

EDUCATIONAL FARMS CONFERENCE 2023

Why educational farms are more vital than ever

Friday Saturday 30 June/1 July 2023

Conference Report

The conference highlighted the enormous benefits of educational farms and gave delegates new knowledge, the opportunity to share experiences, and to be inspired by their peers!

What follows is a snapshot of the coverage.

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Below is a summary of some of the comments received since the conference:

What 3 elements of the event were most useful or enjoyable for you?

- ... afternoon workshops, the chance to talk in a more relaxed manner ... and listening to variety of different ways young people have benefitted from access to farms
- Networking, Speakers/Keynote presentations, TED type talks
- Gaining Inspiration
- Casual talks with other delegates ... to openly talk about anything, with no set focus.
- Hearing about, and meeting, other school farm set ups/staffing/stock numbers/courses.
- Having time to discuss current working practices. Sharing good practice
- Sharing issues & potential solutions.
- Having time to socialise and network with people in similar positions/like-minded was extremely helpful.

Were there additional benefits for your organisation?

- Opportunity to showcase a bit of what we do
- Learnt so much from Shaping Behaviour. Sharing emails with other school farms to share resources is invaluable, and arranging exchange visits with similar settings

- Good forum to meet others of like mind and to identify opportunities for collaborative approaches going forward
- Awards help to keep the aim of the operation valid. Winning an award always great for PR
- CPD is in short supply for the field we work in
- Sharing best practice/new practise to feedback
- Gaining ideas for improving how our school farm can aid positive mental health and well being
- The health and safety side. Since attending, we've put together an action plan to further reinforce our biosecurity and improve our schools Animal Care course.

Given the limitations of available time, what should we have done better, or included?

- Talk lengths were good and not too long
- ... more people would attend if the fee was lower
- Nothing!
- Workshops could have been repeated or for 45 minutes so we could have gone to more than one/ ...nice to be able to do more than one workshop
- Include a 'funding' workshop
- A system to capture questions for speakers where there wasn't time for them to be heard
- Maybe a slightly shorter lunch break?
- It would perhaps be beneficial to track down a high-level speaker e.g. DfE/NFU.

What priorities would benefit you for the School Farms Network/Social Farms & Gardens to deliver?


- A carousel of open events at each establishment/visits to other school farms
- To increase engagement on our social media
- Health and safety in School Farms, Husbandry, Course standardization
- Resource sharing/dissemination of excellent practice, working together on standards and visions
- Sharing of evidence templates & actual evidence/discussion about impact.
- get regular newsletters restarted
- How to be more sustainable
- Biosecurity/identification of illness within large mammals etc

Maintaining opportunities to meet and share knowledge, experience and inspiration

A national conference is at present only possible to organise every two years. A number of people offered to host a day or half-day event at their farm to make it more possible for people to travel a shorter distance and allocate less time. SF&G/SFN will support these events and other hosts may wish to come forward and offer to arrange in their area. They could be a short CPD training session with tour of the facilities and opportunity to share ideas and experience, or longer whole day activities.

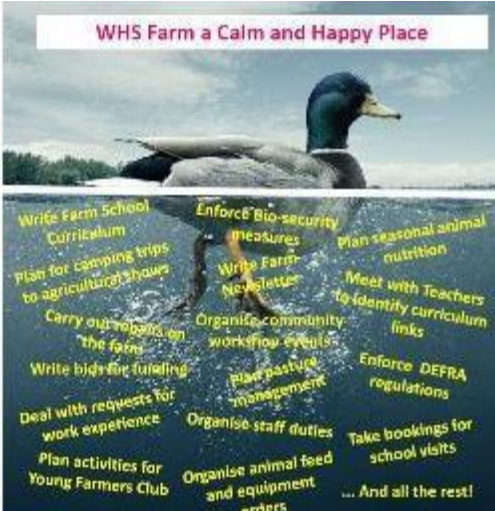
Presentations

The information, experience and ideas that were shared in the various presentations and workshop sessions was truly tremendous and many delegates said they wanted to hear sessions they couldn't attend; links to the recordings have been sent to all delegates. Most of the information is contained within the recordings so what follows are 'tasters' of the expertise shared during the conference.



