



Project no.: 022682

Project acronym: So Far

Project full title: Social Services in Multifunctional Farms ('Social Farming')

SPECIFIC SUPPORT ACTION

PRIORITY [8.1.B.1.1] [Modernisation and sustainability of agriculture and forestry, including their multifunctional role in order to ensure the sustainable development and promotion of rural areas]

Deliverables D 4 & D 16 – “Regional/country platforms innovation Strategies & SWOT analysis of participating countries” by Gerald Assouline

Due Date of deliverable:
Actual submission date: M16

Start date of contract: 1st may, 2006
Duration: 33 months

Lead contractor for this deliverable: QAP (France)

Project co-funded by the European Commission within the Sixth Framework programme (2002-2006)
Dissemination level: **PP**

Table of contents

Introduction	P. 3
1. So Far project initial intentions	3
11. Recalling the technical annex: the work package description	3
12. A qualitative presentation in So Far technical annex	4
2. Methodology development	5
21. Timing and sequences	5
22. Country/regional platforms	5
23. European platforms	7
3. Content of the participatory platforms	8
31. 1 st national platforms	8
Belgium (Flanders)	8
France	13
Germany	17
Ireland	23
Italy	29
Netherlands	34
Slovenia	37
32. 1 st European platform: synthesis of evaluation	40
33. 2 nd national platforms	46
Belgium (Flanders)	46
France	49
Germany	52
Ireland	58
Italy	61
Netherlands	64
Slovenia	67
34. 2 nd European platform: synthesis of evaluation	71

Introduction

The ambition of this document is to put in perspective goals, methodology and results which have been committed by So Far research team and developed during the So Far project. The core methodology which has been implemented is induced by the platform concept, conceived as a space of deliberation to be created at national or regional and European levels.

So the project team organised two national or regional platforms and two European platforms, from spring 2007 to summer 2008.

To analyse this methodological process and its outcomes , we present :

- So Far project initial intentions, as they were stated in the technical annex,
- The methodology development, as it has been concretely implemented,
- The content, balance and strategic outcomes, including SWOT analysis, of the two national or regional platform series and the two European ones. In all those processes, social farming stakeholders of the participating countries have been actively involved..

1. So Far project initial intentions

11. Recalling the technical annex: The work package description

Objectives

- To produce progressive acquaintance, comparison and interaction among participants, finally bringing them to produce shared position papers, at country/regional as well as European levels, which will contain strategic proposals for innovation ('innovation strategies')

Description of work

- Defining a common framework;
- Managing and supervising country/regional platforms (one per country) gathering researchers, representatives of public bodies, and rural players of the region (animating meetings and electronic exchange/debate) (months 8-16);
- Facilitating the participatory designing of country/regional innovation strategies, within these platforms;
- Managing and supervising a European platform gathering representatives of public bodies, and rural players of the participating regions (animating meetings and electronic exchange/debate) (months 16-24);
- Facilitating the participatory designing of a European innovation strategy;

- Drawing methodological lessons' learnt.

Deliverables

Producing:

- Country/regional innovation strategies (D4, month 16);
- 'European innovation strategy' (D5, month 24)
- Methodological lessons learnt (D6, month 24);
- Monothematic papers: D12, D13, D14, D15 (months 24)

Milestones and expected result

- *Milestone 2*: designing of country/regional position papers (innovation strategies) (month 16);
- *Milestone 3*: designing of a European innovation strategy (month 24)

12. A qualitative presentation in So Far Technical Annex ¹ Platforms at regional scale will be set up by each partner.

Country teams (part of coordination committee/expert group) will be direct responsible of their creation and management. Particularly, they will take care to organise platforms in a way that all diverse realities will be represented as well as respecting a proper dimension of the working group (i.e. 20-30 people).

Evolution of the project activities from the local level to the build-up of the European Platform

Enlarged international meeting on month 16

("European platform's meeting" -involving researchers and representatives of stakeholders/rural players working in the participating country/regional platforms) will mark a shift in project focus and activities – from regional/country to European level.

During this meeting the following tasks will be accomplished:

- Presentation and discussion of country/regional innovation strategies ;
- Sharing of objectives and workplan to designing a European innovation strategy .

European innovation strategy will particularly be targeted at reforming the Community agricultural policy (designing of CAP Programme 2007-2013), namely its so-called 'second pillar' (rural development area).

To this purpose, representatives of the relevant Commission services (DG Agriculture), will be invited to participate in the European platform's meeting, in order to contribute to the designing of shared specific objectives and workplan.

Following these outcomes, each country platform, during the period between month 16 and month 24, will work at elaborating positions to be brought/promoted at European level.

A new European platform's meeting on month 24 will contribute to final discussion and conclusions, allowing the drawing of an agreed document.

Outcomes

¹ So Far Technical Annex, 14.11.2005, p. 15

Swot analysis

A SWOT analysis, based also on new knowledge created during the first phase of the project will be part of platforms' work. Each platform will produce its SWOT, referring to conditions of its area. SWOT analysis will represent a new deliverable of the project. It will outline views on current situation and potential of social farming (strengths, weaknesses opportunities and threats) representing a necessary basis for the following designing of 'innovation strategies'.

Monitoring of social, economic and ecological impacts

Innovation strategies will include also the designing of a methodology to determine and monitor social, ecological and economic impact of social farming – a monitoring system that could be implemented in the various participant countries/regions. On this purpose, a number of social farms will be selected in each participant country/region, to take part in a monitoring trajectory to quantifying social, economic and ecological features.

2. Methodology development

21. Timing and sequences

Between month 8 and 16,

- (i) Each country organised **one platform** which lasted one day or more;
- (ii) Between this country platform and the **1st EU meeting** (month 16), there has been a fine-tuning process, using email, web and sub-meetings with specific groups of stakeholders.

Between month 16 and 24:

- (iii) Each country organised **a second platform**
- (iv) Between this country second platform and the **2st EU meeting** (month 24), there has been a fine-tuning process, using email, web and sub-meetings with specific groups of stakeholders.

So there have been two plenary country platforms (month 8 – 16, month 16 – 24), supported, prepared and concluded by smaller meetings. In practice, those country platforms have been regional platform for the biggest countries (France, Italy, Germany) and smaller ones for the Netherlands, Belgium (Flanders), Slovenia and Ireland.

One goal of the whole dynamic was to build a cumulative process : each of those meetings (regional or European), from regional to European ones had to contribute to the construction of :

- mutual knowledge of what's going on in each country,
- identification of « what do we have in common »,
- perception of « what we can learn from each other »,
- joint reflection on questions and issues to be addressed to policy makers, at European and at local levels.

All this process was supposed to be rooted on the experiences and shared interests of the many stakeholders concerned by the development of social farming in Europe, that we could mobilise in those different fora.

22. Country/regional platforms

The purpose of the workshop method was to formulate concrete solutions and action proposals based on the participants' own experiences so that they can put these into practice. It was also to make converge stakeholders' concerns and visions into a common strategic perspective. This method works best with 15-25 participants

This kind of workshop is a particular kind of meeting that follows certain rules. During the course of the workshop there is time for brainstorming, debate, presentation and proposition. The work alternates between plenary sessions and group work. workshop form and rules are there to ensure that everyone is heard, that all ideas are included in the debate and that participants work towards formulating an action/strategy plan.

Procedure description

The future workshop model used as a reference² for the platform development, incorporates a 3-phase work process:

>> Beginning with a critical analysis of the current situation (the critical analysis phase).

>> This analysis is then used to focus on future visions (the visionary phase) which are subjected to a reality check

>> And then finally transformed into action and policy proposals (the implementation phase).

The most common model is the 1-day or 1 day and half workshop, where:

- the morning is devoted to the critical analysis phase,
- the first part of the afternoon to the visionary phase
- and the last part of the afternoon (or following morning) to the implementation phase.

The workshop follows the 3 phases:

>> **Critical analysis** done by each stakeholders' group : focus is given to critical analysis of the current technological situation. This criticism is written down on paper. The most important points are selected and given themes. This session is concluded by a plenary where all groups present their diagnosis.

>> **Visionary phase** done by each stakeholders' group. The critical analysis in phase 1 forms the basis of a brainstorming session. Suggestions and ideas are noted down on large poster boards as draft action proposals, and these are given themes. This session is concluded by a plenary.

>> **Implementation/strategy elaboration** phase with mixed groups. This phase focuses on a critical evaluation of the draft action proposals. The possibility for action and strategy building is assessed and the elaboration is developed further, with emphasis on more concrete steps towards action or the implementation of a project or development strategy construction. The terms , from short to long term , should be clearly taken into account. A plenary concludes this session.

Results: Action/policy proposals.

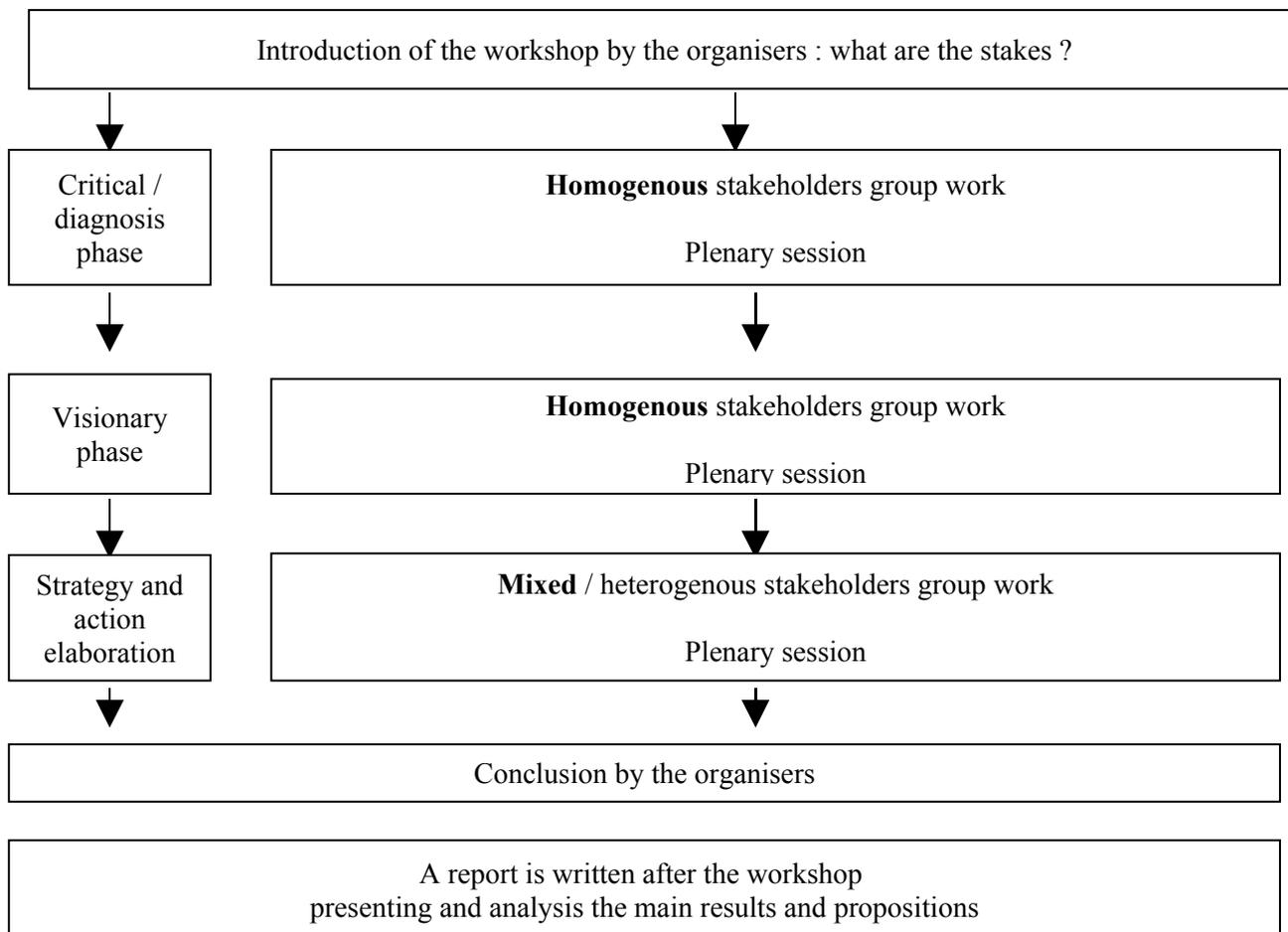
Indirect results: The workshop creates debate and dialogue, and this dialogue often continues beyond the framework of the country/regional exercise. New ties are forged and this can lead to further action on the part of participants through their respective networks.

Presentation of results: All workshop results should be gathered in a report in which additional aspects of the project can also be included. This input was crucial for

² Experimented by the Danish Board of Technology, Copenhagen, Denmark. <http://www.tekno.dk/subpage.php3?article=1235&toppic=kategori12&language=uk#future>

the European platform.

The dynamic of the workshop



Suitability and results

Direct results: The results of the workshop lead to a number of more or less concrete

23. European platform

1st EU platform programme : 18 – 19 October 2007

Thursday, 18th October 2007

- 13:00 – Lunch
- 14 :30
- 14 :30 – - Welcome by the scientific officer of EU VI Framework Programme - Massimo Burioni;
- 15.00 - Introduction to the meeting by "So Far" project coordinator - Francesco Di Iacovo (University of Pisa)
- 15.00 - The national views on social/care farming: basic features and main outcomes of country/regional platforms - presentations by participants
- 16:15 - Break
- 16:45
- 16:45 – The national views on social farming (second part)
- 17:15
- 17:15 – Starting debate: "Building an EU perspective for social/care farming" - Gerald Assouline (QAP Decision) and Joost Dessein (Ghent University) moderate the
- 18:20

- discussion
- 18:20 – Announcing the “video” initiative - Paolo Pieroni (University of Pisa)
- 18:30
- 20:00 “Social” dinner at the Restaurant *La Manufacture*
- Friday, 19th October 2007**
- 8 :30 – Insights into some cases across Europe – presentations by participants from
9.30 France, Germany and Belgium
- 9.30 – Social/care farming in Europe: an overview of basic features and key questions -
10.00 Jan Hassink (PRI, Wageningen)
- 10.00 – Break
- 10 :30
- 10 :30 – Debate : “Building a common EU policy perspective” - Deirdre O’Connor
(University of Dublin) and Katja Vadnal (University of Ljubljana) moderate the
12 :30 discussion
- 12:30 Conclusions – Francesco Di Iacovo (University of Pisa)

2nd EU platform programme : 26 – 27 June 2008

Thursday, 26th June 2008

- 13:00 – Welcome lunch (informal in group session)
- 14 :30
- 14 :30 –
 - Introduction: Massimo Burioni Scientific Officer SoFar project
 - The aims of SoFar project and 2nd EU platform, Francesco Di Iacovo (SoFar Coordinator)
- 15.00
 - The national views about innovation strategies: basic features and main outcomes of country/regional platforms (presented by participants - 15 minutes for each country)
- 15.00 -
- 16:15 Break
- 16:15 –
- 16:45
 - The national views on innovation strategies (second part)
- 17:15
- 17:15 –
 - Starting debate: “Building an EU perspective for social/care farming” Greet Bloom (WUR)
- 18:15 (Thomas van Elsen (FIBL Germany) and Greet Bloom (WUR) moderate the discussion)
- 18.30
 - Study visit to a social farm
 - Updating the “video” initiative - Paolo Pieroni (University of Pisa)
- 21:00 “Social” dinner at the farm

Friday, 27th June 2008

- 9.00 – 9.30
 - An innovation strategy for Social farming in EU: basic features and key views by country platforms – Gerald Assouline (QAP decision, France)
- 9 :30 –
 - Debate: “Building an EU innovative strategy for Social Farming” - Deirdre O’Connor (University of Dublin) and Katja Vadnal (University of Lubjana) moderate the discussion
- 12 :00 lunch (informal in group session)
- 13 :30
- 13 :30 –
 - A synthesis for the EU innovation strategy for social farming in EU Francesco Di Iacovo (SoFar coordinator)
- 14.00
- 14.00 –
 - Discussant on Social farming in EU and innovation strategies: Elena Saraceno Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA) European Commission
- 14.30
 - Reaction from invited stakeholders
- 14:30 –
- 15:15
 - Final debate and conclusions (“Role and strategies for social farming across Europe”):
- 15:15 – (Guido van Huylenbroeck (UniGent) and Greet Blom (WUR) moderate the discussion)
- 16:20
- 16.20 –
 - Conclusion: Francesco Di Iacovo (SoFar Coordinator)

3. Content of the platforms

31. 1st national platforms

BELGIUM (Flanders)

The participants

On March 27, 2007, the national platform in Flanders took place. There were around 10 people who are involved in green care, such as green care farmers and care institutions working together with care farms. Moreover, there were around 15 people who are representative of umbrella organisations related to care or agriculture, policy makers, and the society in general. All stakeholders within the green care sector in Flanders were represented.

The objectives of the platform

- Inventarisation of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threads of Green Care in Flanders.
- Designing strategies for the future development of Green Care in Flanders, based on the SWOT-analysis of the first objective.

The results of the platform

The results of the platform are presented in 2 parts. The first part gives the SWOT analysis, including the conclusions of the plenary session. The second part is related to the SOR and entail the innovation strategies that were formulated during the platform. At the end of the first national platform, participants had a positive feeling related to the outcomes of the national platform. They indicated to be willing to participate in a next platform, if there is an added value compared to the first platform.

SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strong internal organisation ▪ Diversified offer ▪ Link between society, agriculture and care ▪ Number is increasing ▪ Individuality of green care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Physical distance ▪ Figurative distance ▪ Communication ▪ Green care is exclusive ▪ Green care is isolated ▪ Lack of engagement of non-agricultural administration
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ cooperation with other professions ▪ Green care has a high caress factor ▪ More and more 'other' farms emerge ▪ legal framework ▪ increasing social demand to diversified care paths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ danger that accidents with these persons are discussed in the media and blown up ▪ different policy priorities ▪ lack of interest from the care sector ▪ professionalization and size increase of green care ▪ The evolution of the agricultural and

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> horticultural sector ▪ financial basis
--	---

Strengths of Flemish green care

Five important strengths can be distinguished:

- Green care in Flanders has a strong internal organisation. There are several initiatives such as 'policy research centre Green Care', and the received attention by the provinces and the Flemish rural development policy
- The offer of Green Care is diversified, very solid, both in width wise as in dept. A lot of different target groups can make use of the care. Moreover, farmers are suitable for care: they can manage complex situations and have a natural link with care. The location (on the countryside) and the farm structure (most farms are family farms) make that there is a strong offer of green care.
- Green care provides the link between the society, agriculture and care. In this way, agriculture is given a new place in the society, but this place is sometimes questioned. Green care gives also a better image.
- The number of care farmers is increasing: the interest for green care by farmers is steadily increasing. Also the demand from the care sector and education is continuously increasing.
- The individuality of Green Care. Both the client and the farmer get a high self value by using green care. The job satisfaction and the satisfaction of the farm family is high. The informal and family character of this kind of care is complementary to the more formal care forms.

