11. Secure additional, sustainable funding and guard against over-regulation – these are key concerns for the future of KSF. Stakeholders acknowledge the need for additional and sustainable funding without over-regulation. In order to move towards mainstreaming, stakeholders in KSF highlight the need to generate multi-departmental engagement with *New Directions* and secure multi-stream funding. The Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine is examining the potential to develop a network to enable a more co-ordinated approach to social farming across government departments. Based on the evidence presented in the Evaluation, it is recommended that the voluntary model of social farming in Kerry be funded appropriately and fully mainstreamed. Given the success of KSF farm walks, and the desire among host farmers for more of them, it is also recommended that host farm walks be mainstreamed through the DAFM Knowledge Transfer Programme.

12. Seek the support of Social Farming Ireland and local public representatives – to address the challenges of social farming projects in Ireland, stakeholders call for collaboration and co-ordination at national level, including through Social Farming Ireland and some respondents suggest that the Project engage with local government representatives to specifically support Kerry Social Farming.

13. The Kerry Social Farming Facilitator plays a vital role – stakeholders recognise the key role of the Kerry Social Farming Facilitator in driving on the Project into the future in partnership with them. The facilitator is a new post with the employee in place since the start of 2017. The positive feedback from host farmers in particular highlights the value of having an experienced and solutions-focused full-time facilitator available to address issues quickly, to respond to emerging ideas and to help drive the future development of KSF. However, the 12-month cycle of funding for this post, and for Kerry Social Farming more generally, creates uncertainty and risks undermining the ambitions and potential of the Project evidenced in this Evaluation. Again, the appropriate funding and mainstreaming of KSF is recommended to address this.

14. Solve the bottleneck of insufficient support workers – in the short-term, the immediate concern is the need for more support workers in Kerry Social Farming to allow it to grow in 2017. On the demand side, there is a waiting list of interested service users who wish to avail of the Project. On the supply side, there is a growing number of farmers interested in delivering social farming supports in Kerry. A barrier to expansion lies with the limited availability of support workers from the service providers to help the participants settle into the social farms and to provide job coaching to them, especially during the initial months. Insufficient support workers for Kerry Social Farming poses a barrier in particular to participants with high levels of dependency who need continuous assistance. Host farmers recognise the bottleneck that has arisen in KSF in terms of support workers and have identified ways to increase the number of local people available to support participants on farms. In cases where agency staff members are not available for KSF and where suitable training is available locally for interested farmers or other rural dwellers, a number of host farmers are asking if they can be trained to the point of being able to fill the role of support workers. Other sources of support workers could come from participants in the RSS and Tús, and volunteers either recruited directly by service providers or in Kerry Volunteer Network. Tús and RSS workers already supply labour to Kerry Social Farming to make the necessary farm improvements. Based on SKDP's experience of engaging with farmers through a range of programmes, it is recommended that the mainstreaming of social farming take place as part of a wider set of farm-oriented initiatives including the Rural Social Scheme. The suggestion that experienced participants could become mentors for new participants points to a pathway for participant progression that could justify a payment for service users who advance through Kerry Social Farming.

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Doing Research Together with You

What is research?

Research is finding things out. We want to find out about farming and you.

Why are we doing this research?

The research will tell us what it is like on the farm.

What you think is important to the research.

The research will show what works well. It will show how to make things better.
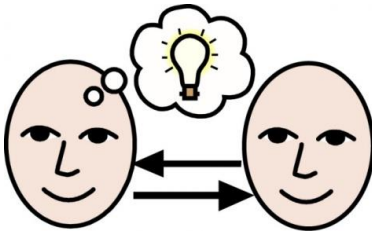
Who are the researchers?

Shane O'Sullivan, Caroline Crowley and Brendan O'Keeffe are doing the research with your help. Research is our job. We read lots of reports. We are learning what has been done.

How will we do the research?

One of us will visit your farm.

We will visit with you and we will visit with the farmer. We will listen to what you tell us.

What will we do on the farm?

We will walk around the farm.

You will decide where we go.

You will decide what you show us.

What will we talk about?

We will talk a little about you.

We will talk about what you do on the farm.

We will talk about your time with the farmer and other people on the farm.

We will talk about what is good on the farm.

We will ask what would make it better.
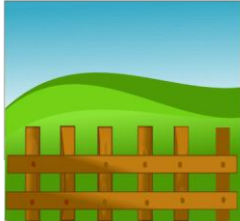
How will we finish our talk?

We will talk about your plans for the future.

What will we do then?

We will think about what we learned on the farm.