If WHS Farm was an animal it would be a Duck

Calm on the surface but paddling at full speed underneath



WHS Farm a Calm and Happy Place

Write Farm School Curriculum
Plan for camping trips to agricultural shows
Carry out repairs on the farm
Write bids for funding
Deal with requests for work experience
Plan activities for Young Farmers Club

Enforce Bio-security measures
Write Farm Newsletter
Organise community workshop events
Plan pasture management
Organise staff duties
Organise animal feed and equipment orders

Plan seasonal animal nutrition
Meet with Teachers to identify curriculum links
Enforce DEFRA regulations
Take bookings for school visits
... And all the rest!

HOLIDAY CLUB

- Started Easter 2018
- Seen over 150 different individual children
- Strong group of regular attenders
- Normal charge £25 per day
- Approx. profit during none COVID times £400+ per day
- Took £8k Summer 2019
- Max 30 kids per day
- Base in school cafeteria as to not disturb the animals



Examples of using your school farm



- Horticulture and Animal Husbandry qualifications
- Nurturing and Well -being
- Science – life cycles, growth, healthy eating, food miles, plants used for medicine etc
- Maths – cost of gardening, measuring growth – weights and heights
- Enterprise – grow to sell
- ICT – Create information boards and add QR codes to link to embedded pages on your website
- Literacy – create information leaflets about your farm
- Geography – food miles
- History – Victorian plant hunters

And many many more.



Framework Document

- Launched at the end of January 2023
- Provides a checklist of all the standards
- Provides link to comprehensive Guidance
- Freely available from our website

Section 1 - We run a responsible organisation

This first section is where you tell us about your organisation and demonstrate that you have the appropriate legal frameworks, organisational policies, and insurance cover to run a Green Care organisation.

- Registration certificates available for our organisation
- Purpose of our organisation is in the public domain
- Accounts audited & independently examined
- A dedicated bank account in place
- Financial & business plans
- Employers' liability insurance
- Public liability insurance
- Other insurance(s) required for our operations
- Feedback, appraisal or evaluation process



Social Farms & Gardens - Growing well together

...and not just benefits, multiple co -benefits



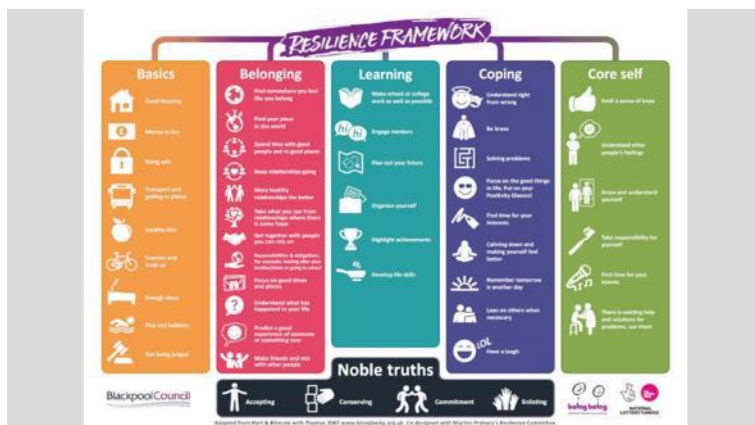
Spending time in nature – at home and in educational contexts - is good for a wide range of positive outcomes and co-benefits including ⁽⁴⁾

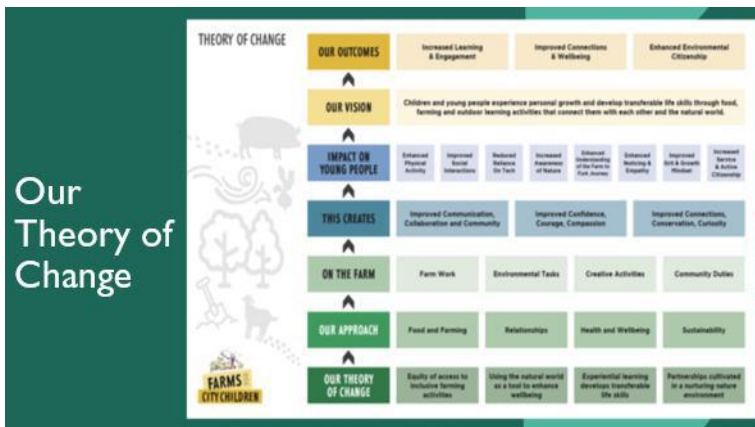
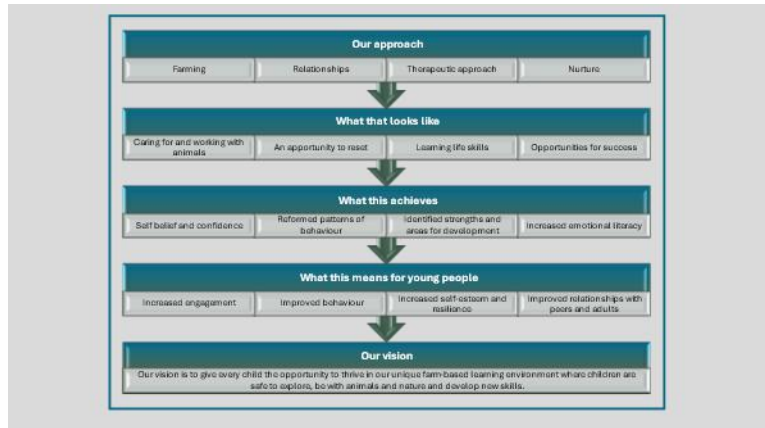


