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The Social Farm

what it does and what it needs in order
to deliver Social Farming supports





Module Objectives:

- To encourage potential Social Farmers to examine aspects of their farm for its suitability
- To prepare the farm and the various items needed to consider Social Farming
- To raise awareness of the importance of examining / preparing your farm and planning for successful Social Farming



The Social Farm



Summary of Module Content:

- Basic knowledge of what a Social Farm is and needs
- Signposting to the various items required to commence Social Farming
- Steps to take to get the various items in place for Social Farming





Steps to considering Social Farming

- Consider your farm and what it offers
- Ensure it is safe
- Have welfare facilities in place
- Comply with any insurance or legal requirements
- Define a profile for your farm with the activities you offer
- Plan the activities you use to engage people on your farm and also off the farm
- Examine the services and population around your farm
- Invest in any facilities or items you may need
- Engage with participant groups and let them know about your Social Farm





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The Social Farm

The farm provides the many and different opportunities and activities to engage the interests of the people who come to the farm and from which they will benefit.





The Social Farm can be of many different types and scale:

- Small intensive horticultural units
- Mixed multifunctional farms
- Specialised large intensive farms producing and selling food
- Regular ordinary farms where farming activity is carried out





Farm Safety

All Social Farmers should comply with any legal requirements in your country to ensure farm safety. Examine the farm for hazards such as machinery, places where people might fall, chemicals etc.

Farm safety:

1. Identify the hazards on the farm which can harm people.
2. Assess the level of risk of any accident/ injury or harm occurring.
3. Take appropriate actions to reduce hazards to minimise any risk to the people who come to your farm.
4. Possibly provide personal protective equipment (boots, rainwear, sunscreen, gloves, masks, goggles) so that people are protected and safe.



The Social Farm



Farm Welfare Facilities

Social Farms should have certain facilities available for people who come to the farm.

Accessible toilet, washing facilities, changing area if clothes become wet, indoor area for activities during inclement weather.

A warm, dry space to sit and have lunch.



The Social Farm



Farm Insurance

The farm usually needs insurance to cover the activities provided on the farm and to ensure that if there are any accidents that people are secure.

Please check the requirements in your country.
Check any other legal requirements/licensing which may apply to your country.



The Social Farm



Farm Profile

The Social Farm profile lets participants know something about your Social Farm.

The profile includes a description of the activities on the Social Farm and the type of support from you the farmer.

Give details of the people who are involved on the farm.

Include photographs, details of transport to the farm, the farm's location (map), contact details, and any online presence for the Social Farm.

Case Study 2 Germany – Bauernhoftiere bewegen Menschen is a good example of a farm which is profiling its activities online with a website and YouTube videos.





Social Farming practical considerations

Think about and define the activities which your Social Farm already has in place and can provide which will engage people. Social Farms offer different activities at different times of the year. A variety of activities attracts different people.

Plants

Activities including cultivating and growing vegetables, fruit, nursery, trees/forestry, herbs, flowers, seeds, etc.

Animals

Tending and caring for cattle, sheep, pigs, horses, bees, goats, donkeys, alpacas, poultry, etc.





More activities which the Social Farm offers:

Workshop

Repairs of machines, woodwork, firewood, restoring vintage or old items

Environment

Hedge laying, woodland or wetland management, wildlife observation, conservation & biodiversity projects

Food

Cheesemaking, preserving, cooking, baking, jam making, selling direct or at markets





More activities which the Social Farm offers:

Social activities on or alongside the Farm

On many farms there are lots of visitors and sometimes celebrations (Christmas, New Year, Halloween), National Holidays and personal events such as birthdays, etc. These provide opportunities for engaging with people on the Social Farm.

On many occasions there are also visits off the Social Farm to local festivals, agricultural shows and events. There are also trips to the market to sell stock, and to farm suppliers, to the vet and others. These are all opportunities for activities and experiences for the Social Farming participants and are beneficial.





Activities can be varied and mixed depending on many factors:

The seasons, the weather, routine farm activities and what participants are interested in doing.

Mixing activities each day will keep participants interested and if planned and communicated to them will ensure that they benefit from the support at your farm.

Case Study 2 Ireland Mike O'Connell is a good example of a farm with many varied animals, activities and things to do which is located close to a large population in Limerick city and which can attract lots of participants.



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The activities and opportunities on your Social Farm are directly related to the needs and benefits for the participants such as:

- Nature experience
- Personal and/or Social development
- Experience new skills and practicing existing skills
- Independence and routines
- Progression towards employment or towards training
- Health and wellness
- Community engagement





Farm Location

The location of your farm is important. The majority of participants will travel to your Social Farm from within 35/40KM so the demand for your Social Farming service will depend on the needs of different groups near your farm.



The Social Farm



Farm Investment – is it important?

You may need to invest in your Social Farm to ensure that it is safe and has the welfare facilities to accommodate people who wish to participate in the activities on your farm.

You may create a profile of your Social Farm and develop some social media or online presence.

Generally the investment required is low as Social Farming is more about building and developing relationships.





Developing linkages with local user groups

Develop an understanding of the client groups near your farm who want to attend and engage in Social Farming on your farm. Research the services and groups in your area then contact them and build a relationship so they understand what your social farm offers, the activities, how people can access it and what it costs etc. Building relationships with these groups is important for the success of your social farm.

A good example of engagement is available from Case Study 3 Romania – HorsEmotion and their engagement with large numbers of participants.





Local supports or advice

For more information and advice speak to Social Farmers or visit other Social Farms in your area. In many countries there are agricultural advisory and extension services which can help farmers to consider multifunctionality or farm diversification.

The Local Action Groups (LAGs) under the Rural Development Programme (LEADER programme) can help Social Farmers to become established. See our 'Resouces' section on this website and look for information on the internet.





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Resources:

Examples of Good Practice in Social Farming

Social Farming and Intellectual Disability Services

Social Farming and Mental Health Services

Handbook for Social Farmers

Risk Management Tool for Farm Events

Handbook for Dutch Care Farmers



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