No one but us will know what you said. We will not share your name.

We will write a report about what we learned.

We will share the report with you so you have a say in what we find out.

We will share the report with others so they can learn what we find out.

See you on the farm.

Appendix 2: Participant interview schedule for the 'walk and talk'.

Participant demographics and farm logistics
1. Gender
2. Age range
3. When did you start work on the farm?
4. What did you do before coming to work on the farm?
5. When do you come to the farm? How long for?
6. What is it like getting from your home to the farm and back again?

Quality of experience
<u>The Farm / Farm Work</u>
7. Can you tell me about your work on the farm, what you do here?
8. Do you get to choose what you do on the farm?
9. What do you like to do most on the farm?
10. Do you get the chance to do much of that?
11. What is the hardest thing you do on the farm? Why?
12. Is it a bit easier now than when you first came to the farm?
13. Do you always understand the jobs you have to do?
14. What work would you like to do more of on the farm?
15. What work would you like to do less of on the farm?
16. Is the work that you do on the farm important?
17. Is there any other help you would like to get from the project? Is there anything else you would like to get out of working on the farm?

<u>The Farmer and Co-Workers</u>
18. What is it like spending time with the farmer?
19. Does the work that you do help the farmer?
20. Do you work with other people on the farm?
21. What is it like working with other people on the farm?
22. Do you prefer to work by yourself or with others?
23. Have you made new friends on the farm?
24. Do you get enough help to do your work on the farm? If no, please tell me about that.
25. Is there someone you can talk to if you have a problem on the farm? Who? If no, please tell me about it.

<u>The Overall Social Farm Experience</u>
26. Do you like telling people that you work on the farm?
27. What do you tell them about your time on the farm?
28. How is working on the farm different to what you did before?
29. How does being on the farm make you feel?
30. What would make your time on the farm better?

Learning Outcomes
31. What surprised you most about working on the farm?
32. Have you learned anything new, something you did not know before coming to the farm?
33. Is there something you have learned <u>how to do</u> that you did not know before working on the farm? Such as?
34. Have you learned something new <u>about yourself</u> since starting coming to the farm? Such as?
35. Developing the Project in the Future
36. Would you like to stay working on this farm?
37. Would you like to work on another farm?
38. Would you like to work in a different job?
39. If you could do anything in the world, what would you most like to do?

Other
40. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Appendix 3: Social farmer interview schedule.

Host farmer demographics and farm profile
1. Gender
2. Age range
3. Farm size
4. Farming activities [e.g. organic / special breeds / diversification]
5. Do other family members / farm employees work on the farm?
6. What is the main source of income for the farm family?
7. What is the second main source of income for the farm family?

KSF – logistics
8. How many participants do you have on your farm per week?
9. How many participant sessions in total per week?
10. Length of a typical session (hours per day that a participant spends on your farm)?
11. What capacity are you operating at in the KSF? 100% / 75% plus / 50% plus / 25% plus / under 25%?

KSF – early experience / training support
12. When did you join the KSF?
13. How did you first hear about the KSF?
14. What motivated you to join the KSF?
15. Ease of entering the project - can you tell me about your experience with the application and vetting process? What was it like for you?
16. Was the training and induction process useful for you / did it address your needs?
17. What else would be useful for you to learn / what other training would be useful to do:
    (1) before you start
    (2) at the early stage of participation
    (3) as you become more experienced in the project?

Practice Support – communications and responsibilities
18. How do you find the communication flow with the KSF?
19. How do you find information sharing with the KSF?
20. What do you think of the activity planning for each participant?
21. Is your role and are your duties to the project and participants clear?
22. How well are arising issues dealt with? Is your feedback listened to / concerns addressed / support forthcoming?
23. How do you find the process of KSF record keeping / monitoring participant progress?
24. How do you keep records?
25. Do you feel you are getting enough support from the project overall?

Practice Support – working with the participant
26. Did you have prior experience with people with special needs?
27. How has it been dealing with farm safety for the KSF?
28. How have you found the participant as a fit with your farm?
29. How would you describe the participant engagement on your farm?
30. How have you found meeting participants' needs and preferences?
31. How do you find the experience of training participants?
32. How do you find the support of a job coach / support worker?

Funding
33. Have any new costs resulted from your participation in the KSF?
34. What do you think of the financial support received from the KSF?
35. Is there any other support that would be appropriate?

Project Outcomes
36. What surprised you most about participating in the KSF?
37. Has the KSF / having participant(s) on your farm made a difference to your farm enterprise? If yes, please explain.
38. Has the KSF / having participant(s) on your farm made a difference to you personally? If yes, please explain.

