







SECAD Partnership CLG

• Established in 1995

 Local Development Company located in Midleton, Co. Cork

 Providing a range of rural development, social inclusion & environmental supports to motivate and empower local communities to create a more vibrant, sustainable and inclusive society

- Delivered through variety of funded programmes e.g. LEADER, SICAP, PEIL, Tus, Community Benefit Funds
- Local, Regional, National & European Partnerships





#### Working with the Farming Community



Sustainable Rural Development strongly rooted in local agriculture sector



LEADER Rural Development Programme & Agri-Diversification



Rural Social Scheme



**Building Partnerships & Collaborations** 

## Irish Farming Context

- Agri-food sector is Ireland's oldest and largest indigenous exporting sector. In
   2020, the sector accounted for over 6% of GNI and 9% of exports in value terms.
- Majority of farms in Ireland managed through a Family Farm structure (99%+)
- 5 main farming systems are: Cattle (Rearing & Other), Dairy, Sheep, Tillage and Mixed Livestock
- 41% of Irish farms are considered economically 'sustainable', with farm income, or additional off-farm income\*
- 31% of Irish farms are 'vulnerable', meaning their farm is not viable and neither farmer nor spouse has an off-farm job\*
- Only 1.3% farm holdings are organic in Ireland
- Rural youth out-migration and the ageing farmer profile are key issues facing rural areas. Young farmers make up only 6.9% of the farming population in Ireland\*\*.

