



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,  
Bia agus Mara  
Department of Agriculture,  
Food and the Marine



The European Agricultural Fund  
for Rural Development:  
**Europe investing in rural areas**



# Irish National Rural Network

## How to Communicate Green Themes to Farmers

Dr Shane Conway  
NRN Team at the University of Galway  
20/09/2022



National Rural Network



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GAILLIMHE  
UNIVERSITY  
OF GALWAY

# The Irish NRN acts as the 'dissemination vehicle' for Ireland's Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020 (extended to 2022) on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) and the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD).



## Mobilising Land Mobility in the European Union: An Under-Researched Phenomenon

SHANE FRANCIS CONWAY

Interest in land mobility in the agricultural sector has grown. There have been calls for the passage of farmland from the help facilitate generational renewal. The single largest barrier to homogeneous importance that relating to land differ consist literature and academic discuss survival, continuity and future communities. By focusing throughout Europe, and more of how to help facilitate the required to investigate the factors to inform future Cross-generational renewal objectives.

KEYWORDS: land mobility

### 1. Introduction

Agriculture is the main land use in for more than 47% of the region (Giannakis and Bruggerman, 2015), essential for food, energy production public goods. Land is also a finite resource of infinite value. Recognising its importance to viable food production, reform discussions have brought mobility (i.e. transfer of land from one generation to the next) to the forefront yet again. An infusion of farming by means of efficient and effective is considered to be critical to achieving and sustainable agricultural sector. A study by Zondag et al. (2016) found of agricultural land through purchase most important requirement for young entrants who want to pursue a career gaining such access to land is also entering the European agricultural 2016, CEJA and DeLaval, 2017; Z...

Received September 2019; revised June 2020  
Final version 15th October 2020  
Corresponding author: Shane.Francis@rda.gov.ie  
International Journal of Agricultural Extension  
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NRN Newsletter  
July 2021

## Smart Villages and Rural Towns in Ireland



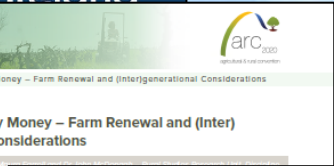
Not Necessarily Money – Farm Renewal and (Inter)generational Considerations  
By Dr Shane Conway, Dr M...  
of Geography, National Uni...

European agricultural farmers. Demographic farms are run by a third of all farm...

How do farms pass on below a way that respects the needs people? Shane Conway and approach that allows older to sustain normal day to day act their farms in later life, whilst to allow for the necessary dis responsibilities and ownership their successors.

European agriculture is population of farmers. Demographic of all European farms are run by 35, while almost one third of all 65. As it is a worldwide policy to contribute and future people sector, traditional family farm sustainability of rural society after age-diverse farming population farming workforce is a major c...

An aging farming population, is decline in the number of young reported as a key factor in the communities. It is becoming a major challenge presents traditional farm transfer, so much renewal is one of the nine H Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Furthermore, the declaration Commissioner for Agriculture...



## LEADER Programme 2014-2020 Case Studies from Ireland

National Rural Network



# How to Communicate Green Themes to Farmers?

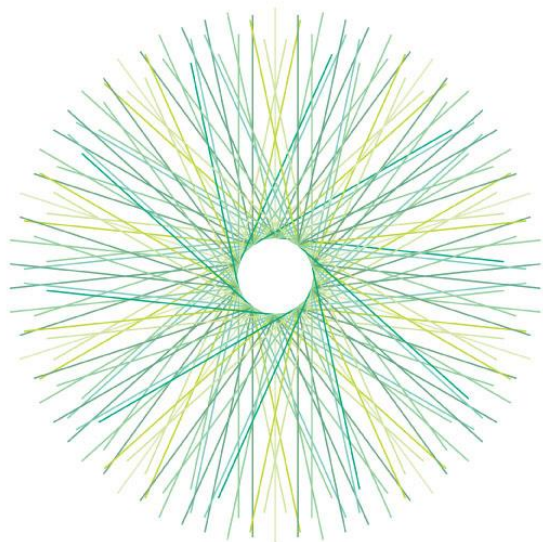
Taking Inspiration from the Irish NRN's work  
with EIP-AGRI Operational Groups (OGs) since  
2017



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**EIP-AGRI Projects are developed by Operational Groups which bring together key actors such as farmers, researchers, advisors and agri-businesses to tackle a certain practical problem or opportunity in the agri-food sector and rural economy.**



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**EIP-AGRI OGs make the best use of different types of knowledge (practical, scientific, technical, organisational, etc.) in an interactive way to identify innovative solutions –**

**Remove Silo mentality**

**Themed – Hen Harrier Project = €25m**

**Themed – Pearl Mussel Project = €10m**

- Agreed with Commission as part of Ireland's RDP
- Recruited by competitive tender
- Responsible for developing local partnerships & developing actions on the ground

**Open Call – Environment = €20m** *(Stream B)*

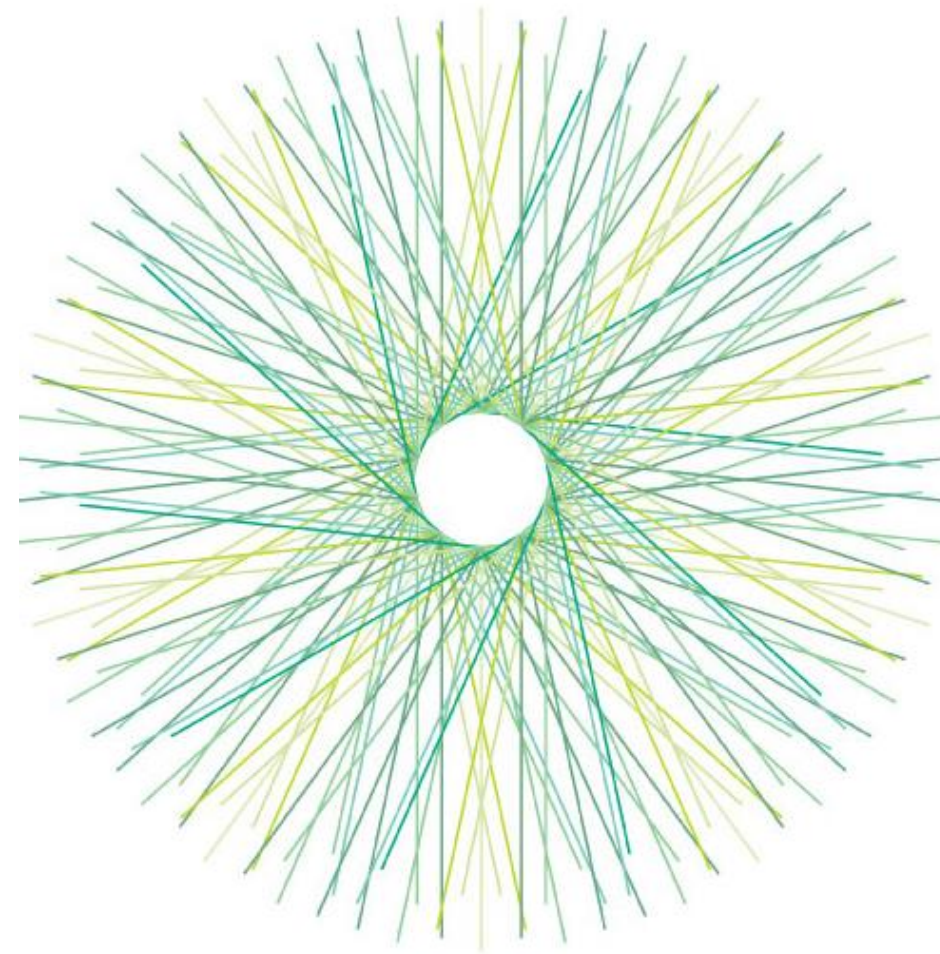
**Open Call – General = €4m** *(Stream A)*

- 'Bottom-up' Operational Group Call
- Recruited by simple application process
- Designed to be accessible to all

**Open Call – Peatlands = €2.2m**

**Open Call – Farm Health, Safety and Wellbeing = €1.8m**

**Open Call – Locally-led Farm and Community Biodiversity = €3m**



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National Rural Network Supporting the EIP-AGRI Initiative through innovative multi-method communication strategies

### EIP-AGRI Species Conservation in Action

April 6th - 9th 2021

An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara  
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

National Rural Network

Thursday April 8th  
Irish Breeding Curlew EIP

Wednesday April 7th  
Hen Harrier Project

Tuesday April 6th  
Pearl Mussel Project

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Home About Biodiversity Climate Change LEADER EIP-AGRI Farm Viability News Blog Contact

**EIP-AGRI**

Supporting innovation, competitiveness and sustainability in agriculture and forestry

About Storyboard Latest News Blogs Join Video Gallery Reports and Resources Useful Links Focus Groups

**About EIP-AGRI in Ireland**

What is EIP-AGRI?

