



# Policy Recommendation Plan in Social & Organic Farming

(Framework)

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## 1. Introduction

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In early 2022, AGRIFORM Soc. Cons. r.l. from Italy as leading partner, the Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences (MATE) and the civil non-profit organization New Agriculture New Generation (NEAGEN) from Greece, started to implement a European Erasmus+ program funded by Erasmus+, EU. The consortium considers the enhancement of connections between social farming, meaning the integration of social care and support services with farming activities, and organic farming (OF), meaning the method of agriculture that emphasizes the use of natural processes and avoids the use of synthetic inputs as crucial for the sector.

The main objective of the project is to strengthen the connection between social farming (SF) and organic farming (OF) by supporting upskilling processes of farmers and aspirants to spread organic and social farming for sustainable and inclusive ecosystems.

The interest in environmental sustainability and the interest in social sustainability are two factors in balance: most of the companies implementing social farming projects and services are organic, biodynamic or in conversion to organic.

In Europe, an economic farm model is gaining ground in which the reference values of the farmers merge and determine innovative and coherent production and service choices: organic farming (OF), restoration of natural habitats, valorisation of animal and plant biodiversity, preservation of the landscape, attention to the well-being of the community.

The experiences of social farming therefore revive the dialogue between rural and urban environments, because they know how to interpret emerging needs, offering unprecedented opportunities for reception/leisure/meeting (especially near the largest cities) and alternative forms of service to people, in inland areas and small towns, in a logic of subsidiarity and social pact between public and private subjects.

The project will contribute to the improvement of the existing training practices by boosting green innovation and the transition to sustainable production and inclusive societies in the future.

The activities of the project foresee:

- a collection of best practices on social and organic farming (SOF) at the EU level and their analysis to create a knowledge baseline as common ground for future development;
- the social organic farmer profile description and social organic farmer vocational training syllabus to identify skills and competencies;
- stakeholders engagement and policy influencing to co-create policy recommendations to boost social and organic farming

The expected results of the project are:

1. A digital glossary focused on agrosocial practices
2. A Best Practices document
3. The social organic farmer skills profile
4. A social organic farmer VET syllabus
5. A Policy Recommendations Paper for stakeholders to support the diffusion of social organic farming through adequate educational policies



This **Policy Recommendation Plan in SOF** is a document that provides recommendations and guidelines for government policies aimed at promoting and supporting social and organic farming practices. The goal of this type of policy plan is:

- to provide a framework of activities related to organic farming that are the means for the inclusive of vulnerable social groups to economic development.
- to encourage the development of sustainable and environmentally friendly farming methods that prioritize the well-being of both farmers and the environment.
- to create a supportive environment for farmers who are looking to transition into organic and socially responsible farming practices.
- to promote the benefits of such practices, such as healthier soil, reduced use of chemicals and increased biodiversity, to wider society.
- to promote further support during the first stages that can motivate stakeholders and beneficiaries to continue their engagement in SOF

## 2. Methodology

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This document is the final result of an active method of involving different stakeholders in a co-creative process. During various meetings at international and local level, the stakeholders shared their experiences under the guidance of the lead partner of this activity, NEAGEN, and the whole SOURCE team.

In the end, the SOURCE team collected suggestions, observations, and considerations for the implementation of this Policy Recommendation Plan, which aims to create a more equitable, sustainable and resilient food system that benefits all members and especially the vulnerable members of the community, from farmers to consumers.

The document is divided into two parts: the first part deals with the lessons learnt during the SOURCE activities on the state of social and organic farming in partner countries and at European level; the second part is the core of the policy recommendations that emerged from the discussion with stakeholders.



## A. LESSONS LEARNED

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### A1. Description of the issue

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The social farming and organic farming already exist as forms of farming, but the combination of the two is even more in line with the economic policy of the EU (Green Deal).

Organic farming (OF) is a method of agriculture that emphasizes the use of natural processes and avoids the use of synthetic inputs, such as synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. Organic farmers focus on building soil health and fertility, promoting biodiversity, and preserving the ecosystem. This results in healthier food, greater soil resilience, and reduced environmental impact.

