

Farming For Nature May & June 2021 Newsletter

Welcome to the May - June edition of the Farming for Nature Newsletter. It's such a wonderful time to be out and about in rural Ireland, there seems to be so much joy in the landscape. Young lambs and calves are enjoying their first taste of fresh late-Spring grass. The hedgerows are continuing to green-up, while blackthorn and cherry blossoms yield to the first whitethorn flowers. Early purple orchids are appearing but it's the woodland flora of sorrel and sanicle, bluebell and wild garlic, that impress the most, taking their chance to bloom before the trees gradually shade them out. Cuckoos are calling day-and-night, frogs are hopping, bees are buzzing – there's all sorts going on, if we have the time to take it all in. For it's a busy time farming too, the sleepless nights of calving and lambing giving way to long days preparing for crops of hay, silage, corn and vegetables. We are lucky here in Ireland to have such a rich and vibrant countryside and we are grateful for those farmers who make it so. Here at Farming for Nature we remain busy, celebrating and supporting those farmers who farm for nature and making sure their practical advice and wisdom is shared as widely as possible, so that we can all work together to make sure our rural communities and their rich heritage have a 'Spring' in their step all year round. We look forward to the farm walks in the coming months, and also to visiting some of the wonderful farmers nominated for inclusion in this year's list of Ambassadors.

This bimonthly publication contains news and upcoming events, offers helpful nature-friendly tips for your farm, and shares useful resources - including words of wisdom from our farmers!

The Farming for Nature initiative was established to help acknowledge and support those farmers who farm, or wish to farm, in a way that improves the natural health of our countryside. It was set up by people with a genuine interest in the wellbeing of our rural landscapes, many of whom work on a voluntary basis to build up this network and profile the good practices that are happening across the country. There are ways in which we can all get involved in this initiative, so please read on and see what you can do.

[Farming For Nature
Short Video](#)

NEWS

Farming For Nature 2021 Ambassador Awards update

In January of this year, we received 48 nominations for the 2021 Farming for Nature Ambassador Awards. The standard of this year's nominees has been simply outstanding. It has been hugely inspiring for us to speak to each of the nominated farmers and to learn more about the incredible work they are doing to incorporate, protect and enhance nature on their land. Each of the 2021 nominees have made a valuable contribution to the Farming for Nature initiative and we would like to thank them again for their time, support and most of all for the work they do for nature on their farms. We have been sharing their stories far and wide across

our social media platforms in an effort to inspire and encourage positive change amongst the farming community here in Ireland and beyond

You can learn more about our wonderful 2021 nominee farmers [here](#).

During the months of February and March, we spoke directly to each nominee farmer(s) to learn more about their farm and their practices for nature. Then following a standard set of criteria, we put together a shortlist of nominees who will progress to the next stage in the Ambassador Awards. These farms will now be visited by our judging panel during the summer months. The purpose of the judges' visit is to give each nominee the opportunity to showcase their farm and elaborate further on their farming system(s) and practices for nature. We will then come together with the judging panel and collectively decide on this year's list of Farming for Nature Ambassadors.

An important point to emphasize is that the Farming for Nature Ambassador Awards are not about winning. As far as we are concerned, every one of our nominated farmers are winners and we want to celebrate each participating farm, giving them the support and recognition they deserve. Every farmer has a story to tell and a lesson to share. Every farmer who participates in the Farming for Nature initiative becomes an integral member of our countrywide network of nature-friendly farmers.

Having gotten some insight into the inspiring work that our 2021 nominees are doing on their farms, we are very excited to get out and see first-hand the actions that our nominee farmers are taking on their land to support nature. We have a wide variety of farms engaged with the programme this year – from dairy producers to foresters, from market gardeners to rewilders, from conventional farmers to alternative agriculture! Our nominee farmers are focusing on areas such as mob grazing, combi-cropping, multi-species grassland management, Korean Natural Farming, no-dig horticulture, wild bird cover strips, conservation farming, rewilding...and much more. What a wonderful range of learnings they offer – watch this space for more! We will keep you all updated as we continue to learn from our wonderful community of farmers across the country.

Meanwhile, we wanted to share with you some of our favourite quotes from our interviews.

"If I could grow all my own food and grow a little bit extra and sell it to people, then make a living doing it – wouldn't that be the dream?"

"We need nature. Ecosystems are what make everything work. From the air that we breathe, to a stable climate, to clean water."

