



**EUROPEAN  
FEDERATION  
OF CITY FARMS**

# Newsletter

## 1. 2026


### WORKING TOGETHER FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

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The EFCF is a member of the European Environmental Bureau (<https://eeb.org> )

## EFCF events in 2026

- Annual General Meeting (AGM) 2026 in Brussels, Belgium 17-19 April
- Youth Exchange 2026 in Brussels, Belgium 13-19 July
- EFCF Conference 2026 in Den Helder, the Netherlands 21-25 October

Keep a close eye on the EFCF website

## Social handprint shows that a city farm is not a cost item but a social investment

*Newsletter of Dutch federation of city farms vSKBN*

More and more municipalities and funds are asking for clear insight into social added value. City farms, in particular, have a lot to offer, not only for animals, but especially for people, neighborhoods, and municipalities.

Eight city farms in the Netherlands have completed the extensive social handprint questionnaire. The handprint 2025 shows the true value of a city farm, expressed in concrete activities and converted into euros. This allows a farm to demonstrate to a municipality, administrators, neighborhood partners and grant providers that every euro invested yields a much greater return.



The national Impact Report 2025 shows that the average Dutch city farm has a social value of €807,000 per year and an impact ratio of 1:1.9. This means that every euro invested in a city farm yields an average of €1.90 in social value.

The Dutch federation of city farms encourages its members to complete the social handprint questionnaire.

<https://socialhandprint.com/>

## Southampton City Farm won Mental Health Network Award

*by Tom Kitcher of Southampton City farm*

We are delighted to announce that the Southampton City farm team won a 'stars for stars' award from the amazing team at Southampton Mental Health Network. We were nominated for creating a safe, supportive and uplifting environment, especially for people facing mental health challenges. As well as this, our Youth lead Hannah won an individual award! Someone nominated Hannah for all of her kind, caring, and supportive work towards the young people that attend the farm. Massive well done Hannah!

The lovely anonymous nomination for the team award:

*"I would like to nominate the wonderful team at Southampton city farm. The staff and volunteers at Southampton City Farm consistently go above and beyond to create a safe, supportive, and uplifting environment for people facing mental health challenges. Their work directly improves wellbeing through meaningful connection with nature, animals, and community.*

*They provide a calm, therapeutic environment for people who need it most. The farm is a place where individuals experiencing stress, anxiety, depression, or social isolation can reconnect with nature at their own pace. Staff and volunteers cultivate a welcoming atmosphere where participants feel valued, respected, and understood. They offer inclusive, person-centred support. Many visitors and service users live with complex needs, including learning disabilities, long-term health problems, or mental health conditions. Staff and volunteers take time to tailor activities, communicate with empathy, and provide gentle guidance so everyone can participate confidently.*

*They use nature-based activities proven to support mental wellbeing. Through gardening, caring for animals, outdoor learning, and creative tasks, the team helps people build self-esteem, reduce anxiety, and experience a sense of achievement. Their programmes encourage routine, purpose, and physical activity—all key contributors to better mental health. They create genuine human connection and community. Loneliness is a major contributor to poor mental health. The farm team actively fosters friendships, teamwork, and social belonging. Many participants describe the farm as their "safe space" or "family," because volunteers and staff treat everyone with kindness, patience, and warmth.*

*They empower people to grow, learn, and thrive. By teaching skills—from gardening to animal care—the team gives individuals opportunities to succeed, take responsibility, and develop confidence. These experiences can be transformative for people who may have struggled in other settings.*

*They give their time, heart, and energy to supporting others. Most importantly, the staff and volunteers consistently demonstrate compassion. They show up every day ready to listen, encourage, and support people through difficult moments. Their dedication has a measurable positive impact on the mental wellbeing of individuals across Southampton.*

*The team consists mostly of volunteers, many of whom have been through mental health challenges, and they use this experience to help support others. Magical place! Their website has lots more info. I know this nomination will mean the world to their team!"*



This recognition means a huge amount to our team. Everyone at Southampton City Farm – our volunteers and staff – puts real care and energy into building genuine connections with the people who come through our gates. Knowing that our efforts make a positive difference to people's mental health is incredibly meaningful and it motivates us to keep showing up for our community and growing this support together. [www.southamptoncityfarm.com](http://www.southamptoncityfarm.com)  
[www.smh.org.uk](http://www.smh.org.uk)

## Farms and Gardens (SF&G) and the Green Care Quality Mark

*by Ian Eggington Metters, Social Farms & Gardens*

Local government in the UK—most commonly through Social Services or Education departments needs assurance that city farms deliver services that are safe, professional, and fit for purpose. At the same time, national governments need to recognise that city farms and other green care providers complement statutory services and contribute meaningfully to social care, education, and wellbeing outcomes.

