



Macra na Feirme's submission to the Citizen's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss

Macra na Feirme Environmental
Working Group

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Macra na Feirme

Macra na Feirme is a voluntary organisation representing a thriving community of 10,000 young people from rural Ireland.

We advocate for, nurture and develop our members aged between 17 and 35 in a fun, inclusive and supportive environment.

Our programmes and activities encourage young people to play an active role in their local community, making rural Ireland an attractive place to live and work.

Agricultural Affairs sub-committee

The Macra na Feirme Agricultural Affairs sub-committee’s brief encompasses all young farmer issues, including the pursuit of unimplemented proposals from existing Macra na Feirme policy documents and position papers, and the drafting of new policy proposals relating to young farmers. It also formulates statements on issues of concern to young farmers for adoption by National Council. The sub-committee achieves its aims through participation in social partnership, nationally coordinated lobby campaigns, and regular bilateral meetings with Government ministers and department officials.

Every young farmer in Macra has access to the Agricultural Affairs Committee through their county’s Young Farmer Development Group and is encouraged to put ideas forward to the Committee.

Macra na Feirme's submission to the Citizen's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss

Macra na Feirme welcomes the opportunity to feed in a written submission to the Citizens Assembly on Biodiversity. It is a welcome development that enhanced consideration is being given to the protection and enhancement of Ireland's biodiversity. Farmers have always played a vital role in managing those eco-systems and in ensuring that nature is part of everyday farming life. Policies and best farming practices have changed over time as scientific developments have emerged and as improvements in management practices aligned with policy objectives. It is therefore important that any discussions and recommendations that are forthcoming are made with the awareness and consideration of the policy and advisory background that encouraged and drove farming practices in the past. Macra na Feirme and its members are committed to playing our role in protecting and improving biodiversity. Macra na Feirme would also seek an opportunity to deliver a presentation to the Citizens Assembly on Biodiversity and to answer questions on the topic in relation to agriculture.

It is first important for an overview of the policy landscape that affects and relates to biodiversity with specific regard to those legislative requirements under both National and EU laws. These are namely,

- Wildlife Act 1976 & Wildlife Amendment Act 2000
- European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011)
- European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018
- Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004
- Flora (Protection) Order 2015
- Fisheries (Consolidation) Act 1959/21 (as amended)
- Heritage Act, 1995 (as amended)
- EU Regulation on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of Invasive Alien species [1143/2014)
- Habitats Directive²⁴ – Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora
- Birds Directive²⁵ – Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the conservation of wild birds
- EIA Directive – Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment amended by Directive 2014/52/EU
- SEA Directive – Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment
- EU Water Framework Directive²⁶ transposed into Irish Law in multiple SI
- EU Floods Directive²⁸ 2007/60/EC

The key consideration in relation to the enforcement and application of the legislative frameworks is that there is no contradictory requirements between various articles. From a farming point of view, the need to meet the requirements of some articles directly imposes differences from the ambitions and requirements of other articles. These can be found in relation to planning of development works or in relation to site-specific work with regard to forestry and associated works. The establishment of a common charter of understanding regarding the relationship between these different articles, would be a beneficial development for the practical enforcement of the regulations but also ensuring cross-sectorial implementation of a common set of needs and objectives.

Macra na Feirme has three key observations in relation to the future of biodiversity in Ireland with regard to this process,

1. The absence of an updated National Biodiversity Plan with an absence of a public consultation on the draft plan to date,
2. The lack of time for the citizen's assembly to consider the Draft National Biodiversity Plan prior to the final report being made,
3. To date the limited direct engagement with Land Owners and farmers on the next National Biodiversity Plan and how any planned changes will impact farmers and their livelihood.

A summary document published to coincide with the Biodiversity Conference in June outlined two key stakeholder groups along with the general public,

1. Core Group: This group include NPWS NBAP Steering Committee, the Biodiversity Working Group, the National Biodiversity Forum, and the Business for Biodiversity Platform Advisory Group.
2. Additional Stakeholder: This broader group comprises some of the bodies and organisations that that are likely to be impacted by the recommendations of the NBAP or will be involved in its implementation, such as Government departments, public bodies, environmental NGOs, and relevant industry groups.