www.lotc.org.uk

Positive outcomes

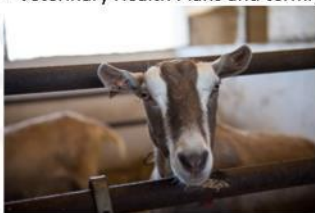
- The social, emotional and mental health benefits from working alongside nature are vast. We found the children that participated in the project benefited from:





How we have responded to the risks

- Animal Health and Welfare Policy
- Quarantine and Isolation
- Veterinary Health Plans and termly cryptosporidium testing



FARMS FOR CITY CHILDREN



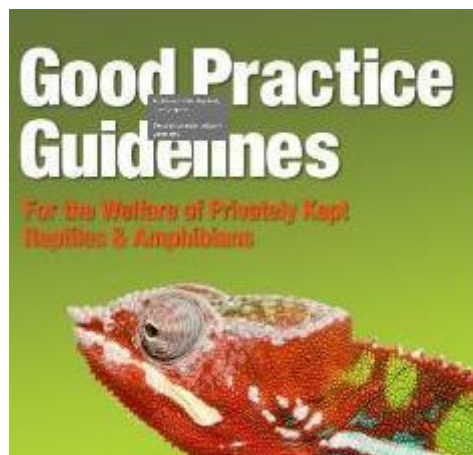
Figure 1: A vicious cycle of late intervention, low confidence and inefficient resource allocation is driving these challenges

What is Alternative Education Provision?

- As of 2020/21 in the state-funded education system in England 1.4 million children and young people were identified with Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- 12.2% of pupils were identified as requiring SEN Support. Amongst pupils on SEN Support in state funded primary schools, the most common primary type of need in 2021 was Speech, Language and Communication Needs (54%). In secondary schools, this was Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) (22%)
- Government aims to establish a new national SEN and alternative provision system setting, with nationally consistent standards across education, health and care

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<https://explore.education-statistics.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england>



AWA, 2006

- The Federation of British Herpetologists, 2014
- Available on the .gov website

Pigs and Literacy

Pigs and their products, like bacon and ham, are frequently mentioned in popular culture and literature. Many children's stories have animal characters, including pigs.


Pigs are fun to read and write about! Studying pigs could link to writing skills such as descriptive writing, persuasive writing, discussion texts, and storytelling. Immersing children in the topic always engages them further in their learning, which makes them enjoy purposeful writing.



- Genres of writing covered in KS2
- Narrative Writing- *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*
 - Balanced argument - *Is it fair to breed pigs for showing? Reasons for and against.* Children would research/take notes on what they have seen.
 - Newspaper Report- *Report on an event*
 - Non-Chronological Report - *What is The Berkshire Pig?*



Discussion



- Impact of changing courses
- Course Support- Exam Boards, Curriculum leads
- Better links with colleges/ Communications
- Requirements of Universities
- Progression for all
- Need for Satellite Hub (small Cohorts)



RAU courses

- Agriculture and Farm Management
- Business & Agricultural Business
- Equine Management and Science
- Real Estate
- Rural Land Management
- Wildlife Conservation & Countryside Management
- NEW: Environmental Sustainability



