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**Supporting policies
for Social Farming in Europe**
**Progressing Multifunctionality
in Responsive Rural Areas**

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editors

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Presentation

In 2003, ARSIA started an innovative activity on 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 one carried out in Italy and it yielded quite successful results. For the first time about 70 projects related to social farming emerged from the shadows and their promoters began to present and to communicate their daily activities on social issues related to farming. The organisation of an initial network was useful in order to define a new arena where the concept of social farming could be presented and debated and could include newcomers in such discussions. From the outset and until now, the ARSIA project has been able to establish networks at regional level and to reinforce local dynamics by affecting political processes. The Tuscany Region has been quite active in addressing social farming with specific measures in the Regional Development Plan (RDP), initially during the 2000-06 EU planning period and later on in the new RDP.

The establishment of a local network with project holders and with Pisa University was the entry point to engage in the SoFar project. The SoFar project would actively contribute to the definition of EU agricultural policies by addressing the innovative field of social farming. Until now, Social Farming seems to have been an under-recognised application of multifunctional agriculture. However, in the context of better re-considering on-farm activities, social farming may usefully fit with many urgent societal issues in both rural and peri-urban areas.

Perhaps in Europe there is an increasing consensus around the idea that social services in rural areas could play an active role in rural development processes in order to improve local livelihoods

and to support economic viability. In that respect there are enough cases in Europe that show us that farmers can actively contribute to improve healthcare services and to support rural everyday life.

But social farming presents also other attributes that are already known to many local practitioners. Social farming offers the opportunity to work with plants and animals among small groups of people. There is evidence about the therapeutics effect for less empowered people involved in social farming. In many cases such practices are organised in peri-urban areas for local urban populations. They enable services to expand their supply and offer the opportunity to build new bridges between cities and the countryside.

The results of the SoFar project are quite important for different reasons. They open a window into a phenomenon that was not well evaluated until now, but they also establish in a concrete way, different possibilities for establishing collaboration among research units, support centres and local practitioners in order to built new pathways of change in rural areas. There is a strong need for innovation in most EU rural areas; sometimes the efforts are needed to face specific questions, but there is also a real need for innovative methodological approaches to face these changes. In that respect SoFar and social farming are offering both a concept and a methodological approach to better promote a living countryside in Europe.

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.

| 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

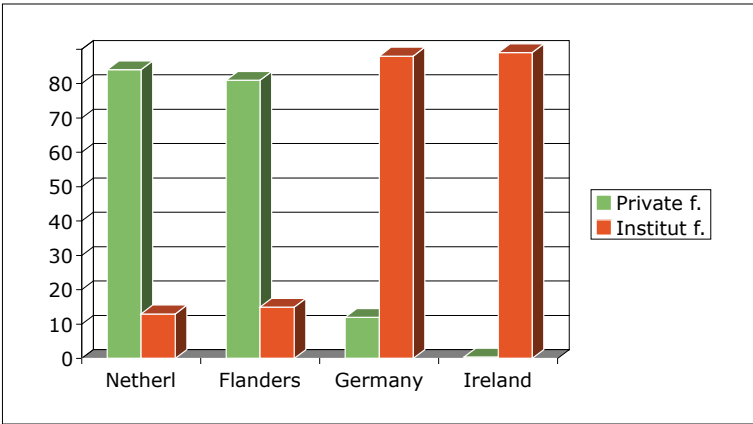


Fig. 1.1 - Development of two types of social farms in the Netherlands and Flanders: private family farms and institutional social farms

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

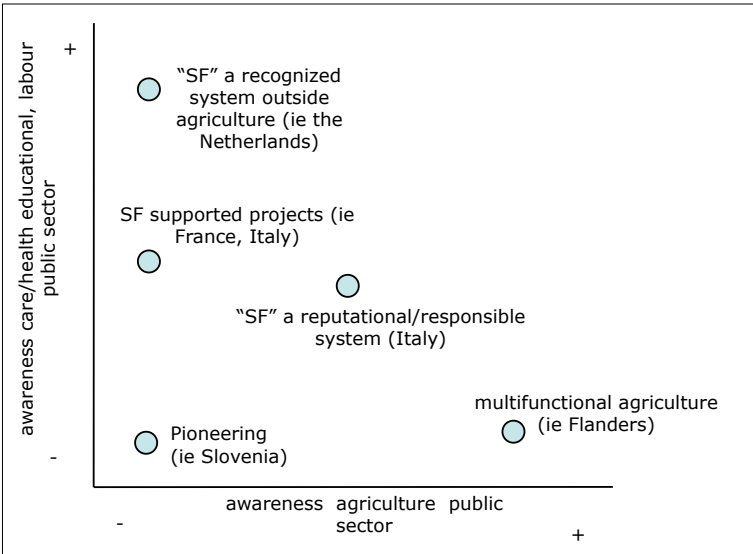


Fig. 1.2 - Awareness of public actors and organisation of social farming (SF)

| Table 1.2 - Number of social farms in the different SoFar countries and the number of users (Source SoFar estimation) | | | | | |
|--|----------------|----------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|
| | <i>Private</i> | <i>Institutional</i> | <i>Others</i> | <i>Total</i> | <i>n. Users</i> |
| 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

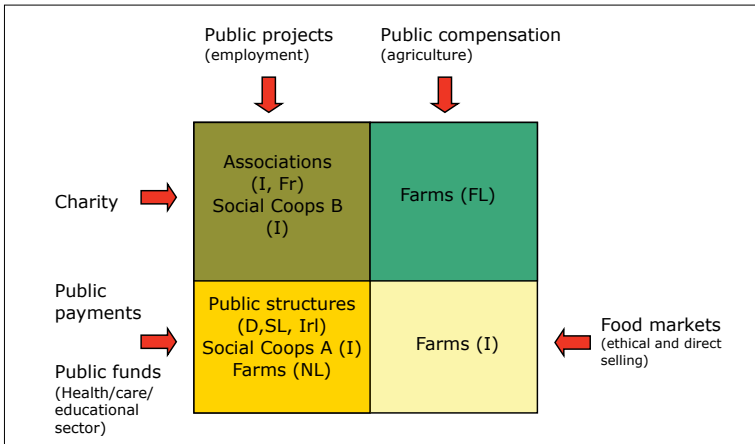


Fig. 1.3 - Different regulatory system of social farming across Europe (Source SoFar)

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.

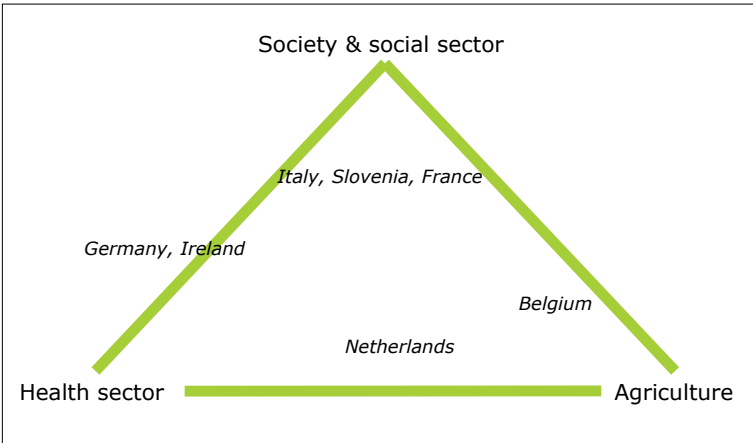


Fig. 1.4 - Orientation of social farming in Europe

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

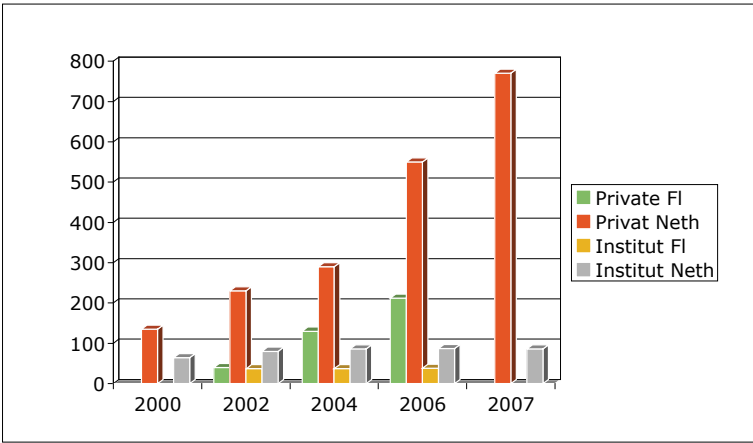


Fig. 1.5 - Percentage of social farms that are private family businesses and institutional/third sector initiatives in 4 SoFar countries (Hassink J., 2008)

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 GdS 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-

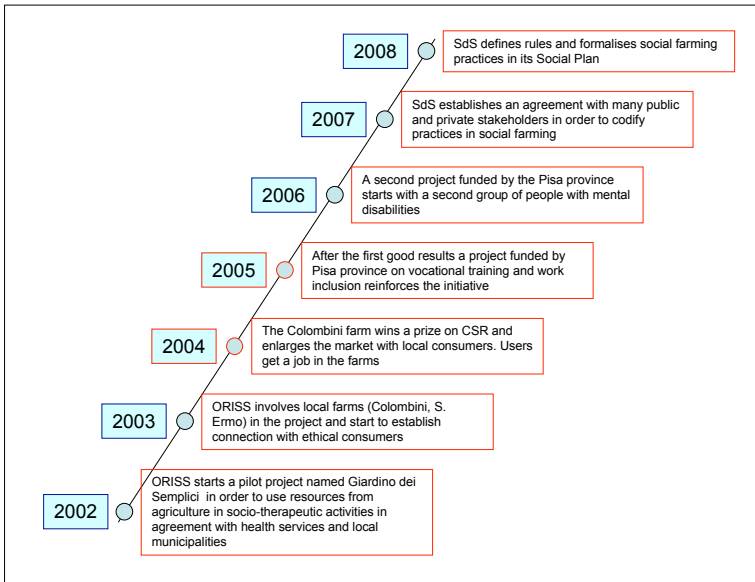


Fig. 2.1 - Main steps of the social farming initiative in Valdera (province of Pisa)

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-

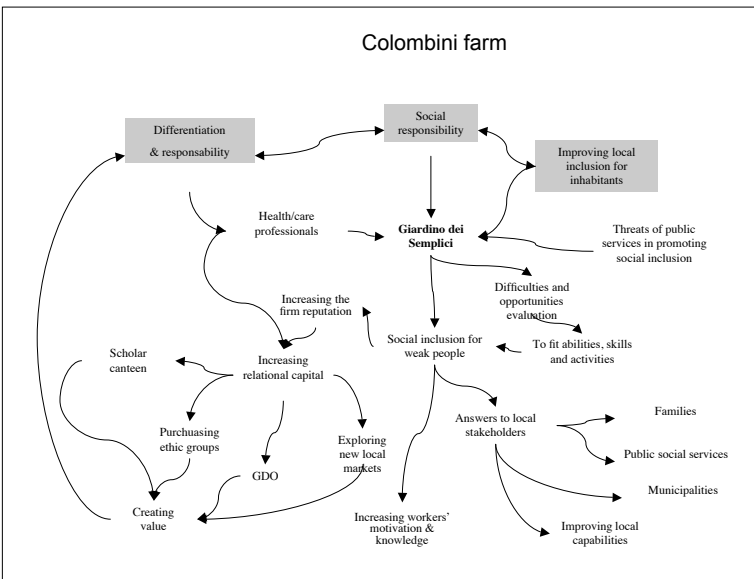


Fig. 2.2 - Development of the social farming initiative in Valdera (interpretative framework)

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-

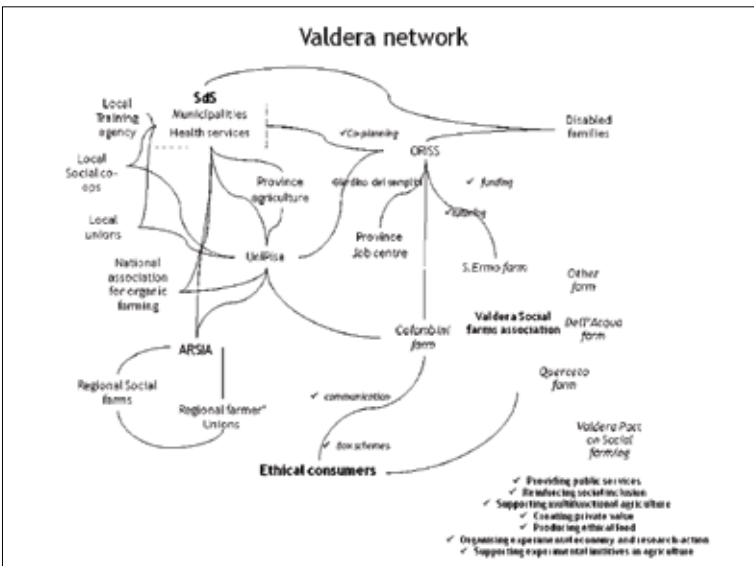


Fig. 2.3 - Network built around the social farming initiative in Valdera

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

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 |

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.

| 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 | |

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”.

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

| 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

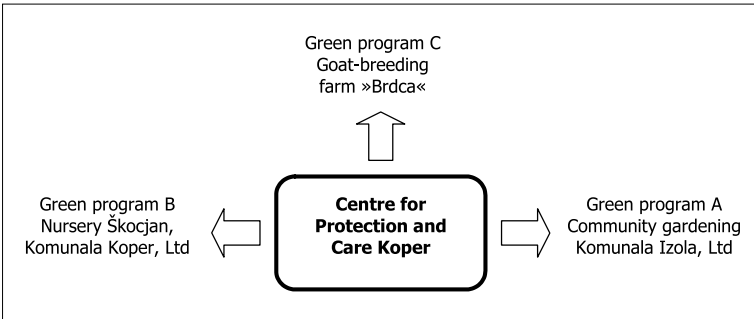


Fig. 2.4 - Development of the green programmes of social care at the Centre for Protection and Care Koper

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

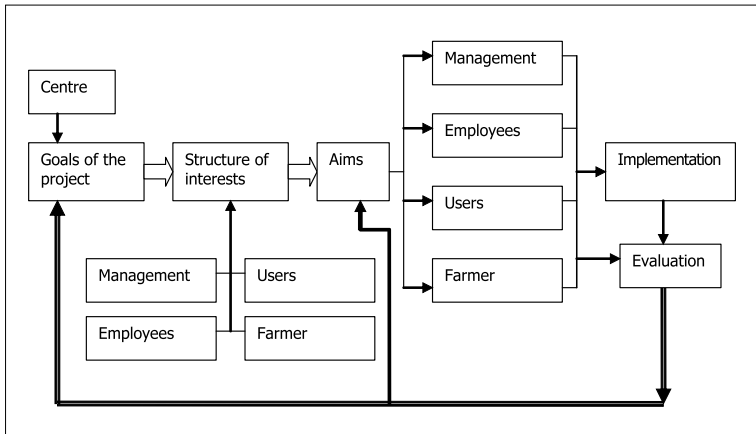


Fig. 2.5 - Consecutive project building procedure

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)

| 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘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

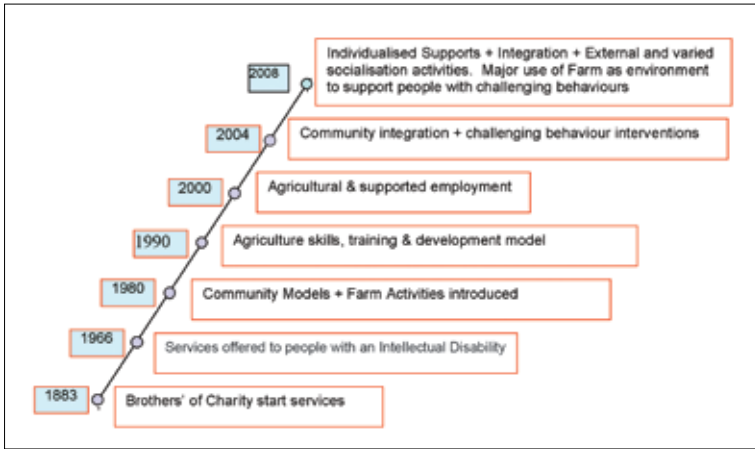


Fig. 2.6 - Main steps in the development of Belmont Farm

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 marked 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 backup 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.

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

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

| 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 Thedinghsweert: an organic care farm and bakery

Key point

Thedinghsweert 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

Thedinghsweert 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.

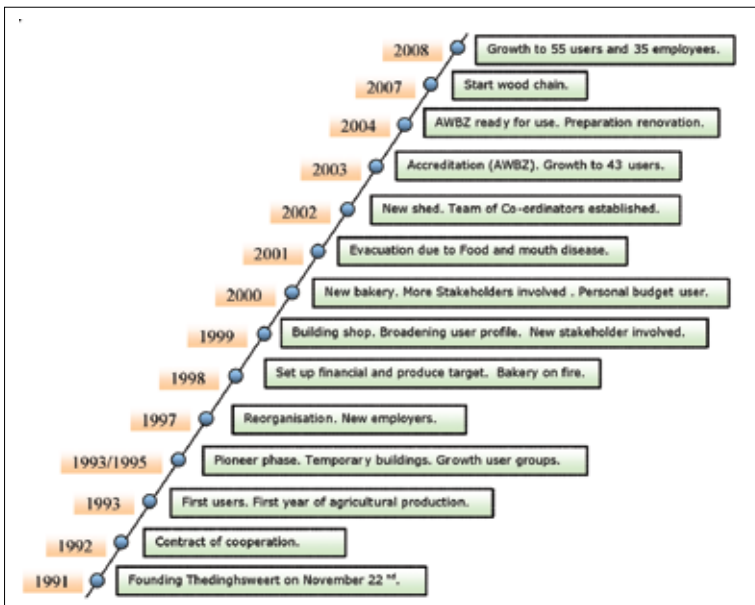


Fig. 2.7 - Main steps in the development of Thedingsweert

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 (anthroposopic) 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

3. A critical reading from cases and emerging issues

3.1 Transversal reading of cases

The previous chapter offered a plethora of social farming examples. Although they all share some characteristics (small-scale activities, initiatives that are driven by an intrinsic motivation rather than mere economic stimuli, and so on), at times they are very diverse. Although the individual cases obviously offered interesting reading, their diversity offers ample opportunity for an enriching transversal analysis as will be outlined in this chapter.

Social Farming initiatives across Europe are characterised by diversity in terms of their stages and trajectories of development; their focus; their organisational structure; their scale of operation and their regulatory environment – among other features.

Due to historical evolution and political choices, the institutional environment represents a gradient ranging from a well-structured and controlled environment, often large-scale and institutionally driven, to more *ad-hoc*, small-scale initiatives. Also the expectations about the role of the institutional environment differs: in some cases (not necessarily contained within regional borders) stakeholders want more regulation and structure; in other cases, the stakeholders want to remain or become more independent as they fear over-regulation or a deterioration in the quality of the service.

The diversity is also apparent in the economic returns from the social farming activity. For some farmers, the care activity is part of a strict business plan and needs sufficient return on investment to be continued. For instance, some farmers in the Netherlands create a high economic return. For others, the economic effect of their care activity is of minor importance or even non-existent. Il Forteto in Italy is a case in point.

The former point about the expectations *vis-à-vis* economic return, is related to another factor that creates diversity within the

social farm sector in Europe. The intrinsic motivation to offer care on a farm is extremely diverse. An encompassing Christian ideology in Italy; a care farm in which a biodynamic cosmology in care is central; a therapeutic-centered and meaningful activity approach by the Brothers of Charity; a mere entrepreneur for whom social farming is but another economic opportunity – these are but a few examples of ideologies and motivations that eventually result in the establishment of care activities on a farm.

This diversity leads to very different roles for agriculture within the whole realm of social farming. The role of agriculture or farming activities is not limited to mere production. While in some contexts, such as the farms offering social farming in Flanders, agriculture is mainly an economic activity, in other contexts agriculture is only a means to provide the environment in which users can receive care. Or sometime agricultural activities may just serve the purpose of sustaining a community. This range is often linked with the role played by therapeutic institutions, which vary from very being formalised and prescriptive, to non-existence or being seen as undesirable.

These diverse aspects are explored in the transversal reading of the cases that have been presented to date. Subsequently, we focus on the inclusive effects of social farming (3.2), on the relationship between social farming and landscape and environment (3.3), on gender aspects of social farming (3.4), on its economic features (3.5) and on the role of policies and institutions (3.6).

For many countries and regions involved, the SoFar project represented the first attempt to determine the nature and extent of social farming initiatives. Consequently, the availability and quality of supporting data to examine cross-cutting issues in social farming must be seen as a constraint on the analysis. For these reasons, the following discussion should be interpreted as exploratory and impressionistic – rather than definitive or conclusive, with the main purpose being to raise issues that warrant further examination.

3.2 Inclusive effects

Inclusion is about society changing to accommodate difference and to combat discrimination (Inclusive Development, 2008). The analysis of more than one hundred cases revealed that in all countries the service-users of social farming belong to quite dif-

ferent disadvantaged social groups: they have an intellectual disability, they have issues with mental health, they have reduced work capacities, they are stigmatised, they are marginalised by the labour market etc. They are more or less excluded from mainstream society because of their difference. Therefore, in term of inclusion social farming has to be discussed from two angles:

- From the perspective of how the concept itself is integrated into inclusive development;
- From the perspective of how it can contribute to inclusion of service-users.

3.2.1 Social farming as an element of inclusive development

Good practices, highlighted through various case-studies, proved that social farming is addressing key elements of inclusive development.

The first and probably the most important is the intrinsic culture of collaboration, networking, listening and tolerance between quite different stakeholder groups, such as people with special needs, farmers, local communities, social/health care professionals, policy-makers or administrators etc.

Secondly, social farming represents community-based and community-oriented development approaches. In this way, it supports new paradigms in the field of rural development as well as in the field of social care.

Thirdly, social farming corresponds to a human rights framework through the provision of individualised and personalised services based upon the social model of disability. Its special added value is the possibility for a disadvantaged person to be integrated into an environment where their personal potential may be valued and enhanced.

Fourthly, social farming has the potential to further broaden, diversify and add value to multifunctional agriculture. By interlacing farming with welfare services, social farming creates new markets for farmers, as well as an opportunity for the creation of market-based policies in both sectors through the transformation of public goods or positive externalities into private and semi-private goods.

The extent to which these qualities can be realised depends very much on the realities of the relevant cultural, political and economic environments. In spite of many commonly-accepted objectives, it is problematic to create services with the active involvement of society (Lamb & Bachrach, 2001; Brun & Rapp, 2001). The consequence

is that many disadvantaged groups in society lead an isolated life, where health professionals are the most important members of their social network (Deweese *et al.*, 1996; Borge *et al.*, 1999). Discussions at national and EU platforms within the SoFar project pointed to the different issues that hinder the development of social farming and suffocate its inclusive potential, such as the domination of a medical model of health over a social-psychological one, the domination of state-based social care over community-based ones and the unwillingness or incapacity of bureaucrats to overcome a sectoral approach to policy-making etc. Yet, social farming – although more or less still invisible and marginalised within mainstream society – provides all the evidence that change is possible.

3.2.2 Inclusion of service-users through social farming

The types of barriers faced by the service-users of social farming are attitudinal, political and linked to empowerment. Social farming is challenging all of these because the focus is on working together and performing the job that has to be done. Service-users say that they consider themselves as workers or farmers and not as patients or clients. Furthermore, its inclusion impact arises from the intervention that follows ideas of being (Depla, 2004): as ordinary as possible (belonging to the community), as meaningful as possible (fulfillment of wishes), as integrated as possible (connectedness) and as active as possible.

Society accepts and includes a person by tendering him/her an identity (Berger, 1995). Different societies have different attitudes towards people with special needs. Sometimes it is more and sometimes less benevolent according to actual socio-economic circumstances. Yet, social farming is a system that is user-oriented and based on high ethical standards and solidarity. Users are approached as so-called normal persons, accepted for their capabilities; they experience respect without prejudice. So, social farming presents a feasible scenario of transition from a medical to a social model of disability.

Furthermore, social farming takes place in the open (farms, gardens, parks). In this way it provides the possibility for the general public to learn about the real capabilities of people with special needs and to understand them better.

Activities that are provided by social farming are, in the majority of cases, oriented to day-care with productive and meaningful activities, as well as integration into the workforce and rehabilitation. But, at the same time, case studies indicate that social farming still depends heavily on public funding and that it is very often (in about one third of cases)

organised within the traditional institutional framework. This is why there is still a very heavy dependence by the service-users on the different kinds of institutions that define their choices. On the other hand, there are very many cases that are community-based and business-oriented social organisations (gardens, farms, enterprises, co-operatives, foundations). They illustrate how to practice de-institutionalisation, socialisation and inclusion successfully.

In each and every case of social farming, there is evidence of empowerment-oriented and strengths-based practices that reflect the changing paradigm in social and health care (Chapin & Opal-Cox, 2001). The users are listened to, consulted and involved. They are encouraged to make their own choices that help them increase their self-esteem and independence. Empowerment happens through social farming via better social interaction, more numerous and diversified social contacts and better social skills.

Social farming is attracting the attention of many professionals in the social/health care sector who see it as a new professional challenge; a new and valuable opportunity to gain more knowledge and understanding of service-users' capabilities and as a means of implementing new working methods. While they have found social farming practices demanding in terms of organisation and economics, they find it rewarding in terms of creativity, sociability, spontaneity, flexibility and its relaxed atmosphere.

The professional challenge is to deepen professional knowledge regarding the implementation of new methods of working with service-users; better working conditions; room for creativity and higher levels of motivation at work in order to create an environment that leads to a life as ordinary, meaningful, integrated and active as possible.

3.3 Landscape and environment

The appearance of cultural landscapes in Europe is influenced strongly by agriculture (van der Ploeg *et al.*, 2002). In former times, cultural landscapes were a by-product of an agriculture with lots of manual work, whereas today a diverse and aesthetic landscape is preserved and developed only by active decisions and means. Today only 3% of the European population is engaged in agriculture, creating the landscape for the rest of society. Landscape is a factor of production for farmers. But landscape is also a place for

living, working, home, experience, recreation, moving through and making connections.

The connectedness of nature and culture is a typical feature of European cultural landscapes. The conversion to environmental friendly practices such as organic farming can be the starting point for higher levels of biodiversity. The realisation of this potential depends on whether the farmers recognise nature and landscape development as objectives of their farming styles and whether they succeed in integrating them into their agricultural practices.

Against the background of European Union agricultural reform, according to which the ecological achievements of farms are to be rewarded in the future, and at the same time, jobs on farms are to be created outside the sphere of agricultural production, there is a new potential to develop organic farming in a multifunctional manner. Such multifunctionality can mean combining the production of food with social functions, such as providing space for recreation, care of the landscape, and the provision of care for those with disabilities. (Lenhard *et al.*, 1997, Kalisch & van Elsen, 2008).

Research suggests that the relationship people have with nature and landscape also forms their opinions about it and thus constitutes part of their identity. Loss of identity is one of the problems experienced by people with drug addiction and other marginalised groups in society (van Elsen *et al.*, 2006). Could the approach of social farming also include care and therapy for nature and landscapes? Are there already examples of combining such aspects of multifunctionality? And, primarily, can multifunctionality play a role in enhancing a feeling of identity? Are social forms of agriculture destined to combine organic farming with nature conservation?

From a theoretical point of view landscape work on farms and people with disabilities can be synergetic. It provides plenty of varied manual work that can be combined with daily routine work – especially in winter or other times when there is not much agricultural work to do. The strong communities (like associations that include parents of service-users and other supporters) support the farms that are not so dependent on profit in comparison with ordinary family farms. Through integration of people with disabilities, the need to produce high yields is lower and the ability and the desire to care and protect people and the landscape higher. Landscape work can be used as an advertisement for the institution and to promote the farm. The philosophy of the community and identi-

fication with the location can thus be supported. Disadvantages lie in the additional need for resources that are already scarce. There is competition for time, space, workers and a shortage of professional staff. Financial issues – you cannot sell landscape – may not be solved by the community alone. Another problem might be the capabilities of the people with disabilities. The potential of landscape work depends on these issues.

We have already made reference to the variable quality of the data supporting much of the analysis within the SoFar project – given its tentative and exploratory nature. Nevertheless, we can report some trends/observations related to landscape issues, based on the national/regional surveys of social farms undertaken as part of the effort to establish the “State of the Art” in each country.

The share of organic social farms might be an indicator for increased environmental and ethical awareness on social farms. The contribution of organic farming to the protection of species and the environment has been proven by many studies, so it seems worthwhile to compare the amount of organic care farms in the different countries. Within the SoFar project, the number of organic farms with social integration varies among the countries and does not give a consistent picture. Whereas in Germany about 60% of the social farms are certified organic, there are only 36 (40%) of 90 surveyed farms organic or low input in Ireland and 20 (13%) of 155 farms that are interested in social care work organic in Slovenia.

Although the database of each country differs, the results show that the share of organic farms among the social farms is much higher than the average number of organic farms in the countries. That leads to the conclusion that these farms contribute per se to a healthy environment, even if they do not offer special landscape activities.

Turning to landscape and conservation activities undertaken by social farms in participating countries in SoFar, in the Netherlands 90% of the care farms are actively improving their environment by nature conservation measurements and 25% of the care farms (compared to 11% other farms) get some additional income for these measures. Also in Flanders many care farms are actively improving their environment and do not see any obstructing factors to do so – besides missing time and financial support. Many social farms in Ireland include some kind of environmental education.

In Italy, the social co-operatives run landscape maintenance

groups and get supported by an Italian law that favours social enterprises when tendering for public contracts. These public orders are mostly simple and unsophisticated landscape maintenance measures in urban areas, rather than activities concerned with nature conservation or landscape development. Low profile landscape maintenance seems to be rather suited as an activity for employing underprivileged people because the staff do not need much training, land ownership is not an issue and the income can be acquired without high costs or expensive instruments. At least some examples in Germany show that there is a threat when social entrepreneurs have to compete with landscape maintenance businesses.

Activities like mowing grass and caring for green space can be seen as a step towards other landscape activities to preserve and develop the biodiversity and biotopes within European cultural landscapes. Social farming has the potential to combine therapeutic goals, the employment of people and social activities to support nature. The awareness for this challenge within social farming should be enhanced.

An example of the synergy between social agriculture and the development of the natural surroundings is provided by Surcenord Farm (*see text box*).

Surcenord Farm

Surcenord Farm is an organic grassland farm in France founded in 1978 which keeps cattle and forms part of a remedial educational institution with several residential homes and workshops. Fifteen young people with learning disabilities aged between 15 and 27 receive instruction and therapy (riding, art therapy), work on the farm and undertake domestic duties. The two farmers place the land and the farm facilities at the disposal of the instructor and carers. Some seven or eight young people at a time, always accompanied by educators, are involved in the farm work which mainly comprises work in the cattle sheds,

harvesting fodder, woodland management and landscape care as well as the maintenance of fences and traditional irrigation systems.

The farm is situated on about 100 ha of largely sloping land at 850-1140 m altitude in the Vosges (cf. Köppl & van Elsen 2005). It is managed as pasture and mowed for forage. The livestock comprises 25 cows and calves, about 20 beef cattle, 10 heifers and 10 horses. The products sold are meat, wood and woodchips. In 2004, the subsidies, which include state support for integration of the people with disabilities, comprised 44% of turnover.

The management of Surcenord Farm are working to open up the landscape, part of which has become scrubby with broom, by planned clearing. Farmer André Frommelt stressed that they are not trying to revert to the 'monotony' of the bare hillsides that were there at the end of the 19th century but rather they value a 'diversity of habitats' on the land they manage and strive to 'maintain and further develop' them. During tree-felling, individual pines, firs, rowans, junipers, dogrose and whitebeam are preserved. The tree stumps are left in the ground and eventually rot away. The fellings are used in the woodchip central-heating system which meets all the heating and hot water requirements of the living accommodation and the farm buildings, using some 3,000 cubic metres of fuel annually.

Farmer André Frommelt sees himself as 'more a student of nature than an environmentalist'. He is a member of several naturalist associations, is an amateur botanist and frequently devotes himself to the observation of wild animals. The cautious further opening of the landscape while maintaining a mosaic of open spaces, woodland margins, bushes and individual trees is intended to meet the requirements of, for example, red-backed shrikes and capercaillies. To protect whinchats, certain areas are used only after their nesting season. A sloping bog, which is subject to nature conservation status, is used particularly extensively and parts of it are fenced off to protect the coralroot orchid (*Corallorhiza trifida*), an endangered species. At the same site, André Frommelt would like to try to re-establish *Bruchia vogesiaca*, a species of moss that was discovered in the Vosges but has disappeared. In recent years there has been a close collaboration with the Ballons National Park in the Vosges. Partly at the instigation of the farmers, the Park has commissioned various studies on botanical and entomological questions and these in turn have yielded information on management for the farmers.

The farmers are looking for opportunities to make a wider circle of people aware of ecological issues. Furthermore there is interest in 'stronger and more regular scientific guidance' directed towards concerns about species conservation. A medium-term plan for the farm is the construction of a solar-heating system for hot water and the installation of an ecological system for treating their own sewage. As regards education, they are considering employing adult carers to help with setting up a meat and milk processing unit.

To summarise the multifunctionality perspective of the care farm approach: Care farms "use" nature as a tool to "heal" or to

employ people with disabilities; they use “natural processes” (such as animal-human interactions, natural rhythms in horticulture). Moreover, care farms can also contribute to the care of healthy nature and landscapes by additional manpower (service-users) and less economic pressure (additional income). That makes social farming a “win-win” situation, integrating functions such as caring for people with disabilities and contributing to the development of rural landscapes.

Landscape care needs many helping hands. Social farming allows the use of hedgerows for dietary fodder and it allows extensive care for biotopes and provides experiences for children on school farms. Green care in agriculture or “social farming” might lead to new perspectives for healthy agriculture, healthy people and healthy landscapes in Europe. This makes social farming an important step towards healthy people and healthy landscapes.

3.4 Gender issues

As noted previously, Social Farming crosses many sectoral boundaries – but clearly agriculture and social care are central concerns. In both of these arenas, the analysis of gender issues is the basis of a wide-ranging body of academic and policy literature. Recurring themes include the feminisation of the care-sector workforce; gender equality in the community and voluntary sector; the invisibility of care labour (both paid and unpaid) and the commodification of care (Armstrong & Armstrong, 2004; Daly & Rake, 2003; European Foundation for Living and Working Conditions, 2006; Ungerson, 1997). Regarding agriculture specifically, a variety of gender equality issues arise in relation to professional status; recognition; visibility and contribution to the sector (European Commission, 2002).

Notwithstanding the caveat on the quality of data emerging from the SoFar investigations due to its explorative and limited character, we can nonetheless provide some insights into some gender-related issues highlighted above – from a social farming perspective. Regarding the feminisation of care work, Daly and Rake (2003) argue that this is not the case only within the family/ domestic sphere, but is also reflected in paid care work. As the sector has grown, women have formed an ever-larger majority of paid

care workers. Insights from various dimensions of the SoFar work (i.e. information contained in the national/regional State of the Art reports; national/regional case studies; national/regional/EU-level platforms addressed – all of which are addressed in *Chapters 1, 2 and 4* respectively of this volume) provide some support for this contention – but it is not uniform across all regions/countries studied. For example, in the case of Italy, the “typical” worker in agricultural social co-operatives is described as “young, female and qualified” and it is estimated that women account for approximately 70% of the workforce in this sector. In Slovenia, the State of the Art report noted that on approximately 70% of Care Farms, it is women who take responsibility for the service users. In the Netherlands, the high proportion of females among volunteer workers in social farming was noteworthy. In some instances (Germany, Flanders), where social farming activities were differentiated between those that were strongly “agricultural-based” and those which were “care-based”, female staff were more likely to be assigned to the latter category of work.

It appears that women are highly visible and perhaps “over-represented” among the rank-and-file workforce in many social farming initiatives. The extent to which this visibility and level of participation is mirrored in other related arenas – such as networking, advocacy, engagement with policy makers etc. – is an important issue, particularly given the stated objectives of the SoFar project. These include the development of networking mechanisms between practitioners/service-providers and researchers as well as measures to support the design of relevant policies for social/care farming at regional and European level. One relevant indicator is the gender breakdown of participation in various platform events organised in the course of the SoFar work. In the case of the first European platform, 22% of the “invited” participants (6 of the 27) were female, while in the second EU platform, 26% (8 of the 31 invited participants) were female. If the national SoFar research project teams are included as participants at these events, the proportions rise to 31% and 33% respectively, reflecting the different gender balance among the research contingent involved. Available data on the gender composition of the National Platforms (NPs) suggest a more mixed picture. Female participation rates at these events ranged from 20-25% (Germany 2nd NP, Ireland 1st NP); 35-40% (Flanders 2nd NP, Ireland 2nd NP) to approximately 50% (Slovenia 2nd NP).

While it is not possible to generalise from such limited evidence, it is worth noting that the relevant academic and policy literature (relating to agriculture; social care; community/voluntary sector) makes frequent reference to women's under-representation at strategic/decision-making/policy-influencing levels in these sectors (European Commission, 2002; National Development Plan Gender Equality Unit 2002, European Foundation for Living and Working Conditions, 2006). While the above discussion has focused on gender issues related to the provision of care services, there are also insights on gender issues and the receipt of care services from the SoFar work. Again, based on information from the national State of the Art Reports and the case studies that were undertaken, the general picture that emerges is that service-users are predominantly male – approximately 75% in many cases (Ireland, France, Netherlands and Slovenia). While this may be explained to some extent by a tendency to ascribe gendered work roles in relation to farming, it may also reflect the difficulties for recipients of care services in balancing their own roles as care-givers. For example, a theme that emerged among the national reports was that initiatives with residential programmes (typically alcohol or drug treatment centres) are frequently inaccessible to women due to the lack of childcare provision. Another salient factor cited frequently by service providers is the higher incidence of certain types of intellectual disability (eg. Autism) among the male population.

Because of the “pioneering” and exploratory nature of much of the SoFar work, it can provide only partial answers to questions such as – whether there are different roles for men/women as service providers in social farming; whether there are gender differences in the uptake of certain types of initiatives and if so can we explain them; what is the gender profile of service users and providers across different countries/regions; does it vary much and why? Within the SoFar work, the desire to receive recognition and the ability to influence policy/decision-making processes have emerged as central challenges for all those who engage in it. From a gender perspective, what is at issue is whether such challenges are likely to be equally problematic for both men and women.

3.5 Economic features

The majority of social farming cases that were studied are organised in three types of working forms: farms (family farms, commercial farms), social organizations (social enterprises, social cooperatives) and institutions. Family farms are dominant in Flanders and in The Netherlands, while the organisational structure in other countries is more diverse. In France, social farming operates in the form of community gardens and urban farms, while in Italy social organisations prevail. In Slovenia, Germany and Ireland, social farming mostly takes place within various social care institutions.

Horticulture, mixed farming and animal husbandry are the most frequent types of production practiced by social farming initiatives. In Italy, France, Ireland and Slovenia there are some cases that are providing green services such as the maintenance of public parks.

As to the size of utilised land, there are cases that use less than 1 ha and cases that are using several hundred ha. In France and Slovenia social farming initiatives are rather small-scale operations using up to 20 ha of land. In The Netherlands where family farms are the dominant actors in social farming, they use from 20 ha to 40 ha, while family farms in Flanders, who are the main providers of green care in that region, tend to be slightly larger. Social farming initiatives in Italy are in the same range. On the other hand, social farming initiatives in Germany are comparatively large operations.

There is evidence that the modern concept of social farming has strong origins in the agricultural tradition in Europe. In Italy and Ireland more than half of the initiatives have been in operation for 20 years or more. Two of the cases studied in Ireland have been operational since the 1960s and in Italy since the 1970s. In Germany, the 1980s was the period when very many initiatives started to operate, while in France and Slovenia it was the 1990s. Institutional changes after the year 2000 in Flanders (the introduction of subsidies) and The Netherlands (personalised budget schemes) boosted the provision of green care on family farms in both countries.

Due to different organisational forms of social farming initiatives, the number of the service-users involved differs too. In the case of small-scale initiatives (community gardens, urban farms and family farms) the number of the service-users involved is rather small, while in the case of institutions and social organisations, the number is much larger. The most frequent number of service-users per initiative is three, while the average number is more than thirty.

The table shows that numerically, the smaller initiatives are far more frequent. In terms of service-users, on the other hand, there is a greater reliance on large-scale initiatives.

Day care with productive and meaningful activities, living and working, as well as labour integration and rehabilitation are the most frequent services that are provided by social farming initiatives in the majority of cases in all countries. Therapeutic activities are much less frequent in the portfolio of social farming initiatives.

About one-third of the cases studied depend on public funds, while about one-fifth is funded by a combination of public and private funds. This varies widely between different countries and regions. Various EU Projects have been instrumental in establishing some projects in Ireland and Slovenia.

Social organisations in all countries combine public/private sources and market-based sales activities to fund their operations. Only a few cases are funded from private sources exclusively.

In Flanders family farms involved in green care receive a special grant of 40 € per day, irrespective of the number of users. Most care farms have a yearly revenue from care activities of 1,000 € to 10,000 € per year. The yearly costs vary from 100 € to 5,000 € per year. Insights from the Netherlands suggests that provision of care for 5 service-users, who are on the farm for 4 days a week with an average subvention per user of 50 € per day, generates additional income of 48,000 € annually. In this situation the costs are low and the contribution to family income will probably be more than 40,000 €. Social co-operatives in Italy have an average yearly turnover per organisation 770,000 € in case of social care, and 473,000 € in case of workforce integration. Agricultural co-operatives

| Utilized land, ha | Structure, % (N=113) |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| >1 | 6,2 |
| 1,1-10 | 18,6 |
| 10,1-20 | 12,4 |
| 20,1-30 | 17,7 |
| 30,1-40 | 16,8 |
| 40,1-100 | 8,8 |
| 100,1-200 | 3,5 |
| <200,1 | 8,0 |
| Unkonwn | 7,1 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100,0</i> |

| Number of users | Structure, % (N=113) |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| Up to 10 | 23,9 |
| 11 to 20 | 21,2 |
| 21-30 | 7,1 |
| 31-40 | 7,1 |
| 41-50 | 5,3 |
| 51-60 | 3,5 |
| More than 61 | 13,3 |
| Unknown | 18,6 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100,0</i> |

that are hosting in average three service-users per day generate 165 € through their contract for a daily grant via social care public bodies. French social farming initiatives that combine organic vegetable production with the provision of different kinds of social services generates from 150,000 € up to 1.5 million € annually. In Ireland, a farm that collaborates with a health institution as a subcontractor gets 36,000 € per person per year on a residential basis and approximately 20,000 € per year for non-residential services. A family farm that co-operates with a social care institution in Slovenia shares 25-50 € per person per day as this is the amount that the institution is paid for its day care services. Slovenian social organisations involved in the provision of employment rehabilitation and labour integration for 50 users generate about 600,000 € per year through the provision of green services. It is entitled to an annual subsidy of 12,600 € per person.

Although social farming initiatives are non-profit mainly, it is obvious that social farming seeks and requires good management to ensure that activities are economically viable. Costs and revenues are more or less balanced on about half of social farming initiatives in all countries, while for the other half, this ratio does not apply – costs are rather high and revenues are rather low.

Investments in green care activities (facilities, equipment, tools for the service-users) depend not only on the economic situation but also on role of such services in the portfolio of the social farming initiative, as well as on the objectives in this field. One French cooperative has invested 400,000 €. In the Netherlands family farms' investment into care activities varies between 200 € and 90,000 €. Two Slovenian social organisations with large-scale operations in green services (maintaining parks) invested between 300,000 € and 450,000 € in equipment and tools for the service-users.

It was very difficult for the promoters of social farming initiatives to assess the future prospects for their economic situation. Yet, those who made such a guess (about one third of all cases), were more or less optimistic: they felt that their economic situation would be better in five years' time. They envisage that revenues from social services will increase more than the costs of their provision.

The holders of social farming initiatives were very reluctant to evaluate the economic importance of the social activities on the overall economic performance of an initiative. The majority of cases studied in Germany, relating to foundations in particular, reported

a considerable economic impact. The same situation is perceived by an Italian Type A social co-operative. Slovenian and German social organisations and institutions, as well as some family farms in the Netherlands see this impact as moderate. Very many family farms in Flanders consider it as limited or non-existent. Therefore, the situation is quite diverse. The economic impact depends on many factors such as holder's attitude, his/her ambition in the field of social farming, the local system of social/health care and associated policies etc.

3.6 Policies and institutions in social farming

As emerged from the analysis of the cases, and as already presented in Chapter 1, social farming is quite differently shaped in different EU countries, notwithstanding the fact that it can present similar features and characteristics at the same time. Such diversity is based upon four main aspects. Each project is distinct because it is born from grassroots level with few opportunities for exchange with others; it may be directed at very different targets in terms of service-users; growth occurs in different institutional contexts regarding the social sector; and it follows a process of progressive adaptation depending on the emerging needs in local communities.

At EU level, the term "social farming" suggests a link with rural development policies as well as with social intervention at different institutional levels and in different fields, despite the fact that the process of recognition and integration between these policies is still under construction.

Regarding its integration into rural development (RD) policies, social farming (SF) fits with many emerging issues, as presented by the cases illustrated in *Chapter 2*:

- SF promotes a wider idea of multifunctional agriculture (as is the case for Hoeve de Ploeg farm in Flanders);
- SF diversifies on-farm activities and can involve new family members in health/care provision, enhancing job opportunities for women and young people (like in the Netherlands or in Flanders)
- SF is in keeping with the diversity that characterises rural EU areas and their social structure;
- SF may represent an opportunity to reduce the lack of services in rural areas and to re-design them in a more innovative way

(Bellechambre farm in the Iserre region in France acts in this way for adults with autism), increasing the quality of life and reducing the gap between urban and rural areas (in the case of the Kuhhorst farm in Germany), with regard to health/care provisions, especially for groups such as children (as in the Forteto case) and the elderly;

- SF improves farmers' reputation in society and – directly or indirectly – their income (an aspect evident in the Colombini farm, Italy);
- SF offers services to urban citizens and establishes a new bridge between urban and rural areas (for farms working in peri-urban areas – eg. Kuhhorst and the Colombini farm);
- SF re-introduces the concept of gift and reciprocity value, reinforcing social capital (this is clear in the Hoeve de Ploeg farm);
- SF reconnects local agriculture to local needs in a more sustainable and responsible way (the Brdca farm in Slovenja clearly reconnects agriculture to local social needs);
- SF fits in with a scenario of sustainable rurality that is able to organise vibrant communities in different EU rural areas and to offer more sustainable models for emerging countries.

SF should be better understood in the context of a multifunctional agriculture in order to promote innovative patterns of rural development that are less dependent on compensation and funding and better rooted in local resources and in a pro-active process of change. For the same reasons, the role of social services in rural development should be better analysed by RD policies, owing to their strong linkages and their involvement in rural development processes. This point has already been made by the OECD⁵. SF can improve social services in rural areas but can also offer new and different solutions to social inclusion in urban and peri-urban areas (this is the case for Solid' Action as well as for Belmont farm).

⁵ The OECD Cologne meeting identified service delivery as a key to the development of rural regions. In this respect 6 key policy areas to improve service delivery in rural areas were mentioned: coherence with local needs and assets; equity and efficiency; innovative contracts among urban and rural; introduction of a logic based on investment rather than spending; organisation of effective and inclusive governance and strong innovation. It should be observed that SF is able to fit with all the six points addressed by the key message of the OECD Cologne meeting on Innovative Service Delivery and in this respect SF is able to offer more than minimum support to improve the social fabric in rural areas.

The definition of an EU common social policy is far from established at the present time. This is not to say that the EU has no policies in the social field. The intervention of the EU in social matters is based on the so-called “open co-ordination method” that encourages co-operation and exchange among Member States by using and promoting the use of best practice; the organisation of some minimum rules and regulations and some interventions approved by the Council.

In the field of health/care/educational services, SF is able to offer a new response to:

- the demand for new tools and innovative processes that are able to support professional services (farms like Belmont and Bellechambre came about through social care professionals who promoted the use of agriculture to improve the efficacy of the services offered) by valorising nature and informal relationships (Hoeve de Ploeg, Colombini and Brdca farms are clear examples where family farms were introduced in the local social structures);
- the increasing demand for personalisation and effectiveness of public health/care services;
- the opportunity to move to a caring strategy within the welfare system (see among the others the Bellechambre farm and the Belmont farm);
- the demand for services based on flexibility and proximity (as is the case of services for older people in the Netherlands);
- the need to increase efficiency in public services by using scope economies instead of scale economies.

The presence of different systems influences the organisation of services for rural areas, as well as the organisation of SF practices. In all the cases presented, the external institutional and cultural environment represents an active medium capable of influencing the evolution of a project by reinforcing it or putting constraints on it.

Perhaps, SF links together *two sectors that are very differently regulated* at EU level. The CAP is the most integrated policy in EU, while in social affairs, national policies are always dominant within a process of common co-ordination. Also *welfare models*⁶ are very

⁶ According with M. SIBILLA (2008) four different models can be defined across Europe: The *social democratic*: organised in northern EU Countries such as Finland, Denmark, Sweden and The Netherlands. This ensures universal rights to all citizens and it is based on high level of taxes.

differently shaped in EU countries in terms of how they impact on SF applications. At the same time, even where countries adopt the same welfare model⁷, SF may be present in very *different applications and characteristics*⁸.

In all EU countries the welfare system is under strong pressure. EU intervention is acting to facilitate co-operation and benchmarking of different systems in order to achieve common results. A better understanding of SF practices, their organisation and discussion about best practices, could facilitate the evaluation and the diffusion of innovative tools for social and workforce inclusion.

Most of cases presented are working in an interface between agricultural and health/social policies. Working in this space presents some opportunities but also some difficulties. Local project holders, especially when they are not strictly connected with institutional bodies, face some problems in trying order to harmonise their initiatives and to find material and personal supports. This is less relevant in case of the Netherlands and Flanders where the formalisation of the SF project is more effective and where rules and procedures are able to facilitate the start-up of new projects.

What is clear at this stage in Europe is that SF is a concrete activity, differently organised and harmonised in local/national rules and institutions, aiming for a clearer recognition from different stakeholders and policies.

The *corporatist model*: (France, Belgium, Austria, Germany, Luxembourg) where welfare is mostly related to workforce participation (workfare). There are different instruments that promote vocational training and a minimum wage for people not included in the labour force

The *liberal model*: it is mainly related to the Anglophone culture. It is mostly based on different supports for families with specific problems (working families' tax credits, disabled persons' tax credits, child benefit).

The *mediterranean model*: it is based on a welfare mix (or welfare society) where the first and second sector (public and private) are integrated by the third sector and the family (fourth sector). The system is sometimes fragmented within different schemes. Voluntary associations are increasingly more active in organising networks, families play a strong role while there is no minimum wage for those who do not work.

⁷ When we consider countries that adopt a social democratic model, we note that in Finland and Denmark social farming is not very well developed while it is the opposite case in the Netherlands and in Norway.

⁸ In France and in Germany which adopt a corporatist model, SF is mostly addressed through workforce inclusion while in the Netherlands a wider range of services is offered.

There is a general question here. Is social farming just a useful way to re-organise care services by involving farmers, or does it represent the “tip of the iceberg” of a more fundamental change that is open to creating new linkages within the social and economic organisation of local society and to open the space for a ‘fifth sector’ related to organisations not specialised in service provisions?

Most of these aspects were analysed in depth during the SoFar project in the various platform activities by the different actors engaging in them. The subsequent chapters will provide more of a focus on them. The subsequent chapters will address these themes as well as possible strategies to adopt in order to increase the awareness of Social Farming across Europe.

4. Building a European stakeholders' perspective of social farming

4.1 Overview

This chapter focuses on the presentation of the methodological approach adopted within the SoFar project that involved stakeholders in a collective dynamic, linking together researchers and practitioners, anchored in each country/region and scaled up at European level.

The mobilisation of this participatory approach led to the production of a shared vision of the strengths and weaknesses of social farming in Europe and identified key issues, questions and priorities to be dealt with at European level, as conditions for the development of social farming in Europe.

Those current policy issues need to be addressed by an intense European networking dynamic, anchored in our territories. It needs to be multi-purpose, with different mechanisms adopted for different functions. The SoFar networking dynamic shows the necessity of intervening simultaneously in different interdependent fields – policy-making, practices, skills recognition and knowledge production.

4.2 Action research to involve stakeholders in establishing social farming as a European policy focus

In this part, we outline the participatory approach that was implemented to involve stakeholders in the development of a European view on social farming and we also provide a preliminary assessment of the methodology used. It reflects the innovative way in which action research has been implemented in the development of social farming at a European scale. It also tries to identify the limitations in extrapolating this methodology to other contexts.

4.2.1 Intentions and unexpected results

The major goals of the SoFar project as outlined in its Technical Annexe are:

- To facilitate increased opportunities for meeting, making comparisons and interaction among participants, eventually leading them to produce shared position papers, at country/regional as well as European level, that will contain strategic proposals for innovation related to social farming ('innovation strategies').
- To create "a platform around the topic of social farming – bringing together key stakeholders and rural development researchers that can support the design of future policies at regional and European levels".

The SoFar project looked at involving social farming stakeholders through the implementation of a participatory process utilising the platform methodology. This had a dual focus: to produce grounded research outcomes – innovation strategies – through the expression by stakeholders of "their" local diagnosis, needs and priorities; incorporating these findings as research inputs and legitimating those outcomes by organising European platforms with the participation of these stakeholders.

The expression of their vision of social farming and the legitimisation exercise necessitated the implementation of a participatory approach at all levels: regional, country and European. This social process produced unexpected results: the emergence of a European network connecting professionals to each other, the gradual construction of a common, shared discourse and vision⁹ on the problems and priorities (more than the solutions) all of which eventually contributed to forging a social identity for this network.

From a research perspective, the social farming network was subject to the social process which took place during the project. We will see below that this evolution introduced some tensions into the project process arising from a conflict between constraints imposed by the contractual obligations of the project (limited time; imperative to produce particular outcomes) and the expectations generated by the social process, with its slow and uncertain evolution, producing its own knowledge and vision.

⁹ Expressed by the German position paper for a European manifesto (see below).

4.2.2 *The development of the participatory approach from local/national to European level*

The methodological proposition used to develop this participatory approach was inspired by the Future Workshop model conceived and tested by the Danish Board of Technology¹⁰. The Future Workshop Model was used as a reference point for the development of country/ regional platforms.

The central pillar of the methodology was the platform tool. The platform approach was constructed using two consecutive national/regional platform meetings and two European platform meetings. One goal of the whole dynamic was to build a cumulative process. Each of those meetings (from country/ regional level to European level) contributed to the construction of:

- mutual understanding of the situation in each country
- identification of “what we have in common”,
- insights into “what we can learn from each other”,
- joint reflection on questions and issues to be addressed to policy makers at European and at local levels.

All of this process needed to be rooted in the experiences and shared interests of the many stakeholders involved in the development of social farming in Europe that could be mobilised in those different fora.

The time issue proved to be a sensitive one. As with any project, there was a limited time-frame and resources. In this case, each sequence had to be choreographed carefully, as each stage in the sequence was feeding into the subsequent one. Consequently, the participatory dynamic was based on a gradual construction process, aimed at elaborating/producing knowledge and propositions that needed collective involvement at local and European level.

The following scheme was adopted:

From month 8 to 16 of the project:

1. Each country organised *one platform* which lasted one day or more;
2. Then the *1st EU meeting* (month 16) took place with the participation of representatives from each national platform.

¹⁰ Experimented by the Danish Board of Technology, Copenhagen, Denmark.
[http://www.tekno.dk/subpage.php3?article=1235&toppic=kategori12&language=uk#future.](http://www.tekno.dk/subpage.php3?article=1235&toppic=kategori12&language=uk#future)

Box 4.1 – Key elements of the Future Workshop Model approach

The purpose of this workshop method was to allow for the formulation of concrete solutions and action proposals based on participants' own experiences that can be put into practice. It was also to forge convergence between stakeholders' concerns and visions towards a common strategic perspective. This method works best with 15-25 participants. This kind of workshop is a specific type of meeting that follows certain rules. During the course of the workshop there is time for brainstorming, debate, presentation and proposition. The work alternates between plenary sessions and group work. The workshop format and rules are there to ensure that everyone is heard, that all ideas are included in the debate and that participants work towards formulating an action/strategy plan. The Future Workshop model incorporates a 3-stage work process:

- A critical analysis is undertaken by each stakeholder group: attention is given to the critical analysis of the current situation. This analysis is documented. The most important points are selected and grouped into themes. This session concludes with a plenary where all groups present their diagnoses.
- The visionary phase done by each stakeholder group. The critical analysis in Phase 1 forms the basis of a brainstorming session. Suggestions and ideas are noted down on

large poster boards as draft action proposals and these are grouped into themes. This session concludes with a plenary.

- The implementation/strategy development phase with mixed groups of stakeholders. This phase focuses on a critical evaluation of the draft action proposals. The possibility for action and strategy-building is assessed and the elaboration is developed further with the emphasis on more concrete steps towards action or the implementation of a project or development strategy. The time-frame for actions – from short to long term – is an important factor to take into consideration. This phase concludes with a plenary session.

Generation and presentation of results:

- Results: Action/policy proposals.
- Indirect results: The workshop creates debate and dialogue that often continues beyond the framework of the country/regional exercise. New links are forged that can lead to further exchange among the participants through their respective networks.
- Presentation of results: All workshop results are collated into a report into which additional matters relating to the project can also be included. This input was crucial for the European platform.

From month 16 to 24:

3. Each country organised a *second platform*;

4. The 2nd EU meeting was organised subsequently (month 24).

In between these events, there was a fine-tuning process, using email, web and small-group meetings with specific groups of stakeholders.

Methodology of the European platforms:

The two European platforms had different objectives and characteristics.

The first one aimed to build a common knowledge base about the different situations in the various countries, in terms of experiences and the policy context. Understanding such diversity was considered as the appropriate starting point from which to reflect on common problems and priorities. So this first platform dedicated a lot of time to presentations and discussions about the concrete situations and lived experience of participants.

4.2.3 Some lessons learned from this participatory approach

To determine if this participatory approach could be used to stimulate social processes and deliberative policy elaboration in other contexts, we need to assess it.

The difficulty in undertaking such an exercise is in how to evaluate the quality of a social process. Should this be done by:

- examining the construction of a local and European networking relationship?
- examining the collective involvement in this construction process?
- observing policy-makers' engagement with the process at national and European level?
- with reference to participants' own assessment of the process?

Stakeholders involvement

160 people attended the first series of national platforms that took place during 2007.

170 people took part in the 2nd series which took place in early 2008 – many of whom were “new” participants that had not been involved in the first round of national platforms. These people were mainly social farming professionals (from farms); social and health services workers and researchers. Politicians and officials from

relevant administrations did not appear in significant numbers in most countries.

Between 3 to 5 people per country emerged from these national platforms to take part in the European platforms, while almost 50% of those who attended the second European platform had not attended the first one.

In this process, policy-makers were conspicuous by their absence

We noted that policy-makers were weakly represented at local and European levels. Despite invitations and the project's clear focus on the policy agenda, policy-makers were not significantly represented. This is true in particular regarding the local platforms and the 1st European platform. There were some encouraging signs at the 2nd European platform. Nevertheless, even at the 2nd European platform, Common Agricultural Policy officials did not appear, although a European policy adviser and an officer from Social Affairs contributed and intervened. It is worth remembering that the SoFar project had the objective of formulating proposals for the European policy agenda about the development of the social functions of agriculture. At European level, this absence of policy-makers and decision-makers from such fora is quite a common feature. It reveals a typical but very real disconnect between research outcomes and policy-making.

Network-building and collective learning

In some countries, stakeholders already knew each other and were part of similar networks – as in the cases of Belgium (Flanders), Netherlands, Slovenia and Italy. In the other countries – Ireland, Germany and France, the SoFar meetings facilitated the building of networks and addressed the issue of how to make those networks develop after the SoFar project.

In terms of how we assess the quality of the networks emerging from the from SoFar process (their level of activity, their impact) – only time will tell. During the project, they were able to produce a diagnosis of their situation and a joint reflection on priorities at local and European level.

This gradual construction occurred over one full year from Spring 2007 (1st platform) to Spring 2008 (2nd platform), with the 1st European platform taking place (Autumn 2007). This suggests that collective learning at country and European levels needed time to become established, for the deliberations to take place and for the building of collective identity. A key outcome expressed by partici-

Box 4.2 - Collective SWOT analysis of social farming in Europe

Strengths

- *Practices & Relations*: high potential; tailor-made practices; comparatively cheap; small groups, social dimension, familiar character, large supply;
- *Territorial Dimension*: Integration at territorial level among society and economy; Increased sensitiveness and awareness, new ties, interest from consumers, effects on landscape;
- *Entrepreneurial Dimension*: innovation & diversification; involving youth in agriculture;
- *Care users*: strong benefits, support from families.

Opportunities

- *Local Factors*: increasing sensitivity and demand from society, positive reputation; newcomers into agriculture;
- *Policies & Institutions*: new judicial framework; wider recognition and support, multifunctional agriculture;
- *Practices*: shift from medical to social model (citizens instead of patients), community integration (care in the community);
- *Networks*: broadening relations and networks;
- *Marketing*: enhanced reputation/image;
- *Increase in need*: European countries face an increase in citizens that will need care (e.g. ageing of society).

Weaknesses

- *Rules and laws*: judicial framework; limited extent of diffusion and consolidation; gap between demand and supply, dependence on public support, lack of recognition and evidence, strong heterogeneity;
- *Start-up*: Difficulties in starting up; distances (physically and figuratively); difficulties in integrating different professional "cultures"; confusion of roles and competences;
- *Local factors*: Prejudices about disability; Lack of transport.

Threats

- *Policies & Institutions*: bureaucracy; standardisation, loss of original value systems; no institutional change, lack of interest;
- *Actors*: Competition among actors; development of opportunistic behaviours; market-oriented welfare systems; creations of "hospitals in the countryside";
- *Practices*: incidents.

pating stakeholders was the understanding of the reality of social farming in other countries; the awareness of the rich diversity and the expression/ recognition of common problems and interests.

The German proposition put forward in the course of the participatory process a proposal to develop and adopt a Social Farming manifesto for Europe that reflects the emergence of this collective identity. The adoption by all countries of this manifesto during the SoFar project would have been a major outcome, anticipating the

continuation of what has been established during the SoFar project. However, this did not happen and only Germany published the manifesto and distributed it among its partners. In other countries, the consultative process on the content of the manifesto is still ongoing (just before the end of the SoFar project). Why? The adoption of the manifesto proposed by German stakeholders by all project partners would have necessitated dedicated time at local and European level for the deliberations, amendments and adoption as a SoFar “outcome”. However, the time required could not be found, as it needed to be allocated to other goals and commitments – determined at the outset of the project.

Here we can see that the deliberative logic, with its uncertain and unplanned outcomes, is in conflict with the project management logic which must follow what has been promised (obligations regarding the results) three years previously.

*A shared vision of strengths and weaknesses
of social farming in Europe*

According to the practitioners’ points of view, a collective view of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) in social farming can be summed up as in *box 4.2*.

In all SoFar countries, meetings with a variety of stakeholders were organised. During these meeting the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities were discussed.

According to the views of practitioners, a SWOT on social farming can be summed up in a common grid as shown in *box 4.2*.

This synthesis represents the common grounds identified from the national or regional SWOT analyses presented above (*Chapter 2*).

Different limitations may contribute to inhibiting the development of social farming, such as:

- The disconnect between farming, social inclusion, employment and health care policies
- The novelty of systems of community-based social care that need experience and dissemination
- The still prevailing medical model of health
- Unsuitable support strategies, fostering the emergence of “hospitals in the countryside”
- Changes in care systems that potentially reduce quality.

The shift from the medical to the social model in social and health care and the focus on the empowerment of users and their rights are all positive developments.

A further stimulus of the entrepreneurial spirit in social farming could result in a strong business community that develops responsive new services and arrangements – services that are attractive for society because they find an optimal balance in “people, planet and prosperity values”. Such services are beneficial for different groups of service-users, for the viability of rural areas, for landscape and for the continuity of rural enterprise.

Policy development

At country level, stakeholders were invited to follow a gradual construction process going from the diagnosis of existing situations and policies within their own contexts towards the identification of priorities and actions for their own contexts – and eventually for a broader European scale.

Box 4.3 – Sample feedback from national/regional platforms

France

The 1st French platform

The objectives were presented as follows:

- To facilitate dialogue and debate between actors connected to social and therapeutic farming in our region, recognising their different professional backgrounds and levels of intervention;
- To encourage them to reflect (in small groups and collectively) on the current situation, on their perspectives and on the strategic priorities that need to be implemented to progress the development of social farming;
- To contribute to a broader debate and enlarge the networks;
- To produce a report after the platform which will be circulated and inform the European platform.

Germany

The 2nd German platform

It emphasises the importance (and possible modalities about) building and consolidating networking strategies at European and local levels. The initiative

to propose the adoption at European level of the Witzenhausen manifesto on the added value of social farming also came from Germany, as a way of building a common basis for developing European networking.

Netherlands

The 2nd Dutch platform

Based on the results of the first national platform (June 2007) and the first European platform in Bruxelles (October 2007) we wanted to deepen the results of these first platforms and come up with more concrete recommendations for international networking and concrete actions for

International co-operation. The objectives were made more explicit and presented to the participants as follows:

- To formulate a framework for a European research agenda
- To make an action programme for co-operation between different countries
- To formulate advice for national ministries on how to focus more on international issues with respect to social farming.

In that sense, the platform concept was very relevant in:

- Providing a local space within which exchange, debate and collective elaboration between researchers and professionals could take place;
- Enabling stakeholders to discover or deepen their knowledge of the reality of Social Farming in other countries;
- Enabling the gradual emergence of an awareness about the importance of the European dimension for the further development of social farming policies and initiatives in all countries.

The “point of departure” for the 2nd local platforms reflected the immediate concerns of platform participants, by highlighting:

- the importance of European and local network-strengthening
- the necessity to tackle joint regulatory and policy goals at EU level
- the importance of valuing the territorial impacts of social farming for our regions and countries.

The scaling-up process at the European platform level

The evaluations of European platform process by participants were generally very positive. Expectations regarding these meeting were usually very high. Participants in local platforms had valued roles as representatives in these European events and took them very seriously – becoming heavily involved in the debates and in (in)formal exchanges. They left those events with a clear explicit intention to continue the exchanges and formalise them beyond the So Far project.

After the European platforms, what was assessed:

Positively:

- the knowledge and understanding of what is going on in other countries and increased awareness about the rich diversity of experiences,
- the need for social farming in Europe to develop a coherent and harmonised vision based on a common definition; joint priorities/actions and policy objectives,
- the opportunity for participants to develop inter-personal relationships that could lead to co-operation.

More negatively:

- the difficulty in achieving concrete results – such as common actions – and a circular dynamic which gave the impression

of repetition. This was due largely to the difficulties in trying to bring forth a shared joint vision of the kind of policies and instruments that need to be developed in Europe for social farming,

- the predominance of the research logic and rhetoric in the European fora, in contrast with most local platform dynamics, where researchers were supposed to be observers and facilitators and social farming professionals were to be the predominant players.

After the 2nd European platform, the following questions were asked:

- What did you expect of the platform meeting? Were your expectations fulfilled?
 - I expected the formulation of more concrete actions. In this respect the meeting did not fulfil my expectations. Maybe I hoped for more tangible outcomes. But it all takes time...
 - Contacts, exchange, nice people. Yes, this was satisfactory.
 - The topic and goal was as difficult as the meeting itself.
 - The elaboration of a definition of SoFar and the manifesto has been started.
- Did they inspire you for your work?
 - The outcomes of the local platforms were probably more enriching for continuing the work at regional level.
 - At EU level, we should have focused our discussion on how and with whom to consolidate EU network. This should have been the main strategy and action to propose to the EU. This was what people had worked in their local platform.

4.3 The production of social farming policy positions by social farming professional actors

In this part, we present a synthesis of the main questions, propositions and priorities developed by social farming actors in the course of the platforms. These propositions were produced through deliberations aimed at meeting the following objectives:

- To provide a new European-wide perspective (information and knowledge obtained in the previous stages of the project), in order to build continuity;
- To reflect on and propose a set of priorities to be tackled at local and European levels;

- To agree the content of what could be formulated at subsequent European fora.

4.3.1 Debates on definitions and patterns of social farming in Europe: what are we talking about?

The general definition about social farming is not yet agreed across Europe. There are still different ways of talking about the phenomenon (farming for health; green care; social farming; gardening therapy; green programmes of social/health care) and of using agriculture or gardening for social/health purposes. In one sense, stakeholders from the different participating countries underlined the necessity to adopt a common base, as a pre-condition for the development of any network. Social farming needs a clear definition, in which its identity (in national and European contexts) and its relationship to the health/social and agricultural systems in each country is well expressed. On the other hand, a major feature of the way social farming is being developed in the seven countries is diversity with regard to:

- policies and administrative schemes
- organisational and operational forms
- economic and social logic.

During the 1st EU platform meeting in October 2007 in Brussels the stakeholders had fruitful discussions. It was stated that social farming is diverse. The different administrative models and cultures in Europe suggest the need for convergence and finding a common ground. The diversity in social farming and definitions impacts on political strategies. There was a discussion on whether to exclude or include initiatives on the basis of the definition used. Whereas the “inclusion” or broad approach is seen as a strength, it was also stated that the “melting pot situation” or the “big basket with many different things” does not enable the targeting of policies effectively and strategically. Some stakeholders had the opinion that a clear definition or a “common slogan” is needed (“to map Social Farming”) as a means of addressing people and “persuading the European public”. Others mentioned that such a definition should relate to the “original values” associated with social farming. Therefore, defining a characterisation or a description should be achieved. The questions of professionalisation versus solidarity and the balance between farming and social activity remained unsolved.

Social farming professionals involved formulated different propositions, such as:

- Social farming covers a set of activities which all have a double dimension – production/valorisation of agricultural production and services on one hand and hosting/support (therapeutic and labour inclusion) to vulnerable groups on the other hand (France).
- Social Farming definition should include the re-establishing of the social function of agriculture. It should recognise promotion of societal wellbeing rather than targeting of particular people with disabilities (Ireland).
- Green programmes of social assistance/healthcare are an option for social or healthcare assistance, as a rule carried out as a subsidiary occupation on a family farm, where the users work with farm animals, cultivated plants and soil, or use its available resources. Agricultural activities (arable farming, horticulture, cattle farming) carried out by companies or social assistance, healthcare and educational institutions are also considered as green programmes (Slovenia).
- 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 (Germany)¹¹.

The different ways of thinking and building social farming in the different countries was debated during the platforms. During those exchanges, the Dutch perspective, the 'Polder model' emerged, as a reference point, about which stakeholders expressed their position.

Some actors agreed on the characteristics of the Dutch model. It was considered to be the cheapest one in terms of subsidies and efficiency. Within it, service-users remain quite autonomous as they are more or less consumers with their own budgets. Additionally, relationships with the policy-making authorities are more direct and clearly articulated. This model seems to be based on a kind of ideal internalised by many people based on the hypothesis that disability

¹¹ *Witzenhausen Position Paper on Added Value in Social Farming*. Call to decision-makers in industry, administration, politics and the public to support social agriculture in Germany. Compiled by participants of the workshop "Value-added in social farming". 26 to 28th October 2007 in Witzenhausen, Germany.

should not be seen as a cost for society. But if there is a cost, how should it be reimbursed? This vision about inclusion could lead to the negation of disability as a specific social issue to be dealt with by society. Others expressed reservations about the Dutch model: “I don’t agree with the vision of that considers social farming as an activity to enhance the income of farmers” (an Italian partner). The German perspective seemed also very interesting: very diverse groups of service-users; very different activities for those service-users; diversity of products – all of which operate within complex organisations.

4.3.2 Key questions arising within the European platform process

It is clear that the platform process was characterised by diversity – in terms of stakeholders’ backgrounds, experiences and perspectives on social farming. Nevertheless, it is possible to discern some concrete questions that emerged during the EU platform process. To some extent, these questions contributed to identifying the priority areas for an innovation strategy for social farming in the EU – which will be discussed subsequently in this book.

How service-users needs and rights should be incorporated into social farming practices and policies?

This is highly relevant given that less empowered / marginalised groups and people of low contractual capacity are such key stake-

Box 4.4 – Key questions from the 1st European platform

The following concrete questions were addressed by social farming professionals during the 1st European platform :

- How do we ensure that the rights/needs of service users are incorporated into social farming practices and policies? What methods should be used to achieve this?
- How much agriculture should be involved in social farming?
- How much social farming should be interwoven with agriculture – i.e. should it be seen a “niche activity” within farming and if so, what does this mean for policy?
- How do we persuade institutions and policy-makers to exploit the benefits of social farming?
- How should policies and structures across the relevant sectors be “joined-up” to provide the necessary supports to different types of social farming?
- How can policy-making support the development of appropriate quality control and standards without losing values/identities?
- Are there any logical and necessary steps in the development of social farming? And if there are – which ones?

holders. For many of the service users associated with social farming, there are significant challenges in trying to influence policies and practices in “conventional” ways and in bringing insights from their own lived experience to bear on the policy-making process in meaningful ways. The local/national context is an important factor in establishing the extent to which service-users’ perspectives can be incorporated within a rights-based, entitlement or social justice framework as this varies widely across countries. There is an equally strong challenge for those with whom the service-users engage to ensure that appropriate mechanisms for influencing policies are developed and disseminated. This issue has a particular resonance for researchers in developing and using participatory processes that can act as a means of accessing other people’s worlds; making those worlds accessible to others and putting people in charge of how they represent themselves and how they depict their situation. As others have argued, such approaches represent a shift in the control of the “politics of representation” from the professional to the beneficiary and from the observer to the observed¹².

To which extent agriculture and social farming are interlinked?

Issues such as the diversity of experiences, the different trajectories of social farming and the local/national contexts are relevant. There are clear distinctions between initiatives where agricultural resources are used in a purely therapeutic setting with little or no emphasis on production versus conventional “working farms” where a proportion of the agricultural resources are allocated to the provision of care services and many other arrangements which may be seen as “hybrids” of these approaches.

By which means institutions and policy-makers can be persuaded to exploit the benefits of social farming?

Central to this issue is the need to increase awareness of social farming not only among agricultural and rural stakeholders – but also among other relevant sectoral interests (health, education, social services, justice etc). This, in turn, takes us back to the issue of an appropriate definition for social farming. As outlined earlier, because diversity in social farming is one of its hallmarks, it is neither necessary nor appropriate to have a definitive “label”. At the

¹² See for example, BOOTH T., BOOTH W. (2003), *In the frame: Photovoice and mothers with learning difficulties*. *Disability & Society*, 18 (4), pp. 431-442.

same time, there is a need to highlight and communicate the common features that characterise social farming in different settings. This is essential in communicating the benefits of social farming to institutional interests, policy-makers and the wider society. There is also a need to build the evidence base about the benefits of social farming by undertaking and supporting research initiatives based on appropriate methodologies; identifying and disseminating of examples of best practice and facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experience among practitioners.

How policies and structures across the relevant sectors should be “joined-up” to provide the necessary supports to different types of social farming?

A characteristic of social farming is the range of policy domains across which it intersects. These include agriculture, health, rural development, environment, education and social services, among others. Not only are there are major challenges in formulating policies across the range of sectors involved (agriculture, health, social affairs etc.), but also *within* particular policy domains (such as agriculture or rural development). In many countries, the absence to date of a coherent policy framework has meant that in practice, there is no obvious “home” for social farming initiatives. This often has clear practical implications for practitioners such as an over-dependence on a “mosaic” of intermittent funding sources and an inability to develop initiatives beyond a pilot basis – which in turn contributes to the fragmented and *ad-hoc* nature of social farming initiatives in many countries. It appears that it is the smaller states (such as the Netherlands and Belgium) where regional/national networks are strongest that have been most successful in developing a level of policy coherence around social farming activities.

They are more likely to have easy access to key decision-makers in different domains of policy and the requisite institutional and financial support. By contrast, more complex forms of decentralised governance, such as that which is currently underway in France, has led to less availability and greater uncertainty around the level of funding available for farming for social farming initiatives. In the case of Germany, the problems of policy coherence and co-ordination are amplified by the fact that the country has 16 federal states, many of which have differing institutional frameworks across sectors such as agriculture, social services and health and education, among others.

*How to develop appropriate regulation
(standards and quality control measures)?*

This must be viewed against a backdrop of very different local/national contexts and experiences. For example, the regulatory and legal environment in which social farming operates across Europe varies widely. It may be embedded primarily within sectors such as health (the Netherlands); the agriculture sector (Flanders); it may be linked with the social inclusion/social economy agenda (France, Italy, Germany) or the education sector (France) to a greater or lesser extent. In other countries, it may be considered conspicuous by its absence. In addition, regulatory frameworks relevant to Social Farming are embedded within profoundly differing welfare systems across the EU. The prevailing welfare model will shape the regulatory and legal environment in which social farming operates in different countries. Again the issue of coherence is an important one – how measures and instruments are framed and “joined-up” so as to be mutually reinforcing rather than contradictory. A shared characteristic of social farming across Europe is the importance of individuals’ and groups’ own beliefs and value systems in building initiatives from the “bottom-up” in a pioneering spirit. A recurrent theme throughout the SoFar process was the question of balancing the imperative to have the necessary standards, monitoring and quality systems while not negatively impacting on the personal values and commitments which underscore many of these activities. There is a need for regulatory/legal instruments to provide the requisite degree of support, guidance and clarity for stakeholders without stifling the innovation, imagination and creativity which are hallmarks of social farming as it has evolved to date. However, this needs to be balanced against the imperative to safeguard the interests of service-users who are some of the most vulnerable and marginalised people in society. Related to an earlier question on the rights of service-users, there is a real challenge to identify mechanisms by which their needs remain paramount in the development and implementation of a legal and regulatory framework and in finding ways in which they can influence the process in a meaningful way.

*Are there logical steps to progress the development
of social farming?*

There are significant differences in the trajectories of development; the focus of the initiatives; their origins; their organisational forms; their structures and scale and the underlying local/national

contexts. At the same time, there are a number of priority issues of shared concern among stakeholders which need to be addressed – many of which need to be considered as indivisible from each other rather than as a set of linear stages of progression. These include the need to find common ground on how social farming is defined and recognised; how knowledge systems related to social farming can be improved and better communicated; how national and international networks on social farming can be developed or strengthened and how an appropriate quality and standards framework can be developed. None of these questions can be addressed in isolation and at the same time progress in any one area can generate positive synergistic effects related to other issues.

4.4 A policy process: building and consolidation of networking dynamics

In many countries and regions, social farming networks already exist, albeit with different functions and based on different criteria:

- The Netherlands and Flanders region are probably those that are the most co-ordinated. The networks play a role in interfacing with administrations/policy-makers and in providing technical support to the care farming sector.
- In other countries the situation is more complex. In the face of fragmented national and regional policy-making schemes, which separate health, employment and agriculture policies, different coalitions may co-exist, such as social inclusion networks in one arena and more dispersed care/health initiatives in a different arena.

Notwithstanding the specificities of different networks and how they interact with policy-making, in all cases they aim to provide these different functions:

- To be a tool of political intervention that engages in regional and national public policy debate to defend common interests ;
- To work as a space for initiating, exchanging and capitalising on experiences;
- To be a channel of communication about the characteristics and social contribution of social farming.

Another important dimension of these relational dynamics is the driving impact they may have at territorial level. In some countries,

social farms, especially in co-operative or associative forms (France, Italy, Germany) tend to extend their political, economic, technical and social relationships into arenas such as rural re-vitalisation. Partially, this arises from their interest in communicating what they do; also because they need to develop such economic and technical exchanges and partly because local funding structures expect them to have such impacts.

The participatory dynamic within the SoFar project was possible because of all those existing connections. Based on those experiences of building such relationships, professionals who participated in the platforms saw an urgency in the need to scale up those relationships at European level.

These networking dynamics need to be multi-purpose, with different mechanisms according to their different functions. It does not mean that different networks deal with different functions. The SoFar networking dynamic shows the necessity of intervening simultaneously in different interdependent fields – policy-making, practices, skills recognition and knowledge production. The potential influ-

Box 4.5 – Proposition from Germany to set up a European network

As an example, we present below what was proposed by German actors in social farming at their 2nd country platform. It covers most of propositions outlined in other national platforms concerning the need for European level network construction.

The implementation and structure of the European network.

- The network needs a strong basis at national (or regional) level initially.
- It is doubtful whether a (virtual) network relying on the internet can develop into a “real network”. The co-ordination of the networking activities should be supported and forthcoming. Participants and stakeholders would be over-stretched to do it themselves. This co-ordination needs dedicated responsible professionals who would take on the task of convening meetings; providing reports; organising events etc.

- The European network could be organised at two levels: an inner “circle” (the key stakeholders involved) and a broader circle that is open to the external actors.
- There are farms and practitioners who need information themselves. It is important that interested people find a central point (i.e. SoFar website) that directs people systematically to particular farms as appropriate.

... Specific actions (education)

The European network should be strengthened via specific actions such as education or exchange among farmers (instead of making “global statements”). In the early stages it should be focused on a special action where stakeholders attach their personal interests. Later on additional tasks can be added and the network can grow.

ence of this network in terms of modification of existing frameworks depends on its capacity to intervene in those different arenas¹³.

The policy function has the objective of getting recognition, support and harmonisation measures for social farming from European authorities. To achieve such goals, the policy network component should:

- propose a manifesto which focuses on this common base and expresses its values, objectives and its means of reaching them. This can serve as an instrument for “recruiting” interested actors;
- should serve as a way to be recognised as a discussion partner at EU level;
- provide a framework for the development of rules and guidelines;
- focus on some tangible actions;
- work with existing networks on how to raise the issue of co-ordination between other groups or networks.

The professional function consists of stimulating technical and professional exchanges in order to share experiences and practices, build a body of references and progressively codify practices among European social farming professionals. This could be done by:

- promoting cross-sectoral involvement through exchanges in the network, linking social and health stakeholders with farming stakeholders
- setting up channels and spaces for exchange of ideas between farmers, health organisations and policy-makers and exchanges between service-users
- building an international database (and website), accessible to different interested parties with various levels of information in different languages.

The research and production of knowledge function for an EU research agenda is addressed through this networking dynamic dealing with policy issues, technical and professional matters. This activity could focus on identifying those knowledge and research priorities that are currently lacking or absent. These could include:

- knowledge production about care farming such as a systematic inventory of social farming initiatives and policies in the 27 European member states and a mapping of the structure and organisational forms of the social farming sector in different countries (their networks; their organisation models)

¹³ ASSOULINE G., MATIAS M., NUNES J.A., *Social mobilisation and conflict in socio-technical controversies: the values of dissent for democracy*. European Sociological Association Conference on “Rethinking inequalities”, Research network on Social Movements (Torun, Poland, 9-12 September 2005).

Box 4.6a – Witzenhausen position paper on added value in social farming¹⁴

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 which integrate people with physical, mental or emotional illness; farms which offer opportunities 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 all features of social agriculture.

Throughout Europe social farming initiatives are springing up. Farming enterprises are increasingly becoming the focus of development in rural areas, creating work and employment for the socially disadvantaged and people with disabilities and taking on an educational role. In countries such as Italy, Norway, Belgium and the Netherlands these individual initiatives have long since grown into movements, thanks to political and financial support. The development of social farming in Germany is lagging behind that in Europe. In the Netherlands and Belgium the number of Care Farms is growing rapidly. They integrate people with disabilities and therefore receive assistance from central co-ordinating authorities. In Italy, agricultural co-operatives are providing new jobs for socially disadvantaged people in underdeveloped areas. And in Scandinavia family businesses are developing new sources of income through providing social services.

In Germany...

...The Future of Social Farming in Germany needs support and a reliable framework: This includes:

1. Recognition of the added value of social farming for society

The added value created for society by social farming must receive recognition and targeted support. The diversity of social and cultural services and the social endeavour for people and nature need public support in order to maintain and develop the various fields of activity in social farming. The integrative and educational work in particular, but also the health provision and therapeutic effects of social farming (through meaningful work and therapy, responsible use of natural resources, sustainable nutritional education) must be recognised, encouraged and researched further. The potential cost-savings for health insurance schemes and the health sector as a result of health improvements appears to be an additional argument.

2. Creating transparency in the legal framework

The confusing variety of laws, authorities and funding options for all user groups and providers as a result of the federal structure but also the responsibilities of different government departments needs to be made more transparent and accessible to agricultural enterprises. In addition, marginal groups in particular who do not fit any medical diagnosis or have fallen through the social security net, such as young people disaffected by school, burn out patients, the homeless, asylum seekers or emigrants need a legal framework which enables them to participate in social farming.

3. Fostering communication and the exchange of experience

The opportunities for sharing experiences between different initiatives which have been very limited to date need to be improved. Pioneer projects with their own history and development that are often unaware of one another need to be linked up and co-operation within existing networks needs to be promoted. Initiatives in social farming can be supported and access new sources of funding through joint publicity, publications,

¹⁴ Call to decision-makers in industry, administration, politics and the public to support social agriculture in Germany. Compiled by participants of the Workshop "Added Value in social farming", (Witzenhausen, Germany, 26 - 28 October 2007).

Box 4.6b – Witzenhausen position paper on added value in social farming¹⁴

a presence on the Internet and political representation of their interests.

4. Setting up a central network and advisory service with co-ordinating responsibilities

Social farming needs contact points. The creation of a central network and advisory service which could be established within the framework of existing advisory provisions would be a first step in overcoming the lack of transparency in the system of laws and authorities, officials, networks, funding and initiatives. This co-ordination would not only bring together supply and demand for social services on farms, but would give competent advice on options for further training and funding, thus helping to develop and implement good ideas in the long term. The remit of this institution would also include representing the interests of social farming and informing the public.

5. Promotion of education and training opportunities, supervision and coaching

Education and training in social farming must be promoted by support for existing educational initiatives and the setting up of new ones. The job profile combines skills and qualifications in different disciplines and supplements the traditional job description of the farmer. Education and training measures will secure, improve and develop the quality of social and agricultural services on farms.

6. Support for interdisciplinary research on social farming

Social farming needs support from research in the fields of therapy and medicine, social work and agriculture and education which cannot be separated from one another in the actual life and work on the farm. What is learned from experience regarding the effectiveness of integrating people in the daily and yearly rhythms on the farm and the communal agricultural work needs to be documented and used for the further development of social farming. There needs to be support for the work in caring for nature and the cultural landscape which is made possible on social farms through many helping hands. Interdisciplinary research which disseminates the knowledge gained from experience and integrates and supervises

participating actors from practice, service-user groups and administration, can foster innovative ideas and involvement in social farming. Scientific support for pilot projects can be of help in the development of models based on single enterprises and cooperatives right up to entire model regions.

7. Promotion of European co-operation

The co-operation at a European level which has been started through the SoFar project (Soziale Landwirtschaft – Soziale Leistungen multifunktionaler Höfe [Social Farming – Social services on multifunctional farms], www.sofar-d.de/), the COST- Action Green Care in Agriculture (www.umb.no/greencare) and the Farming for Health international working group (www.farmingforhealth.org/) must be supported and developed. Practitioners and scientists throughout Europe need to learn from one another through the exchange of ideas, practical solutions and research projects in order to make innovative ideas and solutions available for practical application.

8. Outlook

Social farming enterprises already provide society with added value at several levels within multifunctional agriculture. The measures for supporting social farming detailed in this position paper call upon politicians, ministers, scientists, consumers and the wider public to be aware of, recognise, maintain and promote these services. Social farming opens up the social, cultural, educational and therapeutic potential of managing the land.

We do not want to see social farming as merely another specialist option for agricultural enterprises, but also as a possible building block for a more socially-minded future. Social agricultural enterprises within transparent systems offer opportunities for the individual development of those in need of help, a sustainable approach to managing nature and the revitalisation of rural areas. When many individuals act in concert and develop social values, small-scale alternatives to the advancing rationalisation, competition and price wars are able to emerge. The added value of social farming opens up prospects of a potential paradigm shift.

— an assessment of the effectiveness of social farming, its specific qualities and critical success factors.

Direct consultation with service-users and representative organisations should be part of the research processes.

In order to broaden such interventions, it is essential to have active coalitions at regional and national levels that can attract and enrol new stakeholders and organisations and can communicate about those multiple actors at European level. The German position paper proposes a European manifesto for social farming development and may be an instrument for asserting what social farming is about and mobilising stakeholders regarding their common interests and priorities.

4.5 Concluding remarks

We see the scope of the debate that needs to be undertaken throughout Europe in relation to social farming.

- Should social farming be an additional business or niche within a multi-functional/service agriculture?
- Should it be a model for developing a socially-minded and sustainable future in our societies?
- Should we consider service-users as clients or partners in this new social model?
- Should we let supply and demand be the pillars of social farming development?
- Should we see social farming as a specific activity that needs to be supported or one that is driven by public instruments and policies?

Questions and answers are numerous. Countries and regions in Europe have chosen different ways to deal with those key issues. Beyond this diversity, there are common interests and visions, expressed by practitioners and researchers, of the benefit of social farming for our societies.

5. Priority areas and innovation strategies for further developing Social Farming in Europe

5.1 Introduction

The final goal of the SoFar project was to create “a framework as well as a platform around the topic of social farming – bringing together key stakeholders and rural development researchers – which can support the design of future policies at regional and European levels”. In a way the SoFar project represented a launch pad for a networking process devoted to the organisation of a pathway of change in social farming across Europe. Therefore, regional fora and a final international forum were organised to define common objectives and to formulate priority areas and innovative strategies.

The construction of an EU view on social farming was the main focus of the discussions. The regional fora tried to build a common idea about the various perspectives on social farming, but also the actions necessary to organise at EU and country/regional levels. At the final EU platform in Bruxelles the results of the national fora were compiled and used to identify some priority areas. The final aims of the platform were:

- To formulate a framework for a European research agenda,
- To make an action programme for co-operation between different countries, to improve social farming projects and enable exchange of experiences,
- To formulate innovative strategies for the further development and embedding of Social Farming in a European context,
- To integrate Social Farming into policy at regional level and at EU level,
- To build up a policy network at local and EU levels.

As already presented in Chapter 4, the 2nd EU platform represented a crucial point in the process. It was not only the most critical part of the participatory process that had been established, but also

the concluding event within the SoFar project. As noted previously, in the time available, the opportunities to debate and to exchange on quite critical points, to involve new stakeholders at the institutional EU/national level and to define an active plan were constrained. The process would need and deserved more time than was available to the project. Some of the points emerging during the discussion should have been more fully debated and discussed with the participants.

Starting from the main points that emerged during the national and the EU platforms, new proposals were formulated by the research group and organised in a common framework. This chapter first presents some introductory topics related to a policy network and the process of change in social farming. Then, a Programme of Action for Social Farming is introduced for which 4 priority areas are selected. In combination with the priority areas, innovation strategies are formulated and elaborated for different levels and in different perspectives.

The Manifesto proposed by the German Team in combination with the Programme of Action and the Innovation Strategies can be considered as entry points for a new step in the process, aimed at improving and sharing these documents; implementing them at country / regional level as well as at EU level in a policy networking activity.

5.2 A bottom-up approach and policy network for a new perspective on Social Farming

Platform participants were acutely aware that the work of stakeholders involved in the field had the capacity to bring about changes in social farming (SF). For this reason there was also a lot of work to do to define the instruments and organisations necessary to enable this process. Some aspects emerged particularly strongly from the platforms, for example:

- the strong commitment of most of the people involved in SF;
- the awareness that a bottom-up approach is the right way to scale up the debate around the topic without losing the relevant values inherent in SF practices;
- the opportunity to progressively include additional institutional stakeholders in the discussion and to build awareness about the evidence and the impact of SF across Europe.

The idea to organise a specific network emerged as a common idea. Networking activities are seen as ways of bringing about

change in individual countries as well as at EU level. Networks may often create conditions for political intervention in a new field. The role of policy networks and the definition of some priority areas were debated during the SoFar Platforms with the EU stakeholders.

Policy networks are normally established as means of adding new topics for consideration around a particular theme; of building communities of actors; of clarifying the meaning and understanding of the topic to be conveyed to external actors; of promoting the topic to a wider public (by research, communication and information, training, examples of good practice); of facilitating the establishment of new relationships and activities related to the subject and of attracting the funds and investments necessary to achieve the aforementioned aims. In this respect, the increasing evidence about social farming could be used to facilitate the organisation of policy networks, both at regional, country and EU level (Di Iacovo, 2007). The main task of these networks would be to reflect on experiences in order to trigger a process of innovation. More generally, policy networks can act to support ideas and thematic groups or may play a role in presenting the topic in wider arenas. Policy networks can: *filter* alternatives and ideas to arrive at policy recommendations; *amplify* and disseminate a message or an idea by means of a communication process and by organising and exchanging practices; provide resources for *investments*; *convene people* – bringing together groups and individuals; *build communities* to protect themselves from outside threats and *facilitate* the work in a more effective way.

In SF, policy networks also play a function in building the evidence on the topic, on a step-by-step basis at this stage mainly at country/regional level. There is a growing debate about how to improve the dissemination of evidence and diffusion of information about projects and practices in SF in Europe. Quite often, reflection on the use of agriculture for social purposes starts from local isolated experiences, but it moves quite swiftly towards an expanding network that is able to link together different and new public and private actors. Some of the main points of debate are related to exchanges about experiences and their effectiveness; reflection on the future of social farming, the relationships between policies of different sectors and the possibility of exploring new and more dedicated policies. This slow process increases the awareness of the people involved and, at the same time, can reinforce and improve the evidence base and relevance of social farming and promote an institutionalisation of the new practices. From this point of view,

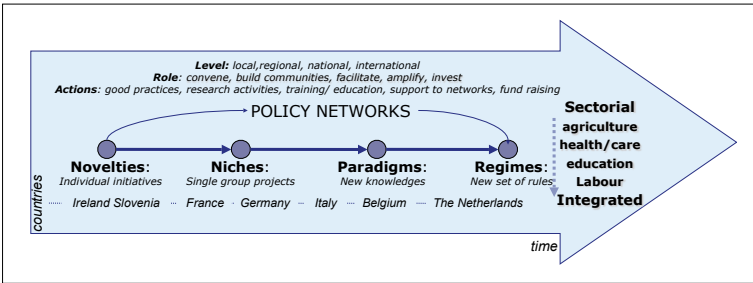


Fig. 5.1* - Policy networks and pathways of change in Social Farming (Source: SoFar Project)

social farming is comparable to a novelty in a strategic niche which can grow. The niches are managed at local level within different regimes (the institutional welfare system). The establishment of new practices reinforces the evidence about the value of agriculture for social purposes and attracts new subjects. As a consequence, it becomes easier to negotiate and to influence public institutions and to promote changes in existing regimes. This process is normally fed by the organisation of policy networks that can establish and develop relationships and actions.

The process of change in SF is strongly dependent on the local capability to build specific pathways of change that promote the passage from a novelty situation (where pioneer and individual projects are mainly present¹⁵), to niches (where single project groups are established and new local networks and communities of interests are defined).

In many cases networks are born in an informal way by producing trust, common understanding and designing new processes, practices and forms of collaboration (Marsden, 2004). At the very early stage these processes are far removed from institutional regulation and from any specific support. They define new arenas for debate where new actors may convene and start up a process of collective learning able to design new paradigms (with an increas-

¹⁵ *Novelties*: when mainly individual initiatives are built it can be assimilated to the pioneering stage; *Niches*: in this case relationships start to be established and a new arena start to be defined. There are single project groups collaborating inside but not connected each other; *Paradigms*: relationships and exchange of information are increased and new knowpledge are established; *Regimes*: a new set of rules start to be defined, affecting institution and the juridical framework.

ing awareness of many stakeholders and the development of new knowledge about the phenomenon). However, initiatives may also fail and revert towards isolated practices again. In such cases, external support can be useful. The awareness of public institutions or agencies may inform a process of animation setting up new contacts and rebuilding arenas for debate. When paradigms consolidate, they can influence the organisation of new set of rules and may inspire the organisation of new regimes (*fig. 5.1*) (Wiskerke, 2004).

In all contexts SF is, by its diffusion, already offering different kind of services to local society, sometimes without any recognition. We can reflect on the opportunity to promote SF across the EU and about policies that can support the facilitation of the organisation of SF. Policies networks at country and EU level should promote the debate around specific priority areas as set out in this chapter. By acting on different priority areas, according with regional/country/EU situations, different actors involved should be able to promote SF in different contexts:

- understanding and recognising of SF
- testing and improving of SF
- diversifying the scope and mainstreaming of SF
- promoting and integrating SF
- rethinking and deepening SF.

This can promote SF among different EU countries in a comparative way. The passage from one step to another is normally linked to the organisation of policy networks at local level that can act in order to convene new actors, to promote the sector and to advocate new policies and new interventions.

5.3 Mainstreaming Social Farming in Europe

The main objectives for a Programme of Action are:

- a. An analysis and integration of SF at macro, meso and micro levels according with some specific priority areas. These levels mutually interact in a nested hierarchy (*see fig. 5.2 and table 5.1*).
- b. The mainstreaming of SF in projects and programmes at regional and country levels, in Rural Development policies (RD) as well as their integration into other related policies (Health, Care, Employment, Justice, Education).

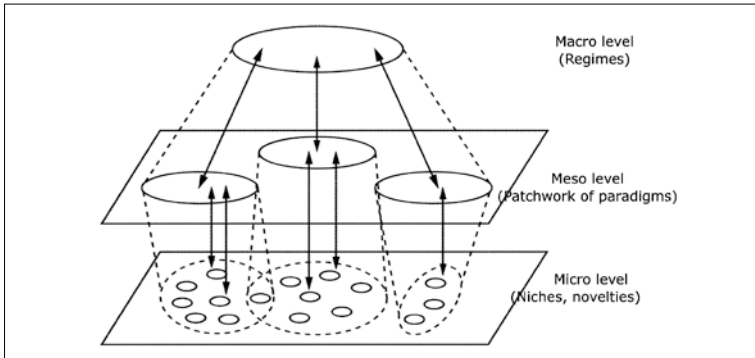


Fig. 5.2 - Multiple levels as nested

- c. SF capacity-building to underpin the Commission's capacity and to mainstream SF issues effectively.

The *macro level* comprises major societal trends and developments – such as political culture, worldviews, regimes and demography. It presents for example SF issues at EU policy level, relating to EU commitments to the CAP Health Check, the EU Agreement for Mental Health and Human Well-being and developments regarding multifunctionality in agriculture and socialisation of care. The reflection of these national commitments in sectoral policies and in national development plans should be taken into consideration at this level. The representation of SF at the highest decision-making levels (public and private sector) and the collection and reporting of national statistics are also issues which must be examined at this level. The checklist of issues to be considered at macro level also includes a question as to whether or not a budgetary analysis of SF within the relevant sectors has taken place.

At *meso level*, relevant issues are the dominant structures, cultures and operational methods. It concerns the patchwork of paradigms in the fields of policy, culture, science, technology and delivery systems which may or may not reflect adherence to principles of SF in their structures and in the services they provide in different fields of social organisation. The emergence of co-operation between individual farmers or organisations, national and international networking and the governmental support are examples of developments at meso level. Institutions and organisations that are particular advocates of SF issues may be important stakeholders at this level.

The *micro level* addresses SF at farm/project level and at community level and looks at the innovative organisation of practices, access for local users and institutions and the interaction of project holders and institutions within which such practices should be valorised. Examples are the small scale initiatives with biodynamic farms by individual committed farmers who are outside mainstream agriculture and/or single project or small group projects regarding SF. In some countries SF projects can also be run in an informal way and may not be explicitly recognised. Different stakeholders for SF issues, including users and farmer’s organisations and institutions at this level, should also be identified. They do not belong to the main structures of the system (regime), but are important in bringing about structural changes.

In the *table 5.1* below we tried to connect different countries according to a number of variables such as activities that have to happen at different levels (*micro, meso, macro*); the stages of the SF projects (*novelty, niche, paradigm, regime*) and the prevalent existing EU welfare models. For each row a necessary activity is suggested in accordance with according with the stage and level of the particular country situation.

It is the role of the policy networks organised around SF to understand their own position and situation and to act in order to promote the progression from one step to the next, according to

| Table 5.1 - Summary of main activities undertaken at macro, meso or micro level and EU countries | | | | | | | |
|--|----------|--|--|---|--------------------------|---------|--|
| | | | Welfare models | | | | |
| | | | Traditional SF | Evolutionary SF | | | |
| Level | Stage | Main activity | Implicit SF | Social democratic | Corporatist | Liberal | Mediterranean |
| MACRO | Regime | Rethinking and deepening | | The Netherlands (Norway) | | | |
| MESO | Paradigm | Promoting and integrating | | | Flanders, Belgium | | Italy (from niche stage) |
| MICRO | Niche | Diversifying the scope and mainstreaming | | | France, Germany, Austria | UK | |
| | Novelty | Understanding and recognising Testing and improving | Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Czech rep., Hungary, Poland, Estonia | Denmark, Sweden, Finland (to a niche stage) | Luxembourg | Ireland | Spain, Greece, Portugal, Cyprus, Malta, (Turkey) |

their internal goals and the external context (models, cultural attitudes, policies...).

Like all similar analytical frameworks, it necessarily oversimplifies the structure of a very complex situation. There are different inter-relationships between different levels of the same priority area, and the priority areas themselves are overlapping rather than discrete entities. Changes at macro level can put pressure on the existing regime at meso level, lead to internal restructuring and offer opportunities for niche developments at micro level. Table 5.1 summarises the main activities that have to be undertaken at different levels and the countries that are already involved.

The role of the existing networks is to reinforce their activities at country/regional level, and to promote the change from novelties to regimes. The main activities are undertaken by networks according to the starting situations, as indicated in the Table. Activities may address the priority areas defined subsequently by undertaking actions needed that are recommended in the innovation strategy for SF. Each network is naturally open to collaboration with other networks operating at country level. The co-operation among different national networks can reinforce exchanges, proposals and actions at EU level.

In the proposed scheme the EU role seems to be invisible. In reality, EU structures can offer substantial support for the processes established at country/regional level. They can also serve to improve the evidence base of SF practices at EU level.

As observed in some national platforms and in the EU platform, the EU rural network can be very useful in supporting country/regional networks, in addition to having the co-ordination mechanisms at EU level that could promote SF across Europe.

SF may become an important element in local quality of life issues in order to improve local services for urban/rural populations. SF can also contribute to a key EU development objective and in the context of the requirement for sustainable development it may offer an opportunity for the concrete application of the EU principle of policy coherence and integration.

5.4 Priority Areas in Social Farming

5.4.1 Elaboration of the priority areas

The priority areas comprise activities of different kinds: research projects, pilot projects (both at farm level and different territorial levels, network supports and training and educational projects). A concrete action programme on each priority area can be formulated and is elaborated below.

Priority area 1: Defining and reinforcing the idea of SF

Short description

Social farming is both an old and new concept when seen as the organisation of different kind of services for less empowered people in the context of a local community. It is also differently organised and recognised in different EU Countries. In some cases SF is still implicitly or informally arranged within family farms in a very traditional way. In other countries it is formally regulated and recognised by different institutions and stakeholders. At EU level it is important to improve the awareness about SF and to facilitate a comparative process of common understanding and sharing about this concept in order to:

- make explicit what is still implicit in some contexts;
- recognise existing SF practices;
- reconnect innovation with the traditional use of agricultural resources in order to improve the efficiency/effectiveness of services in both rural and peri-urban areas.

In order to achieve a clearer understanding about SF it is important to work on the different topics described below.

• *Analyze existing practices*

Social farming is a bottom-up process that normally starts at local level with the individual projects of farmers, public institutions and social groups (communities, third sector). Due to its origins, social farming follows a learning-by-doing process, thus make local projects quite different from another, with a richness and flexibility in terms of different contexts and service-users involved – but at the same time with a certain fragility. All projects are very demanding in terms of the work and attention necessary to make them successful. The result is that project promoters are fully absorbed by their own activities

and they can pay little attention to other projects and stakeholders. In this respect there is a growing demand for a better understanding of SF in a wider context and for the possibility to meet, share, benchmark and exchange individual learning with other project owners to build a common knowledge and a shared definition of SF. This process can reinforce understanding about the topic and at the same time it can better facilitate and strengthen local experiences. In a weaker institutional framework it can be seen as a support, providing affirmation about the activity carried out by local project owners. In stronger situations, it is normally seen as a way to reinforce and to better differentiate various activities within the sector. At EU level it is normally perceived as a way to better communicate the concept and to involve new actors and institutions around its promotion.

- *Social farming as a concept*

It is difficult and perhaps even useless to try to fully define social farming. More interesting would be to provide evidence of the value of social farming and identify some specific features that characterise such a field. The name itself links together two fields of activities – agriculture and the social sphere of life – suggesting the possibility of providing services and supports to people and communities by the use of resources from agriculture and valorising informal social networks within the local welfare system.

Social farming as a concept links together aspects that are normally never considered within the context of welfare provision. In regard to the competencies used, SF works at the same time with those who have professional and non-professional skills (both in agriculture and in health/care/educational fields). In terms of regulatory models, it adopts many systems such as market-based approaches (for services and products), contracts and ideas about gift and reciprocity. From an organisational point of view it can represent an innovation in the welfare mix by establishing communities of interest among many different public and private stakeholders around the idea of public good provision. With regard to the tools used, it introduces new infrastructures and natural elements into health/care/educational provisions. SF represents a break from the idea of specialism in favour of a more flexible organisation of different activities that can include and address people with different needs in a more flexible and specific way, moving from the idea of client/user to a more inclusive idea of a whole person. It represents a growing opportunity in the organisation of welfare

systems. SF introduces a radical innovation in rural, agriculture and social services. The SF concept needs to be better debated, shared and expanded among public and private stakeholders in order to facilitate its common understanding – and its introduction to those who are unfamiliar with it.

- *Identify the specificities of social farming*

The concept behind social farming is linked to the use of agricultural/farm' resources, the contact with biological cycles (plants and animals), the presence of interactive groups (families/co-ops/communities), the informal relations and the value of exchange and reciprocity, the possibility for less empowered people to share/take part in a normal life, the flexibility of time and space that allows for a more tailor-made environment and the ability to adapt and diversify services according to the needs of specific service-users. Such specificities mean that a large umbrella of services for very different options and users can be provided. A better understanding of the different elements that characterise SF and their beneficial effects should be organised in order to clarify the added value of SF in society.

- *Validation and recognition of SF*

What is unique in social farming is the presence of a different attitude by farmers in providing a public good as well as the willingness of health/care professionals to engage with agricultural processes. Quite often in SF there is a mix of market and non-market values linked together. Sometimes they are fully and formally recognised by the society by means of direct payments or monetary compensation provided by the health or agricultural sector. In other cases they are recognised by ethical consumers by means of their appreciation of the agricultural product sold.

In a way social farming can be recognised as a social responsibility by farmers towards the wider society. The second aspect that should be underlined is related to the possibility of providing local resources by farmers and agriculture in order to organise social services. Particularly in rural remote areas social farming has the possibility to replace professional social-care systems with more informal systems rooted in the locality and within families in order to re-establish local communities and innovative self-help networks.

Starting from its specific features SF can be validated and recognised in a wider perspective by the relevant public services that should more fully consider its effectiveness for service-users, by local communities that should be able to understand and evaluate its impact on social capital and by local ethical consumers who are willing to pay for products that incorporate such social values.

- *Identify the common grounds and differences at local/territorial level*

SF should be better understood by collecting information about different projects, analysing their structures, their organisation, the people involved and the results achieved. Gradually, a system of classification regarding different SF projects can emerge. Approaches should be identified to better compare and to easily evaluate the on-going process of SF within the EU.

- *Define codes of practice and a manifesto*

Some common concepts and values related to SF should be analysed and debated in the community of project holders as well as in the research and institutional communities. The organisation of a specific code of practice or manifesto could be the outcome, which at the same time, could act as an input into an ongoing process of understanding and exchange of ideas about the topic.

- *Connect SF to main political guidelines and strategy papers for social/educational/ health/agricultural sectors*

SF should be better connected to the main strategic statements related to the fields involved and gradually embedded into the political process. At EU level particularly, key statements on rural development and on social affairs should have a focus on analysing, introducing and linking the SF concept into the process of change. This process could be facilitated by the involvement and recruitment of new actors to the issue, especially those directly involved in planning and preparing strategic statements.

Sources: At local level many supports can be found to begin the process in order to animate the building of an arena for debate. Some resources can be found by involving local authorities at different level and sectors.

Other institutions such banks and foundations can also support initiatives at local, national and international levels. Some EU

projects could be combined in order to progress the subject as well as developing the relationships among those involved with these groups (e.g. LEONARDO projects and other platforms, observatories on social affairs, PROGRESS; those that require international networks and an EU scale. EU/national rural networks should be briefed in order to introduce SF in the political arena.

Priority area 2: Improving knowledge about SF

Short description

The social farming movement started with high ideals and pioneering projects, each with its own history, development, motives and circle of people sharing ideas, dealing with similar problems and finding solutions to them. So, different types of social farming have developed across Europe. Therefore, development and transfer of knowledge about social farming is important at several levels.

In order to achieve an adequate exchange of knowledge about SF it is important to work on the different topics described below.

- *Knowledge for farmers*

Farmers and other initiators can learn from the experiences of colleagues at regional, national and international level. One way of organising learning is through exchange among farmers. This could be done through organised travels and visits to other social farms, conferences on specific issues and discussions about the particular qualities of different cases.

To foster the professionalisation of social farming it is important to improve education and training about the topic. Until now there have been few courses that focus on strengthening both social and agricultural skills and competencies. Education and training for social farming must be promoted by providing support for existing educational initiatives and the setting up of new ones. The job profile combines skills and qualifications in different disciplines and is supplementary to the traditional job description of the farmer. Education and training measures will secure, improve and develop the quality of social and agricultural services on farms.

- *Linking sectors*

Social farming links the agricultural and social sectors. The observation is that this linkage does not occur naturally. Additional efforts are needed to build strong linkages. This is only possible when there are common goals and perspectives. To reach common perspectives, activities focused on shared goals are necessary.

- *Communication tools*

Communication between the partners involved in social farming and to the wider society is important. The use of various communication tools can be helpful in this respect. Activities directed towards society in general could be: a national and international website focusing on social farming, newsletters, popular magazines, videos and a catchy slogan for social farming. Activities directed towards those partners in social farming could include focus groups and communities of interest. Activities directed towards policy makers and research could be articles in various journals and papers, presentations at symposia and existing networks.

Initiatives in social farming can be supported and access to new sources of funding could happen through joint publicity, publications, a presence on the internet and political representation of their interests.

Regional and national support centres can play an important role in communication. Social farming needs contact points. The creation of a central network and advisory service established within the framework of existing advisory provisions could be a first step in overcoming the lack of transparency within complex system of laws and authorities, officials, networks, funding and initiatives. This co-ordination would not only bring together supply and demand for social services on farms, but would give competent advice on options for further training and funding, thus helping to develop and implement good ideas in the long term. The remit of this institution could also include representing the interests of social farming and informing the public.

- *Research data*

In order to develop SF from a niche experiment to a mainstream position, it is important to connect research with practice. To build evidence about the effectiveness of social farming, it is important that such research fits with the practice on social farms and involves both farmers and users.

In addition, it is crucial to analyse how social farming can develop at local, regional and national levels: what are the hindrances? what are the success factors? As a follow up, developments in different countries can be compared. Important aspects to consider could be the role of initiators, networks, regulations and policy support.

Social farming needs support from research in the fields of therapy, medicine, social work, agriculture and education – none of which can be separated from one another in the actual life and work on the farm. What is learned from real experiences regarding the effectiveness of integrating people in the daily and yearly rhythms on the farm and communal agricultural work needs to be documented and used for the further development of social farming. There needs to be support for the work in caring for nature and the cultural landscape which is made possible on social farms through many helping hands. Interdisciplinary research which disseminates the knowledge gained from experiences, integrates and supervises participating actors from practice, user groups and administration, can foster innovative ideas and involvement in social farming. Scientific support for pilot projects can be a help in developing models based on single enterprises and co-operatives as well as entire model regions.

Sources or support schemes for this theme can be acquired by: products from the SoFar project, The Leonardo da Vinci Program (EU), the EU VII Research Framework, Cost actions, the PROGRESS project, Community of Practice Farming For Health (CoP FFH), national support schemes, Voice EU audit system and existing national relationships with the EU.

Priority area 3: Building networks on SF (nationally and internationally)

Short description

Development of a niche sector is successful when a joint ‘sense of urgency’ is felt by all participants involved in the sector; sufficient interactions with end-users occur; a broad network is formed with different types of stakeholders; clear expectations and goals are defined and learning takes place at different levels.

Strong international networks are needed for further professionalising social farming in an international context, for a more intense co-operation between different stakeholders and a

guarantee of long-term continuation of the sector. In these networks, an intense exchange of scientific and applied knowledge is necessary to effect a process of learning and exchange of ideas and experiences. For developing social farming further and gathering the ammunition for political lobbying, more knowledge is needed about different organisational models, financial structures and co-ordination mechanisms as implemented in different countries. There needs to be an intensive exchange of knowledge on effective management models and good agricultural practices between different countries.

Until now, only scientific co-operation has taken place. It is necessary to extend this co-operation towards alliances between social farmers and other stakeholders embedded in the whole chain of the social farming practice and between people working on rural development and landscaping issues. This indicates a need for the set up of (international) exchange programmes between farmers, users, etc. These programmes should encompass both international meetings and the initiation of collective pilots in which exchange of users may play a key role. Arising from this co-operation, these programmes provide more insight into the tasks and challenges on regional, national and international levels and will develop the SF sector further.

In order to build the networks appropriately, it is important to work on the different topics described below.

- *Share activities and needs*

A collective approach is needed with respect to the definition and identity of SF. This requires:

- Joint studies on effectiveness, specific qualities and critical success factors (Cost Actions).
- Addressing the following questions:
 - How do we define social farming in a national and European context?
 - Which developments are generic and which are region specific?
 - What lessons can be learned?
 - What level within the EU is suitable for a fruitful debate and decisions on care issues that can be implemented at national and regional level?
 - How is social farming in each country related to the characteristics of the health system in each country?

How does small-scale multifunctional farming fit within an EU legislative framework aimed at large-scale highly specialised farming?

How can social farming attach itself to general EU legislation (such as rural development etc.)?

What will reduce the gap between policy-makers and entrepreneurs?

- Active participation in small scale pilots addressing the implementation of quality care systems (by representatives from the social farming sector), choosing Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) as best practice examples.
- The set-up of an international database (and website), accessible to different interested parties and providing different types of information (with different languages), will also contribute to an optimal exchange of knowledge and experience.
- A close connection with the 'Farming for Health' network will also support the building of a strong network for green care.

- *Mobilise resources*

For strengthening the international network the co-operation between different interested parties should be mobilised and encouraged. A joint 'sense of urgency' by all parties is required to move towards a collective goal. This means:

- "Joining-up" interests between different government departments (Ministries of agriculture, welfare, economic affairs and education) and the formulation of joint actions.
- European political lobbying from the ministries.
- More tight co-operation with municipalities.
- Stimulation of joint entrepreneurship.
- EU funding for new initiatives (e.g. rural development).

- *Organise common actions*

A concrete action plan and clear engagement within the social agriculture sector can form the basis for the development of SF. Existing GAPs can serve as examples of best practice that can be replicated and implemented within the sector overall. This means:

- Alliances between people working on rural development and landscape/nature issues.
- The organisation of meetings for exchange of ideas between farmers, health organisations, policy-makers and scientists.
- International exchange among users.

— Connection to the ‘Farming for Health’ network is a prerequisite for success.

- *Involvement of new actors*

More insights are needed on the tasks and challenges at regional, national and international level for further development of the SF sector. This means a careful embedding of SF in the health sector and sufficient financial support. The interest and investment by banks is an important condition for success. New actors who should be involved are service-users’ organisations and banks.

- *Development of service-users’ associations*

Service-user organisations now only operate at a national level. For building an international network the service-user organisations of different countries should meet and co-operate. At the moment, service-user groups differ between countries. For future co-operation a discussion should be started on themes such as: ‘Who is the service-user?’, ‘What does the service-user exactly want?’, ‘To what extent is service-user emancipation guaranteed?’

The basis for these discussions might be laid when international exchange among service-users occurs. Then different service-user organisations should become involved in developing this new network.

- *More debate with other sectors*

Necessary transitions within a sector take place by the interaction of processes, activities and events at different levels. It needs to happen alongside societal trends and developments and needs to be embraced within the fields of policy, culture, science, technology and markets. For social farming this means more close co-operation with:

- Municipalities
- Health organisations
- Other ministries.

Sources or support schemes for this theme can be acquired by: the EU rural networks, existing networks (LAGs), the Leonardo da Vinci Program, local resources and CoP FFH.

Priority area 4: Identifying a common judicial framework and shared vision on SF

Short description

As highlighted repeatedly, Social Farming initiatives across Europe are characterised by the heterogeneity of experiences and diversity in terms of different stages and trajectories of development; the focus of the initiatives; their origins; different organisational forms, structures and scale – among others. Another important area in which this heterogeneity is manifest is the regulatory and legal framework in which Social Farming operates at different levels of governance (local/regional, national, supra-national). To a large extent, analysis of this specific priority area is interdependent and indivisible from issues raised in the analysis of other priority areas – specifically questions related to how social farming is defined and recognised, how knowledge systems related to social farming can be improved and better communicated and how national and international networks on social farming can be developed or strengthened.

Before looking at what actions may be taken to progress this priority area, it is useful to identify some significant contextual issues.

- *Absence of commonality of approach*

As outlined earlier, on the evidence of the SoFar project, the regulatory and legal environment in which Social Farming operates across Europe varies widely. In some countries, it is quite underdeveloped (Ireland, Slovenia) while in others there is a link between specific sectors such as agriculture and health (the personal budget model used in the Netherlands); it may be embedded within the agriculture sector (the “compensatory payments” system adopted in Flanders); it may be linked with the social inclusion/social economy agenda (France, Italy, Germany) or the education sector (France) to a greater or lesser extent.

- *The importance of the “local” context*

Social farming is a cross-cutting issue spanning a range of sectors including agriculture, rural development, justice, health and social affairs – among others. For all countries, the question of coherence across these various sectors – in terms of how measures and instru-

ments are framed and “joined-up” so as to be mutually reinforcing (rather than contradictory) – is an important one. A complicating factor is the existence of more complex forms of federal/ regional or decentralised governance that exist in many EU states. Again, the SoFar evidence suggests that it is the smaller states/ regions (such as the Netherlands and Flanders) where regional/ national networks are strongest that have been most successful in developing a level of coherence across regulatory and legal systems. By contrast, more complex forms of decentralised governance, such as that which is currently underway in France, have led to greater uncertainty regarding the environment in which Social Farming operates. In the case of Germany, the problems of coherence and co-ordination are amplified by the fact that the country has 16 federal states, many of which have different legal and institutional frameworks across sectors such as agriculture, social services, health and education, among others. In addition, as pointed out elsewhere, regulatory and legal frameworks relevant to Social Farming will be embedded within profoundly differing welfare systems across the EU. Using the typology adopted elsewhere, such welfare regimes range from social democratic models to corporatist models, liberal models and Mediterranean models. What is at issue here is the extent to which the prevailing welfare model shapes the regulatory and legal environment in which social farming operates in different countries. For example, it is argued that in countries where the social democratic welfare model prevails, Social Farming is more likely to be formally regulated within a specific sectoral setting or policy domain – such as healthcare. Under liberal welfare regimes, Social Farming will be seen primarily as an activity for the community/ voluntary/ charitable sector.

- *Ethics, Values and Regulation in Social Farming*

Notwithstanding the diversity of Social Farming experiences across Europe, a shared characteristic is the importance of communities and individuals in driving the engagement and development of initiatives, often heavily influenced by individuals’ and groups’ own beliefs and value systems and built from the bottom-up in a “pioneering” spirit. In fact, one of the recurring themes throughout the SoFar work is how to develop appropriate standards, monitoring and quality systems without negatively impacting on the personal values and commitments which underscore many of these activities. There is a need for regulatory/ legal instruments to

provide the requisite degree of support, guidance and clarity for those stakeholders without stifling the innovation, imagination, and creativity which are hallmarks of social farming as it has evolved to date. However, this needs to be balanced against the imperative to safeguard the interests of service-users who are some of the most vulnerable and marginalised people in society.

- *Service-Users in the Regulatory/Legal Framework*

A key challenge is to identify mechanisms by which the needs and rights of service-users remain paramount in the development and implementation of a legal and regulatory framework. This is an important issue for this sector, given that less empowered/marginalised groups and people of low contractual capacity are such key stakeholders. For many of the service-users in social farming, there are real difficulties in trying to influence the regulatory process in “conventional” ways and in communicating their lived experience from their own perspectives in a way that could usefully shape the process. Again, the local/national context is an important factor as the extent to which service-users’ perspectives are incorporated within a rights-based or entitlement framework varies widely across countries.

Sources or support schemes for this theme can be acquired by the EU Realignment Plan.

As implied at the outset, many of the actions necessary to improve the regulatory environment must be reinforced by measures proposed to address other priority areas. For example, measures which develop or strengthen national and international networks will generate useful insights and inform how to build appropriate regulatory and legal frameworks. In addition, it can be argued that increasing awareness and recognition of social farming will be a driving force for the need for appropriate regulation. As social farming becomes more visible, regulation provides a way by which recognition can be afforded to providers of social farming but also a means of addressing societal concerns about the rights and entitlements of service-users.

5.5 Innovative strategies

After identifying the priority areas, the new innovative strategies might be formulated as described below.

Priority area 1: Defining and reinforcing the idea of SF

The identification of social farming as a concept moves through a slow process of collective knowledge. This should involve different actors playing an active role in the field as project holders; health/social care operators, farmers, institutional staff and politicians. According with the local/country situation the process could immediately generate a consensus at national as well as local level and gradually enlarge the range of people involved. In order to facilitate the process the organisation of local networks should be facilitated. A network is a place where people can convene, exchange experiences and share information and knowledge, to attract new actors and to begin to codify their tacit knowledge about the phenomenon. At national/EU level the possibility to mainstream the topic exists through the use of institutional channels, reporting activities, workshops, dissemination of best practice and the exchange of knowledge.

Actions to be taken:

- *Macro level*
- At EU and national level it could be quite difficult to define and to mainstream the idea of SF. However, some action could be taken in order to do it such as contacting/involving European/national parliament representatives of your country/region who are active in the Rural Development committee and/or the Social Affairs committee
- Organising meetings with the key actors involved in social farming who could collaborate in order to better communicate the concept of social farming (e.g. users' associations)
- To organise and communicate a manifesto
- To build and involve key actors in wider networks
- To exchange good practice and to introduce the SF concept in a more co-ordinated way.
- *Meso level*
- Is there already a shared and codified definition for social farming in your country/region?

- Are there initiatives that could be joined-up in order to increase the relevance of the subject?
 - Meetings among project holders
 - To present local projects to farmers or health/care/educational professionals
 - Open meetings and workshops
 - To better analyze processes and projects
 - To clarify key roles and instruments related to SF and so to validate and recognise practices.
- *Micro level*
 - Quite often farmers are already providing services on the farm without any attention. They do not use the term SF and they are not encouraged to publicise the services offered. Have you tried to involve local technical services for farmers (extension agencies, research centres...) in order to try to introduce the subject at farm level?
 - To organise some visits of farmers to some local social farms?
 - Pilot projects
 - Meetings among project holders
 - To present local projects to farmers or health/care/educational professionals
 - Open meetings and workshops
 - Codify and formalise local projects and good practice
 - To organise local forums/networks on SF
 - To communicate clearly about local projects and the concept of SF.

Priority area 2: Improving knowledge about SF

Different types of social farming have developed across Europe. Therefore, development and transfer of knowledge about social farming is important at several levels.

Actions to be taken:

- *Macro level*
- Analysis of factors stimulating or blocking the development of social farming in different countries
- Work on a European Position paper (Manifesto) on social farming
- Publishing existing knowledge and having a presence at relevant conferences.

- *Meso level*
- Research collaboration between researchers from the social and agricultural sectors and involvement of practitioners; organising joint meetings of experts in the social and agricultural sectors
- Foster education, courses, relevant conferences
- Link with projects on rural development, nature trusts etc.

- *Micro level*
- exchange visits for social farmers
- open days on social farms with good PR
- link with projects on rural development.

Priority area 3: Building networks on SF (nationally and internationally)

To ensure the building of a close international network, the exchange of scientific knowledge, ideas and exchanges among service-users should be facilitated. This needs the involvement of all stakeholders within the whole chain of social farming (i.e. farmers, agricultural and health organisations, financiers, political organisations and scientists). It requires the organisation of international meetings, pilot projects and the set-up of a wide-ranging lobby directed towards new organisations that have to be involved for the further development of SF.

Actions to be taken:

- *Macro level*
Analysis of and dissemination on the effectiveness, specific qualities and critical success factors of social farming to persuade society of the strength of this approach for public welfare.

- *Meso level*
Collaboration between farmers, health organisations, policy-makers and scientists from different countries to define and identify the needs and necessary actions for the further development of social farming.

- *Micro level*
The exchange of knowledge, ideas and practical experiences at farm level and the initiation of new pilots based on Good Agricultural Practice as “best practice” examples.

Priority area 4: Identifying a common judicial framework and shared vision on SF

Social Farming initiatives across Europe are characterised by the heterogeneity of experiences and diversity in terms of different stages and trajectories of development. This heterogeneity is also manifest in the regulatory and legal framework in which Social Farming operates at different levels of governance (local/regional, national, supra-national). Many of the actions necessary to improve the regulatory environment must be reinforced by measures proposed to address other priority areas. As social farming becomes more visible, regulation provides a way by which recognition can be afforded to providers of social farming, but also a means of addressing societal concerns about the rights and entitlements of service-users.

Actions to be taken:

- *Macro level*
- Develop a more comprehensive audit of the variety of “models” used to deliver social farming across Europe. These vary substantially across countries/regions – in terms of extent to which they are agriculture-centred; medical-centred; welfare-centred; market-oriented; public-good oriented etc. This is an essential pre-requisite as different models of social farming clearly require different forms of regulatory and institutional support.
- Demonstrate and communicate to the relevant authorities and institutions how social farming is a legitimate dimension of multifunctional agriculture – to pave the way for its inclusion in rural development regulations and specific instruments – which has already happened at national/regional level in a small number of European countries.
- For the same purpose described above, provide the evidence of the existence and potential of social farming as a vehicle for contributing to the social inclusion/social economy agenda to relevant authorities – in terms of best practice on different models and instruments that have been developed.
- Because of the range of stakeholders involved, Social Farming is an arena in which measures and instruments need to be framed in a “joined-up” way – but it is not unique in that regard. What can be learned from other relevant settings in terms of useful principles for devising and implementing appropriate legal and regulatory interventions?

- *Meso level*
- Identify appropriate “points of entry” where regulation for social farming could be influenced at this level – e.g. via LEADER or other rural development structures, health services, structures to address social inclusion etc. Highlight how relevant regulatory/legal frameworks have been introduced elsewhere.
- In other national/regional settings that require a joined-up response to legal/regulatory issues, how are such instruments devised and implemented? Are there insights or models of good practice that can be drawn up?
- Identify what lessons can be learned from the experience of “like-minded” coalitions/interest groups in terms of influencing the development/operation of the regulatory environment – (e.g. disability movement; conservation/heritage interests, anti-poverty coalitions; community and voluntary sector; various other social movements).
- Identify mechanisms by which the perspective and experience of service-users can inform the design and implementation of regulatory frameworks. Does this happen in other relevant setting (disability/mental health/social inclusion interest groups – for example)? What have been the processes which took place? What has been the outcome?
- How are such interactions framed – a human rights perspective; medical model; social justice etc.? What is the appropriate approach in the national/regional context?

- *Micro level*
- At local level, identify who are the key influencers regarding the regulation of social farming and how can they be engaged with. As above, identify local coalitions of “like-minded” interests who can contribute to the analysis of this issue.
- Can specific participatory processes/techniques be harnessed as a means by which service-users can influence the regulation of their own environment?
- Can you identify locally-based groups and initiatives who would be willing to engage in such work and how/by whom should it be supported?

5.6 Final conclusions

This chapter presents an overview of new proposals based on the outcomes from the national and the EU platforms that have been organised into a common framework. The platforms can be seen a bottom-up process in which the following elements emerged as being valuable in the formation of a strong policy network:

- the strong commitment of most of the people involved in SF;
- the awareness that a bottom-up approach is the right way to scale up the debate around the topic without losing the relevant values inherent in SF practices;
- the opportunity to progressively include additional institutional stakeholders in the discussion and to build awareness about the evidence and the impact of SF across Europe.

For mainstreaming social farming in Europe a Programme of Action was established aimed at:

- An analysis and integration of SF actions at macro, meso and micro levels according to some specific priority areas.
- The mainstreaming of SF in projects and programmes at regional and country levels, in Rural Development policies (RD) as well as their integration into other related policies (Health, Care, Employment, Justice, Education).
- SF capacity building to underpin the Commission's capacity to mainstream SF issues effectively.

For this Programme of Action, priority areas were formulated based on the most important themes for an EU development agenda, as identified during the discussions at the platforms. For each priority area concrete actions were described and can be summarised as follows:

PA 1: Defining and reinforcing the idea of SF

- Analyse existing practices (a common knowledge base underpinning a bottom-up process of definition)
- Social farming as a concept
- Identify the specificities of social farming
- Validation and recognition of SF
- Identify the common grounds and differences at local/territorial level
- Define codes of practice and a manifesto

- Connect SF to main political guidelines and strategy papers for social/educational/ health/agricultural sectors.

**PA 2: Improving knowledge about SF
(Research & Education, Knowledge transfer, Communication)**

- Knowledge for farmers
- Linking sectors
- Communication tools
- Research data.

PA 3: Building networks on SF (nationally and internationally)

- Share activities and needs
- Mobilise resources
- Organise common actions
- Involvement of new actors
- Development of service-users' associations
- More debate with other sectors.

**PA 4: Identifying a common judicial framework
and shared vision on SF**

- Recognise the importance of the "local" context
- Keep ethics and values at the heart of regulation in social farming
- Keep Service-Users' Rights paramount in the Regulatory/Legal Framework.

Many of the actions necessary to improve the regulatory environment must be reinforced by measures proposed to address other priority areas.

After identification of the priority areas, new innovative strategies could be formulated and implemented at macro, meso or micro level. It was made clear that networking should proceed. Both at national and international level new meetings should be organised to promote the further exchange of ideas, and the development/ implementation of the SF concept and best practice. Further co-operation between farmers from different countries is a prerequisite for further development of the sector within Europe.

6. Conclusions

The aim of the SoFar project was to support EU policies related to multifunctional agriculture by exploring a different and unknown area related to social inclusion and social services.

The project methodology involved two main approaches: a qualitative survey devoted to exploring the subject collecting some preliminary information (about cases, stakeholders, institutional frameworks). The second element, based on innovative participatory methodologies involved the organisation of national and EU platforms. Stakeholders were involved in defining the SWOT at country and EU level, identifying strategies, actions and areas to address in order to promote focused policy instruments and initiatives for Social Farming (SF) across Europe.

This way of conducting the SoFar activities was more than an attempt to use alternative or more innovative ways of doing research. Ex-post we can conclude it was the right approach to use in this very specific and un-codified world. It was also the only way to respect the efforts of people who are active in the field, frequently operating in a low-key manner with little public recognition.

As is clear from the foregoing chapters, the process of involving practitioners and institutions in the SoFar activities was not an easy or unproblematic one. However, the difficulties did not arise in attempting to attract people to take part in the survey work or in the platforms. In all cases, the response was enthusiastic. Stakeholders saw the SoFar project as a first attempt to have better insights and understanding into what they were already doing, to benchmark their practices with colleagues in other EU countries, to analyse opportunities and threats and to propose actions.

The EU research framework applied to the SoFar project offered many opportunities such as

- Increasing the knowledge about the topic;

- Building a new arena around a new subject (Social farming) capable of including new actors in policy design;
- Stimulating the opportunity to start to establish a network around SF;
- Opening a space to enable reflection about how to promote a better integration among different institutional levels in order to promote SF;
- Focusing on the opportunity to share competencies and resources at different levels and from different perspective in order to promote SF.

The SoFar project considered itself – and functioned also – as a process more than a project. It established some initial milestones in order to define a pathway of change in SF and in rural areas. Of course, as already debated in Chapter 4, this approach led to some elements of disconnection between the process started within the project and the project itself. Deadlines and project constraints are never useful for a dynamic process.

During the SoFar project/process there was clearly a risk of an instrumental use of the participatory dynamic. At the same participants and researchers were aware of the opportunities presented from the application of this process.

As a tangible result of the SoFar project, stakeholders established new contacts. They developed a greater awareness of the main features of social farming across Europe. They shared this knowledge and put it to work, by discussing future initiatives that would better represent their own activities – not merely as isolated projects but as a more integrated network.

Participants were aware that the SoFar project could represent a starting point for future activities rather than an endpoint. This is also why the main perspective that was debated and agreed during the platforms was related to the organisation of a network capable of continuing the debate and to stimulating change in each country as well as at EU level. They focused the attention on communication as a useful tool to increase the knowledge and the awareness about Social Farming and to try to ease the process of change in regional as well as national and EU policies.

Some more practical project results, such as the manifesto, the priority areas and the innovation strategies represent project

outputs that will be considered in future debate among different stakeholders and diverse initiatives¹⁶.

What was also clear to stakeholders involved was that the process of policy formation and policy change is never linear – and more often is circular and iterative. This is clear from the priority areas identified and the actions presented in the innovation strategy.

Because of the different stages of social farming across Europe as well as the different welfare models, it is impossible to define a single model or a specific path. At the same time, various actions can be organised in each region/country and at EU level in order to support the practices, to reinforce the scientific evidence about SF, to better organise the sector, to communicate and to support local initiatives. While SF practices can be diverse and the development trajectories at local level are necessarily different, the pathway of change can be seen as the same all over Europe and need the same types of actions and supports.

This is the idea of the four priority areas:

1. Defining and reinforcing the idea of Social Farming
2. Improving knowledge about SF (involving research & education, Knowledge transfer and communication)
3. Building networks (nationally and internationally)
4. Identifying a common judicial framework and a shared vision on SF.

The innovative strategies operate within the framework of the priority areas with specific action to be taken at different levels. They function as a set of pointers that practitioners all over EU can follow in order to support their own action.

There are some more general remarks that we can reflect on at the conclusion of the SoFar process. They relate mainly to the following five points:

1. the relationships between SF, social policies and Rural Development policies at EU level;
2. the connection between RD policies, social policies and SF;
3. some reflection related to rural innovation;
4. some final remarks regarding policies and public intervention for rural development,

¹⁶ The manifesto has been already debated during a Cost 866 meeting in Thessaloniki, and it will be presented in a public international debate in Modena, as well as in the Community of Practices Farming for Health in Pisa, may 2009. The same track will be followed for priority areas and innovation strategies.

5. the transversal impact of SF on economic, environment and social issues.

SF, social policies and Rural Development policies at EU level

Social Farming extends the idea of multifunctional agriculture to the organisation of different kind of services for rural as well as urban dwellers. We can speculate on why, in the EU, a debate about social farming has not taken place to date. As is evident from the practices on the ground, this is not because it is only a theoretical possibility for farmers.

In general, the first factor we can look at regarding this question is the EU approach to rural development. The dominant rural scenario is one which sees rural areas as mainly urban dependent. Rural areas are seen as hinterlands of global/urban nodes (Lennert, 2008) As a consequence policies alternate between a paternalistic cohesion and a competitive paradigm. RD and political interventions promote a local economy based on soft tourism, integrated sectors, commodification of local natural resources and residential spaces. Multifunctional agriculture is seen more as a palliative to the productivist cost-price-squeeze, or as a spatial regulation of the consumption countryside rather than a key component of a sustainable rural development (Marsden & Sonnino, 2008).

In most rural areas, the incoherence of a model focused mostly on economic values has become evident with the erosion of social structure and services (Shucksmith, 2004) normally linked to the presence of collective goods and public resources. Less attention has been given to new redistributive tools associated with sustainable rural areas (Shortall, 2004). Alternatively, sustainable ruralism is strictly connected to the organisation of a life-sustaining web (Barnes, 2008) based on new rules, different attitudes in local communities and a different organisation of pathways of innovation and policies. In that respect social farming could offer a strong contribution to more sustainable development in rural areas, as well as to a better integration of urban demand with peri-urban supply. At the same time, RD policies should better integrate different aspects of sustainability into their approach by augmenting economic and environmental aspects with the social viability of local communities.

This idea immediately leads to a second point, the connection between RD policies, social policies and SF.

RD policies, social policies and SF

As scientists researching on rural development and rural policies we should draw attention to the disconnect between rural and social policies. As already said rural development is mainly focused on the economic and environmental viability of rural areas. Furthermore, in general LEADER actions have mainly been focused on economic and environmental aspects, notwithstanding the fact that some LAGs have also addressed social services. It was believed that each national welfare system could provide enough resources in order to address social issues.

At the same time, the EU political arena for social affairs is less integrated than the agricultural and rural development one. The Lisbon Summit of 2007 included social affairs in the framework of policies in which the EU can act. The intervention of the EU on social matters is based on the so-called “open co-ordination method” that encourages co-operation and exchange among Member States by using and promoting best practices, the organisation of some minimum rules and restrictions and some intervention approved by the Council. Member States define at EU level some common objectives related to social issues that they want to achieve. Each Member State acts according to their national policies but they are also committed to monitor and to evaluate the results achieved by using a common grid and by following common procedures. It is the responsibility of the Member States to define the needs for which basic services and infrastructure and a better support will be needed in their local context. The organisation of local services is dependent on the welfare models adopted in each country and from the internal institutional structure. Due to this institutional framework, each EU country follows specific models. What is evident at EU and at national level is that social issues are addressed primarily based on the specific needs of different categories of citizens – rather than on a territorial basis. This could lead to some problems in the case of rural areas, especially when the main focus is on social needs in urban areas. Social policies are conceptualised differently from development policies. This explains also why it is difficult to introduce the concept of social farming, an activity that links in a particular way two very different sectors, farming/agriculture and social practices.

Rural areas faces specific issues and needs due to particular settlement patterns, infrastructural issues, specific social structures and difficulties in planning underpinned by ideas about scale

economies. In rural areas, the organisation of social services should follow a specific direction more based on scope economy and multi-purpose activities and services. In this field multifunctional agriculture could prove to be a useful tool with which to reinforce the provision of social services in rural areas – but it could also improve the efficacy of social services provided to urban citizens.

In relation to SF, it has already been observed that there is a diversity and diffusion of projects in all EU countries. At the same time, according to the prevailing welfare model, practices are quite differently organised and regulated in each country as analysed previously. However, in every EU country, SF is promoted in order to diversify, to innovate and to improve the efficacy of social services both for urban and rural citizens and for many different target groups.

There are elements of SF that suggest it has a contribution to make to better coherence between RD models and social intervention. In all EU countries the organisation of the welfare system is under pressure to change. At the same time, strong limitations are emerging due to the economic and environmental crises. Responses to the environmental and economic crises demand completely different patterns of development and lifestyles in the EU as well as in other developed countries. Food provision, environmental resources and relational goods are receiving increased consideration in society. In this respect the role of rural areas and of their resources is becoming more important day by day, even with respect to urban contexts.

More and more local systems are being asked to re-think their organisation. They should be able to attract external resources (Castells, 1998) in order to support local communities, but also to better mobilise and valorise internal resources in order to answer to local needs for daily environmental and social needs. With regard to rural development in the immediate future we need deeper reflection on the organisation of vibrant communities based on the triple “pillars” of economic, environmental and social viability – and better integration of these aspects. SF is in keeping with these needs. Multifunctional farms offer simultaneously products, better environmental services and social services.

SF seems to be strongly in accordance with this new scenario. It offers at the same time the possibility to diversify on-farm activities and to diversify family income, to better valorise human resources present on the farm, especially by enhancing the participation of women and young people, to reduce the gap between urban and rural areas regarding the health/care provision and to reinforce social capital.

For these reasons SF should be better understood through the lens of multifunctional agriculture in order to promote innovative patterns of rural development, less dependent on compensation and funding and better rooted in local resources and service provision – these are the hallmarks of a pro-active project of change.

For the same reasons the role of social services in rural development should be better analysed through a rural development lens because of the strong linkages and the implication they have for rural development processes. The OECD has already indicated that service delivery is key to the development of rural regions. In this respect 6 key policy areas to improve service delivery in rural areas were outlined:

1. the supply of services should be designed to match the characteristics needs and assets of different rural regions;
2. equity and efficiency targets should be carefully balanced;
3. innovative rural-urban contracts should guide service delivery;
4. governments should move away from a logic of spending to a logic of investment;
5. effective and inclusive governance is key to rural service delivery;
6. service delivery innovations should be encouraged.

There is a general question here. Is social farming just a useful way to reorganise care services by involving farmers, or does it represent the result of a more radical change where new linkages are created between social and economic organisations in order to reorganise local welfare? A better understanding of SF practices, and the definition and the discussion of best practices, could facilitate the evaluation and diffusion of innovative tools for social and labour inclusion, both in urban and rural areas.

Although SF may be an attractive option to those who may wish to avail of it, it does not represent the only solution for the organisation of suitable services in rural areas. The organisation of the welfare mix in rural areas is a complex subject that can only be solved with appropriate and strong intervention. But it should be observed that SF fits with all of the six points contained in the key message of the OECD Cologne meeting on Innovative Service Delivery (outlined above) and as such, SF is able to play more than a minor role in improving the social networks of rural areas.

Rural innovation

Without any doubt we can consider SF as an innovative pattern of multifunctional agriculture. While we cannot address the issue of rural innovation in detail, there are some specific aspects that should be underlined. First of all, social farming shows that quite often innovative solutions are already present in the countryside and they are almost always the result of an innovative attitude of farmers and small group of local stakeholders. It is also clear that the diffusion of such innovative habits and solutions frequently meets with many constraints. Resilience is a concept that we apply not only to the farmers involved. We can extend this idea to the organisational and institutional framework in agriculture and rural world, and, in the case of social farming, to the other sectors involved.

SF can be considered as a process of innovation in that it fits with the following concepts:

1. *Social* innovation refers to new strategies, concepts, ideas and organisations that meet social needs of all kinds and that extend and strengthen civil society.
2. *It has a systemic nature* – it is the outcome of collective action and depends on the social structure wherein innovators operate.
3. It is the resulting pattern of *interaction between people, tools, natural resources* more than a transfer of external knowledge.
4. Some features of SF as social innovation
 - *locally embedded and bottom-up process of development*
 - *Public/private goods*
 - *Different levels: micro, meso, macro*
 - *Inter-sectoral*
 - *Inter-disciplinary*
 - *Bottom-up rather than top down organisation.*

So the case of social farming illustrates many issues related to social innovation such as:

- Innovation is locally rooted but is strongly influenced by the driving forces that characterise an historical period (this is why SF has started throughout the EU at the same time).
- Very often new solutions are born from single individuals or small groups of people with specific behaviours who are strongly motivated and willing to share new principles and solutions. This people are able to define, to develop, to improve and to protect new initiatives or “novelties”.
- Such novelties normally occur more frequently when the local

environment is more open – from a social, political, cultural and economic view – to innovation.

- Such kinds of innovations are socially rooted.
- Novelties can find a fertile environment but this may not always be the case. The passage from a “novelty” to the organisation of a niche of projects, a new paradigm and a different regime, depends on many factors. One of the most important is the presence of people that can mediate and integrate the new solution in a broader context and reduce the resistance in the local environment (Becattini, 1991, calls these figures *versatile integrators*).
- In that respect the presence of a pilot project that is well defined, monitored, evaluated and communicated can facilitate the activity of the *versatile integrators*.
- A strong pilot project may feed more than one purpose. It can be understood and analysed by institutions and politicians (in the agricultural as well as in the social sector in case of SF), it can be easily presented to other practitioners and it can be communicated to civil society.
- Only when an innovative solution is consolidated can policies can start to consider it as a new field of intervention. It has to be consolidated in order to reduce the risk of political failure and the negative involvement of policy makers.
- This means that for a long period project holders alone are the only ones responsible for the life of the new initiative. In time, when they succeed in enlarging their audience they should be able to let “newcomers” (other practitioners, institutions, civil society, politicians) re-interpret the practice according to their own ideas and needs. Of course this is a negotiated process that can lead to a different vision emerging.
- A more institutionalised idea of the innovation may develop after this process of negotiation, socialisation and change.
- The definition of a set of rules depends on many different aspects as the diversity of SF across Europe already shows.

Rural development policies

Rural innovation is a social process of change. Rural development policies should take this into consideration and act accordingly. In order to facilitate rural innovation a fertile environment for novel solutions should be promoted. LEADER programmes have followed this path by trying to promote organisational innovation

from an institutional point of view and to stimulate local capacity to promote coherent strategies, actions and solutions.

As social farming teaches us, there are still some aspects that should be better focused in rural innovation. These include the capability to build some strategic incubators for innovative action, building political tools to make it easier for novel projects to be supported and to have the opportunity to consolidate and to develop.

The development of social farming across Europe is strongly linked to some key aspects such as:

1. Each policy is located within an *institutional framework* with clear values, knowledge, goals
2. Political change has to acknowledge issues of *policy legacy/inheritance* (policy acting as a filter for change, resistant groups, national and local differences)
3. The process of change can be referred to as:
 - *horizontal policy integration* (among sectors: agriculture, environment, welfare). It seeks:
 - i. new actors in the arena
 - ii. the organisation of policy networks
 - iii. new attitudes and mutual learning
 - *vertical policy integration* (from government to multi-level governance). It requires a demand for:
 - iv. public-private integration: new rules and procedures
 - v. an attitude to share resources and knowledge.

Typically, rural policies are able to promote “solutions to problems” that are already well established and consolidated in the field. Only these kinds of approaches can be supported by the main institutional and political environment without any loss of credibility at local level. However, the reality about the most innovative of solutions is that they are often built by local farmers and by small groups of stakeholders. They can also stay “in the shadow” for a long time without any attention from the wider public.

In order to support such a cluster of novelties, it could be strategic to organise a “low-key” minimalist package of “tools” for support. This package (supports for local meetings, some instruments for communication, some training activity organised at local level) should support local initiatives to increase their profile and to better represent/communicate their activities “externally”. Such small groups of initiatives could be strongly consolidated with a small amount of resources but could have a high impact on rural innovation processes.

How could such objectives be achieved by EU policies? An opportunity could arise by linking a *scoping activity* driven by research exploring such activities with some *specific supports* introduced within ordinary regulations that have a focus on emerging rural activities. The EU level and the national, regional and institutional processes should be better integrated, not only from the point of view of procedures, but also by considering how to build common objectives and strategies and to achieve common results.

Governance means responsibility and subsidiarity. Bottom-up and top-down activities should be better co-ordinated with each other. “Scoping” research could identify from the bottom-up very innovative pathways of change (such as the case of SF). It is for the EU institutions to better understand the value and the relevance of such evidence on multifunctional agriculture in order to achieve a more sustainable ruralism (Shucksmith *et al.*, 2007). In order to facilitate the diffusion of social farming practices in the ground two possible strategies can be designed:

- To try to reinforce within the institutional communication structures, the existence of such practices in order to reinforce the position of local project stakeholders in the local arena;
- To start from the experience gained within the SoFar project to introduce new instruments in a policy for rural innovation that can better link research activities, EU tools and instruments, rural policies, national and regional decisions and local actions.

The experience of the SoFar project supports the second hypothesis. There will always be a small risk arising from proposing solutions that may not be useful or could be redundant. Notwithstanding this uncertainty, at the same time, there could be the opportunity to promote more and more possibilities capable of supporting a long run sustainable countryside in Europe. In an uncertain world, such redundancy could be an exit strategy that would enable the selection of better solutions.

Transversal issues

We have stressed throughout the exploratory and tentative nature of our investigations within the SoFar project and the importance of the specific local context. At the same time, the multiple dimensions of the SoFar work – national/regional State of the Art

Reports and case studies; national, regional and EU-level platforms – provide useful insights into some cross-cutting themes and highlight issues that warrant further examination. – some of which have already been touched upon in the earlier “transversal” analysis of the SoFar Work (*see Chapter 3*). Useful avenues to explore might be how social farming can contribute to specific dimensions of multifunctionality such as landscape quality or environmental conservation. For example, insights from the SoFar work highlight the prevalence of organic and “low-input” production systems and the importance of landscape/conservation measures in social farming initiatives across Europe, suggesting that social farming may be a promising “vehicle” through which to contribute to the environmental dimensions of multifunctionality.

Turning to issues of social inclusion, there is evidence that social farming practices are addressing key elements of inclusive development. By its nature, social farming demands collaboration and networking between stakeholders from very different strata of society; initiatives are frequently embedded within a community-based/led development framework and are underpinned by a strong credo of social justice, rights and entitlement. For the service-users, empowerment happens through social farming via better social interaction, more numerous and diversified social contacts, better social skills and engagement in meaningful and productive activities. Some of the key future questions for research and practice in social farming relate to how less-empowered and marginalised groups can bring their lived experience and insights to bear on these processes and what participatory mechanisms can be developed and disseminated to ensure that this happens.

On a related issue, evidence from the SoFar analysis suggests that social farming may offer enhanced job opportunities for young people and women. However, we have also seen that many issues of gender equality that arise in related sectors (such as the care sector and agriculture) may also be issues for consideration as the area of social farming develops. These include the feminisation of the workforce; the visibility of the labour force, the commodification of care and issues of professional status, recognition and representation. Within the SoFar work, the desire to receive recognition and the ability to influence policy/decision-making processes have emerged as central challenges for all those who engage in it. However, from a gender perspective, what may be worth exploring is

whether such challenges are likely to be experienced differentially by both men and women engaged with social farming (either as service-users or as service-providers) – i.e. to what extent the concept of “double disadvantage” is a relevant one.

It is clear from the analysis of social farming within SoFar that it has the potential to add value to multifunctional agriculture by creating new opportunities to broaden and diversify farm-based activities and generating new sources of income for farmers. However, our analysis also suggests that understanding the economic dimension of social farming requires a very nuanced approach and a deeper understanding of the relationship between ethics, values, economics and entrepreneurship in SF. Within the SoFar analysis, the attitudes held and positions taken on these matters vary considerably, evidenced by the diversity in practices ranging from those underpinned by a credo of volunteerism or philanthropy; the concept of compensatory payments to farms; contractual arrangements with institutional partners for service-provision and the development of market opportunities/economic relations that are linked to issues of ethical consumption and reputation.

Concluding Remarks

As outlined already, the overall aims of the SoFar project were to support the building of a new institutional environment for social farming; to provide a linkage between research and practitioners/rural actors; to bring different European experiences closer together to facilitate exchange of experiences and activities and to contribute to the design and development of policies relevant to social farming at regional and European level. Reflecting the different stages and trajectories of development in social farming across the various countries/regions, the project served, in some cases, as the first opportunity for those engaged to understand and reflect on experiences in other regions, while simultaneously serving as an avenue for enhanced networking and advocacy in those situations where SF is more established. A particular feature of this project was a methodological approach that was strongly rooted in participatory mechanisms. This approach 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’.

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