With specific regard to direct engagement on the topic of biodiversity and the development of the future plans Macra na Feirme has not been directly involved. From the plan 2017-2021 it identified greater stakeholder engagement as a need to form a better understanding and ownership of the plan. It would be presumed by Macra na Feirme given that farmland accounts for approximately 60% of the total area in Ireland that young farmers would be significant stakeholders.

From the limited information available Macra na Feirme can ascertain that the future National Biodiversity Plan will focus on 6 key objectives,

1. Foster a Whole of Government, Whole of Society Approach to Biodiversity
2. Meet Urgent Conservation and Restoration Needs
3. Recognise Nature's Contribution to People
4. Embed biodiversity at the heart of climate action
5. Enhance the Evidence Base for Action on Biodiversity
6. Strengthen Ireland's Contribution to International Biodiversity Initiatives

Issues have arisen in the past with regard to land designation where farmers have felt left outside the process when it came to designation and the pathway to designation. This relevance relates back to the Department in charge of both designation of land and the development of the National Biodiversity Plan. In meetings earlier this year the Farming Organisations outlined these concerns that farmers have in relation to designation and its process. It appears given the involvement of Macra na Feirme on the Draft National Biodiversity plan to date that changes have not been made or lessons learnt.

An omission from the six key objectives above is the involvement of farmers and farm advisory services in ensuring engagement at the outset but also ensuring adoption of new practices on farm given the important role agriculture can play in protecting and improving biodiversity. Significant

challenges remain with the process to ensuring cooperation and engagement from farmers but crucially from the future farmers.

Our Understanding

The term 'biodiversity' is understood to mean the variety of all living things. It is the measure of variation at species and ecosystem level and of the genetic diversity within species and populations of animals and plants.

Programmes and initiatives such as All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, Protecting Farmland Pollinators and the Festival of Farmland Biodiversity play an important role in raising awareness but also providing financial funding to support positive actions for on farm biodiversity. Under the next CAP new measures contained in Eco-Schemes and also in the new agri environmental scheme ACRES will all aid in supporting actions that protect and restore biodiversity on farm.

Young farmers are acutely aware of the need for the protection of on farm biodiversity and the case studies outlined below will demonstrate the commitment. However as with the many other policy areas not enough is being done to specifically support young farmers in adopting new practices but also in ensuring that enough young people are entering the farming sector. Currently approximately only 6% of the active farming population are under the age of 35, if we are serious about driving serious change in the on-farm practice then we must firstly support young people to enter the sector and sustain a living.

Biodiversity plays a hugely important role in everyday farming life. Irish farmland is characterised by having a good diversity of habitats such as hedgerows, field margins, ponds and streams, native woodland, bogs and species-rich meadows and pastures. Irish biodiversity therefore depends on farmland habitats. The most common farmland habitats are hedgerows with other important farmland habitats including, native woodland, bogs and species rich grassland. Over the course of the latest CAP strategy development Macra na Feirme consistently called for a national hedgerow management scheme which would ensure hedgerows were grown and managed to provide the best habitat for various species. The details surrounding this scheme can be seen on the Macra website or in our numerous submissions to the CAP Consultative Committee. This information is supported by Teagasc surrounding hedgerow management. The most important habitats are designated as protected areas and cover over ten per cent of the country.

In the area of research it is also critical to recognise and support the ongoing work in relation to on farm biodiversity. Currently Teagasc are researching the following areas around farmland biodiversity and ecological resources,

- Improving the environmental effectiveness and economic efficiency of management plans for High Nature Value farming systems
- Improving the environmental effectiveness and economic efficiency of wildlife measures for intensively managed farming systems
- Development and application of farm-scale metrics of sustainability that include farmland wildlife, and can improve labelling and marketing of Irish food
- Development and application of methods to better investigate the benefit of biodiversity to agro-ecosystem services, including biomass yield, reduced weed invasion, increased nutrient efficiency, biological control and reduced greenhouse gases in agricultural grasslands.
- Support for policymakers to successfully implement policies that have biodiversity objectives. This also includes activities of the Teagasc Working Group on Biodiversity.

A holistic approach is required for solution design which includes important stakeholders from the outset but also solutions and change in practices that are favourable to biodiversity but also ensuring that an economic future can be attained from farming. Farmers and their advisors are constantly learning and adopting to changes in policies and consumer demands.

