



# Kerry Social Farming Newsletter

16th Edition March 2022

**Welcome** to the first edition of the Kerry Social Farming newsletter for 2022. Although it's Spring, we've had lots of storms and rain so far. Hopefully the weather will improve and we'll all get to enjoy the longer evenings and more outdoor activities. Life is getting busier on all our host farms and we look forward to more farms walks and visits in the coming months.

## KSF Annual Meeting Friday March 25<sup>th</sup>

We're pleased to say that our Kerry Social Farming Annual Meeting is taking place in Killarney this year. It's great to be able to host an in-person event after a break over the past few years. Here are all the details:

**Date:** Friday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

**Venue:** Brehon Suite, Brehon Hotel, Muckross Road, Killarney, V93 RT22.

**Time:** Participant event at 6pm followed by meeting from 7.30pm sharp.

**Guest Speaker:** Norma Foley TD, Minister for Education.

We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on the night as we reflect on the progress that Kerry Social Farming has made over the past year and look forward to the future.

## 5 good reasons to grow in raised beds.....

### Less back strain

One huge benefit you get when using raised garden beds is less strain on your back and knees. Being organised is one of the best things you can do to ensure that you have a successful garden. All raised beds can be made to suit all abilities.



## Location and Opportunity

Because your raised bed can be designed and built to suit any area this gives you great scope when planning your garden. Keeping your vegetables near the kitchen allows easy accessibility to your vegetables and herbs. Also raised garden beds gives everyone the opportunity to start a garden no matter of ability or mobility. Raised bed gardening is really great for starting us all off growing.

## Early planting

Your raised bed allows you to plant outdoors much earlier in the season because the temperature is much warmer and dryer in a raised bed then the ground.

## Good drainage

One thing that you have to consider if using traditional garden methods is how well your garden drains. With raised garden beds this issue is taken care of. Many of the problems of gardening are solved just by choosing to garden with raised beds.

## Less weeds

Raised garden beds have easy access to weeds and this reduces the weeding time you will need to put into the garden season.

**March**

**Madness.....**

**Let's get**

**growing**



**A Big thank you to our participants and their help in getting out growing this year!**



## News from Kerry Eco-Social Farming

Our Biodiversity Officer Luke Myers has been very busy these last few months working on the Kerry Eco-Social Farming Biodiversity EIP. Since we last saw him in our December 2021 newsletter, Luke has been busy visiting host farms and talking to farmers and participants about how they can help nature and also benefit! Luke is also busy planning events and training courses for host farmers, participants and members of the public throughout 2022. Our first public event will be in in early May, checkout the Kerry Social Farming Facebook page for more info!

Luke will have a regular slot in every newsletter in 2022. During these slots he'll be discussing a topic of interest relating to the project. This week he'll be telling us about bumblebees!



We've been seeing a lot of insects about recently! We can't wait, though, to see the bumblebees emerge from their winter hibernation on our host farms here on the Kerry Eco-Social Farming Biodiversity EIP. We need to make sure that there are enough pollinator-friendly native plants across the entire countryside so that they can survive.



**Did you know** A queen bumblebee emerging in spring needs to visit up to 6,000 flowers per day to get enough energy to brood her first batch of eggs? Can you count 6,000 different native spring flowers on your farm? Autumn is especially difficult for queen bumblebees, once the queen has mated, she must find more food so she can survive hibernation in the winter.

#### **How many bee species do we have in Ireland?**

In Ireland, we have 98 different species of bee. We have one native honeybee species who makes honey which can be harvested on our host farms all across Kerry. The remaining 97 species are wild bee, and we depend on them the most. These species include 20 bumblebee species and 77 solitary bee species. We need to protect all of Ireland's bees, we can do this by allowing native wildflowers to grow naturally on our farms, by correctly managing hedgerows, and by providing areas of shelter such as dense nettle or bramble.

