Outlook

**FarmBioNet Autumn 2026 Newsletter**

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## Update from the Project Team

As we head into autumn, we say farewell to another busy summer for the FarmBioNet team. In June, we had a fantastic time taking part in the FarmBioNet international exchange visit in Romania, which provided a valuable opportunity to share knowledge and learn from farmers across our 12 National Networks. During the three-day exchange, we visited three farms and saw first-hand the inspiring biodiversity-friendly farming practices being implemented to enhance farmland habitats where wildlife can flourish.



*Members of our 12 National Networks as part of our farmer exchange in Romania. Visit to the Cattle breeders association of Viscri. Photo Credit: Natasa Grbovic Vagic*

Also, in June we participated in the Farming for Nature Festival at Ballykilcavan Farm and Brewery (Stradbally, Co. Laois), connecting with several National Network members who are also Farming for Nature Ambassadors and taking part in farmer-led discussions on soil health, biodiversity, farm resilience and profit.

We were delighted to attend the launch of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP) 2026–2030 in July, marking an important new chapter in collective efforts to support pollinators across Ireland. Held at the National Botanic Gardens in Dublin, the launch was jointly led by Ireland's Minister for Nature, Heritage and Biodiversity, Christopher O'Sullivan TD, and Northern Ireland's Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Andrew Muir, and set out a shared, island-wide vision of pockets of nature every 200 metres. FarmBioNet is an AIPP partner, highlighting how the project and the AIPP are working in the same direction to help people understand what biodiversity needs and give them practical ways to provide it.

Our first batch of Practice Abstracts (one-page documents providing concise, practice oriented recommendations) has now been published! You can see the full list on the FarmBioNet Practice Abstracts page, where they are also available to download. If there is a practice or recommendation you think is missing, don't hesitate to get in touch, we will happily produce a Practice Abstract for it.

Finally, a special shout-out goes to National Network member Seanie Ó Baoill, Farming for Nature Ambassador 2025, who sat down with MOLSCÉAL to tell them about his continued commitment to farming and biodiversity, you can view his interview here as gaeilge.

## Actions for Biodiversity on the Farm

### Protecting Watercourses

Early autumn is a good time of year to sure up any watercourses on your farm before the heavier winter rains increase the risk of nutrients, soil and sediment being washed into streams and rivers. Biological indicators such as algal growth can provide useful insights into water quality. You should address any identified sources of pollution or physical damage, including areas where nutrients, soil or sediment may be entering the water. It is also important to identify the presence of invasive species and to devise an appropriate management plan. Establishing buffer strips between farmland and watercourses can help capture nutrients and other pollutants, reduce sediment entering the water, stabilise banks and limit soil erosion. They also provide valuable habitat for insects and nesting birds. Wider buffers are generally more effective. As a guide, use a minimum width of 3 metres beside

rivers and 2 metres beside streams, although widths of more than 6 metres are preferable. A buffer of at least 10 metres is recommended beside cropland. You can find further guidance on the Farming for Nature website.



*NN member Colm Gavin explaining how he carefully manages invasive rhododendron near watercourses on his farm in Connemara. Photo credit: Claudia Barry.*

## Consider digging a pond

Do you have a wet area on your farm that takes a lot of effort to make it productive? Maybe consider using the area as a location for a pond. A pond can be a highly effective way to create a diverse wildlife habitat on your farm. They have many benefits for the farm too, slowing the movement of water across the land, maintaining soil moisture during dry periods, and larger ponds provide a source of stored water for appropriate uses around the farm. Careful planning, location, design, construction and management will help maximise its value for biodiversity. For tips on how to dig a pond visit the farming for nature website.



*Mature pond, Co. Wicklow. Photo credit: Claudia Barry.*

## Hedgerows

Late autumn is a good time of year for planting a hedgerow. Check out our video How to plant a hedgerow with Kim McCall / FarmBioNet Best Biodiversity-Friendly Farming Practice, featuring our National Network member Kim Mcall, for simple guidance on how to plant a hedgerow. Not only are hedgerows beneficial to biodiversity as food sources and nest locations, they also benefit your farm by providing shelter for farm animals and crops. Remember while the hedge cutting season opens September 1st, we encourage you to cut hedgerows less often (perhaps on a 2- or 3-year cycle), in rotation to allow species to flower. If you do need to cut some hedgerows, consider holding off until October or November as they are currently full of blackberries, whitethorn berries, and sloes, among other berries. The National Biodiversity Data Centre have a training course on “Farmland Pollinator Friendly Hedgerows” which you can access here.



*Bramble and whitethorn in fruit. Photo credit: Claudia Barry.*

## Upcoming Farmland Biodiversity Events

### National Hedgerow Week (August 28th to September 6th)

National Hedgerow Week is taking place this week, aiming to raise awareness of the importance of hedges for agriculture, biodiversity and climate. The week features a range of free events across the country, from farm hedgerow and foraging walks to hedge-laying demonstrations and webinars; a partnership between the Heritage Council and Teagasc. You can find out more details about the events at heritagecouncil.ie.