Social Farming (SF), involves the integration of social care and support services with farming activities, providing benefits for both farmers and vulnerable groups in society. This includes providing employment opportunities for people with disabilities, refugees, and other marginalized groups, as well as improving mental and physical health through farm-based activities.

Social & Organic Farmer: a certified organic farmer who provides a location and structure for meaningful work for people experiencing particular challenges in their lives, either temporarily or permanently accompanied by social professionals in the field of social work.

#### *Social and Organic Farming in Italy*

SF in Italy has been developing since the 1970s through local initiatives by various actors to meet different needs and address challenges. Despite significant differences among actors and activities, the involvement of public and private entities has always been considered necessary. The first regulation on the matter was in 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 of developing social, socio-health, educational, and socio-working integration services. The law identified four categories of activities, including socio-working integration, benefits and social activities for local communities, support for medical and rehabilitation therapies, and environmental and food education. Some regions have intervened by issuing their own laws. In Emilia-Romagna, SA represents new employment and income opportunities and the regional law 1/2022 regulated the sector. The implementing provisions of the law were approved with Regional Council Resolution no. 2269 of 19 December 2022. This regulation also clarified the essential points for obtaining recognition as a social farmer through the definition of a specially designed training course.

Organic farming in Italy has grown by 40% in the last five years, with organic farm surfaces and internal consumption increasing. Despite growth in the organic method, the internal market is stagnating due to the economic crisis and the impact of Covid-19.

Unfortunately, there are currently no reliable studies on the direct link between social farms and organic farms. However, in day-to-day practice and in the findings during the development phases of the SOURCE project and the validation meetings with various stakeholders, it appears that more than 50 per cent of those who chose social farms adopted organic, biodynamic, in-conversion or reduced environmental impact agronomic practices.



### *Social and Organic Farming in Hungary*

The organic farming movement in Hungary started in the early eighties and currently approximately 6 % (6,12% in 2020) of Hungarian land is under certified organic cultivation. As a result of the increase of domestic support this area doubled and in 2019 the country was the 10th most dynamically developing country in the world in terms of the expansion of land under organic cultivation. The requirement systems of the five-year support programs evidently contributed to the increase in the share of grassland areas within the total organic land from 49.9% in 2015 in 2020 to 60.03%. It should be noted, that even though the arable land, including vegetables, as well as the plantation area expanded remarkably in absolute value, the ratio of land used directly for organic food production decreased within the sector (this trend is not favorable for SF). Following the quick growth period between 1996 and 2004, the Hungarian organic sector has been stagnating until 2014. From 2015 to 2019 the above-mentioned change in the support system also led to a doubling of the number of organic farmers. Although the weight of this sector and the share of the organic market is still not significant, it has considerable unexploited development potential.

### *Social and 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 those experiencing social exclusion through agricultural activities. The main factors that are involved in SF are cooperative schemes or social cooperatives. However, SF is still in its early stages and faces challenges such as a lack of transparency, recognition, and support. Despite these challenges, SF 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 utilized agricultural area. Social enterprises are gaining interest to restructure the Greek economy and society. To achieve growth, these enterprises need support in the form of political regulations and funding.

### *Social and Organic Farming in European Union*

The European Union (EU) recognizes the opportunity to combine productive activity with social inclusion in various policy documents such as the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Article 39) and the Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) on "Social agriculture: green therapies and social and health policies". The opinion highlights the heterogeneity of social agriculture activities in Europe, recognizes its potential for growth, and calls for its recognition, regulation, and promotion. Social agriculture, also known as social farming, aims to assist the social re-integration of disadvantaged and vulnerable people and is being implemented in various EU Member States. Many European countries have recognized social farming in their national policies and several studies have shown that social farming activities are often carried out on organic farms. Organic farming is a way of agricultural production that focuses on environmental and wildlife protection, animal welfare, and the use of organic production methods. Organic farming in the EU is defined by Regulation 834/2007 and covers around 9.1% of the total utilized agricultural area (UAA) in 2020, with Austria, Estonia, and Sweden having the highest shares of organic farm areas. The development of organic farming in European countries is considered a main driver for the green transition and the EU's "Green Deal" initiatives aim to invest in its growth.