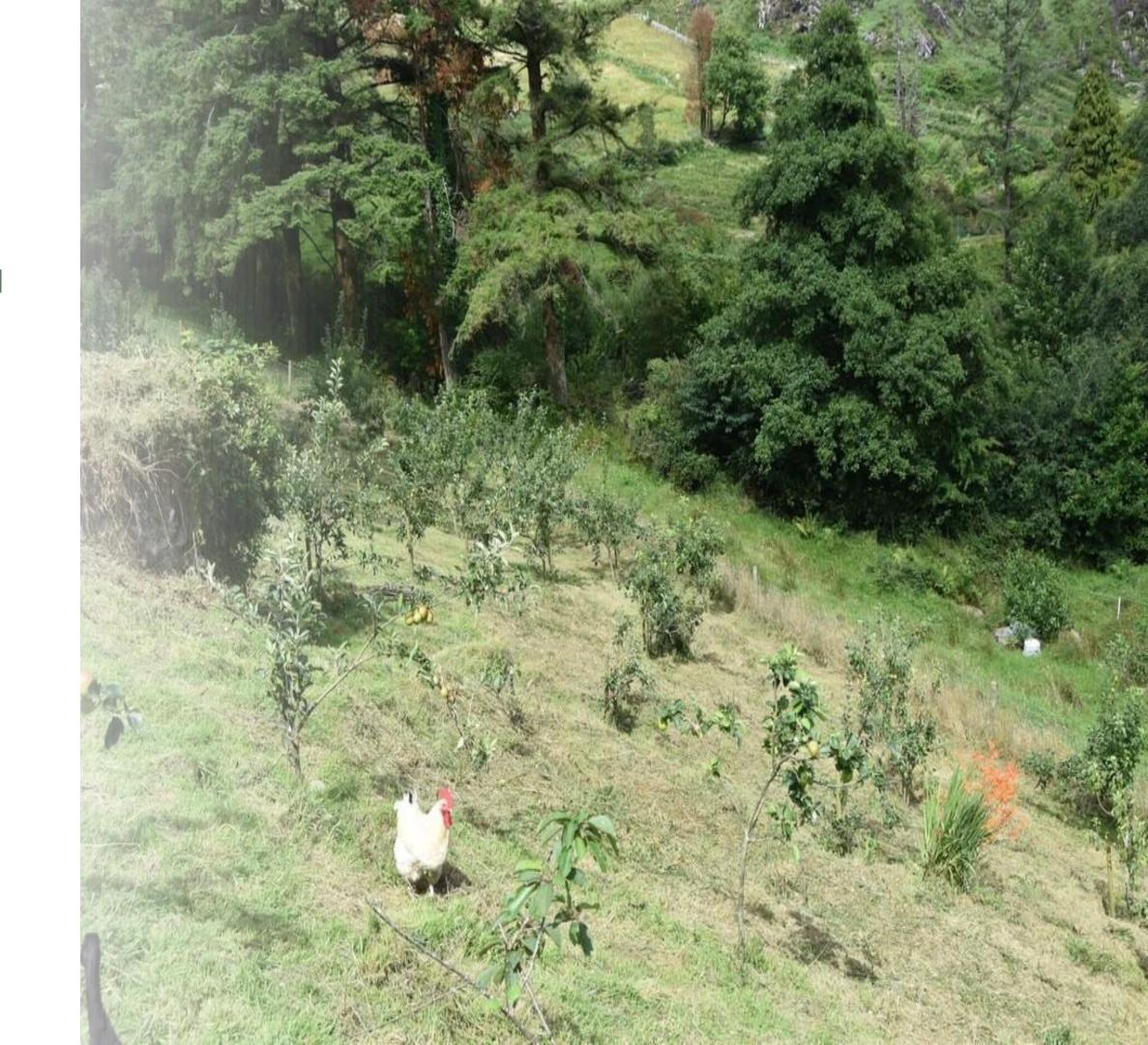






### RA in Ireland

- Growing sector, but still relatively small
- Self-taught
- Refined through trial-and-error
- Small steps, slow transition 'Rome wasn't built in a day'
- Great sense of community amongst those practicing a number of very proactive groups and networks
- Increasing policy focus, but limited Government recognition and lack of funding



## Wirish Case Studies

Diverse Range of Farms interviewed.

#### Farmers:

- Laura Jane Foley & Daniel Lyons, Wild Atlantic Hemp,
   County Clare [Hemp].
- Andrew Bergin, County Kildare [Arable].
- Steve & Claire Collins, **DerryDuff Farm**, County Cork [Berry Farm & Mixed Livestock].
- John McHugh, Clondarrig Farm, County Laois [Dairy, Beef & Community Allotments].
- Paul Moore, County Cork [Arable]
- Mervyn & Robert Auchmuty, County Roscommon
   [Arable]
- Fergal & Sally, Moyhill Farm, County Clare [Market
   Farm & Mixed Livestock]





### Derry Duff Farm

#### Steve & Claire Collins | Co. Cork Berry Production & Mixed Livestock

- 54 hectare farm, West Cork.
- Attained organic status in 2010.
- No Chemical Inputs.
- Mountainous, rugged landscape.
- Main Crops: Blueberries & Aronia Berries.
- Main Product: Health food drinks & powders.











#### Derry Duff Farm

# Steve & Claire Collins | Co. Cork Berry Production & Mixed Livestock

- Clover and herbs mixed into grassland.
- Manual weeding.
- Native trees, Shrubs & Ponds.
- Integrating Cattle & Chickens with the land.
- Tree nursery and agroforestry.



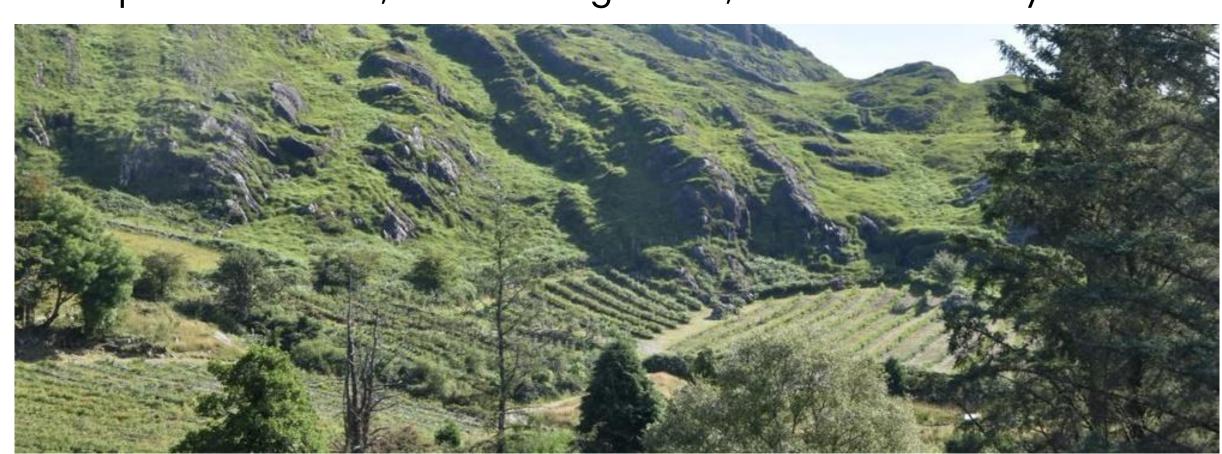




#### Derry Duff Farm

# Steve & Claire Collins | Co. Cork Berry Production & Mixed Livestock

- Apple Orchard.
- Farming in harmony with the natural landscape.
- Trial & Error, "common sense".
- Improved income, land management, soil & biodiversity.