Operational Groups (OGs)

Focus Groups



**Bioeconomy Ireland Week 2021**

EIP-AGRI Bioeconomy Projects

Tuesday October 19th  
Bioeconomy Glas - Small-scale Farmer-led Green Bioeconomy

Wednesday October 20th  
Small Biogas Demonstration Programme (SBDP)

Thursday October 21st  
Biomass to Biochar for Farm Resilience (BBFR)



### EIP-AGRI Upland Projects in Action Week

February 8th-12th 2021

National Rural Network

Friday Feb 12th  
North Connemara Locally Led Agri-environmental Scheme

Thursday Feb 11th  
Blackstairs Farming Futures Project

Wednesday Feb 10th  
SUAS Project

Tuesday Feb 9th  
Inishowen Upland Farmers Project

Monday Feb 8th  
MacGillicuddy Reeks

National Rural Network

**EIP-AGRI Video Gallery**

EIP-AGRI Online Survey

BRIDE (Biodiversity Integration in a Daring Environment) EIP-AGRI Project

BRIDE Project

Flourishing with Nature

An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara  
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, Europe Investing in rural areas

**EIP-AGRI: Ireland's Operational Groups**

Use of Operational Groups for testing out new CAP measures

Dr Shane Conway - NUI Galway & Irish NRN

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EIP-AGRI Guest Blog - Dr Brendan Dunford, Manager of the Burren Programme

**Reimagining Rural Futures**

Dr Brendan Dunford



National Rural Network

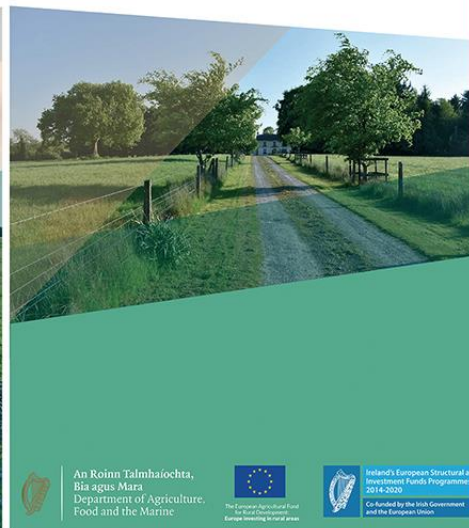


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# EIP-AGRI: Ireland's Operational Groups National Rural Network



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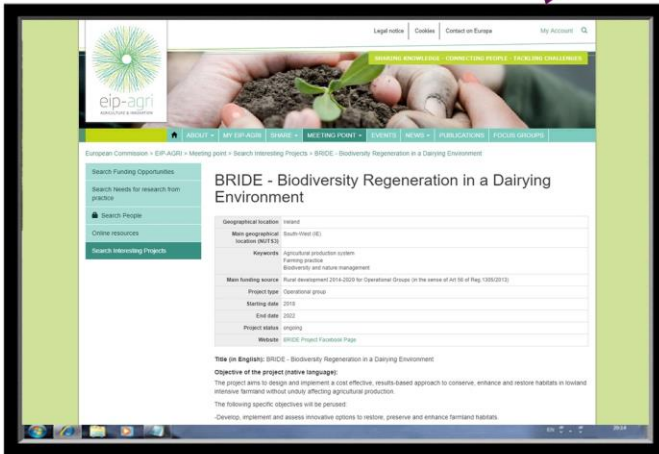
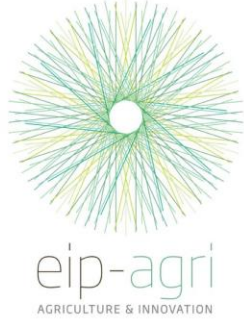
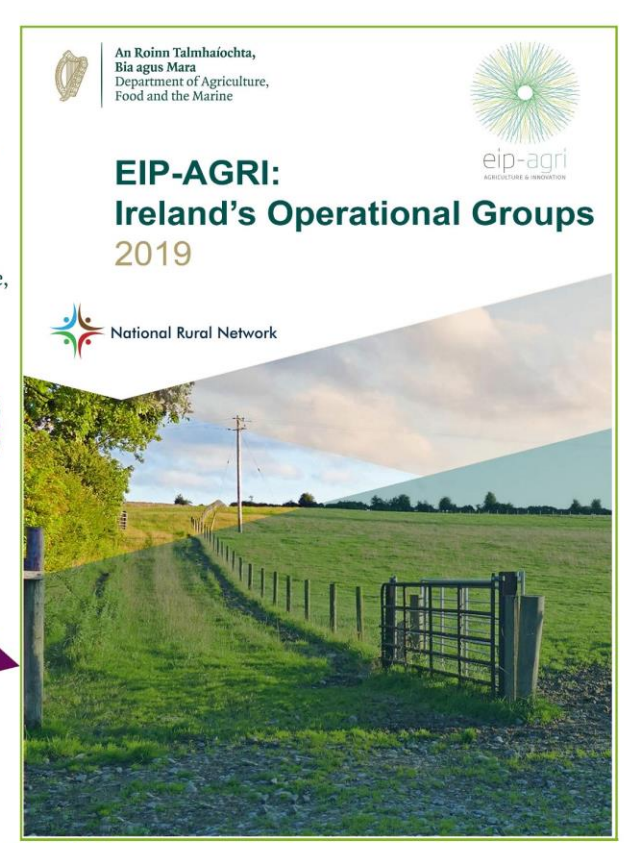
Ireland's European Structural and  
Investment Funds Programmes  
2014-2020  
Co-funded by the Irish Government  
and the European Union



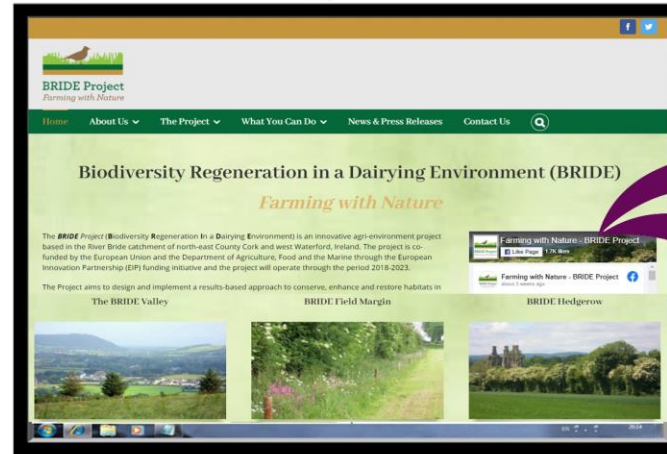




# Irish EIP-AGRI Operational Group 'One-Stop-Shop' NRN Storyboard Database



EIP-AGRI Service Point Project Database



EIP-AGRI Project Website



Project Social Media





# Irish EIP-AGRI Operational Group EIP-AGRI Participating Farmer Video Blog (Vlog)



Episode 1 - Martin and Colm Gavin from the Pearl Mussel Project



Episode 2 - Cyril Ó Flaithearta from the Caomhnú Árann Project



Episode 3 - Kieran Doona from the MacGillycuddy Reeks EIP Project

# Locally-led, Farmer centered



Episode 4 - Louise Rankin from the Maximising Organic Production Systems (MOPS) Project