39. Has the KSF made a difference to your family / farm household? If yes, please explain.
40. Have you learned something new / developed new skills as a result of the KSF? If yes, please explain.
41. Do you / the farm family / farm workers behave or work differently when the participants are on the farm? If so, how?
42. Do you feel differently about the future of your farm because of the KSF? Please explain.

Ongoing Participation and Developing the KSF

43. What do you see as the three main challenges to Social Farming for:
    a. you;
    b. your family;
    c. your farm?
44. Would you like to continue participating in the KSF? If no, why [then skip to Q48]?
45. Would you like to receive vocational training in social farming e.g. leading to a qualification?
46. Would you be interested in having other groups of social farming participants work on your farm? Please respond regarding each type of participant below:
    a. Children and young people up to 18 years who are troubled or have behavioural disorders;
    b. people experiencing psychological ill health;
    c. people experiencing alcohol or drug addiction;
    d. older people with dementia.
47. Can you think of new activities to introduce into the mix of offers on your farm?
48. What skills or personal qualities would be useful for other farmers considering social farming?

Other

49. Is there anything else you would like to add about the KSF or your experience of it that I have not covered?

Appendix 4: Guardian questionnaire.

About Me, the Social Farming Participant and Kerry Social Farming

1. What is your gender?

☐ Female   ☐ Male

2. What is your age group?

☐ 18-35 years   ☐ 36-45 years   ☐ 46-55 years

☐ 56-65 years   ☐ 66-75 years   ☐ Over 75 years

3. What is your relationship to the social farming participant (hereafter 'the participant')?

☐ Mother   ☐ Sister   ☐ Grandmother   ☐ Aunt   ☐ Other (please explain)

☐ Father   ☐ Brother   ☐ Grandfather   ☐ Uncle   _____

4. How long have you been the guardian of the participant?

☐ Less than 1 year   ☐ 1-5 years   ☐ 6-10 years

☐ 11-15 years   ☐ 16-20 years   ☐ Over 20 years

5. How did you find out about Kerry Social Farming (hereafter 'the project')?

☐ Radio   ☐ Kerry Social Farming website

☐ Newspaper   ☐ Annual Kerry Social Farming seminar

☐ Social media (like Facebook)   ☐ Partnership newsletter

☐ Poster   ☐ Other (please say what)_____-

6. What did the participant do for education or training activity before joining the project?

7. Why did you agree to the participant joining the project?

8. How long has the participant been in the project?

9. How often does the participant attend the farm?

10. Does the participant attend any other day care or education / training activity in the community?

Yes	No	Maybe	I don't know
☐	☐	☐	☐

11. If yes, please tell us about the activities the participant does there.

12. How does the participant get from their home to the farm and back again?

13. "The transport arrangements to and from the farm work well for me."

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

14. "The transport arrangements to and from the farm work well for the participant."

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

What I know about the Social Farming Arrangement

15. "I have a good knowledge of what happens at the farm."

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

16. "I know that the participant has an activity plan for the farm."

Yes	No	Maybe	I don't know
☐	☐	☐	☐

17. "I know what is in the activity plan for the farm."

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

18. "It is important for me to know what is in the activity plan for the farm."

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

19. Has there been any problems as a result of the participant attending the farm?

Yes	No	Maybe	I don't know
☐	☐	☐	☐

20. If yes, what was the nature of the problem and how was it sorted out to your satisfaction?

Results of Social Farming for the Participant

21. What are the three most important things that you think the participant gets out of the project?

The Participant's Health and Wellbeing

22. Have you noticed changes in any of the following since the participant joined the project?
(*please tick what you think is the most appropriate box in each line of the table*)

Change in the participant's …	Better	No change	Worse	I don't know	Not applicable
Weight e.g. decrease if overweight, increase if underweight	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Physical fitness e.g. strength and stamina	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dexterity e.g. skill doing things with their hands	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Coordination e.g. ability to use different body parts together	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mobility e.g. ability to move freely and easily	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Physical health e.g. how often they get sick or need to go to the doctor	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mental health e.g. requiring medication or therapy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mood e.g. happier	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Motivation e.g. getting up, going out	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Responsibility e.g. being organised	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Independence e.g. able to complete things by themselves	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Memory e.g. able to recall what tasks were done on the farm	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Confidence, self-esteem e.g. how good they feel about themselves	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Demeanour, appearance e.g. attitude, how they look	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	A lot	Some	Not at all	I don't know	Not applicable
Communication skills e.g. talking, sharing news, telling stories	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
One-to-one relationships e.g. behaviour with one person	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group relationships e.g. behaviour in a group	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mixing in the community e.g. behaviour in public places	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Making new friends	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Meeting the Needs of Participants

