Costs and Benefits of Social Farming

SOCIAL FARMING ACROSS BORDERS

New Opportunities + Connecting People + Improving Lives

Report of the Social Farming Across Borders (SoFAB) Project

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Background to the Report

The Social Farming Across Borders (SoFAB) Project was funded under Priority 2: *Cooperation for a more sustainable cross-border region* of the EU INTERREG IVA Programme. It was a project of 3 years' duration beginning October 2011 administered through the Special EU Programmes Body and delivered through the partnership of University College Dublin, Leitrim Development Company and Queen's University Belfast.

The Project aimed to increase public awareness of the opportunities that social farming offers and ultimately expand the availability of the service in the cross border region while positively influencing public policy in rural development as well as health and social care service delivery in rural areas to maintain and expand these supports in communities.

During the period April 2013 to June 2014 a total of 66 people spent up to 30 days each on 20 farms in the project region which covered the six counties of Northern Ireland and the six border counties of the Republic of Ireland. The farms were family farms and varied in the type of farming being undertaken.

A key deliverable of the project was this report which sets out to present the actual costs of service delivery as determined through the experience of the pilot farms engagement with 66 people over a one year period. Data for this report were collected through the combination of: weekly record books (Log Books) maintained by the farmers; interviews with farmers, participants and their supporters, as well as documented observations by the project's researcher. Data on costs were also collected through a survey of the pilot farmers in April 2014 which was in turn shared with the 20 farmers in May 2014.

This Report is presented in a way that contextualises the SoFAB Project experience in an EU social (care) farming setting and also attempts to relate the costs experienced to the comparable costs of service delivery in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Without due regard to the immediate and wider benefits of social farming to all involved, only part of the story is being told, so the report also attempts to paint the very rich picture of the benefits of social farming as experienced by a cross section of those involved in the project.

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The report is based primarily on data provided by the 20 farmers who piloted the social farming services in the region. Their willingness to collect and share this data is gratefully acknowledged.

The SoFAB Project acknowledges that there would not be a project upon which to determine the costs and benefits of social farming services without the participation of the 66 people who visited the pilot farms on a weekly basis to experience the social farming services available during the period April 2013 to June 2014.

1. INTRODUCTION

Working with animals and close to nature has long been considered as having a therapeutic value. Social farming is based on this therapeutic value and provides activities on family farms to individuals with varying needs and in so doing offers an alternative to the more traditional provision of services in institutional or workshop settings. Social farming on family farms is a relatively new and rare occurrence in Ireland where institutional farms were more common in the provision of health and care services. In other countries such as the Netherlands and Belgium, social farming of this nature is more prevalent. The Social Farming Across Borders Project (SoFAB), which is the basis for this report, involved 20 farms engaged in the piloting of supports to more than 60 people in the 2013-14 period. This report sets out the findings from the experience of the farmers and service users involved in the pilot and draws on comparative data to establish the cost of service delivery on social farms. This report is not a cost-benefit analysis of social farming, such an analysis is beyond the scope of this report which serves to inform on the benefits and the related costs of providing supports by way of social farming.

The context for social farming and the Social Farming Across Borders Project is set out in Section 2. The benefits of social farming are summarised in Section 3 including those specifically identified in the SoFAB project. The cost of providing social farming supports under the SoFAB project are presented in Section 4. These costs are compared with other comparative services both in Ireland and internationally in Section 5. In Section 6, the cost of providing social farming supports is explored. Section 7 draws conclusions on the costs and benefits of social farming.

2. SOCIAL FARMING AND THE SOCIAL FARMING ACROSS BORDERS PROJECT

Social farming is defined by Di Iacovo & O'Connor (2009) in a European study of social farming as:

> "*both a traditional and innovative use of agriculture frequently introduced from 'grassroots level' by both new and established farmers. Social farming includes all activities that use agriculture resources, both from plants and animals, in order to promote (or to generate) therapy, rehabilitation, social inclusion, education and social services in rural areas. However, it is strictly related to farm activities where (small) groups of people can stay and work together with family farmers and social practitioners."*

Social farming is the practice of offering activity on family farms as a form of social support service. The essential aspect of social farming is that the supports provided to participants are delivered in the context of a farm by members of the farm household. The farm is not a specialised treatment farm but remains a working farm where people in need of support can benefit from participation in farm activities in a non-clinical environment. The person availing of the social farming support has selected to work on a farm as part of their day support service. Social farms provide additional choice to service providers in terms of the options available for clients and to develop more person centred plans. In return, the farmer is rewarded for the provision of the service through the opportunity to expand and diversify their income with a new service on the farm. These services provide disadvantaged groups

of people the opportunity for inclusion, to increase their self-esteem and to improve their health and well-being. Social farming also creates an opportunity to reconnect farmers with their local communities through opening up their farms as part of the social support system of the community.

Social farming in Ireland and Northern Ireland is far less developed, established and recognised than in other EU countries such as Belgium and the Netherlands. The potential of care farming in the Netherlands was recognised and supported by the Dutch Government and has led to considerable growth to where over 10,000 people attended care farms (in the region of 800 farms) in 2005 (80% were non-institutional farms) (Hassink et al., 2007; Hine et al., 2008). Similarly in Belgium, there has been considerable growth in the number of private care farms (from 43 in 2003 to 200 in 2008) as a result of the setting up of the Support Centre for Green Care and the introduction of a Government subsidy of €40/day (irrespective of the number of clients) for farmers to compensate them for the time that cannot be spent farming (Hine et al., 2008; Di Iacovo and O'Connor, 2009).