Weaknesses of Flemish green care

Six important weaknesses can be distinguished:

- The physical distance between the care institutions and the farms is often big: the care institutions are often located in urban areas, while care farms are mostly situated in the countryside.
- There is also a figurative distance: the care sector does not know green care sufficiently, and has a lack of trust in the agricultural sector. The care sector has also a misperception about agriculture (polluting, dangerous, too mechanised, ...)
- Communication between care farmers and care institutions is quit tricky. There is a lack of possibilities for exchange or (therapeutic) education. The care sector gives too little information about the files of the clients, and gives little support concerning content to the farmers. The farmers lack pedagogic education. Both sectors also often speak in a different language.
- Green care is exclusive, en particularly oriented to clients which can make an appeal to care institutions. Green care has a high threshold for clients who are not linked to an institution, so it is discriminating.
- Green care is not enough embedded into a bigger, holistic care path. It is too much isolated. What is happening after the stay on a care farm, e.g. for a time-out? Clients often need also other aid questions that have to be managed at the same time. The global sequence of the client's file does not happen in practice.
- The non-agricultural administration are not sufficiently engaged. Support of the policy domain related to welfare and education are very limited, there is no structural support. The judiciary, health and employment policy domains often have also links with green care, but until now, they were not involved.

Opportunities for green care in Flanders

Five important opportunities are distinguished:

- There is an increasing social demand to diversified care paths (time-out, inclusion, from education, elderly people, ...). Also the medical disciplines discovers bit by bit the relevance of green care. Green care knows a big social support, as a consequence of

the improved image of the agriculture and horticulture, and the attraction of the countryside.

- There is a legal framework that arranges green care. The policy domain agriculture and fishery highly supports green care. The current legislation enables to have green care as second branch within the farm. There is a tendency towards administrative simplification that can lower the administrative pressure on care farmers.
- More and more 'other' farms emerge (hobby farmers, managers, compost farms, ...). They have the potential to become a care farm. The increasing amount of horses and gardens increases the possibilities to develop a diversified offer of green care.
- Green care has a high care factor, and gets a lot of media attention, goodwill, ...
- The cooperation with other professions (cooks, bakeries, ...) can improve the development of green care. Other groups of profession take care of clients in a similar way, but do not receive compensation.

Threats for green care in Flanders

Five important threats are distinguished:

- The fragmented competences of welfare and the too small financial basis from only one administration. The current system of remuneration is too limited and not flexible. A – symbolic – remuneration of the labour of the client, is a big problem.
- The evolution of the agricultural and horticultural sector can decrease the number of care farms. The tendency of intensifying, mechanising and increasing scale, combined with the obligation to follow strict rules for production, make that future farms are less suited for green care. In combination with the increased demand, this can lead to a too big demand for a too little offer.
- The professionalization and size increase of green care, can distant the personal relation between the client and the farmer, what can reduce the quality of the green care. The over-professionalization can harm the individuality of green care.
- The continuous lack of interest from the care sector. Not all institutions are willing to apply new forms of green care. New experiments in the care sector still receive limited financial and other support. The integration of a new form in the functioning of an institution is not evident.
- Each minister stresses different elements in the policy. These different policy priorities can thwart green care. For example, the attention for the target groups within green care can be pushed away by other target groups (foreign people, people seeking political asylum, ...) by which the attention and the means are used on another place.
- Within green care, all the time, social vulnerable persons are taking care of. There is the danger that accidents with these persons are discussed in the media and blown up. The sector is highly vulnerable for these accidents. The positive image build throughout the years, can disappear very fast.

The SOR analysis

The SOR (Strategic Orientation Round) takes the SWOT as a starting point. With this research method, one can work out to what degree the strengths help or the weaknesses hinder to exploit the opportunities or to overcome the threats. Moreover, the SOR analysis indicates in what development stage the sector is: offensive, defensive, in a stage of reorientation or in crisis.

	Weighted score
Offensive	21.8
Defensive	20.5
Reorientation	17.0
Crisis	16.8

The highest average score we can find in the offensive and defensive quadrant. This means that from a global point of view, the strengths of the green care sector have a higher influence

on the external factors than the weaknesses. In other words, the strengths of green care have a high potential to use opportunities or to overcome the threats.

The offensive quadrant has the highest score. The sector can grow the most to use the offensive strategy. The sector can be sure that the strengths are strong enough to use the opportunities. The second highest score in the defensive quadrant shows that those strengths are strong enough to overcome the threats. This is a positive result for the green care sector. There is a distance between the scores, with the highest scores for the offensive and defensive strategy. But we can not neglect the other two quadrants. This means that the effect of the weaknesses is also noticeable.

What strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats have the highest influence?

Strengths,

- The strong internal organisation of green care as sector is the most important strengths
- Green care as link between society, agriculture and care
- The offer of green care

Further develop these strengths, can improve the sector

Weaknesses

- Insufficient engagement of the non-agricultural administration in the support of the initiatives is by far the most important weakness!!
- Difficult communication between the care farm and the care institution

Further work on these weaknesses, can highly improve the sector

Opportunities

- A increasing social demand
- Legal framework

The sector can not change these external factors

Threats

- Lack of interest from the care sector, or more specific the involved policy domain
- The limited system of remuneration

The sector can not change these external factors

	k1: stijgende maatschappelijk vraag	k2: wetelijk kader	k3: meer anderssoortige bedrijven	k4: hoge 'aaibaarheidsfactor'	k5: samenwerking met andere beroepsgroepen	b1: huidige systeem van vergoeding	b2: evolutie van de land- en tuinbouwsector	b3: overprofessionalisering bedreigt eigenheid	b4: desinteresse vanuit de zorgsector	b5: andere beleidsprioriteiten doorkruisen GZ	b6: kwetsbaarheid door incidenten	totaal per rij
s1: interne organisatie	25	42	30	7	30	38	29	23	28	23	36	311
s2: aanbod van GZ	32	11	30	26	32	15	20	12	26	13	5	222
s3: GZ als verbinding tussen maatschappij, landbouw en zorg	16	18	22	34	23	22	27	24	29	29	27	271
s4: stijgend aantal zorgboeren	36	14	14	17	7	22	23	9	19	22	10	193
s5: eigenheid van GZ	17	9	12	31	9	7	16	34	20	4	4	163
z1: fysieke afstand tussen bedrijf en voorziening	16	4	13	6	7	2	6	2	16	1	0	73
z2: figuurlijke afstand tussen landbouw en zorgsector	14	13	14	26	9	13	21	21	28	10	25	194
z3: communicatie en vorming	19	22	16	23	16	16	13	30	24	12	40	231
z4: GZ is exclusief	20	20	16	7	16	7	2	4	5	3	0	100
z5: GZ is te weinig ingebed in meer omvattende zorgtrajecten	14	18	8	18	16	24	7	15	27	26	21	194
z6: onvoldoende engagement van niet-landbouw administraties	30	46	19	5	38	50	24	15	25	43	25	320
totaal kolom	239	217	194	200	203	216	188	189	247	186	193	

Strategies

Overall goal

The Green care sector in Flanders is based on a strong internal organisation but it has the challenge to further improve the sector. Communication will be a key item to reach this goal.

Specific objectives

The specific objectives are linked to the SWOT. Especially the strenghts and weaknesses raise specific objectives to further improve the green care sector in Flanders. The opportunities and threats are objectives that can not be established by the sector itselfs. These are constraints for the sector.

Strenghts,

- The strong internal organisation of green care as sector is the most important strenghts
- Green care as link between society, agriculture and care
- The offer of green care

Further develop these strenghts, can improve the sector

Weaknesses

- Insufficient engagement of the non-agricultural administration in the support of the initiatives is by far the most important weakness!!
- Difficult communication between the care farm and the care institution

Further work on these weaknesses, can highly improve the sector

Opportunities

- A increasing social demand
- Legal framework

The sector can not change these external factors

Threats

- Lack of interest from the care sector, or more specific the involved policy domain
- The limited system of remuneration

The sector can not change these external factors

Actions and Tasks

In the table below, Actions and tasks related to the Flemish innovation strategies are given.

Actions	Tasks
Increase the public appeal of care farming	Obtain the attention of popular press. Support Centre renews every 6 months the planning for external communication.
Reduce prejudices about agriculture	Publications in specialised journals. At least 2 publications each year.
Making known the possibilities of green care by means of farmer unions and press	Publications in specialised journals. At least 2 publications each year.
More communication between farmers and care institutions	Support Centre organises meetings with farmers and social workers. In 5 regions 2 meetings a year.
Working for one legal framework for Green Care	Brain work with concerned people. Meeting with administration for education (March 2008), for welfare (April 2008).
Clarify the tasks of the support centre and, at	Description in the Quality Guide of the Support

the other side, the care institutions	Centre (finished in Novembre 2007). Presentation and discussion of the Quality Guide on regional meetings with care farmers and care institutions (March 2008).
Improve the guidance of the cooperation between farmers and assistance	Become eligible for more subsidy. Draft a strong dossier. Compose a working group with concerned people.
Reduce the social workers' distrust of care farming	Description of quality requirements (Quality Guide, Novembre 2007)
Aim at support from non-agricultural administrations	Talks between different departments of administration (agriculture, welfare, education, internal affairs, justice, ...)

FRANCE

Introduction

The French participatory platform took place on Wednesday 27th of June 2007, in a therapeutic farm, La Ferme de Bellechambre, near Grenoble, Rhone Alpes region.

Some 20 persons, mainly from Isère county, came to the event. The methodology used has been the one agreed in So Far network: participatory, with different sequences articulating group and plenary sessions (see below).

The participants

The initial rationale for inviting potential participants was to create a space of dialogue and collective elaboration between four categories of stakeholders:

- Cat. A: Actors directly involved in social farming: farmers, farm managers, social workers,
- Cat. B: Representatives of decentralised public administrations, in contact and in support (financial) to farms,
- Cat. C: Representatives of local municipalities and public authorities and other local actors (like agricultural professional organisations), dealing with agricultural, social and health policies,
- Cat. D: Beneficiaries and users representatives: families, patients associations, medical and educational structures.

In total, some 40 persons had been invited according to this logic. And the platform gathered 18 persons. This difference can be explained as follows:

- A very intense political and electoral context, making local elected politicians rather unavailable,
- A traditional attitude of the French administration of not participating into events it does not organise, nor control.

It means that the categories of political and administrative actors were underrepresented.

The distribution of the participating population can be presented as follows:

- cat. A: 61%
- cat. B = 0 %
- cat. C = 17%
- cat. D = 11%
- research + animation = 11%.

It can be considered as very representative of the diversity and fragmentation of organisational forms of social and therapeutic farming in France (cf French state of the art).

Beneficiaries could make hear their voices.

From March to June 2007, we organised a participatory photo workshop with a group of seven handicapped children (from 7 to 13 years old) going once a week to a farm.

The process has been very successful in terms of pleasure expressed by kids in participating in such artistic activity, pleasure for the professional artist intervening in this workshop and quality of the visual result.

A set of 130 photos selected in large part by kids has been organised as a slide set, into three chapters : the Little Doucette (cow), Us and Us Again by Gerald Assouline. A movie will be edited to be presented at the first European platform, entitled "**Little Farmers Stories**".

The whole work reflects rather well the relationship between children and the farm environment (animals, nature, farmers), the relationship within the group of children and their educators, the seasons passing, their work at the farm.

The audiovisual set has been presented in introduction, at the regional platform as a contribution of a group of beneficiaries to the debate.

This film will be also a contribution to the visual documentary video work to be carried out in WP4.

The objectives of the platform

In the invitation letter sent to potential participants, the objectives were presented as follows:

- To facilitate the dialogue and confrontation of actors connected to social and therapeutic farming in our region, with different professions and levels of intervention;
- To make them reflect in small groups and all together on the current situation, on perspectives and on strategic priorities to implement, in order to consolidate the development of social farming;
- To feed a broad debate and enlarge the networks;
- To produce and report after the platform which will circulate and nourish the European platform.

Additional objectives were also:

- to go beyond the fragmentation of social farming in the region , by helping those people to meet and know what each other is doing.
- To initiate the building process of reflection on the future of social farming , which does not exist.

Those objectives were explicitly shared and agreed among participants.

The results of the platform

The main topics of debate and conclusions exchanged during the plenary sessions are presented here.

Diagnosis phase

>> *Evolution of needs and offer*

- The offer can't satisfy the needs, delays are too long for accessing to structures, filters are too numerous.
- Inclusion periods are too short comparing to the needs , this facilitates precarity. It is easier to find a work inclusion structure than a residence for people in major difficulties. Hosting persons in major social and psychological difficulties should be permanent.
- Rising demand of consumers for food quality products and basket delivery system.

>> *Public policies*

- The fragmentation of policies – agricultural / social / health – is such that social and health policies ignore totally agricultural problems and farm constraints. Social farming has no real recognition and is not considered in current policy constructions.
- Social inclusion policies have be reformed to contribute to decrease unemployment rate: it means that they most help those who have major chances to reintegrate work market. What to do with long term unemployed people?
- Building a project depends too much on interpersonal relations and not enough on structures. And financial procedures are so complicated that bigger structures with staff specialised in subsidy hunting have more chance to succeed.

>> *Positive impacts*

- For beneficiaries, farming is very positive: production steps, seasons, allow them to project into temporality. Cases of re-hospitalisation are rather rare, this is a good signal. For socially handicapped people, the way they re-integrate society is also another criteria.
- The recognition of others is important. In some cases, therapeutic farms are considered as exemplary: they are training centres for other farmers. The capacity of those social farms and of beneficiaries to respect food quality standards, norms, regulations, is considered as an important challenge.
- Natural heritage, landscape and environment are maintained by many social farms.
- They play a positive local economic role by being integrated into social and economic tissue.

>> *Obstacles*

- Lack of training capacities for staff with double competence, technical and social. The agri-social worker does not exist officially, while they play de facto an important role. No professional identity.
- The financial pressures are increasing on social farms: most of them are very dependent from subsidies which are decreasing. In the case of inclusion farms (Jardins de Cocagne), administration is asking them to self-fund at 50%, while they self-fund at 15 – 25%. Costs are also rising.
- In our region, land pressure is very intense, whatever in mountain areas or valleys. Building new farming projects is merely impossible and expending existing ones very costly.
- Labour regulation (with the 35 hours / week) imposes to recruit more staffs and polyvalent ones.

Visionary stage and projection

>> Needs

- They will increase , because of society dynamics and because of the enlarged recognition of handicap. "Borderline" people will be more numerous.

>> Foreseeable answers

- There is a strong trend to des-institutionalise the relation with beneficiaries: the professional goes to the person, the approach is more individual to develop accompanying services. It is done for budgetary reasons, it is less costly and justifies the decreasing importance of state in taking in charge those issues.
- This gives a chance for small structures like farms, with a risk of failure for the most fragile persons.
- The second major trend is privatisation and competition: Big hotel companies (Accor) are investing in hosting structures , like pension houses. In parallel, the pressure is high to broaden the hosting capacities to heterogeneous publics to fill up existing hosting capacities. A possible evolution could be competition and privatisation to host "generalist publics". Which can be more difficult for specific publics.
- In agriculture, the evolution will be towards more concentration and more diversification. Food safety regulation will be more rigorous. Support could be expected from agri-environmental policies or even bio-fuel incentives.

Strategic priorities

There is a strong convergence to assert the necessity to maintain the hosting of people in major difficulties (socially), in the current and future context of local and national budget pressures.

>> Priority 1: to make recognise social farming for its multiple functions: economic, social, environmental, territorial. This should be done at local , national and European (CAP reform) levels.

>> Priority 2: to develop product quality and proximity relations in social farms: it has an impact on territories, consum'actors, it is securing. This should contribute to answer to the necessity to develop economic viability of the farms. This viability should also suppose to preserve agricultural land.

>> Priority 3: to make recognise professional identity and develop training and skills of polyvalent staff, technical and social.

For achieving such priorities, two articulated orientations have been particularly deepened.

- The necessity to overpass fragmentation and strengthen networking strategy:
 - . This should facilitate the recognition of the specific function , social , economic, therapeutic, environmental , of this kind of agriculture: forms can differ – inclusion gardens, individual farms, associative ones – but the objective is common;

- . This connection of initiatives could be done at local level (in the territories where projects are developed), at regional level (as the region drains European subsidies). It could be relevant to build a social farming network in Rhone Alps region.
- The legal status of the farms:
 - . Legal forms are very different: private, associative. In fact, it reflects the lack of recognition of this kind of agriculture.
 - . The question was raised: is it a problem? Is it a real hurdle to the development of projects? Probably not. Is the status of non profitable organisation (association 1901) a good instrument?
 - . Maybe this is not the relevant debate: the most serious issue being the question of acceptance of the specific contribution of social farming.

SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ethic and high involvement of staff working in social / care farms. ▪ Quality of services and food products ▪ Good relation with consumers, looking for direct contact with such producers ▪ For beneficiaries, farming is very positive. ▪ Natural heritage, landscape and environment are maintained by many social farms. ▪ Positive local economic role by being integrated into social and economic tissue. ▪ Strong support of families and patients associations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of recognition of the specific contribution of social farming by policy making ▪ Existing social and health policies ignore the reality and constraints of social farming ▪ Lack of professional recognition of the professional identity of staff with double competence, technical and social. ▪ Lack of training capacities for staff with double competence, technical and social ▪ Fragmentation and strong heterogeneity of social farming ▪ Strong dependence from public support
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Needs will increase, because of society dynamics and of the enlarged recognition of handicap. "Borderline" people will be more numerous. ▪ Strong demand for product quality and proximity relations between consumers and social farms ▪ Strong demand for landscape and environment services from municipalities ▪ Support could be expected from agri-environmental policies. ▪ Strong trend to des-institutionalise the relation with beneficiaries: the approach is more individual to develop accompanying services. It is done for budgetary reasons. It gives a chance for small structures like farms. ▪ Awareness of the necessity to overpass fragmentation and strengthen networking strategy ▪ CAP reform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increasing budget pressures on farms, because of higher costs and fewer subsidies ▪ Intense competition for public subsidies, which puts at risk the quality of hosting services. ▪ High pressure to broaden the hosting capacities to heterogeneous publics to fill up existing hosting capacities. ▪ Increasing risk of failure for following up the most fragile persons. ▪ land pressure is very intense, whatever in mountain areas or valleys. ▪ Labour regulation (35 hours / week) imposes to recruit more staffs and polyvalent ones. ▪ financial procedures are so complicated that bigger structures with staff specialised in subsidy hunting have more chance to succeed

GERMANY

At the 11th of May 2007 the German project partner of the European SoFar- Project (Research Institute of Organic Farming (FiBL Germany)) invited 22 experts and stakeholders being concerned with the topic of social farming to gather in Kassel (in the centre of Germany) in order to contribute to the exchange of ideas and to develop a national innovation strategy of social farming on national level.

1. The participants

The participants of the workshop were chosen carefully in order to serve the requirements of the methodical process of the workshop (see methodology). Some addresses have been collected during the inventory phase of the SoFar project already, when stakeholders and organisational structure of social farming were investigated. Additionally we looked for representatives of policy, administration, trusts and networking associations. We contacted them per email, letters or phone. Therein the SoFar project and the aims of the platform building were introduced briefly and the recipient was asked if he would like to join the meeting or knew somebody else who could be interested. Furthermore the workshop was advertised in the local and national press and on the webpage of the project (www.sofar-d.de). There were quite a lot of people asking if they could participate in order to get some information about social farming activities. We promised them to organize a conference in autumn 2007 that will be open to the public.