23. In which of the following ways do you think the project helps the participant and by how much?
(*please tick what you think is the most appropriate box in each line of the table*)

The project helps the participant by:	**A lot**	**Some**	**Not at all**	**I don't know**	**Not applicable**
Treating them with dignity and respect	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Supporting their emotional stability or calmness	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Stimulating them	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Meeting their interests	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Suiting their abilities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Offering education or the chance to learn new skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Giving variety in their work or daily activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Providing useful training for life or for work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Making it possible to meet new people / make new friends	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Offering a chance to be involved in sports or recreation clubs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Offering a chance to take part in community activities e.g. tidy towns	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Offering visits to local businesses/facilities e.g. shop, hall, mart	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ensuring the participant is seen more in their local community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Providing the participant with support in their local area	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other (please say what)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Making the Project better for the Participant in the Future

24. "I am satisfied with the support that the participant receives through the project."

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

25. "I am satisfied with the project's knowledge of the needs of the participant."

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

26. "I am satisfied with how the project takes their needs into consideration."

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

27. "I would like the participant to continue in the project."

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

28. "I would like the participant to have more time each week in the project."

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

29. "I would like the participant to do something different to social farming."

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

30. Do you think that the project should support the participant in any other way?

31. Do you have any suggestions on how to make the project better for the participant?

You and Social Farming

32. What are the three most important things you get out of the participant being in the project?

33. "The project has a good effect on my own health."

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

34. "The project has a good effect on my caring role or my responsibility for the participant."

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

35. "The project has a good effect on my family life."

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

36. "I feel that the project welcomes my views and opinions".

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

37. "I am involved as much as I want to be in discussions about the participant in the project."

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

38. "If another guardian said they were considering the project for their loved one, I would":

Strongly recommend it	Recommend it	Neither recommend nor discourage it	Discourage it	Strongly discourage it
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

39. Do you have any suggestions on how to make the project better for you?

40. What surprised you most about the project?

41. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Appendix 5: Support worker questionnaire.

About Me and Kerry Social Farming

1. What is your gender?

☐ Female ☐ Male

2. How long have you been involved with Kerry Social Farming (hereafter 'the project')?

☐ Less than 6 months ☐ 6 months to less than 1 year ☐ 1 to less than 2 years

☐ 2-3 years

3. What is the nature of you and your organisation's involvement with the project? Please tick all that apply.

☐ Regulatory oversight ☐ Record-keeping and reporting

☐ Funding provision ☐ Checking-in on participants while on farms

☐ Administration ☐ Accompanying and supporting participants while on farms

☐ Identifying & matching participants to farms ☐ Liaising with participants' families

☐ Logistics (e.g. transport, scheduling) ☐ Liaising with farmers

☐ Farm health and safety ☐ Liaising with other organisations

☐ Devising activity plans ☐ Other (please specify)_____

What I know about the Social Farming Arrangement

4. "I have a good knowledge of what happens at the farms."

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5. Has there been any problems as a result of participants attending farms?

Yes	No	Maybe	I don't know
☐	☐	☐	☐

6. If yes, what was (were) the nature of the problem(s) and how was it (were they) addressed?

Results of Social Farming for the Participant

7. What are the three most important things you think that participants get out of the project?

Assessing Participants' Health and Wellbeing

8. Thinking of ALL the social farming participants who you work with, have you noticed <u>improvement</u> in <u>any</u> of the following indicators since they joined the project?
(If so, please tick the box in each line of the table that most closely indicates how many of your service users showed improvements).

Change in the participant's …	All	Most	Some	None	I don't know
Weight e.g. decrease if overweight, increase if underweight	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Physical fitness e.g. strength and stamina	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dexterity e.g. skill doing things with their hands	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Coordination e.g. ability to use different body parts together	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mobility e.g. ability to move freely and easily	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Physical health e.g. how often they get sick or need to go to the doctor	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mental health e.g. requiring medication or therapy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mood e.g. happier	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Motivation e.g. getting up, going out	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Responsibility e.g. being organised	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Independence e.g. able to complete things by themselves	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Memory e.g. able to recall what tasks were done on the farm	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Confidence, self-esteem e.g. how good they feel about themselves	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Demeanour, appearance e.g. attitude, how they look	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Communication skills e.g. talking, sharing news, telling stories	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
One-to-one relationships e.g. behaviour with one person	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group relationships e.g. behaviour in a group	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mixing in the community e.g. behaviour in public places	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Making new friends	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Meeting the Needs of Participants