In Ireland, care was traditionally provided within an institutional setting, often a distance from the service user's home and family. Government policy is now moving towards a more person centred focus and re-integration of services back into the community. In the past, social farming in Ireland was primarily targeted at those with intellectual disabilities (67%), mental ill health (19%) and physical disabilities (9%) (McGloin and O'Connor, 2007).

The Social Farming Across Borders (SoFAB) project was undertaken in the region encompassing the Border Counties of Ireland and all of Northern Ireland between October 2011 and September 2014). It was an *EU INTERREG IVA* funded project and was led by the *School of Agriculture & Food Science, University College Dublin* in partnership with *Queen's University Belfast* and *Leitrim Development Company*. The project had its origins in a previous EU project, known as the SoFAR Project[1] (Supporting Policies for Social Farming in Europe, 2006-2008), in which the status and potential for social farming was examined across seven EU countries and in so doing stimulated debate amongst stakeholders on how social farming might be established in countries such as Ireland. Arising from this debate and consequent formation of a Community of Practice Group on Social Farming in Ireland the SoFAB project was proposed and focused on adults already availing of support services who were interested in participating in social farming.

The mission of the SoFAB project was to:

> '*promote Social Farming as a viable option for achieving improved quality of life for people who use health and social services and for farm families, through enhancing social inclusion and connecting farmers with their communities'.*

The SoFAB project set out to:

- Establish social farming services on 20 farms in the region on a pilot basis and to learn from the experiences gained;
- Enable networking of farmers and health/social care personnel towards the establishment of sustainable, high quality social farming services in the region;

[1] Funded by the European Union as part of the research priority in the VI Framework Programme.

- Build capacity of farmers and health/social care service providers in delivery of social farming services through training courses and network visits;
- Disseminate information on social farming throughout the region and share the lessons learned from the pilot farm practice; and
- Increase public awareness of the potential of social farming services and contribute to the debate on how public policy might support such services in the future.

3. BENEFITS OF SOCIAL FARMING

Across Europe a wide range of people avail of social farming services including: people with mental health difficulties and people with disabilities (intellectual, physical and sensory); older people; children; people availing of drug/alcohol rehabilitation services; and prisoner rehabilitation services among others. However, the role of farming in healthcare is often neither understood nor recognised and as a result not sufficiently quantified, therefore, quantifying the benefits of social farming is challenging. Hine et al. (2007) highlighted the shortage of economic data to accurately estimate the cost implications and total savings for healthcare from social farming.

In broad terms, much of the focus is placed on the health and social benefits for service users and the economic and non-economic benefits for farm families who provide the services. Dessein and Bock (2010) in the report on '*The Economics of Green Care in Agriculture*' examine the monetary and non-monetary benefits (and costs) of green care (social farming) from the perspectives of multifunctional agriculture, public health and social inclusion. Some of the main benefits include: containing health costs or providing more efficient services; contributing to the viability of farms, creating employment and benefiting the rural areas; provision of new alternatives in health care and treatment; provision of work training and capacity development to individuals; and enhanced social inclusion, self esteem and quality of life for service users.

This section provides an overview of the financial and non-financial benefits of social farming to farm families (Section 3.1), health benefits (physical; mental; and social) for service users (Section 3.2) and benefits to wider society (Section 3.3) identified in international research. A summary of the benefits of social farming identified in the SoFAB project is provided in Section 3.4.

3.1 Financial and Non-Financial Benefits for Farm Families

The reasons why farmers commence social farming may not be purely economic and instead may be related to a wide range of largely altruistic motivations. Anthroposophic movements such as the Camphill Communities engage in farming for therapeutic and holistic reasons rather than economic motives. However, social farming can provide an opportunity to diversify the income earning capacity of the farm and rural economy (Di Iacovo and O'Connor, 2009).

As outlined in the introduction to this section, it is difficult to determine the economic returns to farmers from social farming due to the diverse nature of social farm operations. Even for farmers, their individual dependence on social farming activities as an income

source is varied. Leck (2013) found that 36% of the care farms studied in the UK were mainly/totally dependent on income from social farming, 33% were partially reliant on this income and 31% were not at all dependent on it. Despite the scarcity of financial data and the diverse motivations of social farm operators, the economic reality dictates that social farming activities must generate sufficient income at a minimum to cover expenses if they are to endure.

Evidence from international research provides varied levels of income derived at farm level from care activities in the Netherlands from an annual income of €48,000 to €73,000. However, the estimations were based on different parameters. The scale of income in the Netherlands reflects the fact that care farming is longer established, better developed and larger scale (number of service users) than in many other countries. The financial benefits of care farming to the farmers in the Netherlands in 2005 was quantified by Hassink et al. (2007) as an average annual income of €73,000 per private (non-institutional) farm (an average of almost 16 clients receiving a total of 24 days care per week) (SoFAR, 2007). Approximately one third of Dutch care farms have contract arrangements with care institutions and for 40% of farms, the service-users are mainly those with personal budgets which can be used to purchase services directly (Di lacovo and O'Connor, 2009). The average payment per client in the Netherlands was €77 for those with their own personal budgets and €50 per day for those with contracts through care institutions (Hassink et al., 2007).

