

CONNECTING PEOPLE

Macra Land Mobility Manager Austin Finn has high hopes collaborative farming can create better futures for Irish farmers. **Paidi Kelly** reports

Farm owners in Cork, Kilkenny and Roscommon have contacted Austin Finn because they want to explore the potential of collaborative farming.

These three areas are the pilot regions where Austin wants to set up his first

arrangements. Initially he was worried people wouldn't engage with the service but thankfully this hasn't been the case.

He has a wide range of farms which a variety of future farming options will suit. Hence Austin also needs a variety of people looking to

collaborate with these farm owners.

"I have been in contact with people at all stages of their farming careers – old and young, farm owners and not, people looking to expand and people looking to step back. It takes all sorts to make the different arrange-

ments work," he said.

At this stage over 100 people have contacted Austin wishing to discuss the opportunities collaborative farming could have for them. Here are some examples of some of the opportunities Austin is currently trying to find people for.

Collaborators wanted

1 Owners: Married couple in their 60s, two adult children, neither interested in farming.
Current activity:

Dairy farming.

Farm size: 64ha around parlour (52ha owned), other land leased.

Facilities: 80 cows, 40 bulling heifers, 100 cubicles, 12-unit parlour.

Preferred future option: Expand to 200 cows with a share milker.

2 Owners: Business man and part-time farmer, age 58, family involved in the off-farm business.

Current activity: Mix of tillage and dry stock.

Farm size: 70ha in one block
Facilities: One six-bay double slatted shed and machinery shed.

Preferred future option: Not interested in hiring labour. Wants to enter a partnership with someone who will improve farm profit – not just considering dairying.

Farm owners wanted

1 Age: 34
Current occupation: Farm manager of a large-scale dairy herd.

Farming background/experience: Not from a farm but is a trained farm manager and has worked on a number of farms in Ireland and New Zealand.

Preferred future option: Has seen share milking work in New Zealand and wants to find Irish farmer open this business structure.

2 Age: 26
Current occupation: Working with his brother and father at home.

Farming background/experience: Farming full time for four years and has completed three years in Ag college.

Preferred future option: Home farm not big enough to support three incomes. Wants to farm in his own right. Could be supported by home farm to begin new farming operation somewhere.

BRING OUR YOUNG PEOPLE HOME

A shortage of young people in Ireland with the skill, ambition and experience to collaborate with existing farm owners looks to be a challenge for Austin Finn. He said: "Maybe some young people are nervous of taking a step out on their own or maybe they just haven't got in contact with me yet. I definitely want to hear from more skilled and responsible young people. I have had a number of enquiries from experienced Irish people working on farms abroad and I think via the service we can create farming opportunities which would give them a reason to come home. For every farm owner who contacts Austin looking to take a step back, he needs someone contacting him who wants to take on more land or start farming in their own right. Pairing the two people together in the right business structure can then deliver for both parties. Austin said: "Every individual situation is different so it's crucial to meet the people and understand the different issues they have and based on that, what arrangement will suit them best."

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Next steps for the service

3 **Owners:** Married couple with a young family.
Current activity: Suckling and cattle finishing.

Farm size: 55Ha owned and 10ha on long-term lease.
Facilities: Slatted and straw sheds for over 200 cattle
Preferred future option: Planning on converting to dairying either on their own or via collaboration to access dairy expertise and equity. Partnership with existing dairy farmer or young trained farmer with some land/equity.

3 **Age:** Early 40s
Current occupation: Dairy farmer.
Farming background/ experience: Inherited the home farm and has developed an efficient dairy operation.
Preferred future option: Interested in expanding current operation or developing a second unit.

Austin is working with the three major milk processors in the pilot areas (Aurivo, Dairygold and Glanbia) to meet and match people interested in collaborative farming. Teagasc is at an advanced stage of developing a template for share milking in an Irish context which will help Austin set up these new arrangements.

Of the 100 or more people who have got in contact with Austin, how many are really willing to farm and work with someone else? "I have had people get in contact to just test the water but most of those 100 have a real genuine interest in making a change. Some will end up leasing the farm but by the end of the year I would hope to have at least 20 partnerships and share milking opportunities set up. Developing an arrangement is slow and SFP certainty is needed. Austin will help



Macra Land Mobility Manager Austin Finn.

set up the contract for a new arrangement and will work with the farmers' advisers to do so if necessary.

He then plans to visit the farm three to four times during each year to review progress. Austin is hopeful a support programme will also put in place for farmers engaging in collaborative arrangements – this could be put in place by Teagasc and/or the milk processors in the area to offer extra technical advice to these new arrangements.

The Land Mobility Service is an initiative of Macra Na Feirme with the financial support of FBD Trust and other stakeholders. It is a confidential service available to help farmers and farm families thinking of expansion, changing enterprise, or stepping back. For more contact Austin at 086 2541425 or www.landmobility.ie

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Sugar Beet	High DM Fodder Beet	Medium DM Fodder Beet	Low DM Fodder Beet
ROSALINDA & TOUAREG	ENERMAX & CAGNOTTE	MINOTAURE	JAMON

	Relative Root DM Yield expected*	Expected root DM%	Root Colour	% Root Over Ground	Soil Tare (1-9, 9=best)	
SUGAR BEET & ENERGY BEET						
ROSALINDA	109	22	White	20	3	Sugar Beet variety being grown in a number of EU countries.
FESTINA	106	22	White	20	3	Sugar Beet.
TOUAREG	106	22	White	20	4	Dutch Sugar Beet variety with low soil tare.
GERTY	108	22	White	20	4	Energy Beet - very high DM yield.
HIGH DRY MATTER FODDER BEET						
ENERMAX	107	18.6	White	24	4	Highest yielding Fodder Beet. Bred from Magnum.
CAGNOTTE	103	18.3	Yellow	33	5	Very high DM yield and fresh yield. Harvests very clean.
STARMON	101	18.2	Yellow	33	5	Noticably cleaner than Magnum.
MAGNUM	100	18	White	22	4	Long established variety.
MEDIUM DRY MATTER FODDER BEET						
BOLERO	97	16.5	Yellow	42	6	Most popular medium DM type.
MINOTAURE	102	15.8	Yellow	42	6	Highest fresh root yield of all beet varieties.
LOW DRY MATTER FODDER BEET						
JAMON	86	14.2	Orange	46	7	Suitable for grazing in situ.
FELDHERR	82	11.8	Orange	49	8	Suitable for grazing in situ.

*Based on Goldcrop Trials in 2010-2013 in East Cork, at Teagasc Oakpark in 2009 and the DAF 1999 Recommended List



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1. The effect of Cosecure on the conception rate and trace element status of dairy cattle, A.M Mackenzie, M.M Moeini and S.B Telfer. 2. Cytochrome c oxidase, Cu, Zn-superoxide dismutase, and ceruloplasmin activities in copper-deficient bovines, Cerone SI, Sansinanea AS, Streitenberger SA, Garcia MC, Auza NJ

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