9. In which of the following ways do you think the project helps participants and <u>by how much</u>?
(*please tick what you think is the most appropriate box in each line of the table*)

The project helps the participant by:	**A lot**	**Some**	**Not at all**	**I don't know**	**Not applicable**
Treating them with dignity and respect	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Supporting their emotional stability or calmness	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Stimulating them or meeting their interests	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Suiting their abilities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Offering education or the chance to learn new skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Giving variety in their work or daily activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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Providing useful training for life or for work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Making it possible to meet new people / make new friends	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Offering a chance to be involved in sports or recreation clubs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Offering a chance to take part in community activities e.g. tidy towns	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Offering visits to local businesses/facilities e.g. shop, hall, mart	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ensuring the participant is seen more in their local community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Providing the participant with support in their local area	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other (please specify)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Assessing the Project

10. "The project is effective in terms of information sharing among the partner organisations."

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

11. "The project is effective in terms of collaboration among the partner organisations."

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

12. "The project is a positive addition to the range of choices available to service users."

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

13. "Participants should be able to continue in the project if they wish."

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

14. "Participants should be able to spend more time each week in the project if they wish."

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

15. "Participants should be able to try out new community-based activities."

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

16. Do you think that the project should support participants in any other way?

17. Do you have any suggestions on how to make the project better for the participant?

You and Social Farming

18. What are the three most important things you get out of your involvement with the project?

19. "The project has a positive effect on my overall workload with participants."

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

20. "The project has a positive effect on my support work with participants."

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

21. "The project has a positive effect on my job satisfaction in relation to participants."

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

22. "I feel that the project values my views and opinions".

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

23. "I am involved as much as I want to be in decision-making processes in the project."

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

24. "If I thought it appropriate for a new service user to participate in day activities, I would":

Strongly recommend the project	Recommend the project	Neither recommend nor advise against the project	Advise against the project	Strongly advise against the project
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

25. Do you have any suggestions on how to make the project better for you or your organisation?

26. What surprised you most about the project?

Developing the Project into the Future

27. Do you have any suggestions on how to improve the project in terms of:

1. Identifying potential participants?

2. Improving accessibility for participants?

3. Being more rewarding for participants?

4. Measuring the effects of social farming on participants?

5. Collaboration and coordination among partner organisations?

6. Addressing training needs for participants, farmers or partner organisations?

7. Funding the project into the future?

8. Engaging with key government departments or agencies in relation to the project?

28. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Appendix 6: Partner organisation questionnaire.

About Me and Kerry Social Farming

1. What is your gender?

☐   Female   ☐   Male

2. How long have you been involved with Kerry Social Farming (hereafter 'the project')?

☐   Less than 6 months   ☐   6 months to less than 1 year   ☐   1 to less than 2 years

☐   2-3 years

3. What is the nature of you and your organisation's involvement with the project? Please tick all that apply.

☐   Regulatory oversight   ☐   Supporting service users

☐   Project funding   ☐   Supporting service users' families

☐   Project design and development   ☐   Supporting farmers

☐   Project coordination   ☐   Supporting partner organisations

☐   Project administration   ☐   Other (please specify)_____

What I know about Kerry Social Farming

4. "I have a good knowledge of the work of the project."

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5. Have any issues arisen in your experience with the project?

Yes	No	Maybe	I don't know
☐	☐	☐	☐

6. If yes, what was (were) the nature of the problem(s) and how was it (were they) addressed?

Assessing the Project

7. "The project is effective in terms of information sharing among the partner organisations."

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

8. "The project is effective in terms of collaboration among the partner organisations."

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

9. "The project is a positive addition to the range of choices available to service users."

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

10. Do you think that the project should support service users in any other way?

You and Social Farming

11. What are the three most important things you get out of your involvement with the project?

12. "I feel that the project values my views and opinions".

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

13. "I am involved as much as I want to be in decision-making processes in the project."

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

14. Do you have any suggestions on how to make the project better for you or your organisation?

15. What surprised you most about the project?

Developing the Project into the Future

16. Do you have any suggestions on how to improve the project in terms of:

    1. Collaboration and coordination among partner organisations?

    2. Addressing training needs for service users, farmers or partner organisations?

    3. Funding the project into the future?

    4. Engaging with key government departments or agencies in relation to the project?

17. Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

KERRY SOCIAL FARMING
WORKING TOGETHER !

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