The parameters choosing different stakeholders were:

- To cover the different and diverse sectors of social farming (different client groups: people with handicaps (4), drug addicts (2), school farms (3), minors (2)) should get included
- But also to cover different levels (such as practitioners (10), rural players (2), researchers (3), representatives from policy (1) and administration (1) as well as representatives from networks and associations (4)).
- If possible all these representatives should resemble the distribution of social farming activities in Germany.
- Also innovative or rare entrepreneurs should get the opportunity to present their ideas to show the great diversity and different approaches and let good ideas enter the discussion.
- It should be possible to form homogenous groups to enable discussions about special topics in the intended group sessions.

Furthermore it would be beneficial if we knew the stakeholders and their special interests beforehand. To avoid conflicts persons were chosen carefully, i.e. we did not invite persons with antipathy to each other or that would not find any common topic which would not serve the performance.

Farmers and practitioners of social farming were most interested to participate; also some did not find time to come. For some client groups (immigrants, convicts, elderly and homeless) no representatives could be found because we did not find contact persons of convincing farming concepts with those clients. Only one politician who was a representative of Hessian parliament attended the workshop. Also we spent a big effort (mails and advertisement) at the national parliament nobody could attend the meeting. Some told us that the date was chosen unfavourable because of political conferences taking place at that time. (Social) Administrations and associations did not show interest to participate. We could not find any corporation doing medicinal research on the benefits of social farming for the clients. So the respond of political and administrative side was rather weak. Some asked for further information about the progress of the project.

The objectives of the platform

The overall aim of the multi-country specific support action (SoFar project) is to support the building of a new institutional environment for social farming, providing linkage of research to practitioners/rural players and bringing diverse European experiences closer, in order to

compare, exchange and coordinate experiences and efforts. It aims at creating a platform around the topic – bringing together key stakeholders and rural development researchers – which can support the designing of future policies at regional and European levels. Especially the second phase of the project is dedicated to the development of 'platforms' at regional scale (one workshop (national platform) per participant country) that brings together researchers, policy-makers and rural players in order to enable communication and exchange among stakeholders and to develop a national innovation strategy of social farming in Germany. We used the term "strategic forum" instead of "platform" to raise the awareness that only experts should attend the meeting.

- We aimed at the exchange of the participants. They should get the opportunity to get to know each other, other concepts and ideas and to exchange special problems and advantages of social farming in Germany and about the idea of a common action (network social farming).
- We aimed at a feedback on our state of the art manual: are there mistakes and additional remarks? Which topics and items get discussed that were missing in the state? Does it reflect an appropriate image of the situation of social farming in Germany?
- The outcomes should be useable for a swot analysis and an innovation strategy.

Comments and Critics of the stakeholders during the workshop

- During the introduction many stakeholders expressed their interest to get to know other stakeholders and get new impulses for their work. This aim was complied and positively rewarded in the evaluation.
- The participants regretted the lack of time. The agenda was too crowded and exchange could not come into details. These circumstances demand high quality analysis and evaluation in order to make the outcomes accessible.
- The material (state of the art manual) got an extra applause. Comments were expressed only after the meeting and were not content of the discussions.
- One participant said that the appellation "strategic forum" was too much demanding for the meeting that was more or less an exchange.
- Another stakeholder solaced: He attended a national meeting of the ministries in Berlin where the future of social services was discussed and the outcomes and quality of discussion of these highly paid people was even less ambitious.

The results of the platform

We wanted the participants to get to know each other, their diverse concepts and ideas. This goal was obtained pretty well. All stakeholders were enthusiastically interested in other participants even so they were quite different. There were lively discussions also in the breaks and after the meeting.

We wanted the participants to exchange about special problems and advantages and about the idea of a common action (network social farming). This goal was extremely difficult to obtain in the brevity of time given. Many topics could just be touched but not be discussed sufficiently. The enormous differences start with the conception of what social farming is and should be.

We aimed at a feedback to our "state of the art" manual: Are there any mistakes? Which topics and items get discussed that are missing in the state? Does it reflect an appropriate image of the situation of social farming in Germany? The stakeholders showed impressed by the manual and some gave hints for possible amendments.

Diagnostic

Social farming is mostly estimated as an answer to diverse questions society faces at present (crisis of education, adiposity, ablation from natural resources, violence, drug addiction...). Social farming is very diverse. There are not only differences in client groups and goals of integration (therapy, employment, education, housing, learning responsibility) but also

different durations of the measurements (short term, long term, some hours) and different capabilities of the clients (severity of disability, reduced concentration ...). According to that different sources of financing and administration are responsible. These corporations do not communicate among each other. Education is regulated differently.

Social farms are [under considerable economic strain](#). Some finance their social service through less salary for their co-workers (social dumping) or donations.

The demand for transparency (in the structure of social services, networks, federal countries and associations: contact persons, providing information...) and for secure financing can be experienced on the farms directly by the number of people and institutions requesting social services and farms that have to refuse those services because of (structural, bureaucratic and financial) limitations.

Support is needed to foster the appreciation and recognition of social farming in society, administration, social sector and politics.

The capabilities of the stakeholders to network and exchange are limited.

Vision

The main discussion was on the general concept of social farming (role of the farmer; no hobby farm), common ground of the different social farming approaches, inclusion of holistic parameters, effects and values and benefits of therapeutic/educational approaches on farm, suitable terminology and the possible ways and chances of a common strategic action). The concepts are diverse and in motion. There was the demand for a definition and exact criteria, a quality management and security as well as the proposal to create a common logo for the advertisement. Others do not want to be social farming exclusive and institutionalised but prefer to open up farms for the society through extended social services.

Support is needed to foster the appreciation and recognition of social farming in society, administration, social sector and politics.

Social services on farms must be rewarded and financed adequately.

Know how must be exchanged, communicated and harnessed.

Quality must be maintained and secured.

Diversity and mix of clients must be possible.

Integration sites must be suited to the clients (especially designed working places).

The agreements built for the strategy and action plan elaboration (so called innovation strategy)

Strategic actions should (therefore - see vision) aim at developing and promoting social farming (research on the benefits, raise public awareness), enhance transparency at all levels and connect networks and associations that exist already.

The goals transparency and support can be achieved at many levels in means of long term or short term efforts.

- Every stakeholder might advertise social farming in his personal environment. Local representatives (politicians, administrative bodies, social workers, press...) can get invited to join farm visits or open days. Only papers, press and undirected advertisement do not seem to be sufficient.
- Furthermore strategic alliances must be developed. Cooperation among stakeholders with other social, farming, nature conservation or rural development activities must be developed.
- Beyond that stakeholders see a need to include the topic social services on farms into European agricultural program (period from 2013; ELER, rural development) and into social programmes. There could not be found any strategic plan how this could be achieved and who would be suited to do this work.
- A vision was a holistic (scientific) research programme about benefits of social farming for different clients (needed to communicate at concerned departments), education, advisory service and forms of cooperation of different ministries and the constitution of a national support centre similar to the one in the Netherlands or at least a person to turn for advice.

An action plan – in means of concrete next steps, agreements, shared responsibility and deadlines could not be elaborated. Following topics will be tackled in the next months:

Ideas and topics	Stakeholders, Person to turn to
Conferences and meetings of existing networks	Academy in Altenkirchen, FiBL Germany, SoFar project, Farming for Health in Ghent, cost action
Support through materials (newsletter, public relations, press articles, website, video, conference) and documentation and analysis of workshops, farm visits, interviews, seminars	SoFar project
Transparency of financial support for interactive working places on farms (brochure, research, register)	FiBL Germany (Hermanowski)
Advertise social farming in stakeholders personal environment (invite representatives of politicians, administrative bodies, social work, press etc. on farms	Every stakeholder
Manual and exchange of experiences on the topic organisation of internal work (KTBL) respective integration of nature conservation and landscape care	FiBL Germany (van Elsen)

SWOT ANALYSIS

The SWOT analysis is an instrument primarily established for entrepreneurs and companies to compare their business or product with other competitors in order to plan future developments such as improve market share, product quality etc. It aims at getting an image of the current situation, to define problems and chances. The writer of the SWOT analysis works interpretative and subjective. He or she must decide if an issue is positive (strength) or negative (weakness), if a strength is marginal in comparison to the enormous weakness, if there are potentials for development and which form of illustration would be applicable. A SWOT analysis can be used whenever decisions have to be made.

In the following the attempt will be made to gather information about strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats on social farming in Germany as a result of the first participative German platform ("Strategieforum") at the 11th of May 2007 in Kassel. As already mentioned in other deliverables time was short and not all points given as orientating questions beforehand could be discussed entirely. We will also include discussions and experiences from other occasions in the attempt to present a full picture of the situation of social farming in Germany.

The analysis looks at social farming as a wholesome (new) way of connecting farming and some kind of social services. This viewpoint is not commonly shared and appreciated in Germany. Some people do not feel comfortable with the term "social farming" (farms that are not included might also be social). Other stakeholders do not see common basis with farms of other client groups nor the sense in getting connected with them trough introducing the new term or superior network. Social farming is diverse and follows different goals. This makes it sometimes necessary to talk of each client group or stakeholder individually in order to not miss truth.

For further information about social farming in Germany see:

van Elsen, T., Kalisch, M. 2007: Social Farming in Germany.– Report, SoFar project (Social Services in Multifunctional Farms). – FiBL Deutschland e.V., Witzenhausen, 39 pp.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strong intrinsic motivations and personal engagement ▪ High standards of integration and service quality for clients ▪ "Natural setting" and natural relationships ▪ Highly diverse farms and adapted working places ▪ Processing and marketing of products on the farm ▪ High quality products ▪ High impact on rural development, rural value creation ▪ Monopolistic and established structures i.e. sheltered workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Uncertainty of terms (social farming) ▪ Uncertainty of best suited organisational form of a social farm ▪ Diversity and differences of approaches ▪ Lack of transparency and knowledge ▪ Lack of appreciation in society and no support from medical/ social/pedagogic sectors ▪ Weak PR ▪ Economic pressure ▪ Bureaucratic and judicial limitations ▪ Lack of resources for networking ▪ Not competitive
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increasing interests and requests of clients and private persons ▪ New forms of social services required New conceptions, change of paradigm ▪ New forms of economic cooperation ▪ Using existing networks ▪ Political support ▪ Use organic- social approach as PR ▪ Learn from other European projects and examples ▪ Develop new services i.e. landscape maintenance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Farming and social work as two weak partners ▪ Ablation from natural settings ▪ Weak competitive assumptions ▪ Big and inflexible structures of social inclusion ▪ Federal structures inhibit transparency and transferability ▪ Increasing economic pressure ▪ Lack of capacities of the stakeholders for engagement to put the topic into political programmes

"Free wheeling" comments

Perspectives of social farming

The participants have diverse thoughts about the development of social farming in future. This was expressed especially in the visionary phase. There were two tendencies.

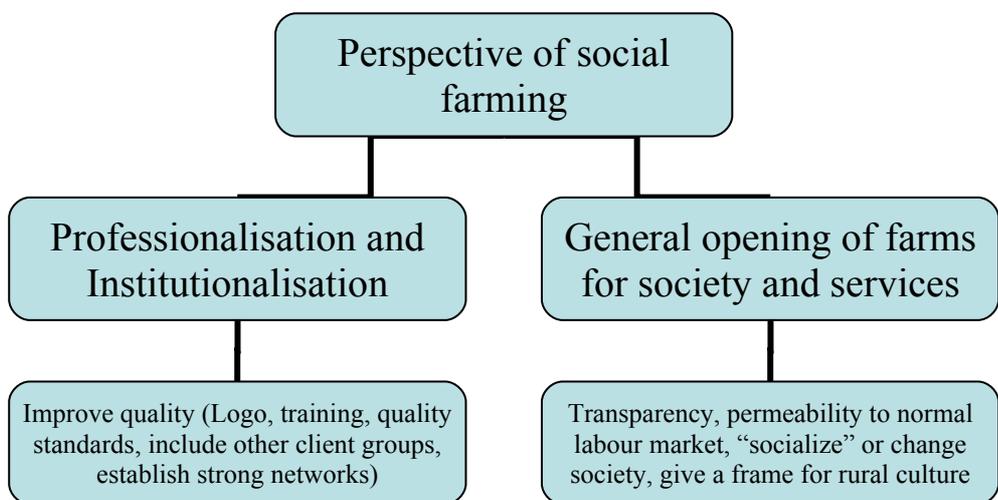


Fig. 2 Perspectives of social farming

- The first tendency aims at widening social farming, enabling more farms to offer social integration institutionalised, improve services and quality (education and training,...),

establish a logo/ brand and perhaps quality standards. The other aims at not to create a new closed shop with special offers but open up farming entirely for social needs: Farming and the whole labour market should become "more social". It should be a natural matter that less capable people get integrated and the farmer gets financial support for his expenditures. The different possibilities for not only less capable people but also children, old people and other to join work (and society) should be permeable and transparent. Social farming could give a frame for rural culture and could be used to change society.

- There was the wish that social farms should be productive and the farmer should not concentrate on social and mental care and organisation (farming not as hobby) but act naturally and competent in his profession. On the other hand there was also the fear that the farmer could get exploited ("farmer stay at your potatoes").
- Quality could be increased and secured through support for education, supervision and coaching for social farms and their co-workers.
- There is a strong interest in European exchange. The stakeholders believe that German social farming activities could learn from other countries and adopt some new ideas (such as mixing of clients, national support centre similar to the Netherlands). There must be transparency and exchange: i.e. an inventory or catalogue of the different approaches and research what circumstances enable these projects, which work best and why?

People with handicaps

Representatives of the sheltered workshops (WfbM) make sure that the opportunities in those big institutions are favourable. In the discussion about installation of working places on normal family farms they fear that more capable clients leave the sheltered workshops. The WfbM would lose their quality ("bleed to death") and diverse working possibilities when only very weak clients stay. Sheltered workshops should have the task to educate and stabilize people.

The example of the cooperating farms in Schleswig-Holstein (a central place where the administrative work is done and cooperating smaller farms integrating 3 to 6 clients) is seen as "absolutely powerful".

A national advisory service and a brochure on possibilities and support for integrated working places on family farms is currently aimed by FiBL Germany (Frankfurt). It aims to connect interested farmers and aid for people with handicapped and provide transparency.

The impacts of the introduction of a personal budget for clients in Germany are quite uncertain. Some see chances for the installation of working places for people with handicaps on normal family farms. Others fear that clients will choose the most comfortable settings (such as holidays in Majorca) and would probably stop working and stop personal development.

School farms

Stakeholders think that the number of school farms in Germany should be increased. Currently the National Farmer's Union is very interested in the topic and tries to use school farms to improve the image of farming in general. On the other hand some school farms have difficulties to fill their capacities. Therefore more public bodies, teachers, schools and the ministry of education must be gained as cooperation partners. Education on health and nutrition should not be introduced as new subjects in school (as planned currently) but could be interactively experienced on (school) farms.

The network of school farms, BAGLOB, is well functioning and seen as sufficient on German level. A social farming network that would express and communicate interests on EU level would be very much appreciated.

Informal sector and Grey areas

There are a huge number of clients without any medical diagnosis asking for services on farms. These people might be in a personal crisis, less capable and/ or in need of a good atmosphere i.e. those just recently finished rehabilitational programmes, burn outs, persistent truants or drop outs, immigrants without working permission and other. Often farmers have to refuse their request when law prohibits integration or social services refuse to pay the expenditures because they are not able to finance the care and input needed. Until now these people are not connected in networks, their number are unknown and their problems are not present in the public awareness. Therefore we may speak of "informal sector" or "grey areas". There should

be some research on the possibilities to help and support these people adequately. Former drug addicted that spent a rehabilitation year on a farm should be encouraged to start a business (support through regional funds?) or offered a job. It should be a natural matter that less capable people get integrated on farms if they wish so and the farmer gets payments for his expenditures.

There are great experiences on individual youth welfare service projects on farms. Unfortunately responsible authorities do not know of these projects or choose project places according to their small budget instead of quality and success. Case stories and a list of farms offering those services could be published in a documentary that is given to youth welfare service, social ministry or other as information and stimulation.

1 References

www.sofar-d.de.

van Elsen, T., Kalisch, M. 2007: Social Farming in Germany.– Report, SoFar project (Social Services in Multifunctional Farms). – FiBL Deutschland e.V., Witzenhausen, 39 pp.

IRELAND

The Participants

The participants for the Irish Platform were selected on the basis of constructing two groups. One group to consist of those people involved in the care and support of vulnerable people and/or farmers that are or have indicated an interest in becoming involved in Social Farming. As linking private farmers with social services through Social Farming is a novel concept in Ireland, farmers' representatives were also invited as well as associations or state funded services that used horticulture and agriculture as part of their core interface with service users.

Group 2 consisted of identified representatives from the state and non-statutory service who are stakeholders and/or those who may have a significant role to play in the development of Social Farming in Ireland.

In excess of 60 invitations were sent out to representatives of the interests listed below. 27 people attended the Platform; 60% of participants were from the practitioner group and 40% from the Policy/Support Organisations (there were a number of cancellations on the morning of the Platform from this group).

Group 1: Care providers and or farmers

(Selected from contacts identified in the national inventory).

- Providers from the different sectors: Intellectual disability, sensory disability, mental health, older people, rehabilitation, prison rehabilitation, social inclusion/community projects.
- Farmers, Camphill communities, Irish Society for Autism, Irish Farmers Association, Organic farmer groups,
- Community Interests/ non-governmental organisation, Disability representative group.

Group 2: Policy-makers/Funders:

- Health Services Executive: Health services personnel management, policy personnel, clinicians: may include Nurses, Social Workers, Psychologists, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, and General Practitioners etc.
- Other: Teagasc (Irish agricultural advisory service-rural business department), Dept of Agriculture, Food and Farming, Dept of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Rural Partnership Companies, LEADER.

Missing stakeholders:

- Department of Social and Family Affairs,
- Department of Health and Children
- Dept of Education.

The Objectives of the Platform

- To bring together actors from various backgrounds.
- To increase awareness of the extent of Social Farming activity in Ireland.
- To allow information sharing and networking.
- To allow stakeholders to articulate the attributes of Social Farming in Ireland.
- To create a forum for all stakeholders to articulate policy requirements for the development of Social Farming in Ireland and what obstacles must be dealt with and how.
- To encourage stakeholders to work together and design a strategy for the development of Social Farming in Ireland.

Diagnosis Stage

There was consensus that Social Farming is an attractive and beneficial activity for service users and something worthy of support and development. In Ireland the incidence of private farmers linking with social care services is low, however as displayed by the active participation in this Platform, there is great interest and enthusiasm for this to increase. Notwithstanding this, there is a long tradition, particularly within the intellectual disability and mental health services of using variations of Social Farming in a social care context and there are many examples of good practice available to inform the development of Social Farming and for the potential of private farmers to develop complementary Social Farming services.