**Did you know...** That one third of our 97 wild bees are threatened with extinction in Ireland.

**Life cycle of the bumblebee** Bumblebees have a very short life-cycle with only the mated new queens hibernating over the winter in order to emerge in the spring of the following year. When the colder weather comes, the old queens, female workers and males die off, making the young queens very important! We need to help our native wild bees by providing food and shelter in every farm, garden and public area across the country.

#### **How can I help?**

You can help very easily, by simply taking the time to look at your garden and seeing if there are enough native wild flowers and areas of ground where bumblebees can nest and stay safe during the winter. You can:

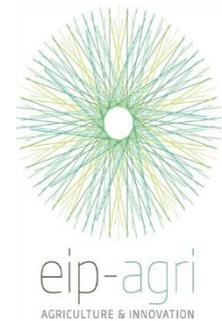
- Change the mowing regime of your lawn to make it more friendly for bees. All you need to do is cut at 6- or 8-week intervals throughout the year and remember to take all the clippings away and put them into the compost. This helps the bees by allowing more time for the native wild flowers, such as daisy, selfheal, dandelion, and buttercup, to flower and thus making it easier for the bees to find food.
- If you have an area of land that you aren't mowing or grazing, you could make a wildflower meadow. It's so easy! All you need to do is cut the meadow in the Autumn and remove the

clippings. This will allow for the nutrient content of the soil to reduce making the land more favourable to native wild flowers to colonise the area!

- Allow your hedgerows to flower and allow at least one Hawthorn tree every 300m to grow into a mature flowering tree.

This EIP biodiversity project is funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine in association with SKDP, NEWKD and project partners. Check out more about our activities at <http://www.kerrysocialfarming.ie/eco>

**#KerryEcoSocialFarmingEIP**



## Host Farmer meetings



*Host farmers meet at McDonnells farm in Kells (left) and Irene Brune's just outside Cahirsiveen (right).*

A meeting of host farmers from South Kerry took place on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> January. It was our first face to face meeting for some time and was most welcome after months of Zoom calls! It was also a chance to welcome new host farmer Bernie Curran, who has just begun supporting Aoife Murphy on her farm just outside Cahersiveen. There was a good attendance and a visit to two host farms, firstly Christy and Mary McDonnells' in Kells, and later to Irene Brune's near Cahirsiveen. Biodiversity Officer Luke Myers attended and gave a useful introduction to his work. Farmers received an update on developments in social farming and plans for the upcoming months. It was a worthwhile event and a good discussion. Thanks to our host farmers who hosted us and we look forward to meeting again soon.

Our North Kerry host farm meeting was held via Zoom on February 7th at 8:00 PM. We had a full house on the night with updates from Dave Fitzgibbon and Tom Sears. Luke Myers spoke about the biodiversity actions on the host farms for 2022. The meeting was just under the hour and we've agreed to have the next meeting in early May. North Kerry host farmers can look forward to a warm welcome from Billy Jo O Connor, Ballyduff for the next host farmer meeting there on May 10th at 10:30 am.

## New host farmers and participants

We are delighted to welcome many new people to the Kerry Social Farming team this Spring.

Clockwise from the top..... Cutting up some wood for host farmer Mary Fleming in Kilcummin is Pat O Connor (right) who is a long-standing member of social farming, helped by John Fleming, they make a great pair of handymen on the farm!

Next is Patrick O Sullivan who has joined Bernie O Donoghue, Valentia with helping to feed the many new calves born on their dairy farm.

Below is our Chairman Eamon Horgan, Kilgarvan pictured with new participant Oisin O Mahony proudly displaying their work in erecting the social farming sign on the farm.

Finally, we have Aoife Murphy showcasing her baking which she accomplished with her host farmer Bernie Curran, Cahersiveen (pictured centre).



