



Welcome to November-December Farming For Nature Newsletter

Welcome to November-December Edition of the Farming For Nature (FFN) Newsletter, a bumper-full edition of news, upcoming events and links to great resources for those who want to farm for nature!

The long evenings are upon us and the onset of the winter season often brings with it a change of workload and pace on many farms. This slower season offers us a time to reflect on the year gone by – mistakes made, lessons learned, stories heard and experiences gained. There is no doubt that 2022 has been a challenging year for much of the farming community. Rising costs, unpredictable weather events and increasing pressure to meet environmental targets have been at the forefront of the Irish farming world this year.

In light of this, we come to offer inspiration and optimism by way of our 15 wonderful FFN Ambassadors whom we welcomed to our network this year. We held our annual FFN Gathering and Awards Ceremony on the 29th of October in Corofin, Co. Clare. Like every year, this year's event proved to be an incredibly inspiring, positive, inclusive and heartening day of farm walks, farmer-led panel discussions and networking, topped off with our awards ceremony. We even had representatives from FFN networks in Austria and Lithuania. To gather so many incredible ambassador farmers in one room and to give them space to share their stories, wisdom and advice, proves to be nothing short of extraordinary year on year. These farmers and farming families are leading the way when it comes to ecologically sound, economically viable and agriculturally progressive farming. We are delighted to welcome such a creative and diverse group of farmers into our network this year, and we look forward to working together over the upcoming year and beyond. Please support all our farmers by watching their videos, buying their products and services and attending upcoming on-line and farm-level events.

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



15 new Farming For Nature Ambassadors join our network in 2022

We are delighted and excited to welcome 15 inspiring new farmers to our growing Ambassador network this year.

HERE ARE THE FARMING FOR NATURE AMBASSADORS FOR 2022

- Andrew Chilton** Alpaca, Co. Roscommon
- Aonghus Ó Coistealbha** Market gardening, Co. Galway
- Brigid O'Connor** Sheep, Co. Kerry
- Bronagh & Cathal O'Rourke** Beef, Co. Clare
- Colm Flynn** Tillage, Co. Kildare
- David Dennison** Vineyard & orchard, Co. Waterford
- Gerry Fitzsimons** Beef, Co. Cavan
- James Ham** Forestry & beef, Co. Westmeath
- Mark Gillanders** Tillage & beef, Co. Monaghan
- Mark Harold Barry** Tillage, forestry & beef, Co. Tipperary
- Maurice Deasy** Tillage & sheep, Co. Tipperary
- McDonagh Family** Horticulture & mixed stock, Co. Mayo
- Pat Mulrooney** Dairy, Co. Tipperary

Paul McCormick & Jacinta French, Beef & nature, Co. Cork

Sean Condon Dairy, Co. Limerick

Following on from our Public Vote campaign which took place in September and October, we will continue to feature the remaining 10 Ambassadors on a monthly basis over the coming months. Keep an eye on our Facebook, Instagram and Twitter platforms to learn more about these wonderful farmers and the valuable work they are doing for nature on their land. We will continue to work with these new ambassadors to produce podcasts, 'Ask the Farmer' sessions, farm walks and more.

We would like to take this opportunity again to thank all of our wonderful Ambassadors – for sharing their stories so far and most importantly for their dedication and commitment to supporting nature on their land. **We currently have 81 Ambassadors in our network. Click below to meet them all.**

[Meet all our current Ambassadors](#)

Meet some of our new Ambassadors up close

Over the next few months, each newsletter will feature two of our new 2022 Ambassadors. Welcome please; Andrew Chilton and Aonghus Ó Coistealbha.

November Ambassador: Andrew Chilton

Andrew Chilton manages 2 farms in Co Roscommon alongside his family. The first farm is 6 ha of marginal land and is certified organic. An advocate for diversity on farms, there is a mix of animals kept on this farm including a small herd of Dexters and at different times there are pigs, goats, sheep and chickens. They grow vegetables for the home and there is an apple and plum orchard on the farm as well. Andrew has trialled different methods of agroforestry on this land including planting field corners and nature corridors, and block planting. He plants between 50-100 trees on the land every year. Andrew has dug 2 ponds on the land which has attracted many insects and birds to the land - *"There is tremendous birdlife on the land, we have counted over 30 different bird species on the farm."*

The second farm borders Lough Key and is surrounded by woodland. A herd of 52 alpacas are kept on this farm and Andrew produces alpaca fleece which is processed in the UK and the finished pillow and duvet products are sold directly from the farm. They also run farm tours and alpaca trekking. All of the animals are on a rotational grazing system and overwinter outdoors. Andrew has been

increasing the diversity of grass species in the pasture in recent years. There is also an apiary on the farm and honey is sold commercially.