Evidence from the SoFAR project (Di lacovo and O'Connor, 2009) estimates an annual income of €48,000 for farms in the Netherlands, based on the provision of care for 5 service-users, for 4 days per week with an average daily payment per user of €50. While the estimates of income vary, it is evident that significant earnings are available from care farming in the Netherlands.

In Belgium, most care farms are independent (non-institutional) farms which cater for a small number of service users. These private care farms are primarily contracted through institutions to provide care services. Payment is generally made to cover the expenses of providing services. In addition, farmers receive a government subsidy of €40/day (irrespective of the number of service users) to compensate for the loss of time farming.
Most of these farms have a turnover of €1,000 to €10,000 from care activities (Di lacovo and O'Connor, 2009).

Leck (2013) utilises a holistic approach in the form of the Social Return on Investment[2] (SROI) to assess the impact of care farm activities in the UK. In summary, the SROI takes account of all social, environmental and economic aspects of service delivery. This specific analysis was undertaken for an 80 hectare care farm providing services to a total of 83 individuals during 2011. The care farm element was primarily funded by individual payments

[2] The Social Return on Investment (SROI) systematically charts the social benefits of social farming. Every contribution to the project is considered an investment. SROI measures, accounts for and communicates a more complete concept of value by incorporating all social, economic and environmental aspects. The focus is on impact (added value) rather than outputs. SROI determines a basis for formulating indicators that convert output into impact and for placing a monetary value on outputs in order to determine social value (Dessein and Bock, 2010; Leck, 2013).

either directly or through an organisation. The charges were generally between £30 and £40 per day. The social return on investment for this care was calculated at: £3.77 of social value was created for every £1 invested in this care farm. This figure was proven to be justified but even when a range of alternative, less realistic, scenarios were tested, the figure remains in excess of £2.50. This SROI calculation presents a different perspective as it explores the actual social value created for the money invested directly and indirectly by the state and other organisations in providing supports to service users and/or service users themselves who pay directly for services. This analysis highlights that social farming represents good value for money. In a recent Natural England Commissioned Report entitled '*Care Farming: Defining the offer in England*' (Bragg et al., 2014) the average cost reported by farmers was £48/session for an unsupported client and £47/session for an accompanied client. The report also stated that the majority of farms included: group supervision; drinks and snacks; personal protective equipment; and structured activities in the charge.

In addition to the direct financial benefits, there are also non-financial benefits to farm families from providing care activities including the sense of personal achievement and fulfilment through: seeing the effects on people; making a difference in their lives; and helping typically excluded people to become more included. The farm family may also benefit from the extra labour provided by service users. It also has the benefit of establishing greater connections between farmers and the wider community; improving the image of farming in the area through recognition for providing care supports and positive feedback from participants, families and referring bodies. The improved image of farming through care activities may also have a financial benefit for the farmer if there is an added economic value realised in the market place for goods produced on a social farm (Hine et al, 2008; Dessein and Bock, 2010; Bragg, 2013).

3.2 **Health Benefits for Service Users**

For the purpose of this report, a broad overview of the health benefits is presented but it is important to bear in mind that the health benefits of social farming are varied depending on the needs and abilities of service users and their individual circumstances.

The health benefits of social farming can be broadly categorised as physical, mental health and social. There is a wide range of evidence (much overlapping) available on these benefits and these are summarised in sub-sections 3.2.1 to 3.2.3.

3.2.1 **Physical Health Benefits**

Some of the physical and related health benefits experienced by the people who avail of social farming services are: physical fitness; improved physical, farming and other skills; farm routine provides natural structure and clarity which serves to motivate in terms of '*getting a job done*'; farm provides a safe and peaceful environment which leads to less aggression; and physical work can lead to an improved diet (and healthy eating) and physical tiredness which contributes to better sleep patterns (Bragg, 2013; Hine et al, 2008; Elings, 2012; McGloin and O'Connor, 2007; and Leck 2013).

3.2.2 **Mental Health Benefits**

The greatest benefits of social farming to those who use the services appear to be related to mental health including: improves self-esteem and well-being; restores feelings of worth and boosts self-confidence; opportunity to engage in an activity which interests and motivates; complements tradition psychiatric treatment; farmer can provide continuity and stability to the service user which enhances their feeling of security/safety/confidence; participants can benefit from improved contact with their own family; farm work can distract from symptoms; reduced feelings of anger, confusion, depression, tension and fatigue; improved social behaviour; increased self-responsibility; and reduced need for medical intervention and hospitalisation (Bragg, 2013; Hine et al., 2008; Elings, 2012; McGloin and O'Connor, 2007; Quayle, 2008; Leck, 2013; Berget et al., 2008; Dessein and Bock, 2010).

3.2.3 **Social Benefits**

The main social benefits to those who use social farming services are recognised as: farm environment builds social skills as participants come in contact with others similar to themselves, the farm family and others who visit the farm; the acceptance of participants by '*normal*' people is valued by them; greater self-confidence in general and more willing to try new things and meet new people/friends; greater independence and personal responsibility; formation of work habits which provide stepping stones for the future; and integrating people and de-stigmatising services which can be effective in tackling social exclusion (Bragg, 2013; Hine et al, 2008; Elings, 2012; McGloin and O'Connor, 2007; Quayle, 2008; Leck, 2013; Dessein and Bock, 2010).