Episode 5 - The Mulkear EIP Project



Episode 6 - Farming Rathcroghan Project



# Mult-Actor Perspectives: EIP-AGRI Guest Blogs – Rural Development Programme 2014-2020



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**NRN EIP-AGRI BLOG** p.43  
**Digital Skills in Farming for a Digital Future in Agriculture**  
 Ethan Cleary, Technology & Innovation Executive, Irish Farmers' Association

**Digital Skills Models**  
 At the EIP-AGRI workshop on 'Enabling Farmers for the Digital Age' the role of AKIS, the focus was very much on how all actors in the agricultural knowledge innovation system can support the understanding and use of digital technologies at farm level. Farmers were identified as being central to the agricultural innovation system and are key actors in many communication, awareness raising and educational activities such as mentoring, on farm demonstration, peer to peer exchanges, on farm testing, community expert groups and networks, etc. In these cases advisers are equally seen as facilitators, trustees and as knowledge providers. Farmers, especially the ones who are already engaged, who have 'success stories' and who are front runners are also called upon to be ambassadors and trainers.



This is why approaches such as "skills based learning" and "context based learning" should be explored as a means for getting the most out of digital technologies. These approaches advocate learning on the job with the instructor role now morphing into the role of facilitator. This social learning approach is already occurring in the successful discussion and knowledge transfer group model in existence in the EU. Social learning involves learning with and from others, and uses digital tools such as private and public online group discussions portals to complement the face-to-face interactions in the real world.

**NRN EIP-AGRI BLOG** p.35  
**Mobilising Forestry Biomass via Sustainable Means**  
 Kieran Sullivan, IT Researcher at Waterford Institute of Technology and Part-time Farmer and Forester



Following an open call for selecting members, EIP-AGRI chosen 20 experts from around Europe. These included foresters, farmers, scientists, government advisors, and environmentalists; together with a coordinator and two support members, the Group kick-started its work in Tampere, Finland, in June, 2016. The final result is a wide-ranging report, complete with insights and recommendations, and to feed into this, the Group centred on eight supporting documents (entitled, mini-papers):

- MP1: Multi-actors / Stakeholders involved in SMRF
- MP2: Forest Ownership types
- MP3: Forest Biomass Markets
- MP4: Decision support tools
- MP5: Harvesting technologies
- MP6: SMRF contribution to environmental issues
- MP7: Incentives for SMRF
- MP8: European map of the regional forest-based sector

Over the course of a year the mini-papers were scoped out and developed, before a second and final workshop in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in February, 2017. At this point, the mini-papers were finalised and work began on incorporating them in the final report.

**NRN EIP-AGRI BLOG** p.27  
**OviData EIP-AGRI Project for Sheep Genetic Improvement – 'An Ounce of Breeding is worth a Tonne of Feeding'**  
 Eamon Wall, OviData EIP-AGRI Project Leader



The OviData EIP-AGRI project aims to bring Irish commercial sheep breeding into the next generation. It sets out to collect performance data on Irish sheep enterprises (across 1,500 ewes) and assign parentage to all lambs born through DNA (genomics). Assigning parentage is a critical step as it unlocks the maximum value from the performance records collected on individual sheep. Without parentage information these performance records would be of far less value. Yes, they would tell us how an individual is performing, but big gains can only be made by assessing performance at a bloodline/family level. DNA also allows us to identify the sire of lambs born, an impossible task for most sheep farmers who use a 'team' of rams to protect against possible fertility issues. Knowing lamb sires is incredibly valuable. When combined with performance data we can identify the top and bottom performers very easily.

**NRN EIP-AGRI BLOG** p.22  
**Pearl Mussel Project - 'More than it says on the tin'**  
 Dr Derek McLoughlin, Project Manager at Wild Atlantic Nature LIFE IP



Farmland habitats are used as result indicators and the higher the quality of these habitats (scored out of 10), the higher the payments farmers receive. This approach has the effect of creating a market for biodiversity and provides an opportunity and incentive for farmers to manage their habitats to a higher quality. Although payments are for results achieved, supporting actions, such as the provision of drinking troughs, drain-blocking, and stock management, are financed through the programme to assist farmer achieve higher scores.

The focus of the Pearl Mussel Project is on reward for ecosystem services, rather than restriction and penalty. One farmer at a meeting remarked 'it's the first time we have been told what we can do with our land rather than what we can't do'.

**NRN EIP-AGRI BLOG** p.20  
**Should Farmers Score their Own Fields in Results Based Programmes?**  
 Dr Amanda Browne, Scientific and Technical Officer of the Caomhnuí Árann EIP-AGRI Project



Before the Covid-19 pandemic, a series of farmer training days were planned to familiarise farmers with the scoring system, the indicator species and the issues that may reduce a land parcel from a score 5 to a score 4, and the actions necessary to improve the score 3 field. With the resulting travel restrictions from March to July 2020, farmer training workshops were not possible, and adaptations had to be made. A scoring leaflet (Fig. 1) and video were subsequently designed in-house by the project team, to encompass the main differences between the scores.

Twenty-five Caomhnuí Árann farmers were selected at random for the booklet and video guides as reference. These 25 August and September 2020. To date the results have been farmer scores and the Caomhnuí Árann project team coming months with further farmer training planned. Ovi with farmers to further develop the scoring systems so it

**NRN EIP-AGRI BLOG** p.14  
**Maximising Organic Production Systems (MOPS) - Meeting the Growing Demand for Organic Fruit and Vegetables in Ireland**  
 Gillian Westbrooke, MOPS EIP-AGRI Project Manager and CEO of the Irish Organic Association (IOA)



The need to keep accurate farm records is possibly the most salient lesson from this project to date. It's vital that farmers know the profitability of each crop, including which variety performs best and under what conditions. If a farmer can not determine crop specific production costs, they can not place a true value for the crop. Profitability will vary on each farm depending on various factors, including but not limited to; machinery, skill set and labour costs. Understanding the real costs helps the farmer become more competitive, improves farm efficiencies and of furnishes the farmer with sufficient knowledge to make an informed decision about which crop, market and supply route to choose. To date, two years into the project, we have seen farms change their crop choice when they realise the true production costs, some significantly reducing the range of crops grown and/or opting for more profitable crops, while others choosing to purchase from another project grower because it's more economically efficient.

On the island and expertise producing gas their farm and are farming to There is a story in maintaining as it was in the Caomhnuí farmer take in (Fig. 3).

its common practice for large retailers to prescribe product specifications, for example the length of carrots, weight of a head of broccoli. If a product doesn't meet the specification, the grower can potentially end up with considerable waste. Waste is obviously undesirable, both environmentally and economically. Although the large retailer can take considerable volume, and suits field scale production, waste awareness and the impact on farm profitability has resulted in some of the project farms returning to direct sales. Many of the growers would have started with a box scheme business and/or farmers market and the trend is to return part or all of their business model to direct sales.