## A2. Scope

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Even though there are many benefits to organic and social farming practices, they remain underrepresented in Europe, where conventional industrial farming practices continue to dominate. However, there is a growing demand for the healthy and social impact of conventional farming methods. This has led to a renewed interest in organic and social farming practices, and a growing recognition of the need to support and promote these methods.

Considering these challenges, there is a need for a more sustainable and socially responsible approach to agriculture in Europe, where organic and social farming practices can play a crucial role.

Scope of this Policy Recommendation Paper is to provide the general framework for designing and promoting VET programs related to SOF, in order to increase the capacity for public and private stakeholders to align on the EU Strategy 2020 that aims at transforming the EU into a smart, sustainable, and inclusive economy with high levels of employment, productivity, and social cohesion and at reinforcing the EU as an actor in global governance.

Accordingly, our planned policy recommendation is also necessary and indispensable, as EU directives can be translated into practice at the national level if a well-established, thorough study coupled with the presentation of existing best practices is prepared in the context of social-organic farming.

Finally, through this Policy Recommendation, new areas of international collaboration can be explored (e.g in new Erasmus+ calls) since a common language can be used to define needs and design efficient training partnership initiatives.

In general, the main objective of this policy recommendation plan is to provide guidelines and suggestions for policy makers to develop a framework of inclusion for vulnerable groups through specialized training in the field of organic farming .

## A3. Existing strategies and legislation

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The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is the agricultural policy of the EU. The policy has been in place since the 1960s and has undergone several reforms to better meet the changing needs of European agriculture.

In 2021, the European Commission proposed a new CAP for the period of 2021-2027, which aims to make agriculture more sustainable, competitive, and resilient while also contributing to the EU's broader policy goals such as climate action and environmental protection. The new CAP introduces several new measures, such as increasing support for sustainable farming practices, investing in research and innovation, and providing funding for rural development.

The implementation of the new CAP is still ongoing and its effects are yet to be fully seen, however, it has received mixed reactions from various stakeholders in the agricultural sector. Some farmers have expressed concern about the increased regulations and red tape, while others see the new policy as a necessary step toward making agriculture more sustainable.





Overall, the new CAP aims to modernize and streamline the EU's agricultural policy, while supporting farmers and rural communities in a time of rapid change and challenges. The success of the new CAP will depend on how well it is implemented and how effectively it addresses the needs of European agriculture.

In addition, "Farm to Fork" strategy (F2F, 2020) calls for the development of sustainable food systems making them fair, healthy and environmentally friendly. The market for organic food is set to continue growing and organic farming needs to be further promoted. The EU sets an objective of at least 25% of the EU's agricultural land under organic farming by 2030.

Beside the development of organic farming, the economic policy of the EU is also committed to the development of the social economy. In addition, expanding the farm's activities with social services is in line with the concept of multifunctional agriculture, thus it also serves the rural development goals.

The European Commission (EC) published the Social Economy Action Plan in 2021 " Building an economy that works for people: an action plan for the social economy" in order to boost the social economy and create jobs.

The European Year of Skills 2023 is a current initiative of the European Union and is still in its early stages of implementation. The initiative is aimed at promoting the importance of investing in skills and lifelong learning to meet the challenges of digitalization, automation, and demographic changes.

So far, the European Year of Skills 2023 has received support from various stakeholders, including the European Commission, national governments, and employers. Many countries in the EU have already started organizing events, workshops, and training programs aimed at promoting the importance of skills development and lifelong learning.

However, the implementation of the European Year of Skills 2023 is also facing some challenges, such as limited funding and resources, a lack of awareness about the initiative among some stakeholders and competing policy priorities. These challenges will need to be addressed in order to ensure the success of the European Year of Skills 2023.

Overall, the success of the European Year of Skills 2023 will depend on the level of engagement and participation from all stakeholders, including individuals, employers, and governments.