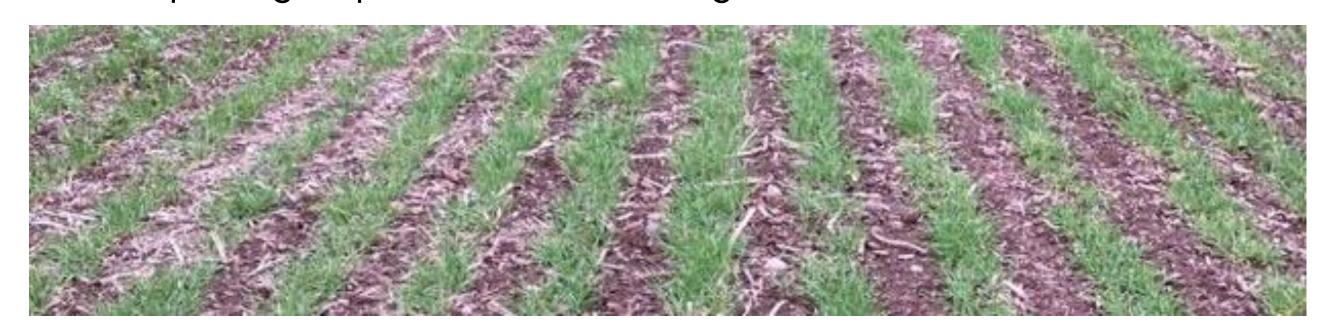




#### Paul Moore

## Arable (tillage) Farmer Co. Cork

- 56 hectare tillage farm.
- Malting Barley, Beans and Oilseed Rape, with a small herd of cattle
- Began experimenting with RA in 2017.
- About one quarter of Paul's land is farmed regeneratively, with the hope to transition more.
- Strip tilling: improved water drainage & soil health.







#### Paul Moore

## Arable (tillage) Farmer Co. Cork

- Wildlife Field Margins.
- Beetle Banks amongst tillage fields.
- Promoting helpful insects that attack aphids:
   Ladybirds and certain beetles.
- Use of Cover crops.
- Reduced workload and input costs. Increased biodiversity.







## W BASE Ireland

#### Rob Coleman, Cork Farmer and BASE member

- BASE Ireland an Irish Farmer-led group where farmers share their RA experiences, ideas, and lessons of advice to other farmers trying out the alternative farming methods
- 100+ members allows farmers to educate each other, chat online, and host knowledge sharing workshops
- Rob & his father Billy run a mixed tillage and stock farm in North Cork, with tillage being the main commercial aspect of the farming system



Rob Coleman speaking at Irish National REGINA Workshop, April 2024









## Challenges

- Farm viability may be affecting perceived ability to engage in more sustainable and emissions mitigation practices
- Suspicion regarding potential results risk & lack of information – 'it has to pay the bills!'
- While some schemes (e.g. organic) exist, there is limited economic motivation due to the lack of RA incentives
- Practices are contextual to their own land, no 'one size fits all' approach
- Concern potential RA policy won't be 'bottom up' / farmer-led, so may be too regulated/ restrictive which is counter intuitive
- Not easy to achieve a good premium price due to limited consumer awareness of RA

## \*\*\*

#### Irish Consumer Prioritisation Graphs\*





- Work to be done with Irish consumers!
- Sustainability overall has a relatively modest influence on Irish shopper's choices right now when compared to global norms
- 3 in 4 saying they would like to buy more sustainable options, but they are often too expensive.

<sup>\*</sup> Bord Bia, Irish Food Board, Global Insights, 2021

## Opportunities

- Appetite to learn and 'do the right thing'
- Peer support, community and knowledge sharing BASE, National Organic
   Training Skillnet (NOTS), Farming for Nature
- Sharing inspiring and hopeful messages great passion & commitment
- Messaging: opportunity to build resilience and farm sustainability over time
- Reducing the risks for farmers in their 'trial-and-error' conversion processes
   more practical research and funding
- Attracting young farmers back to rural areas
- Engaging with communities and consumers, valuing the processes, encouraging dialogue and social exchange









# RA as an Innovation - Food for Thought

- 'the implementation of an idea, service, process, procedure, structure, system, or product that is new to the prevailing practice' (Jaskyte, 2018)
- Innovation requires risk tolerance
- Policy must support experimentation, flexibility and learning
- Nurture bottom-up experimentation that empowers farmers to find what works on their farm
- Promote cross-learning and knowledge sharing that is required to support innovation



#### **Conclusions**

Regenerative Agriculture in Ireland

- RA in Ireland is being led by a community of self-driven farmers
- 2 Mantra of 'trial and error'
- 3 Peer-to-peer learning is key

Empowering - RA encourages

farmers to feel like they are part

of the solution



#### Thank you!

#### And check out the SECAD Website...

Regenerative Agriculture Blogs & other resources

www.secad.ie