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**Multi-Actor Perspectives:  
EIP-AGRI Guest Blogs –  
Rural Development Programme (RDP)  
2014-2020**

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NU Galway  
OE Gaillimh

NU Galway  
Rural Studies



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# Showcase EIP-AGRI OGs' Far-Reaching Agri-Environmental Impact

Hen Harrier Project

Hen Harriers are a good indicator of ecosystem functionality



A Symbiotic Relationship Exists



Not just about Species Conservation

...also about Habitat Protection

€25m



HEN HARRIER PROJECT

Pearl Mussel Project



Water Quality Indicator Benefits



€10m



# A Blended Approach 'On the Ground', at Farm Level



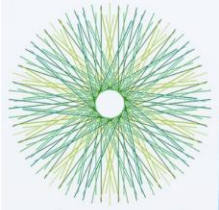
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The NRN have held and assisted in a number of Knowledge Transfer & Exchange Workshops for EIP-AGRI OGs, providing farmers with an opportunity to listen to expert advice and also to learn & Network with each other.

Hands on, practical knowledge Transfer & Exchange activities & strategies on farms are also key....





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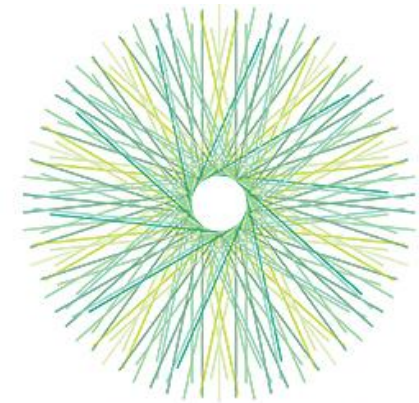


# SUAS Project Demonstration Event



National Rural Network

August 26th, 2021



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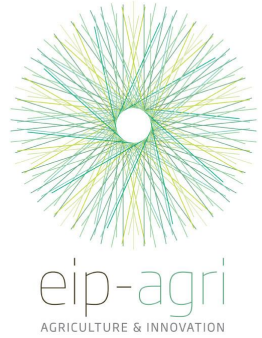
# Lessons Learned from Ireland's EIP-AGRI Approach – *Locally-led, Farmer-centered, Results-based*

- Importance of involving farmers, researchers and advisors in the design phase of projects, and then throughout (*in line with EIP-AGRI's 'Interactive Innovation Model' overarching concept & AKIS*).
- Value of flexible, practical, locally adaptable, locally relevant measures (*e.g. farmers making decisions on a field by field basis in the Caomhnú Árann Project*). **Close the innovation gap between Policy, Research and Practice – Knowledge Exchange rather than just Knowledge Transfer - AKIS**
- **Merit and Impact of a Results-based Approach** i.e. Designing schemes that reward farmers for improvements in farmland biodiversity etc.





# Looking Ahead

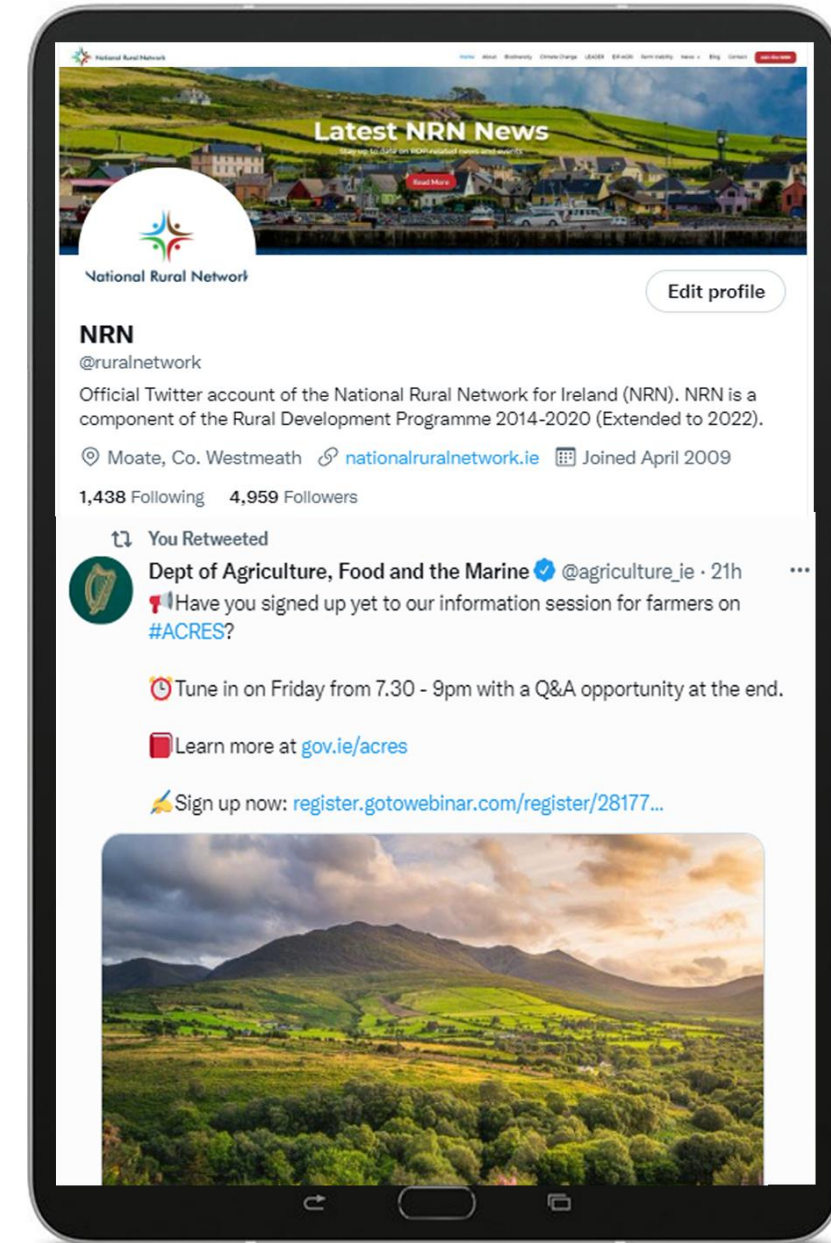


Lessons learned from EIP-AGRI OGs under Ireland's current RDP 2014-2020 (extended to 2022) have helped inform the Agri-Environmental Climate Measure (AECM) contained in Ireland's new CAP Strategic Plan to be known as the Agri Climate Rural Environment Scheme (ACRES)



# Ireland's new Agri Climate Rural Environment Scheme (ACRES)

- **Key component of the Ireland's new CAP Strategic Plan's Green Architecture.**
- **Using a habitats-based approach, delivered through both multi-functional prescription and results-based actions, ACRES aims to contribute significantly to achieving improved, long-term biodiversity, climate, air and water quality outcomes at farm level - *Right action in the right place to maximise and enhance its contribution.***
- ***The NRN will be assisting Ireland's Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) communicate the background, aims, objectives and activities of scheme to the farming community over the next few months.***



# Importance of Collaboration Between Key Actors in Communicating Green Themes to Farmers

*Working Towards a  
Common Green Goal at  
Farm Level*

*Image Credit: Dr Shane Conway*



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# Burren Winterage School Annual Collaboration



National Rural Network

## Burren Winterage School 2021

### EIP-AGRI: Carrying Forward our Lessons Learned

An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara  
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

Date: Friday, October 22nd 2021

Time: 10.30am – 5.00pm

Venue: Kinvara Community Centre, Co. Galway



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burrenbeetrust  
connecting people and place

### Agenda

10.30-11.00am – Opening and Welcome

Session 1: EIP-AGRI - Impact and Innovation Chair: Dr Maura Farrell

- 11.00am-12.30pm
- Fergal Monaghan, Hen Harrier Project
- Patricia Deane, MacGillycuddy Reeks EIP Project
- David Wallis, Danu Project
- Eoin Kinsella, Duncannon Blue Flag Farming & Communities EIP Project
- Henry O'Donnell, Inishowen Upland Farmers EIP Project

12.30-2.00pm – Lunch and EIP-AGRI Poster Exhibition

Session 2: EIP-AGRI - The Farmer's Perspective Chair: Dr Shane Conway

- 2.00pm - 3.00pm
- Pearl Mussel Project
- Mulkear EIP Project
- Caomhnú Árann Project
- Protecting Farmland Pollinators Project
- North Connemara Locally led Agri-Environmental Scheme
- Blackstairs Farming Futures Project

3.00-3.30pm – Coffee/Tea Break

Session 3: EIP-AGRI - Looking Ahead Chair: Dr James Moran

- 3.30pm - 4.45pm
- Declan Byrne, SUAS (Sustainable Uplands Agriculture-environment Scheme) Project
- Petra Kock Appelgren, Farming Rathcroghan Project
- Donal Sheehan, BRIDE (Biodiversity Regeneration in a Dairying Environment) Project
- Caroline Lalor, FarmPEAT Project
- Dr Derek McLoughlin, LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature

4.45-5.00pm – Closing Remarks

5.00-7.00pm – Networking Opportunity

Organized in conjunction with the National Rural Network (NRN), supported by the Heritage Council (HNV Ireland Programme) and the Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine (DAFM).



