# Farmers and fashion unite for sustainability at Kinsale festival



Ciara Hunt and her husband purchased a farm near Kinsale, County Cork, five years ago, motivated by their desire to find a permanent family home. However, they were taken aback by the stark silence that enveloped the property, devoid of birds and insects, which prompted them to undertake significant ecological restoration efforts. “The farmhouse was a ruin but the courtyard and forest where it nestled was beautiful,” Ciara recalls, noting the transition from silence to a more vibrant ecosystem following their interventions.

Upon acquiring the farm, the couple, with support from Ciara’s parents, who own an organic holding across the road, ceased all agricultural spraying and embarked on a journey to rejuvenate the land. This has involved planting thousands of trees, establishing hedgerows, and cultivating multi-species meadows and wildflowers, resulting in a resurgence of wildlife. “The buzzing and birds are already flocking back,” Ciara emphasises, expressing her greater excitement for the external restoration compared to the renovated farmhouse itself.

Sir Tim Smit, the founder of the renowned Eden Project in Cornwall, has been a recurring visitor to the Kinsale farm and has provided valuable insights to the couple regarding their ongoing projects. Smit’s Eden Project, which opened in 2000, has welcomed over 19 million visitors, transforming the former industrial site into a hub of biodiversity and education in horticulture.

In a move to further integrate discussions on sustainable practices within agriculture and fashion, Ciara and her mother, Mareta Doyle, are collaborating to host the inaugural Fashion and Farming Festival in Kinsale on May 10 and 11. This festival aims to bring together a wide array of speakers, including innovators and environmentalists, to address sustainable life practices and share their experiences. Mareta, who has a strong background in festival organisation, previously founded the Kinsale Arts Festival, attesting to her ability to curate impactful events.

“The idea is to highlight how we can attain a more sustainable life and country by gathering experts, environmentalists, innovators, dreamers, fabricators, planners and inventors,” Mareta notes, expressing her vision for the festival to foster new ideas and discussions on how to mend the strained farm-to-fabric cycles that have developed over the years.

Mareta highlighted the interconnectedness of fashion and farming, touching on the pressing challenges both industries face in the context of climate change. “Once inextricably linked, fashion and farming are part of our domestic and social fabric, but how we farm and how we create fashion are killing us in today’s world," she remarked, underlining the aim of the festival to explore sustainable agricultural methods and more eco-friendly fabric production processes.

The festival will also feature notable personalities, including U2's Adam Clayton and actor Sinead Cusack, attracted by the mother-daughter duo to engage in discussions about the synergy between fashion and agriculture, and how sustainable practices can be integrated into both fields.

Ciara, who has a considerable career in fashion media and has held significant editorial roles with various publications, is keenly aware of the substantial environmental impact of the fashion industry. She highlights that less than 1% of clothing is recycled into new garments, leaving a staggering 73% of materials either landfilled or incinerated. This awareness is critical to the conversations that the festival seeks to enable.

As the date of the Fashion and Farming Festival approaches, both Ciara and Mareta express hopes that the event will elucidate the opportunities for collaboration between these two often disparate sectors and spur meaningful dialogues on sustainability, with Mareta stating, “Whether you’re a fashion enthusiast, a farmer or simply curious about the relationship between these two worlds, fashion and farming weaves together experiences, projects and stories that might lead to a brighter future for our planet.”

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)