Social farming may also present the opportunity for wider societal health benefits by encouraging people into the countryside or providing opportunities to become involved in community and/or urban gardens as a means to promote health and environmental awareness. Currently, many existing services are run with the considerable support of volunteers in organising and running day-to-day activities and their contribution needs to be recognised in the development of Social Farming. It was agreed that there is a great resource of skilled farmers around the country and that there was considerable potential as a rural development opportunity for these actors to engage in Social Farming, with consequent benefits in terms of quality of life for service users. It was also acknowledged that this development coincides with some significant changes taking place in the care services, whereby the successful advocacy of disability rights groups has resulted in a shift in policy to promote the provision of services to an individual rather than on a group basis. In time, this will translate into more choice and control for service users of the services that they access. There have also been ongoing CAP Reforms that have highlighted the specific multifunctional nature of the European Model of Farming that goes beyond simply food production towards a broadened set of roles for farming. This policy shift also offers significant opportunities for the development of social farming.

A very fundamental question which arises concerns the different roles and functions which a service user may fulfil. For example, there was concern expressed on the need for consideration of whether a service user comes to 'experience the farm' as a service which the farmer provides, or whether they came to engage in work on the farm. This was discussed in the context of the ethics of a person attending a day care service, contributing to the production of goods for sale by the service provider, but receiving a nominal payment - or no payment. It was acknowledged that some service users may wish to be "employees" and that this needs to be taken into consideration also. This is a sensitive issue that caused disquiet among participants and requires more time and consideration than that that was available at this platform.

Obstacles in the Irish context were identified initially as the lack of awareness and knowledge of the concept of Social Farming and its potential application in a wide range of contexts. This lack of awareness applies to farmers, care providers, statutory services and society in general. This lack of awareness is compounded by the isolated nature of services and very limited linkages between practitioners. This is equally true of funding sources where a statutory service may approve local initiatives in an *ad hoc* way with no dissemination of ideas and learning to other parts of the same or other services and no standardised manner of recognising such a service. Structurally there is much work to be done in Ireland in terms of guidance, education and resourcing of Social Farming. Any development of Social Farming will depend on the education of farmers, service users and their support organisations, social welfare organisations, health services and agricultural

advisory services. It was also agreed that standards of practice would need to be developed as Social Farming evolves. However, this should happen in such a way as not to stifle worthy initiatives or deter potential Social Farmers due to an excess of rigidity or bureaucracy. The financing of initiatives to develop Social Farming and particularly the ongoing resourcing of work also arose as a concern. This is particular challenge in the light of the multi-disciplinary nature of Social Farming. Other obstacles which were identified included difficulties with getting insurance and/or the cost of that insurance, transport needs to and from farms, health and safety requirements and difficulties with planning issues. These are matters which are difficult for individuals and need the advocacy of a representative group. There are also concerns about institutional resistance to the development of Social Farming. A strength of Social Farming is the very multi-disciplinary nature of its application. However, this also means that Social Farming does not have a current or readily identifiable 'home' as it does not 'fit' into prescribed sectors but rather straddles a number of sectors, that can be interconnected through Social Farming. This can leave Social Farming vulnerable to neglect unless policy-makers are educated and come to understand about Social Farming.

Visionary phase

The discussion arising in the second plenary session focused on addressing such questions as: whether social farming has the potential to develop in Ireland and if so, what direction this development should happen; what measures need to be put in place to make this happen and by whom.

Again, there was a consensus that despite the low profile and fragmented nature of much of the activity taking place, social farming has the potential to play a significant role in the provision of care services, while also serving as an additional rural development activity for farm families and wider communities. There is also the opportunity to frame social farming as an investment in "green health" and to shift the focus from illness to health promotion, developing mechanisms which enable people to partake in farm-based activities as a way of investing in their health rather than treating their illnesses. It was acknowledged that there were significant resources in terms of skills and knowledge among the farming community which could greatly benefit the development of the sector. However, it was also agreed that much "pre-development" work needs to take place to raise awareness of social farming. Specifically, it needs to be identified and "named" as an appropriate activity among the farming community and those agencies and institutions with whom they interact. The fragmented and ad hoc nature of many social farming initiatives need to be addressed by the establishment of a designated office or authority which could act as a "mechanism of delivery" for the sector. Allied to this is the potential for social farming to deliver services geared to the individual user as opposed to a formalised group work situation, while recognising that the expectations and needs of service users and providers may also cover a broad spectrum. It was agreed that sensitive and careful 'matching' would need to take place between a service user(s) and a host farmer and that this would be an important role for any authority charged with the development and delivery of social farming in Ireland.

There was concern expressed on the need for consideration of whether a service user comes to 'experience the farm' as a service which the farmer provides, or whether they came to engage in work on the farm. This was discussed in the context of a background of the ethics of a person attending a day care service where they may produce goods and those goods are sold on behalf of the service provider and where the service users may only receive nominal or no payment. It was also acknowledged that some service users may wish to work and that this needs to be taken into consideration also. This is a sensitive issue that caused disquiet among participants and requires more time and consideration than that that was available at this platform. However, it was suggested that a 'matching' service that

matched the service user to a host farmer on a case by case basis may be best placed to deal with such specific situations locally.

Innovation / Implementation Strategy

Given that this platform provided the first opportunity for many actors to meet each other and share a forum, the focus on this session was on agreeing on priority action points, as distinct from formulating a concrete strategy for moving Social Farming forward in Ireland.

There was a general consensus among both groups in the final plenary of the current situation of Social Farming in Ireland and identification of the steps that needed to be implemented if Social Farming in association with private farmers was to develop further in Ireland. This was set as a backdrop to the spontaneous emergence of Social Farming at a grass roots level which should be encouraged and supported; the Platform recognised that this kind of local development was central to the ethos of Social Farming and recognition of local collaborations was where the story and reputation of Social Farming was going to be made. To assist this development a number of core priorities areas were identified that could help create a context for local initiatives to prosper, these include:

The promotion of the concept of Social Farming.

Much work is needed to get Social Farming 'named' so that people may become conscious of Social Farming as a care option, life opportunity for service users and also as a potential rural development opportunity for farmers. There is an immediate need for individuals who have an awareness or engagement with social farming to push its agenda within their own organisations. This is particularly the case for agencies such as Teagasc (the national Agriculture and Food Authority), the farming organisations and the wide variety of government agencies, departments, rural development bodies with which Social Farming interacts.

This Platform recommends that local networks are established to promote awareness in local areas. This could bring together relevant stakeholders including *inter alia* farmers, service users and/or their representatives, care providers, health services personnel, community development interests etc. By working with such networks the word of social farming can be spread by the participation of representatives of stakeholders and by bringing this knowledge back to each of the organisations participating. This raising of awareness is needed across all sectors, private, statutory interests and wider society. However, initially priority constituencies may be targeted such as farmers, statutory bodies e.g. the Health Services Executive.

A network could be developed locally by linking in with the community development infrastructure that is already in place at a local level e.g. Partnership companies (Local Development Social Inclusion Programme) Community Development Projects (Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs), LEADER projects; Family Resource Centres (Department of Social and Family Affairs) etc. The development of such a local network could facilitate the coming together of service users, care organisations and Social Farmers and where service user's needs could be assessed on a case-by-case basis and matched to an appropriate Social Farmer. This can be developed using existing flexibility within social care structures. Such a local approach would ensure support through the participation of other stakeholders whilst maintaining a 'bottom-up' community driven development of Social Farming to take place. The role and contribution of volunteers in many aspects of social care was highlighted and that developments in Social Farming need to include this constituency as a stakeholder across services.

By working in this manner and promoting Social Farming great understanding of Social Farming will be created which will inform institutions and services of its potential role. Social Farming will not, nor cannot replace existing services but it can offer another option to give service users more choice and complement other services that are available. Increased awareness should alleviate possible institutional resistance from both health services, agricultural advisory services etc and drive development from within communities. Co-operation of service providers and their willingness to be flexible and open to do business with new sectors will be imperative for the development of Social Farming.

This network could also act as a local point of contact, providing advice and guidelines on how to go about setting up a Social Farm e.g. assistance with financial planning, health and safety and legal planning etc. with guidance provided in the development of business plans, service plans, Garda clearance etc.

National Authority or Support Centre:

The need for financial resourcing is essential if Social Farming is to develop. Due to the multifunctional aspects of Social Farming and the fact that different facets of Social Farming could fall within the remit of various sectors it was identified that an independent authority emerge that could take the lead on Social Farming at a national level. By creating such an authority to manage this area would help to ensure that Social Farming is not subject to being marginalised due to a lack of identification with any one sector or service.

This authority could be delegated responsibility for managing social farming contracts across the country on behalf of the state. Social Farming could receive support from the Health Services Executive, Department of Health and Children, Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Department of Agriculture and Food, Department of Education, international resources and the role of Corporate Social Responsibility is currently untapped, all are potential stakeholders in the development of Social Farming. The Platform identified as important that Social farming would seek funding from wide range of sources and to not become dependent on any one source.

This authority would have an organisational structure that reflects a network of interested people and practitioners with links to relevant statutory and non-statutory interests. This organisation could have a number of functions:

- Promotion of Social Farming at a national level and support local/regional development through the local networks;
- Forum with links/partners to statutory services, Government, EU etc.
- Establish targets for development-milestones etc.
- This national authority/office could build awareness backed with narratives, evidence, case studies of existing or developing practices so that the story of Social Farming can be delivered to decision-makers and would-be Social Farmers.
- Promote and develop training for Social Farmers.
- Promote research into assessing the impacts of Social Farming.
- This national authority could take a national lead on the development of standards in Social Farming;
- Create resource of best practices from Ireland and the EU in Social Farming that others can adapt;
- Advocate for quality standards and work towards equitable treatment in terms of operational issues such as insurance, health and safety, transport.
- Identify where Social Farming is complemented by policy developments in relevant statutory and non-statutory strategic plans and contribute to future policy developments.
- Promote co-operation among social care services and a move away from narrow sectoral interests that sustain segregation of service users away from wider community.

Service user's rights

In developing Social Farming it is essential that the rights and wishes of service users are to the fore of all development. This could be developed with care providers on the basis of person-centred-planning with and for service users.

Assurances must be given but with a need for an evolving development of standards that provides protection for all involved, but which does not become so onerous to adhere to that good quality Social Farming services are excluded. A local network with local knowledge may be the most appropriate level to implement this at least initially.

There was concern expressed on the need for consideration of whether a service user comes to 'experience the farm' as a service which the farmer provides, or whether they came to engage in work on the farm. This was discussed in the context of a background of the ethics of a person attending a day care service where they may produce goods and those goods are sold on behalf of the service provider and where the service users may only receive nominal or no payment. It was also acknowledged that some service users may wish to work and that this needs to be taken into consideration also. This is a sensitive issue that caused disquiet among participants and requires more time and consideration than that that was available at this platform. However, it was suggested that a 'matching' service that matched the service user to a host farmer on a case by case basis may be best placed to deal with such specific situations locally.

Education

The Platform identified the need for wide ranging education in the field of Social Farming. This included educating service providers, service users, funding agencies, decision makers etc. This would form part of the promotion and awareness raising of Social Farming. Similar orientation education would be needed for the wider constituency of farmers to raise awareness of farming but in addition to that specific training would be needed to train Social Farmers. This training should draw on the existing skills of farmers and adapt this to the particular needs and requirements of Social Farming.

There are resources available that should be in a position to develop tailored training e.g. Teagasc (the national agricultural and advisory service), agricultural schools/colleges, organic farming training networks and other Specialist Professionals e.g. "Assist". This training could be developed to accredited status such as through FETAC.

Opportunities to promote health of wider communities:

Social Farming has the capacity to promote wellbeing and community sustainability through promoting 'Green Health' be this in an urban farm/garden setting or on private farms. There is no mechanism to allow people to partake in farm based activities although people will pay to go to a gym. There is potential to use farms as a way to promote physical exercise and activity. There is also potential to use farms as environmental class rooms and educate service users on health eating. There is growing interest among the health services and businesses in investing in lifestyle changes that may lead to investments in services that focus on promoting health rather than treating illness.

SWOT analysis

Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunity-Threats Analysis (SWOT)

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: red;">ITALY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drive coming from communities rather than policy driven. • Major resource of family farms around the country. • Good examples of Social Farming in existence. Practitioners exist with skills • Creativity and resourcefulness of practitioners and others involved. • Good practices taking place within social care services in relation to Social Farming. • Existing compatible networks e.g. community/rural development networks, organic farming networks etc. • Extant social responsibility structure (community) and awareness of the need for inclusiveness. • Farm activity creates 'normalisation' in life-farmers appreciate the wellbeing that can be derived from a farm. • Opportunity for service user's independence. • Positive economics: costs of Social Farming vs. 24hour care, 7 days a week, medical benefits etc... • A large group of interested and/or concerned citizens • Good marketing model • Expert groups-religious and others with long history of care provision using agriculture and horticulture. • Models available from other countries on how Social Farming has and can be developed. • Multi-disciplinary nature of social farming. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of awareness of the concept of Social Farming among farmers and its potential to promote quality of life for service users. • Confusion over what is meant by various terms. • Lack of awareness of current activity -good practices taking place but learning not being disseminated. • Lack of a focus or network to support the development of Social Farming in Ireland • Lack of appropriate training in Social Farming for both farmers and other stakeholders. • Multi-disciplinary nature of Social Farming-difficult to find a home for the concept. • Lack of co-ordination and coherence from statutory policy-makers. • Fragmented responses from local offices of statutory decision-makers-in one area might support development and not in another area. • Transport-getting service users to and from farms. • Health and safety concerns on farms. • Declining farm numbers and dependency culture. • Availability of land for community garden projects.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential as a win-win scenario, quality of life benefits for service users and perhaps farmers who are becoming increasingly isolated on their farms; and potential as rural development opportunity for farmers in terms of income. • Policy of care provision moving towards community integration. • Policy of care provision moving towards individual person centred outcomes rather than group provision. • Potential as a means to integrate service-users with wider communities. • Wide diversity of responses can be anticipated, if framed positively can give additional choice to service users on how they want to live and work. • Strong and comprehensive network of local and community development organisations to support development. • Likely sympathetic EU policy environment through, rural development opportunities, Multifunctional agriculture and the European Model of Agriculture. • Educational role for society • Farmer incentives-change, educate inform. • Under-utilised urban space. • Opportunity for people in urban areas or those excluded from the countryside to engage with nature. • Green gyms as a means to promote health of population. • Landscape-recreation • Launch pad for lots of opportunities-new communities, new skills • Experience: importance/role of individuals promoting ideas and being supported via service agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General lack of awareness of Social Farming • Specifically lack of awareness among policy and decision makers. • Lack of any clear policy to support the development of Social Farming, regionally or nationally. • Lack of documented evidence of the benefits of Social Farming. • Professional awareness within institutions. • Policy incoherence and lack of joined-up thinking: • 'Sectional' view of health prevails. • Flexibility of key stakeholders e.g. Health Services Executive to work with farmers. • Need for link with policy environment. • Continuity of social farming services. • Need some guidance and regulation in the sector, but not at the expense of stifling quality local initiatives. Need to keep the current actors involved. • Difficulty in securing funding and access to agencies. • Insurance on farms to protect all concerned in event of an accident-may be prohibitively expensive. • Lack of skills training available. • Availability of farms/land and property issues. • Involving volunteers, how do we create interest?

The participants

diverse kinds of stakeholders were invited, pursuing the aim to have a wide diversity among participants. Priority was given to the ones already involved during the previous phase of the project (field visits) and/or in previous research actions, as well as to persons with relevant experience and highly committed in social farming activities. Therefore the final group of participants resulted on the base of personal contacts established during the last years, and also on the base of stakeholders' motivations, interests and possibility to participate.

25 people in all participated, plus the research group of the university of Pisa (represented by Francesco Di Iacovo and Paolo Pieroni) and the personnel of ARSIA who supported the organisation and took notes during groups' work.

Participants were divided into 3 groups:

1. Diverse operators of social/care sector;
2. Diverse (field) operators of agricultural sector;
3. Representatives of institutions and experts of agricultural sector (at regional/national scale).

Some beneficiaries were invited also, but finally only one person could participate who was included in group 1.

Participants came mostly by two regions – Tuscany and Latium – that are the ones in which social farming is gaining more attention.

In all, we may say that the group of participants cannot be really considered as representative in quantitative terms – groups were rather unbalanced, some categories were missing (e.g. relatively scarce representation of the social/care sector - particularly institutional representatives- vis-à-vis the agricultural sector; scarce representation of users), 2 regions were mostly represented.

However, in qualitative terms, we may say that all participants had relevant experience in the field and most of them are currently engaged in interesting or relevant initiatives at regional/national scale. Some of the institutional participants play already relevant roles in the development of social farming phenomenon in Italy at the moment.

The objectives of the workshop

According to the goals of the project the general aim was to create "a platform around the topic (i.e. social farming) - bringing together key stakeholders and rural development researchers -, which can support the designing of future policies at regional and European levels".

As for all participating countries, specific objectives and expected results of the workshop were:

- To draw a (shared) diagnosis of social farming (SF) practices at present in our country (so called "SWOT" analysis);
- To elaborate visions for future development;
- To imagine some strategic actions that might be taken to make SF practices evolve in our country (so called "innovation strategy").

These objectives were shared with participants in advance (i.e. invitations, 1st newsletter) and during the introduction of the workshop. Participants agreed on them expressing interest on the topic, on the specific (European) project and on the methodology proposed.

