



Kerry Social Farming Newsletter



14th Edition October 2021

It's been a while but welcome back to Kerry Social Farming Newsletter! We hope you've had an enjoyable summer and that autumn will bring more delights before the evenings begin to close in. If you've had any adventures over the past few months that you'd like to share, please don't hesitate to get in touch. We'd be delighted as always to hear from you.

Seed saving with David and Irene's visit to Brown Envelope Seeds Organic Farm, Skibbereen, Co. Cork.



Irene's picture shows David viewing some of the fantastic produce grown from seed at the farm.

David and I went for an information walk and talk to the Brown Envelope Seeds organic farm in Skibbereen. Madeline McKeever started her first seed catalogue in 2004 and contained 25 varieties. Since then, the number of varieties produced by Brown Envelope Seeds and the volume of seeds have increased every year. All seeds are grown on the farm. They are certified organic by the Organic Trust Ltd.

It was the first time leaving the county for us after more than a year. It took us nearly three hours to get there but we stopped for a picnic and had a walk in a forest. There was a small group of people from all over the country. We went around the farm and looked at the plants that were grown for saving seeds. David and I liked the small compact Kubota tractor that Madeline drove.

There were unusual grains such as amaranth and quinoa (see pictures below) which are mostly get imported, but there they grew outside. We also got to see different equipment for threshing seeds. Participants were asked to bring different tomatoes if they had, but we had to leave before we could sample them. This and other events are arranged to highlight the importance of saving our own seeds. We have seen last year that there was a lack of seeds during the first lock down. Madeline and the organiser Jason try to motivate more growers to save seeds to support our own food sovereignty.

David and Irene

Amaranth growing on the farm (right)



Quinoa (left) growing at Brown Envelope Seeds Organic Farm

FARCURA National Social Farming Conference, September 24th in South Kerry.

A huge crowd attended FARCURA National Social Farming Conference on **Friday 24th September** on the farm of Mike O'Sé at Canuig, Mastergeehy, in beautiful South Kerry. Over 100 people enjoyed tours of the farm and wonderful hospitality. Edel ní Liobheal, from Radio na Gaeltachta's Saol Ó Theas programme was an early arrival, to interview Mike and photograph the interesting selection of farm tools and equipment which were on the display for the day. Séan Mac an tSithigh (TG4) recorded a piece which featured on the Nuacht bulletin at 7pm that evening.



The event was opened by Councillor Michael Cahill, Chair of SKDP Board and was also addressed by Noel Spillane, SKDP CEO. Host farmer Mike O'Sé, participant Gerald O'Sullivan, Sean Houlihan and Mary Keane of Kerry Parents and Friends Association welcomed those present and explained how social farming operates on the O'Sé farm and the benefits it brings for both participant and host farmer.

The Conference was then addressed by Clare Gormley, Higher Executive Officer, Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine (DAFM). She commended the work of all social farming projects which DAFM fund, noting their commitment to improving the lives of so many people and increasing social inclusion.



Liz Kennedy & Dermot Carroll, of Limerick Institute of Technology provided an update on FARCURA research project, which Kerry Social Farming has been taking part in, through SKDP, since 2019. The position of social farming initiatives across the island of

Ireland was reviewed with presentations from **Brian Smyth**, Project Manager, Social Farming Ireland, **Nicky Green, Horticulturist**, Field of Dreams Centre, Cork, **Sheila Kelleher**, Social farming Co-ordinator, IRD Duhallow, North Cork and, via video link, from **Aoibheann Walsh**, Head of Social Farming and Innovation, at Rural Support, Northern Ireland. This was a unique occasion as it was the first time that all social farming models operating across the island of Ireland had gathered to discuss their projects.



Dr Brendan O Keeffe, renowned researcher and geographer, closed the Conference and commended all those delivering social farming and local social inclusion projects across the country. Brendan has completed many vital pieces of research on a variety of issues in Kerry, including the 2017 Evaluation of KSF, with Dr. Shane Conway and Dr. Caroline Crowley.

Thanks to Mike and all the O'Sé family and neighbours in Dromid who worked so hard to ensure that the day was a success. Also to Niall Foley who photographed and filmed the event and prepared the video on Kerry Social Farming which was on view throughout the day. We are delighted that so many host farmers, participants and friends were able to attend as it had been so long since we were able to meet in person.



