



Supporting policies for Social Farming in Europe

Progressing Multifunctionality in Responsive Rural Areas

- SoFar project: supporting EU agricultural policies





Regione Toscana
Diritti Valori Innovazione Sostenibilità

ARSIA • Agenzia Regionale per lo Sviluppo
e l'Innovazione nel settore Agricolo-forestale
via Pietrapiana, 30 - 50121 Firenze
tel. 055 27551 - fax 055 2755216/2755231
www.arsia.toscana.it
email: posta@arsia.toscana.it

Coordinamento: Roberto D'Alonzo - ARSIA



So Far: Social Services in Multifunctional Farms ('Social Farming')
Web-site: <http://sofar.unipi.it>
Contacts: francovo@vet.unipi.it
tel. 0039 050 2216918 or 0039 050 2210500



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**Progressing Multifunctionality
in Responsive Rural Areas**

Francesco Di Iacovo, Deirdre O'Connor
editors

Credits

Editors: Francesco Di Iacovo, Deirdre O'Connor

Chapter co-ordinators:

Chapter 1: Jan Hassink

Chapter 2: Paolo Pieroni

Chapter 3: Joost Dessein

Chapter 4: Gerald Assouline

Chapter 5: Greet Bloom

Chapter 6: Francesco Di Iacovo, Deirdre O'Connor.

Chapter Credits

Introduction: F. Di Iacovo.

Chapter 1: J. Hassink, with contributions from each national team.

Chapter 2: 2.1, 2.2 P. Pieroni; 2.2.1 F. Di Iacovo; 2.2.2 P. Pieroni; 2.3 G. Assouline; 2.4 K. Vadnal; 2.5 M. Kalisch, T. van Elsen; 2.6 A. Mc Gloin, 2.7 J. Dessein, G. van Huylenbroeck, M. Calus, W. Rombaut; 2.8 G. Bloom, J. Hassink.

Chapter 3: 3.1 J. Dessein; 3.2 J. Hassink, K. Vadnal; 3.3 M. Kalisch, T. van Elsen; 3.4 A. Mc Gloin; 3.5 K. Vadnal, J. Dessein; 3.6 F. Di Iacovo.

Chapter 4: 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5 G. Assouline; 4.3 G. Assouline, A. Mc Gloin, D. O'Connor.

Chapter 5: 5.1, 5.2 F. Di Iacovo; 5.3, 5.4 G. Bloom, F. Di Iacovo; 5.4.1-5.5 G. Bloom, F. Di Iacovo, M. Calus, J. Hassink, M. Kalisch, T. van Elsen, K. Vadnal, A. Mc Gloin; 5.6 G. Bloom.

Chapter 6: F. Di Iacovo, D. O'Connor.

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Index

Presentation	7
Introduction	11
1. Social farming across Europe: overview	21
1.1 What is social farming?	21
1.2 Significance of social farming today	23
1.3 History of social farming	25
1.4 Dynamics of social farming	27
1.5 Estimation of the actual number of social farms in the SoFar countries	29
1.6 Developing networks	29
1.7 Regulatory systems	30
1.8 Different types of social farming	33
1.9 Further description of diversity of social farms	35
1.10 Benefits for the service-users	40
1.11 Qualities of social farms	41
2. “A journey through social farming in Europe”: the case studies	43
2.1 A brief presentation	43
2.2 Italy	44
2.3 France	65
2.4 Slovenia	78
2.5 Germany	90
2.6 Ireland	98
2.7 Belgium (Flanders)	110
2.8 The Netherlands	120
2.9 Conclusions	130
3. A critical reading from cases and emerging issues	131
3.1 Transversal reading of cases	131

3.2 Inclusive effects	132
3.3 Landscape and environment	135
3.4 Gender issues	140
3.5 Economic features	143
3.6 Policies and institutions in social farming	146
4. Building a european stakeholders' perspective of social farming	151
4.1 Overview	151
4.2 Action research to involve stakeholders in establishing social farming as a european policy focus	151
4.3 The production of social farming policy positions by social farming professional actors	161
4.4 A policy process: building and consolidation of networking dynamics	168
4.5 Concluding remarks	173
5. Priority areas and innovation strategies for further developing Social Farming in Europe	175
5.1 Introduction	175
5.2 A bottom-up approach and policy network for a new perspective on Social Farming	176
5.3 Mainstreaming Social Farming in Europe	179
5.4 Priority areas in Social Farming	183
5.5 Innovative strategies	196
5.6 Final conclusions	201
6. Conclusions	203
References	216

Presentation

Social agriculture in Tuscany got its start thanks to work begun in 2003 by ARSIA, the Regional Agency for Development and Innovation in Agriculture and Forestry, in the strong belief that valorization of Tuscan agriculture and ruralities could not be reduced to a simplification of the concept of rural development. Our region's ruralities and the peculiar characteristics of the Tuscan countryside instead merited representation as a set of values, developed through collective learning and rooted in the territory, that were capable of uniting enterprise, culture, tradition, environment, landscape, and social relationships. One of the priority project objectives was to aid the emergence of all aspects of rural life in Tuscany, on the one hand pointing up its links to tradition and, on the other, emphasizing the strong modern connotations that distinguish it. The immediate consequence of this approach was that one of the terms held to be fundamental to the future of agriculture in general found application to social farming: multifunctionality. Agricultural enterprises can develop multifunctional approaches not only in the "classic" directions taken by territorial valorization (for example, in agri-tourism or in the environmental functions of agriculture (agro-energy, territorial management and protection) but also through social farming activities that permit achieving important integrated objectives, including new activities in the agricultural sphere that generate positive fallout and benefits for society as a whole as well as the possibility of applying innovative solutions to improve social services in rural areas.

In 2003, ARSIA launched an innovative activity targeting social farming in Tuscany. The project was a first attempt to better understand, survey, and give recognition to social farmers across Tuscany. The initiative was the first in Italy and was quite successful. For the first time, about 100 social-farming related organizations/initiatives emerged from the shadows and their promoters began to present and communicate their daily activities on farming-related social issues. Organization of a preliminary network proved useful in defining a new "arena" for

presenting and debating concept of social farming and for attracting newcomers to such discussions.

Creation of a local social farming network and the joint project by ARSIA and the University of Pisa on this subject produced a proposal that was selected by the European Commission under the VI Framework Program for Scientific and Technological Research. The SoFar Project (Social Farming in Multifunctional Agriculture) receives EU finding for supporting new agricultural policies in the Union, providing evidence on the theme of social farming and strategic guidelines for formulating intervention tools and policies.

In Europe, there is an increasing consensus that social services in rural areas could play an active role in rural development processes for improving local livelihoods and contributing to their economic viability. In this respect, European case studies have proved that farmers can actively contribute to improving health care services and supporting rural everyday life.

But social farming also boasts other attributes that are already known to many local practitioners. Social farming offers the opportunity for small groups to work with plants and animals, and there is evidence supporting the thesis that social farming is therapeutic for the less-empowered people involved. In many cases such practices are organized in peri-urban areas for local urban populations. They make it possible to expand the services supply and offer opportunities for building new bridges between cities and the countryside. The results of the SoFar Project are quite important for different reasons. They open a window on a phenomenon that has not been well-evaluated to date and they also concretely establish different possibilities for establishing collaboration among research units, support centers, and local practitioners with the aim of building new pathways for change in rural areas. There is a strong need for innovation in most EU rural areas; sometimes efforts are directed toward resolving specific questions, but there also exists a real need for innovative methodological approaches for facing change in general. SoFar and social farming offer both a concept and a methodological approach to better promote a living countryside in Europe. The project results thus come at a moment of fundamental importance for Community policy-making. For all of us, they can delineate important strategic guidelines for our work toward expanding the concept of multifunctionality into other spheres – including that of social farming.

Maria Grazia Mammuccini
ARSIA Director

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Introduction

Historically, agricultural and rural societies, all over Europe, have developed initiatives and practices promoting different forms of solidarity, social assistance and social inclusion.

In particular we may speak of *social farming* (or 'care farming' or 'green care') as those farming practices aimed at promoting disadvantaged people's rehabilitation, education and care and/or towards the integration of people with 'low contractual capacity' (i.e. intellectual and physical disabilities, convicts, those with drug addiction, minors, migrants) but also practices that support services in rural areas for specific target groups such as children and the elderly.

As a *tentative definition* social farming (SF) is both a traditional and an innovative use of agriculture frequently introduced from "grassroots level" by both new and established farmers. SF includes all activities that use agricultural resources, both from plants and animals, in order to promote (or to generate) therapy, rehabilitation, social inclusion, education and social services in rural areas. However, it is strictly related to farm activities where (small) groups of people can stay and work together with family farmers and social practitioners.

Social Farming adopts a multifunctional view of agriculture. The main products, in addition to saleable produce, are health and employment, education or therapy. Agriculture offers opportunities for people to participate in the varied rhythms of the day and the year, be it in growing food or working with domestic animals. Social farming includes agricultural enterprises and market gardens that integrate people with physical, mental or emotional disabilities; farms which offer openings for the socially disadvantaged, for young offenders or those with learning difficulties, people with drug dependencies, the long-term unemployed; active senior citizens; school and kindergarten farms

and many more. Prevention of illness, inclusion and a better quality of life are features of social agriculture.

The special added value of social farming is the possibility for disadvantaged people to be integrated into a living context, where their personal capabilities are valued and enhanced. The presence of the farmers, the contact and relationship with other living beings – animals and plants, the assumption of specific responsibilities, are some of the key features of the rehabilitative practices generated by social farming.

Of course, the definition of social farming is not yet agreed across Europe. There are still different ways of identifying it (farming for health, green care, social farming) as a way to use agriculture for social purposes. SF is both a new and a traditional concept. It originates from the traditional rural self-help systems that were well-established in rural areas before the modernisation of agriculture and the rise of the public welfare system. Nowadays the concept has been radically reformed in an innovative and ever-changing way. In order to build a life sustaining web (Barnes, 2007) it is important to accompany formal and professional social services systems with an extensive system of more informal relationships. Moreover, informal systems should improve the capacity of the local context to include and increase the opportunities for weaker actors.

All over rural Europe, there is a widespread and rich patrimony of diverse agricultural realities – inherited from the past or created more recently – which are characterised by distinctive, sound relationships between farming practices of those of social inclusion.

In many cases these experiences were born autonomously, rooted in the strong, personal, ethical beliefs and motivation of their promoters, who carried a function of collective interest – invisibly and in isolation. In fact, the ‘invisibility’ of such realities is reflected in the absence of a clearly defined judicial/institutional framework for social farming in most countries and at European level which makes objective assessment of these realities a difficult task.

However, social farming is an evolving, dynamic scenario, which is receiving increased attention from multiple stakeholders in recent times. It has already visibly matured in some countries, such as The Netherlands, where social farming is a legally recognised and formalised activity.

However, in most countries and at European level, *SF isn't as yet an organised system*, but more a patchwork-like reality, mainly

developed on a voluntary basis in the form of “bottom-up” actions, unsupported by any specific policies and/or institutional framework. There is a clear need for a process of improvement that can extend the supply of social services by multifunctional farms and enhance their quality. The creation of a social farming ‘system’ will be a long-term, evolutionary, multi-actor process that should be based on the experience of those rural actors who have already started by developing the reality thus far. At the same time, in the process of expanding and “normalising” social farming, we should not lose sight of its original spirit and values, such as solidarity and social responsibility, on which most of the pioneering experiences were based. Thus, it is apparent that the building of a new institutional environment for social farming requires close attention, involving different actors into a dialogue and ensuring active participation by previous and current protagonists.

SF can be also linked to a rural development discourse. A strong theme in most of the rural development literature is that a lack of opportunities in rural areas is often connected to the absence of adequate and innovative services for everyday life. In this arena, SF can offer appropriate solutions that fit the local needs of inhabitants. In rural areas, flexibility and proximity, scope economies and informality are some key words that characterise the use of agriculture and farms for providing services to local inhabitants and rural communities¹, in the face of the erosion of public health/care provision (Di Iacovo, 2003).

Social farming is an emerging issue in many EU countries due to an increasing focus on different aspects of multifunctional agriculture as well as concerns about public health expenditure and the efficacy of social services.

Social farming is connected to many critical issues. It is an example of an innovative response to the transition from old to new economic regimes. This process of change affects agriculture as well as other sectors such as health, care, education, and the employment sector. Social farming seems to be at the intersection of many points of convergence such as: multifunctional agriculture; the fiscal crises of States; concerns over the individualisation and efficacy of serv-

¹ For example kindergarten services or day-services for the elderly.

ices and the re-organisation of local life under a sustainable system for organising services in both urban and rural contexts.

The idea of social farming is connected to the possibility of re-generating relationships between different groups of people and within local communities. It offers also the possibility for better linking urban and rural areas, by improving quality of life at local level, both in peri-urban and rural areas.

Social farming reflects different thinking about the idea development itself. In this case, the need to mobilise local resources in innovative ways is crucial in order to provide solutions to local needs.

Social farming can be also considered as an “informal” service offered by subsistence agriculture. It is not the case that SF means a reduction in the quality of services in poorer areas but, on the contrary, can serve as a way to improve their efficacy by connecting formal and professional services with more informal and non-professional systems. This means that in different contexts, health/care systems can introduce agricultural resources into already well-structured organisational systems. Consequently, these professional services can be augmented by incorporating those resources that already exist within the informal services available to local families and communities.

The term SF has recently entered the domain of rural development in EU, reflected in a wide constellation of different practices that are emerging from different territories; experiences that, in many cases, were born as bottom-up initiatives that have “grown in the shade” for a long time.

Social farming is gaining attention from an increasing range of stakeholders in recent times. On one hand, this results from a new, widespread positive perception of agricultural and rural resources, leading to an increasing interest about the beneficial effects of natural spaces and agricultural areas on the social, physical and mental wellbeing of people. Health institutions are keen to find alternative practices that are more embedded in social contexts. At the same time, social farming represents a new chance for farmers to carry out alternative services, to broaden and diversify the scope of their activities and their role in society. The integration between agricultural practices and social services may also provide new sources of income for farmers, enhanc-

ing the image of agriculture in society and establishing new connections between rural and urban citizens.

Social farming links two worlds – the agricultural and the social. In that respect it is sometimes problematic to create new knowledge and to share competencies between different stakeholders, aimed at reorienting the use of agricultural resources for health/care purposes. SF requires multi-skilled, multi-sectoral integrated approaches to be better understood and developed.

Also depending on the different categories of service-users, *SF is highly demanding in terms of designing integrated policies* in rural development, local development, employment and social affairs.

Social farming can be seen also a process of social innovation where collective learning, bottom-up approaches and practices rooted in local experiences are producing a process of radical change, affecting policies at regional and national level. In this process, there appears to be a specific role for the organisation of policy networks at regional, national and EU level. Their role should be to improve awareness of social farming; to seek greater public attention and resources; to increase the knowledge and evidence base and, at the same time, to work towards developing a judicial/institutional framework that supports and affirms a different culture of caring for less-empowered people, linked to a different use of agricultural resources.

The debate around SF is developing rapidly in most of the EU countries at grassroots level. Meanwhile, it seems more difficult to engage institutional actors – both at national and EU levels.

Building on some existing evidence about SF, the overall aim of the SoFar project was to support the building of a new institutional environment for social farming; to provide a linkage between research and practitioners/rural actors and to bring different European experiences closer together, in order to compare, exchange and co-ordinate experiences and activities.

The project was carried out by a partnership of seven Universities and Research Centres in the EU.

Pisa University, Department of Animal Production (Italy) coordinated the project. Other participants were Wageningen University (The Netherlands); Forschungsinstitut für Biologischen Landbau

(Research Institute of Organic Agriculture), Standort Witzenhausen (Germany); University of Ghent Faculty of Bioscience and Engineering, Dept of Agricultural Economics (Belgium); Department Agronomy, Biotechnical Faculty, University of Ljubljana, (Slovenia); QAP Decision (France); National University of Ireland, Dublin (Ireland), Agenzia Regionale per lo Sviluppo e l'Innovazione nel settore Agricolo-forestale - ARSIA Regione Toscana, Firenze (Italy).

As partners of Ghent University, two other groups in Belgium were involved in the project. They were Groone Zorn, the Flemish centre for social farming, and the Social Science Unit of ILVO (Institute for Agriculture and Fisheries Research).

The partners were strongly motivated and committed to this topic. They were also very well established at regional/country level. Both these elements contributed enormously to the level of debate within the group as well as the possibility of facilitating exchanges and the participation of a large number of stakeholders in the different steps and activities of the project.

The different scientific backgrounds of the participating institutions ensured a wide inter-disciplinary view – the specific expertise of participants included the fields of rural development; economics; marketing; politics; sociology; communication; gender studies and community development. In addition, the presence of partners from very different geographical contexts increased the opportunities:

- to compare experiences in different countries – social farming practices; institutional/policy support; cross-cutting related issues (e.g. economic benefits, gender and ethical issues, relations with other dimensions of multifunctionality) and to benchmark reference points across Europe;
- to connect existing experiences and networks within country/ regional contexts and also to build a European-wide co-ordinated system from this patchwork-like reality;
- to design a shared innovation strategy – rooted in several countries' backgrounds – to support co-ordinated policy-making at European level.

The project lasted 30 months and was organised in the following steps and activities:

1. *Fact-finding and analysis*: Literature review, exploratory survey and detailed information about social farms (produced descriptions of 110 reference cases and a smaller number – 14 – of more detailed stories);

2. *Developing national 'platforms'* 14 working groups comprising about 250 participants in total, SWOT analysis and innovation strategies at country / regional level;
3. *Developing a European 'platform'* (2 working groups with about 100 participants in total): Evolution of the project activities from the local level to the establishment of the European Platforms, EU SWOT analysis and EU innovation strategies;
4. *Communication activities*: Web operational support, information, newsletter and dissemination activities.

The project adopted a participatory approach bridging scientific knowledge with grounded/empirical knowledge (e.g. small working groups with rural actors and policy-makers) and integrating different perspectives (e.g. stakeholders' perspectives, country / regional backgrounds). In that respect, the organisation of different platforms – at regional/country and EU level – was the engine of the action research methodology. It was able to provide the linkage between research and agricultural practitioners and rural development players, and enhanced co-ordination of research activities between the EU, the Member States and regional research institutions.

Another key function of the regional/country and EU platforms in bringing together key stakeholders and rural development researchers was to support the designing of future policies at regional and European levels.

A special added value of this project was its 'grounded' character, which means that scientific knowledge was interchanged and enriched with field-based knowledge. The participatory approach of the project contributed to generating a sense of empowerment among rural actors and offered also a new model of developing (scientific) support to policy-making, more closely aligned to the idea of 'interactive policy making'.

In a way the project also offered the opportunity to animate – and in some cases to begin – the debate about SF in participating countries.

Through the platform activities (carried out at regional and trans-national levels and based on a participatory approach), the following specific objectives were pursued:

1. To assess (and compare):
 - The features of existing realities;
 - The scientific evidence about the effects of agro-social rehabilitative practices;
2. To compare and share:

- Concepts and vocabulary;
 - (Reference) procedures;
 - (Potential) systems of support;
3. To enhance:
 - Networking and co-ordination among stakeholders and researchers;
 - Dissemination of the experiences and lessons learned;
 - Capacity for enhanced visibility, positioning, and profile within the system.
 4. To design innovation strategies at country/regional and European levels;
 5. To learn methodological lessons about the development of participatory research as a valid way to provide scientific support to policies.

These objectives were developed into the following results presented on the project web site (<http://sofar.unipi.it>):

- A State of the Art, describing and analysing current characteristics of social farming in the participating countries/regions, and providing an overview of the situation in other EU countries;
- An inventory of rural actors (i.e. social farms) and other stakeholders in the different participating countries/regions and an overview of other EU countries;
- Country/regional ‘innovation strategies’ designed collaboratively by researchers and different representatives of rural actors and public institutions;
- A European ‘innovation strategy’ designed collaboratively by researchers and different representatives of rural actors and public institutions;
- Mono-thematic papers addressing issues related to social farming and (i) gender issues, (ii) economic issues (e.g. farm viability), (iii) other services in multifunctional farms (e.g. landscape care), (iv) policy issues concerning agriculture and other sectors (e.g. health, quality of life, social inclusion);
- A report on methodological lessons learned (participatory work within platforms).

This book and the video-documentary included, illustrates the research questions and the outcomes of the project.

Chapter One offers a complete overview of the State of the Art of SF across participating countries/regions. It presents some basic

knowledge about social farming; it assesses and compares the features of existing social/care-farming initiatives and offers some scientific evidence about the agro-social rehabilitative practices. It introduces key concepts/vocabulary and information about procedures and systems of support for social/care-farming experiences in Europe.

Chapter Two can be interpreted as a journey around the different realities of SF in participating countries/regions. It provides some information on the different national/regional contexts as well as the specific cases and stories encountered in the course of the project. The cases presented are the same as those recorded in the video work so that readers can gain an understanding and a visual insight into different EU SF projects.

Chapter Three begins with some brief comparative analysis of the cases presented in Chapter Two. It also presents a transversal reading of some specific issues in social farming such as gender; social inclusion; policies; economics; health impacts and environmental effects.

Chapter Four describes and analyses the participatory process underpinning much of the project's activities and discusses its main achievements. Some of the key questions, propositions and stakeholder views that emerged during the platform activities are also summarised in this chapter.

Chapter Five summarises most of the points emerging from the platforms in the form of an EU innovation strategy for SF. This innovation strategy for SF is organised around four priority areas and for each of them specific actions are presented.

Due to the specific methodological approach adopted, it was sometime difficult to fully disentangle the research from the policy dimensions of both the activities and the results. This very particular environment in which the project operated generated some significant challenges in reconciling the project timetable with the time required for undertaking a participatory process aimed at increasing collective learning around SF. The book is an attempt to present the feedback and results from the various project activities, but at the same time to offer a common and shared starting point for analysing the actual situation, the expectations and possible future strategies for SF in Europe.

The hope of the project partners is that it could offer innovative insights into the formulation and implementation of EU rural development policies regarding multifunctional agriculture and social farming.

1. Social Farming across Europe: overview

1.1 What is social farming?

Social farming (SF) is an emerging topic for different stakeholders across Europe: farmers, farmers' organisations, service-users of social farms and their organisations, providers of social and health care services, other stakeholders in social and health care and local, regional and national authorities. It is an innovative approach located within two concepts: multifunctional agriculture and community-based social/health care. Social farming includes all activities that use agricultural resources, both from plants and animals, in order to promote (or to generate) social services in rural areas. Examples of these services are rehabilitation, therapy, sheltered work, life-long education and other activities that contribute to social inclusion.

The general definition of social farming is not yet agreed around Europe. At the same time, today there are different ways to indicate what the phenomenon is about (farming for health, green care, care farming, social farming) and to show how agriculture is used for social purposes. Initiatives for social farming are often introduced by farmers and local communities.

Social farming is both a new and a traditional concept. It originates from the traditional rural self-help networks that were well-established in rural areas before the modernisation of agriculture and the rise of the public welfare system. Nowadays the concept has been substantially reformed in an innovative and an evolving way.

As proposed during the German platform in their Manifesto, Social Farming adopts a multifunctional view of agriculture. The main products, in addition to saleable produce, are health and employment, education or therapy. Agriculture offers opportunities for people to participate in the varied rhythms of the day and the year, be it in growing food or working with domestic animals.

Table. 1.1 - Green care and social farming a tentative classification			
Relational Environment =>		Level of specialisation in care/agricultural activities (-/+) Relevance of an formal / un-formal care environment (-/+)	
Use of living species (plant and animals)		- Health units where therapists prevail	+ Farm units, where farmers prevail
Level of specialisation of use of living species for health/ green or food purposes	+ Multifunctional processes where food production play a key role	2 Green social units	4 Inclusive Farms
	- Prevalent therapeutic use	1 Therapeutic green units	3 Care farms
Specific activities: AAA, animal assisted activities AAT, animal assisted therapy HT, horticultural therapy FT, farm therapy		Units classification: Green care: 1, 2, 3, 4 All green units/farms Social Farming : 2, 3, 4 Green social units, Inclusive farms, Care farms Specialised Green care: 1 Therapeutic green units	

Social farming includes agricultural enterprises and market gardens which integrate people with physical, mental or emotional disabilities; farms which offer openings for the socially disadvantaged, for young offenders or those with learning difficulties, people with drug dependencies, the long-term unemployed and active senior citizens; school and kindergarten farms and many more. Prevention of illness, inclusion and a better quality of life are features of social agriculture.

The special added value of social farming is the possibility for disadvantaged people of being integrated in a living context, where their personal capabilities may be valued and enhanced. The presence of the farmers, the contact and relationship with other living beings – animal and vegetable ones – the assumption of specific responsibilities by the person that uses services, are some of the key features of the practices generated by social farming. In rural areas flexibility and proximity, scope economy and informality are some key words that characterise the use of agriculture and farms for providing services to local inhabitants and rural communities², with the attempt to counter the erosion of public health/care provision. (Di Iacovo, 2003).

