



SOURCE

Boosting SOcial and Organic farming for inclUusive and sustainable gRowing eConomiEs

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THE SOURCE PROJECT

SOURCE is an ERASMUS+ Project financed by KA210-VET - *Small-scale partnerships in vocational education and training*. Its main **objective** is to strengthen the connection between Social Farming and Organic Farming by **supporting upskilling processes** of farmers and aspirants to spread organic and social farming for sustainable and inclusive ecosystems. The project will contribute to the **improvement of the existing training practices** and to design a common vet syllabus for the so-called "social organic farmer" by boosting green innovation and the transition to sustainable production and inclusive societies in the future.

The implemented **activities and results** will be the following:

- description of best practices of social and organic farming at European level and analysis to **create a knowledge baseline as common ground** for future development of Social Farming and Organic Farming;
- **social-organic farmer profile description** and social-organic farmer vocational training syllabus to identify social-organic farmers' skills and competences;
- cocreation of **policy recommendation** to boost social and organic farming through innovative curricula.

SOCIAL ORGANIC FARMING AT EUROPEAN LEVEL

Organic farming (OF) has grown rapidly in Europe over the last decade. Due to the environmental, social and economic

benefits of the sector, there is an increasing demand for a further expansion. Furthermore, the Farm to Fork strategy (F2F, 2020) calls for the development of sustainable food systems that are fair, healthy and environmentally friendly.

On the other hand, the growing interest in Social Farming (SF) is linked to the understanding of the role of agricultural and rural resources in enhancing people's social, physical and mental well-being.

SF and OF are based on and connected to the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainability. While Social Farming focuses on the social inclusion of people at risk of marginalisation, and Organic Farming focuses on low-impact production systems, the aim of these dimensions is the same: to promote inclusive and sustainable development.

The opportunity to combine productive activity with that of social inclusion is present in various policy documents at European level, such as the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Article 39) and it was also recognized in the Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) on the topic "Social agriculture: green therapies and social and health policies" (2013 / C 44/07).

Article 1 defines that "**Social farming** is an innovative approach that brings together two concepts: multipurpose farming and social services/health care at local level. It makes a contribution in the ambit of agricultural production to the well-being and the social integration of people with particular needs".



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Almost 10 years after the EESC opinion, Europe still lacks a common definition, a reference legal framework and a real and comprehensive knowledge of the SF phenomenon at European Union level. Since 2012, however, social farming has been spreading rapidly in Europe, with a growing number of farming initiatives being implemented in various EU Member States to support disadvantaged people, either in terms of therapy or rehabilitation, social or labour market reintegration, or for training and educational purposes.

Social farming initiatives vary in form depending on the country or organisation behind them. However, they share a common goal: to support the social reintegration of excluded and vulnerable people, thereby generating significant added value for society and the economy.

Many European countries have recognised SF in national policies (such as in the Netherlands and Italy) with specific regulations, or are supported by national representative networks (such as in Italy, Germany, Hungary, Portugal, the Czech Republic, the UK and Ireland).

Organic farming is a type of agricultural production that uses organic production methods and places the highest value on the protection of the environment and wildlife and, in the case of livestock production, on animal welfare considerations. Organic production involves holistic production management systems for crops and livestock, emphasising on-farm management practices over off-farm inputs.

This is achieved by avoiding or minimising the use of synthetic chemicals such as fertilisers, pesticides (fungicides, herbicides, insecticides), additives and veterinary medicines, replacing them wherever possible with cultural, biological and mechanical methods.

In the context of European Union (EU) statistics, agriculture is considered organic if it complies with Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 of 28 June 2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products. The detailed rules for the implementation of this Regulation are laid down in Regulation 889/2008.

Over the past 15 years, the organic farming sector has grown rapidly internationally, gaining more and more ground in agri-food policies, among consumers and in the commercial strategies of the entire agricultural chain.

SOCIAL ORGANIC FARMING IN ITALY

SF in Italy has developed since the 1970s through local initiatives by different actors in response to different needs and challenges. Despite significant differences between actors and activities, the involvement of public and private entities has always been considered necessary. The first regulation in this field dates back to 2004, when the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region provided support for activities aimed at people with forms of fragility. Law 141/2015 established the first regulatory framework for SF, promoting it as a means to develop social,



socio-health, educational and socio-occupational integration services. The law identified four categories of activities, including socio-working integration, benefits and social activities for local communities, support for medical and rehabilitative therapies, and environmental and nutritional education. Some regions have intervened by adopting their own laws. In Emilia-Romagna, SA represents new employment and income opportunities, and regional law 1/2022 regulates the sector. Organic farming in Italy has grown by 40% in the last five years, with an increase in the area of organic farms and internal consumption. Despite the growth of the organic method, the internal market is stagnating due to the economic crisis and the impact of Covid-19.

SOCIAL ORGANIC FARMING IN HUNGARY

SF in Hungary appeared in the early 2000s and started with the establishment of manors to support autistic patients and their families. In recent years, social farming activities have stagnated due to a decrease in financial resources. The Hungarian Social Farm Association was founded in 2016 to promote the legal and institutional recognition of social farms, and to collect and disseminate information on good practices.



The government has begun to recognize the importance of social farming with the creation of a Social Farm Working Group in 2015. The Hungarian Social Farm Association created a Social Farm Certification Mark in 2017, however, the development of social farming is still in its initial stage due to the lack of legal regulation, administrative issues, and product sale problems.