The Green Care Quality Mark is a quality assurance accreditation developed for all green care providers. It enables city farms to demonstrate that their organisation delivers services that are safe, professional, and caring, and that they operate to recognised standards of good practice.

The Quality Mark involves a clear application process and an external assessment carried out by experienced assessors. In addition to assessment, these assessors provide constructive advice and

support to help organisations strengthen their practice. The annual cost of the accreditation is deliberately kept low, at £100 (€115) per year, to ensure accessibility.

Social Farms & Gardens (SF&G) recognises that many organisations require guidance and encouragement to put the necessary policies, procedures, and evidence in place. To support this, we provide the Quality Mark Introduction Framework free of charge. This framework outlines the key issues and requirements that organisations need to address in order to meet the standards. It is available not only to UK organisations but also to all SF&G international partners [www.farmgarden.org.uk/](http://www.farmgarden.org.uk/)

## On-Farm Exercise in the Netherlands

The On-farm Exercise Event has kicked off at Wolfslaar City Farm and Landzicht City Farm to mark the start of the Winter Games and promote physical exercise. More Dutch farms will follow in spring.

Carl Verheijen, Chef de Mission of the Olympic Games and chairman of the Movement Alliance has promoted the event and the Dutch Centre for Sign Language [www.gebarencentrum.nl/](http://www.gebarencentrum.nl/) has developed a sign for the On-Farm Exercise! The sign will be in the online sign dictionary.



Visitors (young and old) can take on challenges at various locations around the grounds. These challenges include: "Can you jump as far as a rabbit?", "Can you sit on a perch on one leg like a chicken?", or "Can you run as fast as a horse?", "Frolic like a goat?"

The activities will be available as standard on the farms, and will be expanded with new challenges. [www.kinderboerderijenactief.nl/lekkerbeesten](http://www.kinderboerderijenactief.nl/lekkerbeesten)

## Youth Exchange 2026 in Belgium

by Eva Keymolen of Het Neerhof City Farm

This summer, 13 – 19 July, Het Neerhof City Farm in Brussels <https://neerhof-vzw.be/> is hosting the EFCF Youth Exchange Program, bringing together youth farms from across Europe.



The program empowers young people to design and lead workshops, share skills, and connect with peers from different countries through hands-on activities, creative projects, and intercultural learning.

Participants will work together on collaborative projects like building a treehouse, leading unique workshops, and creating shared spaces, all while developing skills such as communication, cooperation, planning, creativity and self-confidence.

With guidance from experienced staff and a focus on active involvement, this week-long exchange is a unique opportunity for youth and youth workers to learn, grow, and build lasting connections in a supportive farm environment. More information: Eva Keymolen: [eva@neerhof-vzw.be](mailto:eva@neerhof-vzw.be)

## Greenme conference and EFCF AGM in 2027 in Manchester

by Mike Hardman, Social Farms&Gardens

In 2027, Social Farms & Gardens in the UK will host a conference and the EFCF AGM. The conference will be in Manchester / Salford from the 14<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> April 2027, with the AGM connected from the 16<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> April 2027. The conference will focus on advancing work of city, social farms and community gardens with regards to nature and wellbeing. It will also connect with ongoing Social Farms & Gardens projects, such as their role in Horizon Europe GreenME (<https://greenme-project.eu/>).

The AGM of the EFCF will be hosted in the same location and will be the first time since 2014 that the UK has hosted this event.

## “Care” at the Heart of Everyday Life

by Kevin Grilo of La Petite Ferme de Thoury

Located in Thoury-Férottes (Île-de-France), La Petite Ferme de Thoury [www.lapetitefermedethoury.fr/](http://www.lapetitefermedethoury.fr/) is an city farm where care and animals are central to every activity. The farm develops zootherapy, learning through animals, mobile micro-farm and public visits on site, that brings animals and educational experiences directly to institutions and local communities.

Over the years, the project has been built on a simple conviction: the human–animal bond can foster calmness, attention, trust and meaningful relationships. This approach has notably been highlighted through a France 3 television report dedicated to the farm’s animal-assisted activities.