Speakers

Sophie Antonelli	Training & Development Manager, Social Farms & Gardens
Marion Arthur	Subject Leader, Ramsey Grammar School/Deputy Chair SFN
Sandra Ashenford	Farm School Leader at Wick Court, Farms for City Children
Thomas Bennett	BVMedSci(hons)/ex-Woodchurch School student
Tracey Bretherton	Youth Coordinator, British Pig Association, Junior Pig Club
Katie Bristow	Director of Operations, People and Animals
Lucy Cull	Animal Centre Manager, Wolverley School
Laura Dewey	Teacher, Gloverspiece School & Mini Farm
Liam Dowson	Head of Student Recruitment, Royal Agricultural University
Linda Hackett	Teacher/Farm Manager, Woodchurch High School
Beth Hamer-Higgs	Growing Our Future
Anne Hunt	CEO, Council for Learning Outside the Classroom
David Main	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic Planning & Resources), Professor of Production Animal Health and Welfare
Kerry Marks	Head of Agriculture, Brymore Academy
Julie Milsom	Director Standardisation & Monitoring, People and Animals
Ruth Peterson	Careers Manager, Institute for Agriculture and Horticulture
Nicky Plaskitt	Director, Shaping Behaviour
Tim Rose	Head of Operations, Farms for City Children
Denise Sear	Green Care Quality Mark Officer, Social Farms & Gardens
Keeley Smith	Teacher, Gloverspiece School/Chair SFN
Caroline Tasker	Director of Education and Events, South Brockwells Farm Partnership
Sally Teare	Principal Education Support Officer, Ramsey Grammar School
Rhys Williams	Animal Science & Conservation Lecturer & Tutor, South Gloucestershire & Stroud College

Conference programme

Day 1: Friday 30 June

- 09.00 Registration, Refreshments and exhibits
- 10.00 Welcomes from the Royal Agricultural University, Social Farms & Gardens, School Farms Network
- 10.15 Opening keynote
- 10.50 Refreshments
- 11.15 'TED talks': a series of short presentations from practitioners on their work
- 12.30 Lunch, exhibitions and networking
- 13.45 Afternoon keynotes: Quality Standards
- 14.15 Move to session rooms
- 14.30 *Parallel Workshop Sessions choices:*
- 16.00 Refreshment Break /move to lecture hall
- 16.20 Panel discussion/Q&A and closing thoughts
- 17.00 Day 1 conference close

Dinner and Awards ceremony

Friday evening

- 18.30 Gala reception: Drinks Reception, Networking
- 19.00 Gala Dinner and Awards Ceremony

Day 2: Saturday 1 July

- 08.00 Breakfast and Accommodation Check-Out
- 09.00 Optional tour of RAU campus
- 09.45 Welcome and introductions
- 10.00 Keynotes from a school farm & a care farm + Q&A:
- 10.45 Parallel Workshop Session choices:
- 12.15 Lunch and Networking
- 13.00 Afternoon Presentation and discussion:
- 14.00 Discussion: your needs and opportunities for school farms in the future
- 14.30 Day 2 conference close

Awards 2023

Award		Educational Farm
Student of the Year 2023 Sponsor: 	Winner	Ella Rose Mitchinson, Woodchurch High School, Wirral
	Winner (SEN) Joint winners	Stanley Forder, South Brockwells Farm, Hastings John Whittle, Woodfield School/Pages Care Farm, Kingsbury
Farm or Garden Leader of the Year 2023 Sponsor: 	Winner	Fiona Stanley, Brymore Academy, Bridgwater
	Special mention	Jo Powell, Jamie's Farm, Monmouth Sara Spellman, Seal CE Primary School, Sevenoaks
Best innovative farm or garden-based curriculum 2023 Sponsor: 	Winner (Secondary)	Ramsey Grammar School, Isle of Man
	Winner (SEN)	Woodfield School/Pages Care Farm, Kingsbury
	Runner Up	Loddon School, Sheffield
	Winner (Higher)	Hopwood Hall, Middleton
Best student-led sustainable practices 2023 Sponsor: 	Winner	Brockhill Park Performing Arts College, Hythe
Most inspirational educational farm or garden 2023 Sponsor: 	Winner	Llanishen Fach Primary School, Cardiff
	Joint Runner Up	Farms For City Children, Exeter South Brockwell Farm, Uckfield
	Winner (SEN)	Abbey Court School, Rochester
Best School Farm Project 2023	Winner	Abbey Court School, Rochester

The Nineveh Charitable Trust and the Ernest Cook Trust also kindly provided conference sponsorship, alongside significant in-kind contributions from the Royal Agricultural University.

Entries were again this year outstanding, and the judges felt both humbled and inspired by what school farms and individuals have achieved. Due to the quality, it was decided to Award special awards were singled out for their endeavours.

