



Welcome to January- February Farming For Nature Newsletter

Happy New Year to one and all, welcome to the January-February edition of our Farming for Nature Newsletter. It's been a remarkably mild winter thus far, largely free from big floods and freezes, tricking some plants and animals into the dangerous assumption that Spring is imminent. At this time of new beginnings and 'resolutions', here at FFN we are firm in our resolution to achieve so much this year, buoyed by inspiration from our wonderful Ambassadors – not just here in Ireland but also, as you will read below, in places like Austria and Lithuania.

It's fascinating to see the different landscapes and climates in these countries and how farming practices have evolved and adapted over centuries in response. But what is even more striking is the passion, eloquence and enthusiasm that is common to all of these farmers, their quiet power as first-hand witnesses as to how farming and nature can go hand in hand to improve the wellbeing of the farm family, community and local environment.

We hope you can actively engage with us in our 2022 journey – begin by nominating an 'farming for nature' hero you may be aware of so that we can get busy meeting these farmers, sharing their stories, ideas and inspiration and reframing a more positive narrative regarding the role of the farming community in addressing our climate and biodiversity emergency.

[What is Farming For Nature? Listen to our short podcast here](#)



Farming For Nature Ambassador Awards 2022 Now open!

Do you know of a farmer or farm family who are producing great food while maintaining a flourishing farm environment, earning the respect of their peers through their innovation, impact and enthusiasm? Well, if so, please help us to recognise and reward these great farmers and share their stories, so that other farm families might be inspired and so that the wider public can gain a deeper appreciation of the role that our farm families play in nourishing our people and places.

Now in its 5th year, the annual Farming For Nature Ambassador Awards have blossomed into an active network of over 60 wonderful, eloquent Ambassadors who are inspiring many other farmers across Ireland to be more aware of nature on their land. FFN wants to further expand this network in 2022 and we are now seeking nominations of farmers who are going that extra mile for nature. Have a think about any farmers that you know who you feel inspired by, farmers whose stories deserve to be told more widely. Let us know a little bit more about these farmers and their farms and then we will take it from there – at the very least,

getting a farmer nominated for these awards is a great way to show that somebody out there really appreciates their work!

The FFN Ambassador awards are sponsored by Bord Bia and aim to acknowledge and celebrate farmers across Ireland who are doing great things for nature. **If you wish to nominate or be nominated, please see our FAQs below. Deadline is the 14th February 2022.**

[Ambassador Awards FAQs](#)

[Nomination form](#)

Meet some of our new Ambassadors up close

Each newsletter we will profile some of our new ambassadors. This January/February we have 3 Ambassadors from varied farm systems and land types. Welcome please; Thomas Stack, Henry O'Donnell, and Rod and Julie Calder-Potts.

Thomas Stack (Co.Limerick)

He embarked on an ambitious journey to transform his farm, building a system that is resilient to environmental and financial shocks. Thomas transitioned to organic farming in 2018 and since then he has adopted the Korean Natural Farming method. This regenerative approach uses indigenous microorganisms (IMOs) to create fertile soils that produce a high output without the use of synthetic fertilizers, herbicides or pesticides. Thomas milks 60 dairy cows with virtually no external inputs. His cows are entirely grass-fed and they produce high quality organic milk. More information on Thomas's farm below. **Or learn directly from Thomas himself by registering for his online Ask the Farmer Q&A below.**

[Thomas's Farm](#)

Henry O'Donnell (Co.Donegal)

Henry O'Donnell manages a mixed organic farm in the uplands of north Donegal. The 92-hectare farm is made up of different types of land – lowland pasture, marginal upland and commonage. He runs a flock of 60 horned upland ewes. The sheep enterprise is a low input and low-cost system. Henry also runs a herd of suckler cattle, half continental breeds and half Galloways, producing high quality organic beef. Henry has been experimenting with growing red clover swards for winter fodder, as well as multi-species swards for grazing on the lowlands. The animals graze a mixture of diverse vegetation throughout the year as they move between the lowlands and uplands. Henry is passionate about the importance of grazing animals in maintaining marginal uplands –reducing fire risk, maintaining plant diversity and fertilizing the land. He is a strong advocate for high nature value farming systems and this is reflected in the way in which he runs his own farm in the hills of Donegal. More information about Henry's farm below. **Or learn directly from Henry himself by registering for his online Ask the Farmer Q&A below.**