Regulations for SOF:

In Italy:

Regulation:

- 141/2015 - national framework for social agriculture
- 12550/2018 - national definition of minimum requirements and modalities for social farming activities
- 1/2022 (Emilia-Romagna law, which defines the criteria necessary for the exercise of social agriculture, the methods of carrying it out, the administrative and control procedures applicable, the support forms as well as the period of any voluntary suspension of the 'activity, the activities that can be exercised on social farms)
- 2269/2022 - Emilia-Romagna implementing provisions of the regional law which defines the training path to become a social farmer
- 20/2023 - Provisions on social agriculture in Tuscany.



In Hungary:

Regulation:

- 34/2013: annual financial statements, consolidated financial statements, and related reports of certain types of undertakings amending Directive 2006/43/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Council Directives

In Greece:

Regulation:

- 4430/2016: Social and Solidarity Economy and development of its agencies and other provisions.
- 2716/99: Development and modernization of mental health services and other provisions

In EU:

Regulation:

- 2013/C/44/07 (Social agriculture: green therapies and social and health policies)
- 834/2007 (organic production and labeling of organic products)
- 889/2008 (detailed rules for the implementation of 834/2007 Regulation)

## A4. Examples

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In Italy:

The law in Emilia-Romagna regarding social farming is represented by the regional law n. 1/2022. This law regulates the sector and defines the criteria necessary to practise social farming, the methods of carrying it out, the management and control procedures, the forms of support and the period of voluntary suspension of the activity. The law also specifies the activities that can be carried out on social farms. The aim of the law is to promote new employment and income opportunities, as well as the multifunctionality of farms in the region, while at the same time supporting the development of educational, social and health services, as well as social and professional integration, in collaboration with public bodies and the third sector. The law is based on National Law No. 141/2015, which established the first regulatory framework for social agriculture and defined four categories of activities in this field.

These four categories are:

1. Socio-working integration of workers with disabilities and disadvantaged workers.
2. Benefits and service and social activities for local communities.
3. Services and support for medical and psychological therapies and rehabilitation with the help of animals and plants..
4. Projects aimed at environmental and food education, biodiversity conservation, and knowledge dissemination to children of preschool age and people with social, physical, and mental difficulties.

### N° 1

*(Socio-working integration of workers with disabilities and disadvantaged workers)*

#### **Azienda Agricola Clorofilla - Mercato Saraceno (Forlì-Cesena)**

Certified organic farm, social farm, educational farm, agritourism

<https://aziendagricolaclorofilla.it/>



The farm is carrying on the project HOME & JOB (H & J) which was founded in 2021 by Emilia-Romagna Administration in the framework of the RDP. The project has a duration of 7 years and is arranged with the collaboration of the Municipalities Union of Valle Savio, Forlì-Cesena province.

This social farming activity develops an integrated strategy including reception, training, work strategy addressed to people in the "new poverty" areas, such as:

- unemployed persons over fifty
- separate parents with under aged children
- assisted family units or individual citizens in charge of social services
- former inmates
- women victims of violence

## N° 2

*(Benefits and service and social activities for local communities.)*

### **Agriturismo Antica Golena Le Terre della Contessa - Guastalla (Reggio Emilia)**

Social farm, educational farm, agritourism

[www.anticagolena.it](http://www.anticagolena.it)

The farm isn't certified organic, but all the land is in a floodplain, a protected Natura 2000 area dedicated to forestry, particularly arboriculture from wood, and traditional agriculture with fodder-cereal rotation.

For many years, the company has been participating in a multi-year project of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia, Department of Social Services, aimed at the elderly, residents of sheltered facilities, which has the following objectives:

- to facilitate the practice of remembrance through guided tours and creative workshops in agriculture;
- to encourage contact with agricultural products, harvested and processed in the countryside, in order to rediscover memories and emotions linked to food;
- to activate the desire to do and socialise in direct contact with plants and animals.

These services are paid for by the municipality, but they are also important for the reputation of the farm and for the implementation of other projects of intergenerational exchange, welcoming families with children and the elderly, recreational and social tourism activities.

## N° 3

*(Services and support for medical and psychological therapies and rehabilitation with the help of animals and plants.)*

### **Fattoria Didattica Accanto – Modena**

Certified organic farm, educational farm, social farm

<https://www.accantofattoriadidattica.it/>

In order to carry out social farming activities (before specific regional laws were enacted), the farm promoted the establishment of a Social Promotion Association: Accanto alla Terra.

