



RURAL EXCHANGE

Market Gardening: Finding a Fit in Agri-Food Systems

THURSDAY, 05 NOVEMBER 2026 · 09:30–15:00 · Saint George's, Mitchelstown, Co. Cork, P67 XC61

SESSIONS & SPEAKERS

10:00–10:10 | Welcome & Introduction to AGRETAIN

A brief introduction to the AGRETAIN project (agretain.eu), its work on regenerative agriculture and market gardening, and what to expect from the day's discussions.

Dr. Marie Taylor · TUS Welcome address and project introduction.

10:10–10:30 | Weaving Lettuces, Seeding Solidarity

Behind every lettuce lies a network of growers, communities, relationships and resources. This keynote explores the connections and solidarity needed to build resilient local food systems.

Sarah Prosser · Bioregioning South East Ireland Chief “weaver” of social-ecological change at Bioregioning South East Ireland and CEO of BWAI. She also works as an academic and consultant in Norway and Scotland, with a focus on bioregioning, social innovation and community development.

10:30–11:15 | Agriculture and Climate Resilience: The Role of Cover Crops

A practical discussion about how cover crops can improve soil structure, conserve moisture, reduce erosion and help growers adapt to droughts and heavy rainfall.

Chair: Michael O'Shea · TUS Market gardener and lecturer in regenerative agriculture at TUS, with practical experience in commercial vegetable growing, training and education.

Urs Mauk · ReLaVisio Vegetable gardener and organic agricultural scientist. After several years working as a farm manager, he founded ReLaVisio, where he works as a consultant and educator in regenerative agriculture.

Roger Ahern · Green Man's Garden Market gardener from Conna, Co. Cork, with seven years of commercial vegetable-growing experience and a BSc in Plant Biology from University College Cork.

11:15–11:55 | Student Impact Session

Participants from the TUS Certificate in Science in Regenerative Agriculture share their experiences, practical learning and reflections on translating ideas into growing practices.

Chair: Michael O'Shea · TUS Market gardener near Kilmeaden, Co. Waterford, managing a six-acre holding with his partner Lisa. Trained under Jim Cronin, he also lectures in regenerative agriculture at TUS.

Student panelists · Tracy Howe, Wendy Lim, Keith Ranalow and Alison Chambers - participants in the TUS Certificate in Science in Regenerative Agriculture (Marketing Gardening).



11:55–12:15 | Coffee Break

A short break to connect with participants.

12:15–12:55 | Cultivating Growers: Community Gardens as a Gateway to Market Gardening

Community gardens bring people together to grow food, learn practical skills and explore new possibilities. Speakers will discuss how local initiatives can offer pathways into market gardening.

Ciara O'Brien · Mitchelstown Edible Town After a 20-year international corporate career, Ciara returned to Mitchelstown and opened Barnahown B&B. She leads the Edible Town initiative for Mitchelstown Tidy Towns.

Verling Fitzgerald · Mitchelstown Community Allotments Contributor to community allotments and edible-growing initiatives in Mitchelstown.

Ellie Donovan · Community Gardens Ireland Participant representing the community gardening network.

Jess Angland · Slí Eile Her work at Slí Eile offers an example of how market gardening and social enterprise can bring food, nature and community together to create both social and economic value.

12:55–13:40 | Innovative Business Models for Market Gardening

Can small-scale food growing provide a sustainable livelihood while strengthening local communities? The panel explores cooperative models, local markets and ways to make market gardening viable.

John Murphy · Our Farm at Bushy Park, chair Works with Irish Rural Link and CAP Network Ireland and hosts Our Farm at Bushy Park, a cooperative farming initiative.

Joanne McEldowney · Thatch & Thyme Owner and chef at Thatch & Thyme Restaurant.

Evonne Boland · Food Policy Ireland Panel participant representing Food Policy Ireland.

Colman Power · Colman Power Nutrition Organic fitness coach, contributing a nutrition and food-business perspective.

13:40–14:00 | A Little More Food for Thought: Key Reflections & Future Directions

A moment to reflect on insights shared across the day and explore opportunities for continued collaboration between growers, educators, communities and local food initiatives.

Jean Forbes Cooke · TUS Lecturer in Business and Financial Services at TUS and Secretary of the Green Campus Committee, with a strong interest in local food production and supporting local producers.

Elisha McGrane · TUS Lecturer in Applied Science at TUS and Chair of the Green Campus Committee, with a keen interest in sustainable food systems and food self-sufficiency.

14:00–15:00 | Networking Lunch

Continue the conversations, exchange experiences and meet others working across market gardening and local food systems.