Encouraging biodiversity on Irish farms: The needs of young farmers

The farming landscape of Ireland is a diverse space with features and habitats that support native flora and fauna. Previous studies of Irish farmland habitats that focused mainly on grassland farms across a range farming intensities reported average semi-natural habitat percentages of 14.3%, 13%, 15.2% and almost 10% (Sheridan et al., (2011), (2017), and Sullivan et al. (2011) and Larkin et al. (2019), respectively). Best biodiversity management practices can lead to an increase in the biodiversity value and quality of these habitats and due to the interconnectedness of our ecosystems these practices benefit overall environmental sustainability. Young Irish farmers play an important role in the protection, management and improvement of biodiversity on-farm and in overcoming the biodiversity challenge faced across the country. The collective efforts of farmers must be recognised and further encouraged to ensure that progress towards an improved biodiversity status.

A phrase that many farmers are familiar with is “you can’t manage what you don’t measure” and this sentiment is true also of farmland biodiversity. Although, farmers work alongside nature on a daily basis there is a need amongst this community for a meaningful baseline to be established on both the quantity and quality of habitats and their associated species from which improvement, based on clear, achievable guidelines, can be made. Currently, there is a lack of accessible information and advice available to farmers around the status of biodiversity on their individual farms, the types of habitats that co-exist with agricultural production, the best management practices required around these and the ecosystem services that they support.

With this in mind the following resources and actions are required to support young farmers across the country in fulfilling their role in the addressing the issue of biodiversity loss:

1. Establishment of a comprehensive quality and quantity baseline for all farms through ecological studies as well as an assessments of management practices and the development of a farm specific report outlining these baseline findings.
2. Recognition and reward for the existing habitats and positive actions that are already in place on farms, as identified through the suggested baseline establishment. In addition, recognition of the requirement for active management of habitats to maintain and enhance the ecological quality of existing habitats is required. Therefore, a results based payment approach that supports farmers is important.
3. Development of farm specific, biodiversity management plans that firstly focus on the maintenance and enhancement of existing farmland habitats and improvement of biodiversity management practices, followed by the identification of suitable locations for the creation of new features where there is a lack of existing habitats is required to guide baseline improvements. Integration of this biodiversity plan as an aspect of overall farm management, decision-making and planning is key in recognition of the interconnectedness of ecosystems and agricultural production and the role that biodiversity protection plays of achieving sustainability on Irish farms.
4. Collaboration and cooperation among all stakeholders is essential. Personnel who are knowledgeable in the areas of biodiversity, ecology, and countryside management, and who

also have understanding and knowledge in the area of agricultural production and the skills to facilitate knowledge exchange and advise on the topic of improving biodiversity status must be available to positively engage with farmers.

The Importance of Understanding the Sector

A critical part of understanding the barriers to change on farms across Ireland is the need to identify what the barriers are the change and adoption. There are a number of key issues that are interrelated,

1. The economic sustainability of the entire Agricultural Sector

Given that Teagasc national farm survey data from 2021 highlight that 60% of suckler enterprises earned less than €10,000 and just 1% of cattle rearing farms earned over €50,000. There is also a need to highlight that 44% of these farmers are working off farm to support their families. In total 28% of farms had an income of €5,000 or less, 29% earned between €20,000 to €50,000 and 6% had an overcome over €50,000.

2. The lack of generational renewal

As mentioned previously there is approximately 6% of the active farming population under 35 years of age. There are more farmers over 75 than there are under 35. With changes coming to the entire food production system ensuring young well educated people are entering the sector to drive change will be the determinant of success. Macra na Feirme has asked that all policies developed in relation to agriculture/farmland/habitats and the future of rural areas be impact assessed to determine the affect they will have on young people in those areas and ensuring that young people are attracted into these areas for long term sustainability.

3. Scapegoating of older generations

Part of Macra na Feirme's work has involved consulting with farmers of all ages around mental health and the causes of stress on their own personal mental wellbeing. A consistent issue that has been raised is the issue of negative pressures from the media and within policy development. This is casing untold stress and worry for farmers. It must be remembered that farmers who are farming for 20-40 years have grown up in a policy context completely different to the one that exists today.