3.3 **Benefits to Wider Society**

Social farming can benefit wider society by providing a wider range of health care opportunities to service users and greater access to the therapeutic qualities of nature. Social farming supports may provide for more efficient use of public finances and lead to a higher net social value for health care services through lower costs and higher benefits (Dessein and Bock, 2010). It is recognised that social farming can contribute to the fostering of a more inclusive and people focused society which benefits everyone. Social farming takes place in the open and engagement in these activities allows individuals with specific needs to demonstrate to the general public their abilities, which can lead to a greater understanding by the public of their needs and capabilities (Di Iacovo and O'Connor, 2009). At an economic level, there are benefits to the rural economy from more diversified farm incomes and new employment opportunities. The involvement of clients/service users in activities on farms reduces the isolation for farmers and provides them with work companions in the daily farm activities. Experience gained in social farming enhances the employability of participants and increases their potential availability to participate in the general workforce (Dessein and Bock, 2010).

3.4 **Benefits of the SoFAB Project**

This section presents the lessons learned from the experience from of the 20 pilot farms which provided services to 66 people over the period May 2013 to June 2014. During

piloting the 66 people who used social farming services (SoFAB service users) were interviewed and observed on-farm to determine the benefits to them. The benefits identified are presented under a number of headings, namely: personal health and well-being; social inclusion; skill development; purpose/routine; and progression.

Overall the service users expressed a high level of happiness and pride of being involved in social farming. There was a strong sense of achievement and accomplishment. When asked, the majority (87%) of service users indicated that they would like to continue their participation in social farming beyond the 30 weeks offered through the SoFAB project. Health and social care agency representatives and support workers reported that they saw the benefit of service users *'having the opportunities to do new things'*. They have seen service users progress and develop in many different ways. Some service users have moved to the stage of being job ready and acquired vital work experience on the farm.

3.4.1 **Personal Health and Well-Being**

Some 37% of service users identified improvements or benefits in their personal health and well-being as a result of social farming. One of the specific benefits was being given particular roles or responsibilities on the farm (e.g. caring for animals).

'You get a great sense of acknowledgement and responsibility for life's creatures'.

Service users comments related to generally feeling good, healthy and feeling mentally better.

'*I like doing it all, it's keeping you healthy doing things. And it keeps your mind occupied*'.

When asked to rate their feelings about their involvement in the project, 68% gave it the maximum positive score. As a result, participants were engaging in activities on their own.

'I would as a man do some separate [things] on my own. Yeah, fencing, feed the cattle, cut sticks'.

Support workers saw a new confidence in service users, where they now spoke more about their own families and friends.

3.4.2 **Social Inclusion**

Social inclusion benefits were identified by the 81% of service users including: their interactions with SoFAB staff; meeting new people in general; making new friends; developing an interest in the farmer's home environment; visiting other farms or places for supplies; and going to events such as animal sales/shows.

'*I like him [the farmer], I get on well with him and he gets on well with me, I've no problems with him'.*

The relationship between the farmer (and the farm family) and the service user is considered as being central to the success of social farming. Overtime, service users became comfortable around the farmer, the farm family and their home

'*Then I felt at home'* and '*it's great we're allowed in their house, we're treated like guests, we couldn't get better, we're always eating. We're well looked after*'.

Support workers also stated that the '*farm household experience'* was an unexpected benefit for some service users and said that they saw a family home rather than an institution. They got ideas and inspiration for their own bedrooms and a desire to live in their own homes which was particularly powerful for those living in institutions.

The '*group environment*' experienced in the piloting by the service users also provided for the development of new relationships and friendships which were a support in both the work and personal situations.

'I made lots of new friends, it does feel more like family, a tight knit community'.

Support workers recognised that the varied tasks on the farm meant that service users had to both work on their own and in groups. They also had to build relationships with new people and to meet new people on an ongoing basis. This was acknowledged as helping to build their confidence and interpersonal skills both in groups and one-to-one.

The sense of camaraderie supported and encouraged service users in their work.

'There's a good sense of togetherness..... it's like teamwork, working together, there's no problems, we talk together'.

The numerous interactions that service users had with people that visited the farm and visiting other businesses in relation to the farm promoted the integration of service users into the wider community. Support workers believed that the active involvement of working on the farm and interacting in the farming community was powerful for self-esteem and individuals were seen as '*being out and about and active in the community'*.

'Getting out a lot, seeing new people'.

3.4.3 **Skill Development**

Four out of every five service users identified the development of skills as a benefit of social farming to them and these included both practical farming skills and learned social skills. The practical skills included: horticulture; animal care; construction; farm management; and woodwork.

'I did a lot of planting trees, flowers, cutting grass, I dug laneways, fencing. I learnt a lot'.

The social skills they identified included: independence; communication and interpersonal skills; coping and listening skills; and working as part of a team.

'*I've learned to listen, I do listen, but to what people are precisely saying'.*

3.4.4 **Purpose/Routine**

Spending time on the farm gave service users a purpose and helped them to develop a routine (identified by 26% of service users). The farm gave some service users the opportunity to leave their home and/or place of residence and have a '*purpose for getting up in the morning*' or to '*get away*' from their traditional day service environment.

'It gets me up in the morning, it gives me a reason to rise'.

3.4.5 **Progression**

Some 27% of service users felt that the project was a progression to future employment while others said it changed their idea of what they would like to do in the future. The experience of social farming led some to express a desire to continue in agriculture and the possibility of gaining employment in the sector.

