

# SOCIAL FARMING SEMINAR WATERFORD



Comhpháirtíocht Leader Waterford Leader  
Phort Láirge Partnership

Waterford Leader Partnership in partnership with a local benefactor are developing a Social Farming initiative in Waterford and have employed the services of the Social Farming Support office based in Leitrim Development Company.

This initiative seeks to build capacity among service providers and through a programme of events throughout Waterford and will gather crucial information on how best to implement this new concept of service delivery in the county. The board of Waterford Leader Partnership (WLP) have had an initial half day event to inform and build knowledge and understanding of the concept from the experience of the SoFAB project. WLP now invites interested parties to attend local events in Waterford scheduled as follows

<b>Monday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2016</b> , Lismore & West Waterford	<b>8pm</b> St Vincent de Paul Centre, Chapel Place, <b>Lismore</b> , Co Waterford  Meeting with Farmers and Farming Sector representative organisations
<b>Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2016</b> , Kilmacthomas & East Waterford	<b>8pm</b> in Rainbow Hall, <b>Kilmacthomas</b> , Co Waterford  Meeting with Farmers and Farming Sector representative organisations
<b>BOOKING ESSENTIAL – contact Denise Walsh at – <a href="mailto:denise.walsh@wlp.ie">denise.walsh@wlp.ie</a> or call 058-54646</b>	

There will be presentations at these events from the Social Farming Support office and also from Pilot Farmers. The meeting will look at what Social farming is, who are the farmers and why this works, how it would work on the farms, what the users could expect and benefits and outcomes and what the research in the SoFAB (Social Farming Across Borders) project demonstrated.

We are interested in meeting with farmers and their representative groups with a view to developing Social Farming throughout Waterford and forming a local basis / nucleus for it's development. Farmer representative organisations have a key role to play in advocating for and supporting its development locally, so it is essential to be represented at these events.

We recommend that farmers and farm families across the County take the time to consider the potential benefits of Social Farming to their business and local community. Farm Families also have a key role to play - as key partners in responding to the 'rural life' choices of people and offering new opportunities to people availing of supports through health and social care services.



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## So what is Social Farming?

Social Farming links the health care and agriculture sectors to provide a novel social support service for people who use health and social services.

Social Farming is the practice of offering activity on family farms as a form of social support service. In Social Farming the farm remains a working farm at its core but invites people to participate in the day to day activities of the farm. Social Farming provides people who use services with the opportunity for inclusion, to increase self-esteem and to improve health and well-being. The farm is not a specialised treatment farm; rather it remains a typical working farm where people in need of support can benefit from participation in farm activities in a non- clinical environment.

Experiencing farming at first hand, combined with physical activity has been shown to help a broad range of vulnerable people such as those suffering from mental health problems, people with physical or learning disabilities, the elderly, those recovering from drug or alcohol addiction or those in probation services. Involvement in normal day to day farm activities can provide opportunities for inclusion, create ways to increase self-esteem and deliver activities to improve health and wellbeing of individuals and groups of disadvantaged people.

Social Farming in Ireland was initiated by the SoFAB (Social Farming Across Borders) project. This was an Interreg funded Project which piloted the practice in the Northern half of the island of Ireland. The area included the six counties of Northern Ireland and the six border counties of the Republic of Ireland.

University College Dublin (UCD) led the project with partners Queens University Belfast, Dept of Agriculture & Rural Development (NI), Leitrim Development Company, and the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government. One of the outcomes from the project has been the establishment of a support office in both the Republic of Ireland operated by Leitrim Development Company [www.ldco.ie](http://www.ldco.ie) and Northern Ireland operated by Rural Support <http://www.ruralsupport.org.uk/>.

These support office have been established to continue the work of the highly successful SoFAB Project and will draw on the lessons learned and materials produced by the project.

The Project set up 20 Pilot farms, conducted research on these farms with placements over a 30 week period. The participants came from the mental health and intellectual disability services.

Research conducted by the project resulted in three publications –

- Handbook for Social Farming,
- Costs and Benefits of Social Farming - SoFAB Project 2014
- Institutional Arrangements Report

These are available on the projects' website as are many other resources - <http://www.socialfarmingacrossborders.org/publications>