



## Farming For Nature Draft Strategic Plan 2024-2026

Founded in 2018 under the auspices of the Burrenbeo Trust, Farming For Nature is a non-profit initiative whose mission is to support, encourage and inspire farmers who farm, or who wish to farm, in a way that will improve the natural health of our countryside.

This document outlines a strategic vision and 3-year plan for Farming For Nature (FFN). It is based on consultation with staff and FFN's Executive Committee. It will be reviewed annually and will inform the drafting of Annual Work Plans to deliver on its aims.

### Our Vision:

Our vision is that ALL farmers and landowners of Ireland are informed and supported to increase biodiversity on their land, manage their land/farm in holistic manner, provide cleaner water, build fertile soils, help mitigate against - and adapt to - climate change, and produce nutrient-dense food that will benefit their community, their economy and their environment.

### Our Values

The following core values are those which Farming For Nature aspires to adhere to in the pursuit of its vision and goals.

To be:

- Respectful
- Inclusive
- Positive
- Honest
- Practical
- Professional
- Evidence-based

### Our Approach

- *To secure support (financial and otherwise) to enable our team to deliver its work programme and to become a respected actor in the farming-environment space.*
- *To create and support an active network of exemplary FFN Ambassadors, eventually covering all farming systems, land types and counties in Ireland.*
- *To promote the work and stories of these FFN Ambassadors so that they provide encouragement and inspiration to other farmers across Ireland.*



- *To harvest, supplement and share the knowledge of our FFN Ambassador network so that it is available to other farmers who aspire to farm for nature.*
- *To encourage informed and inclusive debate around farming and environmental issues and to make sure that the farmer's voice is heard in this debate.*
- *To engage with the wider public to highlight the positive role that farmers can play in providing a range of key ecosystem services at a time of environmental crisis.*
- *To provide advice and support to our extended network so that they can continue to make positive changes for nature on their land.*
- *To find ways to connect farmers, regardless of what point they are at on their nature-friendly farming journey.*
- *To build partnerships with relevant actors in the agricultural and environmental space so that we can do our work more efficiently and effectively.*
- *To advocate on behalf of 'farmers for nature' at a national and international level.*
- *To promote, support and engage in relevant research projects which help inform our work and that of our farmers.*

## Our Aims

Through this approach we aim to deliver the following outcomes:

1. An efficient and impactful organisation
2. An engaged and expanding network of FFN Ambassadors
3. Improved understanding among Irish farmers on how to farm and manage land for nature
4. A more informed and engaged public
5. Improved outcomes for nature on Irish farms
6. Broader and deeper working partnerships
7. Improved policies and supports around farming for nature
8. More innovative solutions to farming for nature and climate through practical Research

## Strategic Goals 2024-2026

Note: Annual Work Plans will be developed to achieve the Goals outlined here, with detailed objectives, timeframes, team members and actions listed.

### **1. To create an efficient, impactful, grounded and resilient organisation**

*Become an inclusive, independent, impactful and respected actor in achieving a more sustainable future for farming and nature throughout Ireland.*

- Secure sustainable sources of funding to enable medium-long term recruitment, planning and action.
- Support our staff and their professional development.
- Ensure good governance, compliance, transparency and accountability.



- Report to our funders annually on the impact of their funding.
- Value, acknowledge and continually appraise our funders, executive committee, judges, ambassadors and other voluntary supporters.
- Build the FFN brand, so it is more widely recognisable and valued as a reliable source of accurate, impartial information and advice.
- Plan strategically and realistically, but evolve and adapt as necessary.
- Continue to work within the governance and structure of FFN's umbrella organisation, Burrenbeo Trust, a national landscape charity based in Co. Galway.

## 2. To build an **engaged network** of exemplary farmers

*Create, promote and support an active network of exemplary Ambassadors, eventually covering all farming systems, land types and counties in Ireland.*

- Source, screen, select and promote 15-20 new FFN Ambassadors each year.
- Review and update the FFN Ambassador network annually – its participants, its principles, its goals and its impact.
- Deliver a public awareness campaign each year around these new FFN Ambassadors to introduce them to the wider public.
- Host the National FFN Ambassador Awards so all FFN Ambassadors are publicly acknowledged and accredited for their work.
- Provide an induction pack and advice to all new FFN Ambassadors on how they can engage with FFN and with other farmers, communities, media etc.
- Host 1-2 annual networking days for our FFN Ambassadors to enable introductions, knowledge-sharing, debate and upskilling (e.g., communications, marketing).
- Develop peer-support opportunities for FFN Ambassadors so they can take more ownership, for example by supporting each other at farm walks, public events etc.
- Develop the 'FFN Ambassador' brand, encouraging our FFN Ambassadors to take pride and initiative and in representing the organisation going forward.
- Support the network through training so that they can mentor other farmers that are looking to transition to more nature friendly practices.
- Showcase the network as a whole as much as possible so that the public grasp the diversity of farmers and farming systems involved, and get a more positive sense of the potential of farmers to address our environmental crises.
- Support EU and UK partners who wish to establish their own Farming for Nature Ambassador Programmes and explore opportunities for cross-cultural exchange.