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The organic farming movement in Hungary started in the early eighties and only 3-4% of Hungarian land is under certified organic cultivation. The weight of this sector and the share of the organic market is not significant but has a high growth potential. Despite quick growth between 1996 and 2004, the organic sector in Hungary has been stagnating due to decreased incentive power for larger landowners.

SOCIAL ORGANIC FARMING IN GREECE

Social and organic farming (SOF) are growing sectors in Greece, with social farming (SF) aiming to help people with disabilities or social exclusion through agricultural activities. The main actors involved in SF are cooperative systems or social cooperatives. However, SF is still in its early stages and faces challenges such as lack of transparency, recognition and support. Despite these challenges, social farming has the potential to support sustainability and rural development while meeting the expectations of consumers looking for organic and socially responsible products.



The percentage of organic farming in Greece is 10.15% of the total utilised agricultural area. Social enterprises are gaining interest in the restructuring of the Greek economy and society. To achieve growth, these enterprises need support in the form of policy regulations and funding.

BEST PRACTICES

SOURCE staff developed a methodology to identify good practices in organic and social farming. It was then used to collect study cases of social organic farming in Italy, Hungary and Greece.

MORE STRENGTHS THAN WEAKNESSES

Meetings with farmers revealed more strengths than weaknesses. The former relate to the sense of belonging to a networking community, while the latter focus mainly on the economic aspects of SOF.

Strengths

- Contacts with local communities and local integration, best practice and pioneering projects offer opportunities for small town and local government.
- It is a kind of Community Supported Agriculture, it gives a sense of community to customers with a chance to integrate into the life of the farm (during visits, open days, etc.).
- Improvement of social relations, reintegration of marginalised people into the job market.
- The SOF offers a second chance to people who are no longer young; social inclusion and valorisation; re-appropriation of life time.
- Therapeutic effect on employees, as the working community gives a greater sense of belonging
- Circularity and self-sufficiency of production, valorisation of local cultural heritage.
- It could be a profitable business perspective if the farm can thrive without relying on external sources.
- Possibility for volunteers and short-term workers (e.g. local university students can work during the summer).
- Multiplying effects by bringing together a variety of skills.

Weaknesses

- Not a prosperous place to work (low wages).
- It is hard work, sometimes even physically for the workers.
- Low sensitivity of a large part of the population.
- High implementation costs
- Requires a lot of labour at high cost
- Less production, more expensive inputs

TO SUM UP

People working in SOF contribute to the circularity of the local, short agri-food production chain and can see themselves employed from field to table, from agricultural production to food transformation, labelling and cooking.

Networking is one of the best ways to build wealth. By working together, you can find endless opportunities for win-win situations. It is best if there are horizontal links between civil society (NGOs), local government and professional bodies (institutions, universities and companies), researchers, etc..

It is necessary to add value to the current educational programmes in schools, by improving and increasing the use of educational activities on farms, in order to bring young people and adults closer to the countryside, to rediscover the link between the farm and the table, and to promote typical and organic products.

For more information, visit our website!

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PARTNERSHIP



AGRIFORM Soc. Cons. a r.l. is a vocational training centre accredited by the Emilia-Romagna Region to provide training activities for continuous and permanent learning, higher education and activities for specific users.

<http://www.agriform.net/>



MAGYAR AGRÁR- ÉS
ÉLETTUDOMÁNYI EGYETEM

The Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences (MATE) is a central pillar of higher education in Hungary and the region, and one of the largest agricultural-focused, multidisciplinary higher education institutions in Europe.

<https://en.uni-mate.hu/>



NEW AGRICULTURE
NEW GENERATION

NEAGEN is a not-for-profit civil law company with the aim of creating career opportunities and entrepreneurship for young people in the agri-food sector in Greece, one of the country's most important industries and the second largest employment sector.

<https://www.generationag.org/en>

TEAM AT WORK

The kick-off meeting of the project took place in Italy, in Parma, in March 2022, organised by the coordinator AGRIFORM. During the two-day meeting, representatives of the partner organisations shared the project objectives and activities.



Since then, project staff meetings have been successfully held regularly online.



FROM THE GLOSSARY

Organic farming Organic farming is a production system that maintains the health of soils, ecosystems and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects. Organic agriculture combines tradition, innovation and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and a good quality of life for all involved.
<https://www.ifoam.bio/why-organic/organic-landmarks/definition-organic>

Social farming Social farming adopts a multifunctional view of agriculture, combining agriculture with social services/health care at the local level. It can help to improve social and environmental awareness in line with social and solidarity principles.
Although social farming covers a very wide range of activities, they always have two elements in common: the activities take place on a farm or in a market garden and they are aimed at people who have specific needs, either temporary or permanent, including educational needs.
<https://sofaredu.eu/what-is-social-farming/>

Sustainable agriculture Sustainable agriculture is an integrated system of plant and animal production practices, with site-specific application, that in the long term: meets human needs for food and fibre; enhances the quality of the environment and the natural resource base on which the agricultural economy depends; makes the most efficient use of non-renewable resources and on-farm resources and, where appropriate, integrates natural biological cycles and controls; maintains the economic viability of farms; and improves the quality of life for farmers and society as a whole.
<https://www.nal.usda.gov/legacy/afsic/sustainable-agriculture-definitions-and-terms#toc2>



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