'Some day in the future I'd love to get a good steady job'.

A stronger desire was to continue on the social farms and to progress in attempting new things (54% of service users) such as driving a tractor or using a piece of equipment. Also many were keen to work on other seasonal farm activities which they had not yet experienced during the piloting.

'Like there's a lot of stuff, if I did get the chance to go out again, there's the lambing season'.

3.4.6 **Benefits to the Social Farmers**

In addition to the benefits for service users, there were also benefits of social farming for the 20 farmers and their families. Despite the fact that farmers who engaged in the pilot project had an underlying commitment and interest in this activity, they reported an increased awareness of: the challenges faced by those with disabilities/ill health; their capabilities; the needs of service users; and the personalities of those with specific needs.

There was a sense of personal development for farmers in how they worked with the service users, built relationships (working and friendships) and learned new skills of managing and supporting service users in their daily work. Over half (55%) of farmers stated that they had a heightened sense of achievement and job satisfaction as many realised a new element of their own personality and skills and also supported others in achieving things for themselves. Some farmers highlighted how the pilot project had made them more aware of farm safety while others said that the pace of service users meant that they themselves slowed down and were less rushed/stressed in their own work. It has exposed farmers to a new network of people including service users, other farmers and support agencies. For some farmers, the project had built their confidence in social farming as they interacted and learned from others.

The involvement of service users on the farms provided company and camaraderie on farm which can otherwise be quite isolated.

'*I would look forward to the company, farming is a lonely occupation'*.

Farm families were also more likely to work together on the days that service users were on the farm which included interactions both inside the home and outside on the farm. Overall there was a feel good factor about working together as a team on the farm.

'It's nice to have someone to work with'.

While social farming was undertaken in a relaxed atmosphere and service users had varying levels of ability and capacity to undertake activities on the farm, there was a benefit in terms of labour on the farm and 'getting *jobs done*'. Farmers found that they themselves became more organised in planning their tasks and preparing for service users on the scheduled social farming days. Their presence also generated more motivation to undertake

the tedious or more mundane tasks as the team work encouraged the tackling of these jobs. Overall, farmers felt that the farm was better maintained and looking better as a result of the service users working on the farm.

'All these wee [small] jobs I had on the long finger I'm getting done'.

There were also benefits for the wider farm family especially children from participation in the pilot programme. Children of the host farm families interacted with services users and learned to see beyond their disability while other family members also benefited from the regular interaction with service users.

'It enriches our lives and the children's lives too' and 'The children see them too, not as people with a disability, they see them as farmers'.

4. COST OF SUPPORTS ON SOFAB PILOT FARMS

It was stated in Section 3.1 that the reasons why farmers commence social farming may not be purely economic and instead may be related to a wide range of largely altruistic motivations. However, whatever the motives, there are costs to be borne by farmers in the provision of social farming activities. While these farms are functioning agricultural holdings, specific costs in addition to regular costs of production are incurred in the provision of supports to service users. Dessein and Bock (2010) identified some of the main costs relating to social farming including: time commitment; investment in buildings particularly for safety and accessibility; training; insurance costs; and energy costs.

The 20 pilot farms engaged in the SoFAB project undertook detailed recording of the financial and labour (time) costs involved in providing the social farming supports delivered through the 30 weeks of pilot practice on each farm. This itemisation of costs takes account of the variation across 20 farms and provides an average cost per service user per day (Table 1). Some farmers spent more on certain items depending on the tasks to be undertaken and also on the level of pre-existing resources on the farm. There can be debate over whether some items should be included and whether they could be obtained cheaper (or indeed may not reflect the true costs) but as in any farm-based enterprise, different managers will make different decisions on expenditure.

The core costs measured by the SoFAB Project on each farm were: material costs (garden supplies, hygiene supplies, outdoor wear, light farm/garden tools); utilities (energy costs); certain capital costs in excess of grant provided (as a capital grant of up to €2,500 was provided to pilot farmers to cover necessary capital investment); insurance; light refreshments; and other miscellaneous one off costs. The average core costs per service user per day for social farming activities was €14.16 in Northern Ireland and €10.84 in the Republic of Ireland (range from €4.14 to €24.10 per service user per day). Table 1 shows the range in the cost of consumables across the 20 pilot farms and so highlights the different spending decisions of farmers as well as the different costs in the two jurisdictions (e.g. variation in material costs and insurance). It should be noted that transport costs were not included as part of this calculation and while transport costs of service users to and from farms was part-supported by the SoFAB Project no analysis of these costs was undertaken. This information serves to inform those establishing/operating social farms and other

stakeholders on the typical costs involved and of the critical importance of managing those costs.

Pilot farmers in the project were not paid for their labour input. However, the measurement of the time commitment of farmers and their labour input both in terms of direct contact time with service users and preparation were measured by the project. It is acknowledged that while the piloting was possible through the voluntary efforts of the farm households involved that the labour input of the farmer (and others) needs to be rewarded for social farming to persist in the private farm sector beyond the not-for-profit and voluntary sector. The average labour input per service user per day was recorded as 4.23 hours (range of 1.17 hours to 7.5 hours) for the 20 pilot farms.