A tentative classification of different green care initiatives can be organised by considering two different factors – the different plant and animal uses (whether the focus is on therapeutic use or on food production) and the different specialisations of the people involved (in the care sector or in agriculture). When plants and animals are

² Aside services for disadvantaged people we can also consider the case of kindergarten or little services for the daily life of local older people.

mainly used for therapeutic purposes by therapists we have mainly “green therapeutic units”. For initiatives such as small gardens, pet therapy in hospitals or specialised health centres, it can be problematic to name them as social farms. In other cases, where food production prevails and/or the initiatives are provided by those with agricultural expertise, we have different types of social farms (“green social units” such as “Type B” co-operatives in Italy; inclusive farms – the prevalent situation in Flanders, care farms – found in the Netherlands where specialisation in health/care services can prevail inside farms).

Most of the discussion and the cases presented in the book refer to social farming and not to therapeutic green units.

1.2 Significance of social farming today

Social farming fits with the changing needs in society. It is interesting for the social and health care sectors, as it is linked to the strong demand for inclusive development coming from the fields of social and health care services (processes of socialisation).

Nowadays inclusion of service-users into society, providing meaningful activities/work that leads to empowerment, greater independence and better social status and an approach that takes the potential of service-users as a starting point – rather than their limitations are all central elements in the desired renewal of the health and social care/rehabilitation sector (van Weeghel *et al.*, 2005; Schols & van Schriek-van Meel, 2006). Social farming fits with the changing philosophies in care. It is considered to be a good example of the socialization of care.

Social farming is also an inspiring development for the agricultural sector and rural areas. Since World War II, a strong agro-food sector has developed in the more urbanised regions of Europe. In these areas agriculture and rural areas have changed dramatically (Maris & de Veer, 1971). Mechanisation, new technologies, increased chemical use, specialization and government policies have resulted in rapidly-increasing productivity (Veldkamp *et al.*, 2008). These developments have now led to over-specialisation, environmental pressures and encroachment on public spaces (Wiskerke & van der Ploeg, 2004). This has caused the agro-food sector to come up against its ecological and social limits (Dunn, 2003). In the less

densely populated areas of Europe, abandonment of farms and rural areas is an issue. There is a great need for more sustainable systems of agricultural production that meet the changing needs of society (Veldkamp *et al.*, 2008). There is a need to find a better balance between the values of people, planet and prosperity.

Social farming is an inspiring example of a more sustainable type of multifunctional agriculture, with reference to the social values of agriculture. In the discussion on multifunctionality (OECD, 2001) the inclusive potential of agricultural practices and the contribution of rural communities have been overlooked. This is also the case in relation to the significant positive effects that social farming can have on the agricultural sector itself. Social farming gives broader insights by providing the opportunity to become involved in other sectors (education, health and the social sector). So:

- It will enlarge the number and typology of stakeholders,
- Both the young generation and the wider society have the opportunity to change their perceptions about farming
- Farmers have the opportunity to build new networks and circuits that can be helpful to promote their production particularly to ethical consumers.
- Farmers may change their own entrepreneurial attitude towards the idea of corporate social responsibility.
- It will provide a source of direct income for farmers in return for services provided.

Social farming may have a wide impact on many aspects of agriculture and its links with society, arising from:

- The benefits for ‘service-users’, in terms of empowerment, quality of life, social inclusion, education, employment and therapy.
- Innovation: in agriculture, social welfare, health care and education
- New sustainable links between agriculture, social and health care sectors, education and society
- Strengthening urban-rural relationships; stimulating urban agriculture and healthy cities
- Economics of farms and rural areas via diversification opportunities
- Reputation and the social responsibility of enterprises
- Improving social capital in rural areas
- Strengthening social services in rural areas; healthy and vibrant rural communities and the preservation of landscapes.

1.3 History of social farming

The development of social farming differs in each country because of differences in culture and the structure of their health, social and education services. Although the concrete starting point is hard to define, the emergence of individual initiatives in social farming can be traced from the 1960s. In Italy social co-operatives emerged after the closing down of psychiatric institutions in 1980. Many of the co-operatives include agricultural activities. In Germany the first social institutions, founded at the end of the 19th century to help people in need, often had a farming unit to supply their own kitchens and nutritional needs. These institutions have also had a long tradition of integrating people who use services into the work. As they grew bigger, they struggled particularly since the 1960s when food prices fell and many of the farming units were closed down. Others were transformed to sheltered workshops and still exist. Some of them were re-established in the 1980s and 1990s when the awareness for nature and environment issues heightened and the selling of organic products became lucrative again. In the Netherlands and Ireland many of the first pioneers were inspired by anthroposophic and Christian principles. In Slovenia, the majority of projects started in the late 1990s. They were introduced by pioneers who were motivated by the innovative potential of interlacing social care and agriculture (Vadnal, 2008).

In France and Flanders it is difficult to pinpoint the start of social farming. It seems important to remark that almost all initiatives, with different nuances, express a kind of choice regarding social solidarity (e.g. the wish to help people). The driving forces behind the phenomenon of private solidarity-based initiatives have been discussed in several studies (van Schaik, 1997; Iommi, 2005; Zamaro, 2002; Baars & Bloksma, 2008).

There were various reasons for pioneers to start a social farm:

- The desire to respond to the needs of particular disadvantaged groups (e.g. initiatives started by families of disadvantaged people);
- The need or wish to find an alternative to the intensification of agriculture;
- The wish to share farm life with particular disadvantaged groups;
- The wish to pursue goals related to social justice and solidarity (putting personal values and beliefs into practice) as part of

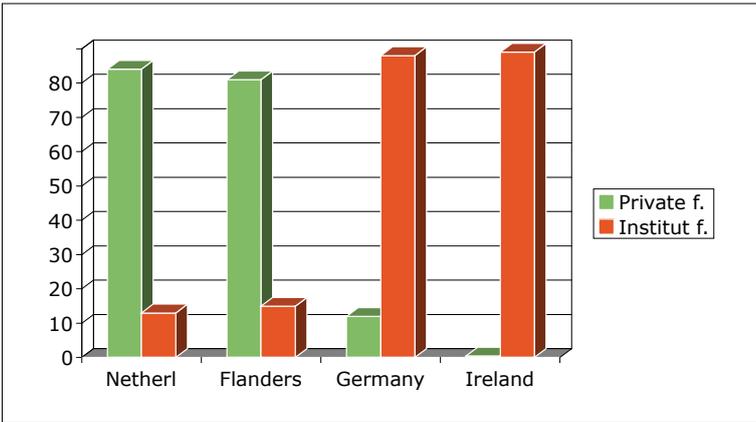


Fig. 1.1 - Development of two types of social farms in the Netherlands and Flanders: private family farms and institutional social farms

personal/family/community life-style choices (e.g. initiatives strongly based on ideals/ideological values);

- The wish to carry out (alternative) professional practice in this field (e.g. initiatives started by professional operators in the social/care/educational sectors);
- The opportunity to have new possible sources of incomes and/or the wish to open up to local community (e.g. initiatives started by agricultural businesses).

The number of social farms is increasing rapidly in Flanders and the Netherlands where family farms are the dominant providers of Social Farming social/health services (*fig. 1.1*). In those countries, this is due to the increasing number of private social farms. In Flanders the increase was from 45 in 2003 to 258 in 2007; and in the Netherlands from 51 in 1998 to 756 in 2007. In both countries, it is only the number of private social farms that is increasing. The number of “institutional” social farms remains constant.

1.4 Dynamics of social farming

A dynamic process is underway regarding the organisation of social farming across Europe. It has changed the organisation of practices as well as the relationships at local, regional, national and even international level. About four different stages can be distinguished, each of which is different in terms of how social farming has developed; in terms of the awareness by different sectoral interests (agriculture and social/health care sector) and as a consequence the regulatory systems adopted at local/regional/country level.

Pioneering situation: In this stage there are relatively few examples of social farming. It is characterised by voluntary action rooted in a strong motivation. Private farms undertake their own projects and farmers enter the system because of their own commitment. There is a low level of awareness by the wider society. Slovenia is at this stage at the moment, although social farming is already gaining a status outside the agriculture sector, similar to the position in Germany.

Multifunctional agriculture: In this stage the profile of social farming is increasing. The interest comes mainly from agriculture and there are local initiatives, both private and public. There is a low level of awareness from the public funding sources related to the care sector. The strong commitment from farmers is a key success factor.

Flanders is at this stage at the moment. Social farming is supported by funds from the agricultural and rural development domain.

SF as a recognised system in social/health care: In this stage there is a strong level of interest in social farming from the health care sector. Public institutions related to social welfare or health recognise social farming as relevant applying to both private and public structures. Germany and Ireland are at this stage at the moment. Social farms are often developed into professionally-based, care-oriented farms that are part of the health care sector. Private family farms are still in a pioneering situation in both countries.

SF as an inclusive model: In this stage there is a large number of initiatives, strongly embedded at grassroots level and in the wider society. They have organised themselves into regional and national networks. There is involvement from both the agricultural and

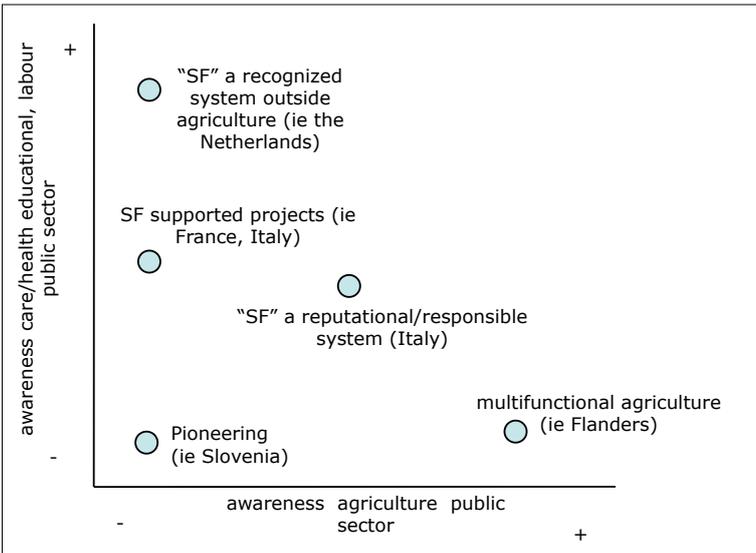


Fig. 1.2 - Awareness of public actors and organisation of social farming (SF)

Table 1.2 - Number of social farms in the different SoFar countries and the number of users (Source SoFar estimation)					
	Private	Institutional	Others	Total	n. Users
Belgium (Flanders)	258	38	12	308	2.000
France					
- associative social inclusion farms / gardens			400	400	
- pedagogic farms				1200	
- therapeutic farms	200		300	500	
Germany					
- therapeutic farms	12	150		162	
- school farms			58	58	
Ireland	*2	**92	12	106	2.000
Italy					
- therapeutic/inclusive/social farms / gardens	150	65	450	675	
- prisons		10		10	
- pedagogic farms					
Netherlands	746	83	10	839	10.000
Slovenia	4	6	5	15	500

* Refers to Irish family farms.

** Refers to Direct funded institutional services, 3rd Sector, Camphill Community farms.

social care/health sectors. The Netherlands, Italy and France are more or less at this stage.

Schematically the stages can be presented as indicated in *fig. 1.2* (adapted from Di Iacovo, 2008).

1.5 Estimation of the actual number of social farms in the SoFar countries

Unfortunately it is not yet possible to give a good estimate of the number of social farms in the different countries and the number of service-users.

However, for some of the countries we can make a reasonably good estimate of the different types of social farms (*Table 1.2*).

1.6 Developing Networks

The variation in the development of social farming – in terms of different levels of awareness is also evident from the networks that have evolved in social farming. In Ireland and Slovenia, the SoFar project was the first initiative to identify existing projects and to bring them together.

In France, there are distinct regional and national networks of community garden projects and pedagogic farms. In Germany separate regional and national networks for the different service-user groups have developed. In Italy, the existing networks in social farming are organised at a regional level.

The Netherlands and Flanders are the only two countries with both national and regional support centres for social farming. These have produced national databases of social farms, national newsletters and operate to impact on national policies that affect social farming. There is a strong involvement of the farmers' organisations.

In the Netherlands the national network have also stimulated the development of regional networks and new foundations of social farmers at regional level. They invest in quality improvement, lobbying and enter into financial arrangements with the care and social sectors.

- National/regional centres: Netherlands, Flanders
- Separate networks: Germany, Italy, France
- Isolated projects: Ireland, Slovenia.

1.7 Regulatory systems

There is a great difference in the regulatory environment for social farming between the different countries. Except in the case of Flanders, “social/care farming” is not defined in any specific national regulations. There are however different regulations that can support social farms. We will describe the regulations for the different countries:

Italy

Italy has regulation for social co-operatives. Social co-operatives can perform agricultural activities. Two types of “social co-operatives” are officially recognised and supported:

- Type “A” that can provide care and educational services (e.g. home care, management of day centres, residential shelters, or kindergartens). Fees differ between categories and vary between 30-70 euro/person/day.
- Type “B” that can operate in all sectors of business (agriculture, industry, commerce and services) with the purpose of integrating disadvantaged people into the workforce. They are obliged to include at least 30% of disadvantaged people into the workforce. At the same time, Type “B” social co-operatives can benefit from tax relief and are treated favourably by public institutions in competitive tenders (e.g. contracts for the maintenance of public parks and gardens and for other services). The law provides also for the creation of agreements where jobs are offered by private enterprises. So, disadvantaged people are frequently employed. In the case of social co-operatives they can be members of the organisation as well.

The scenario looks different for social farming initiatives on private (“commercial”) farms. A specific regulatory framework for these kinds of initiatives has not been established yet.

Germany

There are no regulations specifically concerning social farming. German social legislation strongly regulates social work and its performance. Administration bodies, budgets and institutions differ in each federal state. Specialisation and professionalism often inhibit cross-border attempts to combine social work and farming or food processing. For example the installation of a work-place for a person with a disability in a food processing unit where cows’ milk is proc-

essed must comply with several rules of the related to food hygiene, health and safety as well as standards for fire protection. These specifications are often prohibitive for small-scale initiatives.

In the care sector regarding the employment for people with disabilities, there is a special regulation inhibiting the independent employment on normal family farms. Only sheltered workshops with more than 120 service-users have access to health budgets. The founders of the Federal Republic of Germany wanted to prevent people with disabilities from abuse and thought that big institutions were the best way to reach that goal.

Slovenia

Social farming as a supplementary on-farm activity of family farms was recognised by Rural Development plan 2007-2013. It means that a family farmer can still act in the field of social farming only as a sub-contractor of a social care institution. Social farming is practiced by many social enterprises in rural areas that provide vocational rehabilitation and training, as well as subsidised and/or sheltered employment for people with disabilities (Zakon, 2007a). Social care institutions (Zakon, 2007b) and special-needs social care institutions in particular very often use agricultural activities to broaden the range of activities for service-users with no work capacity. The same holds for centres for protection and care, but they are involved in vocational rehabilitation and training, as well as in provision of sheltered employment.

Flanders

In Flanders, there are specific regulations for social farms. Rural development funds are used to pay farmers for their services. The regulation is restricted to private commercial farms. At least 35% of the income should come from the agricultural enterprise. The maximum support is 40 euro/per day irrespective of the number of users.

Netherlands

There are three possibilities for social farmers to get access to funds from the health care sector. They can become a sub-contractor of an officially accredited care institution. A second possibility is to make use of the personal budgets of service-users (PGB). The PGB was introduced to diversify the supply of care and to shorten waiting lists. With this PGB service-users or their representatives can

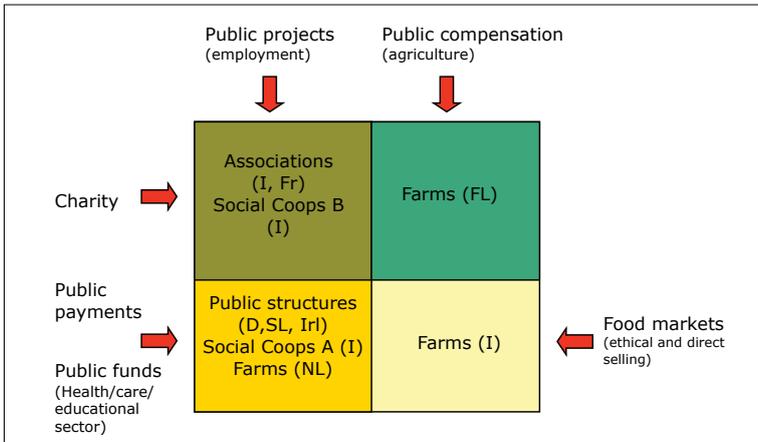


Fig. 1.3 - Different regulatory system of social farming across Europe (Source SoFar)

contract a social farm directly without interference from a care institution. This budget has become popular in recent years. In addition, it has become easier for social farms (or often regional associations of social farmers) to receive an AWBZ (Exceptional Medical Expenses Act) accreditation. AWBZ is the general insurance for special medical costs, and social farms with an AWBZ accreditation have the formal status of a care institution. The average support is 60 euro/ per day/ per person.

Ireland

In Ireland there are no specific regulations on Social Farming itself. However, all organisations engaged in providing services to people, particularly through the use of public state funds to pay for these services, must adhere to a strict body of regulations in relation to health and safety, environmental management and risk minimisation. The latter point is an area of significant concern for the development of private Social Farming in Ireland as farms must insure their service at a very high cost of public liability insurance and may be advised to restrict the practices that people that use services can engage in even if that hinders the overall experience of the Social Farm.

Figure 1.3 presents an illustration of the different types of payment of social services (Di Iacovo, 2008).

As well as differences in the regulatory systems, we can also consider the various orientations of social farming across countries.

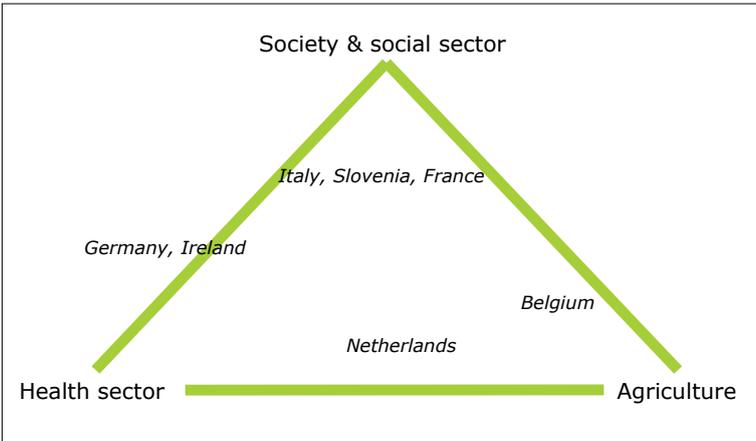


Fig. 1.4 - Orientation of social farming in Europe

Germany and Ireland are mainly oriented towards the health sector. Italy, Slovenia and France are oriented more towards the social and employment sector and the Netherlands and Belgium towards the agricultural sector (especially Belgium).

1.8 Different types of social farming

We observed a great diversity of social farming initiatives among the SoFar countries. First we will describe the dominant types of social farms in the different countries.

Netherlands and Belgium

Most social farms in Belgium and the Netherlands are private, family-based social farms. Most farms are open to people with different backgrounds. The number of service-users is mostly limited to less than 10 per day. On many farms agricultural production is the core activity and social services are of secondary importance.

Ireland, Germany and Slovenia

Most social farms in Ireland, Germany and Slovenia were set up by the third sector (e.g. religious groups, Camphill communities, user organisations). They have developed into institutional, professionally-based, care-oriented farms. They often focus on one group

of service-users. The main groups are people with mental health issues, intellectual disabilities or drug and alcohol abuse problems. However, there is a broad spectrum of applications evident. There are many professionals involved in the provision of social care.

In Germany there is a special law concerning the services and requirements in sheltered workshops for people with disabilities, the *Werkstättenverordnung (WvO)*. Among other issues such as salary and working time, the law demands that the workshops provide many different activities and a minimum of 120 users. This article may stem from the general belief that a large number of service-users is needed to guarantee sufficient quality of the services provided. This lies in the history of Germany. The founders of the Federal Republic of Germany wanted to prevent people with disabilities from abuse and thought that big institutions were the best way to reach that goal. Today this law could be problematic when sheltered workshops claim a "right on clients" (they have to fill their numbers of places) and may hinder family farms from integrating individuals with disabilities. In Ireland and Slovenia there is a strong focus on developing person-centred services leaving behind the days of the 'big institutions'. Social services are the core business and the agricultural production is of less importance. Notwithstanding, there is significant interest from care/service provider organisations in working with private farmers in a non-institutional farm setting. At the same time, Slovenian social enterprises in rural areas are engaged in large-scale agricultural production that is essential for the sustainability of their special employment programmes for people with disabilities

Italy

In Italy the existence of social co-operatives type A and type B, focussing on care and on labour integration respectively is the defining characteristic. They are not-for-profit enterprises and community-based initiatives strongly integrated into the social environment. They can benefit from the special regulations that exist for social co-operatives. In the meantime, increasing numbers of private farms are entering the sector. Their social farming activity can be both a voluntary one and/or more linked to the idea of social responsibility and linked to ethical consumers. New services are also provided by farmers – such as kindergardens. For private farmers agriculture is the core activity.

France

What is particular to France is the existence of different networks of social farms:

- Several networks, national and regional, of community-based gardens focussing on labour integration for underprivileged people. These gardens benefit from social inclusion policies related to unemployment. Most of them are managed by not-for-profit associations. So they have associative forms.
- Different networks of more than 1200 pedagogic farms that are used by primary schools.

There are also therapeutic (individual or associated) farms that are in most cases connected to particular unconventional professional/disciplinary approaches to therapy. As there are no labelling or certification rules for therapeutic farms in France, we know that their number is significant but not known with any certainty and dispersed throughout the territory. Once again, they are mostly associative farms.

1.9 Further description of diversity of social farms

We can distinguish different types of social farms according to various criteria. As with all typologies, the boundary between one type and another can be often hazy or overlapping.

There is diversity in goals, the kind of organisation, the kind of target group and the main activity. We will describe the different types of social farms along these lines.

1.9.1 Diversity in goals

First of all, according to their main purpose, we can distinguish between:

- care oriented
- labour (employment) oriented
- education/pedagogic oriented.

Care oriented. This first type represents a concept of care-service provision to satisfy the needs of service-users. Farms (or more generally the owners of SF initiatives) are care-services providers. There is usually a payment or monetary compensation for the services paid by public bodies – health/welfare and/or agricultural

policies. The service-users are not employed and rarely get a salary. Examples: care farms in the Netherlands and Flanders; sheltered workshops in Germany and Ireland; therapeutic farms in France and Ireland; Type “A” social co-operatives in Italy; initiatives promoted by public care institutions in all countries. Most of these examples also have the goal to offer professional education, training and individual support. However the main aim is not integration into the labour market or the employment of people.

Labour/employment oriented. This type has the objective of integration into the labour force and/or employing people/groups that are marginalised in the labour market. Associated with it, there are usually concepts of developing professional training for disadvantaged groups. In these cases disadvantaged people can be volunteers, trainees or employed workers. There is no concept of care service provision and no payment by the health system. These initiatives are usually “protected”/supported by public bodies – social affairs/labour/equal opportunities policies – either directly or indirectly (e.g. funded projects, subsidised contracts, tax reliefs, priority in public tendering procedures). However public support is usually only partial, so agricultural production and marketing are needed to sustain the initiatives (i.e. payment of salaries). Many of these initiatives are also supported by local solidarity groups of citizens/consumers.

Examples: peri-urban integration gardens in France; community gardens and other social inclusion initiatives in Ireland, Type “B” social co-operatives in Italy and social enterprises in Slovenia.

Education or pedagogic-oriented initiatives.

We can distinguish 2 cases:

- Educational farms that focus on educating primary school children. Their aim is often to provide children with exposure to farm life, (healthy) food and a different lifestyle and access to nature. School classes visit pedagogic farms once or several times during a year. Examples are the networks of pedagogic farms in France and the school farms in Germany. Educational farms also exist in Belgium and the Netherlands (not reported in the State of the Art) and Camphill schools in Ireland. There is also a well-developed sector of this kind known as “didactic farms” (“fattorie didattiche”) in Italy.
- There are other special educational initiatives that offer on-farm educational programmes for children with learning difficulties

or for those who have problems with the law or social inclusion issues; those with family problems or those in foster care etc. Examples: These initiatives are present in all countries, but are less widespread, visible and popular.

1.9.2 Type of organisation

According to the legal basis underpinning the activities of the promoters/holder (or the social farming initiative), we can distinguish between:

- third sector
- private
- institutional.

The “*third sector*” initiatives are promoted and carried out by “social-private” organisations that are usually not-for-profit ones. These initiatives are usually directly or indirectly supported by public bodies and policies. This type is dominant in Italy and France and common in Slovenia and Ireland.

Examples: Italian initiatives run by social co-operatives and/or associations, French peri-urban gardens and therapeutic initiatives run by family associations. In Slovenia, social enterprises were set up by service-users’ organisations. They provide vocational rehabilitation and training and subsidised or sheltered employment. Most of the sheltered workshops in Germany, the majority of the initiatives in Ireland, the majority of the so-called institutional farms in the Netherlands and Flanders were set up by religious organisations, anthroposophical organisations, welfare organisations or service-users’ organisations. They can be considered as third sector initiatives, as the founding organisations own and operate the farm. In many countries they are called institutional farms, as historically, the care and labour force inclusion services were institutionalised/regulated. They have access to mainstream funding and are recognised as officially approved health/social service organisations.

The *private* initiatives are promoted and carried out by private enterprises/businesses, particularly in the field of agriculture (i.e. individual or associated farms). Private farms usually work by linking with public bodies (e.g. health, education, legal institutions) and can be directly or indirectly supported. This type of initiative is dominant in the Netherlands and Belgium. In the other countries they exist, but are less important. Examples: Care farms in Flanders

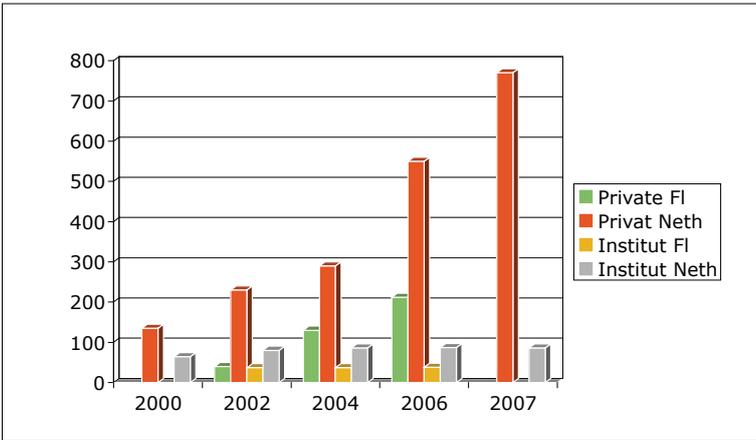


Fig. 1.5 - Percentage of social farms that are private family businesses and institutional/third sector initiatives in 4 SoFar countries (Hassink J., 2008)

and in the Netherlands; similar cases scattered in other countries (Italy, France, Slovenia, Germany and Ireland); training projects and subsidised contracts for the employment of disadvantaged groups/ individuals in the case of Italian private farms.

The *institutional* initiatives are promoted and carried out directly by public bodies. They can be developed within social, health, education or legal institutions – and so are run by the personnel of these public bodies. These are prominent within Ireland, particularly in mental health services which is generally directly provided by the State and as referred to above, by well established religious/Christian services that provide services on behalf of the state, are largely funded by the state and have become more secularised over time. In most countries they are in a minority.

1.9.3 Kind of organisation

According to the characteristics of the organisation and the use of labour we can also distinguish between:

- Family-based
- Community-based
- Professionally-based
- Service-user based: self-organisation by service-users.

Family-based initiatives are initiated by a farmer's family. It is

based on their motivation to include social services in their private enterprise. Their motivation can be religious or humanitarian. Examples: Care farms in Flanders and in the Netherlands are typically family-based. Furthermore, in Italy many initiatives are connected to so called “family-houses” (integrating persons with challenges within the family).

Community-based initiatives are initiated by a group of people often inspired by the Church or other lay Christian, social or communal ideals. Examples: Many initiatives in Italy are typically community-based, such as those inspired by Christian principles or other lay social/communal ideals. The same is true for Camphill initiatives and religious-inspired initiatives in Germany and Ireland (such as the Brothers of Charity in Ireland). Other examples include the services created by families or friends of those who require such services – in response to the failure by other agencies to provide them. Peri-urban garden initiatives in France and Italian social co-operatives appear to be based on community/co-operative schemes with input also from professional personnel.

Professionally-based: Institutional initiatives are usually professionally-based and are initiated by professionals in care institutions. In this, there is more focus on the qualifications of the personnel compared to other types of initiatives.

There may be a lot of overlap between Types 2 and 3 outlined above, as in many cases the community-based initiatives have become very professionalised as services as services. They are institutional in scope and in terms of professionalism, while they may also be third-sector managed.

Service-user based. Some initiatives, among the “third sector” are service-user based. Service-users are in charge of the organisation of the initiative.

1.9.4 Types of Target Groups

We can distinguish initiatives that focus on a specific target group from those that include a mix of service-users with different backgrounds.

In Germany, Slovenia and Ireland many social farms are specialised farms for people with mental health issues, intellectual disability or drug and alcohol abuse issues.

In Belgium and the Netherlands, most care farms are open to a mix of people, including people with mental health issues, intellectual disability, those with a history of addiction, youth or long-term unemployed.

In France, Italy and Ireland, employment-oriented initiatives include a range of people. However, they typically include those with less serious forms of disability who are relatively more capable/skilful and able to work autonomously.

1.9.5 Main activity – Focus on agricultural production or on social services

According to the main activity undertaken (in terms of labour used and the economic importance of the activity) we can distinguish between:

- Care- (or education-) based
- Agriculture-based.

The former (care-based) are represented by initiatives/enterprises in which the social/care (or educational) component is the main one. It is the main activity and source of income and this is reflected also in the profile of the personnel (e.g. professional background) as well as in the approach to the work and operational procedures. Agricultural production has a secondary role.

The latter (agriculture-based) represent the opposite case. Agricultural production is the main component and social/care activities have a relatively secondary role.

Examples: In Flanders and in the Netherlands private care farms are mostly agriculture-based while institutional initiatives are usually care-based. In Italy initiatives run by Type “A” social co-operatives are usually care-based while Type “B” social co-operatives or those run by private farms are agriculture-based.

1.10 Benefits for the service-users

In spite of the huge differences in initiatives across the seven countries, very similar effects are reported for the service-users of social farming. There are reports on improvement in their general well-being, their sense of freedom and space and their integration into society. In addition, all case studies report positive effects on physical health, mental health and social well-being. These effects can be characterised as follows (Elings & Hassink, 2008):

Table 1.3 - Summary of benefits of social farming for service-users

<i>Physical health effects</i>	<i>Mental health effects</i>	<i>Social effects</i>
More physical strength	Increase in self-esteem	Better social interaction
Better appetite	Increase in self-respect	More social contacts
Development of skills	Enthusiasm	More social skills
Better use of energy	Increase in self-awareness	More independence
Better use of senses	Increase in responsibility	Employment

1.11 Qualities of social farms

In accordance with the observed benefits for the service-users, there is also agreement to a large extent on the health-promoting elements of social farms. Based on interviews in different countries, four main aspects of the care farm can be distinguished that are appreciated by service-users: *a) the community on the farm, b) the attitude of the farmer, c) the type of work and d) the green environment.*

Community: A highly-valued aspect by service-users is the sense of community on the farm. Service-users indicate that they feel safe and at home in the group and that they are accepted and respected. Most of them appreciate the small-scale and the possibility to make new contacts. Some service-users also indicate that they appreciate the diversity of the group working on the farm.

Attitude of the farmer. An important quality is the attitude of the farmer. Service-users are approached as normal people rather than being seen as patients. They experience respect with no prejudice. They express that the farmer gives them confidence and responsibility. In particular, service-users with a psychiatric background mention that it is important to receive respect from so-called “normal” people. It is also a relief to them that they do not have to tell their whole history again. Service-users mention the personal relationship with the farmer and his/her concern for them as an important quality.

Work. Service-users mention several aspects that are related to the work performed on the farm.

- *Working according to their capacity:* Service-users value that they can work at their own pace and that they can take a rest when having a bad day.

- *Real, useful work:* Service-users mention the importance of real and useful work. They find it important that they are not excluded from society and make a useful contribution.
- *Structure:* Farm activities offer structure to one's life and a sense of the passing of time with the natural rhythm of the days and the seasons.
- *Diversity of activities:* Service-users appreciate the diversity of activities that can be done. The farm can be a place that offers a broader range of activities than conventional day-based activity centres.

Green environment. Different qualities of the green environment were mentioned by users.

- *Space and quietness:* Service-users appreciate the quietness and space of the farm environment. They experience it as an environment with far less stimulus than the urban areas where many of them come from. The space gives them the possibility to be alone when necessary.
- *Experiencing nature:* Aspects that are appreciated by many service-users are being outside and experiencing aspects of nature like the flowers, the birds, the sun and the wind.
- *Farm animals:* Another important aspect that is mentioned by service-users is the contact with farm animals such as cows, pigs, chickens, the dog and the cat.

2. “A journey through social farming in Europe”: the case studies

2.1 A brief presentation

The direct observation of lived realities and the study of actual cases are fundamental elements of any socio-economic research. This is especially true for the understanding of “social farming” in Europe, a concept recently identified that actually embraces a wide range of heterogeneous experiences taking place in different (physical, socio-political, cultural, institutional) environments, in different times and subject to different driving forces and objectives. Understanding this diversity must be the basis for any attempt at common policy regulation and/or common action to support “social farming”. So, in this sense, the analysis of case studies has formed the backbone of the project.

The case studies conducted by each national research team participating in the project and presented in this chapter were brought together in a fieldwork exercise using video documentation. This was carried out through a real international “journey” – conducted by Paolo Pieroni, part of the Italian research team, together with Andrea Fioravanti, who has already been involved in social farming as a “service-user” for many years in Italy – who travelled and visited these particular case studies in the Winter/early Spring of 2008. This documentary “journey” was made possible by the active co-operation of each national team and the willingness of the local project-holders and stakeholders who were open to taking this opportunity for exchange.

The video documentary (contained in the DVD Annex) and the description of the case studies which follows complement each other. The DVD aims to represent tangible fragments of real life, grasped at a particular point in space and time; incorporating the everyday dimension of these very specific and almost hidden, social agricultural worlds, making them visible: the faces, the hands at

work, the labour and production processes; the particular human relations as well as the ones with plants, animals and nature. Therefore, the documentary is aimed mainly at incorporating the visual/tangible dimension of the case studies. This approach was also necessary because of the difficulty of translation and the limited resources that made it necessary to reduce “spoken words” to a minimum. In the end, the interviews produced during the journey were not included and only a small amount of dialogue remains. However, such dialogue is not really necessary for the viewer’s comprehension of the case.

Additional information and an analytical discussion of the case studies (e.g. background, milestones, crucial support, external environment, outcomes, challenges and actions required) are supplied in the following pages. The case studies are preceded by a brief description of the national background and a picture of the state of the art of “social farming” in the country. A “SWOT” analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) of social farming, developed by the stakeholders involved in the project within the regional/national platforms is also included.

Comparative analysis and an overall discussion of the cases are contained in the next chapter.

2.2 Italy

The topic of social farming has become more prominent in recent years in Italy. This is the result of a growing network of interest and practice that is expanding across the country, involving many different actors. This network, though quite unstructured as yet, has started to meet more frequently, to start discussing and exchanging experiences and subsequently to organise different forms of promotion and awareness-raising. This growing network was promoted by the regional agency for rural development of Tuscany initially, together with some University Institutes who, through exploratory research, were able to involve numerous field operators and different stakeholders. Today, the main national agricultural organisations, different “local action groups” of the LEADER-plus initiative and several other regional bodies are involved in the network, all over the country. Organisations of users still do not exist. Some special measures on “social farming” were introduced into some regional plans

for rural development (implementation plans of the EU Common Agricultural Policy). The topic has also reached the Italian Parliament and the national media, presenting it in the public domain.

The “SoFar” project has been a relevant element in fostering and reinforcing this increasing prominence by adding a European perspective. *Table 2.1* shows the results of the SWOT analysis (“Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats”) of the national situation, as drawn by the participants in the Italian platform of the project.

At present, most of the social farming initiatives in Italy are related to so-called “social co-operatives”. There are two different types: co-operatives that offer social services on behalf of the State (called “Type A”) and co-operatives that engage in production as a means of including disadvantaged people as employed work-

Table 2.1 - SWOT analysis of the country situation as drawn by the participants in the “So Far” Italian platform

<p><i>Strengths</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social inclusive potential • Acting at multiple levels • Confirmed by empirical practice • Possibility for tailor-made practices • Comparatively cheap • Motivations and enthusiasm of the promoters • Integration/embeddedness at territorial level • Increased sensitiveness and awareness • Producing entrepreneurial innovation and diversification • Involving youth in agriculture. 	<p><i>Weaknesses</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unclear/complicated judicial framework • Still limited diffusion and consolidation • Gap between demand and supply • Difficulties in starting up • Difficulties arising from different professional ‘cultures’ • Confusion of roles and competencies • Lack of (on-farm) tutorship • Voluntary-based efforts • No certification of efficacy • Prejudice towards disability • Lack of transport/connections • No special distinction for the goods and services produced ‘socially’ • Risk of creating charity-based marketing.
<p><i>Opportunities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased sensitivity and awareness of public institutions and society • Positive public reputation/image • Labour integration for disadvantaged categories • Potential definition of a new judicial framework • Wider recognition and support by institutions • Broadening relations and networks • International exchanges • Gender opportunities • Enhanced reputation/image of (social) enterprises • ‘Social’ marketing. 	<p><i>Threats</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too many expectations • Too many rules • Standardisation and loss of original value systems and motivations • Local/regional fragmentation • Maintaining of sector-based logic • Maintaining current judicial framework • Competition between different actors • Development of opportunistic behaviours • Market-oriented welfare systems • Hospitals in the countryside.

ers (“Type B”). Several social co-operatives run activities in rural areas and/or in the field of agriculture. Social co-operatives are usually defined as “social-private” organisations, because their specific organisational form is between private and public entities. In fact, social co-operatives are enterprises/private initiatives that are not profit-oriented and pursue social goals – they work by “subcontracting” the management of public social services and can operate in all areas which benefit from special measures (e.g. tax exemptions). Disadvantaged people can be members and users or employed workers of these co-operatives.

A new frontier for “social farming” in Italy is the involvement of private farmers. This could be a means of strengthening the overall social development of rural areas and of offering new opportunities to farmers themselves. Some successful pioneering experiences are examples of this potential (e.g. the Colombini Case). In this case in particular, the farmer has become the corner-stone of a wider collective social action developed at local level.

At the same time, there are no standard practices of “social farming” in Italy. A huge diversity has emerged. This can be viewed both as a positive and a negative feature (*see SWOT analysis*). This diversity is the result of a wide spectrum of initiatives, most of which came about as bottom-up actions, started by the commitment of their initiators to provide a response to emerging social needs (as a consequence of a lack of State initiatives in social/care fields, particularly evident after the welfare crisis during the 1970s) and/or by the desire to put their personal social ideals into practice. So, “bottom-up” initiatives of this kind, like the case of “Il Forteto” which follows, were started several years before the creation of legally-based “social co-operatives” (that occurred during the 1990s). Thus they have developed with a strong spontaneous, rather than a standardised character.

2.2.1 Creating win-win solutions among farmers and public structures (ORISS “Giardino dei Semplici”, SdS Valdera, Associazione Valdera Insieme)

Key point

Social farming can be a win-win solution capable of meeting the different needs of users, farmers, local institutions, local communities and local consumers, creating common advantages.

The initiative named Giardino dei semplici (G.d.S.) was launched in 2002 in the Valdera area (Pisa province) by an NGO active in the health/care field. The project aims to promote socio-therapeutic activities and labour integration services for people with psychiatric problems through horticulture and

Project Profile at Colombini Farm	today		
	-	0	+
Knowledge in care	-		
Knowledge in agriculture			+
Experience in care		0	
Experience in agriculture			+
Female role in social farming			+
Male role in social farming			+
Accessibility of the farm			+
Dedicated space on the farm	-		
Dedicated agricultural processes	-		

agriculture. The initiators were able to progressively involve third partners in the initiative, particularly public socio-health services, local administrations and some private farms in the area. The project aims to show the potential for development of new forms of co-operation at territorial level for the health and well-being of the population (i.e. a “pact for health” as defined by the same promoters). As well as benefiting the psychiatric services’ users, the initiative has produced important effects around increasing the numbers of participating private farms. Particularly, in the case of Colombini family farm, which is an organic professional farm producing vegetables, it has progressively transformed its system/style of farming because of the labour integration experience and the new support it has gained in the local community. This has occurred through “solidarity purchasing” – by selling directly via a box scheme system, achieving significant economic results and regularly including people with disabilities into the work. There is also the issue of personal satisfaction and enrichment. Nowadays the local institution for health/care services (SdS - “Società della Salute”) has codified about 13 different services from agriculture that can be provided by farms and at the same time social farms have established an association to better define their activity and to improve arrangements for including disadvantaged people in line with SdS.

Description

The project is quite complex because it is organised as a pathway of development that can evolve step by step and can include new subjects and new activities. The project can be split in four different sub-groups of activities.

The first one is the socio-therapeutic inclusion for groups of less empowered people, driven by professionals in conjunction with



Producing vegetables at Colombini farm (IT)

some local farms, and until now, funded by ESF projects on vocational training organised by the Pisa province. This approach also involves on-farm training for groups. There are normally groups of 6/8 users that follow theoretical and practical classes about horticulture and animal assisted therapy/activities. Courses last about 4/6 months and are tutored by health/care professionals. At this stage users go on to farms and gain increased confidence about agricultural activities.

The second activity provides vocational training and work inclusion for those members that would like, and are able, to work and to pursue on-farm activities. Direct relationships between individuals – or groups of individuals – and selected farms are established. This approach is supported in a different way by the Pisa Province's labour office with specific grants and tuition is provided by the health/care professionals using a tutor on farm.

The third approach relates to the institutional arrangements established in the SdS in order to improve and formalise SF practices at local level. SdS has established a local agreement involving a large number of public/private partners, including local farming associations. The agreement process formalised different services

recognised by SdS. Some of them (socio-therapeutic activities, children's gardens, support for the elderly) can be directly funded by the public system or by families. Other activities are recognised and supported through mechanisms to improve the work environment at farm level; through improved promotion for agricultural products with a specific brand, i.e. by organising a database for ethical products. Tuscany's "rural development plan" co-finances structural investments for on-farm measures to enable diversification activities including the development of structures and buildings which are accessible for people with specific needs (all different target groups).

The fourth activity relates to the relationships with local ethical consumers organised as a supporting purchasing group that directly buys agricultural products from select local farms participating in SF projects. Farmers participating in the network can increase their reputation with local consumers and better promote their products. In the case of the Colombini farm – the first one involved in the G.d.S. project, the farm income increased considerably as well as having a greater labour force (from 5 to 11 people employed, four of whom were part of the first socio-therapeutic project).

Background, milestones and crucial support

The project named G.d.S. was promoted by a local non-governmental organisation working in the fields of health and development based in the area of Valdera but operating mainly in Mali (ORISS "Organizzazione Interdisciplinare Sviluppo e Salute" – i.e. "Interdisciplinary organisation for development and health"). It started with the aim of creating a rehabilitative pilot experience, aimed at people with psychiatric problems. It was inspired by two main motives: the Anglo-Saxon tradition of horticultural therapy and the local historical tradition of the use of herbs for medical purposes, drawing on the presence in the NGO of a retired psychiatrist who used to work in the area.

Involving both social/care rehabilitation, as well as the recovery of heritage, a first therapeutic gardening initiative was created by ORISS in the years 2002-2004, with the support of all local administrations of the area (SdS Valdera). A small piece of land was given by the local municipality to build an open laboratory and it started its first practice with 7 psychiatric service-users. Assisted therapeutic horticulture carried out over one year produced visible positive effects (both physical and mental) on participants: enhanced self-es-

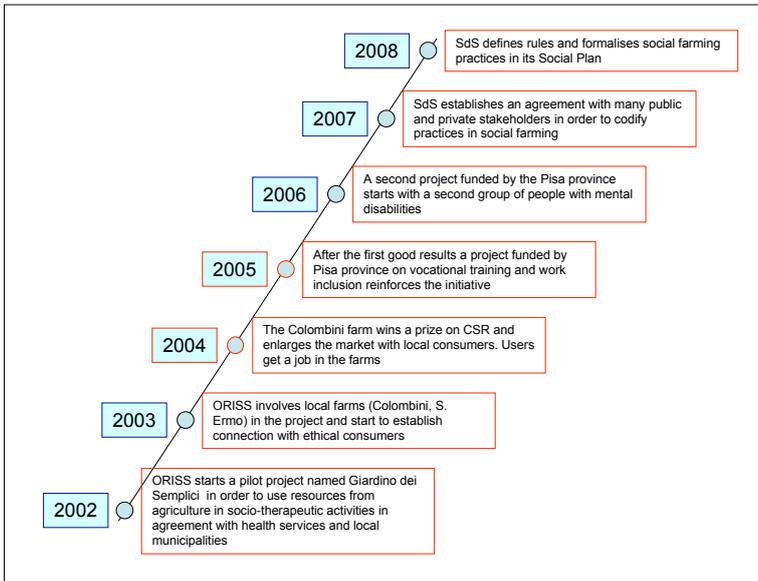


Fig. 2.1 - Main steps of the social farming initiative in Valdera (province of Pisa)

team; autonomy; responsibility; reduced addiction; improved sense of well-being. This is related to the special features of horticultural work that entails physical engagement, open-air activity, personal responsibility, relations with others, as well as with organisms and environment. The acknowledgement of the job done, recognition by educators and by “important” people such as administrators, were also important sources of satisfaction.

As a next step, from the perspective of training and labour inclusion, participants were offered the opportunity of integration into some private (for profit) farms in the area. Through the intervention of ORISS, an agreement of “socio-therapeutic integration” was established between 2 farms and local socio-health bodies. This is a voluntary-based agreement; farmers do not receive any compensation nor give any compensation to practitioners. In accordance with their personal beliefs, farmers agree on the proposal seeing in it an opportunity to receive possible support in the form of labour, and/or for the wish to co-operate with a local initiative promoted by local institutions.

Alessandro Colombini – a young farmer who inherited a traditional family farm of 18 hectares in a hilly area – is the main actor involved in this second stage of the initiative. The farm produces

vegetables that are organically certified. Participants join the farm 3 days a week, for a period of one year. At the end of the training period, two people leave, two are conventionally employed on the farm, and the other three participants continue to join the farm as paid trainees (small grants paid by the province through the European Social Fund). In all, it is considered a very positive balance for participants, both in quantitative and qualitative terms (e.g. appreciation of the experience, personal benefits).

After some initial difficulties (e.g. how to find suitable jobs and tasks for each person), the experience produced a series of positive effects for the farm too. Disadvantaged people demonstrated the ability to do many different jobs and to make a real contribution to on-farm production. Work inclusion is facilitated by legal structures and measures. It enables enterprises to enter into subsidised contracts with disadvantaged people. Over and above this, a sense of personal satisfaction/enrichment is experienced by the farmer through this new social activity and engagement at territorial level.

The farming system/style is being progressively transformed by the social initiative. Of particular relevance is the support of organised “solidarity” purchasing groups. The produce, previous-

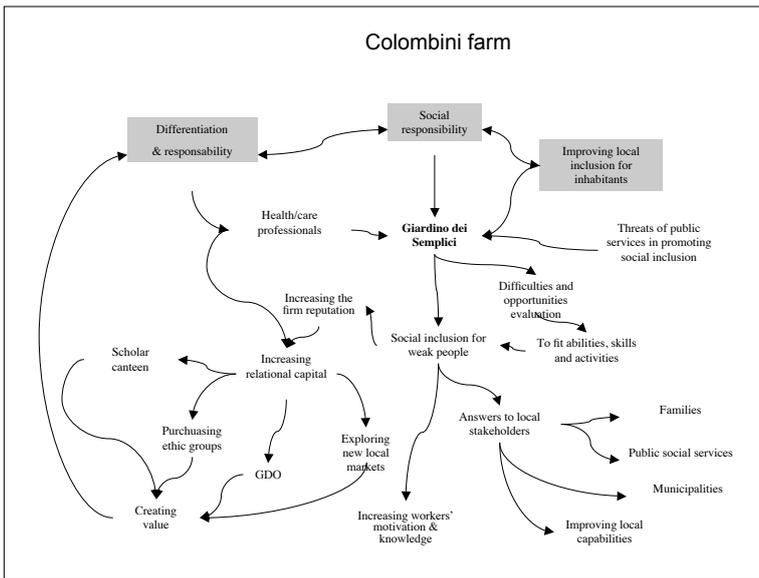


Fig. 2.2 - Development of the social farming initiative in Valdera (interpretative framework)

ly sold to the mass market, is today completely sold to final consumers. Customers (e.g. families) organised into groups of purchasers have increased from 10 to 500. They are mainly active/aware consumers from the city of Pisa, who have chosen to buy from Colombini's

Local Profile	-	0	+
Tutorial external support			+
Technical advice			+
Networks and relationships with other projects			+
Political supports			+
Financial supports			+
Public recognition			+
Community support			+

farm, because of the environmental and social features of its produce. They are now in constant touch with the farmer through e-mail, and also participate in decisions about farming choices. While previously the farm produced only 3 kind of vegetables, today the produce consists of around 50 different kinds. The income has almost doubled. The overall success of the first project has attracted new farmers to the initiative. Today another 4 farms in the area (involved in animal and wine production) have become actively engaged in social farming. In co-operation with these farms, a new training course in agriculture was promoted by ORISS involving a new group of 9 psychiatric service-users, and funded through the European Social Fund. This second project was funded by the Pisa Province in 2005-2007 (ESF on vocational training). The SdS has followed the second project more closely and started to promote an agreement on Social Farming (2007-2008) and to define codes of practice and procedures in order to formally introduce Social Farming (SF) as a practice capable of increasing local quality of life and social inclusion.

What was crucial in all activities and in all stages was the possibility to share and build a common knowledge base starting from very different backgrounds (agriculture, education, health/care etc.) and attitudes in a very open arena. The project was able to mix practical evidence and experience with more theoretical and conceptual activities, communicating externally the results achieved and progressively increasing the number of stakeholders involved. The support from the consumer gave an added value to all projects moving it away from public subsidies and changing ideas about the nature of public support itself.

External environment

At the initial stage, the project was facilitated by the intensive effort and commitment of ORISS and also by the good relationships

that the retired psychiatrist had in many areas including the health care system. However, it was also facilitated by many external contributors. These included the Pisa province (labour department) which offered the support for the first pilot initiative and the local psychiatric public unit. Step by step there were new supports. ORISS tried to find new markets for the products of the farms involved. Professionals working in the local hospital started to organise a “solidarity” purchasing group and to buy fresh vegetables directly from the farms. Also, in the area a large initiative of organised ethical consumers became aware of it and made contact with the initiative. In 2003 an initial contact with Pisa University and ARSIA (Regional agency for innovation and development in agriculture and forestry) strengthened the project. The effectiveness of the first project increased the attention from the local SdS. Pisa province offered also some support, via the University, in order to animate and facilitate the debate around SF at territorial level. More generally, Pisa University was also increasing its research activities on SF with a project of “experimental economy”. With support from the University and ORISS, the Colombini farm participated in an award on corporate social responsibility at national level and won first prize in the small enterprise section. It was the only farm participat-

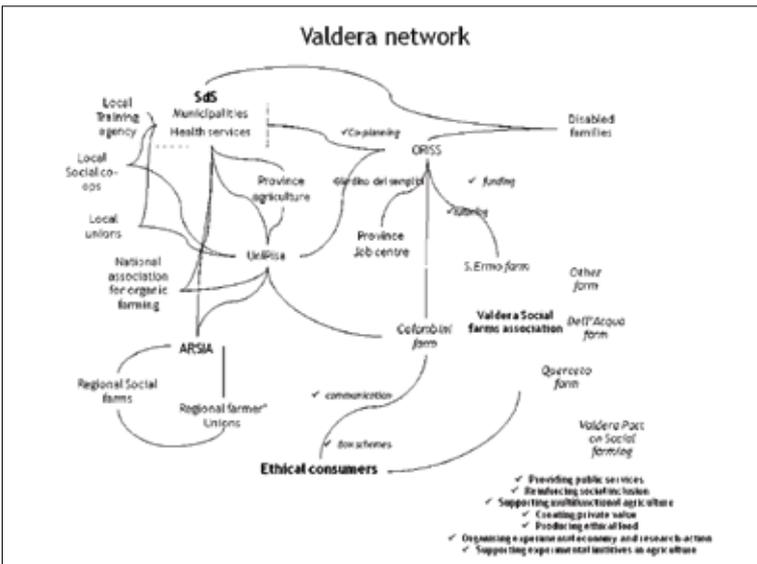


Fig. 2.3 - Network built around the social farming initiative in Valdera

ing in the award. This meant a major increase in the visibility and the reputation of the farm as well as of the project. The farm and the project become an example at national level of how to introduce a win-win solution in socio-therapeutic and labour inclusion projects. The network around the project started to expand and with it, the commitment of the SdS to formalise SF practices. Currently, about 15 public/private stakeholders at local, regional and national levels are involved in the agreement. This activity run by the SdS is the first in Italy and was codified by Pisa University in a project funded by the Italian Welfare Minister, by the way of AIAB (an organic association in Italy).

Currently, the local environment is quite supportive for SF thanks to the increasing number of initiatives organised around it, the positive results of the projects and the networking initiatives defined at local, regional and national levels.

Outcomes

During its first pilot steps, the project achieved very interesting outcomes. Some of the people involved in the first G.d.S. project were heavily disadvantaged. Following their involvement in the project, some of them were able to recover from their condition and find a mainstream job. For others, there was still the opportunity to continue the on-farm activity with the support of some external grant.

For the farms involved – and especially for the Colombini farm – the participation in the project was offered as a gift, without any economic expectation. In the end, not only the attitude of the entrepreneur, but also the organisation and the market for the farm products, completely changed, also due to the reciprocity of relations with local consumers. “It is clear that we are still at an early stage...however, results encourage me to keep going on ...” – Alessandro Colombini commented two years ago. Regarding the state of his farm currently, he now comments: “It is running much better than before. In these areas agriculture was going to disappear... Today, my farm has become a sort of enlarged family. Con-

Direct Outcomes	-	0	+
Therapeutic effects			+
Educational effects		0	
Work inclusion			+
Job creation			+
Other		0	
Indirect Outcomes	-	0	+
Environment			+
Landscape		0	
Biodiversity			+
Direct selling			+
Farm reputation			+
Farm viability			+

sumers have supported the farm also at difficult times, for example when the produce was limited. This way I could make investments that were unthinkable before”.

It is apparent that the social initiative has triggered a profound transformation of the farm, bringing to it the creation of a new model of “community supported agriculture”. The experience of Colombini and of the other 4 farms appears to be an important model for other farms as well. Having different features, the 5 farms can usefully play complementary roles and enrich the “social” options for participants (e.g. integrating them into different kind of activities). They are also reinforcing their co-operation in marketing initiatives (i.e. supplying families and groups of purchasers). At present a project for supplying school canteens is being studied, fostered by the ORISS association together with public administration; as well the organisation of occasional small fairs in the area.

For local consumers the advantage is the opportunity to buy fresher organic food at the same price as conventional products. But also they are able to support the local economy and local ethical initiatives. For the public structures the project offers the opportunity to diversify the services offered and analyse the results, but gives also the possibility of testing new alternatives in response to the reduction in public expenditure. The users’ families also experienced some advantages in coping with their situation. Due to the activities on-farm, the families have more free time and some of them have started to devote it to voluntary/charity activities in the area. There are also some indirect outcomes at local level. Certainly, there is the promotion of organic food that has positive impacts from an environmental point of view. In addition, regarding biodiversity, the Colombini farm – and the other farms – have established an association whose production is based on local varieties. Some activities are also devoted to landscape management. There were important effects on farm reputation, direct selling and farm viability as well.

Challenges and actions required

The initiative started by ORISS is developing new forms of territorial co-operation that promote the health and well-being of citizens (i.e. the “pact for health”) but also agricultural/economic development. We may look at this as new forms of integrated territorial welfare and/or social economy characterised by a close co-operation between public bodies, non for profit organisations, private businesses (i.e. farms), and civil society. At this stage the territorial

project is quite advanced. There is the formal commitment of all institutional actors to support and to recognise SF as a useful practice in the organisation of the local welfare. A challenge for the future is to make SF a common practice for a larger number of farms. It will take time and new efforts from many actors.

Main Challenges	-	0	+
Clear rules and definition			+
Specific laws		0	
Technical support			+
Financial supports		0	
Information/communication			+
Recognition		0	
Improving knowledge (research, education, transfer)			+
Networks			+
Policy integration			+
Public recognition			+

A specific effort should be made to better monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of SF activities. In that respect the evaluation should be done at different levels such as service-users, local systems and social capital, farm viability and consumer satisfaction. A public recognition at national and EU level could contribute to reinforcing the local activities. In that respect SdS could promote communication of the project and attempt to present it externally as an innovative and good practice.

2.2.2 Production as a means of autonomy: the special and successful story of a 'social farming' community in Tuscany ("Il Forteto")

Keypoint

"Il Forteto" is a special farming community in the mountainous area of Mugello (province of Florence) in Tuscany. It is the dream brought to reality by an idealistic group of young people during the 1970s, who had a strong wish to live together in an alternative manner – in contrast to the dominant models. They had the dream of having a place "where you can be accepted, be yourself and establish sound human relations with others...".

"Il Forteto" is an impressive enterprise (co-operative) today – one of the most important businesses in the agro-industrial sector in Tuscany. It produces and exports many kinds of cheese all over the world, while currently developing a series of other activities.

The community includes more than 100 members, many of whom are people experiencing social disadvantage and/or intel-

lectual disability. An integrated system of fostering has been developed through the years within the community. A number of disadvantaged children and adolescents are included in the community, being sent via the Juvenile Court. They are offered a new family environment and a different community, as well as the opportunity to start working in the co-operative when they become adults.

The people of “Il Forteto” never had the intention of developing care activities or services. What they do is simply part of their “private” ethical choice. They have never received any public monetary support for their activities, nor do they seek it. They have developed their agricultural business as a means of achieving autonomy, and thus as a means of making their social/community dream possible.

Through its specificity, the case shows features that are typical of many social farming initiatives that have evolved in Tuscany and Italy in recent decades. These mainly developed on the basis of spontaneous initiatives and social and personal private motivations, with little public support. Public institutions are now rediscovering the values associated with these pioneering experiences and trying to develop new forms of support for social farming.

Description

According to those involved, we can explain what “Il Forteto” is today, based on three different dimensions: *a.* the enterprise (co-operative) and the economic dimension; *b.* the community experience and the (internal) social dimension; *c.* the “foundation” that represents a more recent initiative that aims to promote its human, social and cultural values to the wider society.

a. The enterprise and the economic dimension

The enterprise is organised as a “co-operative”. Initially it was simply a co-operative of farmers, sharing capital, labour/management and income. More recently, in accordance with the new legislation, this concept was broadened. This means that the co-operative includes today not only the “working partners” but also “contributing partners” (profit shareholders) who are both individuals and some large institutional partners who know the enterprise and want to support it. This has increased the financial resources to a significant extent – and consequently – the potential of the business. Activities have been broadened beyond farming to incorporate agro-industrial enterprises (cheese production), commercial enterprises (food and plants shops) and the agro-tourism sector.

These sectors (especially the cheese production) represent the main source of income. However, we may say that farming still constitutes the main identity of the co-operative.

The farm has 450 hectares, half of which are woodlands, with the other half comprises arable land, orchards and livestock pastures (250 “Chianina” – traditional local breed beef cattle and 35 “Maremma” horses – used in agro-tourism activities or to be sold). For the most part, production follows certified organic farming or low-impact protocols.

Cheese production represents the most important source of income. The new dairy was built in 1992 according to the new hygienic regulations (HACCP) and more advanced technologies and subsequently expanded with new large rooms for aging and storage (in 2000). More than 15,000 quintals of cheese, of more than 30 different varieties (made both from sheep and cows’ milk provided by associated producers all over Tuscany), are produced per year. The yearly turnover related to cheese production is around 16 million euro (data of 2004) – of which 66% is wholesale, 17% is retail sales and 17% exported all over the world. Of particular note is the fact that the co-operative is the major exporter of certified (Protected Denomination of Origin - Pdo) “Pecorino Toscano”.

b. The community experience and the social dimension

Since its beginning and still today, agriculture and economic development are not goals but means for “Il Forteto”. The main goal is to maintain the community experience. It exists today as an original and consolidated form of cohabitation. For more than 25 years, all the community meets regularly at lunch and dinner time. To discuss issues, agree on tasks and take decisions, a short meeting takes place every day after dinner in the large dining room.

The community experience is not defined as “ideological” by its members. It rather looks for new, alternative ways of establishing human relations, inspired by values such as transparency, authenticity and sharing “a new form of sociability among the members, to be

Project Profile at “Il Forteto”	today		
	-	0	+
Knowledge in care	-		
Knowledge in agriculture			+
Experience in care			+
Experience in agriculture			+
Female role in social farming		0	
Male role in social farming			+
Accessibility of the farm			+
Dedicated space on the farm		0	
Dedicated agricultural processes	-		



Working together in Cooperativa Il Forteto (IT)



Living together in Cooperativa Il Forteto (IT)

expressed in everyday life". From this perspective, the community has opened itself up to include people with particular difficulties, especially minors with family problems. They are often children or adolescents who have suffered physical or mental violence or sexual abuse.

Throughout the years the community has developed an integrated practice of an fostering that is still practiced today. Youths are introduced through direct contacts with the Juvenile Court. "New parents" in the form of a couple who may not be themselves close-knit take direct responsibility for them with the support of the rest of the community. Here, these young people lead a normal life (e.g. going at school locally etc.) and have the opportunity to remain – finding employment there – once they become adults. No money is received by the community for this form of social work, so fostering and similar practices of social inclusion are exclusively run on a voluntary basis. It is clear that terms like "social services", "users" or "targets" are meaningless in the case of "Il Forteto".

c. The Foundation

In order to give stronger continuity to the social initiative and to promote externally the values enshrined, more recently (1998) a group of members have created a new organisation. This is a foundation charged with promoting educational, cultural and research activities. It has developed numerous projects in co-operation with local schools, universities, and other institutions, particularly in the field of youth education and child-fostering.

Background and milestones

The idea of "Il Forteto" took shape in the years 1975-76 within a diverse group of 19-20 year old youths who frequented a church in the town of Prato (close to Florence) and became progressively engaged in recreational, social and educational initiatives. Driven by social Christian ideals and particularly influenced by some charismatic, well-known figures of those years (Don Milani and Don Balducci among others), the group progressed their wish to start a new community life together, as a way to experience human and social relations in a different way; to go beyond the narrow limits of traditional institutions – as the family was in their view – and beyond a selfish, utilitarian way of life.

The co-operative was created in 1977. None of the group had special links with agriculture and the rural world. Agriculture "simply seemed the right environment" to put their community idea

into practice. In fact, the rural families of historic times appeared to be inspired by a broader concept of family, so it was close their own idea. Therefore, they began agricultural production as a means of becoming autonomous and developing a new community life together. The co-operative appeared to be the legal organisational form closest to their own ideals – “all the members are self-employed, nobody is the owner, the goal is not accumulating profit but creating and sharing opportunities by working together – so as to maintain everyday life in common”.

The initial resources were very limited: some land rented by a friend – mainly woodlands – and a few animals – 40 sheep, 3 cows and 5 pigs. Furthermore nobody had any skills. Despite these limits, the strong motivation and the community spirit – that has always been the main characteristic of the group – made the experience and the co-operative progress. So, according to the same players, the main reasons behind the co-operative’s impressive economic development can be found in its “idealism capital”, its “humanist” philosophy to make the experience of each member richer (in terms of quality of life, e.g. sense of acceptance, self-esteem and satisfaction etc.) even when incomes were very limited – as in the initial period. This gave a strong motivation towards professionalisation, technological innovation and organisational improvement, resulting in quantitative and qualitative growth.

The co-operative has established contacts with different research institutes over the years. Several agro-technical innovations were experimented with and introduced. A big step forward occurred in 1992, with the creation of a new, large and advanced (in terms of technology) dairy, as already mentioned. This allowed them to increase the quality and quantity of cheese production, while maintaining the style of traditional cheese-making in the region. Direct selling, through the opening of a retail store managed by the co-operative directly, was another key factor in increasing incomes. Furthermore, the production is sold directly to the major distributors, with no intermediaries (in particular to supermarket chains managed by the consumer co-operatives – co-op supermarkets). Other commercial

Local Profile	-	0	+
Tutorial external support		0	
Technical advice		0	
Networks and relationships with other projects			+
Political supports			+
Financial supports	-		
Public recognition			+
Community support			+

activity, especially the development of cheese exports, has been further developed in subsequent years.

On the social side, the community experience has become increasingly consolidated. The practice of social inclusion of disadvantaged people has been a characteristic since the beginning, as part of a collective ethical choice. In addition, the early years of the co-operative was the period in which the big psychiatric and childrens' institutions were closing down in the country. So, there were particular needs emerging in those years. Nowadays, fostering activities continue in the community as a specific feature, part of community's identity and as a consolidated practice. The foundation, whose special initiatives are opened up to wider society, represents the main recent development on the social side.

External environment

In the case of "il Forteto", relations with the external environment were initially very difficult. The initial group of youths was seen as free or eccentric and too far removed from ordinary standards – a sort of group of hippies or mere idealists. Many families generated a strong opposition to the development of this group's "adventure". The institutional Church was also opposed to this unconventional experience. Clearly, the experience of "il Forteto" was in conflict with the conventional institution of the family. This opposition resulted in criminal charges and trials, but these had a positive resolution for the members of "Il Forteto".

However, "Il Forteto" was able to gain respect, approval and popularity through the years. Today, different public institutions support it as an important socio-economic reality in the region. The co-operative currently has numerous contacts with a range of different partners ("contributing partners" – other producers, commercial agents and consumers). The community has close relations with the Juvenile Courts of the area and other social institutions concerned with the practice of youth fostering. The Foundation promotes different kinds of initiatives in partnership with schools, universities and research institutions, public bodies and associations of different kinds.

Outcomes

The table below shows the economic and employment outcomes achieved by the co-operative over the years (essentially this refers to cheese production). The progressive increase over time is clear. The co-operative has been the major exporter of "Pecorino Toscano" (PDO)

in recent years, exporting to more than 10 countries including the USA, Canada and Japan. These economic results were the basis on which the social project became sustainable and was able to grow.

On the social side, “Il Forteto” estimates that about 110 “disadvantaged people” (adults and minors) were hosted since its inception (for short or long periods and/or who are still part of the community today). The majority were children and adolescents who suffered neglect, abuse and abandonment. About half of them left the community for different reasons, while the remainder are still present in the community and work in the co-operative (with the exception of minors and students), accounting for 20% of the full time workers. Furthermore 13 people with profound intellectual and physical disability are employed as full-time workers as well. About 15 children and youths are fostered at present in the community, taken into care by some members via the Juvenile Court.

Together with Ferroni (1999) we can affirm that “Il Forteto” could be seen as inventing and practicing a new, special form of communal life, “a new way of getting in touch with others, with ourselves and with things... capable of producing visible therapeutic effects”.

Direct Outcomes	-	0	+
Therapeutic effects			+
Educational effects			+
Work inclusion			+
Job creation			+
Other		0	
Indirect Outcomes	-	0	+
Environment			+
Landscape			+
Biodiversity			+
Direct selling			+
Farm reputation			+
Farm viability		0	

Table 2.2 - Evolution of the co-operative: economic and employment impacts

Year	Economic results - Euro x 1000			Total partners	Employment results		
	Turnover	Net income	Investments		External full time workers	Total employed personnel	Total salaries € x 1000
1977	2	2	2	24	0	6	0,516
1980	270	27	89	50	0	39	60
1984	1.041	334	306	47	0	47	124
1988	2.328	833	3.807	56	0	54	359
1992	5.504	2.069	8.631	73	24	82	682
1996	11.474	4.720	10.597	105	35	132	1.234
2000	13.383	8.789	14.072	117	34	143	1.770
2004	15.888	8.586	13.034	104	37	124	2.646

The foundation has promoted a series of educational/research projects, as well as holding meetings and producing several publications since its inception.

Challenges and future actions

All the 33 founder members of the community are still present/involved today and are around 50 years old at this time. Indeed their experience appears mature and consolidated today. One group concentrates mainly on the social side through the foundation, while the other is more involved in the economic and technical management of the co-operative. Both maintain their personal commitment at family and community level. Numerous public acknowledgements have already been achieved. Therefore, the members of “Il Forteto” do not appear to face particular challenges. Even in the face of questions about their future “...will the new generations – your children – continue your experience?” they don’t appear to be particularly worried. They say: “...It’s true, they have a different history and perspective from us. They found all this. They didn’t choose it or create it themselves. Not all of them have our own community spirit and would be ready to continue all this in the same way. However the community is an opportunity for them. It is something that has fulfilled our own life and could be useful/helpful for many other people. They have a free choice now to keep it or leave it. It’s not a must that our children continue this same experience in their future...”.

The critical questions raised by the “Il Forteto” case for regional institutions concerned with agricultural and rural development who have developed a new interest on the issue of “social farming” are:

- Can such realities (that have an evident socio-economic value) be replicable somehow?
- What should be the role of institutions in fostering such kinds of socio-economic development in the countryside?
- What should be the direct relationship between agricultural institutions, social institutions and “social farms”?

2.3 France

Diversity should be the key word for characterising the evolution of social/care farming in France. One specificity of what is going on in France is that social/care farming is considered by the stakeholders concerned as a highly ethical and a solidarity activity rather than a (profitable) business.

Social farming

There is in France a long tradition of shared gardens, or workers' gardens, since the 19th century, initially encouraged by the church, to alleviate the living conditions of the working class. Today, social farming is mostly an activity dominated by peri-urban vegetable and fruit production. This production is developed in so called gardens.

Social inclusion gardening is mainly an associative activity, carried out by not-for-profit associations. They can be classified in two categories: day work gardens and gardens with hosting or residential capacity.

There are several networks developing peri-urban gardening. These initiatives are set up for social purposes and not explicitly for the diversification of agricultural income – with the objective of social inclusion for marginalised or socially excluded people. The expansion of those initiatives has been stimulated by the political will to develop the social dimension of unemployment policies. The scope of public action towards these projects is inclusion into the economy, framed in the Law of Social Cohesion introduced in 2005. This heavy dependence on public subsidies is a source of tension: self-funding opportunities resulting from the production and marketing of vegetables to the members of the associations are rather limited and account for up to 15% of their budget. In the current period, subsidies are extremely volatile and some of those farms are experiencing serious difficulties and are under economic and financial pressures from public funding institutions.

Therapeutic farming

Such farms are more difficult to observe, quantify and analyse than social farms. Until now, there has been no official national label defining a therapeutic farm, which makes individual initiatives difficult to identify at the national level. Farms that are identified as care farms refer to many different kinds of therapy and their networks of affiliation are mainly research networks in different fields

such as animal therapy³ (called also animal mediation), art therapy and music therapy.

There are three categories of therapeutic farms:

- Individual farms, hosting one or several service-users during the day and charging the host institutions of those people for the service;
- Individual farms, with one or several service-users, who stay, live and work with the farm family, which receives some financial support for hosting and accompanying those people
- Associative farms (i.e. owned and set up by associations) with service-users who stay, live and work at the farm. Those associations can be *ad-hoc* associations set up for creating and managing the farm or can be existing associations for those with disabilities.

Pedagogic farming

They are widespread and cover a range of situations. All pedagogic farms are not therapeutic and therapeutic farms can be pedagogic ones. Therapeutic farms are considered and labeled as pedagogic ones mainly when they work with children. Besides the broad diversity of the organisational forms, the objectives can be diverse within the same network: from simply the provision of information to education, or communication. Some can add other kinds of activities: recreational, social, therapeutic, heritage or commercial.

Competition for public support

These initiatives receive strong public support. Production and the sale of services may account for some 15% of the total resources. The other resources come mostly from municipalities, county and regional authorities.

The current decentralisation process, *à la française*, means that the State transfers responsibilities to decentralised authorities and these authorities have to assume those charges with limited resources. Such a process is leading to a situation of tension in which local public money is not expandable, while the needs are growing. This tension is observable for those initiatives which are residences for service users. They depend mostly on funding at the county level.

A growing number of projects are submitted to the county for annual funding, instead of multi-annual funding which was the case until recently.

³ There are several specialised associations for animal-assisted therapy, horse or equi-therapy, dog therapy, donkey therapy...

Strategic priorities

In the current and future context of local and national budgetary pressures, it is important to reinforce the necessity to maintain the practice of hosting people who are experiencing major social difficulties.

Priority 1: to recognise social farming for its multiple functions: economic, social, environmental and territorial. This should be done at local, national and European (CAP reform) levels.

Priority 2: to develop product quality and reciprocity of relations in social farms: it has an impact on territories and consum’actors (“members of the associations) it is interacting with. This should

Table 2.3 - SWOT analysis of the country situation as drawn by the participants in the “So Far” French platform	
<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethics and strong involvement of staff working in social/care farms. • Quality of services and food products • Good relations with consumers, looking for direct contact with such producers • For service users, farming is very positive • Natural heritage, landscape and environment are maintained by many social farms • Positive local economic role by being integrated into social and economic fabric • Strong support of families and service users’ associations. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of recognition of the specific contribution of social farming by policy makers • Existing social and health policies ignore the reality and constraints of social farming • Lack of professional recognition of the professional identity of staff with dual competencies, technical and social • Lack of training capacity for staff with dual competencies, technical and social • Fragmentation and strong heterogeneity of social farming • Strong dependence on public support.
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs will increase, because of societal dynamics and of the increased recognition of disability. “Borderline” people will be more numerous • Strong demand for product quality and closer relations between consumers and social farms • Strong demand for landscape and environment services from municipalities • Support could be expected from agri-environmental policies • Strong trend to de-institutionalise the relationship with service-users: the approach is more individualised in developing necessary services. It is done for budgetary reasons. It provides opportunities for small operations like farms • Awareness of the necessity to overcome fragmentation and strengthen networking strategies • CAP reform. 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing budgetary pressures on farms, because of higher costs and fewer subsidies • Intense competition for public subsidies, which puts at risk the quality of hosting services • High pressure to broaden the hosting capacities to different groups to fill up existing hosting capacities • Increased risk of failure to follow up arising the most fragile people • Land pressure is very intense, whether in mountain areas or valleys • Labour regulation (35 hours /week) makes it more difficult to recruit more staff and multi-skilled staff • Financial procedures are so complicated that bigger organisations with staff specialising in subsidy seeking/grant writing have a higher likelihood of succeeding.

contribute towards addressing the necessity to develop farms' economic viability. This viability should also contribute towards preserving agricultural land.

Priority 3: to recognise professional identity and develop training and skills of different categories of staff – technical and social.

To achieve such priorities, key approaches have been established by professionals.

Using a strategy of overcoming fragmentation and strengthening networking should facilitate the recognition of the specific functions – social, economic, therapeutic, environmental – of this kind of agriculture.

Forms can differ – inclusion gardens, individual farms, associative ones – but the objective is common. Legal forms are very different – private or associative. In fact, it reflects the lack of recognition of this kind of agriculture. This variety is not a real hurdle to the development of projects. Maybe this is not the relevant debate: the most serious issue being the question of gaining acceptance of the specific contribution of social farming.

This could be done at local level (in the territories where projects are developed), at regional level (as the region draws European subsidies). It could be useful to build a social farming network in Rhone Alpes region.

2.3.1 The Farm of Bellechambre (Isère county)

Key point

The Farm of Bellechambre hosts on a permanent basis 28 people, mostly adults who have autism, in an alpine dairy farm and residence, located 30 km from Grenoble, on highlands at 1000 m altitude. It is a rather isolated place. According to their capabilities, service-users/residents work at different farm tasks (milking, cleaning the stable, feeding poultry, making cheese, selling at the marketplace...) and participate in many non-work activities, such as sport, art therapy and choir. Employees who are directly in contact with residents in their "life-groups" are doubly skilled, with social and technical competencies. The medical follow-up is done outside the farm – in the town with specialist doctors and hospitals. The main source of funding is County of Isère.



Bellechambre, A farm for autisme in the mountain (FR)



A warm atmosphere in Bellechambre (FR)

Description

a. Social/care component

28 people are hosted at Bellechambre, of whom 25% are women. Service-users have many different types of disability, with a majority being adults with autism. It operates seven days a week as the service-users are in residence. They are organised into three life groups, each one with its own technical team.

In total 41 people, equivalent to 31 full time people, work at the Farm of Bellechambre. Project workers have dual skill sets: technical and social, but not medical..

The farm is not a care setting. Individualised care is provided in the town – either at hospitals or private specialist doctors.

Different activities are suggested to service-users, focused on self-expression: choir, drawing and painting, art therapy and sport. During the appropriate season, service-users go on vacation camps.

Participation in the farm work is tailored for each person, according to his/her disability and capabilities. People are not contracted: the farming tasks are considered as productive and occupational.

b. Agricultural activity

The farm has been re-activated after 10 years of non-activity. Today, it is a dairy farm producing cheese and some meat. It is set up on 11 ha. and the livestock consists of 11 dairy cows, 6 pigs, 1 horse, 30 rabbits and chickens.

Service users work in milking, taking care of animals, cleaning the stable, feeding the poultry and making cheese. A balance needs to be found between rotating the tasks undertaken by the service-users which stimulates flexibility and maintaining the necessary stability of their way of life. Not all residents can work on all the activities.

Other activities are table d'hôte (serving meals), education and a weekly sales event at a market place in the valley. Landscape and forest maintenance activities are well suited for such a farm, but it is not a priority. There is a lack of financial support, lack of time, and no specific project has been set up so far.

The sales value of the production is 76 000 euros. The situation is improving.

Background and crucial support

The national association Sésame Autisme, with its regional branch, initiated the project, by developing it and looking for

support and funding. The objective was to create the conditions for offering to adults with profound disability, mostly those with autism, stable living conditions with hosting, residential capacity within a farm.

It was able to start in 1990 thanks to the support of families, the local municipality, public administration and the county, who provided the residence and the farm. When the farm was set up, the project received 400,000 euros from the county for investment. Bellechambre's budget is 1.8 million euros: 96% of which is subsidised.

The farm and the residence are managed separately.

- The residence/hosting activity is mostly funded by the county of Isère: Bellechambre receives 180 euros /day/ resident, paid for by the county.
- The farm production activity is more or less self-funded (with normal CAP subsidies) for its running expenses. Staff salaries are paid by the residence, due to their dual function.

External environment

Strong connections have been established with:

- therapeutic networks (hospitals, doctors),
- service-users' and disability associations (especially Sesame Autism),
- other farms,
- agricultural actors.

Now Bellechambre is becoming a reference point for farmers.

It organises on-site visits for other farmers and professional training. Potentially interested individual farmers follow carefully the care activities at Bellechambre. It has a leading role in some professional associations like Association des Producteurs Fermiers de l'Isère (APFI), where social as well as quality issues are tackled and stable relationships have been built with the Agriculture Council technicians.

In terms of services for those with autism, Bellechambre has become a reference point for authorities, medical actors, patients' families. The waiting list is amazing as residential turn over is very low. In a way, it gives Bellechambre a strong negotiating power with local administrations from social affairs, health and with the County.

Isère County is considered in France as one of the most favourable places to live for those with disabilities because of its many services, accessibility policy, and the presence of adapted residential structures.

Outcomes

Multiple positive effects:

a. Social effects

According to local social workers, the effects on the personal and social wellbeing of the service-users are positive. External medical specialists confirm these positive impacts.

More generally, it contributes to a better understanding of disability: experiments and solutions are tested to provide improvements for users. There is also a better approach to the understanding of disability by the neighbourhood.

b. Economic effects

The reactivation of the farm in the rather isolated mountain area contributed to developing economic relations with local actors: direct selling, marketing, delivery, supply, inducing a positive impact on local rural development. Many employees and their families live in the surroundings, contributing by their presence to the maintenance of public services such as education, the post office, roads etc.

c. Environmental and landscape effects

Bellechambre is the only remaining farm in the surroundings – on the Plateau des Petites Roches. Its presence on 11 ha of maintained pastures contributes to ensuring the openness and accessibility of the mountain landscape and to preserving the biodiversity of pasture areas.

Challenges and actions required

Within the dominant French model of social farming, ie the associative organisational form, Bellechambre can be considered as representative of the dominant French social and therapeutic farming model and typical of its vulnerability:

- it is highly subsidised,
- it succeeds in providing to service-users not only work, but residence, social support and all kinds of activities (from art to sport practices),
- the family association Sésame Autisme, plays a key role in the governance of the structure,
- in the local scene, Bellechambre is a driver in the debates on social farming and social policies.

The necessity for staff to have dual competencies, technical and social, makes it rather difficult to recruit new people. On the other hand,

the good working conditions are a factor in explaining the very low staff turnover, which is very rare in the French social sector.

Users can stay at Bellechambre for 'life': there is no time limit on the length of stay. This raises a problem for prospective candidates – the waiting list is striking. There is also a very serious lack of residential capacity for the oldest service-users who might leave Bellechambre – what to do with 60 or 65 year-old people? This problem is unsolved at the moment.

In the medium-term, the decentralised organisation of the country will be modified. The current government wishes to change the administrative organisation by eliminating the county level and strengthening the regional one. This shift is supposed to be operated without any additional new financial means. Will Bellechambre be able to adjust to the new situation and continue to be supported at the same level by the Region Rhone Alpes?

2.3.2 A Jardin de Cocagne: Solid'Action inclusion garden

Key point

Solid'Action is a social inclusion organisation, residence and working place, hosting some 17 service-users. It is located in a mountain area, 30 km from Grenoble, on highlands at 1000 m altitude. It is a member of the national Réseau Cocagne and has no agricultural production. It is dedicated mainly to selling services such as the maintenance of green space, forestry, path maintenance and cleaning of buildings and private gardens. It presents itself to funders as a family hosting system, where there is a very integrated life with the staff. The founder is very much respected by residents for his personal engagement and dedication.

Description

The non for profit association Solid'Action was set up in 2002 and the initiative started in September 2004. Solid'Action is a partner of the national Réseau Cocagne and its director is a member of the board of the national network. From the beginning, it was conceived as a residence and working place.

a. Service production and marketing activities

The main activities are dedicated to selling services such as maintenance of green space, forestry, path maintenance and clean-



Inclusive work in Solid'Action (FR)



Looking to the fire in Solid'Action (FR)

ing of buildings and private gardens. There is no agricultural and food production. To participate in these tasks, service users are contracted as employees, through a specific legal contract called subsidised contracts, in which the State subsidises 65% of the total salary cost (24h a week), so service users are paid.

b. Social care and inclusion

There are 17 residents, two of whom are women. 4 are employed externally, 5 people with major challenges are in occupational activities and 8 are contracted by the organisation. The average age is 35 years. Most of the people come from the county. Solid'Action is dedicated to most excluded people coming from the streets, jail, those with addictions and those who are long-term unemployed. They say "...we host people nobody wants to host".

To accompany those residents, 7.5 people are engaged in social work (to help with all re-integration, social and administrative procedures) and service provision. Psychological and therapeutic follow-up is carried out in town by hospitals, doctors and specialists.

As a hosting and working place, Solid'Action has a strong specificity, due to its director's choices – "...we are a hosting family". The director and his wife (also working there) live in the same house as the residents and take their meals with them. The life of the residents and the director's family is very collective and interlinked. For Christmas evening, service users and the director's family celebrated together and spent their night looking at photos. They work, they live and they go on vacation together – for those who do not have other options.

The founder is very respected by the residents for his personal engagement and dedication. Obviously, this characteristic makes Solid'Action a very unique experience. He was co-founder of Réseau Cocagne. He is a noted personality in the 'business', and also considered very atypical, considered to be too idealistic by other directors.

Background and crucial support

(a national network of social gardens – Réseau Cocagne)

In 2007, some 90 Jardins de Cocagne were active in France and some 20 were planned for the short and medium term. The implementation of the gardens is very uneven across the country, with a high density in the Eastern part of France and lower density in the Western part. There is the opportunity for growing the network in this part of the country. This feature is mainly due to history.

According to the network, some 16,000 people, including gardeners, permanent staff, consumer members, volunteers and project holders, are involved in the garden project. Permanent staff (professional technicians, directors, secretaries, psychologists, environmental activists and social workers) account for 450 people. In 2004, 2500 gardeners (with inclusion contracts) were working in the gardens. "Consum'actors", ie members of the associations, represent some 12,000 families and board volunteer administrators account for another 1200 people. Four fundamental principles underpin the development of the network:

- The social and professional inclusion of people living in difficult social situations,
- The organic vegetable production system,
- The distribution of the production to a network of members through a weekly delivery basket,
- The co-operation with local professional actors.

The Cocagne network along with other European inclusion stakeholders participates in European projects and for several years (since 2007) has been benefiting from European Social Funds.

External environment

Subsidies to the managing association come from decentralised public administrations in the areas of social affairs, employment, justice and the European Social Fund at county and regional level. Two-thirds of the organisation's resources are subsidies. The remaining 1/3 comes from the rent paid by residents (15% of residence costs) and revenue from the sales of services (18% of inclusion activity costs, mainly consisting of salaries and investment in materials).

The expansion of this kind of initiative has been stimulated by the development of policies which address the social aspects of unemployment. The field of public action relevant to these projects is inclusion in the economy, framed in the Law of Social Cohesion voted in 2005. This law has integrated inclusion initiatives into the legal framework of employment, with the mission of assuring the recruitment and employment of unemployed persons with particular social and professional difficulties, by developing activities that have a dimension of social benefit. This law is the continuation of a former law voted in 1998 to counter social exclusion.

Since 2005, social inclusion through economic activity can result from:

- production of goods and services for commercialisation,

- activity having social benefit,
- activity having social benefit which may be connected to the commercialisation of goods and services.

The law says also that only socially useful activities, with or without marketing, can benefit from subsidised work contracts .

At local level, Solid'Action is immersed in a very dense social exclusion/inclusion web of organisations, both associative and administrative. It is also connected to town-based medical doctors and hospitals, as it has no medical function.

Outcomes

It is a very challenging type of population. Nobody wants to receive them. The impacts of the initiative varies substantially according to the profile of people.

a. Economic and social effects

It is difficult to have a sufficient time frame to assess this as the initiative is very young (established in 2004).

4 users out of 17 are employed in "normal" conditions. This is the average rate of return for normal work conditions for Cocagne.

For this local mountain area, the presence of Solid'Action is important in terms of economic relations with local suppliers and people who use services. Employees and their families live locally. So we can consider that Solid'Action contributes to maintaining the local economic and social fabric and keeping public services alive.

b. Effects on service-users' lives

The long-term difficulties experienced by service-users contribute to psychological difficulties for many of them. According to service-users' interviews, staying at Solid'Action helps them to recover, to think about what they would like to do and to get support for dealing with rather complicated administration procedures. However, some of them can't recover even after a long stay there. Those with drug and alcohol addictions seem to face the most challenges in recovery.

c. Landscape maintenance

Landscape maintenance services (forestry, paths etc.) is one of the main sales areas. It has the effect of keeping the landscape open and accessible.

Challenges and actions required

The profile of the initiators of this experience as well as the profile of the service-users make this initiative exemplary in terms of engagement and objectives.

It also makes it difficult to generalise and extrapolate. The activities developed in the garden are atypical: unlike other Cocagne gardens, it does not produce food, although it is their intention to produce food to meet internal needs.

The pressure related to public expenditure cuts for this type of social experiment increases its financial vulnerability and dependency. As in the case of Bellechambre, the drastic changes which will be implemented as part of the decentralisation process will force inclusion initiatives to adjust. Social expenditure budget cuts are putting pressure on Solid'Action to increase self-funding and marketing of their services in a rather difficult and uncertain economic context.

2.4 Slovenia

In Slovenia, as in many EU countries social farming is not yet organised. Instead, it exists as a patchwork of operations mostly developed from voluntary bases and bottom-up actions and is not supported by any specific policies or institutional framework. However, increasing interest is emerging for utilising the positive effects of farming/gardening, as well as contact with domestic animals, on the quality of life of different groups of people with special needs.

Analyses of 15 cases of "green programmes" focused on social care (social/care farming) revealed a common pattern as well as some differences within the activity. The majority of the projects began in the late 1990s. They were introduced by pioneers for whom the innovative potential of interlacing social care and agriculture is a challenge. The green programmes of social care are a testament to the innovation and reputations of their providers. Since their beginnings the motivations behind the programmes have been aspirations for a better quality of life for the service-users and for inclusively-oriented social development. The majority of the service-users are young people and adults with intellectual disabilities and mental health issues. The green programmes are aimed at diversifying the portfolio of activities (occupational therapy, occupational rehabili-

Table 2.4 - SWOT analysis of the country situation as drawn by the participants in the “So Far” Slovenian platform

	<p><i>Opportunities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing public awareness about human rights of people with disabilities • National policy on social care (community based provision of services, individualisation, private-public partnership) • Common agricultural policy (support for a multifunctional agriculture) . 	<p><i>Threats</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceptability of the green programmes by local communities • Multifunctionality of agriculture as a red herring • Bureaucratic over-regulation by the state .
<p><i>Strengths</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better use of on-farm resources • Diversification of farm incomes • Meeting the service-users’ needs • Job creation 	<p><i>Strengths /Opportunities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Government has to issue the Letter of Intent to implement green programmes for developing and strengthening national social welfare – Green programmes have to be included into the system of social care on equal terms. – The associations of the service-users and the providers of green programmes have to be established. – Co-operation between all stakeholders has to be strengthened and diversified. – Regular monitoring, analysis and evaluation of good practices at home and abroad have to be carried out. – Development of additional education for farmers. 	<p><i>Strengths/Threats</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Preparation of executive legislation of quality – Co-operation of all relevant ministries to prepare inter-ministerial standing orders of green programmes – Formation of the working body at national level that will coordinate the activities in the field of green programmes.
<p><i>Weaknesses</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of knowledge and know-how • Poor economics • Lower competitiveness due to social stigma surrounding the service-users 	<p><i>Weaknesses /Opportunities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – All involved have to accept the strategic decision of using available funds for development of green programmes. – Informing farmers what EU funds are available and training agricultural extension officers to help farmers with the applications. – Stimulating co-operation between farmers and social care institutions. – Developing care for aged farmers to create the possibility for them to stay on a farm. – Encouraging farmers who have family members with a disability to introduce green programmes on their farm. 	<p><i>Weaknesses/Threats</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ministry for Agriculture, Food and Forestry should inform potential providers and service-users about existing possibilities to carry out green programmes. – Ministry for Labour, Family and Social Affairs should inform potential providers about necessary activities to meet existing requirements, as well as what requirements are to be expected in the future.

tation, labour integration and education) for the service-users and upgrading the existing concepts, models and practices in the field of social work. The work of the providers is more or less invisible and there is no support from either the social care sector or from the agricultural sector although all the programmes are professionally planned and implemented. Lack of knowledge and practice were the major problems experienced by promoters when starting these programmes and has been a common experience. In addition, the lack of a proper legislative framework has been a major obstacle to further development. The majority of the programmes are micro projects that are oriented to meet the service-users' needs first of all. For institutions, economic effects come second and income has to cover the costs. Yet, for the farmers, and young farmers in particular, as well as social enterprises the economics of a programme is an important issue. The providers hold a very optimistic view of the future of the green programmes and their economic viability. This optimism is demonstrated by their investment in necessary facilities. Ambition to develop the programmes further is supported by generating very good outcomes for the service-users in terms of their personal and social skills and well-being. Because the green programmes take place in the open (farms, gardens, parks), they provide the possibility for the general public to learn about real capabilities of people with special needs and to understand them better. Additionally, by practicing low input technology, as well as by taking care of landscape amenities, the green programmes have an important and positive environmental impact.

Key stakeholders in general (farmers, social-care institutions, social enterprises, people with special needs, local communities and government) know little or nothing about social farming and have very little experience of it. However, they show a reasonable level of interest and a preference for exploring the possibilities offered by the green programmes of social care (social farming). Furthermore, through good practices in the field of interlacing agriculture with occupational therapy and activities in many welfare institutions, the requisite operational knowledge is accumulating. However, in order to realise nationwide expansion of the programmes, "inclusion" and "normalisation" are needed at the public level. This means that green programmes of social care have to be included among (the common) agricultural policy, as well as in social welfare policies.

Thus, it is apparent that building a new institutional environment is a crucial pre-requisite for the economic viability and public rec-

ognition of social farming as a new dynamic scenario of sustainable rural development.

The structure of the SWOT matrix shows that it was easier for Slovenian stakeholders to assess external factors (opportunities/threats) than internal ones (strengths/weaknesses). There are at least two reasons for this:

- The green programmes of social care are very new phenomena without enough practical experiences to permit comprehensive evaluation as of yet;
- As in the field of social care and agriculture policy-making, the green programmes are still invisible. The pioneers of these programmes are facing numerous unfamiliar obstacles that frustrate them and make their day-to-day practice quite difficult.

Furthermore, they scored weaknesses and threats a little higher than strengths and opportunities. Therefore, in the actual initial developmental stage, elimination of weaknesses to avoid threats and to take advantage of opportunities is of the utmost importance to ensure the basic pre-conditions for further development. Once that is established, the use of the programmes' strengths to take advantage of opportunities should be the dominant strategic guideline.

2.4.1 Co-operation of the Centre for Protection and Care: Koper and Goat-Breeding Farm "Brdca"

Key point

The Centre for Protection and Care Koper, a public welfare institution, is developing three types of green programme for social care: providing occupations at the local nursery, maintenance of public parks and on-farm empirical learning and occupational activities. In the case of the latter, the inclusion of the service-users of the Centre, adults with intellectual disability, into farming activities on the goat-breeding farm "Brdca" was introduced in the year 2003 as a pilot project within a feasibility study on social farming in Slovenia. Diversification of activities for service-users, because they long for change and wish to experience new places and to meet new people, was the main motivation for starting the project. For the management and employees, co-operation with the farm was a professional challenge leading to requests for reconsideration of the existing concepts, models and practices, as well as for their improvement and



Planning the daily tasks in Koper and Goat-Breeding Farm “Brdca” (SL)



Feeding hens, Co-operation of the Centre for Protection and Care (SL)

upgrade. As for the farmer, he was interested to learn and practice working with those with intellectual disability, as his goal was to generate half of the farm’s income from social care activities. All of the stakeholders, i.e. service-users, professionals and the farmer were involved in designing this working method. Initially, two to four service-users worked on the farm twice per week for one season under the supervision of the farmer. Later on, the format changed and a larger group of service-users is now working on the farm once per week for one season, along with two instructors and the farmer. Evaluation of the project shows that the goals and execution of the project were adequately defined and implemented and new content and activities were introduced into the occupational programmes. Finding room to encourage personal decision-making, as well as the conditions for permanent and empirical learning, preservation of knowledge/skills and better social contacts were created. However, the total costs of the project are high due to the transportation of the service-users and the farmer’s compensation. Because these costs are not covered through the Centre’s public funding, other sources have to be found (donations, tenders, sales of the products etc.).

Description

The centre is public social institution that provides day care and occupations for adults with intellectual disability. Agricultural occupations are provided in co-operation with different local partners: a farmer, a nursery/garden centre and private and public owners of gardens and parks. In this way more than 200 ha are available for service-users’ activities. The largest proportion is represented by municipal parks. In all cases ecological practices are promoted. The social/care component is represented by day care, living and working and education.

The programme was introduced in early 2000s. The motives were as follows: diversification of the activities for the service-users and better quality of life for them, diversification of income services, strengthening the process of normalisation/integration of the service-users

Project Profile	today		
	-	0	+
Knowledge in care			+
Knowledge in agriculture		0	
Experience in care			+
Experience in agriculture		0	
Female role in social farming			+
Male role in social farming			+
Accessibility of the farm			+
Dedicated space on the farm			+
Dedicated agricultural processes			+

and expanding their social network. A very important motive was to transform the general public's attitude from one of pity for those with intellectual disability to respect and recognition.

11 paid staff members qualified in health/social care and in therapy, and some with no special qualifications, work on the programme part-time.

The service-users (55), who have an intellectual disability, take an active part in agricultural activities. The project is paid for the support given.

The programme is funded partially by the centre, partially by the service-users who have their own budget and pay for the services themselves and partially by selling services on the open market.

The impact of the green programme on the economic viability of the centre is moderate. Costs and income are balanced. More than doubling the capacity of the green programme in terms of number of service-users and of income is planned for the future.

Background, milestones and crucial support

An exploratory study on the feasibility of green programmes of social care (social farming) revealed that parents of those with intellectual disability and farmers do accept the idea of incorporating farms into a general provision of social services for those with intellectual disability. However, neither group has proper knowledge or experience with social or care farming (Vadnal, 2004; Vadnal, 2005). Furthermore, the potential service-users of the on-farm social services and their potential providers, are aware of the possible benefits from social farming in terms of the service-users' quality of life and efficient use of on-farm resources, as well as of the significant responsibility for all involved. However, the decision to take an active part in it will be not easy for either of the groups. Considering all this, the model of a green programme that has been suggested is to work with an institution as a project holder and with farmers as partners. Still, the implementation of a green programme as a supplementary on-farm activity should be gradual, transparent and economically viable and needs to be supported by building partnerships between participants, i.e. the persons with special needs, the farmers and the institutions.

Five years of experience with the on-farm green programme proves that the model does technically work in actual Slovenian conditions. However, operating in these real conditions identifies the major weakness of the model – the effects of giving a central role

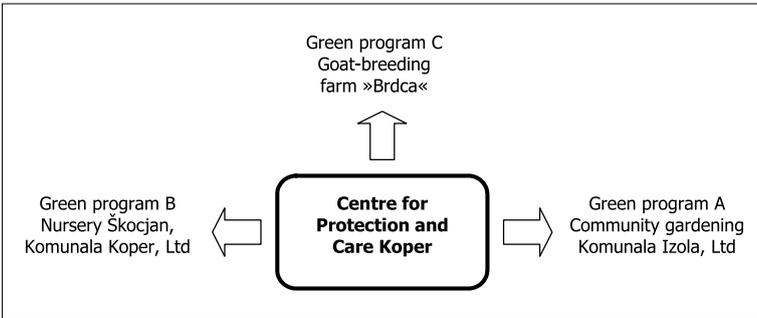


Fig. 2.4 - Development of the green programmes of social care at the Centre for Protection and Care Koper

to an institution. Institutions are notoriously ineffective in the field of resocialisation – they develop institutional behaviours, subordinate personality and hinder the development of social networking (Flaker, 1998; Ulaga, 1998). Altogether they are incompatible with the modern inclusive philosophy for social care.

The problem created by this weakness cannot be overcome without profound changes in the role of the State in the area of social care. The State maintains its role of ensuring the provision of public services even in the face of adversity. Transitioning to the function of regulating and setting the scope and conditions for the provision of public services, including the required minimum standard and supervision of the provision of such services, has been announced but not yet implemented (Resolucija, 2006).

The major strengths of this project are for management of the Centre to see co-operation with a farm as a possible means of improving the standard of care for adults with intellectual disability, of building cohesion between organisational units and employees of the Centre as well as between employees and service-users and as a means of expanding the area of inclusion in a social environment to encompass rural surroundings. Through a multi-dimensional planning procedure, these goals were transformed into operational aims that corresponded to each group of stakeholders, management, employees, service-users and the farmer. This multi-dimensional evaluation procedure facilitates adjustments in terms of interests and performance.

During the planning stage the issue of the service-users' preferences for agriculture/ farming emerged. When given the opportunity to make choices about their involvement (self-advocacy), participants

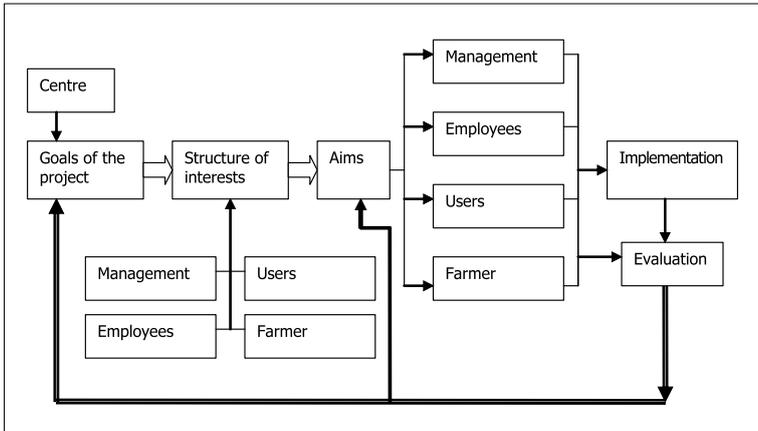


Fig. 2.5 - Consecutive project building procedure

of urban origin were reluctant to join the project. On the other hand, those having some experience with agriculture/farming did not have second thoughts about joining. In order to overcome this problem for the future development of the green programmes, the potential service-users have to be introduced to the agriculture/farm related activities during the early stages of their special education (Košmelj & Vadnal, 2003). Therefore, it is crucial to “green” up the existing programmes of special education and training in order to provide the room for those with intellectual disability to acquire experiences within the programme and then to be able to evaluate them.

On-farm activities were structured into three main groups: care for animals (cleaning the stable and its surroundings, trimming and feeding the animals), maintaining the landscape (Karstic grassland, forests and stone walls), and housekeeping (preparing food and tidying). These activities were combined with a variety of seasonal activities, such as picking fruits, herbs and mushrooms, gathering acorns for animals, preparing firewood, etc. These activities can only be carried out from May to October due to harsh winter conditions (frequent and strong north wind, snowdrifts and black ice). Introduction of year-round on-farm activities requires investment in facilities for service-users and for their corresponding winter activities (processing, packing). Both Centre and farmer applied for several tenders at local and national levels without any success. This indicates that there is a profound under-estimation of the innovative potential of social farming that may lead to the institutional isolation of social care.

The safety of the service-users on the farm has been an important issue to tackle. In this field it has been essential to balance properly the safety and freedom of all involved. This balance has been established through very intensive consultations between the professionals and the farmer who was introduced to the Codex of Ethical Principles of Social Care and is obliged to follow it. Furthermore, the lack of practical experience necessitates close on-farm co-operation between the professionals and the farmer, particularly at the beginning. The professionals from the Centre attend to the service-users during the first few visits and assist the farmer in their initial encounters with those who have moderate intellectual disability, as well as assisting the service-users through their first steps on the farm.

The on-farm working day starts with planning daily activities while having morning tea or juice. The service-users are encouraged to suggest activities. The farmer and the service-users evaluate the suggestions in terms of their practicality and include them in a daily plan. All the work tasks are written into a diary that the farmer is obliged to keep for the purpose of transparency. Then, the service-users change into overalls. The farmer gives initial instructions and demonstrates the working procedure. The service-users work alongside the farmer. They perform simple operations independently. At the end of the working day the farmer and the service-users check the tasks they have fulfilled and compare the actual outcome with the planned one. The tasks that remain undone or unfinished are put into a plan for the next visit.

The evaluation of the project by all stakeholders involved showed that all constituent elements have been met. The farmer stressed that the service-users' quite different views of a farmer were staggering. Some of them see a farmer as an authority, others as someone who is in need of help or as a co-worker, etc. It was very difficult to accept all these different concepts. Yet, the farmer has to be able to work with all of them along with their different degrees of disability; being on good terms with them is essential. A farmer has to be attentive to all the service-users. Service-users have to feel at home. Therefore, the number of service-users and the degree of their disabilities matter. One care-taker can manage 5 or more service-users with mild degrees of intellectual disability. Yet in another case, one service-user with a moderate degree of intellectual disability requires an additional helper. In cases that involve service-users with moderate or profound degrees of intellectual disability, it is recommended that a farmer should work with just two service-users.

External environment

The Centre is faced with a dilemma: how to reconcile the rigid state system of payments for social care with professional ambitions and the service-users' welfare. Under such conditions the adjustment of social care activities depends heavily on the philosophy and creativity of the social care management. As outlined earlier, the Centre applied for many different tenders in the field of social services at the local and the national level, but without any success. This indicates that there is still a profound underestimation of the innovative potential of social farming.

Local Profile	-	0	+
Tutorial external support			+
Technical advice		0	
Networks and relationships with other projects			+
Political supports	-		
Financial supports	-		
Public recognition			+
Community support		0	

Outcomes

The managers and employees found the co-ordination and implementation of the green programme very demanding. It calls for additional efforts dedicated to organisation and implementation and involves great responsibility. Nevertheless, the working conditions are less stressful and more relaxed than elsewhere. The programme offers many possibilities to model diverse, more individualised approaches. Concerning the service-users, they adjusted to the new environment quickly and established good, relaxed and friendly interaction with the farmer. They learned the basic details of the work on a daily basis and regularly had the opportunity to alter plans with their ideas and suggestions. They took an active role in the evaluation procedure during the activities as well as at the end of the working day. The service-users came to know the surroundings, names of places and special characteristics of different parts of the farm. Through taking care of the animals they learned why the particular operation has to be carried out in a particular place and on a particular sched-

Direct Outcomes	-	0	+
Therapeutic effects		0	
Educational effects			+
Work inclusion			+
Job creation		+	
Other			
Indirect Outcomes	-	0	+
Environment			+
Landscape			+
Biodiversity			+
Direct selling	-		
Farm reputation			+
Farm viability		0	

ule. By performing the work procedures together they learned to co-operate and to help each other. The occupations were neither monotonous nor profit-oriented; they were well diversified, providing enough small and simple operations with meaningful, useful and attractive goals. Miss Teja and Mr. Borut were asked to present their experiences with the green programme on the farm to the professional public at the conference “Living with Downs Syndrome” (Življenje, 2008). While Miss Teja stressed social effects and accomplishments (we met the farmer, we worked together, we guided children⁴ during their visit to the farm etc.), Mr. Borut, who was in charge of the hens, expressed a high degree of awareness and responsibility. His statement “A fox ate hens” persuaded the audience of the value of the green programmes.

Challenges and actions required

The centre is very active at meetings and activities with other farmers and institutions at all levels. Support for communication and information, definition of practical guidelines for potential new entrant farmers, monetary compensation, vocational training, aids for structural investments and technical assistance are the measures that they see as crucial for the further development of green social care programmes. They are of the opinion that green social care programmes are clearly recognised by public institutions. They believe that the development of social farming has to be supported by the State and local authorities partially.

Main Challenges	-	0	+
Clear rules and definition			+
Specific laws			+
Technical support			+
Financial supports			+
Information/communication			+
Recognition			+
Improving knowledge (research, education, transfer)			+
Networks			+
Policy integration			+
Public recognition			+

For the future, more than doubling the capacity of green programmes in terms of number of service-users and of income is planned – under the conditions that green programmes will be included into systems of social inclusion, cohesion and equal opportunities policies on equal terms and supported accordingly.

⁴ Goat-breeding farm “Brdca” has executed pedagogical activities for the pupils of primary schools as an on-farm supplementary activity for several years. Participants in the green programme are also actively involved in this pedagogical activity.

2.5 Germany

With 82 million inhabitants Germany is the most densely populated country in the European Union. Germany consists of 16 federal states. In relation to agriculture, the social sector, therapy and pedagogy, these federal states have different laws. The consequence is that social farming in Brandenburg might face different rules and regulations than in Hessa.

Furthermore, agricultural work is still under-appreciated work. In Germany it is either industrialised (strongly mechanised, large-scale, impersonal) or – if it provides social-economy type working places or therapeutic facilities – it is primarily manual work. This work is physically hard, repetitive and offers little choice. In modern eyes, workplaces in agriculture may be seen as unattractive and underpaid. On the other hand the meaning of work itself is changing currently and is seen increasingly as the fulfilment of one's personality. In a world that is rapidly changing this could also be a strong element in a pedagogic or therapeutic setting: a place where work and place stay the same and people are needed every day.

The discussion about occupation and employment for "fringe groups" and especially for people with disabilities is sensitive because of the special German history of the Nazi regime. Because people with disabilities were murdered during the Third Reich, the founders of the federal republic tried to assure the wellbeing of those with disabilities in large and diversified units, the so-called "sheltered workshops for disabled people" (WfbM). According to the existing rule (see German rule on workshops Wvo § 7;1) these sheltered workshops have to consist of at least 120 people. Their representatives ensure that the conditions in such institutions are favourable. The idea of workplaces for individuals on "normal" family farms is not favourably received based on the belief that service-users that are more capable might leave the sheltered workshops. Consequently, these institutions will consist of only those people with more profound disabilities, causing greater segregation and categorising these workshops as pure care institutions. But there are models of co-operation between workshops and farms in terms of external working places and they are increasing. The impact of the introduction of a personal budget for people with disabilities in Germany is quite uncertain.

A national advisory service has been developed and a brochure on the possibilities and support for integrated workplaces on family

farms has been published by FiBL recently (available in the German language at www.gruene-werkstatt.de/zusammenschaffenwirwas/index.html). With these initiatives FiBL aims to connect interested farmers and support services for those with disabilities in a transparent way.

In Germany there are different networks and associations according to the group of people who use services, specific treatments and particular therapeutic approaches (such as horticultural or animal assisted therapy), education or rehabilitation. The networks run internet platforms, publish newsletters, organise meetings and/or provide their members with other services.

The network of school farms, BAGLOB, is also in operation and is seen as effective at the German level. A social farming umbrella network that would express and communicate interests on an EU level would be very much appreciated. There are hopeful experiences with individual youth welfare service projects on farms. Until now there has been a lack of public awareness of these projects.

There is a huge number of people with problems but with no medical diagnosis asking for services on farms. These people might be in a personal crisis, less capable and/or in need of a good environment i.e. those just recently finished rehabilitation programmes, those experiencing burn-out, persistent truants or drop-outs, illegal immigrants and others. Often farmers have to refuse their requests when the law prohibits integration or social services refuse to pay the expenditures because they are not able to finance the care and input needed. As of now, these people are not linked into any networks, their number is unknown and there is low public awareness of their problems. Therefore we may speak of an "informal sector" or "grey area". Research on the possibilities for helping and supporting these people is lacking. It should be a commonplace occurrence that less capable people can become integrated into farm work if they wish to and that the farmer gets financial support for his/her expenditure. The final goal should be a smooth transition between the different possible labour markets to enable participation by all people.

The SWOT analysis was used to gather information about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats regarding social farming in Germany as a result of the first participative German platform ("Strategieforum") on the 11th of May 2007 in Kassel.

The analysis looks at social farming as a wholesome (new) way of connecting farming and some kinds of social services. Social farming is diverse and follows different goals. Therefore, it is some-

Table 2.5 - Swot analysis of the country situation as drawn by the participants in the “So Far” German platform	
<p><i>Strengths</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong intrinsic motivations and personal engagement • High standards of integration and quality of service for people involved • “Natural setting” and natural relationships • Highly diverse farms and adapted working places • Processing and marketing of products on the farm • High quality products • Strong impact on rural development, rural value creation • Large scale and established structures i.e. sheltered workshops. 	<p><i>Weaknesses</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertainty about the most suitable organisational form for a social farm • Diversity and differences of approaches • Lack of transparency and knowledge • Lack of appreciation in society and no support from medical/ social/educational sectors • Lack of professional PR • Economic pressure • Bureaucratic and judicial limitations • Lack of resources for networking • Not competitive.
<p><i>Opportunities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing interest and requests from people with disabilities and private citizens • New approaches of social services required • New conceptualisations, change of paradigm • New forms of economic co-operation • Using existing networks • Political support • Use organic-societal approach as PR • Learn from other European projects and examples • Develop new services i.e. landscape maintenance. 	<p><i>Threats</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farming and social work as two weak partners. • Assumption re weak competitive structure • Big and inflexible structures of social inclusion • Federal structures inhibit transparency and transferability • Increasing economic pressure • Lack of capacities among stakeholders for engagement with political institutions.

times necessary to talk about each group of people with problems or each group of stakeholders on an individual basis in order to be completely accurate.

The following tables are taken from Kalisch & van Elsen (2009) and give a synthesis of the results.

2.5.1 City meets countryside: Organic farm Kuhhorst

Key point

The Organic Farm Kuhhorst was founded in 1991. It is an agricultural holding combined with a workshop for people with disabilities (WfbM structure) where the agricultural goods are produced, processed and marketed. Kuhhorst is situated about 35 kilometres north of the city of Berlin in flat countryside that once was a huge bog.

The organic farm has been certified since 1992 under the regulations of the German association Gaa. It belongs to the Mosaik-Workshops Company in Berlin and is a pilot project on the advancement of vocational training for people with disabilities. The farm offers work placements for more than 70 people with intellectual disabilities and provides their social integration. Some of them live in modern homes in the village itself, while others are brought to Kuhhorst every day by bus transfer. The farm is active in the network of "Green spaces in WfbM" and since 2002 has been one of 200 German "Demonstration farms" – organic farms that engage in public relations in terms of hosting open days, festivals, information points for visitors and consumer information. In 2006 Kuhhorst was the winner of the Organic Farming Award. The farm not only strives for organic premium products but is also registered as a "farm ark" – a movement to save endangered farm animals.

The farm consists of about 400 hectares of arable fields and grasslands. The animal and crop husbandry activities include dairy cows, pigs, poultry, vegetables and fruits. In many different fields of activity, high-quality premium food is produced that gets sold in the farm shop in Kuhhorst and marketed in many other organic shops in Berlin. The proximity to Berlin, their hospitality to guests and clients as well as their highly successful networking are crucial factors in their success.

Description

The organic farm Kuhhorst gGmbH grows cereals and animal fodder on about 400 hectares. There are 200 cattle for dairy production and 100 pigs for meat production. In the summer 600 ducks and 800 geese are kept on pastures and complete the product range in the winter months. Besides the cows and pigs, visitors can also attend the petting zoo. The acquaintance with animals, plants and agricultural products enhances the sensory experience and social competence in a special way. The fields of action (on-the-job training) are:

- Animal husbandry
 - Dairy and pigs, working in the sheds and in the fields (construction of paddocks)
 - Fattening geese and ducks
- Gardening (fruits, vegetables, potatoes, flowers and herbs)
- Processing of cereals and storage
- Food processing
 - Production of pasta
 - Production of meat and sausage products

Table 2.6 - Staff and employees (Kuhhorst)

Staff	1 manager (farm and workshop)
	3 tractor drivers
	2 milkers
	3 apprentices
	1 secretary
	2 people preparing the work
	7 team leaders
	1 bus driver
	1 social trainer (Coaching service)
	4 young men in civil service
	18 care workers in homes for people with disabilities
Social sector	Employment of about 70 people with disabilities in 9 areas of work

- Cheese dairy: milk and products from milk (cheese, curd cheese, yoghurt)
- Sale
 - Farm shop and box scheme.

In a special training kitchen, new recipes for cakes and biscuits are tested. The products are marketed mainly via the farm shop. Moreover the products get delivered to shops and green markets in Berlin.

The number of co-workers has grown despite various periods of re-organisation. Currently 22 permanent co-workers work and, in some cases also live, in Kuhhorst. There are also 4 young men completing alternative “civilian service” and some trainees helping. There are about 70 people with disabilities working in Kuhhorst. Mosaik e.V. as the supporting organisation is an important voice for the interests of social and vocational integration of people with disabilities and also had a role in defining the goals in Kuhhorst. The aim of Mosaik is to facilitate participation in society. A strong community feeling supports this self-belief and brings together co-workers, workers in the workshops and the inhabitants of the homes to form a community.

This community feeling combined with a powerful cordiality characterises the co-operation of the people in Kuhhorst. The organic farm provides not only modern and attractive working conditions but the chance for people with intellectual disabilities to work and live in a rural area. There are also diverse attractions and opportunities that enhance personal development such as landscape, crafts and sports. Associated leisure time facilities include courses on wood-carving with a local artist, art therapy, cultural activities (such as

writing, reading, or soccer). For many people a life in the countryside is an alternative to life in the city. Therefore Mosaik e.V. offers housing possibilities in Kuhhorst in direct proximity to the farm. Two homes can accommodate 24 inhabitants. These were newly built in 2003 and are very comfortable.

Background, milestones and crucial support

For more than 30 years the supporting organisation Mosaik e.V. (in Western Berlin) has employed people with intellectual disabilities in different working and training areas. The political change in 1990 enabled the association to set up a workshop (WfbM) at an agricultural enterprise in the nearby federal state of Brandenburg. With such a Green workshop the existing traditional labour supply of the workshops in Berlin needed to be expanded. In 1991 an appropriate place was found in the small village of Kuhhorst.

Table 2.7 - Milestones (Kuhhorst)

1991	• First contract lease and establishment of an organic farm
1993	• Construction of two polytunnels in the horticultural unit
	• Purchase of 25 pregnant heifers and installation of a dairy
	• Construction of a house for vocational training in the horticultural unit or "Gardenhouse" and first work placements for people with disabilities in horticulture
	• Rebuilding of the old pig shed as the new house for geese
1997	• Opening of the village pub "Dorfkrug"
2000	• Construction of a new large cow shed in the outskirts of the area
	• Development and opening of the organic shop in the village pub "Dorfkrug"
2001	• Rebuilding of the old barn as a new cereal store
2002	• Rebuilding of the old cowshed as pig stables and laying the foundation stone for the new building of a workshop and for 2 new homes (volume of investment about 3,7 million euro)
	• Registration as "Demonstration farm" for organic farming
2003	• Completion and opening of the 2 homes for people with disabilities (in total 24 places)
2004	• Opening of the new workshop building for food processing
2006	• Winning of the Organic Farming Award
2007	• Registration as an Ark farm for endangered farm animals
	• Placed first with the Pro Animal-Award for species-appropriate animal husbandry
2008	• Installation and opening of the solar plant in Kuhhorst in co-operation with the solar association Berlin-Brandenburg e.V.



The animal farm at Kuhhorst (D)



Direct selling at Kuhhorst (D)

In accordance with the recommendations of the European Union concerning the employment of people with disabilities (EU 386HO379), Kuhhorst developed a complex model combining social and ecological objectives. The main issues for the organic farm Kuhhorst are:

- Widening the scope of work opportunities in the region
- Holistic and naturalistic work facilities for people with disabilities
- Protection of natural resources i.e. securing soil fertility
- Securing incomes in the rural area via organic farming, processing and marketing of organic products.

With these guiding principles, the former estate was rebuilt and developed as a different agricultural entity. The important milestones of the farm history are summed-up in the *table 2.7*.

Outcomes

Brandenburg is a German federal state with fragile rural structures and is especially affected by unemployment. The initiative of the (West) Berlin social association Mosaik is therefore much appreciated. The initiative brings life to the region, brings a vivid exchange between the capital and a rural hinterland and creates working environments – not only for people with disabilities. It sets the agenda of sustainable development not only in the context of organic farming but also in the context of tourism, culture, the economy and social issues. The combination of production and marketing at the farm is very important, because the structures of food processing are underdeveloped in Brandenburg. Via the integration of food processing and marketing, new markets become accessible. As already referred to previously, the outcomes are positive for many different actors. The people with disabilities experience inclusion and are able to do meaningful and valued work regardless their mental and physical challenges. The outcomes are positive for individuals, the region, nature, organic agriculture, for the federal state of Brandenburg and for society in general. The different awards of the last years are evidence of this.

Challenges and actions required

Organic Farm Kuhhorst is a well-functioning and constantly developing enterprise. The networks will be strengthened and broadened in the next years. Joachim Brych, the farm manager of Organic Farm Kuhhorst is quite engaged in international co-operation in projects such as quality geese meat projects with organic

farms in Italy, international youth exchanges and other social and agricultural as well as cultural projects and activities.

The farm belongs to Mosaik in Berlin and it may be a challenge to implement the idea of organic performance and sustainability in other branches and workshops of the association. There is a village pub in Kuhhorst, which is not run by the farm but by Mosaik's gastronomy branch. The gastronomy manager is not a convert to organic consumption and there are no organic and local dishes to be found either in the pub or at the workers' canteen. This may appear to be a strange situation for tourists who visit the farm in the summer and want to have a break at the café.

Another challenge for the future will be the organisational structure of the farm. The whole farm concept is based on its founder Joachim Brych. He had the idea, has written and developed the concept, has moved to Kuhhorst and has brought the farm to life. He is the one deciding on product recipes and staff requirements and he manages all aspects of the farm. As the farm grows, its management has to be shared among more players. One person cannot shoulder it all. After all the further development of a nice place to live and work will always be on the agenda.

2.6 Ireland

While the term 'Social Farming' is not one that is readily recognised in Ireland, the use of agriculture and horticulture as an activity within or closely aligned with care settings (such as the Mental Health Services and Intellectual Disability Services) has a long history. There are many excellent working examples of good Social Farming practices currently in existence in Ireland although they may not have considered themselves as 'Social Farms'. In former times, the use of agriculture and horticulture was often seen as a healthy vocational activity for people with problems, an activity that may have been familiar to many due to the agrarian based economy and which may often have made a significant contribution to the reduction of costs (through the provision of food) associated with running large residential institutions. Since the late 1980s, there has been a shift in care provision in Ireland from a predominantly institutional setting to a community-based model. In the past concerns were raised that institutions, caught in

a routine also concerned with the production of goods, lost sight of the goal of working for the well-being of the people with problems. This has changed and continues to evolve with the focus moving to 'people that use services and 'person-centred outcomes'. In parallel to this, we have seen a growth in community-based Social Farming and horticultural initiatives since the early 1990s in Ireland. From a rural development perspective, of particular interest is the small but growing number of these initiatives which have benefited from the involvement and support of LEADER companies (a number of which have included Social Farming in their development plans) and other community development programmes.

In the broad context of social service provision in Ireland, the Catholic Church has historically been a key actor, in the past establishing services to support and protect vulnerable people when the Irish State had little resources to do so. Today in Ireland the Irish state is the main funder of mainstream health and care programmes. The role of the Catholic Church has changed in recent years in Ireland, due both to falling numbers of vocations which have had knock-on effects for service provision which has led to increased professionalisation and secularisation of services but also a shift in focus from direct service provision to more advocacy and policy-related work. Nevertheless, religious communities, generally in partnership arrangements with the State-funded health services are a key feature of many interventions in Social Farming in Ireland at the present time. The dominant type of Social Farm is one which is embedded within an existing institutional or community setting and privately owned farms that offer a social farming service in Ireland are extremely rare. Consequently, it is frequently not relevant to analyse the contribution of care activities to farm income. In most cases the Social Farming element of care activities is not readily distinguishable from the other care service elements and is treated as part of the overall operational budget.

Potentially, the issue of Social Farming cross-cuts a range of policy domains including, inter alia, health; agriculture; rural development; environment; criminal justice and education. However, a joined-up approach to policy-making is not a strong feature of the Irish political landscape. Consequently, there is no evidence of any coherent policy to support the development of Social Farming in Ireland, either at an integrated level or, indeed, at a sectoral level. This is reflected in the *ad-hoc* nature of many of the initiatives undertaken which are largely determined by the vision of a small number

Table 2.8a - SWOT analysis of the country situation as drawn by the participants in the “So Far” Irish platform

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drive coming from communities rather than policy driven • Major resource of family farms around the country • Good examples of Social Farming in existence. Practitioners exist with skills • Creativity and resourcefulness of practitioners and others involved • Good practices taking place within social care services in relation to Social Farming • Existing compatible networks e.g. community/rural development networks, organic farming networks etc. • Extant social responsibility structure (community) and awareness of the need for inclusiveness • Farm activity creates ‘normalisation’ in life-farmers appreciate the wellbeing that can be derived from a farm • Opportunity for service user’s independence • Positive economics: costs of Social Farming vs. 24hour care, 7 days a week, medical benefits etc. • A large group of interested and/or concerned citizens • Good marketing model • Expert groups - religious and others with long history of care provision using agriculture and horticulture • Models available from other countries on how Social Farming has and can be developed • Multi-disciplinary nature of social farming. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of awareness of the concept of Social Farming among farmers and its potential to promote quality of life for service users • Confusion over what is meant by various terms • Lack of awareness of current activity – good practices taking place but learning not being disseminated • Lack of a focus or network to support the development of Social Farming in Ireland • Lack of appropriate training in Social Farming for both farmers and other stakeholders • Multi-disciplinary nature of Social Farming - difficult to find a home for the concept • Lack of co-ordination and coherence from statutory policy-makers • Fragmented responses from local offices of statutory agencies. Decision-makers in one area might support development and not in another area • Transport - getting service users to and from farms • Health and safety concerns on farms • Declining farm numbers and dependency culture • Availability of land for community garden projects.

of key stakeholders in each situation and the receptivity of local decision-makers. There is no standard approach across the country but rather isolated and fragmented groups developing according to their needs with little replication taking place elsewhere.

The lack of adequate funding to develop and maintain social services is highlighted by the plethora of training programmes developed in this area and squeezed to fit into programmes aimed at increasing participation in the labour market. Often in practice the project promoter or social care provider may not be interested in employment progression per se but rather finding the means to keep an initiative alive or establish a new project. Another difficulty that severely hinders development in this area is the lack of continuity in funding. While a project may be able to secure funds for a

Table 2.8b - SWOT analysis of the country situation as drawn by the participants in the “So Far” Irish platform

<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Threats</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential as a win-win scenario, quality of life benefits for service-users and perhaps farmers who are becoming increasingly isolated on their farms and potential as rural development opportunity for farmers in terms of income • Policy of care provision moving towards community integration • Policy of care provision moving towards individual person-centred outcomes rather than group provision • Potential as a means to integrate service-users with wider communities • Wide diversity of responses anticipated, if framed well can give additional choice to service users on how they want to live & work • Strong and comprehensive network of local and community development organisations to support development • Likely sympathetic EU policy environment through rural development opportunities, multifunctional agriculture and the European Model of Agriculture • Educational role for society • Farmer incentives - change, educate inform • Under-utilised urban space • Opportunity for people in urban areas or those excluded from the countryside to engage with nature • Green gyms as a means to promote health of population • Landscape and recreation • Launch pad for lots of opportunities – new communities, new skills • Experience: importance/role of individuals promoting ideas and being supported via service agreements • Must come from ‘Environment’ (social, natural etc.) • Opportunity for leadership and to create incentives to develop social farming • Recognition of the importance of social capital • Potential to create forum for joined-up action • New arena for farm extension/ advisory services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General lack of awareness of Social Farming • Specifically lack of awareness among policy and decision makers • Lack of any clear policy to support the development of Social Farming, regionally or nationally • Lack of documented evidence of the benefits of Social Farming • Professional awareness within institutions • Policy incoherence and lack of joined-up thinking • ‘Sectional’ view of health prevails • Flexibility of key stakeholders e.g. Health Services Executive to work with farmers • Need for link with policy environment • Continuity of social farming services • Need some guidance and regulation in the sector, but not at the expense of stifling quality local initiatives. Need to keep the current actors involved • Difficulty in securing funding and access to agencies • Insurance on farms to protect all concerned in event of an accident – may be prohibitively expensive • Lack of skills training available • Availability of farms/land and property issues • Involving volunteers, how do we create interest? • Inflexibility of current policy environment • Different services – different costs – implications for providers.

pilot initiative – for example from LEADER sources, it is left with no clear path to follow once the initial funding is exhausted as there is no clear home for Social Farming initiatives.

In Ireland there are no dedicated formal networks established to promote the development of Social Farming. Activities conducted in the course of the SoFar project (such as the national and EU platforms) represented the first attempt to bring different actors from across the social care sectors together in a single grouping and feedback from the stakeholders suggested that this was a highly valued outcome in its own right. Social Farming has a clear and positive resonance with service-users, farming people and service providers alike, as evidenced by the interest and willingness of stakeholders to engage in this research – all of which augurs well for the future development of Social Farming in Ireland, notwithstanding the considerable challenges which must be faced.

2.6.1 Belmont Farm, Waterford

Key Point

The Services of the Brothers of Charity at Belmont in Waterford utilises farming and horticulture to provide support services tailored to the needs of people with an intellectual disability to provide them with a good quality environment whilst teaching social and work skills to facilitate each person's choice of living and personal growth.

Description

Based on the outskirts of Waterford city, in the South-east of Ireland, Belmont Farm (as part of Parkside Services) is a working farm embedded within an intellectual disability support service. The farm is owned and operated by a charitable (not for profit) company limited by guarantee called Brothers of Charity Services that was established by the Brothers of Charity, a Christian organisation involved in the support and care of people who are marginalised by society. The farm and horticultural nursery are part of a range of social care occupation opportunities available to people who use the services. On a weekly basis there are 17 people using services on the farm (80% male) and 24 (85% male) people using services in the horticulture area. A further 31 people are involved in the other workshop activities on the same site.



Belmont Farm, Waterford Bros of Charity (Irl)

Belmont Farm itself is a 40 ha farm of mixed to free-draining soil which is conventionally managed. There are 50 dairy cows that are milked twice daily; 50 weanling cattle and 50 adult cattle, which are fattened for slaughter. On the farm a number of pedigree Aberdeen Angus are also bred; these are mainly for exhibiting at agricultural show competitions and the people using the service are very involved in this.

Potatoes are grown on 0.8 ha and people using the service are involved in the preparation of the seed bed, sowing and harvesting. The potatoes that they grow that are surplus to their needs are bagged and sold around the area informally. Again the people using the service are heavily involved in the production but the real return for them is in selling them to local people – here they can see the rewards of their labour turn into “cash” and engage with the public. There used to be a larger area grown but this was reduced with the sale of some of the farm land.

A pony is also kept on the farm. The Service has found that this can be very good for people who present with challenging behaviours. These people can learn to develop relationships through riding and caring for the pony. The main advantage in the use of

the farm is in therapeutic interventions for people with challenging behaviour in that the farm gives them space and activities that are very structured – the cows have to be milked and the animals have to be fed under any circumstances. This gives the people using the service great predictability in

what they are expecting to happen. This in turn reduces their anxiety thus reducing their challenging behaviour. The development of life and social skills as part of training has come much more to the forefront and Social Farming lends itself to this approach. At local agricultural shows, the participants exhibit the cattle, pony and vegetables. They go to the National Ploughing Championship and to machinery shows because of their interest in farming. The ideology is that they are part of the community.

Project Profile at Belmont Farm	today		
	-	0	+
Knowledge in care			+
Knowledge in agriculture			+
Experience in care			+
Experience in agriculture			+
Female role in social farming			+
Male role in social farming			+
Accessibility of the farm			+
Dedicated space on the farm			+
Dedicated agricultural processes			+

There is also a horticultural nursery as part of the same overall service on 2ha. This was added in the early 1980s. A workshop was built for preparing cuttings, propagation and potting-up. A number of polythene tunnels were added for the growing-on of plants. This is a wholesale horticultural production nursery and they grow herbaceous plants, shrubs, ornamental trees etc. The annual production of shrubs can be up to 150,000 plants per year. People using the service choose to participate more in this than they did 20 years ago. They take cuttings, pot-on, propagation and do watering etc. There is a lot of labour involved with each part of the process in the nursery.

People using services who have the ability are taught to drive the forklift on the farm and they are also prepared for the State theory test for driving. On the farm they also have a 'Gator' (ATV) which was purchased as a vehicle that would be easier for people to use (this is like a quad/4 wheel bike except it has a steering wheel as opposed to handle bars and has a protective cab).

All staff on the farm and garden are dual qualified in agriculture/horticulture and have social care training. There are 70 staff approximately based at Parkside. These include the workshop, farm

and nursery staff as well as the clinical back-up of psychologists, medical support and administration. These services also provide residential accommodation for 23 of the people that use the services and who also participate in day service activities. This residential accommodation is provided within the community in 8 separate houses with occupancy ranging from one to five people per house. On the farm there are three agricultural staff: the Farm Manager, another Agricultural Instructor and each year there is an agricultural student on placement for 9 months. There are an additional three staff that work on the farm but they are primarily specific supports to people with additional requirements. If the person using the service decides he/she wants to be elsewhere that day then the assigned staff member goes with him. So in that way they are not really part of the farm staff. In the Horticultural Nursery there are three posts, 2 male full-time and two female staff job-sharing (1 full-time equivalent post). Occasionally there are students on work experience from a horticultural college or from a social care background.

Background, milestones and crucial support

This farm was a land bank surrounding part of a former psychiatric hospital. The former hospital treated patients with mental health (psychiatric) problems, people suffering from alcohol abuse and also provided care for people with an intellectual disability. When the hospital was closed in 1992 the mental health care and alcohol abuse treatment were moved to another hospital in the Waterford area run by the national Health Services Executive. People with intellectual disabilities started coming to Belmont campus in 1966 and were provided specialist care in an *institutional environment* which was in vogue at that time. During the 1980s the services started to diversify and *de-institutionalise* and it opened many community houses for people with an intellectual disability to live in and it also opened community workshops to provide day services within the community. This was referred to as the *community Model*.

In the 1990s training of people with a disability in specific skills and making them ready for some area of the jobs market was the model of service being provided. In this decade the ideology of *supported employment and community integration* had been the model of service. This meant organisations supported people with an intellectual disability to access part or full-time employment in the open environment and also to integrate as part of the community – not

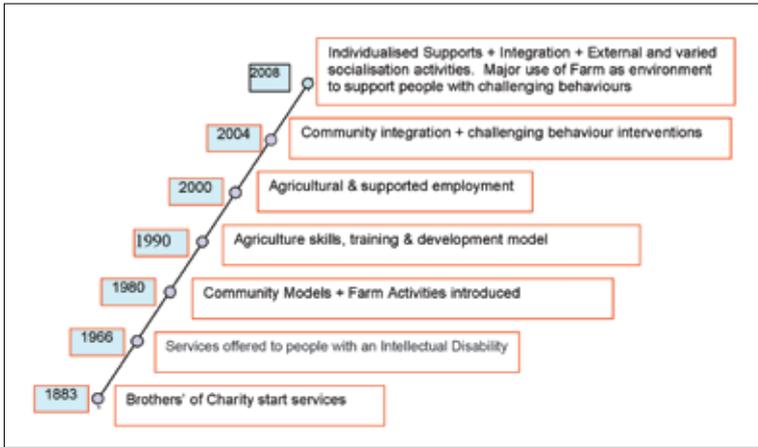


Fig. 2.6 - Main steps in the development of Belmont Farm

just as an enclave. Recent changes in the Irish labour market have negatively affected this model in that employment opportunities are scarce for all. People with an intellectual disability are not insulated from a world wide recession. There have been some people who were not able to access all the services outlined above and the Brothers of Charity Services have been innovative in providing semi-in-house services to provide opportunities for these people, so that they too can have a feeling of self-worth and self-actualisation. Some of these have been the developments on the farm and horticultural enterprises, which have served these people even though they may not have progressed to open employment. The Health Services Executive (National Health funding authority) provides the core funding for the service, effectively using the Brothers of Charity Services as a care provider on a sub-contract basis.

The redevelopment of the farm commenced in the 1980s in response to the changes taking place in care services. Since the 1980s there has been a gradual movement away from residential institutional services towards promoting *community integration* through independent and supported living according to the capacity of people using service to attain independence. With the dissolution of formal institutional care there was a need for day services to provide occupation and structure for people using services. Initially there was a focus on providing vocational services; farming and horticulture would have been very familiar to many of the people

using services. However, in latter years there is increasing focus on responding to the needs of each individual using the service and tailoring services to address those needs rather than fitting the person into available services. This model is called the Person-Centred model of service provision.

People using services choose to come to the farm or the other parts of the service. When the person comes out of their special school they can progress on to what is called the Rehabilitation Training programme. This gives the service-user exposure to different options in terms of training and potential work experiences. This organisation offers the person experience and participation in activities in the farm and horticultural nursery and alternative workshop occupations including woodwork, fence making, concrete products e.g. paving, arts and crafts and the organisation of sports and recreation. Over their time in the Rehabilitation Training programme, participants can request to be assigned to an area such as the farm or elsewhere. After 2-3 years in the Rehabilitation Training Programme a participant can choose to come to the farm or not.

People using the service may in many cases also work in mainstream employment for 1-2 days per week depending on the interests and ability of the person. They can earn up to € 120 before this has an impact on their disability payments (social welfare). However, many of the people who use the service like to maintain their social and support contact with the farm and don't like being isolated from their group in the service by being employed full-time elsewhere.

External environment

The Brothers of Charity Services work in partnership with the Health Services Executive who are their main statutory funders and with other statutory and voluntary organizations such as government agencies and special interest groups. They are affiliated to national representative organisations that support service providers including the National Federation of Voluntary Bodies and Inclusion Ireland. Belmont Farm are participating in a pioneering multi-disciplinary network with actors from the farming sector – including

Local Profile	-	0	+
Tutorial external support			+
Technical advice			+
Networks and relationships with other projects			+
Political supports			+
Financial supports			+
Public recognition			+
Community support			+

practitioners and technical advisory services and also with actors from other care services, social inclusion etc. services to promote and develop Social Farming in Ireland.

Outcomes

As this farm is part of a large care organisation there are professional multidisciplinary teams that work with the staff including medical, psychiatric, psychological, social work, speech & language, recreational and occupational therapy. While all of the individual disciplines see the value in providing services in a spacious and activity-based environment, the psychology team is heavily

involved in planning the interface between the individual with a disability and the farming activity. They believe that there is a lot of value in the farming work for these service-users. By coming to the farm they have a structure to their day. It gives them a sense of identity as they can say 'they work on the farm' and provides social networks with a mix of people. The farm also provides a sense of the seasons and a sense of time and its passing for the individuals accessing services. For some the work is relaxing, working with the soil and working with animals. Participants learn about the animal and learn to care for them. There is a sense of achievement. Some of the skills on the farm are quite difficult and require co-ordination e.g. during milking, people need to learn to sequence their work and this can be difficult to learn and is considered a great achievement when they do.

The Principal Psychologist devised a support system in consultation with staff. Staff that are providing particular supervision with a person using services review their progress and how they are getting on with current activities every two weeks with the staff supervisor. Every six weeks a review takes place between the people using the services and staff to review their progress and the suitability of the programme being offered. According to the Psychologist, incidents of challenging behaviour can be seen to improve over

Direct Outcomes	-	0	+
Therapeutic effects			+
Educational effects			+
Work inclusion			+
Job creation			+
Other		0	
Indirect Outcomes	-	0	+
Environment			+
Landscape			+
Biodiversity			+
Direct selling			+
Farm reputation			+
Farm viability		0	

time on the farm. Between Feb 2005 and January 2006 the incidents of challenging behaviour among new people using services showed a mark decline, while at the same time the participation in farming activity had greatly increased.

As an aim of the service is to help the person to be as independent as possible and gain experience of life and work outside the support organisation, one of the opportunities for this is the use of agriculture and getting to know people that come in contact with the farm can be of great benefit. The people who use services can build a relationship with suppliers, gardeners, veterinarians etc. that come on to the farm and these outside people have the opportunity to engage with these people in a non-clinical environment.

Challenges and actions required

According to the Farm Manager there is a challenge in managing a farm with such a strong emphasis on care. The farm has to look at its enterprises not just for their intrinsic farming value but also from what use this can be in the provision of therapeutic interventions. All farms present with inherent dangers and a keen eye must be kept to ensuring that the environment of the farm does not present unreasonable risk to any of the participants. Resources are always scarce so financial constraints are ever-present but social care is the primary aim of this farm. It provides an opportunity and space to channel the energies of persons using the services rather than sitting in a day centre. The physical activity and outdoor work provide each individual with a sense of worth, achievement and is generally regarded as being healthier for them. It is a natural nurturing environment and many of the people using services come from a farming background so the work can be familiar to them and also transferable to their home and neighbouring environments.

The Farm Manager has no doubts about the benefits of working and spending time on the farm to the person using services and sees a great need as well as suitability for a service such as this. Belmont Farm would like to develop relationships with external private farms whereby the people using services could get the opportunity and experience of working or spending time on farms in the wider community. Of course this needs to be approached on a phased basis to ensure that the "host farmer" is comfortable with the requirements of having such people accessing their farm. Also there is need for back-up especially where people may have a propensity to act strongly in an unknown environment. It must also be recognised that although

the people using services are keen to take up external work, they may also choose to attend the core facility a couple of days a week as their friends and social peer group are there and they can feel isolated in mainstream environments. So a balance is necessary according to the needs of the individual who uses the service.

2.7 Belgium (Flanders)

“Green Care” in Flanders is not new. Some specific initiatives have existed for a very long time. Yet, in the past few years, combining agriculture and care has caught on as an idea in Flanders, in the agricultural and the horticultural sectors as well as in the care sector. The number of care farms has grown considerably.

Most care farms are independent agricultural or horticultural farms that receive a limited number of service-users on a small scale. Flanders scores very well on the diversity of the target groups of Green Care. A broad range of vulnerable groups qualifies for Green Care: people with intellectual and/or physical disabilities, people with psychiatric challenges and young people from youth welfare services etc.

Green Care in Flanders can be found in varied and combined forms: day services, day-time or 24 hours a day basis, employment as re-integration or sheltered labour, as well as therapy in the shape of relaxation, personal development or learning social skills.

The growing number of care farms shows clearly the positive effect of the incentives set up by the Support Centre for Green Care and the recent new legislation.

The Flemish Support Centre for Green Care (‘Steunpunt Groene Zorg’) has officially existed since January 2004. Its primary goal is promoting Green Care in Flanders. Care organisations, active care farms and interested farmers/horticulturalists can contact the centre for:

- all information on Green Care: visits, website, newsletter, training & extension;
- contacts with interested care organisations and interested agricultural or horticultural farms;
- support for the start-up of co-operation between care organisations and farms;
- meeting active Green Care initiatives: information and demonstration days, study visits; consultation platforms, study groups, working groups;

Table 2.9 - Evolution of the number of Green Care initiatives in Flanders						
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Care farms	46	130	185	212	270	399
Institutional farms						
and sheltered workshops	37	37	38	38	38	38
Other social farming projects	10	11	12	12	12	12

- screening of new care farms;
- initial matching of service-users, organisations and farms.

Behind the scenes, they also work/co-operate on:

- promotion of the Green Care concept,
- appropriate conditions for Green Care,
- preparation of policy and consultation with public authorities,
- extending national and international contacts,
- engagement in research projects,
- contributions regarding quality systems for Green Care initiatives.

The Support Centre for Green Care has developed a quality guide. It describes the ideal situation on a care farm and the ideal co-operation between the farm, the care organisation and service-user. The guide contains a general description of a quality care farm, testimonies by people involved and many practical tips. The Flemish care farms do not use any standardised quality system. The care organisations have the final responsibility concerning their service-users and the co-operation with care farms. The agreements between

Table 2.10 - SWOT analysis of the country situation as drawn by the participants in the “So Far” Flemish platform	
<p><i>Strengths</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strong internal organisation of green care as a sector is the most important strength • Green care as link between society, agriculture and care • The supply of green care. 	<p><i>Weaknesses</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient of the non-agricultural administration in the support of initiatives is by far the most important weakness. • Difficulties in communication between care farms and care institutions.
<p><i>Opportunities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A increasing social demand • Legal framework. 	<p><i>Threats</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of interest from the care sector, or more specifically the relevant policy domain • The limited system of remuneration.

the care farm, the care organisation and the service-users are put into a kind of contract which is evaluated on a regular basis.

A second factor in the growth of Green Care in Flanders is the subsidy for care farms. Since 1 December 2005, care farms can apply for official permission. New legislation, with a corresponding subsidy, was developed. This subsidy is principally conceived of as a compensation for the time a farmer (or his/her partner or staff) spends with the service-users, preventing him/her from working full-time on the farm.

The following requirements are in place for an agricultural or horticultural business to be considered as an official care farm:

- co-operation with a care organisation, officially recognised by the Welfare Department, or with a counselling centre for high school students,
- farming or horticultural activities as the main or additional profession,
- using the official Care Farm contract.

The legislation is not perfect yet and it still needs some adaptation. At the moment the agricultural or horticultural business must have a minimal viable size. This implies that projects with a limited agricultural aspect cannot be supported. Small-scale initiatives with an emphasis on the service-users find it very difficult to get sufficient financial support at the moment. The subsidy is fixed in the sense that it doesn't take into account the intensity of care and the number of service-users. The budget for this subsidy comes from the Department of Agriculture. The Departments of Welfare and of Education helped to develop this new legislation, but they have not contributed to its costs so far. This may hamper the further development of Green Care in the future.

2.7.1 Hoeve De Ploeg

Key point

Hoeve De Ploeg is a dairy farm. This family business is run by the children of the founder. According to prevailing standards in Flanders, this farm is rather impressive. For the last few years the farmers have made themselves accessible to vulnerable groups in society. These people have been put in contact with the farmers through different social services. They represent different target

groups of social farming. The people with impairments work in a one-to-one relationship with the farm owners. The interactions vary from providing an appropriate activity to providing educational support, in the sense of developing social skills. Hoeve De Ploeg is a typical illustration of the structure and implementation of social farming in Flanders. The main objective of the enterprise is economic productivity. That commercial context offers the people who use social services the opportunity of experiencing social inclusion.

Description

Hoeve De Ploeg was founded in 1961 by the father of the current managers. The father started in 1986 with the processing of milk into cheese, butter and yoghurt. After his death the son and the four daughters stepped into the business. Their mother still lives at the farm. Together with the family-in-law and one cousin, they manage the farm. The husband and son of the oldest daughter are also engaged in the enterprise.

All together 9 people are engaged in the farm – most of them part-time. From that perspective, this case is rather exceptional in Flanders. Most dairy farms are run by only two people: the farmer and his wife.

The men at Hoeve De Ploeg are busy with the animals, the milking and the arable farming. The farm consists of more than 70 ha of arable land. The women are active in the processing of the milk. They process 450.000 litres a year. The dairy products are sold in the farm shop that was reopened in 2001. The shop is open every day.

Three years ago the farmers were approached by the tutor of a social institution nearby. The institution Martine van Camp (called after the founder) organises the daily activities of people with disabilities. The first person that was drawn to the farm activities was a young boy with Downs Syndrome named Tom. The young man lives at home with his parents. On Wednesdays, it's his farm-morning. Tom likes to spend that time tend-

Project Profile	today		
	-	0	+
Knowledge in care		0	
Knowledge in agriculture			+
Experience in care		0	
Experience in agriculture			+
Female role in social farming			+
Male role in social farming			+
Accessibility of the farm		0	
Dedicated space on the farm			+
Dedicated agricultural processes			+

ing the calves. This ‘farmer assistant’ is quite strong and active. He comes to the farm individually by bicycle.

This first successful experience helped the farmers to accept six months later a second request from the same institution. This is a boy with autism called Karel who comes on Tuesday mornings. His activities need to be very simple and repetitive. Together with the women on the farm he prepares and labels the products to be sold in the shop. A formal structure and time-schedule is very important to him. Exactly at 9 o’clock Karel is brought by his father. On his command, and only on Tuesdays, everybody who’s working on the farm has to take a break at 11 o’clock.

Last school year a third boy, Bram, came three days a week to the farm to help with different tasks. Bram is 16 years old. Because of problems at school – he was the victim of bullying – the management decided to give him a “time out” for 9 months. His activity at the farm had to rebuild his self-confidence. Because of the problems he was a timid boy at school. But now, among the cows, he can take a break. He worked at the farm during school-time from 9am to 4pm. His tasks were varied. Mostly he helped in the sheds.

His absence from school during his days on the care farm is legal. The boy is assisted by the Centre for Assistance to Pupils (CAP) that is officially recognized by the government. Every school is committed to work together with a CAP.

In each collaboration, the support of the social services is crucial. The tutor or social assistant has to determine if working on the care farm would have a curative effect on the service user. In the case of Tom, it’s quite simple to foresee the positive effects of working on a social farm. It’s one facet of his busy and varied weekly programme that is set up to structure his life with activities according to his interests.

But the situation of Bram was rather complex. He had no affinity with working on a farm. The social context at school was stressful. The CAP was not sure about the success of placing Bram in a care farm. The purpose of Bram’s participation in the farm activities was to encourage his self-confidence and to develop social skills. He had to be able to restart school in September. The CAP social assistant had to discuss with Bram, his parents and his teachers to establish if a care farm – and what kind of one – would have these positive effects on Bram.

In addition to providing motivation and assistance to the service-user and his environment, the social worker must support the care farmer. He/she is a professional farmer who has not had any education to assist young people in their social problems or to teach

social and professional skills. The provision of information to the farmer is for that reason of great importance. The farmers on Hoeve De Ploeg don't need to know the life history of Bram and the others. What they need is some relevant information about the behavior of the potential 'assistant farmer'. A careful introduction and a systematic follow-up by the social worker are important in that regard.

For each of the three groups of people who use services, the care farm makes an agreement with the social institution and with the service-user and, eventually, with his parents. Each of the three parties has his/her own responsibility:

- The farmer provides activities adapted to the capacities of the people involved. He/she must be respectful with the personal information about the assistant farmer.
- The duty of the social service is of course to guarantee the social rights of the service-user. He/she is responsible for a regular evaluation of the progression according to the pre-determined purposes. At the same time he/she has to support the farmer in providing assistance to the service-user.
- Finally the assistant farmer must respect the rules of the house.

Background, milestones and crucial support

Hoeve De Ploeg serves as a model for more than 300 commercial farms in Flanders that are brought together in one network by the Support Centre for Green Care.

This integrated model of care farming is not new. In earlier times it was common that vulnerable people were integrated into local farm activities. In those times there was a lot of manual work to do on the farm. The modification in the structure of agricultural enterprises and the increasing mechanisation made extra manpower redundant. Simultaneously the care sector developed towards greater professionalisation. People with disabilities were brought together in institutions and got the chance to develop their capacities.

Nowadays, the estrangement between agriculture and social care has reached an end. Social institutions have opened their doors to let service-users integrate into society. Farmers are looking for ways of diversifying their activities. They search for better communication and integration into society. In this common movement the social and agricultural sectors meet each other again.

The actual concept of care farming that is practiced by Hoeve De Ploeg and many others is characterized by a small-scale approach.

That approach has several advantages:

- The approach is an accessible one for farmers. The intensity of the engagement can be varied. The farmer chooses how many days a week he/she is available as a care farmer.
- The social and psychological satisfaction levels of the farm family increases.
- This project supports the social diversification of agriculture.
- The social acceptability of the farmer's agricultural practices is influenced in a positive way.
- Green Care in this way widens the possibilities of economic diversification without losing the main objective of agriculture – that is producing food.
- The assistant farmer has the chance to work in a real economic or commercial context. It is not an artificial situation. What he/she does creates an economic surplus value.
- He/she can do this work in a context outside the daily living environment. The other people he or she lives with (in the institution or in the family) are not present. The 'assistant farmer' goes to work as everyone else does.
- The care farmer is not a professional tutor. He/she is not concerned about the problems of the 'assistant farmer' but only about his/her capacities.

The three boys in Hoeve De Ploeg have become part of the family. The farmer's family and the 'assistant farmers' work together and have fun together. At noon, the mother prepares a "bread meal". The 'assistant farmer' takes his/her place at the table, together with all the family members present. This aspect makes the integration process complete. Particularly for the young people, their adoption into the family life gives additional value. Often it's a part of the educational goals of the institution.

Basically, the model of social farming has not changed since earlier times. However, the construction of the co-operation has changed and had to be adapted to a more institutionalised society. Care farmers and 'assistant farmers' have to comply with rules concerning insurance, social security and labour regulation. For that reason the Support Centre for Green Care devised a model agreement that is accepted by government.

The standard approach to care farming in Flanders makes it easy for professional farmers to enter the system. The most frequent motivation for farmers to embark on social farming is the social



Debating at the European platform (Sofar project)

goal. The success of the system is that this social contribution can be integrated in the activities of the enterprise.

The presence of a support centre for care farming and the supporting policy has increased the appeal of social farming since 2004.

External environment

Since 2006 a legal framework has been encouraging farmers in Flanders to go for care activities at the farm. Professional farmers receive an allowance (a subsidy) for each half day that an assistant farmer works on the farm.

If necessary, a farmer who wants to provide appropriate facilities for the service-users can get a subsidy for the necessary investments. Both subsidies are paid by the Department of Agriculture (Flemish Government).

Farmers and social workers can access the services that are supplied by the Support Centre for Green Care. That support centre developed, with the financial support of the Department of Agriculture, a Quality Guide for Green Care. The guide offers suggestions to improve the quality of the co-operation between the farmer, the social services and the service-users. It is the basis for the educational pro-

gramme of the Support Centre. That programme brings care farmers twice a year together to exchange their experiences. Other meetings organised by the Support Centre are addressed to social workers to introduce them to the possibilities and conditions of social farming in Flanders.

Local Profile	-	0	+
Tutorial external support			+
Technical advice		0	
Networks and relationships with other projects			+
Political supports			+
Financial supports			+
Public recognition			+
Community support		0	

The Support Centre for Green Care is financed by the five provincial governments. The work of the Centre facilitates the accessibility of Green Care to farmers and social workers. Since it started to work in 2004, the network of care farms has increased from 46 to 382 at the end of 2008.

Outcomes

The social wellbeing of the care farmers of Hoeve De Ploeg has increased since the arrival of Tom, Karel and Bram. The three assistant farmers have also experienced benefits. The farm activities of Tom and Karel stimulate their social integration. Bram's mental wellbeing strengthens him and enables him to restart his school activities. In September he finished his co-operation with the care farm and he embarked on a course to learn about landscaping. The acquaintance with agriculture has given him a new perspective for studies and perhaps for employment later.

In general, institutions for special youth care and schools often work together with care farms in order to develop the social skills and orientation towards employment of young people. The one-to-one relationship guarantees enough attention for each of the young boys and girls. Satisfying the need for attention is very often a key to obtaining more acceptable social behavior.

The increasing number of care farms seems to be good for the public reputation of farmers. People appreciate the

Direct Outcomes	-	0	+
Therapeutic effects			+
Educational effects			+
Work inclusion			+
Job creation	-		
Other			
Indirect Outcomes	-	0	+
Environment		0	
Landscape		0	
Biodiversity		0	
Direct selling		0	
Farm reputation			+
Farm viability			+

social contribution of care farming. Most farmers do not have much in common with the social sector. On the other hand the agricultural sector is not known by social workers. For both of them social farming opens a new world. This co-operation between the social and the agricultural sector contributes to greater mutual respect.

The economic impact of the social activities on Hoeve De Ploeg can be considered as non-existent. Despite the subsidy social farming does not represent any kind of economic diversification. The income for Hoeve De Ploeg because of their social activities was in 2008 not more than € 4.000 gross. Nevertheless care farming is an example of social diversification that gives more psychological satisfaction to the farmer’s family. From that point of view it’s beneficial to the viability of the farm.

Challenges and actions required

The discussion about the finance system of social care in Flanders can have direct consequences for the implementation of social farming as an economic diversification activity for agriculture. The possible financing, in the future, based on a system of personal budget for clients should open the possibility of social farming as an economic activity. In that system the client could shop freely on the market for social support services. If he/she wants to go to a care farm he will have to pay for it. At the moment, the personal budget system has not yet been introduced and there is no certainty that it will be. In that case social farmers only can hope that the subsidy will increase. If not, care farming will remain as volunteer work.

Since the restart of care farming in 2002 a diversification of target groups has been noticed. The traditional service-users that were sent by large institutions were people with disabilities, people with mental health issues or young people. The growing awareness about social farming and the facilitating service of the Support Centre for Green Care has meant that care farms became attractive for smaller and more mobile

Main Challenges	-	0	+
Clear rules and definition			+
Specific laws		0	
Technical support		0	
Financial supports			+
Information/communication		0	
Recognition			+
Improving knowledge (research, education, transfer)			+
Networks		0	
Policy integration			+
Public recognition		0	

services as well for more target groups. More than 50% of the clients in 2008 lived at home. 33% of the requests came from schools. This democratisation makes care farming accessible for underprivileged people.

The growing number of care institutions and social services that work together with care farmers is a potential risk to guaranteeing the quality of the co-operation.

Therefore the conditions for a high-quality co-operation between the care farmer and the social institution must be thoroughly clarified. The expectation about the goals that can be reached by appealing to a care farm has to be clarified.

In order to address this issue, a discussion between the Support Centre for Green Care and the Flemish administration of Welfare would be welcome.

The recognition by policy could be stimulated within a programme of scientific research. Field workers are convinced about the preventive benefits of social farming. An investment of the policy in social farms must lead to a reduction in public expenditure, especially in the mental health care sector. Scientific research on that issue would be a good basis to justify a stronger policy report.

2.8 The Netherlands

Care farming is by far the fastest-growing multifunctional agricultural sector in the Netherlands. The combination of agricultural work and care is not new, but exhibits a long-standing development, driven by idealism (often based on anthroposophic philosophy) and positive results. Since the end of 1990s, the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality and the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports have stimulated the development of care farms, as they are considered to be contributors to the desired integration of care into society. Since then, care farming has become more professionalised and the number of care farms has shown a spectacular growth (from 75 in 1998 to 720 in 2006). Until the 1990s, the main target groups were people with intellectual disabilities and people with psychiatric challenges. The number of other target groups, such as the elderly, people with an addiction background, those with burn-out, long-term unemployed, children etc., has been increasing over the last few years. Most of the clients are male.

Most care farms are dairy farms or some type of grassland-based farms. A distinction could be made between institutional care farms (14%) and non-institutional family-based care farms (86%). Institutional farms are generally more care-oriented than the non-institutional care farms. The number of clients and the number of days that care is provided per week is higher on institutional care farms. Approximately one-third of the care farms are classified as farms with formal co-operative arrangements with a care institution. The health institution pays the farmer for the care activities and the farmer has to negotiate financing with the care institution. In more than 40% of the farms, the service-users are mainly those with a personal budget (PGB), which can be used by service-users or their representatives to buy supportive or stimulating day activities on the farm. Service-users with a personal budget have a direct contract with a care farm, without interference of a care institution. A growing number of care farms have AWBZ (Exceptional Medical Expenses Act) accreditation, i.e. the general insurance for special medical costs conferring farms with the formal status of a care institution.

Next to farmers, lots of organisations and individuals are involved in care farms: social workers and therapists, service-users that are working in the field, representatives from (local) government, organisations for well-being, policymakers and insurers. Farmers often have good contacts with local organisations, but less contact with national organisations. In almost every province, groups of care farmers organise meetings in order to learn from each other.

In an increasing number of regions care farmers have formed regional associations of care farmers. The aim of these regional associations is to match supply and demand, to introduce quality systems, to provide information about green care and to negotiate with health institutions and insurance companies about getting reasonable prices for the care activities. In several regions, these regional organisations of care farmers have received an AWBZ (Exceptional Medical Expenses Act) accreditation, providing them with the formal status of a care institution.

At the moment, there is no national policy regarding farming for health. However, care farming as such fits with the policy of different national departments. The Ministry of Welfare and Health wants care to be more embedded into society, while the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality has opted for increased contacts between society and agriculture and for new financial opportunities for farmers. At regional level, provinces have developed

general policies for farmers that combine farming with care, agricultural, and spatial planning policies. The current trend in policy is decentralisation. This means that in the future more policies will move from provinces to municipalities.

Several research projects have focused on the relationships between nature and health and the significance and development of green care farms. Researchers from Wageningen University and Research Centre (Wageningen UR) collaborate with researchers from Trimbos Institute (Netherlands Institute of Mental Health and Addiction), Louis Bolk Institute (Institute for Biological Agriculture, Food and Health) and the universities of Utrecht (psychology) and Tilburg (chronic care). In 2005 three long-term research projects were started to determine the effects of care farms on elderly people, service-users with psychiatric challenges and those with an addiction history. In addition, research on the specific role of farm animals, plants and other working fields on the farm has begun. The rapid development of care farms was supported by different courses for farmers in the late 1990s. In September 2004 the first education programme for care farm managers began. In the same year, the first professional education for service-users of care farms began. In addition to these education programmes, a module ‘agriculture and care’ was developed at Wageningen University as part of the study of ‘rural development’.

Table 2.11 - SWOT analysis of social farming in the Netherlands

<p><i>Strengths</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept of social farming fits with the actual societal character of the era • Sector is becoming more robust • Character of farm management systems in social farming fits well with actual agricultural practice • Service-user-based approach has proven results. 	<p><i>Weaknesses</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two sectors (agriculture and care) with their own characters • Agricultural sector views itself as inferior to care sector • Little interaction between both sectors • Effects of social farming are less visible • Social farming an ambiguous concept • High dependency on available funds • Care education doesn't feature social farming as an education theme.
<p><i>Opportunities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes arising in different financial positions and possibilities • Changes in the care sector • Societal trends • Enhancement in networking • Increase of professionalism in social farming. 	<p><i>Threats</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial support systems will be changed • Changes in regulation • Relations between agriculture and care still unbalanced • House building corporations require high rates of interest • Uncertainty about the balancing of supply and demand.



A care farm in the Netherlands (NL)

In discussions with stakeholders and subsequent research, the broader benefits for society were discussed. It was shown that care farming contributes to the well-being of farmers and their families by increasing their quality of life and the economic and social vitality of rural areas. Care activities on farms also generate additional income and jobs: e.g. almost 600 additional jobs in rural areas in 2006. Moreover, the percentage of farmers with a successor is much higher among care farmers than conventional farmers (79% vs. 60%). It was also shown that 35% of care farmers would not be able to continue farming without the care activities – for financial reasons. Care farmers also contribute more to landscape quality because of receiving additional income – compared to conventional farmers.

Although the number of care farms has increased rapidly over the last decade and the positive effect of nature on health is generally accepted, social farming in the Netherlands faces many challenges. The main challenges are:

- To bridge the gap between rural and urban areas.
- To extend networks of social farming.
- To develop sustainable financing structures for social farming.
- To develop scientific evidence on the positive effects of care farms and nature on health and well-being and to determine the

health-promoting aspects for different target groups.

- To use farms and nature not only curatively, but also preventatively.

In the near future, the sector needs to provide more evidence about the positive effects of working on a farm or in nature for different kinds of people. Some farmers think that there is enough practical information to prove such effects, but it is generally accepted that more scientific evidence is essential.

2.8.1 Thedingsweert: an organic care farm and bakery

Key point

Thedingsweert is a biodynamic care farm offering a mix of activities and products for adults with psychiatric problems or with mental and physical disabilities. The users work in small groups to offer a small-scale, safe environment. Due to the diversity of activities, users get tasks fitting to their own personal capabilities and demands. This offers the possibility for the optimal development of the users' skills.

Description

Thedingsweert is a biodynamic care farm, initiated by a Care Institute. It is a working farm with indoor and outdoor crops and livestock, with a wood processing section, a packing section, a bakery and a shop. The products are mainly sold at the local market.

Approximately 55 users and circa 35 professionals are present on the farm daily. The users are adults with psychiatric problems or with intellectual and physical disabilities. They are employed at the farm when it is indicated from a medical point of view. Those with drug and alcohol addictions are excluded as they are considered to bring too much disruption to the groups.

In according with biodynamic principles, the daily schedule is rather strict. People arrive at the farm at a fixed time. A small group of users (12 people) lives in an apartment next to the farm. They also have to be at the farm at a fixed time and do not go home in between.

The service-users work together with experienced professionals in groups on the field (arable crops), in the greenhouse (different crops), in the shed (horses, beef cows and sheep) or in the packing centre, the bakery or the artisan shop. Moreover, the farm collaborates with an organic restaurant nearby (also working with the same

kind of user groups). Service-users from the farm get the opportunity to work in the restaurant from time to time also.

The daily concerns about the service-users' care is in the hands of a care co-ordinator and coaches. They ensure that there is a pleasant, friendly working atmosphere that fits with each one's personal needs and interests in order to stimulate growth and development towards integration into normal social life. The allocation of tasks is directed by the coaches.

The service-users arrive at the farm at 9.00 am in the morning and leave at 4 pm. After a joint coffee session in which each person can bring in his/her personal story, daily activities are assigned to the users by the coaches. Breaks for coffee, lunch and tea are at fixed times as well. The activities at the farm are diverse and include:

- the care for livestock (cows, horses, sheep)
- maintenance of the stables
- the sowing, the care and harvest of different crops
- processing the products
- maintenance of the machinery
- preparation of (ca. 120) products for the bakery
- sale of products in the bakery shop and on a stand
- domestic activities (laundry, kitchen etc.)
- support of administration.

The service-users get tasks fitting to their own personal capabilities and demands, incorporating as much variation as possible and aiming at challenging them to stimulate a process of learning of new cognitive and social skills.

Apart from activities for production, there is also time for relaxation and entertainment. On Friday afternoon they can turn their attention to sport activities, games, excursions or educational activities (like painting, playing instruments, telling stories etc.). Birthdays are also celebrated. The celebrations are important for getting a sense of the seasonal changes of nature.

Based on the biodynamic idea, the farm can be characterised as an organisation in which agriculture, care and labour are inextricably connected. Recycling, an ample crop rotation schedule and farming without artificial fertilisers and the use of biocides are considered to be a prerequisite for sustainable agriculture. The targets of the farm are:

- a production system which is respectful towards and in harmony with nature and the environment (no soil exhausting; no pollution);

- the creation of valued labour;
- growth in the supply of products complying with a societal demand;
- the service-users (i.e. intellectually disabled) full functioning
- activities that can be well executed by the service-users and
- sufficient income from products sold, insurance and gifts to guarantee continuance in farm management.

It is crucial that service-users have the right to work in a way that it fits their personality and contributes to their self-esteem.

Background, milestones and crucial support

The idea to start a farm initiated when 4 farmers had a brainstorm about the question “What to do for disabled people?” One of them had a child with a disability himself and was looking for new possibilities to set up a route of care. As a result, the organisation Thedingsweert was founded in 1991 aimed at the creation of a valuable service for people with intellectual disability at a farm that was fit for this target group. The design for the organisation was inspired by the anthroposophic approach which basically assumes a coherence between the three human elements Body, Soul and Spirit.

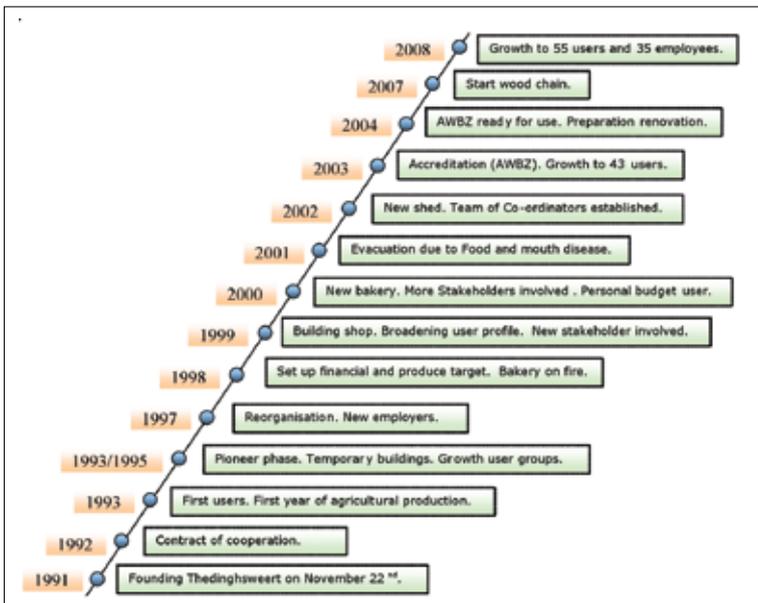


Fig. 2.7 - Main steps in the development of Thedingsweert

People with a disorder in their development are considered to have an imbalance in the three elements, while their unique individuality or nature remains recognisably present and healthy. This consideration is the starting point for management on the farm. Organic farming is the form of agricultural practice. The service-users are treated as equals and asked to show a mutual responsibility and respect for nature. The coaches use individual targets for each individual user. These are regularly discussed with the persons involved and/or with their relatives. Individual routes are evaluated twice a year and – if necessary – adjusted. According to the biodynamic approach the tasks are well defined and recurrent. Stress is avoided. However, the intention is to bring the service-users into the ‘normal world’ and as much as possible to normalise service-users’ lives and to raise societal awareness for people with disabilities.

At its foundation in 1991, the organisation had an area of 28 hectares. In 1993 the preparations were done and the first users were welcomed. In *fig. 2.7*, the history of the farm is presented in detail.

As can be seen from the figure the farm grew rather fast towards its present level of 55 users and 35 employees. The employees are educated in care or experts in special fields (farmers, bakers etc.) and paid for their job. The service-users are not paid for their labour but have to pay for their care.

During the process of taking in a new service-user, it is decided whether or not the work and atmosphere of the farm will fit. Then, an extended acquaintance takes place. After a probationary period of between a few weeks and two months, a decision is made about whether the service-user will stay or leave.

External environment

Thedingsweert has a close relationship with different organisations that can support both agricultural and care activities, like:

- Different (anthroposophic) care organizations
- Umbrella organisation green farming
- Regional organisation green farming
- National farmers organisation
- Organisation for biodynamic Agriculture

Local Profile	-	0	+
Tutorial external support			+
Technical advice			+
Networks and relationships with other projects			+
Political supports			+
Financial supports			+
Public recognition			+
Community support			+

- (Local) organisations for people with disabilities
- Local organisations of public housing.

The Dutch government has an affinity with green farming and supports research on this subject. This results in contacts between the Ministry of Agriculture and employees of Thedingsweert. One of them was also involved in the SoFar project.

For selling the products of Thedingsweert a contract has been made with the biodynamic retail organization (ODIN).

Outcomes

From an economic perspective Thedingsweert produces biodynamic products and employment for people with psychiatric problems or with mental and physical disabilities. The biodynamic products are sold at market prices. The costs of employing the service-users are determined within an AWBZ (Exceptional Medical Expenses Act) financial structure. The customers are the service-users and their family, individual buyers, organic retailers and care organisations.

From a social perspective Thedingsweert has an impact on the wellbeing of the users and their relatives. Arising from their educational activities, service-users get the opportunity to develop their personal skills and are able to explore their individual abilities. From an ecological perspective Thedingsweert contributes to 28 hectares of clean soil.

From a societal perspective Thedingsweert contributes to a green image of the local community, the care and the insurance organisations. Arising from careful public relations the outcomes have an effect on an evolutionary increase of the societal concern for green farming.

Challenges and actions required

Future challenges for Thedingsweert (and other care farms as well) are:

- A threat is the imminent cost-saving measures to be taken by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports and the possible

Direct Outcomes	-	0	+
Therapeutic effects			+
Educational effects			+
Work inclusion			+
Job creation			+
Other		0	
Indirect Outcomes	-	0	+
Environment			+
Landscape			+
Biodiversity			+
Direct selling			+
Farm reputation			+
Farm viability			+

Working at the national platform (Sofar project)



new obligation to accommodate users from daily expenditures within a residential care structure. As a consequence, the care organisations will have the power to decide whether people with psychiatric problems or with intellectual and physical disabilities will be permitted to go to a care farm or not. Then, economic considerations will dominate the decision-making.

In anticipation of this development, the management of Thedingsweert is discussing and studying the possibility of expanding their housing capacity. So, they may be able to interweave living and working better and be able to offer residential care to the community living in the apartments next to the farm.

A new initiative is coming from individual entrepreneurs to lobby for the creation of a place of rest for employees from medium/small enterprises who need a temporary rest because of overstrain, burn-out etc. Care farms are considered to be ideal places for recovery. Thedingsweert is in the brainstorm phase to develop a route and action plan for this idea. The elaboration of this idea needs an extensive lobby and knowledge dissemination (management and employees of enterprises, company doctors etc.) about the effects of green farming on the recovery.

2.9 Conclusions

The “journey” undertaken, as shown in the video-documentary bears witness to the vitality of multiple social farming experiences across Europe: diverse people of different ages and genders, with different personal abilities or disabilities, at different latitudes and in different environments/settings – all engaged, in different ways, with concrete and diverse experiences of “social agriculture”, rich in many dimensions; multiple initiatives offering valid means and support for personal growth in diverse ways – from education to training, to social and labour integration.

In this chapter we tried to go behind the scenes, so as to make clear, through an analytical discussion of the cases, the origin and the history of these initiatives, their organisational patterns, their actual status of development and future challenges, with a special attention on the national/regional context and the mechanisms of support. In the next chapter we will try to offer some elements of transnational comparative analysis of the cases.



Thinking about the future of Social Farming during the national platform