**Press Release**

**Education opportunity for Kerry Farmers**

Kerry Social Farming is collaborating with extensively with UCC and Skellig CRI (Cahirsiveen) in devising and planning the NQF Level 6 ‘Certificate in Practice Support in Social Farming’. The course is aimed at expanding training opportunities for both new and existing host farmers as part of the Kerry Social Farming initiative. The ‘Certificate in Practice Support in Social Farming’ was completed by 13 Kerry host farmers in 2020 and a further 15 (a mixture of existing and new host farmers) in 2021. The feedback about the course from farmers is very positive, both in terms of how it has helped their social farming practice and also how returning to education, many after a long break, has benefitted their own personal development and self-confidence.

SKDP’s Joseph McCrohan said that this course supports all those engaged to understand the history and components of social farming and disability services. “It supports farmers with communication styles and an opportunity to share and develop suitable activities on their farms that will benefit social farming participants” he said. “Both the host farmers and their participants enjoy the benefits of the course and it helps support and strengthen the Social Farming initiative” Joseph added. The use of the online virtual world of study over the past academic year has pushed students to further develop their IT skills, along with their learning specific to the course content around Social farming.

The ‘Certificate in Practice Support in Social Farming’ is taught by experienced teachers, many of whom have direct experience of working in social farming. The course examines a variety of topics, including learning how social farming operates both in Ireland and across Europe, the communities it serves and the outcomes it provides. The role of the environment, the farm setting and well-being and how they link to social farming practice are explored. The course features modules on law and the legal position around disability and equality, which provide a practical insight into the issues involved. Communication is a key topic, with students learning about a variety of communications styles and how to build on their own existing strengths in a way which can improve the social farming experience. There is also a module on social inclusion, which focuses on how groups and individuals may be excluded from society, and how social farming can provide opportunities leading to meaningful and sustainable social inclusion. The course is now established as part of UCC’s Adult and Continuing Education (ACE) programme, see link: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/ace-cpssf>.

Kerry Social Farming (KSF) was established in 2013 to innovatively target both an increasingly marginalised farming community in the county, as well as to include participants, i.e. people with a range of disabilities, in the everyday life of their own community. KSF ([www.kerrysocialfarming.ie](http://www.kerrysocialfarming.ie)) offers choice to people with disabilities to engage with farm families and the farming community, in tandem with meeting their personal life choices and exploring new options within a rural community setting.

An information event on the 2021/2022 course, containing feedback from the successful students (farmers), will be held via zoom on 27th July 2021 at 8.00pm. If you would like to hear more about the course and or to attend the information event please contact Joseph McCrohan, South Kerry Development Partnership CLG at Tel 066 9472724 or e mail jmccrohan@skdp.net

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