For the purposes of estimating a total cost per service user per day, a notional labour cost was allocated to the time input of farmers. A labour cost of €11.08[3] was allocated to the NI farmers and €15.30[4] was allocated to ROI farmers for their labour input. These hourly rates were calculated based on NHS and HSE pay scales. It is acknowledged that the selected pay scales for NI and ROI may not be absolutely comparable, however, they do provide an appropriate basis upon which to estimate of labour costs. Based on the relevant pay scale the average labour cost is estimated to be €51.52 for NI farmers and €58.27 for ROI farmers. Therefore, the total cost per service user per day is estimated to be €65.68 in NI and €69.11 in ROI. As these are estimated costs for providing social farming services, they should be considered as indicative figures for typical services rather than a precise determination of the cost of services. Even from the relatively small number of pilot farms (ten farms in RoI and ten in NI) it is obvious that there is a wide range in the costs and consequently farmers, service user's and commissioners need to bear that in mind when assessing and making decisions on services.

[3] The labour cost was calculated based on the equivalent rate of pay for a Healthcare Assistant (Community Health Services). The rate was calculated based on the midpoint of the NHS Band 3 pay band (€22,211) (NHS, 2014). The hourly rate was calculated based on a 37 hour week for 52 weeks.

[4] The labour cost was calculated based on the equivalent rate of pay for a Care Assistant (Intellectual Disability Services). The rate was calculated based on the midpoint of the Department of Health pay grade (€29,434) (HSE, 2013). The hourly rate was calculated based on a 37 hour week for 52 weeks.

Table 1 Social Farming Across Borders Project: Costs of Service Delivery – based on 20 Pilot Farms

	Northern Ireland		Republic of Ireland		All
Cost Item	**Range € per service user/day NI (10 Farms)**	**Average € per service user/day NI (10 Farms)**	**Range € per service user/day ROI (10 Farms)**	**Average € per service user/day ROI (10 Farms)**	**Range € per service user/day All 20 Farms**
Material costs (consumables)	0.04 to 10.51	3.69	0.08 to 8.5	2.39	0.04 to 10.51
Utilities (light, heat, power and phone charges)	0 to 4.67	1.81	0.5 to 3.67	1.85	0 to 4.67
Miscellaneous one off costs	0 to 2	0.71	0 to 2.44	0.72	0 to 2.44
Capital costs in excess of grant provided	0 to 6.51	2.46	0 to 4.4	1.95	0 to 6.51
Insurance	2.5 to 5	3.45	1.67 to 3.33	2.19	1.67 to 5
Coffee/tea (Not including hot meals)	0.4 to 3.6	2.03	0.83 to 3.3	1.74	0.4 to 3.6
Core Costs (excl. Labour)	**6.14 to 24.10**	**14.16**	**4.14 to 16.43**	**10.84**	**4.14 to 24.10**
Labour input (hours)/participant/week (1 visit)	2.33 to 7.5	4.65 hours	1.17 to 7.17	3.81 hours	1.17 to 7.5 hours
Labour cost per participant (€11.08/hour for NI; €15.3/hour for ROI)	25.82 to 83.1	51.52	17.9 to 109.7	58.27	17.9 to 109.7
Total Cost per participant per day (incl. labour cost)	**33.15 to 107.2**	**65.68**	**34.2 to 113.79**	**69.11**	**33.15 to 113.79**

Notes:

1. Exchange rate used Euro to £stg = 1.2
2. Labour input/service user/week averaged across the 20 farms is: Preparation 18%; Delivery 70%; Follow-up 12%
3. Core costs difference between NI and ROI is: 48% attributable to material costs and 33% to insurance costs
4. The numbers of service users per farm can influence the cost as there can be an equivalent or higher input of labour per participant if there are lower numbers of service users on the farm or if there is more labour required than just the farmer e.g. spouse etc.

5. Consumables included: garden supplies; hygiene supplies; outdoor wear; and light farm/garden tools.
6. Miscellaneous included: additional transport costs; safety signage; and other costs.
7. Capital grant of €2,500 was provided to the pilot farms to cover capital costs.
8. Capital costs in excess of grant included: paths; fencing; gravel; refurbishment; first aid box; and costs relating to livestock.
9. Transport to and from the farms was not included in the costs due to the wide variation of modes of transport.
10. Labour cost based on NHS and HSE pay scales is included at €11.08/hour (NI) and €15.30/hour (ROI) in order to provide a measure of cost.

5. COMPARATIVE SERVICE COSTS

Up to relatively recently in Ireland, practically all social farming initiatives were linked to care or community services (many performing their activities on a non-profit basis). Public funds are the predominant source of funding, supplemented by private funds. Many providers are registered charities which receive funding from Government Departments in addition to donations and fundraising and deliver services with a not-for-profit ethos. Where farming is one part of the overall care services, it is difficult to calculate the exact costs. For example in the Camphill Communities, which engage in farming for therapeutic and holistic reasons rather than economic motives, co-workers are effectively volunteers receiving no payments. Costs of services vary greatly depending on the nature of the service in terms of usage, residential or otherwise, vocational or where used as a more specialized therapeutic provision. As the economics of social farming may not be the priority concern of farmers, many do not keep records about costs and revenues on the provision of social services. Evidence from the SoFAR project reveals that many providers had no idea about exact costs while others were satisfied to break even from their activities (Vadnal, 2006). Therefore, it is difficult to provide directly comparable costs for social farming, however, it is possible to explore different elements of costs for other day care supports. While these figures may not be directly comparable, they present a picture of the type of costs associated with the provision of somewhat similar supports. The differing time periods for which the costs presented relate also makes direction comparisons more challenging.