# Supporting Ireland's Farming for Nature Initiative

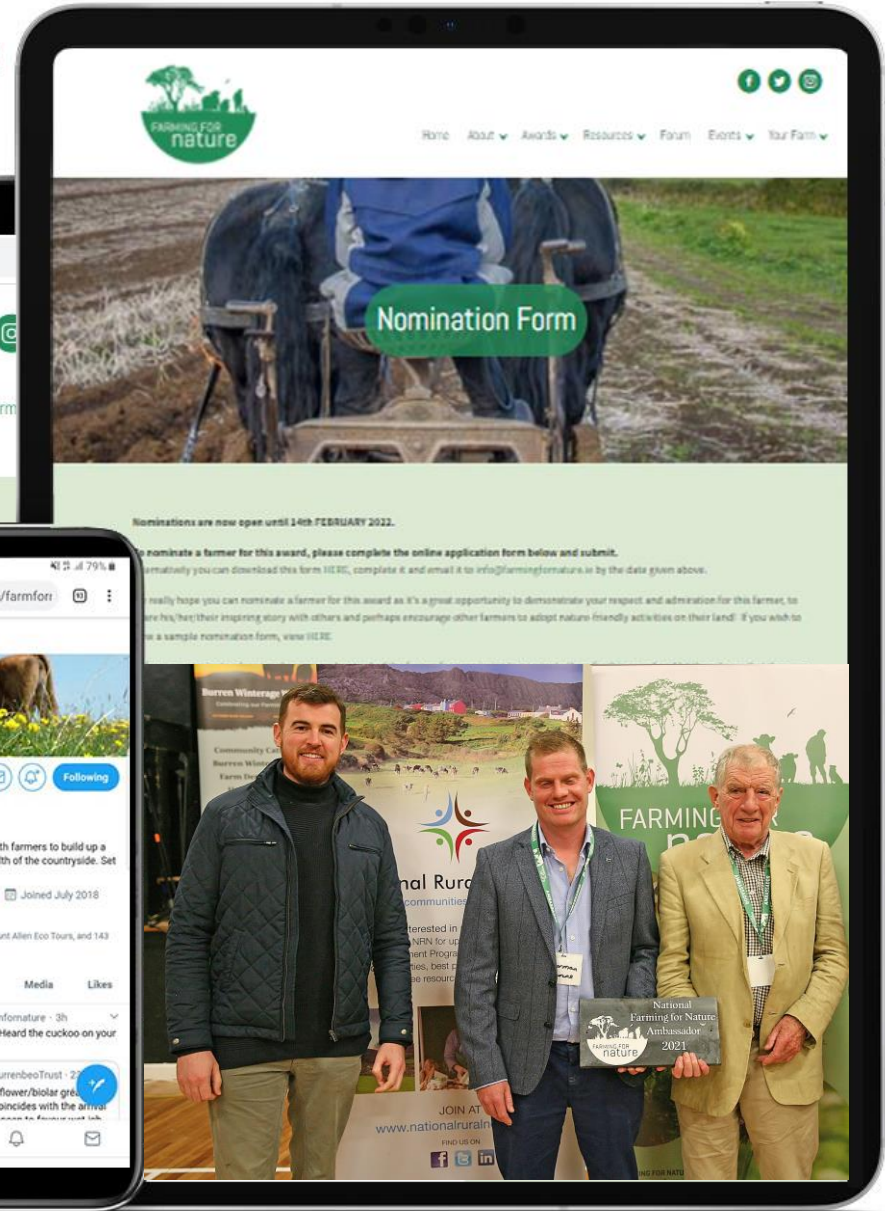
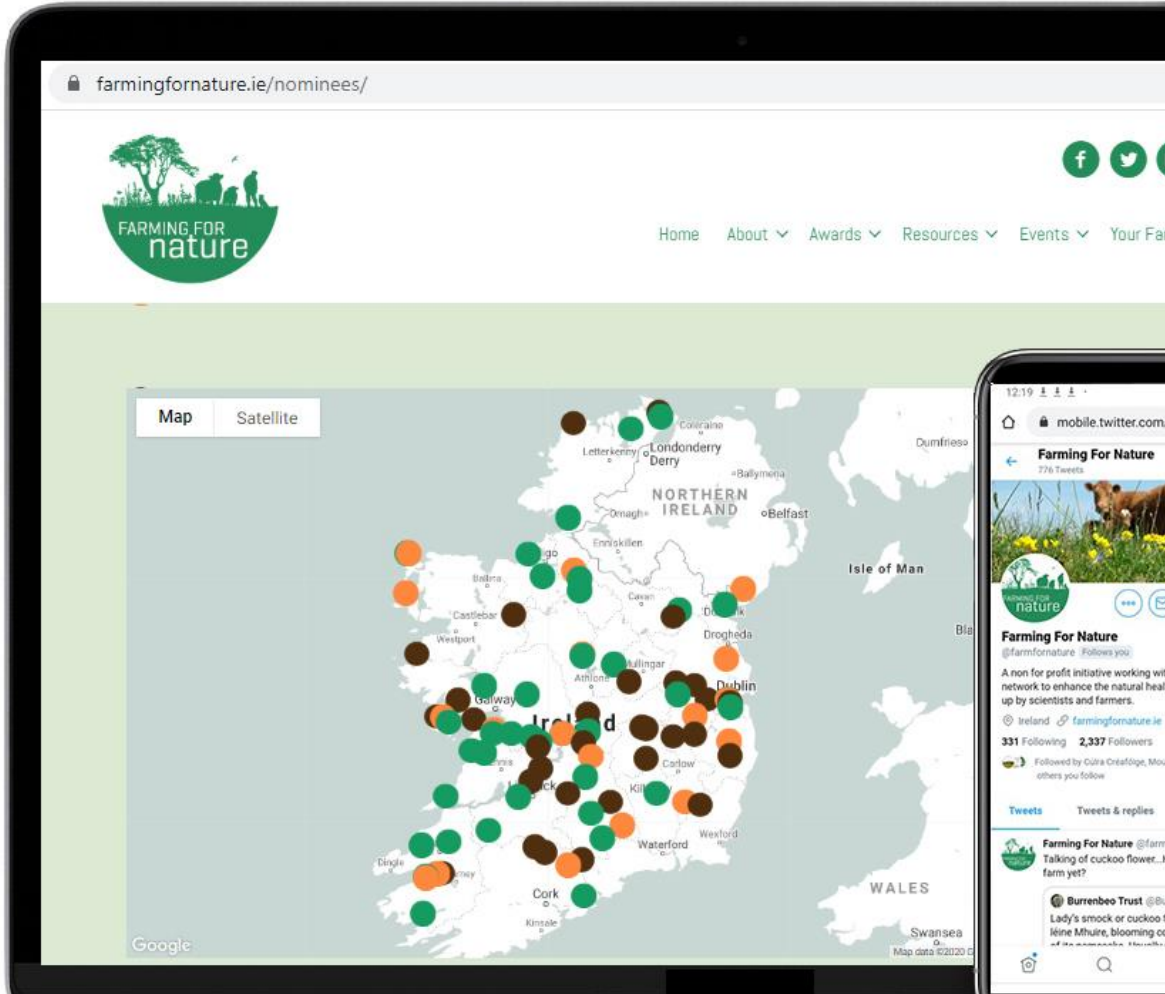


