

Social Farming

2018 Top 10 Farm Diversification Trend (Farmers Guardian)



The Family Farmer's

5 Minute Introductory Guide

to starting a Social
Farming Enterprise

(12 or 24 days a year)

share the rural privilege
give your community support
receive modest income



FarmBuddies
SOUTH EAST ENGLAND

INTRODUCTION & SUMMARY

Social Farming or Care Farming, these terms refer to exactly the same activity, it is simply that the different names have been adopted in different parts of the UK and elsewhere. 'Social Farming' is used throughout this Guide.

DEFINITION

Social Farming ('SF') is the practice of offering family farms and smallholdings as a form of social service. The farm remains a typical working farm where people in need of support can benefit from participation in the farm's activities. It also re-connects farmers with their local communities.



KEY POINTS

SF is one of the most exciting new uses of a farm today.

Research suggests the working family farm has a unique key role.

Any adult member of the farming family can play an important part.

SF is a farm diversification for 12 or more days in a year with financial and non-financial benefits for the farmer.

SF is an opportunity to support the local community backed by Central Government.

SF outcomes from meaningful work regularly delight all involved.

PREPARING FOR AN SF ENTERPRISE:

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Read this Guide or other introductory information	Meet with a regional development coordinator	Complete the recommended training	List farm jobs, do risk assessments & policies, obtain DBS clearance & insurance

"Social Farming is about people and it is very much about progressing people on, you work with someone to build their confidence in a personal way, it is not a work placement but more relationship building, in the hope that the participant will move on to do other things based on the life experiences they gained working on your farm" **Social Farmer**

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

As SF in its various forms expands nationwide, it is evident that the family farm in the UK between 5-500 acres has significant potential, not only to deliver the concept but also to produce the very best of results.

Such farms can make a real difference to their local community with just a part-time enterprise as short as 12 days in a year.

The purpose of this Guide is to provide a brief introduction to SF as a part-time enterprise rather than a full-time one. It is based on FarmBuddies practical experience of supporting successful part-time SF enterprises that fit into diverse family farming businesses. The summarised information comes from the South East region of England where over 2000 Individual Day Visits have been monitored since 2010.

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CAVEAT – This Guide summarises research and practical experience by FarmBuddies over 10 years. The reader should note that it is not intended to be professional advice nor comprehensive but a brief time saving introduction to the subject matter for a specific audience, namely family farmers and smallholders. Further research and consultations will be necessary prior to starting any enterprise. Great care has been taken in preparing this Guide but the author/publisher does not assume and hereby disclaims any liability to any party for any loss howsoever caused whether directly or indirectly.

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A TRIED & TESTED PROGRAMME

A programme of visits that has been shown to work successfully with the Youth sector since 2010 is as follows:

An accompanied group of up to a maximum of 4 participants visit the farm one day (10am-3pm) a week for a minimum of 12 consecutive weeks; they do meaningful work according to age, choice and ability. Similar models work for other sectors.

Productivity is not the goal but rather social and environmental connectivity and ensuring each participant feels valued and useful.

These programmes have delivered a wide range of social, health and educational benefits for the participants; particularly improving communication, feelings of self worth and connection to Nature, which in turn have lead to job satisfaction for the farmers involved.

Jobs are best varied according to the interests and abilities of the participants.

Farms might adopt a programme of activities split between animal husbandry, short-term tasks - for example fencing repairs - and ideally a long-term project such as pond clearance, orchard planting or landscaping around stables to last the length of the 12 week programme.

Non-farming activities might also be included such as cooking, woodwork or photography.

The pace of work is adapted to the individuals involved – for some it will be minimal, while others will surprise with their energy and abilities.

Meaningful work builds responsibility, engenders trust and encourages feelings of satisfaction through helping others.





PARTICIPANTS

Demand for regular farm visits is expanding in most areas of the UK within the age range 9-90 years old.

HM Government has committed to trebling the number of participants to 1.3m per year by 2022 (2018 25 Year Environment Plan) and will be funding, as announced in January 2019, regional development, training and resources.

Typical participants include children for whom the school environment is a challenge or where they are home educated, adults with learning difficulties or disabilities and older people experiencing loneliness or the early stages

of dementia; a number of other sectors also exist.

At the outset it is suggested the farmer contacts one sector only rather than mixing different sectors and ages; for example, if their affinity is with Young People, it might be parents through local autism support organisations, schools and Occupational Therapists, all if possible within 45 minutes maximum travel time.

FarmBuddies regularly receives enquiries from parents, schools, and wellbeing professionals across the South East and can usually help, if required, to increase participant numbers.

Any mixed enterprise farm or smallholding, typically between 5 and 500 acres with animals, will usually present plenty of activity options. Livestock are important but can be as little as some pets and kitchen garden poultry.

The whole farming family need to relish the thought of helping the local community and 'changing down a gear' for their visitors. Lifetime experience on a farm is a sought after asset to engage participants but a new first generation farmer with a different skill set can provide an equally beneficial service. At best, 2 people would be

available from the farm one day a week for 12 or possibly 24 weeks a year to lead up to 4 participants with their accompaniers. Farmers have said they enjoy their work more with this social and educational element in their week's routine.

