WORKING TOGETHER FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

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The EFCF is a member of the European Environmental Bureau (EEB)
**ECF events postponed due to Covid-19**

The 2020 AGM has been postponed till 9 September as video conference. The 2020 EFCF conference and the Youth Exchange have been postponed till 2021. The Erasmus Plus application for the Youth Exchange had already been granted for 2020 and fortunately can still be used for 2021. The 2021 AGM of the EFCF will be held in Belgium from 9 – 11 April 2021. Please keep an eye on [https://cityfarms.org/events](https://cityfarms.org/events) for updates.

**City farms and corona**

Although city farms have been closed for months because of the pandemic Covid-19, many farm projects managed to stay in touch with their visitors and found interesting ways to do so. There were virtual tours and live-stream happenings. Webcams were especially exiting in springtime and visitors were also asked to think of names for the new arrivals. There were lots of suggestions for activities to do at home such as sowing insect-friendly plants, ‘bug hunting’ in your own garden and designing your own city farm at home. Some farms rented out small pets to prevent loneliness and many even succeeded to keep the farm shop going outside the farm, through a counter or on the internet. There were many successful calls and ways for financial support, donations and also for sponsorships for animals. The EFCF has shared as many Facebook messages from city farms all over the world as possible. But ....... we have all been longing to go back to the real thing: a city farm open to visitors!

**Collingwood Children’s Farm also closed due to Corona**

*by Andrew Phillips*

Like city farms across the world, the Collingwood Children’s Farm [https://www.farm.org.au/](https://www.farm.org.au/) has been closed due to official Federal and State Coronavirus mitigation regulations. However with some wages support from the Federal Government (called the JobKeeper scheme in Australia), the closure is being used for a skeleton staff to complete a series of important upgrades to infrastructure, which should benefit visitors when the Farm reopens. The CCF has also joined an alliance of 20 Melbourne not-for-profit organisations seeking to increase food security by growing produce in the inner-city, which can hopefully support its reopening.
Italian farms create national city farm network

by Marta Lo Sicco of Educaterra

Educaterra was finally born! It’s initiated by four associations: “Amici dei Boschi” from Pavia, “Il Giardino di Giancarlo” from Ustica; “Valli Unite” from Costa Vescovato and “La Montanina” from Sezzadio.

We hope that many associations will join us to share our goals: reciprocal support and good practice exchange between members; common projects; improve our visibility.

We strongly believe in the reali- ties of city farms and in their mission: only by knowled- ge of our surroundings we can save old varieties and old breeds, and we’ll discover their value and commit to save them.

In Italy, there is a lot of interest in outdoor education, like kindergartens, but also associations of vegetable gardens for children and people with disabilities. Contact with nature has a strong influence in human’s quality of life. Our members do more of these kind of activities, each with their own characteristics: our territo- ries guide us in the creations of routes, workshops and activities.

We strongly believe in experience, first of all how “be in nature” and discover it by many languages and ways: care farms’ animals, growing vegetables, cooking, outdoor games, paint and create with natural elements.

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EFCF 30th Anniversary in 2020
Theme: Soil

Healthy soil is important. Home gardening, growing your own food, CSA and more food production systems need healthy soil. City farms offer a lot of educational programmes about soil and food. In most city farms visitors can actively participate and are encouraged to ‘dig in’.

Unfortunately the Covid19 virus prevented the AGM in Bruges, the Youth Exchange in Italy and the Annual Conference in Birmingham. Nevertheless we succee- ded in developing the fifth edition in the ‘Stuff you can do around …’ series: Stuff you can do around soil’ with many practical ideas.

Available on https://cityfarms.org/activities

The EFCF Birthday Calendar marks the 30th birthday of the EFCF and contains 30 years of good practice, examples, ideas and information around soil.

There will be a limited amount of hard copies available for our members and contacts. The calendar can also be downloaded from the EFCF website. There are two digital versions. One shows where to punch 3 holes to turn over the months and to hang it. Use small key- rings in the two outer holes. Use the middle hole to hang the calendar. The other one has room for a spiral. Best to print the calendar double-sided on 160 grs paper. Also nice to sell at the farm or to use as a promotional gift.
You will find the calendar under the 20th and 25th EFCF anniversary publications on the EFCF home page. [https://cityfarms.org](https://cityfarms.org). Both versions can also be found on [https://cityfarms.org/guidances/view/72](https://cityfarms.org/guidances/view/72).