Thanks go to Award judges **Amy** Lipscombe BSc (Hons) Geography, MSc Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security, Doctoral International Teaching Fellow Vice Chancellor Scholar, RAU, **Jennifer** Howse BSc, PGCert, MA, FHEA, Doctoral International Teaching Fellow Vice Chancellor Scholar, RAU and **Ian** Egginton-Metters, representing the School Farms Network who gave their time and enthusiasm in judging the submissions.

We are especially grateful to the sponsors of the Awards: The Ernest Cook Trust, Countryside Learning, LEAF Education, Royal Agricultural University, the National Farmers Union and Social Farms & Gardens.

Each Award category was allocated simple criteria to allow flexibility of submissions for the range of educational farm providers, whether within school grounds or use of a local farm. The diversity of resources, facilities, ages and abilities however made it very difficult to allocate single winners without recognition of some who showed almost equal merit; hence we recognised some runners up and special mentions.



2023 Award winners

Comments from sponsors



The Ernest Cook Trust is delighted to be supporting the Educational Farms Conference once again. As one of the UK's foremost providers and funders of Outdoor Learning, the Trust shares its land, knowledge, and experience in order to influence and inspire a greater love and understanding of the natural world, farming and sustainability. We provide free Outdoor Learning Programmes for schools and community groups local to our sites, particularly for those who are disadvantaged, while our Everything Outdoors Grant Schemes are offered nationwide. For more information, please visit our new website at www.ernestcooktrust.org.uk.

Emily Crawley, Head of Learning Strategy and Delivery



Countryside Learning is proud to support SF&G. Having worked with the many passionate and committed members in our own delivery programme for many years we know exactly the real and tangible difference the organisations work makes to the next generation of young people in engaging their interest in the natural environment and the role we all play in its future sustainability.

Gary Richardson, Chief Executive



School farms provide an invaluable and unique opportunity for their students; ensuring that food production is put at the heart of the school ensures that our future generations are able to connect and value their food and those who produce it.

We are proud to support the 'Best student-led sustainable practices' award this year. The winner shows how the school has connected its own and local produce with the overall supply chain within the school canteen, understanding the importance of food provenance when considering sustainable food choices. LEAF Education is proud to celebrate and champion school farms that continue to go above and beyond for their students and we applaud the work of staff and students alike who are seeking to be more sustainable in their practices – something we know young people are increasingly passionate about. *Carl Edwards, LEAF Director, Education and Public Engagement*



NFU Education are delighted to be sponsoring the 'Best innovative farm or garden-based curriculum 2021-2022' category. Teaching agriculture within the school curriculum is a fantastic method to ensure children and young people have the skills and knowledge required to become the sustainable consumers and workforce of the future. We congratulate the winners for putting such an important, relevant topic at the heart of their curriculum. *Josh Payne, NFU Chief Education Manager*



The Royal Agricultural University is proud to have been working with the School Farms Network over the past 6 years, supporting the School Farms Conference and Awards and advocating for the use of school farms and outdoor learning as a powerful tool for education. The University's mission is "equipping a new generation to thrive through change". And we think that this has never been more important. The national and global challenges we all face have shown that our courses and our graduates are needed more than ever, and we're excited to support and develop the next generation of students to thrive through change and help find the solutions to these challenges. This mission is one of the reasons we're so passionate to support the role of school farms. Not only can they be of incredible value to the education and welfare of individual students, but they also play such a valuable role in growing the understanding of our land-based industries.

As a University we're really keen to work with young people to raise awareness and aspirations of higher education options and careers in our sector. We would encourage any school staff to contact us on outreach@rau.ac.uk if you feel we can support your work. Our thanks and congratulations go to you all for the brilliant work you're continuing to do to support our young people and make a real difference to individual students and our shared future. Details of courses can be found at www.rau.ac.uk/courses and our schools/colleges page www.rau.ac.uk/about-rau/info-for-schools-and-colleges.



Social Farms & Gardens are delighted to continue our support for the Educational Farms Awards again this year, and for the School Farms Network. These last few years have been challenging for so many, and the fantastic entries in this year's awards demonstrate just how important these spaces are in times like these, where adults and children alike can reconnect with the land and nature. As we move beyond the pandemic and as understanding of the value of time spent in nature for young people grows, the work of the SFN and organisations here at the conference and awards can only continue to gain importance. *Sophie Antonelli, Training and Development Manager*

We are also very grateful for the support of **The Nineveh Charitable Trust** for this conference for school and care farm awards, conference bursaries and other conference costs.