## Manual handling for participants



Eight participants received Manual Handling Training at Barna, Ballybunion in February (left) and another nine participants came to Scotia Glen Farm, Tralee earlier this month for training (pictured on the right). It's vitally important that we all learn how to work safely on the farm and correct any bad habits we may have picked up along the way. Well done to Anthony, Shane, Ciara, Vanessa, Bryan, Martin, Tomás, Kevin, Sharon, Mike, Antoinette, Bronagh, Helen, Tim, Patrick, John, and Seamus and thanks to Rena and Tom for their hospitality on our training days.

## News from Mike and Joe in Lerrig, Ardfert



Mike O'Connor has been enjoying working with Joseph Walsh from Lerrig, Ardfert. Mike attends Kerry Parents and Friends service in Listowel. He began social farming with Joe last November. Joe has a mixed farm, growing potatoes, turnips and tending to sheep and cattle. Last week they covered the newly planted potatoes in their ridges with a porous plastic to protect them from frost. They look forward to seeing the new shoots appear in the coming weeks.

*Photo shows Mike and Joe sorting some of last year's spuds for the shops.*

## News from Daniel and Irene in Cahirsiveen

Since December literally a breeze is going round my garden! And the breeze is called Daniel. From the time he arrives to when he is getting a lift home no stone is unturned or no loose stake will be left unattended. It's the right boost of energy you need to get you through the winter! And I know I must have a plan for the day, or plan B for a rainy day as "What's next?" and "What's after that then?" to quote Daniel, reminds me that Social Farming can be very productive!



I am Daniel Casey and on Wednesday afternoons I am going to Irene's garden and in the mornings I am in school. I am doing different jobs with Irene. I always start with spraying the plants in the tunnel with garlic and seaweed extract. It is food for the vegetable plants. When the weather is dry, I load the wheelbarrow with cow manure, using the pike, and bring it to cover the empty vegetable beds. I like to push stakes with the sledgehammer into the ground.

Irene showed me how to weave a windbreaker with willow around stakes to protect the rhubarb plants. We collect small stones for a path to the manure pile, as it is so slippery there. When we find bigger rocks, we bring them to the entrance to make a flower bed. I like coming to Irene's garden and to try out different things. And when I see something which needs to be fixed, I want to do it here and now!

## UCC Certificate in Practice Support in Social Farming

Best of luck to students who began their learning journey on 7<sup>th</sup> February. This is the third intake of students for this unique and innovative course. We wish them well in their studies throughout the coming year. For more information on the course here <https://www.ucc.ie/en/ace-cpsf/>



### Kerryman

Kerry Social Farming features in the Winter Farming Supplement with the Kerryman newspaper of Wednesday the 15<sup>th</sup> of March. Look out for news from some of our host farmers.

### Radio Kerry

Thanks to everyone who took part in the Radio Kerry's Saturday Supplement programme on New Years Day. The podcast is available at <https://www.radiokerry.ie/podcasts/saturday-supplement/saturday-supplement-january-1st-2022-264789> We'll be working with Radio Kerry again very soon. Read on for more radio news!

### Saturday Supplement

KSF in conjunction with Radio Kerry will host a week-long training program for eight people, made up of participants, host farmers and facilitators in radio presenting and broadcasting a radio show. During the week the trainees will be out and about gathering vox pops and interviews from the social farming community across the county.

This show will then be aired on the Saturday Supplement with Joe McGill in in late May or early June. The aim of this show is to promote KSF though the country and put a call out for new Host Farms.

For more information or if you wish to be a part of the show in any way, please contact Evelyn or Rena.



We welcome your input into this newsletter, if you'd like to write or share a photo please get in touch with us; Rena, [renablake@newkd.ie](mailto:renablake@newkd.ie) Evelyn, [eoconnell@skdp.net](mailto:eoconnell@skdp.net) and Julie [jbrosnan@skdp.net](mailto:jbrosnan@skdp.net) .

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Also check our website [www.kerrysocialfarming.ie](http://www.kerrysocialfarming.ie), where you can link to our You Tube channel, featuring lots of social farming videos.



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