The association, made up of young educators, farmers, animators and freelancers, has launched the "Oasi dei Mulini" project on the land of the Accanto farm. With the partial financial support of the Emilia-Romagna Region and the voluntary contribution of members and users, a Healing Garden is being created.



The main aim of the Healing Garden is to promote the wellbeing of users through the use of space, which is achieved through: sensory stimulation, cognitive stimulation, spatio-temporal orientation, maintenance of motor skills, stimulation of manual dexterity and socialisation through group enjoyment.

The ultimate purpose is to strengthen the local community by rediscovering the common heritage through inclusive and accessible ways of social participation; indeed, the activities of the Healing Garden are carried out in agreement with local administrations, elderly residences, social cooperatives and schools.

#### **N° 4**

*(Projects aimed at environmental and food education, biodiversity conservation, and knowledge dissemination to children of preschool age and people with social, physical, and mental difficulties.)*

#### **Azienda Agricola I Campi - Vernasca (Piacenza)**

Certified organic farm, social farm, educational farm, agriturismo  
<https://www.icampidiborla.com/wordpress/>

There is a close link between the company's organic production choices and the educational content on environmental and food sustainability, which is delivered through methods of sharing and comparing different personal stories.

The farm offers social or proximity tourism services, which consist in hosting, for a day or a week, groups of guests who decide (with their teachers, animators, or families) to activate their own educational project on social and environmental sustainability, or to participate in one of the educational proposals periodically promoted by the farm.

The proposed stays are also aimed at people with physical or psychological problems and ailments, especially young people, who can stay in a positive space with others in a protected situation and try to "do many useful and concrete things". They can work in the fields, pick vegetables, prepare food, set the table, build small carpentry objects in the equipped workshop, without fear of making mistakes or being judged, freely experiencing the rhythm of the day as a source of well-being and learning.

#### **In Hungary:**

#### **N° 1**

*(Socio-working integration of workers with disabilities and disadvantaged workers combined with the volunteer program of university students)*

#### **SZIA Agroecological Garden**

Public utility foundation  
[info@diverzitasalapitvany.hu](mailto:info@diverzitasalapitvany.hu)

The organic farming started in 2018 in a framework of the cooperation with a Family Shelter. In 2019 was established the Holdvilag social farm, a place for learning and working for disabled and disadvantaged people.

#### **Activities:**

- social workshops
- training activities
- employment for people in situations of hardship and fragility
- educational farms: student practice within some BSc and MSc courses



-internship for students (e.g. related to a 3-month structured voluntary training program based on the principles of agroecology)

In Greece:

**N° 1**

*(Socio-working integration of workers with disabilities and disadvantaged workers)*

**Agricultural Detention office of Agias, Ministry of Citizen Protection**

Organic farm, educational farm, social farm

The prison originally operated as a general prison from 1932. At 1941, it was characterized as a "military war prison" and operated as such. Today, it works as an agricultural detention office, an alternative form of detention where prisoners benefit from a reduced sentence for participating in labor.

Activities:

- Produce organic products: summer and winter vegetables (tomato, cucumber, pepper, aubergine, bean, zucchini, corn, spearmint, lettuce, cabbage, spinach, carrot, beetroot, broccoli, cauliflower, artichoke, etc.) aromatic plants (oregano)
- Produce -conventional products: olive oil, walnuts, almonds, apricots, oranges, lemons tangerines, vanillas, alfalfa, vetch, barleys, oats.
- Conventional (extensive) animal husbandry: sheep, goats, cattle, pigs, chickens.

The purpose of the diversity in productive directions is:

1. Enables the prisoners to acquaint themselves with as many different occupations as possible
2. Maximizing the economic viability of each activity

The agricultural prison aims to prepare and facilitate the integration of inmates into society. All the productive activities in the store facilitate the transition of the prisoner to society in a variety of ways.



