



FARM' IN

INCLUSION THROUGH
SOCIAL FARMING



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Lesson 2:

Developing Inclusive Work Environments



Principles of Inclusion on Farms

- Inclusion goes **beyond physical access** → it means full participation and respect.
- **A truly inclusive farm:**
 - ✓ Welcomes people of different ages, abilities and backgrounds.
 - ✓ Creates **conditions where everyone can thrive**.
- Key aim: design spaces, processes and relationships that **reduce barriers and promote equal contribution**.

**Inclusive farms build
trust with families,
social workers and
communities →
ensuring sustainability.**

Core Principles of Inclusion



Respect for diversity

every person's skills and presence matter



Equal opportunities

everyone contributes in a meaningful way



Safety & well-being

protect physical and emotional health



Participation & belonging

build group spirit & shared success



Empowerment & growth

support learning and new responsibilities

Inclusion on farms means much more than physical access — it is about creating a safe, respectful and empowering environment where everyone, regardless of ability or background, can meaningfully contribute, feel a sense of belonging and grow through shared participation.

Types of Barriers on Farms

Barriers often invisible to those who feel comfortable.

	Barriers	Solutions
Physical	narrow paths, heavy tools, inaccessible toilets	<i>ramps, lighter tools, raised beds</i>
Social	cliques, prejudice, lack of involvement	<i>rotate teams, train mentors, invite input</i>
Communication	language gaps, cognitive challenges, hearing issues	<i>step cards, visuals, simple instructions</i>
Organizational	strict schedules, too few mentors, unclear orientation	<i>flexible routines, proper introduction tours</i>

Removing Barriers: Strategies & Benefits

Be proactive: observe, listen, involve participants in problem-solving.

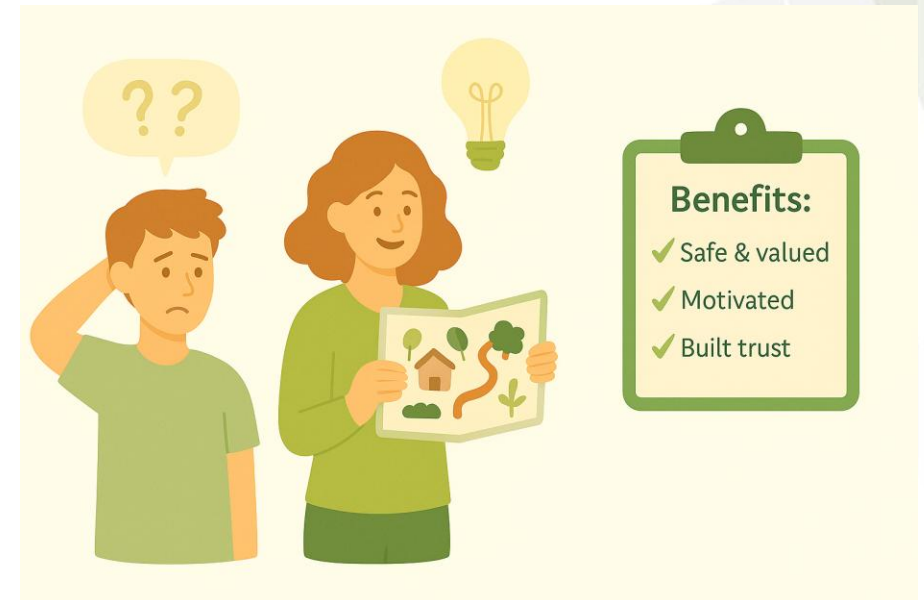
Quick wins first: lighter tools, clearer instructions, visual aids.

Systematic approach: review regularly as groups and needs change.

Shared responsibility: ask “What would make this easier for you?”

Practical example:

A newcomer avoids confusion when given a short orientation tour + visual farm map.



Participation: Creating Opportunities

Inclusion is incomplete without **active involvement**.

Farms can encourage participation through:

- ✓ **Shared decision-making** – e.g. vote on crops or market layout.
- ✓ **Ownership of tasks** – responsibility for greenhouse or compost.
- ✓ **Visibility of contributions** – see the results of one's own work.
- ✓ **Opportunities to teach others** – experienced participants guide newcomers.

Practical example:

A group plants seedlings → later they share a meal from those vegetables → clear link between effort & reward.

Belonging: Building Community

Belonging = emotional outcome of participation.