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## National Farming For Nature Ambassador Awards 2022



# Pioneering Ireland's Biodiversity Farmer of the Year Award



## The Signpost Series 'Pointing the way to a low emissions agriculture'

Sustainable Agriculture  
Training Webinar Series

Register at:  
[www.teagasc.ie/sustainableagriculture](http://www.teagasc.ie/sustainableagriculture)



National Rural Network

A series of Sustainable Agriculture  
Webinars aimed at Irish Agri Professionals

### Topics covered in September will be:

Friday, 3 September 9.30am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ireland's Nitrates review</li> <li>Questions and Answers</li> </ul>	<p><b>Speaker</b> Jack Nolan, Senior Inspector, Nitrates and Biodiversity Division, DAFM</p>
Friday, 10 September 9.30am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Combining catchment science and agricultural advice to improve local water quality</li> <li>Questions and Answers</li> </ul>	<p><b>Speakers</b> Cathal Somers, ASSAF Advisor, Teagasc Philip Murphy, Catchment Scientist, LAWPRO</p>
Friday, 17 September 9.30am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Pearl Mussel Project EIP: A results based payment scheme targeting an endangered species while delivering wider environmental benefits</li> <li>Questions and Answers</li> </ul>	<p><b>Speaker</b> Dr Patrick Crushell, Project Manager, The Pearl Mussel Project EIP</p>
Friday, 24 September 9.30am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agroforestry – multiple benefits for Irish agriculture</li> <li>Questions and Answers</li> </ul>	<p><b>Speakers</b> Dr Ian Short, Forestry Research Officer, Teagasc Professor Jim McAdam, Queens University Belfast Mr Eugene Curran, Forestry Inspector, DAFM</p>



# EIP-AGRI Participating Farmer's Perspectives Week

National Biodiversity Data Centre  
*Documenting Ireland's Wildlife*



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Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

## Festival of

# Farmland Biodiversity

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The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development  
Europe Investing in Rural Areas

Friday May 20th  
MacGillycuddy Reeks EIP Project

Thursday May 19th  
MOPS Project



Monday May 16th  
Pearl Mussel Project



Wednesday May 18th  
Caomhnú Árann Project



Tuesday May 17th  
Mulkear EIP Project





# Methods to Bridge the Divide Between Policy, Research and Practice To Achieve our Green Ambitions at Farm Level



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*Image Credit: Dr Shane Conway*



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# Herald Farming Farmer's Yard could provide for isolated rural dwellers

Marts identified as potential source for Farmer's Yards

By Mark Walsh

GALWAY native and NUI Galway lecturer Shane Conway has published a policy brief proposing the creation of a national social organisation for older farmers.

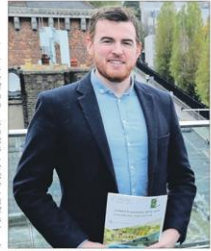
'Farmer's Yards' would work in a similar fashion to Macra na Feirste, a nationwide farming group for 17 to 35-year-olds with 20 clubs in rural Ireland. Isolation is a very real issue in the countryside, among older men, many of whom are bachelor farmers. The lockdowns of 2020 and 2021 did nothing for them in terms of social interaction, with pub shut and people steering clear of one another.

Dr Shane Conway's policy brief is titled 'A Way of Life: Creating an Age-Friendly Environment in the Farming Sector through Farmer's Yards, a Social Organisation for Older Farmers', and he suggests that such an organisation could help establish an age-friendly environment within the farming sector.

"Designed to fit the older generation's aspirations, interests, needs and values, the proposed 'Farmer's Yards' organisation, funded annually by the Government and through other means, would help alleviate the isolation and fear of older farmers," he says.

"It would be a place where older farmers could meet and share their experiences, and where they could help one another. It would be a place where they could help one another. It would be a place where they could help one another."

"It would be a place where they could help one another. It would be a place where they could help one another. It would be a place where they could help one another."



NUI Galway's Shane Conway

**The bidding ring and canteen at livestock marts are therefore not considered to be just venues of transaction within the farming community, but hives of social interaction...**

people who may have signed their land over or are no longer able to carry out the physical duties they once could. Marts are identified in the paper as 'Farmer's Yards' - a potential source for social and professional interaction. They are also a meeting point for farmers, and for the wider rural community. The bidding ring and canteen at livestock marts are considered to be hives of social interaction. They are also a meeting point for farmers, and for the wider rural community.



## Call for dedicated organisation for older farmers

Ailidh O'Brien  
April 3, 2022 7:00 am



There is an urgent need for agricultural policy makers to place a greater emphasis on the quality of life of older farmers, according to an academic paper.

Peer-reviewed research compiled by the National University of Ireland (NUI) Galway and Teagasc has called for the establishment of a national social organisation for older farmers.

The paper suggests this "would have the potential to transform farming into an age-friendly sector of society".

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He said that "significant" issues as a weekly social outlet for older farmers has increased, with "meeting points" within rural communities such as post offices, pubs and local shops have closed.

"Marts are more than just livestock markets," he said.



## Whitaker Institute Policy Brief



Policy Brief No.: 96  
March 2022

Cluster: Environment, Development and Sustainability  
Theme: Sustainable and Inclusive Societies  
Contact: Dr Shane Conway, Postdoctoral Researcher, Rural Studies Centre, Discipline of Geography, NUI Galway. shane.conway@nui.galway.ie

**Further Reading:** Conway S.F., Farrell, M., McDonagh, J., Kinsella, A. (2022) 'Farmers Don't Retire': Re-Evaluating How We Engage with and Understand the 'Older Farmer's Perspective'. Sustainability, 14(5), 2533. DOI: 10.3390/su14052533

**Read More About:** The Environment, Development and Sustainability cluster within the Whitaker Institute for Innovation and Social Change.

**Acknowledgements:** This study was funded by the NUI Galway College of Arts, Social Sciences and Celtic Studies Illuminate Programme. Thanks also to the Innovation Office at NUI Galway for their assistance with this study.

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## Policy Brief

### Creating an age-friendly 'Farmer's Yards', a social

Globally, policy aimed at stimulating limited regard to the mental health and identity and social circles, which are studied, in probing this contentious issue, in disparate literatures, namely connective gerontology. It investigates what steps reassure older farmers that their sense within the farming community will business to the next generation in the potential of transforming farming into WHO's Age-friendly Environments Concept.