[Henry's Farm](#)

Rod & Julie Calder-Potts (Co.Kilkenny)

Rod and Julie Calder-Potts organic orchard supplies them with apples for artisan apple juice, apple syrup, apple cider, vinegars and much more, almost all of which are processed on the farm. They have more recently built a distillery on the farm and are now producing apple gin, apple brandy and apple vodka. Respect for and connection with nature is at the heart of the farm. They continuously work to enhance biodiversity on the farm. They have built two lakes, planted forestry all around the farm and sowed pollinator friendly flowers to encourage solitary bees amongst other insects. Rod and Julie are

passionate about supporting small-scale Irish farmers and producers. More information on their farm below. **Or learn directly from Julie herself by registering for her online Ask the Farmer Q&A below.**

[Calder-Potts's Farm](#)

Ask the Farmer Q&A continues

The 'Ask the Farmer' series continues to run these next few months during which a number of our amazing Ambassadors will be on-line to tell us a little more about their farm and farming system and to answer your questions about farming for nature. These 'live' evening sessions will take place every other Tuesday and include a short interview with the featured farmer and then an open Q&A session where you can 'ask the farmer' about whatever you would like to know, with a focus on practical management advice. It is a great opportunity to learn from our Ambassadors who work with nature every day on their farms, and also to share your own ideas and experience of 'Farming for Nature'.

So far this season we have the following farmer lined up for these sessions. Please register using the button below.

- 11th January 2022 8pm **Lowing inputs but remaining productive** with Limerick farmer Gearoid Maher.
- 25th January 2022 8pm **Moving from intensive tillage to profitable biological farming** with Meath farmer Louis McAuley.
- 8th February 2022 8pm **Korean Natural Farming on a Dairy Farm** with Limerick farmer Thomas Stack.
- 22nd February 2022 8pm **Grazing the uplands sustainably** with Donegal farmer Henry O Donnell.
- 8th March 2022 8pm **Fruit growing and diversification in business** with Kilkenny farmer Rod Calder-Potts.

[Ask the Farmer Q&A Registration](#)

Nature's Calendar this winter

Wondering what wildlife to look out for and what practical actions you can take on your farm this winter? See below.

[Nature's Calendar - Winter](#)

Groundtips - advice from farmers for farmers

This is a new section on our website that provides practical advice and tips from farmers in their own words on how they have enhanced nature on their land. Everything from ponds to bats, owls to agroforestry, green manures to holistic grazing and much more. Click below to read their top tips on these areas.

[Groundtips from farmers](#)

Groundtips Podcasts

We continue to develop new podcasts to our series. These short audios are a great way to listen to what our farmers are up to on their land and how they are carrying out do certain actions to improve nature on their farm. These are great to listen to in your tractor, car or when you are working the land. Subscribe to our podcasts through the usual means (Spotify, iTunes etc) and you will be notified when new ones are out. Meanwhile click below for our latest episodes including 'How to entice barn owls to your farm' with farmer Paul Moore, and 'What is Farming For Nature' with our very own Brigid Barry and Brendan Dunford.

Podcasts

Farming For Nature has gone international!

Working on the Farming for Nature Ambassador Programme over the past number of years, we've come to realize that many of the same challenges and opportunities that exist here in Ireland around farming and nature also exist in countries across Europe. With this in mind, we've been connecting with some wonderful colleagues in Lithuania and in Austria to support them on their journeys in establishing national Farming for Nature Ambassador Awards programmes. We are thrilled with what's been achieved and we are sure that you'll be equally impressed with the farmers who have been involved and fascinated by their stories.

Farming For Nature Lithuania held their Farming For Nature Ambassador awards in December 2021 and their farmer videos can be viewed here in English www.kitoksukis.lt

Meanwhile, Farming For Nature Austria have posted 5 stunning farming videos online and are encouraging the public to vote for their favourite one (until the 15th January) - see www.farmingfornature.at

About Farming For Nature

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. Learn more by visiting our website.

www.farmingfornature.ie

Farming for Nature

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