Strengthened by daily, consistent practices:

- ✓ **Group rituals** – greeting circle, reflection at end of day.
- ✓ **Shared meals & breaks** – equality at the same table.
- ✓ **Celebrations** – harvest festivals, birthdays, milestones.
- ✓ **Storytelling & cultural sharing** – diversity as a strength.

Overcoming barriers:

- ✓ Gradual integration, peer mentoring, safe spaces for communication.
- ✓ Fight stigma through education & mentor role modelling.

Wider Impact & Benefits

Mentors are central – listen, recognise progress, balance group dynamics.

Wider community involvement builds dignity:

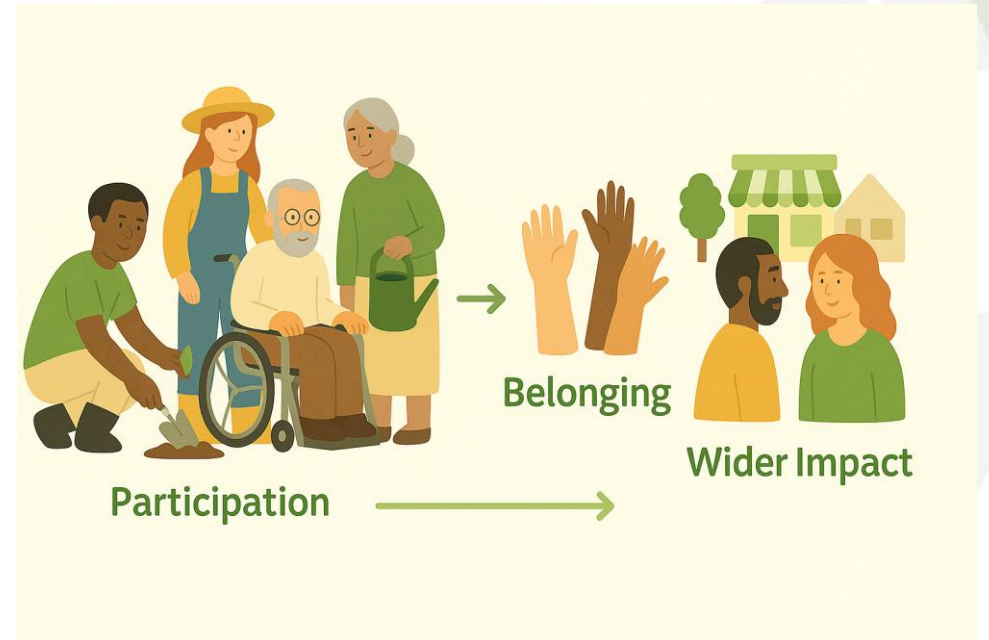
- ✓ Open farm days & local markets;
- ✓ Schools visiting and learning from participants;
- ✓ Families & neighbours joining activities.

Practical example:

A participant demonstrates farm tasks to school visitors → confidence grows & stigma decreases.

Benefits:

- ✓ Motivation ↑, drop-out ↓.
- ✓ Improved mental health & resilience.
- ✓ Stronger community recognition & funding opportunities.



Why Team Building Matters

Farming = cooperation → teamwork improves productivity **and inclusion**.

Many participants have little/no positive teamwork experience.