GrassRoots

Macra Na Feirme has established a new environment ambassador programme called GrassRoots with the aim of leading by example in reducing emissions, improving water quality and biodiversity while also maintaining profitable and productive enterprises. We see ourselves as custodians of the land and view the climate challenge as an opportunity to protect and enhance the environment around us while also ensuring a viable livelihood for ourselves and future generations. Macra proposes that the GrassRoots programme are supported by the Department of Agriculture through fully funded Ecological visits to each of the members farms whereby the ambassadors will receive a report which will give an indication of the Biodiversity that already exists on these farms while also identifying areas for improvement and the potential to create new habitats that will have the most benefit for the natural flora and fauna that exist in that area. It is envisaged that it would cost in the region of €1500 per farm report which would cost €15 000 in total.

Macra's young farmers want to lead by example and embrace the challenges we are facing in relation to Biodiversity loss throughout the country. We are motivated to make a real difference but need support in order to make the required changes. The desired goal if the request for support is successful and the Ecological surveys are carried out is that the ambassadors would be in a position



to share the acquired knowledge with all young farmers in the organisation which would potentially have a huge impact nationally. The ambassadors are also opening up their farms not only to the wider farming community in the future but also to the public so we believe that the programme will have a massively positive impact inside and outside the industry if the necessary support is afforded to the group.

Case Study/Example 1: Dairy Farm, Co. Waterford

Shane Fitzgerald is a young, third generation of dairy farmer milking 210 cows alongside his family in Portlaw, Co. Waterford. Shane is an active member of Macra and one of our GrassRoots Environmental Ambassadors. He is also a Teagasc-Glanbia Signpost Future Farmer and through this has been involved in a biodiversity communication focused study conducted by Aoife Leader, Teagasc Walsh Scholar/UCD Agricultural Innovation and Support programme PhD student and fellow GrassRoots ambassador. He has a passion for promoting farm sustainability, including the protection of biodiversity. Here he discusses the importance of biodiversity, biodiversity planning as part of the whole farm plan and the actions him and his family take to allow space for nature on their 90-hectare farm.

I have been involved in co-creating a biodiversity management map for my farm as part of my involvement in a biodiversity communication study and based on the criteria set in that study we found that over 18% of my farm is made up of areas that lend themselves to biodiversity. I have also experienced first-hand the benefits that having a baseline has had, not only because I have been able to identify areas that need to be improved but it also made me more aware of the positive practices that were already in place on my farm. Our hedgerows and grassy banks, watercourses and field margins are networks for nature that which provide nesting sites and song posts for birds, cover for small mammals, and space for native plants to grow. The extent of these linear features on my farm contributes to a low average field size of 4.9ha which is a positive indicator of the extent of wildlife corridors on my farm. We also have an area of mixed woodland trees and a grassy low-input pasture which are spaces on the farm that support a range of insects, birds, mammals, plants and trees. Even the farmyard and our ryegrass fields play a role in supporting biodiversity, in particular birdlife with a flock of Whooper Swans arriving each winter to feed on our green pastures. These large, migratory birds are identified on the amber list for birds of conservation concern in Ireland. However, the 8th International Swan Census (2020) found that Whooper Swan numbers in Ireland had increased by 27% and this is due in part to the farmers like me who provide these majestic birds with a crucial feeding habitat. By identifying these areas I have been better able to plan for my farm with biodiversity in mind and apply best management practices around my farmland habitats. Improving the value of biodiversity on our farm is important to us, not only does it benefit our native wildlife but also supports a whole host of ecosystem services which in turn support our farming system.

When I think about improving biodiversity, I always start with the habitats that are already in place on the farm and how these can be maintained and enhanced to increase their value for biodiversity. It is only after this that I consider creating new habitats where suitable. When it comes to hedgerow management, we cut our hedges in rotation and try to encourage good height and density to ensure that hedge-nesting birds have enough cover above and below their nests. We also retain thorn trees, like whitethorns and blackthorns, to grow and mature along the hedges to provide food for the pollinators and the birds throughout the year. All watercourses are fenced off with 1.5m-wide margins and animals are not permitted to drink directly from any watercourse allowing vegetation to grow along the bank and prevent damage and pollution to the waterbed, protecting the instream biodiversity habitat in addition to water quality protection. We do not spray along farm roadways which allows natural native wildflowers to flower and we also avoid spraying and cultivating within



