



INTERNATIONAL
LAND CONSERVATION
NETWORK

NEWS FROM OUR PARTNERS

Networking Working Landscapes

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Working lands are a major part of the biodiversity and climate crises. Networks between private owners and users of working lands, whether farms or forestry or quarries, are valuable partners and sources of innovation on how working lands can be part of the solution to these crises.

In many countries, national associations representing farmers or foresters, have existed for decades. Besides these classic sector lobbies, there are also, here and there, associative networks of farmers working for climate and biodiversity. This newsletter introduces two: [Farming for Nature](#) (FFN) in Ireland, and the Nature Friendly Farming Network in Great Britain.

Farming for Nature (FFN) in Ireland



This network, linked to the Burrenbeo Trust, seeks to bring together farmers who look after nature on their land. To enable them to swap experience, tips and tricks, between them and with conservation professionals. But – and this is an equally important purpose of the network - to advertise nature-friendly farming and farmers to Irish society at large.

As the FFN website eloquently puts it: “the environmental damage that can be caused by the wrong type of farming - we hear about it all the time. There isn’t as much discussion of those that are doing a great job farming for nature, about the positive stories, meaning we don’t have many good role models. This negative narrative can alienate farmers from nature, making them feel apart from it rather than part of it. Encouraging farmers to feel that they are part of the solution, not just the problem, is the first step in a long journey.”

What does the network offer farmers who join it? Best Practice Guides for downloading, short films, podcasts, webinars and peer-to-peer farm walks. A forum where farmers can ask questions of each other and share information. A bimonthly Farming for Nature Newsletter with news, upcoming events, nature-friendly tips for the farm, words of wisdom from farmers....

There is a strong focus on the practical. From scratch – one of the guides on offer is called 'Your Farm – Where to Start?' And it doesn't stop there – under the heading 'Products & Offerings'

website visitors can discover which nature-friendly farmers sell their produce online, at the farm gate or in their own farm shop. Directly linking 'green' consumers and farmers working with nature, is a key tool to make the wedding between agriculture and biodiversity work.

To promote and advertise the farmers who improve the natural health of their land, the Farming for Nature network has been running “Farming for Nature Ambassador” awards for some years now. Farmers are nominated and each year, a jury of peers selects the ambassadors for that year. Once an ambassador, always an ambassador – the list grows from year to year. There is now a variety from hill and peatland livestock farmers to vegetable and arable growers; interesting and inspirational stories; endearing personal profiles: check them out [here](#).

Nature Friendly Farming Network (NFFN) of Great Britain



Nature Friendly Farming Network

The Nature Friendly Farming Network was set up by farmers for farmers. It has a federal structure: a national over-arching chair and groups covering England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The Network seeks “to champion a way of farming which is sustainable and good for nature...highlight that farming and nature can go hand in hand.”

Like the Irish network, it wants to “demonstrate to the wider public what farmers can do to help wildlife, the environment and climate whilst still producing plentiful quality produce.”

Their primary function is to share insights and experience between farmer members and explore innovative and improved ways of achieving agronomic, environmental and social benefits. The Nature Friendly Farming Network does this through organising events and training, e-newsletters for farmers and a blog carrying updates, news, opinion. It participates in third-party events and meetings on policy and practice. It has a web-based library of technical guidance documents for best practice, from expert organisations such as conservation trusts and public agencies. It also publishes its own technical reports – check them out [here](#).

Another Network function is helping farmers build markets for nature-friendly produce. This became critical during the covid pandemic, when, as the NFFN writes, its farmer-members had good food to sell, but many of the usual supply chains were closed. The farmers had produce to harvest, but a lack of workers to make this happen. As a result, nature-friendly farmers are changing the way they supply the food they produce, marketing directly to the public through local supply chains or online. Hubs and clusters of farmers increase the range that can be offered to buyers and make internet sales more efficient. Pick-your-own arrangements help with the harvest problem. Covid showed that 'a sustainable food supply chain in the UK has never been more crucial.'

Political action plays an important role in the Nature Friendly Farming Network, which has built up partnerships with British conservation trusts and public agencies also working towards better policies for food and farming. Especially since Brexit, which is both a challenge and an opportunity. Away from the EU since the end of 2020, Britain can now formulate its own agricultural policies. If government and Parliament chose to do so, British farming could be given a policy and regulatory framework which targets a sustainable future and does far more than before to help nature to survive and thrive. The Nature Friendly Farming Network wants to help its members have a strong voice in these crucial and critical post-Brexit policy debates. A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create brand-new policy where farmers and nature work hand in hand!

Much attention is devoted to getting the message across to the general public (which can join the Network and donate to it). Besides classic tools like e-newsletters for the public, farmers from all over the Network have been sharing their nature-friendly farming stories through podcasts made by a professional team. There are already 10 such podcasts – they can be listened to [here](#).

Have news? Share updates from your organization or country by emailing ilcn@lincolninst.edu.