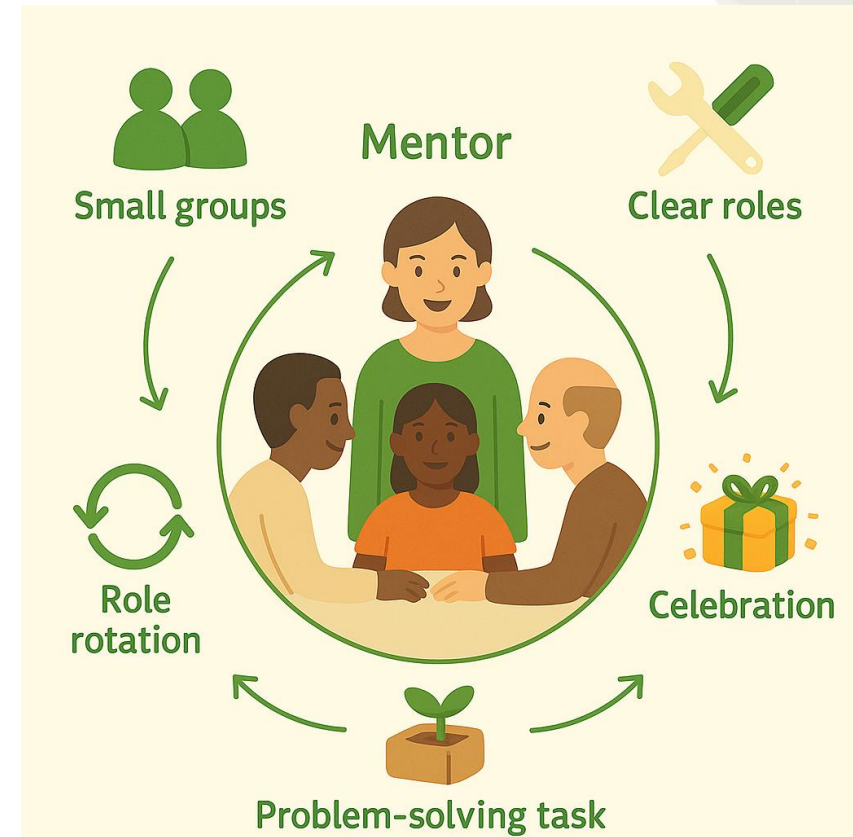
Benefits of teamwork:

- ✓ **Social learning & communication skills.**
- ✓ **Confidence & resilience through shared success.**
- ✓ **Reduced mentor stress** → participants rely on each other.

Practical example: Dividing a planting field into small groups → every participant contributes without being overwhelmed.

Strategies for Strong Teams

- **Small groups:** easier participation, less anxiety.
- **Clear role division:** avoids confusion, gives ownership.
- **Rotation of roles:** builds flexibility, prevents monotony.
- **Problem-solving tasks:** compost system, farm stand planning → trust grows.
- **Celebrating group achievements:** shared meal, group photo, words of appreciation.



Handling Challenges: Mentor's Role in Challenges

Conflicts happen → mentors guide constructive resolution.

Conflict resolution tools:

- Early intervention before escalation.
- Focus on behaviour, not personality.
- Encourage compromise & active listening.

Encourage inclusion: ask quieter participants for input, rotate leadership.

Role of mentor:

- Sets the tone: respectful communication, calm leadership.
- Observes dynamics: supports quieter voices, manages dominant personalities.
- Builds trust: keeps promises, models inclusion.

Long-term mentor impact:

Trust & stability in group.

- Continuous improvement through reflection.
- Creates safe, resilient farm culture.

Conflict Resolution on Farms: Resolving Conflicts Constructively

Conflicts are natural → especially in diverse/vulnerable groups.

Main sources:

- Task disagreements (speed vs. precision).
- Role confusion (dominating vs. overlooked).
- Personality clashes, stress, fatigue.

Mentor's role:

- Intervene early, prevent escalation.
- Encourage active listening and respectful dialogue.
- Focus on behaviour, not personality.
- Guide towards compromise & shared solutions.

Practical example: Two participants argue about tool use → mentor clarifies roles calmly, encourages them to find middle ground.



Building a Culture of Empathy

Empathy = foundation of conflict prevention and resolution.

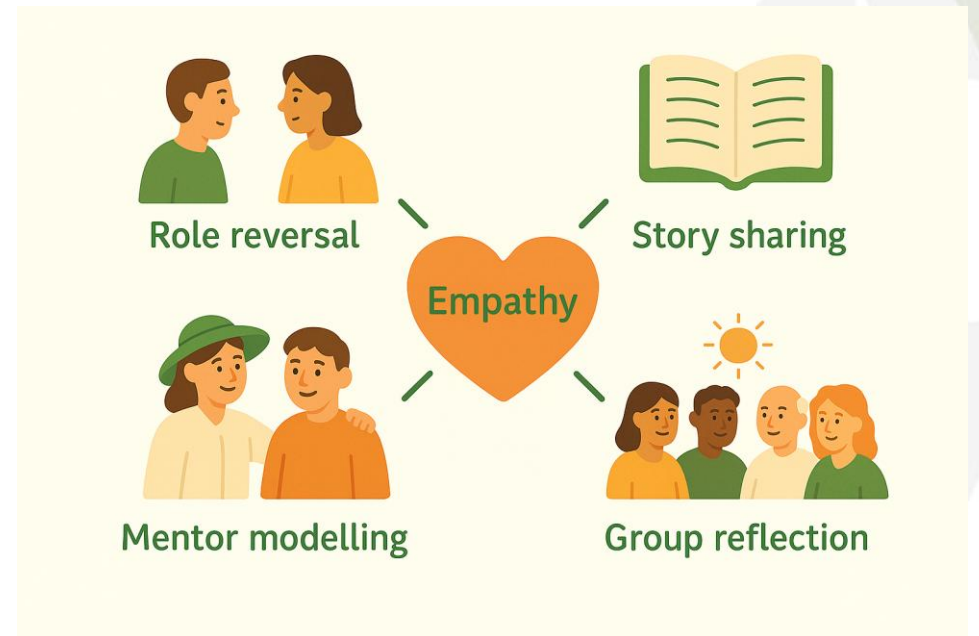
Strategies:

- **Role reversal exercises** – “How would you feel?”
- **Story sharing** – personal experiences reduce stigma.
- **Mentor modelling** – respect, patience, apologising when needed.
- **Daily group reflection** – highlight positive actions by others.

Long-term impact:

- Trust ↑, cooperation ↑.
- Stigma ↓, group safety ↑.
- More positive working environment for mentors and participants.

Practical example: At end of day, participants share one positive thing another person did → builds appreciation and recognition of empathy.



International & European Models of Inclusion

- **Kerry Social Farming (Ireland):** ordinary farm life, adapted tasks, reflection circles → inclusion rooted in everyday routines.
- **IPS Model (EU):** focus on strengths + close mentorship, mediation turns conflicts into growth.
- **Italy – Social Cooperatives:** farming + social services, team-based tasks, strong peer support.
- **Slovenia – Korenika:** multigenerational centre with food production, workshops, therapeutic gardens, seed preservation.
- **Netherlands – Care Farms:** elderly & dementia care, therapeutic gardening, structured routines.

Different contexts, same goal → dignity, belonging and participation for vulnerable groups.

Practical Solutions on Farms

- ✓ **Structured entry:** orientation tour + easy starter tasks → builds confidence.
- ✓ **Planting tasks:** divide into roles + rotate → prevent monotony, support different abilities.
- ✓ **Packaging lines:** U-shaped tables, micro-roles, visual samples → everyone contributes.
- ✓ **Markets:** greeter/bagger/stocker roles, price boards, quiet corner → reduce stress.
- ✓ **Weather flexibility:** indoor “plan B” ensures stability and routine.
- ✓ **Communication-friendly:** step cards, colour-coded tools, demo + practice.



- **Trauma-informed:** predictable routines, choice of tasks, non-verbal break signals.
- **Energy check system:** red-yellow-green signals → adapt workload to wellbeing.
- **Debriefing:** after incidents → learning, trust, recognition.

Practical Guidelines for Inclusive Farms: From Theory to Daily Practice

Physical environment:

- ✓ Accessible paths, ramps, reachable tools, clear signage.
- ✓ Organised spaces reduce stress & confusion.

Work organisation:

- ✓ Defined roles = predictability & security.
- ✓ Tasks adapted to abilities, step-by-step approach.
- ✓ Visible contribution builds confidence.

Role of mentors:

- ✓ Not only supervisors, but backbone of inclusion.
- ✓ Flexibility, patience, balance between leading & supporting.



Routines & Tools for Stability

Daily routines:

- ✓ Morning intro = clarity.
- ✓ Evening reflection = recognition & support.
- ✓ Consistency → trust & safety.

Checklists as tools:

- ✓ *Space* – accessible paths, labelled tools, rest areas.
- ✓ *Work organisation* – clear roles, adapted tasks, breaks.
- ✓ *Staff* – trained mentors, peer exchange, crisis protocols.

Flexibility is key:

- ✓ structure guides, empathy makes it work



Key Lessons from Lesson 2

- ✓ Inclusion = **beyond access** → respect, participation, belonging.
- ✓ Barriers must be **identified & removed** → physical, social, communication, organisational.
- ✓ Participation + belonging = **confidence, stability & resilience**.
- ✓ **Team building** strengthens productivity and unity → mentor plays central role.
- ✓ **Conflict resolution & empathy** transform problems into opportunities.
- ✓ Examples from practice show that **small adaptations create big impact**.
- ✓ Practical guidelines (routines + checklists) provide **safety, dignity & growth**.