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in field margins when reseeded. The low input pasture is managed with reduced fertiliser input, no pesticide use and no cultivation and instead is maintained with light grazing. These practices encourage the pasture to become more diverse and support a great variety of wildlife. Actions for biodiversity have also been taken around the farmyard including the creation of a south easterly facing bee scrape on an existing earth bank that offers shelter for nesting solitary bees. This year we created 4m wide fenced field margins which are fantastic grassy habitats and have further increased the space for nature on the farm. I plan to continue to maintain, enhance and create space for biodiversity on my farm throughout my farming career. In the future I hope to plant a grove of native woodland trees while also continuing to enhance the existing features on the farm. I have been sharing my biodiversity story through social media as well as through a podcast and webinar, articles and videos for a number of years now and I plan to continue to demonstrate the simple, effective practices in place on my farm with other members of Macra, the farming community and the wider public into the future.

Case Study/Example 2: Dairy farm, Co. Clare

Liam Hanrahan is a young dairy and beef farmer on the west coast of Co. Clare farming in a family run partnership. Liam is also an active member of Macra and one of our GrassRoots Environmental Ambassadors. Liam completed the Clare Local Development Company (CLDC) Farm Biodiversity Training Project in 2021 and has a keen interest in enhancing farmland biodiversity, protecting the environment and working in conjunction with nature. Here he discusses some of the management practices implemented on his farm.

High quality field boundaries are very important on our farm. They serve the purpose of a stock proof fence and also provide connectivity between a range of habitats that are present on the farm including habitats for a wide range of plant species, insects, small mammals and birds. These field boundaries are achieved by a rotational hedgerow cutting management process and by allowing tall trees to develop along hedgerows. The farm is laid out in many small fields typically less than 3 hectares in size and divided by hedges, ditches and minor watercourses, which means it is essential to adapt field management practices to maintain these boundaries. In the case of fertiliser or spray applications field margins must be maintained to capture any excess nutrients and improve nitrogen use efficiency. Chemical fertilisers are applied to productive grasslands in suitable conditions based on soil test results, with all slurry applied using low emission slurry spreading equipment. The land is well fenced to prevent damage to field boundaries by livestock or livestock entering watercourses, with the land serviced with a suitable water system to supply livestock with adequate water supplies, also maintaining appropriate distances from water courses. Livestock are housed during the winter to prevent damage to grassland and to allow grassland to recover for the following grazing season and the development of new species during this period. A proportion of the farm is managed under a low input pasture regime with minimal fertiliser applications with these fields typically used for making hay if the weather allows in late summer. In the winter months the Tullaher flock of geese and swans resided at a local lake and peatland area, accessing local farmer's lands for grazing during the day time. There are also owls present on a quiet part of the farm where bird boxes were installed a number of years ago, which are a rather pleasant addition to the farm.

Case Study/Example 3: Dairy Farm Co. Cork

Nicole Keohane is a 24-year-old dairy farmer / PhD student. She Farms alongside her grandparents John and Anne Keohane in Innishannon, Co. Cork. Nicole is one of Macra's newest members and a



firm advocate for all things Irish dairy. She is an ambassador for our grassroots environmental programme. Nicole's PhD is investigating novel approaches to reducing antibiotic usage on farm which plays a significant role in Ireland's stride towards sustainable farming.

For generations we have been custodians of the land. We can produce food in parallel with preserving existing habitats. We are farming alongside nature. I farm alongside my grandparents, who are a wealth of knowledge. It was from them I fostered my love for both farming and our surrounding environment. We are continuously striving to better ourselves and our understanding of what we can do to maintain these habitats and allow all wildlife to flourish on our farm. Hedgerows are a central hub for these creatures and surround the entire boundary of the farm. Our hedgerows are currently brimming with blackberries (a very tasty snack for all our little neighbours) and alive with numerous flowering plants. We rotationally manage the hedges so not to disturb the habitats too much, but also to ensure that there is visibility for all road users. Water management has always been a priority on our farm. All water courses are fenced off at 1.5 metres from livestock. This prevents cattle drinking from the waterway and the possibility of contamination. We have also been harvesting rainwater for nearly a decade now. We have all of the infrastructure in place to catch every last drop of this precious resource from the rooftops of our sheds and milking parlour. In the past two years we have reduced our nitrogen output by nearly 10%. A small step in a big journey to reduce our reliance on chemical fertilisers. As a generation of young farmers there is a lot we have done (with the support of our fathers, mothers, grandfathers, and grandmothers) to improve the biodiversity and water quality on our farms. And as a generation of young farmers there is a lot more we can do. We have the passion, the understanding and the absolute love for this cause.