## B. RECOMMENDATION FOR POLICY MAKERS

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### B1. Target groups

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The most relevant target groups for involvement in SOF activities and synergies were identified as:

- Local municipalities or associations of municipalities
- Regional authorities
- Advocacy associations (e.g. organic farmers associations, farmers associations, farmers network, labour syndicates)
- Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Social Affair, Ministry of Labour, Institutions belonging on aforementioned sectors
- Associations of Social Cooperatives and Social Entreprises
- VET school and training agency

### B2. Suggested activities

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A different approach to the issue of social organic farming is to enhance and legitimize its role as a provider of multifunctional welfare services to local communities, thus contributing to the development of both. This is the only way to achieve a win-win result for all stakeholders.

It is useful to list some negative aspects or weaknesses of the current situation of policy and then link the comments, suggestions and positive suggestions or strengths to these.

#### **Negative aspects or weaknesses**

- The lack of a clear identification of the role of the farm as an operative subject in the context of social farming. This role and reference, on the other hand, has always been recognised for third sector subjects.
- Although the public authorities recognise the value of farms involved in social farming, they do not yet have clear management models that can open up direct cooperation between public bodies and farms involved in these processes. There is a lack of administrative references and clearly defined procedures for drawing up contracts for the provision of services by farms.
- There are no agricultural departments in the municipalities of the territory (e.g. in Italy, in Emilia-Romagna, they are present in only 40% of the municipalities). In any case, social services departments do exist, but they have their own traditional frame of reference, linked to social service providers.
- Healthcare institutions (called Local Health Authorities in Italy) are looking for immediate, guaranteed, easy-to-manage solutions for large numbers of people, but above all at low cost.



- Professionals working in local health authorities are trained by schools and universities that are not always up to date with new developments in the care of vulnerable people, to be activated in non-formal contexts and with tailor-made working methods.
- In the allocation of external service tasks, the importance of control procedures prevails, but it is not always a matter of controlling the results on the person, but rather the pure and simple delivery of service hours.
- In order to be able to analyse the results obtained, e.g. on the recovery of residual abilities of disabled or elderly people, we need survey instruments that also include, in our case, social farming practices.

### **Positive suggestions or strengths**

- Farmers are very interested in the new content of social engagement, both because it is now linked to their organic and environmentally friendly production, and because it can generate new income.
- In this context, we would like to highlight a deep change in rural sociology. Today, many qualified young people have chosen agriculture to build their own sustainable business and provide multifunctional services to different types of users; they do not always come from landowning families and often have pursued other studies far away from agriculture.
- This infusion of new cultures and broader approaches into the traditional farming mentality is encouraging the emergence of business models based on responsibility, environmental and social sustainability.
- This spirit of renewal has given rise to numerous projects and programmes with both public bodies and private associations in the environmental, social and voluntary sectors. These are multifunctional services, open to different user groups, with a strong social footprint.
- In parallel with the phenomenon described above, training systems in the agricultural world are being pressed by new demands and needs. As a result, sector academics, high-profile management consultants and experts in non-traditional agricultural subjects are involved in training activities to set up training courses, project groups and coaching activities, with considerable agreement from participants.
- In the professional agricultural organisations, the positive trend of multifunctionality highlights the need for new responses and new consultancy needs. This is a growth factor that has favoured the emergence of teams specifically created to analyse and deepen the issues of multifunctionality and to promote new projects, both in the RDP (Rural Development Program) and in connection with the world of research and universities (in agricultural and non-agricultural faculties and disciplines).
- The presence of farms, even in marginal areas where there is a high risk of depopulation, strengthens their position as their social role is recognised, both in maintaining the population in disadvantaged areas and in providing services.





When the positive elements are recognised, the farm's reputation becomes its strength and the public recognises the value of the service provided. If the feedback is positive, even with regard to the for-profit nature of the business, the responses from external stakeholders reveal the conviction that this is not an obstacle to the quality of the service provided to people, nor is the commitment to the social sphere seen as merely a search for market space. On the other hand, the social farm reinforces its ethical vocation, which recalls the agrarian cultural tradition of inclusion of vulnerable populations.

To summarise the general meaning attributed to social farming, it can be said that community welfare is a system of many parts, of public/private interventions in co-planning, in which social farming is fully involved and must now be considered as a leading interlocutor. It should also be emphasised that the action of farms involved in social farming is not in competition with the public sector or social cooperation.