**Social Organisation for Older Farmers:** This study recommends that the es generation of the farming community can respond positively to the agri generation's aspirations, interests, annually by the Government and around the fear of the unknown us providing older farmers with an osphere in later life. A social agri every county (or similar geographi farming by allowing the older gene peer group of similarly aged farm opportunities to develop a pattern of increased collaboration with farmer reported successful social and em movement throughout the world organisation for older farmers would dismantle the patriarchal nature of fa

**Collaborating with the Livestock Mart:** This study proposes drawing on all established livestock mart sector, Ireland, to facilitate the roll-out of its addition to their primary function a livestock, marts also provide a vital whom has no other social outlet. M of activity within the heart of rural platform and network to signify the for the older gener

**Livestock marts: hives of social interaction**  
The roll-out of a national social organisation for older farmers may seem challenging, but it could be relatively easy to investigate. The project team proposes drawing on already existing channels to establish the organisation, namely that of the long-established livestock sector. Many older farmers, on their weekly visits to the mart, to meet friends, exchange and catch up on local informal setting. This green is significant years as many of the meeting points community due to the pubs and local Livestock help to fac

**A way of life**  
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Shane Conway, Postdoctoral Researcher at NUI Galway and project lead, says: "Our goal is to determine what steps, if any, could or should be taken to minimise the disconnect between policy and realities on the ground. "We're paying particular attention to practical farmer-sensitive actions that can be taken at both policy and societal level. This is to measure older farmers that their sense of purpose and legitimate social connectedness within the farming community will not be

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## Research Magazine

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Teagasc  
AGRICULTURE AND FOOD DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

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**Keywords:** family farm; older farmers; retirement; succession; wellbeing; identity; social gerontology; age-friendly environments; innovation; rural sustainability

Received: 17 November 2021  
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## Academic Journal

### 'Farmers Don't Retire': Re-Evaluating How We Engage with and Understand the 'Older' Farmer's Perspective

Shane Francis Conway <sup>1,\*</sup>, Maura Farrell <sup>1</sup>, John McDonagh <sup>1</sup> and Anne Kinsella <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rural Studies Centre, Discipline of Geography, School of Geography, Archaeology and Irish Studies, National University of Ireland Galway, Galway H91 TK33, Ireland; maura.farrell@nui.galway.ie (M.F.); john.mcdonagh@nui.galway.ie (J.M.)  
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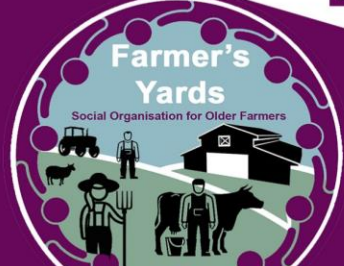
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# MAKING AN IMPACT

## Creating an Age-friendly Environment in Farming through 'Farmer's Yards', A Social Organisation for Older Farmers



Local Media

National Media

Wednesday, April 6, 2022  
€3.00 (€2.80 stg)  
**The Tuam Herald**  
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### Herald Farming

## Farmer's Yard could provide for isolated rural dwellers

• Marts identified as potential source for Farmer's Yards  
By Mark Walsh

GALWAY native and NUI Galway lecturer Shane Conway has published a policy brief proposing the creation of a national social organisation for older farmers.

'Farmer's Yards' would work in a similar fashion to Macra na Feirste, a nationwide farming group for 17 to 35-year-olds with 20 clubs in rural Ireland.

Isolation is a very real issue in the countryside, among older men, many of whom are bachelor farmers. The lockdowns of 2020 and 2021 did nothing for them in terms of social interaction, with pub shut and people steering clear of one another.

Dr Shane Conway's policy brief is titled 'A Way of Life: Creating an Age-Friendly Environment in the Farming Sector through Farmer's Yards, a Social Organisation for Older Farmers', and he suggests that such an organisation could help establish an age-friendly environment within the farming sector.

"Designed to fit the older generation's aspirations, interests, needs and values, the proposed 'Farmer's Yards' organisation, funded annually by the Government and through means that would help alleviate the financial burden on farmers, would be a potential source for social and economic support for older farmers from across the country."

Conway believes that his proposed organisation - 'Farmer's Yards' - could be developed in conjunction with the country's mart network.

He said that "significant meetings points" within rural communities such as post offices and local shops had closed.

"Marts are more than just the place to buy your milk."

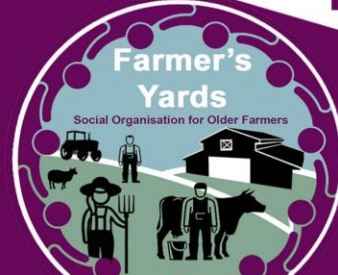
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## Call for dedicated organisation for older farmers

Shane Conway  
April 3, 2022 7:00 am

There is an urgent need for agricultural policy makers to place a greater emphasis on the quality of life of older farmers, according to an academic paper.

Peer-reviewed research compiled by the National University of Ireland (NUI) Galway and Teagasc has called for the establishment of a national social organisation for older farmers.

The paper suggests this "would have the potential to transform farming into an age-friendly sector of society".

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Contact: Dr Shane Conway  
Postdoctoral Researcher  
Rural Studies Centre  
Discipline of Geography  
NUI Galway  
shane.conway@nui.galway.ie

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Policy Brief

Research Magazine

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Teagasc  
Agriculture and Food Development Authority

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Check for updates  
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Academic Editor: Marc A. Rosen

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Academic Journal

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### Commentary

## 'Farmers Don't Retire': Re-Evaluating How We Engage with and Understand the 'Older' Farmer's Perspective

Shane Francis Conway<sup>1</sup>, Maura Farrell<sup>1</sup>, John McDonagh<sup>1</sup> and Anne Kinsella<sup>2</sup>

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# Entrepreneurial Young Trained Farmer Case Study

Karol Devaney, Drumcliffe, Co. Sligo



National Rural Network



An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara  
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine



The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development:  
Europe investing in rural areas



Ireland's European Structural and Investment Funds Programmes 2014-2020

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National Rural Network

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## FARMING EFFICIENTLY

KAROL DRUMCLIFFE FARMER HAS DEVELOPED HIS ENTERPRISE BUSINESS

# Leitrim Observer

34 FARMING

## Embracing innovation in a new era of rural living

By Karol Devaney

As a young farmer, Karol Devaney has been at the forefront of innovation in rural living. He has successfully expanded his business by creating his own online company, EWEKNIT, which provides woolen apparel for farmers. Karol is a trained farmer and a young entrepreneur who is passionate about his work and his community. He is currently working on expanding his business and exploring new opportunities in the rural sector. His story is a testament to the resilience and innovation of young farmers in Ireland.

**LEADER**

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## News

### Karol breaking new ground as farmer and entrepreneur

A young Sligo farmer who has also created a clothing brand and does a podcast for farmers has been the subject of a case study of an entrepreneurial young trained farmer. As part of that study, Karol Devaney told Dr Shane Conway of the National Rural Network about what he's working on, and his plans and hopes for the future.

It's been a busy year for Karol Devaney, a young farmer and entrepreneur from Drumcliffe, Co. Sligo. He has successfully expanded his business by creating his own online company, EWEKNIT, which provides woolen apparel for farmers. Karol is a trained farmer and a young entrepreneur who is passionate about his work and his community. He is currently working on expanding his business and exploring new opportunities in the rural sector. His story is a testament to the resilience and innovation of young farmers in Ireland.

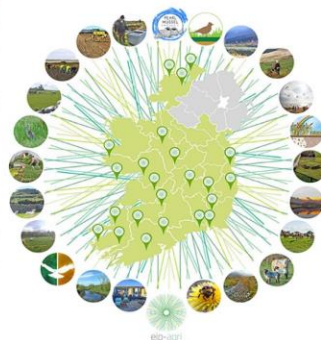
**LEADER PROGRAMME**

The LEADER programme is a rural development initiative that supports young farmers and entrepreneurs. It provides financial assistance and technical support to help them start and grow their businesses. Karol Devaney is a beneficiary of the LEADER programme, which has helped him to expand his business and create jobs in his community.

# National Rural Network Embraces AKIS

## Irish Language Translation of EIP-AGRI Operational Group Booklet

The Irish National Rural Network (NRN) have stepped up their efforts to help stimulate knowledge exchange and boost innovation in agriculture and rural areas by producing an Irish language (Gaeilge) version of a booklet highlighting and promoting Ireland's 23 EIP-AGRI Operational Group projects on behalf of Ireland's Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. This publication details the main aims, objectives, activates and background of each of the Ireland's EIP-AGRI projects. It also features an informative infographic illustrating the geographical location of the Lead Partner for each of the Irish EIP-AGRI Operational Groups throughout the country. The majority of these projects are bottom-up, led by farmers who are passionate about the future of farming and the environment in their own communities.



