Social farming: re-connecting economy with social needs in rural areas

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Entry points

RD in its traditional concept: Attract flows of external resources (the State will do the rest) economy as separated from social intervention

- Economy in Rural Development
  - ideas & initiatives supporting economic activities
  - rural areas are attractive also for their public goods (nature and communities)

- Rural communities
  - changing communities (elders, newcomers, new families, local inhabitants)
  - specific needs asking for equivalent services but facing strong difficulties (fiscal crisis, scale economy, lack of innovation)

Rural change: Mobilising internal resource for local needs also than attracting
(integrate economy with social/Health issues)

- Lack in rural living infrastructure is a threat for economic development
- Economic and social development could mutually reinforce in rural areas
- Enterprises may act with responsibility
- Local community need to increase their control on living resources

1. Social development in rural areas
2. Valorise farming for social inclusion
Contents

- Social farming: what is it?
- Social farming: what is new?
- Social farming: how it grows?
- Social farming: lessons learned
- Social farming: policy remarks
**Key messages**

1. **Crisis:** is asking for a deep paradigm shift able to combine private and public goods.

2. **Policies:** should support and integrate social and economic development at territorial level and should better focus on **specific** needs in rural areas.

3. **SF** technically is an **under-explored area of multifunctional agriculture** useful for urban and rural areas that fit the paradigm shift.

4. **SF already exists** as an effort of pro-active farmers and provides everyday services for less empowered people and communities.

5. **The concept** of social farming is highly demanding in terms of **integrated policies for rural areas**.

6. **Social farmers** are claiming for **recognition** able to increase the general awareness about the idea and to facilitate their activity, **not for funding**.
SF: what is it?

a tentative definition

- It is both a **traditional** and an **innovative** use of agriculture frequently introduced from "**grassroots level**" by both new and established farmers.

- It includes activities that use agricultural resources, both from plants and animals, in order to promote (or to generate) **therapy, rehabilitation, social inclusion, education** and **social services**.

- It is related to farm activities where (**small**) groups of **people** can stay and work together with family farmers and social practitioners.

- It **addresses diverse needs** for different groups of less empowered people (intellectual disability, physical disability, psychiatric, drugs & alcohol recovery, Children, Youngsters, Prisoners (ex), Long run non occupied, Terminal patients, Burn out, Elders).

- It **mobilises local resources** (agriculture and knowledge) for social needs.
Combating Poverty and social exclusion in rural areas
Budapest, 11-12 June 2009

Moncalvo Farm (IT)
- Family farm
- Kindergarten
- Services paid by families and municipality

Elde Knipeers farm (NL)
- Family farm
- Elders
- Services paid by the Insurance system

Solid’action (FR)
- Association
- Job creation for less empowered people
- Projects funded by social funds

SF: some examples

Colombini
Agricoltura Biologica
- Family farm
- Organic vegetables
- Didactical and social farm for disabled
- Reputation and added value for product sold

Coping with nature
Dialogue with ethic consumers
Direct selling
Fresh food for families
Anna: the second chance in a vineyard

Maria: 70% extent of disability, 10 years of conventional treatments before entering in a farm
SF already exist

From traditional communities. It re-started everywhere in the 70’s

Table 1.2: Number of social farms in the different SoFar countries and the number of users (Source SoFar estimation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Institutional</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Nº users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belgium (Flanders)</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>2.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- associative social inclusion farms / gardens</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>400</td>
<td>400</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- pedagogic farms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- therapeutic farms</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
<td>500</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>162</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- therapeutic farms</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- school farms</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>2*</td>
<td>92**</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>2.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>165</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- therapeutic/inclusive/social farms/ gardens</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- prisons</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- pedagogic farms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>746</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>839</td>
<td>10.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An on going process: quick growth of new projects recognition of existing practices
SF: bottlenecks
it links many sectors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agricultural and Rural Policies</th>
<th>Social policies</th>
<th>Health sector, Education, Justice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EU level</strong></td>
<td><strong>Member states, different traditions and culture in welfare systems</strong></td>
<td><strong>Member states, Diverse welfare systems, some common trends</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common rules and policies</td>
<td>At EU level, common goals, comparative method and exchange of good practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farms</td>
<td><strong>Third sector</strong></td>
<td><strong>Voluntary associations and charity groups</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Public sector</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Is difficult to create a common framework
2. Easier to start from rural development policies
3. Awareness of institutions as a key word to find new solutions
SF: what is new?