Kerry Social Farming speakers at FARCURA Final conference 30th September



Voluntary Model of Social farming

- In Ireland the Department of Agriculture provides funding for the development of different models of social farming. Currently 4 different projects.
- From the beginning in 2013 Kerry Social Farming developed the voluntary model of social farming
- The voluntary model allows farmers to be the central point of the operation of Social farming
- The farmer and the participant are not paid for their involvement in social farming
- Social farming does not cost that farmer.
- Development and Education are important elements.

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The final FARCURA Conference took place online. Representing Kerry Social Farming was Joseph McCrohan presenting a case study of Kerry Social Farming (one slide captured above) and host farmer, Eamon Horgan spoke about his experience of social farming and being a host farmer.

Grace O'Sullivan MEP visits Blueberry Hill Farm, Sneem

On the 1st October, Grace O'Sullivan MEP, along with local Green Party representative Cleo Murphy from Kenmare, visited the host farm of Yvonne and Sigi Muller, near Sneem. Participant Emma Browne and her support worker Amanda McCarthy (Enable Ireland) very graciously shared their social farming day with us.

There was plenty of activity as we took a guided tour of the farm, feeding fowl, boars, sheep and rabbits and viewing some of the many features of this unique farm. The lovely autumnal sunshine made it possible for us to enjoy all amenities and see the many facets of Blueberry Hill Farm. Thanks to Yvonne, Sigi, Emma and Amanda for their hospitality.



It's pumpkin picking time at Barna



An easy pumpkin soup recipe from John, Antoinette & Bronagh

Soup pumpkin

- 1.5kg edible pumpkin
- Olive oil
- 1 teaspoon dried chilli
- 1 tablespoon coriander seeds
- 1 large onion
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1 carrot
- 1 stick of celery
- 1 litre hot vegetable stock

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 170°C/340°F.
2. Half the pumpkin and remove the seeds (you can keep these for roasting), then chop into wedges.
3. Place the pumpkin on two large baking trays and drizzle over a little olive oil.
4. In a pestle and mortar, grind the chilli and coriander seeds with a pinch of salt until finely ground.
5. Sprinkle the spices over the pumpkin with some black pepper.
6. Roast the pumpkin for 1 hour, or until soft and slightly caramelised at the edges.
7. Meanwhile, roughly chop the onion, garlic, carrot and celery.
8. Heat a lug of olive oil over a medium heat in a large saucepan then add the vegetables and cook for 15 minutes, or until soft and sweet but not coloured.
9. When the squash is ready, add to the pan with the hot stock. Blend with a stick blender, adding a little more water if you like a thinner consistency.
10. Enjoy

New social farming in recent months

Peter Curran Barrow Tralee



New host farmer Peter Curran, Barrow East, Tralee is a sheep farmer and a beekeeper. Peter is a very successful beekeeper and sells his honey locally as 'My Kerry Honey'. Peter keeps his bees at a number of locations throughout the County and in autumn he brings home the Hives for processing and honey extraction. Both Peter and Amanda completed the UCC Certificate in Practice Support in social farming course and will graduate later this year.

Cian, social farming participant, is well used of bees as his father is also a bee keeper and Cian help his father a lot at home. Cian engages in the new direction programme out of Resilience Care based out of the KDYS building in Tralee. Cian visits Peter on a Tuesday each week, mostly Cian helps Peter attending the sheep and doing general jobs around the farm.

Resilience Care, one of the newer service providers to team up with Kerry social farming is supportive of promoting KSF, promoting our project on their website;