Volunteers in the **School Farms Network** have organised this conference, along with the Royal Agricultural University.

Information is available at www.farmgarden.org.uk/school-farms-network and if you haven't joined Social Farms & Gardens (for free!) and signed up to receive the School Farms Network newsletter then please do here: www.farmgarden.org.uk/join-us, and join the SFN Facebook group www.facebook.com/groups/1928624297419435/ to share experiences, ask questions, offer help or livestock etc.

Please comment on this conference and anything that you would like to know or hear about in the future, be that information or other events; contact schoolfarms@farmgarden.org.uk.

A selection of comments and references from Saturday discussions:

The debate looked at: What prevents your learners from progressing? What communications do we have with colleges/Universities? Are the qualifications required? Do League Tables affect what is offered to students? Do Academies limit choices? Helping students choose courses for the right reasons. Recruiting colleagues to support the choice of qualifications. Some Colleges are requiring entry students to undertake Level 2 studies when they have already achieved that within the school farm. CPD, exam board requirements, school restrictions, funding etc!

The session also covered evidencing benefits/evaluation: several delegates referred to interviewing students at the beginning and after a period of accessing the farm to demonstrate improvements. These individual reports can be used with Ofsted, in fact they didn't want to see data and are often more interested in the student journey/case studies. One school has the [Inclusion Quality Mark](#) and Ofsted inspectors interviewed individual students. Some schools maintain records of disciplinaries that can be accessed by the farm teacher to help evidence behavioural improvements after attending the farm.

Who are we evaluating for? It isn't clear to everyone: some need it for SLTs, some for funders. There is a move towards more qualitative evidence rather than relying on quantitative data. There are many tools to consider, some require a fee and others are free. Examples include: various Mood scales (examples: the [Brunel Mood Scale](#), the [Profile of Mood States](#)), [Thrives' Toolkit](#) (for horticultural therapy but adaptable for a farm situation), [Which Tool?](#) (a guide to various tools used in 'green care'). One suggestion was to attract a STEM trainee teacher on the understanding that they undertake evaluation work. Some schools use social media to seek feedback from parents and collate that evidence; a farm page on the school website could track the number of page views etc. Each setting will need to adapt to our particular circumstances but to become aware of different methods to choose from would be extremely useful. Other ways of sharing include posting on the [SFN Facebook Forum](#) group. It is also used to help keep each other motivated and supported; questions will always be answered. **Request made to all delegates:** please share the attendance, confidence, behaviour and attainment methods and proformas of evidencing we use to be collated and then shared; send to ianem@farmgarden.org.uk.

Vets: building relationships is crucial, sometimes using different vets for their specialisms and challenging them if they don't have experience of a particular species to learn together; no-one can possibly have experience of all species and learning together is useful for both parties. Breed societies can often call on members to provide specialist advice. The Association of Zoos & Aquariums produce [manuals](#) for many species. The British Psychological Society also produce

some useful free [guidelines](#) on working with animals. Haynes [pet and animal care](#) manuals are good as being student friendly.

CPD for staff: some vets run short courses on lambing, score conditioning etc. The Farmers Weekly website has an [E-learning](#) section for e.g. biosecurity, animal health; these are certificated after a test at the end of the course. Why not offer your site as a base for training and get yourself on the course for free. If a need/interest can be identified for a group of people then the [Workers Education Association](#) may fund a course. [Gardeniser](#), [Landworkers Alliance](#) are amongst many others to explore. This list isn't comprehensive! An exchange programme between school 'Young Farmers' would be a great way of learning from different ways of working. Gaining knowledge and inspiration by visiting other provisions is so useful; several people offered to host events next year.

The "Dual Professional" or the "Practitioner-teacher" was recommended to explore: [The Dual Professional Toolkit](#).

With thanks to our supporters

Countryside Learning

The Ernest Cook Trust

Linking Environment And Farming

The National Farmers Union

The Nineveh Charitable Trust

The Royal Agricultural University

Social Farms & Gardens



www.farmgarden.org.uk/school-farms-network

SFN contact: Ian Egginton-Metters schoolfarmsnetwork@farmgarden.org.uk

The School Farms Network is supported by

Social Farms & Gardens

The GreenHouse, Hereford Street, Bristol BS3 4NA

Tel: 0117 923 1800 e-mail: admin@farmgarden.org.uk www.farmgarden.org.uk

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And the Royal Agricultural University

Contact: Liam Dowson Liam.Dowson@rau.ac.uk