



Irish NATIONAL CONFERENCE



Mary Butler TD, Minister for Mental Health & Older People visited Killarney on **May 24th** to attend a **National Social Farming event** being hosted **by SKDP** at the **dairy farm of John and Catherine Fleming** at Muckross, Killarney, Co Kerry. Clare Gormley (Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine also attended. This event was part of **ongoing work of the FarmElder, an Erasmus+ research project**, of which **SKDP** is one of the Irish partners alongside **TUS** (Technological University of the Shannon).

Elaine Cleary TUS (Technological University of the Shannon) addressed the gathering, outlining the research and practical work of FarmElder, the **development of training modules and the outputs from the project**.

Host farmers shared their stories and explained how many older farmers are **giving their time every week to help people** with disabilities. Participants spoke about their experience of social farming. John Fleming led a farm walk and Tim Fleming gave a talk on the history of the farm.

Lunch was served on the farm allowing for **host farmers, participants, family members, service providers, SKDP Staff and guests, including members of the local Active Retired group**, the opportunity to discuss the project and share experiences. All participants enjoyed the fine weather and the **very positive atmosphere**, with the Flemings' Farm providing the perfect setting for the event.



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Minister Butler commented: *"I am really pleased to visit the Flemings' farm here in Muckross who have been part of Kerry Social Farming since 2022. Additional social inclusion opportunities, especially for older people, helps combat loneliness and isolation as well as supporting positive wellbeing. I would like to thank all who support and are involved in this fantastic initiative."*

A number of agencies working with older people across Kerry were in attendance, including SKDP RSS & Tus supervisors, providing information on the range of **services and opportunities available for older people**. Over 100 people attended in the course of the day, including representatives from all other social farming projects funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine, namely Rachel Budd (IRD Duhallow), Debbie Kelleher (Field of Dreams /Down Syndrome Cork) and Eadaoin O'Connell (West Limerick Resources/ Development Officer Social Farming Ireland).

The event was covered in **local media** including the Kerryman, Kerrys Eye newspapers and Killarney **Outlook paper**, as well as **nationally on Raidió na Gaeltachta**.

Links to coverage are listed here.

The Kerryman (online)

<https://www.independent.ie/regionals/kerry/south-kerry-news/minister-visits-kerry-farm-to-learn-about-expansion-of-social-farming-initiative-to-older-people/a2060>

Kerry's Eye

[Farming \(kerryseye.com\)](https://www.kerryseye.com)

Raidió na Gaeltachta

https://www.rte.ie/radio1/podcast/podcast_ansaolodheas.xml

Killarney Outlook

<https://killarneyoutlook.com/images/pdfs/KO31052024.pdf>



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