The results of the platform

Visions and prospects

negative visions (what is not wished)

- *No actual change.* Things are not able to evolve from current status or only seeming dynamics of change and innovation are created (e.g. only able to create work for bureaucrats and technicians and visibility for policy-makers)
- *Market-driven and speculative development.* SF practices are driven by a mere market/profit logic (and/or of reduction of public expense in social/health sectors); persons, relations and practices are transformed according to a process of 'commoditization'
- *"Medical" transformation.* SF practices lose their actual agricultural nature; they are transformed into medical procedures and social farms become kind of hospitals in the countryside
- *Bureaucratization.* SF practices are weighted with new sets of rules and standards underpinning a heavy bureaucracy.

positive visions (what is wished)

- *Diffusion, consolidation and normalisation.* SF practices are affirmed and spread with the support of institutions; they become common and well-known, representing a new option for multifunctional agriculture, in a way similar to the case/history of agro-tourism; SF is recognized and supported by all main policies of diverse sectors and levels; there is a relevant organisational development; there is a widespread positive perception of SF within the society
- *'Social economy' paradigm.* SF practices follow a new logic of 'social economy' and are inscribed in a wider perspective of territorial sustainable development
- *New ad hoc juridical framework.* SF practices are accredited and regulated by the national health and social/care systems as an alternative option of rehabilitation/therapy
- *Integrated local welfare systems (to enhance citizens' quality of life).* Multiple actors (for profit and non, e.g. private farms, social cooperatives, associations) cooperate closely at local level under the coordination of public institutions; agricultural, social and health policies are closely integrated at local level, pursuing an overall goal of quality of life enhancement; SF practices contribute to this goal effectively (e.g. fulfilment of needs of local population, valorisation of local resources, incomes for farmers and social/care operators)

Strategy and actions

Overall goals

Agreed overall goals can be summed up in the following statement:

- “to make SF practices grow and innovate by taking action responsibly as a system”

Specific objectives

1. To elaborate a new ‘ad hoc’ juridical framework and specific instruments of support
2. To create dialogue and new cooperative relations between the world of agriculture and the social/care sector
3. To promote a new concept of SF within civil society at all levels
4. To reinforce the entrepreneurial development of farms / social cooperatives and networking

Actions

- *Creation of local/regional fora*
They would be (permanent) spaces where diverse stakeholders can meet, confront and coordinate / work together at territorial level. They would include both private, social-private (i.e. non for profit organisations) and public actors. They would facilitate:
 - a. the definition of specific criteria and rules for SF practices;
 - b. the identification of local needs and ‘demand’ for SF practices;
 - c. the elaboration of specific integrated projects;
 - d. the exchange of knowledge and the creation of specific training and educational initiatives for operators;
 - e. the sensitization and the involvement of civil society through the development of a series of cultural, educational and ‘promotional’ initiatives;
 - f. the institutional support of specific/targeted initiatives.
- *Creation/reinforcement of local networks of enterprises (i.e. farms and social cooperatives)*
They would act in partnership. Particularly they would define common standards and rules (self-regulation). They would work to reinforce the know-how / skills of operators and the marketing strategies of the enterprises. (They would be part of the afore-mentioned local/regional fora)
- *Juridical definition of SF and new criteria of accreditation of enterprises,*
It is to create a (participatory) process of revision of current legislation in the field of welfare (health and social/care), involving SF operators. SF should be recognized at national level. Dialogue and cooperation among diverse national departments (e.g. agriculture, social solidarity, health), as well as among diverse regions would be created on this purpose. New actors (e.g. private farms) should be accredited also as social/care services’ providers. Criteria of assessment should be created as well.
- *Definition of typologies of services and of professional profiles*
Following the same process, as a next step the different kind of practices and/or services would be clearly defined (from labour inclusion, to daily care, to residential care, etc.); professional profiles of operators would be defined as well.
- *Study/analysis of current experiences and dissemination of good practices*
It would support the actions above described. It would involve stakeholders and fora not only researchers or policy-makers.
- *Educational initiatives with school children*
Many ‘social farms’ are already involved in educational programmes with schools. This kind of activity would be reinforced – would become more systematic and more specifically focussed on the ‘social’ dimension of the farms. They would promote new cultural values (e.g. concepts of social economy). (Local/regional fora would organise them at local/regional scale).

- *Professional training of operators and academic education*
(Recognized) training courses for SF operators would be created or strengthened. These training programmes would be based on field experience/practice and on the expertise of who is already working in this field. They would address both agricultural and social competences in integrated way. The topic would also enter academic environment (e.g. seminars, courses) of different fields.
- *Voluntary-based experiential initiatives open to all citizens*
These ones would be occasions to make all kind of people experiment the experience and values of social farming themselves (not only the disadvantaged categories or the agricultural and social operators). They would be periods of residential staying on the farms – citizens are offered hospitality and cooperate within the SF activities voluntarily (e.g. kind of alternative holidays on social farms).
- *(National) information desk and consultancy services*
It is an action already started at national level by some agricultural organisations (joint together in this action). At the moment it is mostly represented by a (small) web with information on legislation and on how to start new initiatives. The idea would be to reinforce it at different levels (not only developing the web but also other services of information and support). Other consultancy services promoted by institutions would support the development of enterprises.
- *Organising/promoting 'social' marketing*
It is to create/reinforce special marketing circuits and devices in appropriate ways, so to add value to the goods and services produced by 'social farms': from the organisation of local groups of consumers and supporters; to the possible creation of special denominations or brands for the food produced; to a possible special role in public food procurement (e.g. school canteens and else)

SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
A1. "Social inclusive potential" A2. "Acting at multiple levels" A3. "Confirmed by empirical practice" A4. "Possibility for tailored-made practices" A5. "Comparatively cheap" A6. "Motivations and enthusiasm of the promoters" B1. "Integration/embeddedness at territorial level" B2. "Increased sensitiveness and awareness" C1. "Producing entrepreneurial innovation and diversification" C2. "Involving youths in agriculture".	A1. "Unclear/complicated juridical framework" A2. "Still limited diffusion and consolidation" A3. "Gap between demand and offer" B1. "Difficulties to start-up" B.2 "Not easy inter-cultural and inter-professional integration" C1. "Confusion of roles and competences" C2. "Lack of (on-farm) tutorship" C3. "Voluntary-based efforts" C4. "No certification of efficacy" D1. "Prejudices for disabilities" D2. "Lack of transports / connections" E1. "No special distinction for the goods and services produced 'socially'" E2. "Risk of creating charity-based marketing"
Opportunities	Threats
A1. "Increased sensitivity and awareness of public institutions and society" A2. "Positive public reputation/image" B1. "Labour integration of disadvantaged categories" C1. "Potential definition of a new juridical framework". C2. "Wider recognition and support by institutions" D1. "Broadening relations and networks" D2. "International exchanges" D3. (gender opportunities) E1. "Enhanced reputation/image of (social) enterprises" E2. " 'Social' marketing	A1. "Too many expectations" A2. "Too many rules" A3. "Standardization and loss of original value-systems and motivations" A4. "Local/regional fragmentation" A5. "Maintaining of sector-based logic" A6. "Maintaining of current juridical framework" B1. "Competition between different actors" B2. "Development of opportunistic behaviours" B3. "Market oriented welfare systems" B4. "Hospitals in the countryside"

“Free wheeling” comments

- There is a spread feeling among participants that “social farming” (SF) is at a turning point in our country: “the phenomenon is grown; it gained increasing consensus, interests and expectations...what to do now? How to make initiatives grow actually? How to drive the process?”
- There is a spread feeling that a clear definition and norms are still missing; “where do we want to go and how” is still not clear
- Participants are aware of a series of potential risks like: the advent of opportunistic or speculative behaviours; the vacuum development made of words, papers and bureaucracy; the advent of specialist care practices and private/market driven welfare; transformation of current SF practices in something different like “countryside hospitals”, “beauty farms” (wellness centres) or else on the base of profit logic
- To define a clear juridical framework appears as a priority (e.g. “who can be the beneficiaries of the new measures included in new RD plans? How to distinct who can access to them?”)
- The prospect of a new “ad hoc” juridical framework is wished (opportunity) and feared (threat) at the same time:
 - wished: as an opportunity to be recognised and supported;
 - feared: as a threat to be imposed new standards, norms, controls, bureaucratic practices; or that new actors moved by opportunistic behaviours can enter and transform current reality/experience; or that finally ‘normalisation’ of SF experiences (e.g. new standards and routines) will bring to a loss of the original spirit
- Most of participants have in mind (more or less implicitly or explicitly) the idea that (private) farms may start offering paid care services; agro-tourism phenomenon represents (more or less implicitly or explicitly) a kind of model (i.e. farms developing integrated third services)
- In this sense “social farming” could be regulated by the already existing national law on agriculture that is based on the concept of “multifunctional agriculture” – no needing big juridical innovations
- Most of participants (or even all of them) think that SF practices should conserve their current agricultural nature; they should not become therapeutic/clinical practices; they should rather be oriented by a concept of enhancement of the quality of life and social inclusion of all citizens; they should remain embedded into the agricultural world.
- Participants agree on thinking that (private) farmers should cooperate with social workers and not replace them; it would be important to define the reciprocal roles. (actually social cooperatives have already often a double nature – being both agricultural and social enterprises; this double juridical nature however creates mostly difficulties in the management – e.g. complications, contradictions in norms).
- “Would it be fair if policies recognise private farms practicing SF – included the big ones pursuing profit goals and carrying out relevant business – as equal to other organisations doing it as “non for profit”?” – one critical question put by the side of social cooperatives.
- Some participants remark also how SF should not be limited to the perspective of on-farm care services. It should rather be oriented to a wider concept of social regeneration of the countryside and of the rural communities.

NETHERLANDS

The participants

In the Netherlands a network in Social Farming has already developed since more than a decade. As a result, the actual situation has a history in which many stakeholders were involved already a long time. In this network meetings for farmers and other stakeholders are organized regularly. For the SoFar project we have used one of such a regional meeting with 30 participants (mainly farmers) to prepare the first concept of the SWOT. For the second meeting, the final platform meeting organized by ourselves, we made broad selection of stakeholders involved in the process of professionalizing from different points of view. Moreover, we have invited people from which we were certain that they could bring in good ideas on strengths and weaknesses of the sector. An overview of the participants is given in Tabel I.

Table I. Participants of the platform meeting

Organisation	Number of participants
Rabobank Netherlands	2
Center for advice and accompanying care farming	1
Center for advice on processes	1
Center for knowledge on chronic care, welfare and living	1
Ministry of Agriculture	1
National farmers organisation	1
National umbrella organisation	1
Care institution for people with drug and alcohol addictions	1
Care farmers	4
Research (University Groningen & Wageningen UR)	6

This groups of participants does rather well represent the profile of stakeholders involved in social farming in the Netherlands and responsible for its development. However, the participation by governmental employees is always meager, as it is hard to plan a convenient date with them. Governmental employees from the ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport were even totally absent.

Objectives of the platform

The objective was to organise a discussion and inspiring meeting on the national and international future of the social farming sector. Following subjects had to be elaborated:

- a rough outline of the profile of the sector
- a SWOT analysis of the sector
- recommendations for an European research and networking agenda to support the further development of the sector.

The objective was warmly welcomed and subscribed by the participants and resulted in sparkling debates.

Results of the platform

The first part of the meeting the historical facts were evaluated and supplemented. This resulted in an insight in the critical success factors for the development of the social farming sector. The second part of the meeting was used to make a detailed SWOT analysis. Based on this analysis an innovative strategy and recommendations for the policy (national and international) were formulated.

Critical success factors

Summarizing some distinct factors and incidents have been crucial for the development of a tight network in Care Farming in the Netherlands:

- passionate pioneers daring to take risks
- a remarkable cooperation between different organizations (national farmer organization youth care organization and antroposophic organization) and two ministries to pick up joint goals
- political attention and pressure
- change of paradigms in both the agriculture and care sector
- coming up of regionalization (local products) and growing interest in care farming by regional management
- financial support, both national and regional during start-up phase
- possibilities for AWBZ (Exceptional Medical Expenses Act) accreditation
- switch to a market driven approach
- support from discussion clubs, intervision groups, introduction of professional training
- support from research
- efficient clustering of administrative operations
- loss of subsidies when network is tight. This forced farmers to 1. cooperate, 2. professionalize and 3. choose for a market driven approach.

SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ concept of social farming fits in the actual societal character of the era ▪ sector is becoming robust ▪ Character of farm management system fits well in actual agricultural practice ▪ Client approach proves its results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Two sectors (agriculture and care) with their own character ▪ Agricultural sector feels it selves inferior to care sector ▪ Less interaction between both sectors ▪ Effects of Social farming are less visible ▪ Social farming not unambiguous ▪ Financially dependent on available money ▪ In care education centers social farming is no education theme
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chances in financial position and possibilities ▪ Changes in the care sector ▪ Societal trends ▪ Enhancement in networking ▪ Increase of professionalism in social farming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Financial support will be changed ▪ Changes in regulation ▪ Relation between agriculture and care still unbalanced ▪ House building corporations require high interests ▪ Uncertainty about well tuning of supply and demand

Innovation strategy

At the platform-meeting the strengths and chances were considered as basis for critical success factors in the process towards a full and sustainable network and to formulate future strategies. Following recommendations for national and international policy were formulated:

Suggestions for future research:

- Development of a good definition of 'professionalism' in relation to quality
- Inventory of differences in quality between the agricultural sector and care sector and their mutual relationship.

Actions needed on national level

- Linking interests between different departments (ministry of agriculture, welfare, economical affairs and education) and formulation of joint actions
- Active participation in small scale pilots on implementation of quality care systems (by representatives from social farming sector)
- Elucidation of needed cooperation
- Elucidation of most suitable farm management systems; Search for suitable niche-enterprises
- More tight cooperation with municipalities
- Collective approach with respect to
 - o substitution during illness of professionals
 - o placing of clients
 - o coordination of regional activities, searching for a good match
- Development of distinctive supply and demand features, indicators of performing and results and protocols for testing results
- Suitable exchange of information (both between different sectors and individual clients and suppliers)
- Stimulation of dual entrepreneurship
- Concrete action plan and clear appointments within social agriculture sector

Actions needed on European level

- Joint effect studies (Cost actions)
- Inventory on the questions:
 1. which developments are generic and which are region specific? What lessons can be learnt?
 2. What level within the EU is suitable for a fruitful debate and making of appointments on care issues to be able to implement them at national and regional level
- European political lobby from the ministries (Gerda Verburg from the Netherlands)
- Intensifying the 'Farming for health' network and international contacts
- Choosing GAP's (good agricultural practices) as inspirational examples
- EU-funding (FP7?) for new initiatives (f.e. rural development; what are typical characteristics?)
- European brand name for social farming
- International exchange of clients

For further information about social farming in the Netherlands see:

J. Hassink, Ch. Zwartbol, H.J. Agricola, M. Elings and J.T.N.M. Thissen., 2007. Current status and potential of care farms in the Netherlands. NJAS 55-1. p. 21-36.

Free wheeling comments

Views of participants

Participants appreciated the platform meetings and the seeing of different stakeholders from different fields. They also subscribed the goal of the SoFar-project to gear social farming to a sector with international exchange of ideas and experiences. The role of the EU in setting the research agenda might be important for the development of a robust international network.

The meetings gave a good impression on the diversity of social farming and different motives to start. The discussions showed clearly the need for developing unambiguous definitions and vocabulary on social farming related characteristics. It became clear that more reflection is needed on the role of the client, the farmer, the care institution and the support from society. Moreover, the meeting showed the importance of making the results from research accessible for a wide audience.

Opinions about future action

An important next step is to define social farming and its goals carefully.

Topics to be elaborated: research and terminology; mapping and measuring side-effects and benefits of Social Farming for rural areas; discussing themes like 'who is the client?' and 'what does the client exactly want?', 'which products are central (human or agricultural product, culture or relationships)'; 'how can politicians become personally involved in social farming?'; addition of the topic Food as integral part of social farming.

Alliances to be entered: between people working on rural development and landscaping-issues; (international) exchange programs between farmers, clients, etc.

Other important issues to take in mind: 'how do we take care of the long term continuation of care farming?'; 'how do we get exchange of functions without losing engagement?'

Evaluation

The organization of national and international platforms is a good method to trigger the discussions between stakeholders and to exchange ideas. In the Netherlands Social Farming is developing towards a market oriented sector, which is a rather well accepted course towards a professionalized sector. It was instructive to notice that this development is critically observed by some other countries. It was inspiring to feel the enthusiasm of all participants during the meetings and their drive to be engaged in the field of social farming.

SLOVENIA

The participants

During the filed research on the state-of-art of social farming in Slovenia, five groups of relevant stakeholders were identified as follows:

- Representatives of users' organizations
- Farmers and farmers' organizations
- Care organizations
- Local communities
- Government.

Therefore, the representatives of all five groups of stakeholders were addressed to participate at the 1st national platform on social farming. In case of the first five groups, the criterion of addressing was "experience with green program of social care". It means that invitation was sent to 4 subject in each group, that already execute some form of interlacing agriculture or farming with social care. Consequently, the list of addressed subject was as followed:

Representatives of users' organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sožitje-The Slovene Association for Persons with Mental Disabilities• Sonček-The Slovene Association of Societies for Cerebral Palsy• Šent-The Slovene Society for Mental Health• Mozaik-The Society for Social Inclusion
Farmers and farmers' organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Goat-breeding Farm Brdca• Potočnik Farm• Slovenian Association of Farming Women• Agricultural and Forestry Chamber of Slovenia
Care organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public Special Institution for Social Care and Protection Hrastovec• Centre Dolfke Boštjančič• Centre for Protection and Care Koper• The Association of Social Institutes of Slovenia

In case of local communities two criteria were applied. The first was that local community represent major regional centre. Another one was the appearance of social farming in the area of local community. Therefore, four local communities were addressed: Municipality of Ljubljana, Community of Črna, (Rural) Community of Kidričevo and (Rural) Community of Veržej.

In case of government, four relevant ministries, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, Ministry of Health and Ministry for the Environment and Spatial Planning. In order To attract governmental official the support of Directorate for Invalids was essential.

Out of 20 invited persons, only 3 were absent (1 representative of users' organisation (Sonček), 1 representative of local communities (Veržej) and 1 governmental official (Ministry for the Environment and Spatial Planning). All relevant stakeholders were represented adequately.

The objectives of platform

The objectives of platform were:

- To define mission, goals and aims of the green programs of social care in Slovenia up to year 2013
- To identify strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities and threats of the green programs of social care in terms of mission, goals and aims
- To elaborate a policy strategy for encouraging the development of the green programs of social care in Slovenia
- To start process of networking of the initiatives across Slovenia.

Participants agreed that defined objectives of platform correspond to their needs and anticipations.

The results of the platform

Mission

Implementation of inclusive development philosophy by innovative interlacing multifunctional agriculture and social welfare, as well as urban and rural communities.

Goals

- In terms of agriculture and rural areas the goals are to provide new jobs, to increase economic vitality of small-scale farming and to revitalise abandoned farms, to strengthen social cohesion in the rural areas and to strengthen local initiatives and to support their actors.
- As to social welfare the goals are to strengthen solidarity with and tolerance of vulnerable and marginalized social groups, as well as to intensify their social inclusion and emancipation at reasonable social costs.
- To support sustainable development of rural and urban areas by innovative synergic processes of interlacing good practices of social/health care, agriculture/forestry and protection of natural environment.

Aims up to 2013

- 350 farm with green programs of social/health care at the most.
- 100 social/health institutions with green programs at the most

Target users of green programs:

- Mentally disabled
- Children and adults with problems in mental health
- Seniors.

SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher possibilities to chose • Economics • Agriculture as on-farm supplementary activity • New jobs • Right to chose • There are unmet needs of users • If local community support the programs • Creation of sound legislation • Agricultural orientation of EU and creation of common agricultural policy • Large scale needs in the field of social services • If all costs are taking into account 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of knowledge and unrealistic expectations may cause a disappointment • Unfulfilled obligations of the state may cause mistrust • Lack of skills in the field of green programs • Poorly defined legislation • Chance of stigmatisation • Inconsideration of structural changes at costs restitution
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration • Increasing awareness and promotion of human rights • Assuring legal protection of persons with special needs/invalids • Invalids are popular with society; now is the nick of time • Coordination of joint strategy • Incorporation representatives of the providers into creation on the national programs • Financial stimulations • Strengthening influence of civil society • Strengthening influence of local communities • National document provide opportunity for development of green programs • There is a real need for green programs • Promotion of the professions • Additional income at limited risks • Working on a farm gains a popularity • Preservation of rural settlements • Young people are staying on a farm • »Multifunctional agriculture« is crucial to rural development; therefore EU funds are available for a push and education • Rationalisation of services' execution • Institutions want the green programs • Demand for social services in higher than supply • Higher interest of mass media • There is a readiness of all stakeholders to cooperate in preparation of the standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neglecting a responsibility • Possibility of exploitation and abuse • Opposite interests of the institutions • Institutions are often adverse to each other • Lack of executive regulation aggravate realisation • Too strong influence of state on realisation of the national programs • Risks – injuries, accidents, fatal accidents • If permanency is not assured • Wish to get something for nothing • Absence of systemic solutions in the field of rural development • Denying professional capabilities of the new providers • Chance of overregulation • Chance of poor standards may lead to irreparable damages • Chance of refusal • To obstruct by asking numerous different • Poor organisation may cause damages • Pouring money off agriculture • Changes in agricultural policy • Major fiasco at realization of particular projects • Insufficient openness to all and inadequate information

32. 1st European platform : Synthesis of evaluation

Process

What are your general impressions ?