5.1 Service Costs in Republic of Ireland

The National Federation of Voluntary Bodies '*Analysis of Need for Services and Supports for People with Intellectual Disability 2005-2008*' presents the requirements over this period. Based on the figures presented in the analysis, it could be estimated that there was a cost of €84m involved in providing 5,751 day support programme places (health funded and day support services). Based on a provision of 230 days service per year, this is equivalent to approximately €64 per place per day (at 2005 costs[5]). Based on the cost provided for the provision of a unit of employment support/sheltered employment, the cost per unit was €18,550 on average equivalent to €81/day (230 days/year) (at 2005 costs).

The 2012 Department of Health '*Value for Money and Policy Review of Disability Services in Ireland*' provides an in-depth review of the costs associated with the delivery of disability services both within the HSE and by other agencies. A review of the costs presented in the report provides a useful measure for comparison of the costs of social farming. The type of services and service provider vary greatly but in order to get some worthwhile comparative measures, the costs are summarised on a per day per place basis (relevant details summarised in Table 2). Based on the figures provided in Table 2, the average annual cost of providing day supports (activation and day support & work like activities) is €66.50 (for minimum and low support) and €76.10 (for minimum, low and moderate support). However, taking account of reduced funding and pay cuts, and incorporating a cost for non-pay costs, the target cost per place recommended in the Department of Health report is €44 (for minimum and low support) and €57.70 (for minimum, low and moderate support).

[5] The costs presented in this section relate to 2005 and should be taken as an indication of the scale of costs rather than current actual costs.

Table 2 Comparative Costs of Service Provision for Day Supports (2012)

Level of Support	Programme Type	Average Annual Cost Per Place (Includes HSE and Non-HSE providers) Note 1	Average Annual Cost Per Place (Includes HSE and Non-HSE providers) Note 1		Recommended Target Pay Cost Per Place Table Note 2	Recommended Target Cost Per Place Note 3
		Direct Pay	All Costs incl. Pay		Direct Pay	All Costs incl. Pay
	Intellectual Disability	€/day	€/day		€/day	€/day
Minimum & Low Support	Activation and Day Support	33.0	46.8		29.3	39.6
	Work Like Activities	63.9	86.2		35.9	48.4
	Average	**48.4**	**66.5**		**32.6**	**44**
Minimum, Low and Moderate Support	Activation and Day Support	49.4	68.2		41.3	55.8
	Work Like Activities	62.1	83.9		44.2	59.7
	Average	**55.7**	**76.1**		**42.8**	**57.7**

€/day calculated at 230 days service/year

Source: Department of Health '*Value for Money and Policy Review of Disability Services in Ireland*' (2012)

Notes on Table:

1. Calculated from information presented in Table 5.12 (p.104) of Department of Health '*Value for Money and Policy Review of Disability Services in Ireland*' (2012).
2. Calculated from information presented in Table 5.18 (p.123) of Department of Health '*Value for Money and Policy Review of Disability Services in Ireland*' (2012).
3. Calculated from information presented in Table 5.18 (p.123) plus addition of other costs at 35% (Table 5.12) of Department of Health '*Value for Money and Policy Review of Disability Services in Ireland*' (2012).

5.2 Service Costs in Northern Ireland

Health and Social Care Trusts indicate that the current average day care cost in Northern Ireland is approximately £72.67 per day (average of 5 days per week over 48 weeks per year) (HSCB & PHA, 2014).

The Centre for Independent Living Northern Ireland supports individuals receiving self directed supports for acquiring and managing a personal budget for health and social care needs. Evidence from two Trusts shows that the average rate of payment for self directed supports is £9.65 (£9-£10.29) per hour (level of support is agreed based on the number of hours of need assessed by the local Health Trust) (CILNI, 2014). Individuals can purchase supports at a rate to be agreed between themselves and the supplier. These rates are paid to cover all needs of individuals and the total payment would not be available for the purchase of services such as social farming alone.

5.3 Service Costs in UK

Hine et al. (2008) provided estimates on the fees charged in the UK ranging from £25-£100 per day (typically around £30 per day). However, the diversity in the way fees were charged (per person, per day, per group, for facilities) makes it difficult to determine an average charge. Leck (2013) reported similar variations with a typical fee of between £35 and £50 per day (depending on needs of the individual and funding arrangements in place). Bragg et al., (2014) identified the cost of care farming in England based on a survey of 169 care farms. The average cost per session for unsupported clients (attending the farm without the support of a care worker) was £48.

6. DETERMINING THE COST OF PROVIDING SOCIAL FARMING SUPPORTS

The SoFAB pilot project has provided considerable insights into the operation of social farms from a number of perspectives (service users, farmers and support agencies). In particular, the 20 farmers involved in the pilot have provided an assessment of the costs involved in providing social farming supports. It is important to reflect on the costs collated within the project to provide an insight on the indicative costs of providing these services for the future. Both the costs for the pilot farms and comparative costs for services in Ireland, Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom have been outlined in Sections 4 & 5. The challenge in providing comparative costs is the fact that the: services are diverse; the supports provided are different; the staff resources (training, skills and experience) are very varied; and the comparative data sources and time periods reviewed are very different (Government reviews, Health Care Trusts and social farms). The comparative costs may also include direct, clinical and administration costs. The provision of supports by Health authorities or agencies also includes the cost of staff leave and superannuation requirements which should not be specifically costed for individual farmers. However, the aim of all these services is to provide worthwhile and meaningful supports for individuals who require them.

