



# Kerry Social Farming

## 'It's the best thing I ever did getting involved in Kerry Social Farming...'

I HAD been thinking about getting involved in Kerry Social Farming for a while when I got in touch with Irene Kavanagh and Joe McCrohan. From there I started it and I haven't looked back since. I have Stephen and Seamus coming to me once a week and it's a lovely experience for all of us.

Being out in the fresh air and being around animals and fixing fencing is all part of what they do. I've seen signs of their personalities really changing for the better, they look forward to it and of course we have the tea as well.

I think it's the best thing I ever did getting involved in Kerry Social Farming. I get great en-

joyment working with the two lads on my farm on Fridays. It makes me happy and it's great to have company out in the country. To know you're doing something to help someone that's helping you back, what more can you ask for.

My advice to other farmers is to go for it. They don't have to stay at it if they aren't happy but

they should definitely give it a try as there are loads of boys and girls out there that would love to be on a farm for a couple of hours a week.

Mary Healy,  
Ardoughter, Ballyduff

## It's so much fun and I loved it from Day One



ANTOINETTE O SULLIVAN, PARTICIPANT

WHEN I started social farming I knew that I was going to love it because it's something new that I never did before and it sounds so much fun. I went on a visit to the place and I loved it from day one.

What I loved about the place is that it's so peaceful and calming and it's a great place of freedom. I have been going for over a year now and I have to say that I have learned so much in the past 12 months it's unreal. I enjoyed working around the garden and in the tunnels. I love planting new seeds and flowers. I love watching the plants grow and it's amazing.

I look forward to going to the farm every Friday morning. It's one of my favourite days of the week. The time goes very fast when we are working hard. We always get to bring home something different each week and it's a wonderful opportunity to take part in something like this as I absolutely love it. I now have a lot of interest in gardening and I think it's wonderful to have a place like this to work.

JOHN O CONNOR, PARTICIPANT

I LIKE working at Rena's farm. I help to feed and water the hens and ducks. I learned to set seeds and water them. I like meeting other people there. Rena has a lovely dog and cat, the dog's name is Kerry and the cat is Ginger. I also like working with Antoinette and Bronagh.



Martin Sheehan with Gerry Smith St John of Gods, Eileen Sheehan Social Farming Working group at George Kelly's Hazelfort Farm, Ballymalis, Beaufort.



## Farmers supporting their local communities

## FBD Insurance – proud supporters of Kerry Social Farming

MIKE O'Donoghue of FBD Insurance first discovered the Social Farming initiative when a pilot programme supported by the EU was undertaken in the border region back in 2013.

Mike was naturally delighted when some farsighted members of the South Kerry Development Partnership (SKDP) such as George Kelly, Joe McCrohan, Irene Kavanagh, and others, decided they were going to bring the initiative to Kerry. The practice of offering social activity on family farms as a form of social support service for people with disabilities has huge potential to make a significant difference to the lives of both the participants and the host farmers.

Mike explains that FBD Insurance made a commitment at the outset to Social Farming Ireland that its customers were able to have the correct insurances in place to meet the needs of the project. Primarily, it necessitated both employers and public liability covers being in place up to the required levels to meet the needs of the project.

There are also a variety of other supporters of the project who need to have their interests indemnified under the relevant policies and FBD Insurance are happy to be able to facilitate the needs of the project. The overall aim is to eliminate red tape insofar as possible in a world where red tape is becoming more prevalent.

"My basic approach to this project was to eliminate any potential roadblocks and do whatever needed to be done as the potential of the project was simply too good not to be supported in spades," said Mike.

"I'm delighted the project has worked out so well up to this point and I can see its reach extending as the gospel is spread. There is great credit due to the organisations involved and, in particular, SKDP for their foresight in coming together to make this project a reality, which is making a difference to people's lives. We in FBD Insurance are proud to support them."



Rena Blake, Barna, Ballyunion and Student John O'Connor working on the farm in Ballyunion.

## A calling to all Kerry farmers...

KERRY Social Farming (KSF) is a collaborative, community-based service that provides farming and social inclusion opportunities to people with disabilities all over Kerry. KSF offers participants the complete farm experience, working with animals, flowers, vegetables etc in a safe and friendly environment.

The role of the host Farmer is vital to Kerry Social Farming. They offer participants opportunities to learn new hands-on skills as well as life skills. The participants get the chance to connect with farm families and the wider rural farm community. KSF helps build friendships

and open doors, allowing greater integration and social inclusion for all.

Currently, there are 19 host farmers across Kerry providing a weekly, social farming experience, for 31 participants.

KSF has recently employed a new part-time Social Farming Facilitator for North and West Kerry, Rena Blake. Rena is also a host farmer herself with three participants coming to the farm each week. "Social Farming has become part of our weekly routine and I really look forward to their Friday visits. It's very positive and we all gain from the experience, learning

from each other."

Part of Rena's role is to encourage new host farmers to get involved in North and West Kerry. "Currently we have 20 people with disabilities on the waiting list for social farming and we are looking for new host farmers to come on board. It is a great opportunity for host farmers to get involved in a unique and rewarding project. You also become part of a bigger host farming network with lots of farm walks and opportunities to connect with other farm families."

Although KSF is a voluntary project, they ensure that no host farmer is out of pocket.

Financial support is given to cover additional insurance costs and implement necessary farm upgrades.

Rena says Kerry Social Farming offers a therapeutic use for of our farm landscape. It's all-encompassing: social, educational, health and wellbeing. "If you would like to get involved in social farming or if you have any questions and would like more information please feel free to call.

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