"If you want to do something for wildlife or for nature, the first thing you have to do is observe and make a record of your observations. I observe nature on my farm on a daily basis - I observe plant species, I observe birds and insect species. I try to keep a mental or written record of my observations."

"Grazing is very important for certain rare species, such as curlew, corncrake, lapwing, skylark and other ground nesting birds, as well as flora like orchids, all those species have followed us as farmers through the ages and they have benefited from our farming activity. Now, the lack of that type of farming activity means that many of those species will be in trouble because they won't have suitable habitats."

"If everybody did a little bit, it would add up to an awful lot... you don't have to turn your farm into a nature reserve, but if we all do a little bit of work to support nature and biodiversity on our farms, that will add up to have a big impact."

The FFN Ambassador awards are sponsored by Bord Bia's Origin Green programme.

[Meet the 2021 Nominees here](#)

[Meet our 2021 Judging panel here](#)

Farm Walks update

We've been waiting patiently to see when restrictions will allow the Farm Walks to begin and are very excited with our provisional schedule for May-October 2021. We have opened bookings for a number of the walks. We are closely following the easing of restrictions and will continue to open bookings on a phased basis and update those on waiting lists as more information becomes available. For walks that bookings have not yet opened you can join an 'expression of interest' (waiting list!) for the walk you wish to join and you will be notified when the booking is open. Places will be offered on a first come, first served basis.

These farm walks are an opportunity for the Farming For Nature farmers to showcase their contribution to nature and good farming practices on their land. The walks cost €10 to attend in order to reduce the number of no-shows. This is a not-for-profit initiative and all monies received will be circulated back into the farming community.

8th MAY	Michael Hickey	Co.Tipperary	TO BE RESCHEDULED
15th MAY	Mark Hurst	Co.Kildare	TO BE RESCHEDULED
22nd MAY	Andrew Bergin	Co.Kildare	BOOK NOW
5th JUNE	Stephen Morrison	Co.Kildare	BOOK NOW
12th JUNE	Pat Lalor	Co.Westmeath	BOOK NOW
19th JUNE	Trevor Harris	Co.Kildare	BOOK NOW
23rd JUNE	ISSA	Co.Clare	
26th JUNE	Thomas & Claire O'Connor	Co.Kerry	
3rd JULY	Thomas Fouhy	Co.Cork	
10th JULY	Mervyn Auchmuty	Co.Roscommon	
11th JULY	Mimi Crawford	Co.Tipperary	
17th JULY	Jim Cronin	Co.Clare	
24th JULY	Thomas & Claire O'Connor	Co.Kerry	
7th AUGUST	Sinead Moran	Co.Mayo	
14th AUGUST	John McHugh	Co.Laois	
21st AUGUST	Bridget Murphy	Co.Sligo	
28th AUGUST	Kate Egan	Co.Westmeath	
4th SEPTEMBER	Ailbhe Gerrard	Co.Tipperary	
11th SEPTEMBER	Donna Mullen	Co.Meath	
18th SEPTEMBER	Shackleton Family	Co.Cavan	
25th SEPTEMBER	Kate Egan	Co.Westmeath	
2nd OCTOBER	Olly Nolan	Co.Dublin	
3rd OCTOBER	Mimi Crawford	Co.Tipperary	
9th OCTOBER	Sinead Moran	Co.Mayo	

Farming For Nature would like to thank the farmers for their generosity in hosting these farm walks. And thanks to DAFM and NPWS who support these walks.

[Add your name to farm walk WAITING LISTS here](#)

Farmer Q&A sessions are available to listen back to

Our 'Ask the Farmer' series ran throughout this Winter and Spring with 13 superb Ambassadors having an informal chat with us on-line about their farm and farming system and then an open floor session with the attendees. These proved hugely popular and a great way to listen to these eloquent spokespersons for nature. You can now listen to all of these either on our YouTube channel or by following the link below.

[View the Ask the Farmer Q&As recordings here](#)

Meet our Monthly Ambassadors

Cyril Ó Flaithearta (Ambassador May 2021)

Cyril Ó Flaithearta runs the family farm, based on Inis Mór island, keeping beef cows and selling weanling calves and/or stores. The highly fragmented farm, with up on 80% of its area within an SAC runs from one side of the island to the other and contains fine examples of species rich grassland and the associated biodiversity. Active management by Cyril and his family maintain these stunning grasslands. It takes a lot of work to rebuild stone walls to control the grazing livestock, to ensure fresh water supplies on the small fragmented fields and to control encroaching bramble and scrub. Cyril's work is a continuance of the traditional winterage management system that has created and maintained these grasslands for many generations, but he is also adopting new methods such as improvements in animal breeding and nutrition to improve the agricultural output of the farm.