On the question of how to develop cooperation between actors from different sectors, some highlighted the value of networking and the need for territories to begin to express new modes of action. It is essential to rethink strategies and procedures in order to promote the integration of social organic farming experiences into the range of services offered by public bodies, through the social services of municipalities. Organisations and stakeholders that should be involved in the SOF promotion can be Social Enterprises, Agri-food Industries and Cooperatives, organizations for local food consumers, Short Food Supply Chains Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), Social Media and influencers, SO Farmers' Networks, health care professionals (doctors, veterinarians etc) and social enterprise consultants.

### **Suggested activities**

- 1) The Regional authorities have the resources, the financial means and the scientific capacity needed to promote:
  - a) advertising campaigns of organic products with an emphasis on local products (environmental, health, tourism promotion criteria, etc.)
  - b) training actions of agricultural technicians and farmers in the practices of organic production with an emphasis on local crops.
- 2) Vulnerable groups of people are very heterogeneous and cannot be dealt with in a widespread and general way. A separate study should be done for each category so that they can be supported through Social & Organic farming actions. e.g. prisoners, people in rehabilitation, women with special problems, people with special needs, disabilities etc. are completely differentiated groups that should be considered in what way they can be involved in such a process.
- 3) The Ministry of Civil Protection in each country can promote partnerships between Rural Prisons and companies, individuals, etc. in organic farming. Also, it can promote certified training of prisoners in organic farming, as a basis for future vocational rehabilitation (cooperation with Academic, Educational Institutions, the Region, etc.).
- 4) Municipalities can contribute, through their social structures (homeless shelters, social feedlines, etc.) to the identification, characterization, and categorization of vulnerable groups and promote their orientation towards Social & Organic farming actions (with the coordination assistance of another entity).



- 5) Independent legal entities (e.g. KETHEA in Greece) can contribute by including Social & Organic farming practices in collaboration with private farms (through a coordinating body) with a financial incentive.
- 6) The private sector can contribute by adding Social & Organic farming practices in order to increase their Environmental, social and governance indicators (ESGs), through some direct or indirect financial incentive.
- 7) The tourism industry should be associated with Social & Organic farming. Especially in Greece, large hotels usually have gardens and productive land (vegetable gardens, fruit, other). They can contribute by adding Social & Organic farming practices in order to increase their Environmental, social and governance indicators (ESGs), through some direct or indirect financial incentive. It is excellent advertising and will mainly promote environmental and health claims. With the aid of a coordinating entity, vulnerable groups of people who are acceptable to work in such places can be selected. Furthermore, Social & Organic farming combined with agritourism services could be a potential new source of income for the farming household. This opportunity could be crucial for small farmers: in fact, it could provide the additional income required to enable them to continue, thereby reducing the risk of land abandonment.
- 8) The establishment of SOF local markets where SO farmers can sell directly to clients
- 9) The provision of an official labelling system to avoid fraud and negative practices

In general, taking all of the aforementioned into consideration, there is a lack of a flexible entity that would act as an intermediary between the private sector (related to organic farming) and the vulnerable groups of people that could be employed there.

### **B3. Impact**

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The willingness of decision-makers to promote social organic farming will only be facilitated if they:

- are adequately involved in qualified projects/strategies/initiatives on these issues;
- are convinced of its usefulness in providing services that are genuinely linked to the needs of the population;
- will find social farming offers economically viable in the service market;
- have access to qualified studies that can reassure them of the value of these activities;
- directly know (also through training/dissemination programs and the dissemination of the results of the SOURCE project) with examples of successful models already operating in the different reference realities.

Social farming can offer:

- community services, with initiatives to integrate disadvantaged people into the job market (internships, agricultural work in general...);
- multifunctional services, open to any target group and with particularly interesting aspects of specialization.



On the first point, the recognition of roles has made a lot of progress, but we must reflect on the service activities of social farming

On the second point, it is important to point out that multifunctional services can compete in the health and wellness market, so they will be able to contribute to the economic and social development of disadvantaged area.