- Technical components
- Conceptual components
- Social components
Technical components:

- Cope with nature (space, time, biological cycles)
- Rationale: action -> effects, responsibility, no judgment
- Human factors: connect formal services and informal networks
- A facilitating environment supportive for flexible inclusive paths
- Adopt scope economy
- Large supply of territorial services more than concentrated ones

![Diagram showing urban, peri-urban, intermediate rural, and deep rural areas with services for urban citizens and services in rural areas, including urban welfare and rural welfare]]
Conceptual components:

Adopt **win win** solutions (economy with social) and mobilise local un-expected resources for local needs

**Users**: more and more personalised services better integrated in the local society, support for families

**Farmers**: new networks, better reputation/ diversification and income, involves young farmers

**Care/health workers**: more tools

**Local institutions**: more services at a better value
Social components

Reshaping arenas

- **knowledge**: multidisciplinary and linkages among sectors, collective learning, common knowledge
- **innovation**: a social process, organizational innovation,
- **policy networks**: dynamic process of change, bottom up approaches, networks, identity and motivations
Mobilising resources:
Orti E.T.I.C.I.
www.ortietici.it

Research centre

Reconnect private and public

society

consumers

Farmer

Pisa University
students

Social Coop
local community

research on efficacy agricultural know how

land Social know how
SF: how it grows?

Supportive environments
- Communicating
- Codifying practices
- Exchanging knowledge
- Networking
- Collective learning

Supportive tools
- Start-up innovators
- Pilot initiatives
- Results

New projects
- New arenas
- New institutional levels

Increasing political awareness

Supporting rules

From sector policies to more integrated policies
A slow continuous transformational process that starts from the bottom

Responsible Amiata (IT) kick off 2009

Inter-cultural/professional integration
Lesson learned

1. **Social inclusion** in rural areas starts from reshaping local society

2. **SF** is a **paradigmatic example** in this direction
   - It is both **traditional and innovative** (differently spread in EU)
   - It fits the **transition** in rural areas and opens new bridges with urban ones
   - It re-establishes links among local resources and needs, economy and social issues

3. **Innovation** is always on the ground, especially in more fertile environments;
   - we are **enable to recognize** and to re-adapt traditional attitudes
     - (subsistence farms and mutual help-nets);
   - It can be **latent for a long time** before it starts to match new needs (crisis);
   - It emerges when the **awareness** in project holders and stakeholders increases;

4. **Local knowledge at work**: Local actors in SF are central and they grow by exchanging and organizing collective learning processes

5. **Farmers** can be (are) more than just economic entrepreneurs.
   - They can link private and public goods, economic, social and environmental elements
   - but only by collaborating with other specialised competencies
Policy remarks:

1. **Rural policies** are already addressing SF
   - Diversification and social services in rural areas
   - But they are still far from fully incorporating the concept (diversification in peri-urban areas)

2. **Social/health policies** are addressing aspects related to social inclusion in rural areas
   - But they don’t fully see/recognize specificity in rural needs and some innovations like social farming

3. **Social farming** is not demanding for subsidies but it’s struggling to operate under a better integrated umbrella
Setting the political agenda

1. **Policies** can be **supportive for social innovations** like SF
   - Creating **supportive environments**: understand, recognise and promote
   - Adopting **supportive tools** -> to sustain **collective actions**
     - Stimulating Integrated pilot projects and exchanges (locally - at EU level - Progress)
     - Enhancing linkages among research and practices (VII EU RF),
     - Supporting networks (Leader, Rural Network)
   - Defining **supportive rules**: guidelines and frames to facilitate start-up and to take care of the users’ rights (integrated views of diverse DGs)

2. **Combating poverty and social exclusion in rural areas**
   - is highly demanding in terms of **policy integration**, especially in order to mobilise local unexplored resources, like for SF
   - Rural development policies are contributing to the process of change but the process is still at the very beginning
Summing up

- SF is still working in the **shadow** in most EU Countries

- SF is **inclusive** and it’s offering services for thousand of people in rural and peri-urban areas

- SF projects are often growing **outside specific supports** but they are struggling trying to link diverse un-specific tools and rules (RD, Social, Health)

- SF works as a **collective action** able to build new strategies, concepts, ideas and organizations that meet social needs

- **SF** is already producing **reorganisation** at local level but it should affect also higher institutional levels (Countries/EU)
Thank you

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Building the change

- **Priority Area-1: Defining and reinforcing the idea;**
  - Analyse existing practices
  - Connect SF to main political guidelines for linked sectors
  - Identify specificities and common grounds

- **Priority Area-2: Improving knowledge**
  - Research & Education,
  - Knowledge transfer
  - Communication;

- **Priority Area-3: Building networks;**
  - Share activities and needs
  - Mobilise resources
  - Involve new actors

- **Priority Area-4: Identifying a common judicial framework and shared vision;**
  - Recognise the importance of the “local” context
  - Keep ethics and values at the heart of regulation in social farming
  - Keep Service-Users’ Rights paramount in the legal Framework