The overall impression of the EU platform participants was very positive. The opportunity was considered as unique in order to widen the knowledge about what is happening in other Countries, as well as to understand the real motivations and the personal experiences of the actors involved and to cope with them in order to face the open questions (like the lack of legislation).

The debate has been considered rich and the people could perceive the diversity of approaches and representations in relation with handicap and people with disabilities.

Interrogations were numerous at the beginning on the methodology to follow to build a relevant common ground from all the diverse and respectable experiences in a political perspective, far from humanitarian clichés.

The initial presentations were considered as important to discover the content of diversity: of publics, of institutional practices, of policies. In some participants a different style would be appreciated (like round table).

The exchange in the platform was seen as an important starting point to underline the relevance and benefits of social farming in the EU and should continue and lead to further meetings on social farms in different countries.

Many participants would have more time in order to better understand practices and debate questions.

It was also good that the concluding discussions reached a consensus on what was needed, very quickly.

The debates were perceived as very well moderated and the use of the time quite good.

Although there were some remarks like the following ones:

- The articulation with politics remained vague and fuzzy (FR).
- The topics to be discussed were not defined clearly enough (SLO).
- The fact that there was not translation into Slovene language reduced the possibility to express thoughts, ideas and suggestions of the Slovenian delegation, as well as their active participation in discussion (SLO).
- Further more, they were surprised that so few care-farmers and no potential users were present (SLO).
- due to language problems, it was a bit chaotic and caused a slow speed and tiring process (B)
- a more detailed exchange of facts and ideas between participants from different countries was limited (NL).

Which reflections and ideas did you bring back home ?

May be for the first time, most of the participants start to feel that there are other people in several Countries that are facing same problems with specific solutions that can be analysed and benchmarked. This perception was useful in order to reinforce the believe of participants about social farming and to stress some specific point as follow:

- FR: There is isolation of vulnerable persons who have been dropped out of the job market, of social life and for whom job inclusion is very difficult. In some other countries, social inclusion may not be the right word as, despite their difficulties, those persons continue to work and live in the middle of people who are fine. Otherwise, the French public engagement in relation with solidarity has not been well understood by some other partners: we can get a public political support without losing our "soul".
- IRL: Views included, that despite there being no structure or overall policy relating to social farming in Ireland we have some very interesting projects and good practices that are well developed and sophisticated in meeting the needs of the various people using such services. This may need to be brought together under an umbrella group. Much work needs to be done on convincing agencies of Government, the EU and policy makers on the benefits of supporting the variety and types of projects and for expanding them.
- IRL: However there is a need to encourage other member states to participate.
- IRL: There are a lot of private farms/farmers in Ireland, with the right publicity, mentoring and problem-solving there is great potential to get it up and running.
- IT: We are not alone. It was important to know about the others, it would be good to have bilateral exchanges also. Some countries (France and Germany) seem to be more similar to us. Our work seems to be even more advanced and original than the others, because we look at social farming not as a specialized sector but as part of new solidarity-based models of welfare.
- IT: "one of most relevant things is, for us in Italy, to strengthen relations with the health/care systems, to achieve full recognition of SF practices".
- IT: "The stakes of care and health sectors appear to be stronger than agriculture – they are the main driving force, differently from our case".
- SLO: situation in the field of social farming in Slovenia does not differ essentially from the situations in other countries (but The Netherlands), as well as that everywhere social farming is dealing with the similar problems as in Slovenia. Official bodies in Slovenia are far behind in terms of understanding, regulating and supporting social farming. Therefore the issue of systemic regulation (legal framework) has to be put on the top of agenda, while discussing further development of social farming with government as one of the relevant stakeholders.
- NL: The discussions showed clearly the need for developing unambiguous definitions and vocabulary on social farming related characteristics.
- NL: It became clear that more reflection is needed on the role of the client, the farmer, the care institution and the support from society. Moreover, the meeting showed the importance of making the results from research accessible for a wide audience.
- D: The wish arose that more countries should have been participating, and the question how to characterize what belongs to social farming and what not.
- *B: An important idea is related to the professionalisation of care farming. Often it is seen that care farming could be more organised in a professional way within the farm, but we do take home the criticisms vis-à-vis the professionalisation in the Netherlands.*

What is your opinion on the structure of the meeting (programme, agenda, time for debates, translation, place , possibility to exchange with others...) ?

The feeling of the participants about the organisation of the meeting was clearly good. All agreed that the platform was quite comprehensive, dense and professional; the translation was important. The mixture of discussion - presentations with different facilities (video, ppt, photos) was appreciated.

The important means which have been mobilized have been appreciated. It made possible exchanges and interventions. The facilities were great, translation etc. More of the video and photographic presentation included as part of the proceedings could focus the mind and discussions. The articulation between information and debates was well synchronized. Exchanges, even during the breaks and dinner, have been rich. The social event was very

useful in getting to know various people and about their projects and situation. The European mixture of practitioners and researchers, of points of view, have been interesting. The possibility of exchange with stakeholders of social farming from other countries was fine.

The responses were positive and for more of the people would have appreciated to have more time in order to go much more in depth with the analysis and the debate, also in a more informal way.

An extra day would have been good with a general meeting on the first day and more in-depth look at examples etc during a longer (full) second day and short concluding discussions on the third.

We could have more room and time for discussion, if we do select a limited number of key questions.

Translation was good (unfortunately translation into Slovene language was not available). Schedule was extensive and formal, so that there was no room for talking with people from other countries, except during the discussions according to a schedule that were limited by time also. There was not enough time for small informal discussions. Our participants would have preferred to work in small groups as well: this could have facilitated more interaction from participants and not only from Sofar-project members Platform represented a starting point of the process, it was very good. But if the EU Platform was only an instant meeting in Brussels, it cannot be satisfying.

Of course there were also some problematic aspect like the language barriers and the formal aspect of the hall (necessary for interpreters), or some aspect related to the organisation of different activities.

Out of the translation, language barrier remains real (outside the official debates and in more direct communication) not available to exchange during the breaks.

The location and choice for simultaneous translation hindered the interaction and exchange of ideas between participants. Add the possibility to work in smaller groups. It would be preferable that the Sofar-project members do stay more quiet and leave the participants at word. If all participants can be heard, it could ameliorate the quality of the platform.

Something to eat or drink during the breaks had been desirable also. The performance – one giving a lecture and all others listening – was sometime criticized as old fashioned; a round table discussion would have been better. There was a lack of written information, i.e. abstracts of the presentations would have been good.

Which suggestions would you like to propose for the next forum to happen in Spring 2008?

The willing to actively participate in the debate on social farming was clarified by the points addressed by participants in giving some advices for the next EU platform meeting.

The propositions regards different points as follows:

On content:

- To be able to work on relevant documents before the forum, for making the exchanges more quickly propositional, to get written information/ a survey about the situation in different countries
- To dedicate time to speak again of the specific projects of the stakeholders.
- Need to start thinking about Action Plan-how to get this up and running.

On people to be involved:

- To make possible the presence of high position CAP persons.
- to involve more countries

On organisation, location and process:

- Formation of working groups made up of members from each representative country will allow for greater sharing. Whilst groups remain together by nationality it really only affirms the views that we already have. Group work on special issues could be useful in order to share knowledge, for instance best practices in how to convince administration, nature conservation, learning on the farm, working with disabled people, etc.
- To have a longer meeting or of the same duration but selecting only a few questions to be discussed. Exchanging on the field also. Strengthening the exchange with care/health sector.
- It is important to find a more warm location than in Brussels. To create much more synergy the next conference should be held on a farm or institute. A venue that could include also a field trip would be appreciated.
- It would be important to have more space for presenting initiatives by the participants. Moreover, there should be the possibility to react more on each others cases and posing statements to stimulate the interaction between the different countries.
- It is of outmost importance that "bottom up" approach is followed much more strictly and that summaries and conclusions of the Platform have to be prepared. They have to be observed by the next Platform in more detailed, as well as more focused way.

Outcomes of the meeting

What is your opinion in relation with the discussed topics? (did they allow to inform you on other countries, did they provide other perspectives, does it inspire you for your own activity?)

The discussed topics were considered as very interesting. The debate gave clarity to the similarities and differences in the policy framework, structures and activities in different countries. Of course some aspect and situation were more clear than others.

The current organisation in the other countries was clarified – the different way of thinking, sensitivity and models. It was also possible to analyse how similar or different are the systems and the experiences in the Country involved. Of course the presentation of different cases was useful in order to understand different lessons.

Progressively, during the discussion a kind of consensus around the Dutch perspective emerged, as the cheapest one in terms of subsidies and the most efficient. But it seems that the concerned populations remain rather autonomous and by the way are less budget consumers; additionally, relations with concerned policy makers are more direct. This model seems to be based in a kind of ideal, interiorised by many people: handicap should not be a cost for society. And if it costs, how to reimburse? There is a kind of inclusion dream which could lead to the negation of handicap. This does not mean that the Dutch position is not relevant. But let's be cautious on "absolute models" and be clear on ethical exigencies.

Some participants expressed to feel distant from the Dutch model, particularly Stefano: "I don't agree with the vision of who considers social farming as an activity to enhance the income of farmers").

The German perspective seemed also very interesting: diversity of publics, diversity of activities for those publics, diversity of products. All this within a complex organisation. We would have liked to deepen the knowledge of the Italian cooperatives: we missed time.

The overall impression was that all people need to become more actively involved in the exchange of ideas and information. The exchange confirmed the participants to be on the right way.

The material, prepared for national platform, contained an international review of social farming, so that participant got basic information prior to EU Platform. Therefore, they missed information on some new developments and vivid discussion about some new aspects. Most of all they missed communicative exchange of practical experiences. One participant expected more information about single projects and initiatives in each of the countries.

The contribution of politicians to the group was considered too rare.

Participants are looking forward to receive the reports of the different countries and to make cooperation more concrete. For next time more depth by identifying different themes is needed.

What were your expectations ? Had they been fulfilled ?

The main feeling was the unexpected interest for the participation to the platform. In many cases the initial thought was to be invited in a more ritual meeting. What people expected was mostly to be informed :

- to know more on other kinds of practices, of handicap cultures.
- to meet people involved in social farming from the various countries and hear of their situations.
- to hear about the extent of and the structures for support for social farming and how it is supported by policy in each country.

At this level, they have been fulfilled.

There were some points that were considered as unexpected like:

- the political perspective that was not considered an initial expectation (FR).
- the side of contents and relations (strong motivations in all participants).
- the opportunity to understand what do the others mean with 'social farming' (the different concepts existing – as solidarity on the one hand and as a kind of new specialization for farmers on the other one).
- the opportunity to verify the own work by confronting (IT).

There were some points that were not fully satisfying, especially when the relationships and the analysis of the practical activities are considered:

- It was expected that there will be more "social farmers" and more exchanges of experiences, more practical prospects, and more discussion on how and why to do social farming, that clear guidelines, as well as models of performing will be set down (SLO).
- farmers should be stimulated to enter in the discussion, but it is very difficult to find farmers willing to participate in these discussions
- the exchange between participants was insufficient (NL).
- For next time it is desirable to work on alliances that can help countries that are less developed in Social Farming (maybe new EU-members) (NL).

What should be tackled in the next step?

The perception after the first EU Platform is that there is the possibility to build a real EU platform; so, continuing on this direction; opening confrontation with health/care sector; coming to an agreed definition of 'social farming' (to be presented to EU institutions); bringing people and social farmers together that want to cooperate on project level.

Some possible tracks could be followed according to participants:

- to provide room for regular meetings of social farmers in order to exchange practical experiences and to have personal contacts.

- to promote and to support on-farm programs of social farming.
- to set down guidelines for legal regulation of social farming across EU.
- to define basic knowledge/expertise of social farmer.
- to define research priorities able to strengthen the outcomes.
- to define harmonised standards of performance .
- further exchange meetings in the participant countries.
- to broaden the number of participating countries.

. *Topics*

The main aspects that should be more in depth analysed, emerged as follows :

- To make social farming more visible at all levels: regional, national and European.
To achieve this main result, some subpoints should be addressed like:
 - . a mapping and catalog of the different forms of social care, institutions and policies
 - . an identification of the different kinds of handicap taken in charge
 - . a deepening of the reflection on the relation between farming and handicap,
 - . ethical principles which should channel those initiatives
 - . how to reach European and local policy makers in such a way that they are willing to participate?
- To activate stakeholders and partnerships that could achieve this result (Farmer/Care Org.).

They should be better identified and defined but they can work actively in order to promote the idea of social farming also working on the following points:

- . Clear (normative) definition of social farming, as well as of the position of the farmer in respect of the user and of the different practices (e.g. day activities, long-term staying on farms); care/health system's recognition of social farming, criteria of accreditation, integration between agricultural and care/health/social sector (individuation of good practices);
- . Social farming as part of new local welfare systems and as a way to enhance the quality of life of all citizens, to promote healthy, alternative life-styles.
 - . Mapping and measuring side-effects and benefits of Social Farming for rural areas;
 - . Discussing themes like 'who is the client?', 'which products are central (human or agricultural products, the topic Food as integral part of social farming)
 - . A special theme on farms with addicts and homeless people.
 - . Defining the requirements for the growth of each initiative or project.

. *Priorities*

Most of the points can be organised according to the literature related to *Policy networks* and *advocacy coalitions*, and with the idea of promoting a new 'sociology' of social farming (SF as part of a new development paradigm of our societies) and they regard how:

- To convene people and to build communities:
 - . To identify the key European actors to target.
 - . to involve the people whom care farming benefits i.e. the service users, people in rehabilitation etc. and high level politicians,
 - . to bring people together that want to cooperate on project level, building up not competitive but healthy relation between agriculture and social farming
 - . to include policy makers at different levels and different client groups
 - . to Build a real EU platform; so, continuing on this direction; opening confrontation with health/care sector; involving farmers and other stakeholders,
 - . to establish a Central body in each country
- To facilitate activities :
 - . to continue the presentation of mutual good practices,

- . to talk on a more precise way of the benefits of farming for vulnerable publics,
- . to consolidate the common grounds which will make possible the building of a network and propositions to EU,
- . to put together an action plan.
- To amplify the subject :
 - . Research priorities identified and linked up with other research which could strengthen outcomes.
 - . coming to an agreed definition of 'social farming' (to be presented to EU institutions)
 - . Publicity: raising general public's awareness, so that it will become on the (political) agendas in different countries.
 - . Common (normative) definition + Quality standards of social farming
 - . European legal framework(s) for social farming: this could be one or more, in order to keep the diversity of social farming in Europe
- To invest and to search for funding :
 - . to integrate the topic into the second pillar of the EU- agricultural subsidies.

Which relations should be built ?

The views of the participants are strictly linked to a bottom-up approach, able to link local individual initiatives in a broader political network.

In this respect some points emerged from the evaluation reports and they regard the opportunity :

- to build an exchange relation, by knowing what do the other partners,
- to organise visits first with close initiatives and then to broaden the circle.

The idea of the video documentary of the SoFar project may contribute to it.

Relations should be built with:

- consumers and all citizens;
- institutions both at local and European level;
- health/care sector;
- people working on rural development and landscaping-issues;
- exchange programs between farmers, clients, etc.

Alliances to be entered:

- All governing bodies that are interested in social farming
- All civil movements – associations in the field of social, spiritual development and health
- Users and their organizations
- Local communities.

33. 2nd national regional platforms

BELGIUM (Flanders)

(Ghent, 23 April 2008)

The participants

As agreed among Sofar partners, the different kind of stakeholders involved in social farming in Flanders were invited, pursuing the aim to have a wide diversity among participants. More specific, the participants of the previous Flemish platform, the Flemish participants of the European platform and the Flemish participants of the Community of Practice 'Farming for Health' were invited.

In total, at this second workshop of the Flemish platform, 16 people participated (Annex 1). Participants were divided into 2 groups. A first group consisted of diverse operators of the social/care sector. A second group included diverse operators of the agricultural sector. The group of care farmers was also invited but due to the timing of the platform, they were not represented during this meeting. In both groups representatives of the related and relevant public administration were present.

Overall, we may say that the total number of participants was limited, but except for the care farmers, most groups of participants were represented. Especially the high number of policy related participants was in accordance with the objectives of this second platform. We may say that all participants had relevant experience in the field or at policy level and most of them are currently engaged in relevant initiatives at regional/national scale. Some of the institutional participants play relevant roles in the current development of social farming phenomenon in Flanders.

The objectives of the workshop

According with the results of the first European platform the objectives of this regional platform were the better defining of what can be the added value of an European initiative related to social farming, both in the perspective of the Country/regional evolution of social farming as well as in a common European view. The perspective of the construction of an EU view on social farming was the main focus of the discussion. Therefore this regional platform focused on the discussion regarding actions that can be established at EU level in order to promote social farming on the following aspects:

- Integration of green care sector into policy at regional level and at EU level
- Policy network at EU level
- Actions that should be focused at EU level in order to improve social farming projects
- Actions that should be focused at EU level in order to integrate social farming in a territorial dimension

This common integrated report is the outcome of the discussion at Flemish level and forms input for the next European platform.

The objectives of this workshop fit in the overall goal of the project, i.e. to create "a platform around the topic (i.e. social farming) - bringing together key stakeholders and rural development researchers -, which can support the design of future policies at regional and European levels".

The results of the platform

Do we need an integrated or sector approach?

Both the agricultural and the care sector do not have a clear vision towards an integrated or sector approach. According to the two groups, both systems have advantages and disadvantages.

In general the agricultural sector has the possibilities for social farming, the care sector has the methodologies for social farming. The two sectors need each other to create a good social farming environment, but there is some hesitation related to an integrated approach, and the top-down aspect of this approach.

At this moment, there is still a grey zone related to social farming, and clear definitions about 'what is social farming?' do not exist. The discussion in the plenary session focussed on the concept of social farming, where to put the boundaries of social farming, and what is the place of social farming in the care sector. One of the prime characteristics that should be focussed is the family characteristic of social farming. The origin of this discussion is the variety of care modes for target groups of which each of them needs a specific implementation. The diversity of social farming should be the starting point: it is a therapeutically care, but it is hard to put some boundaries: sometimes there is exchange with care institutions, some farmers only offer the framework.

The participants agree on the fact that social farming is a kind of community care, and there should not be placed a burden on it because of too high institutionalisation, but on the other hand there is a high need to further conceptualise social farming in order to preserve it from competition by e.g. labour market inclusion policies with the risk that the weakest who now find a place in social farming will not anymore find a place, in particular if social farming would be seen merely as an economic activity and not as a service activity.

An interesting approach is to rank the different forms of social farming in relation to the 'therapeutic or care' element in it. The more the care element the higher the need for integration. The group also suggested to divide the social farming sector within 'therapeutic care' on the one hand and 'labour inclusion' on the other as starting point for such conceptualisation.

In general the group had the feeling that for the moment social farming should remain a farming policy instrument certainly at EU level for following reasons:

- social care policies is mostly lacking as policy field in the EU
- the agricultural sector at EU level is well established and subsidy mechanisms are well developed (although there is a problem here with social farming as recognised form of diversification)
- The social sector could come in as partner in a agricultural policy (so not as main driver) within cohesion policies or as partner for developing 'social farming methodologies'

Policy network at EU level

The following aspects for a policy network at EU level were provided:

- The policy network at EU level can give a framework for the development of rules and guidelines, i.e. institutionalisation of social farming, but it is important to do it in a way recognising the diversity be it with clear boundaries meaning that social farming must have a clear farming element in it (and by preference family farming, given the importance of the family in the therapeutic effects). There is the fear that the diversity of social farming will be lost due to institutionalising. It would be a pity if the local dynamics got lost.
- A policy network at EU level should focus on some tangible actions, and not on the conceptualising of social farming (this should already be done before).
- The local dynamics of social farming have to be remained by a bottom-up approach
- A policy network can stimulate member countries of the EU, without putting strict boundaries. A network can give incentives and can stimulate the trans national cooperation, in particular in border regions. The initiatives at regional level can be evaluated by means of comparison with other countries, but there is no need for streamlining.

- A policy network at EU level could have more impact in order to guarantee a permanent operation than present initiatives such as the Community of Practice
- It would be a way to be recognised as a discussion partner at EU level
- A financing mechanism for such a policy network can guide the development of social farming
- Care sector is not organised at EU level, so the policy network should be initiated by the farming sector

Within the plenary session, it was stressed that social farming is still a growing sector and the first aim is to further develop a network for exchange and for developing the concept of social farming. In the future this network can grow towards a real policy network. First role would be the exchange of practices, the further conceptualisation of social farming, the collection of data and figures (the sector will only be recognised if it can be expressed in figures).

Actions to improve social farming projects at farm level

The following actions should be taken at EU level to improve social farming projects at farm level:

- Fixation of certain policy targets related to the number of social farms, number of clients on social farms, percentage of population involved in social farming etc. as commitment of the policy makers to work on this (e.g. other targets in EU)
- Guidelines for the development of a support platform or structure that coordinates social farming, in each member state (national level), but also the stimulation of the establishment of local support centres (sub regional level)
- Sensitizing, not with single campaigns and preferable in a formal environment, making use of the existing organisations, having in mind the emphasis of the social recognition and relevance. Incentives for education and training related to social farming, although there is no consensus about the work format and the extent of education that is needed for a farmer within social farming
- Promotion of a matching model: the linkage of demand and offer is an important aspect of the success of social farming, but this should not be an administrative burden and the importance of the matching has to be highlighted from the beginning. This can not be done only on paper but should involve people both from the farming as the social sector as each client has different requirements
- Giving more international support to the communities of practice, supporting of these Communities of practice by the recognised local support centres and using the present Sofar model (national platforms to discuss the topics at national level and then having representatives at EU level to explain and eventually defend national positions). In this sense this could be a gradual transformation into a policy network Hereby two forms may co-exist: the present CoP model in order to exchange practical experiences at EU level (open structure) and than the Sofar model as policy network for putting policy issues on the table of policy makers

Actions to integrate social farming in territorial dimension

The main actions to integrate social farming in a territorial dimension, are the following:

- Socialisation of social farming can be improved by the following actions:
 - An increasing awareness of the importance of social farming in the curricula of care related studies, so that future users of care methods are aware of this form of social care
 - To give it a basis within the local communities (by organising e.g. an EU day of social farming with demonstration and visits)
 - supporting incentives to start with social farming, e.g. pilot projects, including the use of social farming into the yearly reporting of the care institutions

- putting forward targets to implement social farming in the care sector (as also recommended for the farming sector). There should be sensitizing and activation as the low percentages of social farming should not be seen as upper limit
- stimulating financial support from other policy sources (not only the agricultural sector but also the care sector, the judicial sector,..) in order to increase the involvement and the support from all involved sectors (and to work towards more integration). This could be reached if subsidies at EU level are recognised and given if accompanied with a 50 % national support (which could then also come from other sectors)
- limitation of the administrative burden
- related to the demand of social farming:
 - per sector making intervision possible (platforms per sector and not longer having a uniform vision on social farming but allowing and stimulating diversity)
 - Acceptance of the methodology of social farming by the care policy
 - Sensitizing and image building related to the agricultural sector in order to give confidence to the care sector (farming has still a bad image in e.g. the medical sector because of some incidents in the past)
 - Necessity of inventory of possible constraints and incompatibilities between policies (e.g. problems with losing social payments by clients if they work)
- Related to the tuning of demand and supply:
 - Actions to clarify the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders therapeutic guidance is the role of the social sector (farmers should not be social workers), role of farmers and the role of the intermediation who needs to organise the brokerage between supply and demand,
 - exchange of expertise and further improvement of the methodologies of how to use social farming within therapeutic treatments or social inclusion programmes
 - Further development of the integrated vision which is a dynamic process.

All participants agreed that there is certainly a role to be played by the EU as catalyst to enhance the visibility and attractiveness both for farmers and social sector of social farming. The development of a EU policy would be certainly an important driver for the development of the sector as has been seen in other sectors or policies.

FRANCE

The participants

20 persons participated in the forum organised by So Far on May 19th at Solid' Action *Jardin de Cocagne*.

With regard to the 1st forum of June, 2007, some remarks can be done concerning the participants:

- The number of participants was higher,
- The variety of the initiatives and represented actors was wider,
- 50 % of participants had not participated in the 2007 local meeting,

Elected representatives of the Regional council and the County came, intervened and expressed their interest for this meeting, considered as a stage of the construction of the network.

. They formulated several propositions to facilitate the access of our network to regional and county authorities.

. They insisted on the interest of communicating and making know local initiatives, through the production of visuals, in connection with So Far visual activities. They expressed their will to co-fund those specific productions.

After the forum, the local press better echoed the event (a journalist had stayed at the forum a part of the day)

Proportion of participants by category

Type of actor	Number
Researcher (So Far)	1
Politicians	2
Social farming professionals – working on farms	15
Agricultural technical support (Agricultural council)	1
Users/ families handicap association (autism)	1
Total	20

The objectives of the platform

Objectives of the forum

- To present a short state of the art of So Far project and a summary of 2007 local and European exchanges , in order to build continuity,
- To reflect on and propose a set of priorities to be tackled at local and European levels,
- To agree on the content of what could be formulated at the next Brussels forum.
- What were the objectives you wanted to reach during the platform?

The results of the platform

The recognition of social agriculture and the development of an European network which contributes to this recognition are considered as very connected.

The recognition of social agriculture.

The definition of a common base has vocation to be a marker of identity and of the perimeter of the relations to be built between the concerned actors.

Proposition :

Social agriculture covers a set of activities which all have a double activity - production / valorisation of activities of production and services on one hand and of hosting / support to vulnerable publics, on the other hand.

The networking dynamic and issues

A network for what?

- To be a tool of political intervention, which weights in European, local, national public policy debates, to defend common interests, to be specified ;
- To be a tool of communication on the characteristics and social contribution of social farming;
- To work as tool for opening, exchanging and capitalising experiences.

The creation or the extension of regional, national or European networks keeps pace with:

- *Carrying out an inventory* of the initiatives and the projects which refer to the common base,
- *Proposing a manifesto*, which leans on this common base and expresses values, objectives and mutualized means to reach them,
- *Seeing with existing networks* how to raise the issue of *inter-networks coordination*.
- *Mobilising absentees* which count:
 - . Agricultural professional organizations,
 - . Labour unions.
 - . The world of medicine.
 - . Actors of professional training.
 - . Employment service.
 - . More locally: local governments (municipalities, county, region, regional parks...

Issue raised without finding clear answer

The more the network is broad , from a wide common base, the more the common denominator will be small and the more it will be difficult to propose orientations and implementation of relevant tools of development.

Example: the relation between CAP to be reformed and peri-urban gardening systems of self-production / self-consumption is far from being evident.

Priorities for the building of an innovation strategy

Specific priorities

- It is important for the many associative structures of social agriculture to be recognized as farms, while defending their specificities bound to the hosting of vulnerable publics. Such an evolution would be a condition for a better access to land, which remains a major concern for all. Let us remind that this question is rather specific as in other countries in Europe, structures are recognised as private individual, cooperative or work shelter organisations.
- Necessity to help farmers in big difficulty who receive survival minimum income.
- How to encourage the development of the population of hosting families ?
- The status of staffs which supposes the recognition of skills, curriculum and training programmes
- True or false debate? Can we compete with other types of farms, on the market and at the same time receive public help?
 - . Values, quality of products, solidarity, relation with consomm' actors, can be factors of differentiation on the market: the concept of *solidarity agriculture* should be promoted.

- . At the same time, the hosting services, devoted to the community, must be compensated or paid by State or other public actors. The necessary over-staffing for hosting activities must be financed.
- . This debate does not seem to be raised in other countries.

Priorities to be carried at the European level

- *To focus on the necessary conditions* for implementing a European network or an inter-network coordination:
 - . Common definition of social agriculture.
 - . Complete inventory of initiatives and networks.
 - . Manifesto of the network.
- *With regard to the PAC*, how to take into account the specific publics living and working on the farms (example of the milk quota)?
- *A label or standard system*, which would clarify or propose good practices, mainly concerns vulnerable publics hosting, as the agricultural activities are already very standardised. How to make compatible specificities, values and some necessary harmonisation? This codification of practices can also be a condition in the development of public policy support to social farming.
- To reflect together (Europe) on the *payment system* to farmers or for financial compensation of partial incapacity of hosted persons, for social farms .
- How to combine on one side quality and duration of the (long-term) hosting of publics in trouble and on the other side, the pressure to send them back (often illusion) towards employment and labour market?
- Which *status and rights of the beneficiaries* ? How to codify them?

"Free wheeling" comments

The 2nd platform has been a very positive new step in the emerging of a regional network , as an outcome of the project.

- Presence of local and regional politicians,
- Commitment from them to support the network
- Commitment to try to find funding for image production on local initiatives
- Clear idea of the current priorities, like the adoption of a common declaration to clarify what and with whom...

More participants and more diversified scope made it positive as it contributed to enlarge the audience of So Far and enrich contacts for participants. Better press coverage.

The series of questions we had adopted for the 2nd platform were complicated; for us and for participants: cf the debate we had at the beginning of the step. Participants expressed this complexity. By the way it made the group discussions rather slow and difficult.

Here there is a kind of contradiction or tension between the project logic which requires the production after 2 years of "innovation strategies" and the social process we have engaged with social actors, which need more time and more interactions

GERMANY

The participants

All in all about 350 persons became invited and the meeting was announced in the press. An estimated number of about 50 people were personally contacted via mail and telephone and asked to take part in the meeting.

As worried before we did not succeed in attracting important stakeholders from politics and associations and to have a well mixed group with stakeholders from all sectors - as probably the other countries did. Finally we have been a group of 14 participants (three researcher/organizer included, 3 cancelled their participation because of illness). The mixture was quite unbalanced. Only one person had already participated in the first platform in Kassel, the other 10 came from the North, West and South of Germany, mainly working in the context of farming with handicapped people and organized in their associations. 5 participants had an anthroposophic background, about 7 are working in research and advice. In the following table a survey of the stakeholders (profession and representation of client group) attended the workshop and the number of persons invited is given. The mentioned profession of the stakeholders is just a tendency. Some are farmers (practitioners) but also spend some time on networking or representing their work.

Client group	Participating org	Profession	Number participants	N° invited persons invited
People with handicaps	Sheltered workshops	Practitioners	1 (Schmalenbach)	22
	Network Green sectors in Sheltered workshops	Representative	2 (Kleinheitz, Hermanowski)	2
	Independent farms with handicapped people and general handicapped associations	Representative/ Practitioner	4 (Feldmann, Ehlers, Bauck, Timme- Ruffler,	33
	Psycho- social Rehabilitation on farm, Drug addicted, homeless, unemployed	Representative	1 (Frangenberg)	13
Children and young people, Education/ school farms	School farms (Network BagLoB), Individual youth aid on farms (minors)		none	24
Elderly/ Immigrants			none	4
Unspecific therapy	Network gardening and therapy		none	
Regional and national Politics; Administration and advice	Diverse sectors (social, agriculture, rural development)	Representative	none	25
European Politics	Diverse sectors (agriculture, rural development)	Representative	none	9

Finance and banks			none	9
Press and media			none	4
Other networks, social and therapeutic work, education			3 (Limbrunner, Herz, Kolmar)	14
Other Research, Interested individuals			1 (Schüssler)	About 60
Organisation and moderation, SoFar Project	FiBL Germany e.V.	Researcher, Representative	3 (van Elsen, Kalisch, Kleinfeldt)	3
		Total	15	About 350

The objectives of the platform

The aims of the platform ("definition of a set of practical actions to develop, in order to build an EU strategy on social agriculture") are described in the "discussion paper" (provided by Francesco Di Iacovo) under the heading "points to be addressed". Four main questions were selected and suggested to discuss:

- How to define social farming in terms of practice and in terms of politics in the EU context?
- How to organize policy networks at regional, national and EU level?
- How to characterize the minimum common features of local projects and practices?
- What should be role of the EU institutions in the social farming further development?

The workshop also fit the goal of carrying on the dialogue on social farming between the heterogeneous stakeholders involved by sharing and discussing their own experiences. This common German perspective will be presented at the next European platform. As additional topic the German position paper on social farming should be discussed by the participants.

The results of the platform

Although the group has been small and not well mixed we succeeded in having fruitful discussions about social farming in Germany. The topics and questions of the second platform on European network and an innovation strategy require different stakeholders than the first platform; the ordinary social farmer is not familiar with European policy and networking. Therefore it was rather difficult to think and speak of European (social) policy dimension in Germany. Social policy in Germany is quite complex and not transparent. One participant was gained to take part in the second meeting in Brussels who is interested in a European action on education/ training courses for social farmers.

European network

Instead of "network" the term "syndicate" or "community of interest"

The term "network" is connected with strong demands and expectations. Some participants suggested to replace the term by "syndicate" or "community of interest" and change the objective. It would be beneficial to form a strong community on one concrete action and later broaden the activities to avoid promises and frustration. Farmers and stakeholders should actively profit and thereby get motivated to participate.

Tasks and structure of the network

A network can be useful in those areas where common interests exist and structural conditions are similar. These could be:

- rural areas (rural development)
- education and qualifying training
- lobbying and political representation
- networking: exchange and inform each other
- projects such as exchange visits (farmers get to know other countries, other structures) and development of best practice (demonstrational) farms
- experimental research, transparency of research and *best practice transfer*

The question of the implementation and structure of the network was discussed. Following ideas came up:

- It is doubted that a (virtual) network relying on the web can develop a „real network“.
- The network needs a *powerful basis on national (or regional) level first*. (Kolmar)
- The coordination of the networking should be supported and provided. Participants and stakeholders would be overstrained to do it themselves. This coordination needs continuous responsible professionals. Their task would be to invite to meetings, provide reports, organize events and visits a.o.
- The European network could be organised two-parted as an inner circle (the persons concerned) and a broader circle that is open to the outside. On the one hand there are multipliers (such as existing networks) that transport information into fine structures. On the other hand there are farms and practitioners who care for their self-information. It is important that interested people find a central point (i.e. SoFar-Website) that guides systematically (through a data record) to appropriate farms.
- There could be an exchange organized as a *Gordon Conference*.

Prototypes for networking and who should be included in networks

In anthroposophical initiatives (i.e. Demeter- association, study group) successful and proven examples on networking already exist. Partners, know-how or support might be found here.

Following institutions and activities were mentioned who could be asked for experiences or cooperation (see table):

Who	Attributes	Forms of networking or usable instruments
<i>Bäuerliche Arbeitsgemeinschaft (Farmers working community)</i>	(more than 20 countries; 300 farmers, social homes, german speaking, anthroposophic)	Monthly newsletter,...
Social-therapeutic study group in <i>Dornach</i> ³ ,	anthroposophic, long tradition	European journeys and reports each year
<i>Camphill communities</i>	anthroposophic, long tradition, many in europe (Ireland, Scandinavia)	
<i>BAGLOB German network on school farms</i>		
<i>Grüne Werkstätten Green sectors of workshops for people with handicaps</i>		
<i>Socialtherapeutic working group</i>	anthroposophic	
<i>4 years agricultural apprenticeship</i>	(anthroposophic, at first only in northern Germany, now european)	Apprenticeship for Demeter- farmer

³Each year there is a conference about social therapy at Dornach in Switzerland, the centre of the anthroposophical movement: www.khsdornach.org/de/konferenz-fuer-heilpaedagogik/arbeitgruppen.

	wide developing (Switzerland, Netherlands, France Sweden)	
<i>Landbaupraktika⁴ of the Waldorf schools</i>	Anthroposophic, 9th grade pupils working on farms	Regular meetings with exchange on European level
<i>Social association (i.e. Lebenshilfe, Diakonie⁵)</i>		
Demeter- board of control tellen	anthroposophic	Good data base record on social farming
<i>Information office at the Demeter association in Darmstadt.</i>	anthroposophic each year about 1000 people get connected, worldwide, open to all	Farm and job exchange fair
<i>European Disability Forum⁶ a.o. networks in the area of social work on european level</i>	European NGO connecting about 90 to 110 NGO´s; Know How in the sector of people with disabilities	i.e. ask for experience in networking and coordination
<i>ECCE - European Cooperation for Curative Education and Social Therapy</i>	anthroposophic, Cooperative action of therapeutic pedagogy and social therapy, resides in the Netherlands	i.e. 2 Leonardo-projects, platform, meetings ask for experience of cooperation on European level, advice, get connected

Research and best practice transfer as support actions for networking

Experimental research and best practice transfer were touched only briefly and not discussed to the end. It was stated that research just as education could be an action suited for the exchange on European level. In general there should be more transparency in research and publications on the topics and outcomes researched.

From a sectoral approach to an integrated political view- strengthening the public awareness and the profile of social farming

Overcome fragmentation and diverse responsibility: convince ministers

There was consensus on the need of a development of an integrated political viewpoint in Germany. Until now the responsibility gets shifted between different ministries and between regional and national boards. It was discussed whether this fragmentation can be resolved and how:

- Cooperation bilateral or multidimensional? Possible actors: ministries of labour, agriculture, regional and national boards, ...
- Support of integration via persons concerned (bottom- up) or via legislation by the state (top down), who becomes active?
- guarantee the rights and needs of clients

The starting point of lobbying should be at the level of ministries and experts on the administrative level.

Further actions to overcome fragmentation could be:

- professionell PR
- Provide information (web, brochures, advice, publish research results, etc. ...).
- special actions (education)
- actions with strong PR effects.

⁴ practical work of school classes on farms: Waldorf school offer practical seminars for pupils (grade 9) in agriculture.

⁵ Diakonie und Lebenshilfe are like Caritas care institutions that offer institutional care in Germany.