### Soil your undies, a fun challenge to learn about your soil

**Source: Marion Soil & Water Conservation District, Oregon**

According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) a teaspoon of healthy soil contains more microbes than there are people on the planet. Healthy soils are critical to sustainable food production as well as enhanced biodiversity. The quick and dirty way to test the microbial activity in your soil is by burying organic matter (cotton undies, for example) and digging it back up after at least 60 days. The more the underwear is deteriorated, the healthier your soil.

Nationally, farmers soiled many pairs of Tighty Whities from coast-to-coast over the last year, under a program sponsored by the National Resource and Conservation Service (NRCS) of the USDA. Here in Marion County, NRCS has partnered with Marion Soil and Water Conservation District to carry out the project. Every pair was shredded, with virtually nothing left but the elastic bands.

How healthy is your soil? Soil your undies to find out! For more information visit the NRCS website [bit.ly/soilundies](http://bit.ly/soilundies) and get started.
The Gardeniser Hub application

The Gardeniser Hub application was submitted to the UK agency (Ecorys) on 21st of April by Social Farms and Gardens with input from the partners who are REPLAYNetwork from Italy, Pistes Solidaires in France and EFCF. A PDF of the application is available if anyone wants a copy but is quite large (over 200 pages long). The application will now be assessed in line with the process summarised in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide and they plan to notify us of the results of the assessment process by the end of August 2020.

More information: https://www.gardeniser.eu

St. Anne’s City Farm
Dublin, Ireland

by Ella & Lynn Spitzer Beirne, 11 years old

Ella and Lynn are twins and they do an afternoon shift with their mum on a Wednesday and Thursday.

St. Anne’s city farm www.stannescityfarm.ie is the first urban farm in Dublin. It is run by volunteers, the

volunteers have to look after all the animals and make sure that the stables are clean and most importantly make sure that they give the animals lots of love. All the animals in the farm were unwanted by their previous owners and brought to the farm which is their forever home. There are lots of animals on the farm such as Susie, the lovely donkey, Susie has travelled a lot before she came to the farm. Susie is from America where she was reared, then she got shipped to England where she lived for a while and then she moved to Ireland and from her previous owners in Ireland she moved to the farm where she is very happy.

We have lots of animals on the farm: 20 chickens, 3 goats, 2 pigs, 1 pony, 1 donkey, 1 sheep, 5 rabbits, 5 guinea pigs, 2 cats and 10 ducklings. The farm has been open to the public for one year and relies on donations from the public for food for the animals, plants to grow, straw, hay and other things for the animal’s beds. Me and Ella close up the farm every evening on Wednesday & Thursday. The farm means a lot to us because if we are ever sad or stressed the animals manage to make us feel happy again. We love going to the farm, there is so much to do, like feed the animals, bring the animals out grazing, water the plants and most importantly give the animals lots of love.

Me and Ella have been going to the farm for 2 years, the farm is a great thing to have because you spend time with lots of different animals and learn lots about animals and how to look after them properly. There is still lots of things to do on the farm even if you are not a volunteer such as drawing & painting classes for adults and children, herb classes for children & yoga classes for adults. And if you still want to get more involved with the farm you can volunteer on Saturdays.

Freckles is our only sheep on the farm. She loves children so much, Freckles is disabled but being disabled does not stop her from doing all the things she loves to do, like playing with Maggie May, our lovely goat. Freckles also likes to play with the chickens and most of the love playing with all the children on the farm. Freckles is just over a year old and she came to us when she was a lamb. Freckles has a wheelchair but the wheelchair is too small for Freckles so we will get it adjusted to her right size. Freckles loves going grazing. Grazing is one of her favourite things to do and Freckles loves it even more when her grazing buddy Susie comes with her.

Moses is our only pony on the farm. And he too travelled before he came to the farm. Moses came from Newbridge farm, another farm in Donabate. Moses is a cheeky pony but lovely. He also likes going out grazing. Maggie May, our lovely goat came to the farm with Moses. Maggie May is best friends with one of our other goats, Coco. Coco and Maggie May get along great, they both love beech tree leaves, as well as Twinkle, Cocos sister.
How COVID-19 is affecting the UK community farming and growing sector

by Social Farms & Gardens

The past few months have been extremely difficult for our members in the UK and for all those working in the sector. Since March, our teams have been supporting our membership across the UK. Innovation and adaption has been key and we have seen this take many forms, particularly across online platforms.

We conducted a large scale survey to assess how the pandemic was affecting our members, giving a national picture and allowing us to respond accordingly with support. In the UK we know that our members are:

- Growing easier to cultivate and less unusual plants
- Growing food for the community

Key issues:

- Major losses of income
- The fast-changing situation is hard to plan for and manage
- They are worried about volunteer and staff mental health and the lack of social interaction in their community

More can be seen in this infographic and on our website.