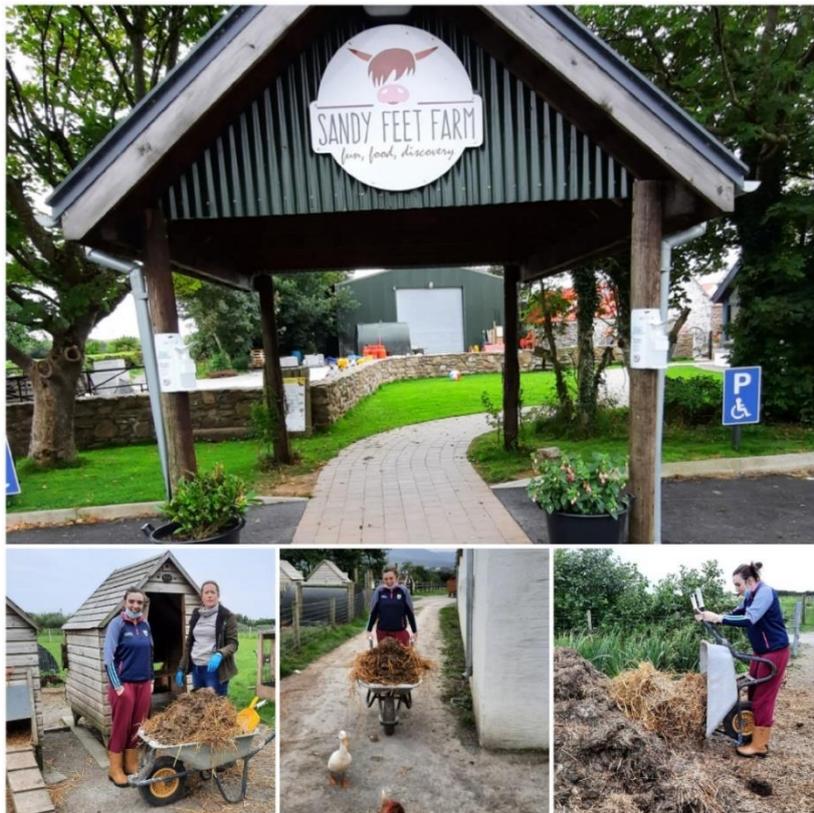
"Our Social farmers in Kerry hard at work repairing a damaged stone wall last week. A fantastic community-based service that provides farming & social inclusion opportunities to people with intellectual disabilities & acquired brain injuries in the area"

Peter and Cian Sept 2021



Sandy Feet Farm

The farm has been in the family for more than 300 years and is now operating as a visiting pet Farm. This family-run open farm situated in a rural setting near the village of camp on the main Tralee-Dingle Road, taking the Conor Pass route. Set in the most stunning location surrounded by mountains and boarded by wetlands and a long, wide sandy beach. It has something for everyone that visits, and depending on the time of year, baby farm animals are waiting to be cuddled and fed. There are various rare breed farm animals. A sensory garden and interactive garden is great addition to Sandy Feet. Eleanor and Roy are the owners of Sandy feet where social farming started here in autumn 2019 and has been on hold for the past year. We resumed here this August 2021 after a long break due to covid-19. Host farmer Eleanor meets Sharon, a participant from National Learning Network (NLN) at the farm on a Thursday morning each week. Sharon was so excited and happy to be returning to social farming after the long break she really missed social farming and her weekly trips to Sandy Feet.



Kerry Social Farming Working Group

The reconstituted Working Group held its first meeting via Zoom in September 2021. New members introduced themselves and received a progress report from KSF operations team. The Working Group consists of Chloe O Shea (HSE Mental Health Services), Tom Sears and Eamon Horgan (Host farmer representatives), Pat O'Neill (SKDP), Patrice O'Neill (HSE Disability Services), Liz O'Donnell (Kerry County Council) , Brenda McNamara (St John of God), Michael Hennessy (Down Syndrome Kerry), Dessie Cronin(Cúnamh Iveragh), Mary Keane (Kerry Parents and Friends Association). It is hoped that all future meetings can now be held in person as we move forward from the period of restrictions.

UCC Certificate in Practice Support in Social Farming

Enrolment is still open for this Course which will now be running from January 2022 onwards.

If you'd like to get more information about the course, or you or someone you know are interested in registering, please feel free to get in touch with Julie, Evelyn or Rena (Their contact details are below). You can also get more information on UCC Adult and Continuing Education website <https://www.ucc.ie/en/ace-cpsf/>

The 2020/21 class enjoyed a get together recently at Tom Sears' farm in Tralee. It was the first time that the class had met up, as the entire course had been run online. They are due to graduate later this year so we wish them well for their big day!



As ever, we welcome your input into this newsletter, if you would like to write or share something please get in touch with us; Rena, renablake@newkd.ie Evelyn, eoconnell@skdp.net and Julie jbrosnan@skdp.net. If you've changed your contact details recently for example, your email or postal address, please let us know so we can make sure the Newsletter gets to you each month. If you know of someone else who'd like to get our Newsletter by post or email, just let us know their details.



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine

