



SOCIAL FARMING IN EUROPE

Table of the contents

Introduction	2
Farming and Social Work: a combination including challenges	2
Therapeutic Agriculture?	3
The term of Inclusion between Social Darwinism and Change of Society	3
From national Position Papers towards the European Manifesto on the Added Value of Social Farming	4
Current State of Social Farming in different European countries	7
<i>The Netherlands</i>	7
<i>Italy</i>	10
<i>Germany</i>	12
<i>Finland</i>	14
<i>Portugal</i>	15
<i>Czech Republic</i>	16
<i>Bulgaria</i>	17
What belongs to Social Farming in different Countries?	18
References	21

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Introduction

"Social farming" and "Green Care" are being developed throughout Europe: farms which put the "multifunctionality" demanded by the policy makers into practice, contributing to the creation of jobs in rural areas through the creation of social services. Social farming includes agricultural enterprises and market gardens which integrate people with physical, mental or psychological disabilities; farms which provide opportunities for the socially disadvantaged, for young offenders, those with learning disability, addicts, the long-term unemployed and active senior citizens; school and kindergarten farms and much more besides. Social farming includes elements such as provision, inclusion, rehabilitation, training and a better quality of life.

Starting with the European Community of Practice (CoP) Farming for Health, research activities were set up: the COST Action 866 Green Care in Agriculture and the EU research project SoFar. What will be the future of Green Care and Social Farming in Europe? A view across Europe shows different directions of development.

Farming and Social Work: a combination including challenges

Beginning a "social farming" - activity can be based upon two different starting points: either an institution that includes farming or gardening activities, for example a workshop for people with learning disabilities establishing a social farm; a hospital starting horticultural therapy or a school that builds up a small farm for children with special needs. The other starting point can be a typical food production farm that wants to widen its activities by integrating social work, i.e. by caring for individuals in specific circumstances or in need of help, or by orienting the whole farm towards a school farm, a farm caring for people with addiction or for long-term unemployed.

Throughout Europe a wide range of social farming activities exists regarding the amount of income coming from the element; the financial sources of the social element; the type of residential arrangements, ranging from day-care to living and working communities in which service-users and professionals live together; the professional background of people working on the farm and the institutional basis of the farm. These range from private farms or NGOs to the different church and anthroposophic initiatives and Camphill communities that combine biodynamic farming with Rudolf Steiners' approach to curative education.

A wide range of motivating factors can be identified among social farming actors and initiatives. They range from "introducing a surplus income for the farm", to providing an opportunity for the farmer's wife to work from home"; to finding a new field of activity" towards idealistic motives to change society, i.e. combining social activities with Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) or their integration into eco villages. For example, in Germany for many actors "authenticity" is important, in the sense that social farming should be "real farming" - a farm that grows food and provides not only care purposes - not a petting zoo. In this sense, developments in social farming across European countries differ from each other. For example, in the Netherlands many existing care farms do not produce any food. At the same time, in the Netherlands, social farming is well perceived by the public, visits by the Netherlands Royal Family to care farms produce a big media response, green care is a "warm, soft theme" for the media. The farmers' organisations have their own support centres that advise farmers and place users on farms. In Norway the government has become aware of the opportunity to keep rural landscapes alive by supporting family farms integrating care activities. Different ministries work together supporting social farming activities in an efficient way which is often not the case in other countries. On the other hand especially in countries in which green care is subsidized copycats appear more frequently: farmers that discover green care as an interesting business and an additional income only.

Therefore, quality assurance is becoming an issue, and there is a need to work on common goals in social farming in order to provide a high standard of services.

Therapeutic Agriculture?

Farming and social work contain potential areas of conflict. How much social work can a farm bear? If after mowing the grass a thundercloud appears and the dry hay has to be brought to the barn quickly, a conflict between social and farming needs appears. Also there is a lack of professional and interdisciplinary education: Farmers need pedagogical skills, and social workers lack farmers' knowledge. Both professions often need additional educational and qualification tools that are not available in many countries. For example, in Germany only two agricultural universities offer social farming as an elective course, and at universities offering social science programmes, there are no offerings for this interdisciplinary subject at all, not even on an optional level.

The idea behind social farming and green care is more than just the opportunity to develop specialised farms into which people with special needs can be integrated. In fact, "education", the development of people in the sense of "developing personal attributes" and "multifunctionality" are aims of social farming. Green care can be more than just a "tool to reach therapeutic goals" - it allows participation in labour processes; it allows people to achieve feelings of being productive; it invokes experiences using all the senses and it allows people to re-connect to the environment, to nature, to animals, plants and the soil. The quest of industrial farming - which is how to further reduce human labour and manual work - can be reversed in relation to a social farm. The issue is no longer the provision of any work for its own sake, but offering work opportunities that makes sense, that become useful for the environment, for nature, for animals, plants and the soil. Social Farming can not only "use" nature for purposes of therapy, but furthermore provide services to care for nature and landscape development in a multi-functional way. There are lots of activities on traditional farms that have been rationalized more and more and that can be combined with green care activities on social farms. Through such activities social farming is able to become "therapeutic" not only for humans, but also for the environment and the cultural landscape. The development is still at its very beginning, but it offers an interesting perspective and a challenge for the future.

The term of Inclusion between Social Darwinism and Change of Society

There is a new impulse concerning the development of green care through the demand for "social inclusion" of people with learning disabilities. While "integration" means to include someone who does not comply with the norm, the term "inclusion" changes the point of view in another direction: the person who is different from the common standard shall be deemed to be part of the whole and of the spectrum of normality.

The discussion originated in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that was adopted in December 2006 and entered into force on 3rd May 2008. The Convention follows decades of work by the United Nations to change attitudes and approaches to persons with disabilities. It takes to a new height the movement from viewing persons with disabilities as "objects" of charity, medical treatment and social protection towards viewing persons with disabilities as "subjects" with rights, who are capable of claiming those rights and making decisions for their lives based on their free and in-formed consent as well as being active members of society. The Convention is intended as a human rights instrument with an explicit,

social development dimension. It adopts a broad categorization of persons with disabilities and reaffirms that all persons with all types of disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms. It clarifies and qualifies how all categories of rights apply to persons with disabilities and identifies areas where adaptations have to be made for persons with disabilities to effectively exercise their rights and areas where their rights have been violated, and where protection of rights must be reinforced¹.

Concerning social farming there are many activities to facilitate people with certain disabilities into first labour markets. There can be opportunities for at least some users of services in sheltered workshops or social farms. The disadvantage of training people for the social Darwinism of the first labour market is that they have to leave the sheltered space of surroundings that have been adapted to their special needs.

But the goal of "inclusion" can also be understood in a different way. The UN convention can also be a chance to change society in terms of the "deficiency-oriented" thinking on people with special needs. Within a social farm many users have the chance to find work and activities that fit their "special abilities" - their one-sided talents. The sheltered spaces represented by many social farms can create spaces of humanity, of care and devotion - attributes that could be a future aim for society as a whole!

From national Position Papers towards the European Manifesto on the Added Value of Social Farming

The "Witzenhausen Position Paper on the Added Value of Social Farming" was compiled by participants of the workshop "Added value in social farming" from 26 to 28th October 2007 in Witzenhausen/Germany which took place as part of the SoFar project. This was done in a participatory process after at the 1st German platform in the SoFar project participants proposed to write a position paper to support Social Farming in Germany.

The first page of the manifesto describes the causes for elaborating this position paper. It starts with an explanation what social farming means. The second paragraph is about the situation on European level. The third paragraph tries to identify problems and challenges of social farming in Germany (on national level).

The following 7 paragraphs about requirements have been ranked carefully due to priorities and relevance. Each headline

1. Recognition of the added value of social farming for society
2. Creating transparency in the legal framework
3. Fostering communication and the exchange of experience
4. Setting up a central network and advisory service with coordinating responsibilities
5. Promotion of education and training opportunities, supervision and coaching
6. Support for interdisciplinary research on social farming
7. Promotion of European cooperation

is followed by explanations.

The final chapter ('outlook') tries to mention perspectives and chances for the future development.

¹ (www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=150)

The German version of the position paper is published in a book (van Elsen & Kalisch 2008). Both the German and the English Version are available as Downloads².

The German position paper has been presented at the 2nd international SoFar platform in Brussels to the SoFar project team. Afterwards it was discussed whether to elaborate national position papers in European countries and a European position paper as a task for the CoP Farming for Health and to follow this process at the working group "policies and green care" of COST 866 in Thessaloniki. Afterwards in 2009 at the national Italian conference in Modena there were presentations of several initiatives for position papers in other countries (The Netherlands: Pit Driest; France: Gerald Assouline; Italy: Saverio Senni, Francesco Di Iacovo and Roberto Finuola etc.). Then crucial points were elaborated to be included into a first draft for an international version by COST 866 working group 3 members (Aideen McGloin, Deirdre O'Connor, Hans Wydler, Gerald Assouline, Francesco Di Iacovo, Piet Driest, Pedro Mendes Morreira, Katriina Soini, Thomas van Elsen). The second draft was presented and discussed at the Farming for Health CoP conference in Pisa within a panel discussion with Katja Vadnal (Slovenia), Piet Driest (The Netherlands), Larry Masterson (Ireland), Joachim Brych (Germany), Ferruccio Nilia (Italy) and Gerald Assouline (France) and Thomas van Elsen (Germany). After a third draft the manifesto was finalized at the COST conference in Antalya (2009).

European Manifesto on the Added Value of Social Farming

Call to decision-makers in industry, administration, politics and the public to support social farming in Europe

Compiled by the participants of the Conference *Farming for Health* from 25-27 May 2009 in Pisa/Italy

European demands

Farming and Healthcare both face strong demands and challenges across Europe. Rural development tries to keep people and services in rural areas as a means of preventing landscape degradation and depopulation. Agriculture is highly valued for its cultural and multifunctional contribution within Europe. Small-scale farms and human labour on farms need specific approaches to survive and develop and the cultural landscapes, diversity of genetic resources, species and biotopes need attention in order to survive and flourish. In recent times, we see that EU countries' subsistence agriculture needs to find coherent pathways of adaptation and transition.

Health care (both in terms of prevention and cure) is another challenge facing all of Europe. The inclusion and participation of people with disabilities, migration and demographic changes are further challenges that Europe has to face. There is growing awareness of the need to take into account the social aspects of disability, rather than regarding it only as a 'medical' or 'biological' dysfunction. There is also increasing recognition of the importance of the contextual/environmental factors within which an individual's functioning and disability occurs³.

Both the future of agriculture and farming and the future of health care require a paradigm shift. This coincides with the Global and Sub-Global IAASTD⁴ Reports. The IAASTD development and sustainability goals were endorsed at the first Intergovernmental Plenary and are consistent with a subset of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): the reduction of hunger and poverty, the improvement of rural livelihoods and human health, and facilitating equitable, socially, environmentally and economically sustainable development. Successfully meeting development and sustainability goals and responding to new priorities and changing circumstances requires a

² www.sofar-d.de/?Positionspapier

³ See www.who.int/classifications/icf/en

⁴ International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development, www.agassessment.org

fundamental shift in agricultural knowledge, including science, technology, policies, institutions, capacity development and investment. Such a shift would recognize and give increased importance to the multifunctionality of agriculture, accounting for the complexity of agricultural systems within diverse social and ecological contexts. To offer external benefits like human rights, welfare and inclusion of people with special needs are challenges for farming within societies of the future.

Social Farming as a contribution to Europe of the future

Can Social Farming help reconcile some of these demands and problems?

Social Farming adopts a multifunctional view of agriculture and produces some collective goods. The main products, in addition to saleable produce, are health and employment, education or therapy, a better environment and a care for biodiversity. 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 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. It can offer good living conditions for those who are strongly dependent on long-term care.

Throughout Europe social farming initiatives are springing up. Farming enterprises are increasingly becoming the focus of developments in rural areas, creating work and employment for the socially and physically disadvantaged and providing care for the elderly. They are taking on an educational role and developing new sources of income through enhanced reputation associated with their production and the provision of social services. Social farming needs political and financial support.

Requirements and priorities

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 and its foster its identity. 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.

Improving and developing Social Farming across Europe requires an enabling environment. A fruitful co-operation between the different sectors of policies and administration (health/ social/ agricultural/ employment) is needed - at European, national, regional and local levels. Furthermore the production and exchange of research knowledge, professional and practical knowledge across Europe is an essential requirement.

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. For people with special needs it can offer good living conditions and places where their individual abilities are valued and enhanced. So for them social farming is a step towards inclusion into society.

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 personal 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 advancing rationalisation, greater competition and price wars can begin to emerge. The added value of social farming opens up prospects for a potential paradigm shift and transition pathways for agriculture and social work. The approach of social farming coincides with initiatives like networks for fair trade, solidarity, human salutogenesis and many actors see themselves as part of a movement and process of transition that improves societal demands not only in rural areas.

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Current State of Social Farming in different European countries

Social Farming is a mixture of skills which combine the use of agricultural resources and the multi-functional productive process with social and in some ways educational activities. The status of Social Farming differs in European countries from first contact between projects that have started purely out of idealism up to a legalized framework and state support. In most countries Social Farming is not specifically supported. Farmers may sometimes use subsidies for employing people with disabilities, but there is predominantly no chance to do so by working with long-term unemployed.

Below, the status of Social Farming is presented as set out in different countries.

The following questions will be answered for a first glance:

- a) Dimension: What is to say about the number of farms taking part? How is the public perception of Social Farming?
- b) Stakeholders: Who are the main institutions and organizations dealing with aspects of Social Farming?
- c) Network: How are the stakeholders linked? Is there any official network for Social Farming in the country?
- d) Support: Is there any kind of state or at least public support for Social Farming activities (in general, not according to target groups)?

The Netherlands

On high level – according to public perception and state support – is Social Farming in the Netherlands. The so-called Care Farms have developed rapidly in the last 10 years. Their number is soaring, which is mainly due to developments linking the agricultural and the care sectors, the founding of the National Point of Support for Agriculture and Care (Landelijk Steunpunt Landbouw en Zorg), the reform of the care network and the introduction of the Person Care Budget (PGB) in 2003 (Venema et al. 2009:14). There is even a statistical survey as Care Farms are an accepted agricultural branch.

Care Farms in the Netherlands can be divided into two major groups. The first group of farms are the traditional family farms that want to generate additional income by diversification with Care Farming. The focus of these farms stays on the agricultural activity, at least in the first years after Care Farming has been started up. The second group of farms are Care Farms that have been started up as a Care Farm in the first place, in many cases by health care institutions or by people that used to work in the health care sector. On the second group of farms, care has a central position from on the beginning. The agricultural activities serve more as therapeutic means, although they may also generate financial output in the long run. The major part of the farms with Care Farming is cattle farms, among which dairy farms and other farms with grazing animals. Most of the farms with Care Farming are smaller than 70 nge⁵. It can be assumed that the importance of the traditional agricultural activities of these farms is decreasing and that Care Farming is already more, or at least as, important as the agricultural activities. However, there are also farms with Care Farming larger than 150 nge, which still have a positive perspective for the traditional agricultural activities (Oltmer & Venema 2008). There is no typical agricultural type for the Care Farms. The farm can be small or bigger, it can be an arable, horticulture, dairy, goat or sheep or grassland based farm. At the beginning, in the 1990s the farms which offered care service on the farm were mostly organic farms. Nowadays the amount of conventional farms practicing care farming is increasing (Csoman & Dronten 2008). In 2005, nearly 10,000 clients made use of Care Farms, of which 8000 used non-institutional Care Farms. Care Farming resulted in 473 additional jobs in 2005 (Hassink et al. 2007).

People from various care groups find their way to Care Farms in the Netherlands. Below we will briefly describe the most common target groups found at Care Farms.

- People with a mental disability with sometimes linked behavioural problems.
- People in need of psychological care: people who as a result of (temporary) psychological problems need support to be able to function in society.
- People with a physical disability: people with a physical disability either or not linked with other limitations.
- (Ex-)detainees: people who, after having committed a criminal offence have lost their freedom and (in most cases) need support for a new chance in society.
- (Ex-)addicts: people who as a result of addiction problems have no connection with the social and working community.
- Youth welfare work: young people in the age-group up to 18 that receive extra care, support, guidance and such in various fields. Within youth welfare work various target groups may be distinguished, such as young people in need of youth aid and young people with a light mental disability.
- Young people from special education: young people attending special education because of mental limitations and/or behavioural problems, for instance, at a ZMLK-school or ZMOK-school⁶.
- Elderly people suffering from dementia: people mostly older than 55 who have an indication for the spectrum of dementia.
- Elderly people: people over 55 who need support to find a meaningful way of spending their time.

⁵ Nge="Nederlandse grootte eenheid", the Dutch Size Unit for a livestock unit
⁶ ZMLK = Zeer moeilijk lerende kinderen (children with serious learning difficulties)
ZMOK = Zeer moeilijk opvoedbare kinderen (children with behavioural problems)

- Long-term unemployed: people who are long-term unemployed and have no prospects of finding a job in the year to come.
- People suffering from autism: young people or grown-ups with a disorder from the autistic spectrum; either or not accompanied by other disabilities.
- People with non-congenital brain damage: people who have sustained brain damage through an accident or disease as a result of which they experience limitations when trying to function in society.
- People with burn-out syndrome: people suffering from burn-out symptoms through work and/or private life as a result of which (full-time) work is (temporarily) impossible.
- Child care: day nursery (for children with a disability) for children from 0 to 4 and out-of-school care for children up to the age of 12. In the past children without a disability were also considered part of this target group.
- Asylum seekers: people who have applied for asylum and are waiting for a residence permit or deportation. Aimed at integration (especially concerning language and culture) and assistance in trying to find work (Verenigde Zorgboeren 2007).

At the beginning the main target groups of Care Farms in the Netherlands were people with psychiatric problems and people with mental disability. During the years more and more different groups joined them.

Client groups of Social Farming in the Netherlands

Client group	Number of clients	Percentage of total	Number of Care Farms	Number of clients on non-institutional Care Farms
Mentally challenged	3700	37	452	2953
Physically handicapped	398	3	138	321
Psychiatric demand	1322	13	221	1029
(Ex) addicts	262	3	80	220
Autistic persons	898	9	217	760
Children	388	4	43	364
Youths	587	6	87	370
Elderly	654	7	64	587
Elderly with dementia	220	2	50	106
Long-term unemployed	230	2	50	128
Burn-out	109	1	39	95
Persons with brain injury	102	1	53	79
Special education for people with learning difficulties	493	5	157	393
(Ex) prisoners	73	1	11	7

Other	472	5	64	442
Total	9908			7954

Source: Hassink et al. 2007:26

Italy

Research states that the first experience of Social Farming in Italy was born around the end of the 1970's when a mixture of economic-social and philosophical factors arose that led to initiative and normative measures which allowed the birth of this phenomenon (Ciaperoni 2007). Youth unemployment and succession in consequence of rural exodus fell together with the battle of Democratic Psychiatry and its leader Antonio Basaglia for the closure of psychiatric clinics and the adoption of new therapeutic procedures (ibid.) Hippy movement and other fundamentalist or socialistic ideas led to the foundation of communes. Drug abuse and the need for an appropriate treatment were features of these years as well and brought about the birth of rehabilitation communities for drug addicts, usually located in rural areas. A collaboration was developed between SERT (drug addiction service) and farming cooperatives in some regions (ibid.). Three decisive laws were adopted then concerning youth employment, the law on uncultivated land and the so-called Basaglia law about the reform of psychiatry.

Social Farming in all its diversity is born and consolidated prevalently on a local scale. It is usually the provinces who operate. So no statistical survey about the number of institution has been carried out until now like in the Netherlands. There are hints, however, that Social Farming is mostly practiced on common ground and particular carried out by social cooperatives of work integration. It is often done on residual land resources which had been left in condition of abandonment. Other typical characteristics are

- the small-medium dimension of farming activities
- the multi-product characteristic
- biological production, or eco-compatible productive techniques
- farming with high request of manual labour
- the significant presence of female employment
- the choice of production with added high value
- the management of connected activities (transformation inside the company, didactic-educative activity, hospitality and catering industry, direct sale of products etc.)
- a sharply 'open' reality to territory and local community, and
- a remarkable vocation to the integration of local outer networks

Beside these types of Social Farming resulting from alternative social movement the Italian government developed own ideas of Social Farming for the rehabilitation of prisoners.

The National Forum of Social Farming (FNAS) is the place of Social Farming experience pluralism in Italy. Farming companies, social cooperatives, welcoming communities, parent associations, experts or university professors are gathered here. An assembly elects the national coordination where members from different regions or institutions take part. The Forum intends to represent the entire experience of Social Farming on a national level. Funders of Social Farming services are the public sector and the joint public-private sector.

The regulations which control Social Farming in Italy are currently very complex and fragmented. To create uniformed order throughout the whole national territory by respecting each regions competence, the National Forum of Social Farming has presented guidelines for a national law in November 2011.

There are the following public bodies, agencies and organizations involved in several key projects regarding Social Farming in Italy:

- ➔ Over 250 certified organic farms and social cooperatives which operate on the nationwide, e.g.
 - Social cooperative [Agricoltura Capodarco](#)
 - [Biocolombini company](#)
 - The [Forteto agricultural cooperative](#)
 - [Conca d'Oro Social Farm Association](#)
 - [Andi Fausto farm](#)
 - [Fattoria Solidale del Circeo](#)
 - [Libera Terra association](#)
 - [Associazione Biofattorie Sociali of Veneto](#)
- ➔ [Alsia](#), the Regional Agency for the Development and Innovation in Agriculture in Basilicata
- ➔ [Arsia](#), the Regional Agency for the Development and Innovation in Agricultural and Forestry sector in Toscana
- ➔ [Arsial](#), the Regional Agency for the Development and Innovation in Agriculture in Lazio
- ➔ [COLONIA project](#) (Sardegna prison administration and AIAB) focused on the improvement of the social and work integration of the detainees within the sardines agricultural colonies of Is Arenas, Isili e Mamone, through the conversion of the agro-zootechnical production of the colonies to organic.
- ➔ [Distretto di economia Solidale di Pordenone](#), united economy district of Pordenone (Friuli Venezia Giulia)
- ➔ [Forum delle Fattorie Sociali](#), a network of associations, local institutions and bodies of the social-health sector involved in carrying out rehabilitation and social integration treatments towards of disadvantaged, through the enhancement of natural resources
- ➔ [La Buona Terra dei Castelli romani](#), a project focused on the placement of people at risk or in situation of dependence in the territory of the ASL Rm H in 2007/2008.
- ➔ Laore, the agency for the implementation of regional agricultural programmes and for the rural development in Sardegna
- ➔ [Libera Terra association](#), it works on the land confiscated from the Mafia through the involvement of social cooperatives which carry out placement of disadvantaged, farmers and other productive sectors of the territory that carry out the processing of products
- ➔ "[Modello di impresa agricola biologica finalizzato alla promozione di filiere corte e all'inserimento di soggetti svantaggiati](#)" AIAB project which involves Aretè Social Cooperative of Bergamo in the agro food production through the placement of disadvantaged people, in particular detainees and subjects with mental disabilities.

- [Patto Territoriale Torino Ovest in Piemonte](#), regarding the funding of investment programs in agriculture in Torino Ovest side.
- [Regione Lazio](#) – Guarantor of the Detainees and the Minor Justice Centre
- [Tavolo dell'AS in Valdera](#), it involves institutions of Valdera (agricultural, social and health part), it promotes projects and job placements in agriculture
- [Veneto agricoltura](#), the training agency of Veneto

Other associations that promoted and realized information activities regarding SF: AIAB, Alpa, Rete delle Fattorie Sociali, CNCA, Acli Terra.

Germany

Social farming in Germany is quite diverse. This diversity not only concerns client groups and integration goals (therapy, employment, education, housing, learning responsibility) but also different measurement durations (short term, long term, some hours) and different client capabilities (disability severity, low ability to concentrate etc.). Social Farming is mostly done on farms where a lot of handwork is needed. Different studies found out that 60% of the farms are organic.

There are three main groups of social farming sectors in Germany: the so called "sheltered workshops for disabled people" running a farm or doing horticultural or landscaping activities, the educational farms offering services for children, and a wide range of farms offering different services for a wide range of client groups:

- 1) People with learning disabilities are usually working in "sheltered workshops for disabled people". There is a law that connects financial support to the number of at least 120 clients. This law was made when the Federal Republic of Germany was founded after during the Nazi regime people with disabilities were killed. The intention was to ensure the wellbeing of people with learning disabilities in rather large units. There are lots of very well organized productive farms belonging to such workshops mostly working as organic farms. They are "real" farms: they sell their products and have to be productive. Those farms are connected in a network ("Grüne Werkstätten": Green Workshops) with an annual meeting.
- 2) Also the movement of educational farms is well organized in a network (Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Lernort Bauernhof: Federal Network of educational farms). Those farms offer services for children of different age. The main intention is to connect children to nature and to provide knowledge and experience about food production, processing and farming in general.
- 3) The third group is a wide range of mostly private farms offering different services for a different client groups. A first survey and analysis of such farms was carried out within the SoFar project. There has been no networking and political support for these bottom up initiatives before. Within a national research project, supported by the ministry of Agriculture, the obstacles and potentials of those different farms have been analysed (www.soziale-landwirtschaft.de).

Depending on the different frameworks, a wide spectrum of measurements is applied, each with its own sources of finance and administration. Until now there is a lack of communication between the bodies concerned with financing and administration. Many projects are pilots that originate in the personal involvement of individuals (pioneers). Some initiatives are networking effectively, but others are isolated from one another. Often the individuals involved in a project do not feel the need for the project to be visible to society. Many social farms operate under

considerable economic stress. Some finance their social service through low co-worker salaries (social dumping) or through donations. There is a demand for secure financing. Many farms have to refuse requests by people and institutions for social services because of structural, bureaucratic and financial limitations (Kalisch & van Elsen 2007).

There are no solid data on the number of Social Farms in Germany that can be estimated between 300 and 500. Mostly, the clientele are persons with mental disabilities. Nevertheless, there are farms working with other target groups – similar to the ones mentioned in other countries – as well. Public acceptance seems to be on highest level referring the mentally disabled. Anyhow, the acceptance for other target groups in Social Farming is increasing.

Public, private and church institutions are involved in Social Farming. The main associations are the following:

- ➔ Deutscher Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband (joint welfare association)
- ➔ Caritas (charitable organization of the Catholic Church)
- ➔ Diakonische Werke (charitable organizations of Protestant Church)
- ➔ Arbeiterwohlfahrt (workers welfare organization)
- ➔ Verband für anthroposophische Heilpädagogik, Sozialtherapie und soziale Arbeit e. V. (association for anthroposophic curative education, social therapy and social work)
- ➔ Camphill Deutschland.

Other institutions are listed in the [database](#) of German Social Farms. About 3,600 persons have subscribed a mailing list for information about Social Farming.

The “Deutsche Arbeitsgemeinschaft Soziale Landwirtschaft - DASoL” (German Association of Social Farming) is a working group of experts without a firm organizational structure. Similar to the European group “Farming for Health” it is meant to be a self-supporting association where different persons are responsible for certain processes. One of its main outcomes has been establishing and developing of thematic and regional networks. The latter have to date built up in North Bavaria, Thuringia, Berlin/Brandenburg, Lower Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein. Thematic networks serve for the exchange of farms/experts/practitioners according to different clientele (e.g. youth, addicts, unemployed, seniors) that have so far no other possibility to do so. Thematic networks that have already maintained for some years are the following:

- ➔ [Grüne Werkstätten](#): Sheltered Green Care Workshops for persons with disabilities
- ➔ [Sinnstiftung](#): foundation of sense, a project concerning children with attention deficit disorder working on alps or so called “active farms”
- ➔ [MeGa, Netzwerk Mensch und Garten](#): a network for the therapeutic use of horticulture
- ➔ [Institut für soziales Lernen mit Tieren](#): an institute for social learning with animals
- ➔ [Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Lernort Bauernhof e.V. – BAGLoB](#): a network of school farms and environmental education projects in rural areas.

Both the legal framework and the financial support vary according to the specific target group of a Social Farming project. There is no standard regulation which may in any case be difficult to generate due to the plurality of farms (van Elsen 2012).

Finland

In Finland Social Farming – or “Green Care” as it is called here – has been considered as a new business opportunity for farmers in recent years. While it is mostly offered by private enterprises the public sector is an important partner and client. The best known form of Green Care activity is riding therapy which can be funded by the Social Insurance Institution of Finland, or by the Social Services of Municipalities. The social-pedagogic horse-assisted activity is an intervention method, which usage seems to grow all the time in Finland. Riding therapy and horse assisted methods are usually offered in private stables in a farm like surroundings. It seems like Green Care methods used by private companies organizing recreational type of services is much more common in Finland than “real” Social Farms are – of cause depending on how the term “Social Farming” is understood.

An association named [Green Care Finland](#) was founded in 2010. Nevertheless, Green Care services are not new at all. Some decades ago, it was very usual that public care institutions had their own farms and gardens where their clients worked according to their abilities during their stay. Care institutions were often located in beautiful landscapes. Social Farming was practised in prisons, in hospitals for people with mental illness, and in institutions for persons with disabilities. Their number has significantly decreased out of short term economic calculation. It was also usual that farms employed people with different disabilities which is rather not in place nowadays. Green Care services nowadays include institutional care and housing services for elderly and for other social service clients such as youth, children, former drug-addicts or persons with disabilities. The “open type” services include kindergartens, day care service for elderly or for other social service clients, employment for long-term unemployed, therapy and rehabilitation, recreation for social services clients and education.

In Finland the promoting of networking is at very advanced stage compared to other countries. This association Green Care Finland is for instance developing ethical regulations for Green Care services at the moment. The association is also keen on developing system of Green Care education in Finland. The association organized the first Green Care conference in Finland in autumn 2011, which raised a lot of interests among different actors in the field.

Other institutions support the idea of Green farming, as follows:

- ⇒ The [Well-being Services Theme Group](#) in the Rural Policy Committee at the Ministry of Agriculture
- ⇒ The [MTT Agrifood Research Finland](#) coordinates the Green Care projects in Finland and prepares Green Care service modules. It was the partner of COST Action 866 between 2006 and 2010 and an active partner in the international community of practice [Farming for Health](#) (since 2004)
- ⇒ [Work Efficiency Institute](#) (TTS)
- ⇒ Educational sector of secondary schools
- ⇒ [Green Care in Savo region](#)
- ⇒ [Finish Riding Therapists’ Association](#)
- ⇒ [Association of Social-pedagogic Horse-activities](#)
- ⇒ The Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners (MTK) provides a [website](#) about how to become a Social Farmer
- ⇒ Rural entrepreneur advisor organization [ProAgria](#)
- ⇒ [Home Economics Association Marttaliito](#)

The Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners, as well as The Rural Women's Advisory Organization are interested in the topic and their representatives are belonging to the board of the Green Care Finland Association.

The public sector is an important partner and client as it seems like more than 2/3 of usage of Green Care services are funded by public sector. The clients for Green Care services are mostly coming through public social or healthcare sector]. Out of 33 case of Green Care providers in a study 23 cases were funded by the public sector, 16 cases by private sector and 6 cases by both. The riding therapy session for rehabilitation purposes can be funded by the Social Insurance Institution of Finland, or by the Social Services of Municipalities or by some patient associations. However, the riding therapist must be qualified through certain determinate education.

Housing services e. g. for persons with disabilities is funded by national insurance.

There are (yet) no special regulations, standards or laws targeting Green Care services especially. At the moment only public institutions provide employment opportunities to the purpose of rehabilitation. Creating employment opportunities is possible for private companies or private farms as well, but the relating regulations are so complex and strict that these forms of Social Farming are rather rare.

Portugal

Social Farming in Portugal is exercised in private sector on traditional family farms, in public sector in prisons, hospitals or psychiatry and in the so-called third sector, where not-for-profit organizations like social cooperatives or therapeutic communities work, especially for people with disabilities and mental illness. There is a large number of the latter which have generally the status of IPSS (private institution of social solidarity), e. g.

- ⇒ CERCICA (Cooperativa de Educação e Reabilitação de Cidadãos Inadaptados de Cascais = Education and rehabilitation cooperative for non-adapted citizens of Cascais)
- ⇒ APPC (Associação de Paralisia Cerebral de Coimbra = Cerebral Paralysis Association of Coimbra)
- ⇒ APPACDM de Castelo Branco (Associação Portuguesa de Pais e Amigos do Cidadão Deficiente Mental = Portuguese Association of Parents and Friends of Mentally Deficient Citizen)

The IPSS also work with elderly people and school-age children or with homeless people running farming activities at their own properties. Green Care has been used as therapeutic strategy for a long time. In 1951 vegetable gardens were introduced in the Portuguese prison system. Many of the institutions doing Social Farming have adopted organic farming because of its structure, its demands on manual work and less sources of danger.

Social Farming in Portugal, although rooted in ancient practice, is a relatively new topic for scientists and researchers in Portugal. Interesting groups are researchers from agriculture and landscape architecture, social care, psychology and psychiatry fields, as well as municipalities, companies working with recycling of urban residues, schools and religious groups from Catholic Church.

A group of actors has gathered as national focus group in MAIE project but beside there is no special network or support. A first meeting concerning Social Farming was held in April 2011 and organized by the following groups:

- ⇒ APCC (see above)

- ⇒ GRAU (Grupo de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento Sustentável da Agricultura Urbana = Supporting Group for Sustainable Development of Urban Agriculture)
- ⇒ ESAC (Escola Superior Agrária de Coimbra = Coimbra Agrarian University School)

Besides, an institute called IEPF (Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional = Employment and Professional Training Institute) created a professional integration forum in 2009 to ensure the regular monitoring of employment policies and vocational training implementation to people with disabilities and inabilities.

There are vegetable gardens in 12 prisons. Besides food production, vegetable gardens are intended to promote inmate's social reintegration through training and creation of work habits. Green Care is provided at hospital and mental institutions: e.g. Centro Hospitalar Psiquiátrico de Lisboa (Lisbon Psychiatric Hospital).

A specific legal framework for Social Farming has not been built up as yet. There are many interesting case studies in Portugal but little information on them and a lack of communication between the intervening actors, therefore the urgency of creating a platform to share experiences and common problems exists. The participants of the 1st Meeting on Social Farming (April 2011) were in consequence invited to fill in a questionnaire in order to create a database of institutions that carry activities under the frame of Green Care and Social Farming.

Urban and peri-urban agriculture become an increasing phenomenon in urban areas due to the current socio-economic situation, changes in socio-cultural aspirations and lifestyles and increased media coverage. This scenario, involving multiple projects and actors, with their different objectives and motivations, led to the foundation of the Portuguese Urban and Peri-Urban10 Agriculture Network. This network is an informal structure with a horizontal nature, designed to gather in an organized way different institutional actors of diverse nature in order to discuss and exchange experiences for sustainable development of urban and peri-urban agriculture. It is an open and inclusive structure intended to put in contact ideas and experiences of urban agriculture and thus contribute to improve the urban environment and quality of life in the cities of Portugal (Moreira & Malta 2011).

Czech Republic

The national actors describe themselves being in a pioneer status of Social Farming matters in the Czech Republic where a very weak acceptance of official authorities and low financial or methodical support is stated. There is no link between the work of farmers and the work of social workers. Separate projects exist but no need has revealed yet to find a suitable general term to cover them. Sometimes providers of social programs know each other, but only in a non-formal way. Therefore, Social Farming is not seen as a distinctive topic and nearly no research is done. If you google "sociální zemědělství" – the Czech translation for Social Farming – you will only find websites linked with the NGO AREA or the organic farm Biostatek where programs of Social Farming are done. Three agricultural employers are known that provide 47 jobs for persons with disabilities. They all name their motives idealistic. None of them hired any social worker or trained assistants. There is no financial support for Social Farming but it is possible to find resources for converting a farm. The counties annually announce grant schemes for the environmental education of school children.

The main actors are the NGO Nová ekonomika which runs a website called: www.socialni-ekonomika.cz. This is a part of a project to build up a thematic network for social economy which is funded by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The sustainability of this project is not

ensured⁷. Another project – the Pavucina network for environmental education – ended in 2010, so at the moment¹ its continuity is not guaranteed (see: www.pavucina-sev.cz).

Bulgaria

The Bulgarian actors see themselves being in an extremely initial phase referring the matters of Social Farming. The positive thing in this case is that although in a small scale, some existing examples can be shown. The negative is that the possibilities and the advantages of Social Farming are not well known in society, neither in national administrative bodies. As a consequence of this there is no common, purposeful and consistent policy to popularize and to develop this type of activity. The existing examples were realized as a result of private initiative without any protection, consultation or coordination of any governmental institution.

The basic activities, which find application in the country, include animal interaction (mainly with horses) for children, youngsters and adults with different medical/health problems, as well as participation in agricultural activities for adults, who have problems in social behaviour and adaptation (prisoners and minority representatives). Centres for rural/agrarian tourism exist in the country and their activity is oriented to the people from all age groups without specific needs, the goals of these centres are mainly recreational.

Five types of actors are engaged in Social Farming, depending on type of activity: therapists, instructors, educators, consultants and farmers.

Organizational forms in Bulgaria are mostly private horse ranches and private farms which are settled in different regions of the country. Moreover, there is to find a prisoners' farm (Prison in Bobovdol) and a non-governmental organization (NGO) in Plovdiv.

Bulgaria is a country with already established traditions in the building and development of agricultural cooperatives, which together with their production activity had a number of social functions. Unfortunately, at the moment the country does not have an established example of a cooperative that is engaged in Social Farming even though there are 1100 of them in Bulgarian villages. They can be characterized by following aspects:

- Their subject of activity is mainly the production of agricultural output.
- They unite owners of resources for agricultural output, whose main employment is outside the agrarian sector.
- They are registered according to the Cooperative Law, but they function as capital enterprises with nearly no social activity.

Special attention deserves the fact that the Social Farming is almost unknown in Bulgarian society. Single materials can be discovered in the press, presenting the experience of some countries, but as a whole the information is episodic and extremely insufficient to provoke public interest and to turn the attention to this direction. There is a lack of research interest in the country.

The possibility of using financial support offered by a programme for the development of rural regions has so far not been used.

⁷ January 2012

What belongs to Social Farming in different Countries?

There is no single definition of the term Social Farming as it is a vivid and changeable movement and differs due to national circumstances. Sometimes the therapeutic benefit or a connection to "real" farming is more emphasized. Therefore, some countries in Northern Europe prefer the term "Green Care" to give a better description. Even between them there is some disagreement as to whether education is a part of "Green Care".

One of these countries is the **Netherlands**. Green Care here is seen as an umbrella term for a broad spectrum of health-promoting interventions that all use both biotic and abiotic elements of nature in their treatments. The ultimate goal is to maintain or promote a person's social, physical, mental, and even educational well-being (Haubehofer et al. 2010). Care Farms are part of the so-called "expanded agriculture", a term that describes all activities on a farm that

- a) deliver products and services whose added value is not directly related to an agriculture chain (non-agricultural activities); no substitution therefore takes place of activities which are normally performed by a different link in agricultural chains.
- b) The products and services are produced/supplied using available production factors on the farm (Venema et al. 2009).

There is a clear separation between Care Farms and farms that provide childcare and education (cf. Venema et al. 2009).

The multifunctional definition of Social Farming is similar in **Italy** where it is considered as an activity which uses agricultural and zootechnic resources, the presence of small groups that operate in an agricultural reality in order to promote therapeutic actions of rehabilitation, social and work integration recreational and services useful in everyday life and education.

The areas of work in Social Farming are numerous and in particular refer to:

1. Rehabilitation-Care: For people with serious disabilities (physical, psychic/mental, social) aimed at social-therapeutic.
2. Training and work integration: experience orientated towards employment for subjects with low contractual power or slight disabilities.
3. Recreation and quality of life: experience revolving towards a wide spectrum of people with (more or less) special needs, aiming at social-recreational (social agro-tourism, farm didactics)
4. Education: for subjects who are very different and who benefit from learning from nature and productive agro-zootechnic processes (minors, burn out, terminally ill)
5. Services for daily life: agricultural-nurseries, daily support services for the elderly, re-organization of networks for care and support for the elderly.

The concept of Social Farming is distinguished by the following elements:

1. The ability to connect activities of production and agro-zootechnic processes and the supply of social services for people and communities.
2. The informality and at the same time, the responsibility and mutuality on the part of the subjects involved, and in particular of the agricultural companies, aspects which give availability to both users and services, characterized by a low rate of medicalization.
3. The flexibility and adaptability of the structure of Social Farming for a wide range of needs.

4. The possibility on the part of the agricultural companies to participate in the production of collective and community well doing.
5. The diffusion of the attitudes of companies more attentive to the needs of local bearers of interest, in the eye of social business responsibility.
6. The unity that can be generated between the responsibility of producers and consumers in the area of direct relations, marked by distinctive behaviour of deep ethical values.
7. The possibility, in the social-therapeutic courses and training/work integration, favouring the transition and continuity of the participation in economic processes.
8. The possibility of re-orientating a winning strategy, where every participating subject can find their own direct advantage whether being material or immaterial.
9. The opportunity to offer and regenerate well doing in local communities and to integrate concepts of mutualism and professionalism in service networks

As the Italians say, there are some indispensable characteristics which should be insured in the experience of Social Farming, and in particular:

1. The necessity of tight integration between service networks and social protection and also of professionalism on the part of the operators, and the worldwide assurance of the informal networks involved in Social Farming.
2. The necessity of putting the people involved at the centre of Social Farming practices, and in particular those subjects of the lowest contract.

The services that the planners of Social Farming can assure and offer diverse support to the organization of a network of territorial social protection. In particular:

1. In a periurban environment, farming resources consent to the diversification of network offers of services revolving towards a prevalently urban social class. The project of Social Farming moreover, is able to establish new contacts between the urban and rural world, favoring the growth of new relations and knowledge between the inhabitants of the city and farming organizations. The outcome of this could bring about the definition of new significance of food, open up new fields of opportunity for both producers and consumers, with positive implications from a social/work integration point of view.
2. In the areas which are majorly rural, next to the above mentioned mission, the possibility of widening the social protection network is added, which, for lack of resources and an adequate economic scale, risks erosion. At the same time, the practice of Social Farming enables the activation of new social relations and new processes of undertaking, increasing social capital in rural areas and reorganization of lifestyle and major attraction in development of rural tourism (Di Iacovo 2009).

In **Germany** Social Farming is described in the so called Witzenhäuser position paper (2007). It 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 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. In Social Farming the traditional branches of agriculture as crop and livestock production are expanded by pedagogic and therapeutic effective fields of

activity. Therefore it is interdisciplinary: not only education (e.g. environmental education) and social work (e. g. employment and rehabilitation) are involved but also medicine, health and healing. Moreover, Social Farming covers branches as horticulture, landscaping or pomiculture. The cooperation and use of synergies of these disciplines is a challenge both on side (structures of organization and communication, distribution of competence and weighting of tasks) and on level of administration and policy (granting of subsidies, interpretation of legal norms) (Kalisch & van Elsen 2009).

This is different to **Finland** where the term "Green Care" is used as well but also includes educational projects. It is currently understood as a wide umbrella concept for the care services utilizing nature (animals, plants, landscape, and farm) and community based methods favouring various target groups among social and health services as well as in sector of education. To the target groups include different age groups as well as groups having different disadvantages: mental or physical health problems, disorders, social problems etc. Green Care services are targeting to social inclusion and integration, training, rehabilitation, care and education. In Finland the term Green Care is better known and also better accepted than Social Farming. The latter is too close with the meaning of socialist farming, which makes the term difficult for many Finns to understand and accept.

In **Portugal** Social Farming is seen as a multifunctional vision of agriculture that besides crops should provide health, employment, education and therapy. It has its origins in mutual assistance that was commonly practiced in the rural world before agriculture modernization and welfare schemes. The term Green Care is used in a rather similar way and defined as the use of agricultural and forest land with the aim of promoting physical and psychological well-being of people. Animals, plants, gardens and landscapes are used for recreational and work activities with people with disabilities, drug addicts, children, elderly people, homeless, with pedagogic and/or therapeutic purposes. Urban agriculture is seen as a part of Social Farming which comes into fashion at the moment. Municipalities and public companies support the investment of creating kitchen gardens in abandoned green spaces and rent them to families and individuals. Municipalities seek to involve different group targets, namely children and elderly people, in activities such as composting in these re-qualified green spaces. Although it is present in national reality through many different institutions or public services, the public in general and his own actors do not know Social Farming as concept. In the view of Moreira & Miguens (2011) "Social Farming has a key role for rural development and innovation, with various benefits in social, economic and environmental issues of rural areas. However, implementing Social Farming needs coordination between Agriculture, Health, Welfare and Justice Ministries. It needs also a legal framework that eases interaction with the various sectors involved, training and I&D (e.g, MAIE, DIANA and SOLIBAM). Consumers Social Farming perception leads to the need of adequate strategies, linking Social Farming production with efficient marketing channels" (Moreira & Miguéns 2011).

In other countries the expression "Social Farming" is still rather unknown. In the **Czech Republic** e.g. neither farmers nor social workers may give an exact definition of the term when asked. Up to now social work on the one and farming on the other hand are two totally separated sectors in public perception, although there are some running projects. These are rather special so there has not revealed any need to find a suitable general term.

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This document has been compiled mainly based on two sources:

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All sources quoted above are to be found in these two sources.