The average core costs for the pilot farms are €14.16 in Northern Ireland and €10.84 in the Republic of Ireland (range from €4.14 to €24.10 per service user per day) and the average

total cost (including notional labour costs) are €65.68 in NI (range from €33.15 to €107.20) and €69.11 in ROI (range from €34.20 to €113.79).

Comparative costs for similar services are summarised in Table 3. As highlighted earlier in this section, the sources of information are diverse and the time periods varied which needs to be considered when reflecting on the figures.

Table 3 Selected Comparative Costs for the Provision of Day Supports

Ireland	National Federation of Voluntary Bodies (2005)	Provision of new support programmes	€64-€81
	Department of Health – Value for Money Review (2012)	Provision of day supports (actual)	€66.50-€76.10 (depending on service)
		Provision of day supports – Target costs	€44-€57.70 (depending on service)
Northern Ireland	HSCB & PHA (2014)	Day care costs	€87.20
	Health Trusts (2014)	Personal budgets	€11.60 per hour
United Kingdom	Leck (2013)	Daily fee	€42-€60
	Bragg et al. (2014)	Daily fee	€57.60

Taking account of the: actual costs recorded for the pilot farms in the provision of supports; the comparative costs for broadly similar services; need to deliver a fair return for the provision of public resources; value for money for individuals acquiring services; and rewarding farmers for their efforts; then, in order to deliver these supports farmers providing social farming activities will require a payment per service user per day of approximately €55-€65 in Northern Ireland and €60-€70 in the Republic of Ireland.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The Social Farming Across Borders Project has provided evidence on the main benefits and costs of the provision of social farming at farm level in Ireland. The value of the findings from the project is that the evidence comes from 20 working farms each operated by individual farmers with differing skills, qualifications, backgrounds and enterprises.

It is evident from the experiences of service users, pilot farmers and others who participated directly and indirectly in the SoFAB project that it has substantially delivered on its mission of promoting social farming as a realistic option for achieving improved quality of life for people who use health and social services and for farm families, through enhancing social inclusion and connecting farmers with their communities. This report serves to explore the viability of this option in terms of the cost of delivery for farmers and funding agencies.

Social farming benefits: agriculture by diversifying the income base and opportunities for farm families; public health by enhancing the range of service provision opportunities particularly in rural areas and possibly providing better value for money; and social inclusion by more actively involving service users in the local community. Service users have benefited from their engagement with the social farming project in terms of: their health and well-being; greater inclusion in their local community; development of skills; enhancing

confidence and self-belief; and giving them a purpose or focus. Critical to the benefits is the farmer who supports, encourages and motivates service users. Support workers/agencies reported the main benefit of social farming as seeing individuals progress and develop in many ways. The long term benefits of social farming include the potential to reduce the dependency on health services for some service users and ultimately reduce the cost of service provision to national health services. The farmers also realised the benefit of extra assistance on the farm, company while farming and an enhanced awareness of both the capabilities and the needs of participants.

The evidence from other European countries confirms the potential for social farming from the perspectives of service provision (large numbers engaging in supports), farmers (income earned), service users (benefits received) and Government and Health care agencies (range of service opportunities). However, the future of social farming in Ireland (North and South) requires a greater acceptance by all stakeholders (farmers, service users, service providers/agencies and health authorities) of the role it has to play in supporting individuals with specific needs. While services will continue to be provided by charitable and other not for profit organisations, the expansion among the wider farming public can only occur if there is a return to cover expenses and provide a level of reward for the endeavours of farmers. Obviously additional economic resources for supporting individuals to engage in social farming are not readily available and will require a change in budget allocations and priorities. Personal budgets for supports are a new concept which have been further developed in other countries (e.g. Netherlands). While this approach provides more control to the user (personally or with assistance) to determine the supports they require and access them, however, the resources are nonetheless, public funds and need to be spent in a transparent and accountable manner. The Social Return on Investment analysis clearly demonstrates that there is a positive social value to the provision of supports through social farming.

The collation of the costs of providing supports by the pilot farmers highlights divergence of costs across the range of different farms and farmers which makes it difficult to pinpoint an accurate and fair cost to cover material and time inputs. It is also difficult to accurately align the cost of social farming with the provision of day supports by other agencies due to the diversity of providers and the time periods for which costs are available.

Based on an assessment of the: costs of service delivery on pilot farms; costs of comparative supports; the need for equity to farmers in the provision of supports, to service users in the delivery of supports and to commissioners in the provision of value for money; the project estimated the cost per participant per day for social farming services falls within the range of €60-€70 in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, while accepting that rates would need to be sensitive to both the client group and the nature of the activities and supports available on the farm. It also acknowledges that no two farms are likely to be the same in terms of what is offered, this diversity of offerings reflects both the richness and challenge associated with social farming services on family farms.

This figure should serve as a guide to farmers both delivering and considering social farming supports to inform them on the likely daily rate which is appropriate for these supports to cover expenses and reward their own labour input. For other stakeholders (agencies and

Government) the cost outlined serves to indicate the scale of payment required at farm level to deliver a meaningful level of support and both cover costs and reward farmers for the services provided.

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