The SOURCE project has already analysed the key factors that can help farms starting with the definition of the competence profile of entrepreneurs, the collection of pilot experiences and the definition of a common reference language; at this stage, we need to communicate to public and private decision-makers the real value of these services for local communities. This is a difficult task if we want their cooperation in legitimizing and supporting the emerging social farming system.

At the same time, it will be useful to formulate a **proposal for a document (a kind of vademecum)** containing:

- an updated inventory of social farming practices, collected at national level (with the involvement of professional agricultural organisations):
- a collection of significant social farming projects, presented by individual farms or farm networks and financed by the Rural Development Programme.
- a simplified handbook (addressed directly to farmers) on
  - planning social farming services
  - formulating bureaucratic procedures for setting up agreements with public and private bodies in their territory and beyond;
  - setting up business networks.

These steps could be initiated in the final stages of SOURCE as a follow-up to the project and could constitute a common regional, national, European platform for the emergence of **territorial cooperation pacts or community pacts**.

In addition, in order to involve the decision-makers and support them in their future choices to promote social farming, it is proposed to organise a remote **workshop (atelier) of participatory planning**, in order to collect and classify, in summary:

- the multifunctional/social services and the ways of continuously increasing the number of users, already successfully tested in some realities, in each of the partner countries;
- the most attractive and effective paths, already experimented, to realise opportunities for work and social inclusion of people in difficulty;
- the territorial links between public and private subjects in search of new spaces for further entrepreneurial intervention, to be shared and consolidated.

In cooperation with the SOURCE project partners and the stakeholders involved in the validation meetings, this could lead to the design of a territorial **pilot project** for at least one of the types of social farming presented in the examples.



## B4. Importance of action

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Currently, social farming is not a significant phenomenon in terms of the number of farms, but it represents a growing social innovation, especially in marginal areas (hill and mountain areas, small villages).

In Italy, in 2022, there were 904 active farms declaring that they carried out social farming activities (0.1% of the total number of farms and 1.4% of the total number of farms with multifunctional activities - 7th agricultural census, compiled by the National Rural Network on the basis of ISTAT data).

The benefits of social and organic farming for society come under the concept of **sustainability**.

Regarding **social sustainability**, it consists of the following actions:

- -promoting social inclusion to ensure the survival of the rural population;
- -building new bridges between rural and urban areas;
- -re-establishing links between local resources and needs, the economy and social issues;
- -stimulating innovation to re-adapt traditional attitudes (subsistence farming and mutual aid networks);
- -helping to meet new needs arising from the socio-economic crisis
- -working to preserve local knowledge by sharing and organising collective learning processes.

On the other hand, on the subject of **environmental sustainability**, the following is a reflection by Prof. Saverio Senni\*.

*There is indeed a natural convergence between the pursuit of social goals and respect for the environment. Both have a common root in the assumption of a form of responsibility towards the community: social responsibility/environmental responsibility.*

*On the one hand, the development of organic production methods avoids the presence and handling of products that are to some extent toxic, in a context in which people who may be seriously disadvantaged are actively involved. On the other hand, it increases the quality level of the products, enriching them with an "environmental quality" that an increasing number of consumers demand and for which they are willing to pay, either directly through their purchases or indirectly through agri-environmental payments... By opening up to the local community and beyond, the social farm consolidates its reputation in the area, strengthens its links with the local population and with other organisations and institutions and, ultimately, increases the effectiveness of the integration paths pursued through the social farm experience.*

*\*Acts of the National Conference "The new frontiers of multifunctionality: social farming" - Ripatrasone (AP) 2006.*

Finally, the transition into a greener and more sustainable business model is a priority for the European economy and especially for the agrifood sector. This transition offers a broad selection of pathways where UN Sustainable Development Goals and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) performance criteria of businesses are not just theoretical approaches but are strongly connected with the sustainability of the economic development. A new demand for solid and real impact activities will rise where Social and Organic Farming can play a very significant role, under a specific common European Framework.



# SOURCE

Boosting **S**ocial and **O**rganic farming for incl**U**sive and  
sustainable **g**rowing **e**Conomi**E**s

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