The majority of family farmers supported by FarmBuddies have been in their 40s, 50s and 60s – the average age of a UK farmer is 59, which is ideal for SF. A key attraction of SF for farms is its inclusivity; any available adult farming family member of any generation living on or nearby the farm can play an important role.



**WILL IT WORK
ON YOUR FARM?**

INCOME & COSTS



SF is a recognised commercial farm diversification.

On most farms the participant pays around £60 + VAT per person per day (national average); this is usually funded by a parent or carer, school, charity or from the participant's Personal Budget. Farmers in Higher Level

Environmental Stewardship schemes coupled with Educational Access or under other future support schemes, may consider a lower daily charge more appropriate.

No capital costs and low running costs in years 1 – 3 (see appendix).

Current training recommendations should always be checked; at present 3 days is recommended ie a 2 day course on SF (nationally recognised CEVAS course) and one day First Aid (eg St John Ambulance). A welcome indirect benefit from the SF training is that the necessary focus on providing a safe programme, using risk assessments and policies, will improve the safety status of the overall farm business, not just on SF days.

More supporting resources are planned. At present most publications tend to be

targeted at starting full-time Social Farms rather than the part-time SF enterprises focused on in this Guide. Such information includes research papers, 'how to' handbooks, reports/briefings and checklists by Social Farms & Gardens and others. There are periodic national seminars and conferences, and on-farm meetings in the regions can be arranged e.g. South East: FarmBuddies.

As most established Social Farms are busy, it is suggested farmers wishing to make research visits do so on advertised Open Days.



FARMER TRAINING & SUPPORT

OTHER POINTS



Experience has shown that often a young person who finds the classroom setting or elsewhere challenging with resultant behavioural issues will thrive on the farm.

The farmer is only responsible for leading the farming activities. In the rare event that a behavioural issue or other personal problem arises, the accompanying parent or carer is there to resolve the issue.

To date, in 8 years monitoring over 2000 Individual Day Visits, FarmBuddies is not

aware of any reportable Health & Safety incidents during their delivery.

Growing, preparing, cooking and eating food together at lunchtime around the table has been shown to be very beneficial in improving programme outcomes.

If you would consider renting out 5 acres or less to someone else to run an SF enterprise, FarmBuddies regularly receive enquiries from prospective tenants across the Southern region.

APPENDIX

Net Income Budget - 2019

Year	1	2	3
	£	£	£
Gross Income (average no. of participants)	2160 (3)	4320 (6)	5760 (8)
Expenses:			
Insurance	400	450	450
Enhanced DBS certificate	44	-	-
Training – SF (varying subsidy levels)	200	-	-
– First Aid (St John Ambulance)	135	-	-
Lunch/refreshments	300	400	450
Sundries	50	75	100
	1129	925	1000
Net Income contribution to the farm	1031	3395	4760
Number of programmes run (visitor days)	1(12)	2 (24)	2 (24)

About FarmBuddies:

The principal roles of the Social Enterprise FarmBuddies are:

1. To assist Family Farmers set up a Social Farming enterprise
2. To assist parents and schools find the most appropriate Social Farming programme in their area

The owner/manager: Stephen Sellers

Stephen had been running a successful professional practice providing business advice to farmers for many years when back in 2007 he first heard of Social Farming. From living on a Yorkshire farm until his early 20s, the benefits of this concept immediately resonated with him. Some research followed, resulting in the sale of his practice and the setting up of FarmBuddies in 2008. Stephen works full-time managing this Enterprise to expand Social Farming in the South East, including the Channel Islands, with his wife Mary.

We welcome any enquiries - please contact FarmBuddies:

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Farmers and Smallholders can obtain a free copy of this Guide by contacting us as above.

WHAT PARENTS SAY...

"I have already seen such an improvement in his confidence it is staggering"

"Olivia has had an amazing time on the farm. As for the three outcomes, I have seen significant changes especially expressing her feelings about the Dad she lost. Her confidence has definitely grown and her ability to address others especially adults has increased. It has also highlighted her passion in this area, we may have a future farmer on our hands"

"There's little we can say other than Daniel absolutely loved his time at the farm and will talk endlessly about his day, he doesn't do that with anything else"

"Laura's time on the farm has been amazing, with help and support she has become more confident, self esteem is picking up she has learnt that she can go and do things that she is asked and not to worry if she gets it wrong as this is how you learn. She has learnt to be herself and to enjoy what she's doing, not to worry about tomorrow"

"It's been such a great experience for Ellis and he really has done extremely well there. It's so lovely to see the boys complete meaningful work - which they can see the reason for"

"I would like to thank you for arranging this opportunity for Ben. He has thoroughly enjoyed his time on the farm. It was the only thing he was enthusiastic about and would actually get up and ready with little prompting. His mood has definitely improved and he is going to start a college course in animal care from September"