## 3. To **improve understanding** among Irish farmers on how to farm for nature

*Harvest, supplement and share the knowledge of our FFN Ambassador network so that it is available to other farmers across Ireland who aspire to farm for nature.*



- Share FFN Ambassador stories, advice and innovations through mainstream farmer-friendly media outlets (newspapers, radio, tv etc) – at a local and national level.
- Share FFN Ambassador stories, advice and innovations through bespoke videos, podcasts, online webinars, on-line discussion fora and other ‘easy to digest’ formats including animations, illustrations, calendars, webpages etc.
- Organise farm walks on FFN Ambassador farms to that other farmers can see first-hand what farming for nature looks like and ask their peers about their experience.
- Support more one-to-one, peer-to-peer knowledge exchange between FFN Ambassadors and other farmers through ‘The Horses Mouth’ initiative.
- Develop and share bespoke practical resources on best practice regarding farming for nature and for climate (e.g. composting, hedgerow mgt, pond construction).
- Partner with National organisations to generate new mechanisms through which FFN resources may be delivered to new users (e.g. Green Cert courses, ACRES training)
- Share other relevant practical research, guidance and learning opportunities around farming for nature with Irish farmers through our social media channels.
- Support landowners who may not be farming currently, by providing them with advice, encouragement and resources to help them improve outcomes for nature on their land.
- Help connect farmers that can farm for nature with farmers that want to farm for nature.
- Continue to review the impact of all awareness-raising efforts and adapt accordingly.

#### 4. To build a more informed and engaged public

*Highlight the positive role that farmers can play in providing a range of key ecosystem services for wider society at a time of environmental crisis.*

- Promote FFN Ambassadors, resources (podcasts, videos, publications etc), events (awards, farm walks, workshops etc) and initiatives (e.g., The Horse’s Mouth) through mainstream media to reach as wide an audience as possible.
- Place FFN Ambassadors at public events where they can represent their network to a (new) general audience – festivals, agricultural shows, conferences etc.
- Maintain and enhance our presence, and audiences, on social media.
- Explore ways to build active geographical networks to encourage more localised change.
- Engage with partners in targeted campaigns around relevant topics such as promoting local, seasonal food; minimising food waste etc.
- Develop an educational programme that can be delivered in schools and in post-school environments.
- Explore the development of a FFN supporters’ network (possibly membership-based)
- Continue to prepare and share quarterly newsletters with our community.



## 5. To support positive action for nature at farm level

*Provide advice and support to our extended network (Ambassadors, Nominees, Horse's Mouth participants) so that they can take direct action for nature on their land.*

- Provide capital funding and advice from professionals (ecologists, hydrologists) each year to farmers from our extended network to build ponds, create heritage orchards and ecological corridors (working with The Hare's Corner initiative).
- Share these actions as educational and inspirational case studies for what other farmers and landowners can do on their land to help nature.

## 6. To build broader and deeper Partnerships at National and EU level

*Engage meaningfully with relevant and respected actors in the agricultural and environmental space so that we can do our work more efficiently and effectively.*

- Engage more closely with our core funders to add value to our relationship, for example by helping us disseminate FFN materials and promote FFN Ambassadors.
- Support similar organisations/initiatives by sharing their events with our network.
- Build alliances with other key farming groups, governmental agencies and environmental organisations who may help us connect with new audiences and provide a more convincing consensus.
- Support other farming organisations by finding out their needs to tackle barriers to change and identify ways to help them address these.
- Engage in group exchanges where visiting groups from other organisations and countries can visit FFN Ambassador farms.
- Engage with, and support, likeminded groups internationally that want to develop similar farmer-centred initiatives.
- Build partnerships with agricultural colleges to try and include more FFN content in these curriculums. Explore options to organise FFN farm walks in conjunction with some of these colleges/green cert students.

## 7. To create more supportive Policies around Farming for Nature

*Advocate on behalf of 'farmers for nature' at a national and international level.*

- Promote result-based payment systems - which reward those farmers who deliver most for nature – at a National and International level.
- Participate in relevant initiatives (e.g., strategic planning), and engage with relevant partners, so that we can advocate for better support for farming for nature.
- Support international partners (e.g., through advice, resources) in their efforts to promote nature-friendly farming and build farmer-centred support networks.



- Work with ENGOs such as Birdwatch, The Irish Wildlife Trust, Friends of the Earth etc to help shape more informed and impactful policies around farmland biodiversity.

## 8. To create more innovative solutions to farming for nature and climate through practical **Research**

*Promote, support and engage in relevant research projects which help inform our work and that of our target farming audience.*

- Collaborate with relevant partners to engage directly (as partners) in research projects (e.g., Interreg, Horizon) which will help support and inform the work of FFN.
- Contribute to research projects which are meaningful and relevant – directly through our team and resources or via our FFN Ambassadors.
- Identify key research questions from our FFN Ambassador network and share/promote these with relevant research institutions.