Andrew works with Social Farming Ireland and teaches the NOTS Organic Production Principles Course. He is also a farm advisor/planner.

Join us for a Q&A with Andrew - register below.

December Ambassador: Aonghus Ó Coistealbha

Aonghus Ó Coistealbha is a market gardener from Connemara Co. Galway. An Garraí Glas is a 1-acre farm where Aonghus grows a variety of chemical-free vegetables including lettuce/salad leaves, onions, tomatoes, radishes, herbs and more. A tremendous amount of vegetables are grown from a small space, not to mention a challenging landscape with plenty of stone and a strong Atlantic prevailing wind. All of the fresh produce grown is sold to local shops and restaurants, as well as in the on-farm shop.

Aonghus is particularly interested in regenerative farming; composting, soil health and building fertility is of utmost importance to this farming system. Compost is made on the farm using food waste from local café's and restaurants, seaweed and other organic material from the land. Aonghus is passionate about his local Gaeltacht community and has worked hard to educate the local community in terms of where their food comes from and how it is grown. His mission is to produce high quality, fresh and nutritious veg for the local community. He is open and willing to share his farming advice and story with anyone who would like to learn, and he takes a number of interns and volunteers on the farm every year.

Join us for a Q&A with Aonghus - register below.

Sean Condon Awarded the 2022 Farming For Nature Public Vote Winner

The 2022 National FFN Ambassador Awards were held in Corofin Co. Clare on Saturday 29th October. On the night we welcomed 15 new ambassadors on board and highlighted five outstanding examples of how farmers are supporting nature on their land. This year's Public Vote winner is Sean Condon of Templeroe Dairy in Crecora, Co. Limerick.

Farming For Nature project officer Lucy Bowler says *“I think every farmer in Ireland will be able to relate to at least one of these farmers and admire what they have managed to achieve on their farms. We commissioned a short film on five of these farms so that the public could see first-hand the valuable work that so many farmers are doing to support nature on their land. We had an outstanding response to this campaign in terms of video views and votes cast over the last few weeks. This year’s public vote winner, Sean Condon, manages an organic, extensive dairy farm producing top-quality milk. Some 25% of the farm is set aside for nature, biodiversity and wildlife. Sean takes a wonderfully holistic approach to farming – ensuring the farm is not only ecologically and economically sound, but also managing a farming system whereby himself and his livestock thrive!”*

Deirdre Ryan, director of Bord Bia’s Origin Green Programme said *“Partnering with worthy, progressive initiatives such as the Farming for Nature awards is central to the ethos and ongoing development of the Origin Green programme. Farming for Nature has an important role to play in guiding the discourse around Irish agriculture by raising awareness of the variety of valuable habitats that are carefully managed by Irish farmers. The network of engaged and active Farming for Nature ambassadors are helping to make farmers central to conversations around environmental management and protection, while also serving as inspiration to other farmers. On behalf of Bord Bia, I’d like to congratulate all the new Ambassadors and Sean Condon for winning the public vote.”*

More information on Sean’s farm click [here](#) or check out his podcast here following on from his win last month.

[Sean Condon's Podcast](#)

Ask the Farmer Q&A is back this week

The ‘Ask the Farmer’ series runs from winter through to the spring where 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 pressing questions about farming for nature on a fortnightly basis. These ‘live’ evening sessions will be 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'.

Upcoming Q&As:

- 8th November 2022 8pm ***Farming and restoring an Irish Atlantic Rainforest*** with Cork farmer Eoghan Daltun.
- 22nd November 2022 8pm ***Mixed stock organic farming*** with Roscommon farmer, Andrew Chilton.
- 6th December 2022 8pm ***Making a living on a 1-acre farm*** with Galway farmer Aonghus O Coistealbha.