## Implementing a Locally Tailored, 'Farmer-Sensitive' Approach

As many of Ireland's Operational Groups are located in native Irish speaking areas throughout the country (known as Gaeltacht regions), the NRN team at NUI Galway recognised the need for, and importance of, respecting the heritage, culture and identity of these rural communities, particularly of the many farmers living within these areas whose first language is Irish. As innovation is a social process, more bottom-up or interactive than top-down from science to implementation, this locally tailored, 'farmer-sensitive' approach towards knowledge exchange will help bridge the gap between science, research and practice in the Gaeltacht regions of Ireland. Taking into account the social dimensions involved, by communicating and sharing EIP-AGRI material and expertise in their native tongue, will also ultimately lead to greater farmer engagement in the process, further strengthening farmer-led innovation and knowledge flows between research and practice at local level.

## Embracing AKIS (Agriculture Knowledge and Innovation Systems)

This integrated approach towards fostering innovation, supporting modernisation and enhancing knowledge exchange, tuned to the human side of agriculture and rural development, is essential in helping farmers and rural communities to ensure the long-term survival, continuity and future prosperity of the agri-food sector, traditional family farm model and broader sustainability of rural society. Indeed, the European AKIS (Agriculture Knowledge and Innovation Systems) ecosystem acknowledges and recognises the need for EU Member States to include social innovation and inclusiveness within their AKIS strategies and action plans, by taking into account the full range of rural socio-cultural contexts in their respective countries. The Irish NRN have adopted, and implemented this fundamental principle of AKIS through the application of place-specific EIP-AGRI knowledge exchange strategies and practices to help create innovative ecosystems in the native Irish speaking regions of Ireland.



## Creating Familiarity and Trust in the EIP-AGRI Initiative

The Irish language EIP-AGRI booklet was officially launched by the NRN and the DAFM at an EIP-AGRI Workshop entitled 'EIP-AGRI: Lessons Learned Through Shared Experiences' at this year's Burren Winterage School on the 24th of October 2019. Speaking after this event, Dr. Shane Conway noted that it was 'very encouraging to hear a number of Operational Groups Leaders from these Gaeltacht areas at the launch thanking the NRN for respecting the importance of the Irish language to rural dwellers and farmers in these communities by interacting with them in their native tongue in an effort to not only scale up innovation within these regions, but also to create a better connection with, as well as trust in, the EIP-AGRI initiative as a whole'.

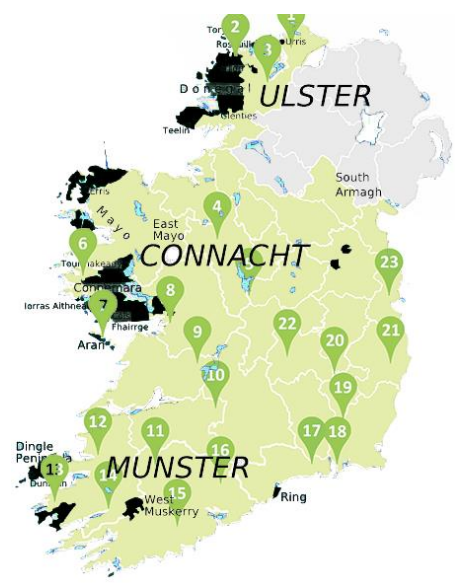


## AKIS in Action on the Aran Islands, Co. Galway



AKIS came to fruition when the Caomhnú Árann EIP-AGRI Operational Group Project located on the Aran Islands, Co. Galway hosted a visit from another Operational Group located in another Gaeltacht (Irish speaking) area located in northwest Co. Donegal, Cúlra Créafóige. The Cúlra Créafóige project is rehabilitating disused lands, improving biodiversity through regenerative agriculture and encouraging cottage industry by revitalizing local cultivation activities. Small scale tillage is still a feature on Inis Meáin, Aran's middle island, with crops of potatoes, rye, cabbage, turnips, leeks and onions grown throughout the island every year mainly for domestic use but also for local restaurants and cafes. The island of Inis Meáin was therefore a natural choice to host the project team and farmers participating in the Cúlra Créafóige Operational Group and share information. During the visit, the Cúlra Créafóige members had a chance to visit the thatched cottage 'Teach Synge' during this visit, in which the playwright John Synge stayed during his time on Inis Meáin and had an opportunity to hear from Ciarán Ó Fatharta about rye growing on the island and how it was used to maintain the thatch on the cottage. Later Seán Ó Domhnaill from the Caomhnú Árann project showed the Donegal group the crops grown on his farm, explaining the traditional techniques in both growing and storing the crop.

Whilst Caomhnú Árann host a range of visits each year this was the first time a farming group from another Gaeltacht area have visited, allowing both participating groups to communicate in Irish, which is an added bonus of the EIP-AGRI structure with the range of small community based groups throughout Ireland in Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht areas. Gráinne Ní Chonghaile from the Caomhnú Árann project team, explains that Irish is 'the first language of participants in the Caomhnú Árann project and that in general the participant farmers have a preference for doing their business through Irish where possible'. She highlighted how important it is that this has been recognised by DAFM and the NRN, in publishing the EIP-AGRI projects booklet through Irish. Gráinne added that this booklet is 'a useful resource for dissemination purposes within the local community, local schools and the wider public'.



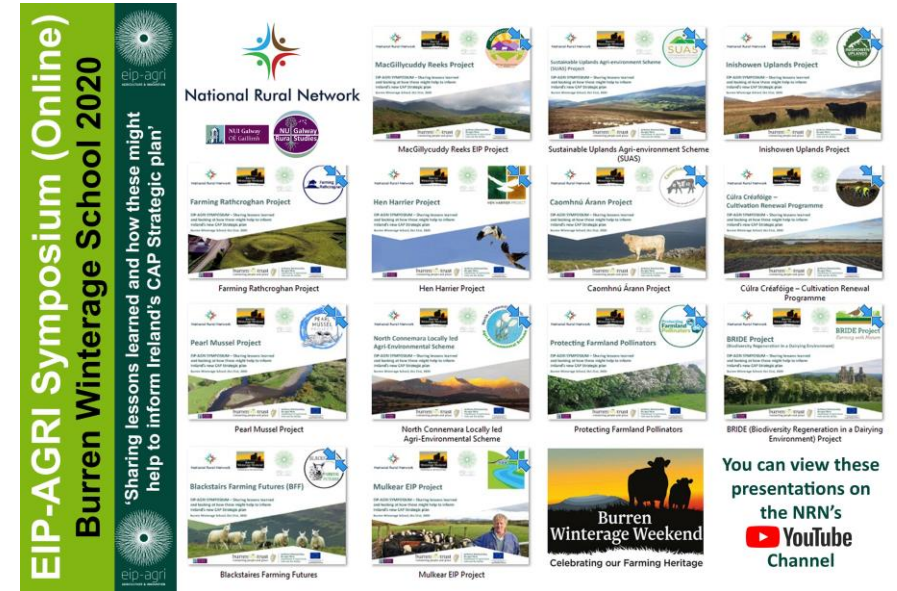
**The European AKIS recognises the fundamental importance of such measures not only for stimulating green innovation at farm level, but also in strengthening social inclusiveness & well-being within the farming community.**

# The Necessity of a Blended Communication Approach



National Rural Network

- As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Irish NRN diversified our efforts to help stimulate knowledge transfer by holding virtual meetings with farmers and other key rural actors via Zoom – *Key opportunity to embrace technology.*
- A blended (mixed) approach is now necessary, combining such digital measures with hands on knowledge transfer activities on the ground to communicate green themes to farmers.





## Whilst it is Important to Know how to Communicate Green Themes to Farmers....

We all must also listen to their lifetime experience working the land and daily care of their local environment –  
A top down approach towards achieving the green agenda at farm level is not appropriate and is also dated!



# Thank you for your attention

*Go raibh maith agaibh go léir*



National Rural Network

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