An active member of the French Association of Educational and Animation Farms (AFFA) [www.fermedanimation.fr](http://www.fermedanimation.fr), La Petite Ferme de Thoury is part of a network grounded in the sharing of knowledge, high standards of welcome, and a shared ethical framework. Despite the geographical spread of project leaders across France, AFFA member farms maintain strong connections, support one another and collaborate to continuously improve their practices and develop innovative, responsible initiatives that respond to contemporary societal challenges.



Kevin’s traveling farm is sometimes asked to participate in historical themed events

Finally, the farm is deeply committed to preserving living heritage. The creation of a true sanctuary

dedicated to safeguarding orphan animal breeds was recognised in 2025 with an award from the [F.E.R.M.E. Association](https://association-ferme.org). <https://association-ferme.org>  
<https://www.lapetitefermedethoury.fr/>

## How can we assist the farms to achieve a sufficient income and good management?

by Irene Pande Rådgiver Landbruk/4H gård Norway  
Photos Olaug Olsen

This was the question when 4H-farms of Norway <https://4h.no/om-4h/4h-gard-norge> interviewed all their member farms in the northern region. 4H and EFCFs purpose is “to give young people and adults practical experience in a wide range of activities focused around farming, empowering people to improve their own lives and environment in peaceful coexistence”.

Common for all the farms that welcome people from outside, is that they need a sufficient income, predictability and development.

Every farm was asked questions about four themes; pricing, marketing, contracts and applying for funding. The interviews mapped how each farm worked with this themes, and if they had a need for support or training. Most of the farms have been 4H farms for many years and had much experience. Still the interviews revealed a great need and wish for both support and training within all the four themes.



4H-farms of Norway are a part of the greater organization 4H Norway <https://4h.no/>. The farms represent many great opportunities. The farms help building goodwill and a good reputation in the society. Every year they give more than 300 thousand people of all ages, knowledge about farming and nature. The farms also supply well-being, social interaction and physical activity for those who visit them.

Most of the 4H farms are owned and run by private farmers around the country. Ownership and management can also be: a foundation, a school, a museum or other.

Some farms are located in rural areas and some in cities. The results from the interviews are interesting since the farms are considered a great resource in 4H. Each and every farm is important, and 4H wants to support them in a good way. In 2026 we will continue the work and look into how this can be done in a good way. We wish all the best for this valuable task.

## Amsterdam city farms in the picture

During ‘Nldoet’, the largest volunteer campaign in the Netherlands, De Bijlmerweide care farm and city farm [www.bijlmerweide.nl/](http://www.bijlmerweide.nl/) had the pleasure of welcoming Princess Beatrix, former Queen of the Netherlands.

As a true animal lover, the Princess was eager to come and motivate the volunteers and personally enjoy all the animals present. During the tour, farm managers Reynier Meyjes and Ellen Verweij explained about the farm and its diverse range of animal species and traditional Dutch breeds.

Princess Beatrix was very interested and learned many new things. She also took a moment to pay attention to our clients who cared for the animals and the volunteers who were busy ‘getting the farm ready for spring’. Much attention was also given to the animals; the donkeys, Nubian goats, and the Lakenvelder and Witrik cows were fed and petted, while the spotted Bentheimer pigs watched enviously with their front legs on the fence.



The highlight for the Princess was bottle-feeding one of the Zwartbles lambs. Although she likes all animals, she found the Sable-footed bantams to be ‘beautiful chickens’ to look at. The princess had visibly enjoyed her visit and thanked the farm for the hospitality.



**De Pijp city farm** [www.kinderboerderijdepijp.nl/](http://www.kinderboerderijdepijp.nl/) also received a special visit: a group of Japanese students whom the farm workers San Montforts and Thamar Blanes met during the EFCF conference in Belgium in 2025. They were very interested in how city farms in Europe organize and use city farms for education and were invited to visit and join the farmworkers of The Pijp farm for a day after the conference.



And they did! Despite the pouring rain—it really hardly stopped for a moment—they worked enthusiastically all day long. They helped feed the animals, cleaned the stables, and rolled up their sleeves wherever necessary. Their dedication and cheerfulness were infectious, even on such a wet day.

It was wonderful to see how a shared love for animals and the outdoors can connect people from all over the world. The farm workers look back with great pleasure on this special exchange and hope that our paths will cross again in the future!



## Clever ideas