[Register for our Q&As here](#)

Nature's Calendar this Winter

This is a great time to think about filling the gaps in your hedgerows, planting some bare-rooted trees. Have you seen any signs of a barn owl on your farm, yellowhammers on your winter stubble or waterfowl on your wetlands? And don't forget the birds closer to your house/yard too - fill up those birdfeeders to help the smaller songbirds throughout the winter months. These are just some of the things you can expect to see and hear over the coming months. For more information on what wildlife to look out for and what practical actions you can take on your farm to help nature, see our November and December nature calendars below.

[Nature's Calendar - NOVEMBER](#)

[Nature's Calendar - DECEMBER](#)

Farming For Nature Podcasts

These podcasts are a great way to listen to what our farmers are up to on their land and how they are carrying out certain actions to improve nature on their farm. They can be enjoyed whilst out to in

your tractor, milking the cows or when you are working the land - basically at a time that suits you. Subscribe to our podcasts through the usual means (Spotify, iTunes etc) and you will be notified when new episodes are issued. Meanwhile, click below for our latest episode on '***So you have a bog on your land, now what***' with Roscommon farmer Tommy Earley.

Please rate, review and share in order to help get the message out there.

['So you have a bog on your land, now what' podcast](#)

Groundtips - advice from farmers for farmers

This section of our website provides practical advice and tips from farmers in their own words on how they have enhanced nature on their land. We share one of these with you each newsletter. This month we are covering ***Good Compost for Horticulture*** with ambassador Jim Cronin. Click below to see how you can make your own compost for your garden or market garden.

[Groundtips - Good Compost for Horticulture](#)

Farming For Nature Advisory Services

Farming For Nature have recently developed our offerings to farmers across Ireland including both peer to peer knowledge exchange as well as capital funding for actions for nature on the land.

The Horse's Mouth

We have recently launched our new farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing and mentorship service. The Horse's Mouth is to support farmers and landowners who are looking for on-the-ground practical advice from fellow farmers on how they might improve their land's natural capital. We received a number of applications and for this pilot phase we have picked just 10 farms across 7 counties. Four of our Ambassadors will act as mentors and visit these farms walking the land with the owner and sharing simple, practical advice and encouragement from 'The Horse's Mouth' as such. We hope to roll this out more into the future. Thank you to all our Ambassadors that have offered up their time and expertise to this project. We will keep you posted on how this develops.

The Hare's Corner

In conjunction with our sister organisation, Burrenbeo Trust, Farming For Nature have offered some of our Ambassadors the option to build a wildlife pond on their land this winter under The Hare's Corner project. The idea of this is that every farmer in Ireland should be able to leave a corner of their land for nature - what was known as the hare's corner in the past. Under the guidance of wetlands ecologist, Feidhlim Harty, and with support from NPWS, 16 FFN farms across 14 counties will be digging ponds for wildlife.

We are also working with 15 FFN other Ambassadors to create mini-woodlands on their farms consisting of native Burren Pine trees and a number of companion plants including Holly, Spindle, Whitebeam and Guelder-rose. We were delighted to offer these trees to our wonderful Ambassadors and we are certain that these trees have made their way to safe and happy homes around the country!

We will keep you posted on how these turn out and what wildlife comes to these areas as a result.

Forum

This section of our website is for farmers to ask questions and share information around farming for nature with each other. Recent queries include *'Where can I buy Galloway Heifers?'* and *'Keeping organic sheep on a commonage - how does that work?'* and *'I have land but what to do with it'*. To view any of these, share ideas or to put your pressing farming questions on the Forum just go to the below link, register your email and then you are go to go!

[Forum](#)

This Christmas Support Farmers that Support Nature

Dare we mention the c-word (?!), however the Christmas season is looming and it presents a good opportunity to support some of our farmers and their produce. We have gathered together some products and services that our Farming For Nature Ambassadors provide, many of which can be delivered to your door. This is a great opportunity for you to engage with, and meaningfully support, these farmers in the lead up to the Christmas Season. These are listed under various themes of food products, education, accommodation and more. **Just click on the below button to find out more about our Ambassador products & offerings.**

[Support Farmers this Christmas](#)

In other news:

Biofarm

The national conference on Biological Farming, Biofarm starts next week. As always it has a stellar line-up including a number of our Ambassadors. This will be held on the 7th-11th November in both Co.Leitrim but you can watch it online in your own time that suits you. More information [here](#).

(If you are are a FFN Ambassador or state/relevant body and wish to let our audiences know about an event please do not hesitate to send me details on info@farmingfornature.ie)