We used this survey data to set up a series of webinars from May to June, which provided direct advice and support on the issues raised by members. Examples of key topics ranged from ‘Adapting working practices for community farming and growing sector’, to ‘The post-COVID - 19 future for community farming and growing sector’, with a strong focus on funding topics such as ‘Finding and approaching funders’. We hope to run more after June, announcements of this will be on our website.

In the first few weeks of the pandemic, Social Farms & Gardens also set up a dedicated COVID -19 section on our website which contains all the most up to date advice, resources and information affecting community farming and growing. This provided our membership with critical advice during lockdown. It continues to be updated and remains a useful resource for any organisation working in the sector.

A call out to the Social Farms & Gardens UK wide membership was made to collect ideas and stories about how they were adapting and innovating. This was shared online, allowing others to get ideas and inspiration and learn from each other quickly. Innovations by members occurred rapidly and included everything from YouTube video tours of farm life and growing food, to live streaming events, online courses and supplying the community with free seeds and growing advice. The ideas are continuing to assist members across the UK to look at alternative ways of working, helping them to adapt and innovate which will be crucial for long term survival.

Social Farms & Gardens’ #GrowingTogether campaign has been gathering momentum and helping the general public grow food at home through videos, ideas and useful tips. The gardening boom in the UK during lockdown has provided an important opportunity for the sector to highlight the mental health benefits of green spaces and for us as a charity to support communities to use gardening and nature based activities as a way of connecting.

Our key services and existing projects have adapted quickly; new funding was secured to provide additional services such as supplying communities with growing kits in Wales. Teams in Northern Ireland have been providing a series of popular ‘Lockdown Gardening’ videos with over 9,000 views for a video on Hugelpots, Carrots, and Solar Gain. In Scotland demand for the advisory services grew rapidly and in England, the ‘Growing Care Farming’ project adapted its training, forums and events online to continue delivery.

In order to rapidly respond to the ever changing climate and tackle the most pressing concerns arising from this crisis, we will be continuing to survey and contact members, sharing best practice from around the UK.
We believe that being able to share ideas and support each other as a network will play a key role over the coming months and we will be encouraging further peer-to-peer support between members. 


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**Good news from Eyes on Animals**

by Lesley Moffat

There is good news! The Netherlands has followed the steps of several Federal States of Germany and taken the grand decision to immediately stop approving long transport journeys of live animals to countries outside the EU that would require a 24-hr rest break!

For years this has been discussed, negotiated, debated… it was often small organizations working in the field against the lobby groups trying to convince the authorities to take action… now finally some authorities in Europe have gotten the guts to put theory into action and really effectively apply the welfare law! In our eyes, they are setting history!

I cannot say how pleased we all are at Eyes on Animals. We have been active for over 10 years trailing trucks and investigating the export of animals from the EU to countries far outside the EU borders. Our main focus was Turkey where we conducted investigations every summer when temperatures ran up to 45 degrees. We sent all of our findings to the authorities and press, including photos of the very tiny and unhygienic stable on the Turkish side of the border, or the parking lots without even shade or water, where EU animal trucks were waiting all day and in most cases, for days in Ankara and Istanbul.

It was a long overdue decision, and now all the remaining EU member states need to do the same, especially ones that play big roles in export such as Denmark, Czech Republic and France. But the Dutch and some German officials have set the path now, shown it is possible to put your foot down against the large powerful live-export lobby groups.

The reason why they, after hard work, could justify and put such a grand decision into place is that there was enough proof that there was a complete absence of proper resting stations to unload the animals into in these countries.

In fact, most exporters and transporters were simply lying and cheating, claiming to the authorities that they were unloading their animals as legally required in faraway places in Russia and Turkey. But in truth they were leaving the animals on board because there was no infrastructure there. [www.eyesonanimals.com]

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**Clever ideas**

If you come across a clever idea or if you had a brilliant idea yourself, take a photograph and e-mail it to Hans-Jörg Lange [bdja@bdja.org](mailto:bdja@bdja.org) or to Pauline Wolters [pauline@cityfarms.org](mailto:pauline@cityfarms.org)

**Hedgehog feeder.** There is no such thing as a free lunch for (neighbours’) cats. The diameter of the pipe is 11 cm. Hedgehog Rescue Haarlem (NL)

**Edible wall** with herbs. Kinderboerderij- Hertenkamp De Houthoeve. (NL)