



National Rural Network

2020 National Rural Network Biodiversity Young Farmer of the Year: Joe Melody proudly showcases the important habitats his farm supports.

Joe Melody was awarded the 2020 National Rural Network Biodiversity Farmer of the Year Award as part of last year's FBD Young Farmer of the Year Competition. Joe farms in partnership with his



father, close to Bunratty Co. Clare. Joe and his father have a mixed farming enterprise which includes a dairy herd and a pedigree Charolais, Limousine, Angus, and Hereford herd. More recently, Joe established a joint venture with his brother Frank, 'Melody Farm Eggs,' consisting of a 400 strong bird flock of pasture-raised hens, producing high-quality eggs sold locally.

Joe is an active participant in the Green Low-carbon Agri-environmental Scheme (GLAS), funded under the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, extended to 2022. The scheme provides payments to farmers to help tackle climate change, preserve biodiversity, protect habitat and promote environmentally friendly farming. Joe is conscious that, given the location of his farm, he has some sensitive grassland

habitats that require specific management.

Joe's farm supports some important grassland habitats, such as maintaining swards to support Wild Geese & Swans, Traditional Hay Meadows, and Low-input Permanent Pastures. A key aim of Joe's GLAS plan is to produce and maintain a grass sward to feed wintering geese and swans. The wintering birds include Whooper Swan, Greenland White-fronted Goose, Barnacle Goose, and Brent Goose. The farm borders the Shannon estuary for over 3km. The riverbank is emersed in a reed bed that intersperses with salt marsh, all of which need to be grazed and managed to allow the habitat and its ecosystem to thrive.

"We graze the area very lightly between April & October with young stock. They break down some of the foliage to prevent it from becoming too dense; this rejuvenates the pasture within the immediate vicinity of the riverbank. Sometimes, in the winter, you will see the swans grazing on the farmed permanent pasture too, which shows it also provides support."





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There are areas of Joe's farm which support species-rich grassland; these are not intensively managed or grazed by stock. Joe's farm encourages other important grasslands, Traditional Hay Meadows (THM) and Low – input permanent pasture (LIPP). The objective is to promote the maintenance of traditional forage conservation methods beneficial to grassland plants and animals; during harvest, turning the cut grass twice allows the seeds of the grasses to be spread, ensuring the meadow continues to maintain its diverse number of species.



Joe's story is now available to view here: [J. Melody Farmland Video](#)

The National Rural Network would like to thank Joe for taking the time from his busy schedule to showcase his farm with us.