Case Study/Example 4: Dairy and Beef Farm, Co. Cork

Helena Coughlan is dairy and beef farming in North Cork with her parents Ann and John. She is milking 130 cows and finishes the calves to beef. Some barley is grown on farm for winter feeding. I am the seventh generation to farm in Ballyellis and this brings with it the knowledge that our biodiversity, habitats and wildlife are the result of many generations care and planning. The aim is to not only continue this work but to improve on it.

We are lucky enough to have very well established and maintained hedgerows throughout the home farm and out blocks. These hedgerows include Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Crabapple, Ash, and many other varieties of trees and bushes. These hedgerows not only provide shade for stock, but are an invaluable asset to the wildlife and biodiversity present. There are many standalone trees, some over 150 years old and we have planted more in the last 20 years to maintain these trees for future generations. As to wildlife, we have a pair of buzzards on the home farm, a number of hares on the out-blocks, breeding pheasants and we have seen hawks and other birds of prey nearby. The aged tree cover, especially near a shared lake is especially important as a habitat for many birds and other animals. This lake and the river Awbeg are all fenced to ensure there is no stock encroachment, fertiliser and slurry has an exclusion zone to avoid run-off and we are very conscious of avoiding heavy rainfall when spreading. The river and lake have long been a consideration when making long term decisions and preservation of these habitats is very important. The presence of nesting swans, ducks and smaller water fowl prove that we have done a good job maintaining their natural habitat. When it comes to our daily farming practices we are believers in keeping up with scientific developments that allow us to not only farm more efficiently, but to be conscious of our wider impact. To that end, we have used Protected Urea throughout the farm over the last five years. We



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have also used Low-Emission Slurry Spreading (dribble bar) for all of our slurry application over the last four years. Clover has been added to all grass seed mixes for many years, and we have over-sown clover into older pastures. Given the release of some promising research, we have incorporated “slurry-bugs” into the slurry tanks to improve nitrogen utilisation when spread. We have identified areas of improvement on farm, such as wider field margins, the planting of more trees and the revitalisation of aged hedgerows. We will be undertaking these improvements in a phased basis over the coming years

Case Study 5: Engaging with farmers on biodiversity management

Aoife Leader is a GrassRoots ambassador who is also currently a Teagasc Walsh Scholar and UCD Agriculture Innovation and Support Programme PhD student base in Kilkenny. Throughout her studies Aoife has been working towards developing a communication strategy for biodiversity management with dairy farmers. Here Aoife shares some of the work she has carried out over the course of her studies and also the practices in place on her family farm.

My background is firmly rooted in agriculture and in particular the dairy sector, coming from a dairy farm in North Cork. This has bestowed me with a passion for safe-guarding the sustainability of Irish agriculture. In recognition of the important role played by biodiversity in agricultural sustainability my PhD study to date has involved working in collaboration with the Teagasc Glanbia Signpost Future Farmers, dairy discussion group members, advisors and other stakeholders to design and implement a strategy that supports communication on biodiversity management in a manner that takes a holistic view on biodiversity and integrates it into existing communication channels and whole farm considerations. As a part of these studies I have also been involved in the production of videos, articles, podcasts, and webinars and on-farm events highlighting various aspects of farmland biodiversity management. In my experience farmers are willing to engage on the topic of biodiversity improvement and are interested in find out about the measures they can take to enhance biodiversity on their farms.

In my spare time I also combine my love for agriculture and nature. I am involved in the running of our family farm where we strive to maintain the existing habitats, such as the escaped hedges, woodland areas, and watercourses which have been in place for generations on our farm, to a high quality for biodiversity. In 2017, we planted a 2ha woodland area of mixed trees species and in more recent years have identified and fenced off wet grassland corners which receive no fertiliser input and are lightly grazed in the Autumn, and have installed a barn owl box.

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