[Read more about Cyril's Farm here](#)

Irish Seed Savers (Ambassador June 2021)

The Irish Seed Savers Association (ISSA) have made a major contribution to the protection and enhancement of nature on farms, gardens and across Ireland for over 30 years. ISSA conserve Ireland's threatened genetic resources and maintain a public seed bank of over 600 varieties of seed. They preserve heirloom and heritage food crop varieties that are suitable for Ireland and local growing conditions, contributing to the nation's food security. They provide a unique service to the nation in terms of supply of organic heritage seeds and apples trees. The 20 acre farm, gardens and visitor trail at Capparoe, Scarriff, Co. Clare is an inspiration, ably demonstrating best practice in organic farming and farming for nature. They supply seeds of vegetables, grains, herbs and edible flowers, as well as apple trees the progeny of which, thanks to ISSA, adorn many an orchard across Ireland today.

We're hoping to have a walk at ISSA on the 23rd of June. To join the Waiting List for this walk, click below.

[Join ISSA 23rd June walk waiting list](#)

Join our FFN Forum

This is a forum for farmers to ask questions and share information around farming for nature. It was set up to encourage and support farmers that wish to include nature more in their farming practices. While it is primarily for farmers, we welcome users that are able to contribute from related fields.

Check out our farming podcasts

Farmers! Here is a podcast by you, for you! Listen to a wide range of farmers talk about how they farm with nature for a sustainable future. New podcasts will be coming soon including our most recent monthly ambassadors and our Q&A sessions. While there has been a delay

[Access Forum](#)

due to Covid restrictions we hope to have new podcasts available soon. Please rate, review and share these podcasts.

[Podcast channel](#)

Other News & Events

- United Nations Food Systems Summit: Ireland's National Dialogues, May 4th and 17th. Register at <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/a5881-food-systems-summit-2021-irelands-national-dialogues/>
- Teagasc Signpost Series Webinar - Celebrating our biodiversity and motivating farmers to address the climate and biodiversity emergency, May 21st. Register at <https://www.teagasc.ie/news--events/national-events/events/sps-celebratingbiodivers.php>
- Burren in Bloom, celebrating the Burren's biodiversity, 18th-22nd May. Programme and registration on www.burreninbloom.com
- All Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025 launched. Download the plan and see how it builds on the previous plan at <https://pollinators.ie/aipp-2021-2025/>

Your Farm

A monthly calendar for noticing nature on your farm

We are developing a month-by-month guide to spotting different forms of nature on your farm and practical tips to help you encourage even more! This is just a start, we need your help to develop this further – please send in your ideas and help us create a rich calendar for what is on the farm and practical notes on how to enhance it: info@farmingfornature.ie

Thanks to all the Ambassadors that fed into this work so far and to Mark Robins for collating it.

[View Wildlife Calendar's here](#)

Best Practice Guidelines & Illustrations

The below management guidelines contain simple actions that you can do on your farm to enhance biodiversity. They also include clear illustrations on good, moderate and poor management to help guide you. We hope you find them useful!

Plan For Nature

Diversity of habitats on your farm is a key to a thriving ecosystem. See here how to plan for nature on your farm

[Plan For Nature](#)

Hedgerow management

Diverse hedgerows can provide a wide range of both agricultural and ecological benefits. Click below to view best practice guidelines.

[Hedgerow management](#)

Watercourse management

Well managed rivers and streams on your farm can provide a wide range of agricultural and ecological benefits. Click below to view best practice guidelines.

[Watercourse management](#)

Species-rich grassland management

Preserving and enhancing species-rich grasslands can provide a wide range of agricultural and ecological benefits. Click below to view best practice guidelines.

[Species-rich grassland management](#)

Peatland management

Well managed peatlands can provide a wide range of agricultural and ecological benefits. Click below to view best practice guidelines.

[Peatland management](#)

Frequently asked questions

We have a series of frequently asked questions about farming for nature and how to do it on your land. Just click below to get started.

[FAQs](#)

About Us

[Meet the Team](#)

[Current
Ambassadors](#)

[Useful Resources](#)

Support our Ambassadors

The products and services listed below are a great opportunity for you to engage with, and meaningfully support our Farming For Nature Ambassadors. These are listed under various themes (Food Products, Education, Accommodation and Other) and ordered alphabetically by farmers' names.