### Laois Living Boundaries Project: Hedgerow Management Workshop (September 16th and 21st)

Laois County Council's Biodiversity Office is inviting landowners to participate in the Laois Living Boundaries Project, a National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) funded initiative aimed at promoting best practice in hedgerow management for biodiversity. They are running two practical, farm-based workshops providing participants with live demonstrations of best practice hedgerow management techniques and advancing biodiversity through hedgerow and field margin conservation.

**Date**: 16th September at Rosanallis, R32 T621 and 21st September at Meredith's Organic Farm, Ballylynan R14 HD71

**Time**: 9.30 – 12.30 both days

Attendance is free, but registration is required as places are limited. To book a spot please call or message Pat on 086 1952373.

## Farm walk Leitrim (September 25th)

On Friday 25th September, FarmBioNet will take part in a farm walk hosted by Barry & Sharon O'Hagan in Glenboy, Manorhamilton, Co. Leitrim (F91 R260). Barry and Sharon's farm is an extensive, lightly stocked sheep hill farm, with multispecies swards and red clover present. The walk will consist of a series of stops and boards including information on soil health and biodiversity. We are looking forward to collaborating with Teagasc Organic advisors for the event. **Join us from 2pm on Friday 25th September in Glenboy.**



*Barry O'Hagan on his farm in Glenboy. Photo credit: Cathal McCauley.*

## FarmBioNet decision-tools workshop (October 29th)

Join us for our fourth National Network workshop on Thursday, October 29th at Clanard Court

Hotel (Athy, Co. Kildare), held in partnership with the RestPoll project and BiOrbic, as part of Bioeconomy Ireland Week.

We'll be introducing two new decision-support tools, the biodiversity-friendly farming Cost Benefit Calculator and the Pollinator Restoration Toolbox, through interactive demos, discussions, and a feedback session where your input will help shape their development.




## Burren Winterage Festival (October 23rd - 25th)

The festival celebrates and recognises Irish farmers who are working to promote biodiversity and their farms and to celebrate Irish natural heritage. Every year the Farming for Nature Ambassador awards take place at the festival. You can find out more about the festival at www.burrenwinterage.com.




## Biodiversity in Plain Sight

### Hoverflies and butterflies

The beginning of autumn is a time for change. You will begin to notice hedgerows are bursting with the colours of berries now instead of flowers. While insect activity will slowly begin to decrease the place is still buzzing with hoverflies and butterflies.



*Left: Silver-washed Fritillary (Argynnis paphia). Right: Honeybee-mimicking hoverfly (Eristalis tenax). Photo credit: Claudia Barry.*

## Ivy (*Hedera helix*)

After a very dry summer (at least in the South!) much of our wildflower species have dried up and gone to seed leaving very few floral resources for our remaining pollinators. One species though, ivy is just beginning to flower, offering a source of pollen and nectar for our pollinating friends. Another reason to avoid cutting your hedgerows as soon as the seasonal ban ends. See if you can spot a patch of ivy in some of your hedgerows, your almost guaranteed to spot a bee, hoverfly or butterfly!



*Bumble bee (Bombus terrestris agg.) resting on ivy (Hedera helix). Photo credit: Claudia Barry.*

## Endangered solitary bee discovered

On 11th August 2026, All-Ireland Pollinator Plan Rare Species Pollinator Officer, Joshua Clarke, re-found the Critically Endangered Silver-sided Nomad Bee (*Nomada argentata*) in Co. Offaly

These rare bees occur in flower-rich habitats such as dry grasslands, heathlands and coastal dunes, particularly where Devil's-bit Scabious grows. You can read the full article on the re finding here.

## Further Reading

While the FarmBioNet team is working in the background to produce training materials based on the results produced from our events up to date, you can find blogs in the FarmBioNet website and short articles in Teagasc T-daily.

## FarmBioNet Newsroom

In the FarmBioNet Newsroom you will find project updates as well as blog posts on biodiversity and other related topics. Access the full list at: https://farmbionet.eu/newsroom/.

## Teagasc T-daily

Any time the Irish Farming and Biodiversity National Network has hosted or taken part in an event, we have published a short article within Teagasc T-daily. You can find all the articles published up to date below:

Farmer-focussed Biodiversity and Agricultural Knowledge Network
Boosting Biodiversity: The FarmBioNet Project Kicks-off
FarmBioNet workshop brings farmers together to share biodiversity knowledge
Biodiversity and productivity can go hand in hand
Insights from FarmBioNet's second workshop
Exploring a new BASELINE for Irish agriculture
Projects working together – news from the FarmBioNet and SAFER workshop
FarmBioNet at the Farming for Nature Festival
FarmBioNet becomes a partner in the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2026-2030
Farming with Nature: Practical Ways to Enhance Farmland Biodiversity

## Additional Resources

If you want to find out more about the project, please check out our website https://farmbionet.eu/. And make sure to follow us on Linkedin.

**The Farming for Nature Handbook** is a practical resource for farmers looking to boost biodiversity and build resilience. From meadow management to soil health, it's full of real world, biodiversity-friendly farming practices that work with the land—not against it. For more information about Farming for Nature and the handbook you can visit famingfornature.ie.

**The National Biodiversity Data Centre** host a variety of workshops and free online training courses on a wide range of topics from managing hedgerows for biodiversity to identifying farmland birds, bees and butterflies. You can also keep an eye on The Hare's Corner and Farming for Nature websites for upcoming events and workshops.

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