⁶ European Disability Forum (EDF)

Professionell PR, coordination centre and presence in media

The main focus of public interest is on the human being. When media report on social farming the agricultural activity is often left out, there is a lack of interest. To strengthen the profile of social farming the media could become a crucial role. A challenge is to formulate the topic positively and not to get stuck on the need of help (i.e. organic farming was long time defined through NOT fertilizing artificially, NOT using pesticides etc. It is also necessary to describe the positive things such as a surplus social value through fair prices, appropriate animal husbandry etc.)

There is the possibility to bring the topic in social media in order to inform the "users" first – the broad public should become acquainted with social farming later. It was discussed whether professional PR would be needed. – such campaigns are very expensive, it is better to finance good projects.

There was also a discussion whether a support centre is needed in Germany similar to those in the Netherlands, but clear answers could not be found, there was a discomfort regarding the enormous economic and "selling" dimension of it (such as introducing social farming as a new brand).

Collect and provide information

Independently from the grade of professionalisation PR should be carried out on all levels. Currently there are some actions on this topic – in the SoFar- project (DVD, video, German position paper), at FiBL Frankfurt and at the university of Nürnberg. A publication on social farming in Germany as a general reference book is missed until so far (available literature is to be found at www.sofar-d.de.)

Special actions (education)

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

Change of paradigm: farming should become more social

The general goal should be to make agriculture more social and develop an *overall concept of social action in farming* – in accordance with the initial ideas of organic farming. There is a need of continuous lobbying in order to formulate offers for special groups of society and moreover to provide farming with a new image and positive meaning.

Important activities on EU- level to improve social farms

Important activities such as the support of exchange among farmers or the implementation of a support centre have been mentioned in the chapters above and should not be repeated here.

European project for the training of skilled labour

It was proposed to use the topic of training and education as starting point for a European network. There are already some actual attempts such as the development of the *Famit - Curriculum*⁷ (that is currently checked by German authority for vocational training BIBB⁸). The Famit- initiative aims at social training for farmers that work in social farming but also picks up the question of vitalisation of rural areas which is of general public interest.

Social farming is not taught as a topic at German universities and technical colleges as it is in other countries such as the Netherlands (Dronten), Sweden and Italy (Viterbo) where the first postgraduate courses started recently. The application of European projects is quite demanding, therefore stakeholders are needed to do that.

⁷ Expert for building a climate of participation, social- therapeutic education i.e. for farmers, see: http://www.verband-anthro.de/index.php/cat/5/aid/226/title/FAMIT_Curriculares_Konzept

⁸ Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung: <http://www.bibb.de/de/index.htm>

Lobbying for a regulation on social farming

The German „position paper on the surplus value of social farming in Germany“ that was discussed in the morning could be used as a starting point of a European claim.

Like the development of the European regulation on organic farming standards before standards of practical social farming and claims for political support could be formulated. This idea was also criticised, it was mentioned that the difference between organic farming 30 ago and today is that it has become strongly regimented with rules, certifications and accreditation systems. Such regulations and their implementations for social farming are different in each European country, it would be impossible to find common solutions. The topic (social law) is not suitable for European networking whereas topics like rural development with the goal of revitalisation of rural areas or the topic of training and qualification is better suited to reach common goals.

Status of social farming in Germany

Qualitative characteristics of social farming in Germany

The topic was not clearly asked for in the discussion paper but emerged on the figure (showing the comparison of social farming situations in different countries) that was worked out in Brussels by the Italian SoFar- partner Francesco Di Iacovo (see figure). The topic is about the definition of social farming, the demarcation to other movements and the question what German social farming can contribute to European discussion.

German social farming means "quality" and "real farming"

The participants agreed that social farming should always be "real agriculture". This means: serious production and size of the farm, effectiveness, professionalism (i.e. machine equipment) and (product-) quality, identification with the (agricultural) activity, integration of clients in suggestive working processes, possibility of biographical development and support, most possible normality and inclusion. Farms with a protective and extended social specialisation, where pets are kept for hugging and where "at 5pm the shovel stops" are not as effective, motivating and integrating. These farms do not match with the participant's image of agriculture and are referred to as "gimmick".

Future efforts of networking in Germany

Initiatives of social farming in Germany (except school farms and green spaces in workshops for handicapped) are networking deficiently. Efforts to increase networks have been part of the SoFar- project that will stop at the end of 2008. FiBL Germany will try to apply for a national follow up project but there is no guarantee on approval. Therefore the future of networking is unsecure. The SoFar- website (www.sofar-d.de) will be relaunched until project end and will be available after project end if it will not cause additional costs. In the special topic of decentralised working places on family farms the FiBL Germany will launch a national project that is not budgeted until now and found an association of farmers and parents to help people with handicaps to work on farms.

Quality assurance before growth

The basic conditions to start new social farms are currently disadvantageous in Germany. In the sector of people with handicaps the sheltered workshops resist against the decentralisation of working places and there are some other limiting factors such as the question of retirement pension for people with handicaps after their working lifetime on farms. A radical change would be the introduction of the "personal budget" that enables clients to choose their required services – such as integration on farms - by themselves. In this context the participants emphasized that it would be an advantage when new starting ("converting") social farms would get developed professionally by using know how of existing social farms. What matters thereby is not only growth of social farming but also topics such as sustainable further development, quality assurance, qualification and

competence.

Quality assurance via local networking

One participant contributed enthusiastically about his work in Weide-Hardebek⁹ where for many years twelve different social farms cooperate. The local cooperation can be used as an instrument to secure and increase the quality of social work. The cooperation gives clients the possibility to choose between different farm models and also to change farms when after some biographical developments different farm structures can foster the individual progress. Not only the farms but also the clients benefit and public authorities support the cooperation in their own interest.

Further topics

We asked the experts who would like to participate in the second international platform in Brussels and gained one participant, *Dr. Gerhard Herz* to attend the meeting and contribute the topic of education and training in social farming in June.

As a main point of the strategic forum the German position paper was discussed among the participating experts and it was asked for the participant's ideas where (magazines, authorities, associations, ministries?) to direct the `German position paper on social farming` once it will be sufficiently formulated. Some magazines were named (*Punkt-Kreis, Das Band*) and insisted that it should get distributed not only in agricultural circles but also in social therapeutic media and influential associations such as the national association of parents of people with handicaps (*Bundeselternvereinigung*). The paper will be ready in June and presented at the second international platform in brussels.

IRELAND

⁹ www.weide-hardebek.de/

Introduction

The 2nd Irish National Platform was held on the 21st of May 2008 in Mountmellick, Co.Laois, Ireland. 26 people attended the 1 day platform that ran from 9a.m. to 5pm. This 2nd National Platform was constructed with a wider scope of participants. Of the 26 participants, 65% attended the Social Farming platform for the first time. The remaining 35% of participants had participated in the previous SoFAR Social Farming Platform held in 2007.

As there was a large attendance of 'new people' some re-cap on past work was necessary as well as an introduction to the work of the SoFAR project. This also meant that some re-covering of previously discussed topics was inevitable which also allowed for the enhancement of those discussions.

Those that attended represented farmers and/or care service personnel directly involved with Social Farming practices or actively seeking involvement; farmer organisations, disability advocacy networks, health services management, representative from Ministry of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, care organisations, Camphill, agricultural advisory services and rural development/community development partnerships and LEADER groups.

Objectives of the Platform

-
- To share information from the EU platform with the National Platform.
- To introduce the concept of Social Farming to new participants and to bring them up to the same level of information as past participants.
- To discuss perspectives on the value of a network to support Social Farming initiatives and work towards raising awareness of Social Farming in Ireland and EU.
- Promotion of integrated work or a joined-up approach between various stakeholders to support and promote Social Farming.
- At an Irish and European level what could be done to develop social farming initiatives at the farm level?
- What could/should happen at a European level to promote Social Farming nationally/regionally, inter-country?

Key results/priorities that emerged from the Irish Platform:

- There is a need for the re-defining farming/agriculture/horticulture policy to include cultural, social, economic and environmental attributes. Social Farming may be a means of re-establishing the social function of agriculture/ horticulture.
- Social Farming must be responsive to the needs and wishes of service users, it must be a choice for those service users that wish to avail of farm services and opportunity for personal enhancement (directly for service-user and spin-off benefits to farmer and wider society).
- Social farming is not equipped to replace social services but rather should be seen as an opportunity to enrich the lives of service users that choose to avail of such services.
- Core values of Social Farming should include that it benefits society as a whole and brings farming closer to people and people closer to farming and the countryside. It has potential to reverse the trend of farm abandonment and rural desertification and may contribute to making farming as a way of life and career more attractive to farmers.
- We need to be pragmatic about the financing of social farming. We need to find a balance of paying farmers for the provision of a Social Farming service whilst at the same time not simply making it a commercial activity. The expectation that people

are going to provide a quality service is important and this may not be well served by relying on altruistic commitment.

- Widen scope to include an opening up of the countryside. Promotion of societal wellbeing rather than targeting of particular people with disabilities. Concern that if you target certain groups that you move or re-create the institution in the countryside.
- Promote along different avenues: Health-Commercial-Social
- Social farming offers an opportunity to bring sectors together (joined-up thinking)
- Need support-resourcing in finance to develop as a concept and in its implementation.
- More research is needed to underpin the work that is taking place across Europe and to sell the concept to stakeholder sectors.

The networking dynamic and issues

The development of a network was discussed as bringing added value to the development of Social Farming in a number of key areas:

- By facilitating the involvement of stakeholders through a network can create a foci for attention to Social Farming, an identity that can be used to promote awareness and influence.
- Social Farming requires resourcing to become established, a European network will require support and through its role advocate for the support and development of Social Farming in Europe. Governments have statutory obligation to provide services and supports to all citizens.
- By increasing awareness a network can increase the supply of services and the demand for services.
- A network could bring together the various stakeholders who can generate awareness among target organisations e.g. disability advocacy groups, agricultural organisations, politicians that would raise the profile of Social Farming.
- Ensure that the views of other stakeholders are interchanged with those of farming e.g. promoting person centred care for service users.
- Network could aid the recognition of the different goals: rural development and/or social inclusion.
- Promote the values and philosophy of social farming as a multifunctional attribute of farming, whereby the social function of farming may be re-established in agriculture.
- Promote recognition of Social Farming as a valid area of social care provision.
- Promote cross-sector involvement through exchange in the network and link social and health stakeholders with farming stakeholders.
- Allow concepts to emerge and examples of good practice that can be shared with the member countries.

How can we promote integrated work or a joined-up approach between various stakeholders to support and promote Social Farming?

- Social Farming lacks evidence-based research to support its beneficial claims and as a means of dissemination of the concept. Evidence is needed to get buy-in from current and potential stakeholders. Unless Social Farming can be demonstrated with facts and figures it will be very difficult to get buy-in from inter-sectoral groups. Therefore, further research required to underpin the development of Social Farming.
- Direct consultation with service users and representative organisation should form part of research.
- Clear statement in policy to recognise the social function of agriculture and that Social Farming may be a means to re-establish that social function of farming.
- Public relations: work like the SoFAR project contributes to this but on a local level, utilising media to highlight the existing and potential benefits of Social Farming would be beneficial. Testimony and accounts of the experiences of service users valuable in this regard.

- Make alliances with other relevant organisations/movements e.g. environmental, organic farming organisations and disability representative groups.
- Promotion of 'Person Centred Budgets and broader service delivery options, creates demand for alternative external services. If the quality of the service is good enough there will be a demand for it.
- Policies should be framed by how communities should support those who need services.
- Importance of national policies; policy framed by 'opportunities' for inclusion: equal opportunities, social inclusion, Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP), Teagasc Farm Options (alternative rural development options for farm families)

Priorities for the building if an innovation strategy:

At European level, what could be done to develop social farming initiatives at the farm level?

Priorities at the Irish level to develop at farm level:

- Need to develop pilot project(s) that can be evaluated to measure costs and benefits of Social Farming. Providing detailed information on establishments, costs, benefits, evaluation of practices.
- There are no current supporting infrastructure for Social Farming in Ireland (beyond SoFAR project) need to establish a steering group to practically develop this idea further and to develop a strategy for Ireland.
 - A steering group was agreed at the Irish Platform with practitioners, care providers and various agricultural and health care statutory representatives nominated as members. This group will be convened by University College Dublin post the European Platform.
- National resource centre to promote and develop provision of Social Farming services.
- Use existing mechanisms e.g. rural development funding, local action groups e.g. LEADER, community networks to fund and facilitate initial development.
- Learn from other services/agents good practice-where/how people access other services. Look at how service providers in other arenas are 'compensated'.
- Protection of prevailing national ethos and practices – Irish solutions to Irish issues.

Priorities at the European level to promote at farm level:

- Recognition of the social function of agriculture/horticulture in European rural development policy.
- Promotion of the concept of social farming
- Sharing of experiences among European partners.
- Need for evidence based research across Europe-re-sourcing required.

What should happen at a European level to promote Social Farming nationally/regionally, inter-country?

- Cross-sectoral alliances to influence policies from both farm perspective and service user perspective- input into policy formation.
- Recognition of the social function of agriculture/horticulture in European rural development policy.
- Promotion of the concept of social farming
- Create synergies with other agendas-organics, environmental agendas.
- Creation of opportunities to share experiences and exchange visits.
- Future direction of agriculture policy-opportunities for payment for services

ITALY

Introduction: context, participants

The topic of social farming in Italy has noticeably grown and is still growing in the last months. For example, just some days before the country platform meeting, the topic was presented in one of the main national newspaper, featuring 2 full pages. There is a growing network expanding at national level that is very interested in the topic. It has started to meet more and more often in different occasions and organizing promotion and sensitization, being able to reach influential places/subjects (e.g. Parliament and other relevant institutions at regional and national level). This growing network includes Tuscany as well as other regional institutions, some lags of the LEADER-plus initiative, the national organic farmers association and other minor national small farmers association (particularly active on the topic) as well as the main "conventional/traditional" farmers' associations (coming a bit slower behind the topic) and a group of the national left party. Representatives of all these realities participated to the workshop together with some field operators (both from agricultural and care sides) and one "user" (Andrea, involved in the video initiative too). On a total of 43 people participating to the workshop, 24 were new entries, while 19 were also present at the first platform meeting (so, we aimed at keeping a core group on one hand and enriching it on the other one – particularly with institutional representatives, as agreed).

Objectives

The objective of the workshop was to foster this new "movement" growing around the topic in our country, by: providing a new European-wide perspective (information and knowledge achieved through the former steps of the project); providing new (structured and facilitated) room for exchange and confrontation – particularly, to discuss the 4 questions proposed by the international SO FAR coordination group. Participants worked within 4 (facilitated) heterogeneous groups (2 groups' sessions, followed by 2 plenary ones), following the proposed common methodology.

Outcomes

Though the clear overall value of the workshop as a means to offer new support and stimuli to the stakeholders (as expressed by themselves in their evaluations), in respect of the specific results (e.g. answers to the 4 proposed questions) the impression is that the actual achievements are still necessarily limited. Participants expressed many different needs in all directions (each one from his/her own specific background and direct stake): as a matter of fact, being SF at the initial stages, the needs are still many – of all kinds and at all levels. A clear synthesis (and/or list of shared priorities or propositions) can be hardly drawn. As a matter of fact, the workshop could only allow an open discussion on the proposed questions. We try to sum-up some of the rough ideas emerged during the groups' work on the 4 questions.

European net

- Seen as positive by all participants (as a means to strengthen the national process). Particularly:
 - To gain more visibility and recognition
 - To exchange experiences and know-how
 - To build common actions
 - To create a dialogue among different sectors and stakeholders
- How to build it? From bottom or top? Formally (e.g. relevant institutions) or informally ("people", operator, users)? And led by who?
 - The discussion seems open. However different approaches can be complementary rather than mutually exclusive (integrating bottom-up and top-down actions).

- It should articulate EU, national and regional levels. It could be backed on the emerging efforts and existing groups – the actual network that, though in the embryonic stage, is taking shape in our country.
- Some suggestions:
 - It could be installed inside the European Commission Agriculture General Directorate at two different levels:
 - For a political level, into the Consultative Committee for Rural Development, already representing producers, consumers and research.
 - For an operative level, into the European Rural Net, whose function is to coordinate National Rural Nets, sustaining innovative processes in multifunctional agriculture. The European Rural Net allow interaction between European groups promoted by society, using a *bottom-up* approach.
 - It could work in the way of "SO FAR" platforms;
 - It would be useful to have some kind of EU definition of SF, like a chart of principles and values.
 - The base of an EU net could be based also on the census of existing experiences at national and European levels (Equal, Horizon).
- Possible risks:
 - Creating a bureaucratic or political body - loosing attention from practical needs (users, farmers, territory) to political ones;
 - Reducing the actual diversity in SF, (fostering a kind of homologation process) .
 - Other ideas (potential actions of the EU net):
 - Set up suitable information tools (first of all, a web page) in order to facilitate the networking process between existing experiences and to create a virtual "exchange point" to collect materials and information on SF.
 - Give an harmonization of rules and regulations on SF throughout EU.
 - Define a chart on principles and values in SF.
 - Offer a support activity for participating at Community calls for propoSAls.
 - Organize and support visits and exchanges between European experiences (educational exchanges, stages,...).
 - Support in studying and analysing experiences and practices.
 - Build a records office: a data-base collecting information and experiences on SF, using it for producing materials and creating a common know-how.
 - Make lobbying activity.
 - Develop initiatives to create networking (SF Festivals,...)
 - Support research activity on SF.
 - Start a communication with and throughout media.

Policy integration

- Seen as crucial by all;
- The local level (Municipality, Province, Region when not too large) is generally seen as more suited rather than the higher ones (European, National, Regional levels);
- In this sense, local SF pilot projects - to develop methods, tools and codification- are indicated by some participants as possible tools.

Some other suggestions (to coordinate Agriculture and Welfare policies):

- Creating a specific law at national or regional levels;
- Creating a coordination board between institutions and/or a permanent "observatory";
- Creating specific guidelines ("what it is" and "how to do") for public institutional offices and officers.
- Educational and research activities (e.g. seminars, meetings, integrated actions of different kinds) are also indicated as possible tools to promote policy integration.

At EU level, a first useful tool to start an integration process could be an EU recognition of the topic and some project shared among different DG' (employment, social affairs, agriculture), like a call for proposal on interdisciplinary research activity on SF or on interdisciplinary networking activity on SF.

Actions that could be undertaken at European level in order to improve social farming projects at farm and territorial levels

Some of the main ideas/needs expressed:

- Clearer definition of SF that entails:
 - definition of basic standards and minimal requirements to become a Social Farm (it seems agreed by most of participants, though some ones are still worried about it); (the general recommendation appears to be: avoiding excessive rules)
 - Updating the list of "people with special needs"; definition of SF users and SF activities.
 - Definition of common terminology
 - Definition of the different possible SF goals: user's assistance/care, education and training, work placement/employment,...
 - (However it is generally acknowledged the importance to valorize the actual level of diversity existing in SF experiences, approaches and methods, throughout different territories and nations)
- Promotion of research to validate SF practices on the base of experimental evidences.
- Institution of support agencies, supposed to provide training and administrative assistance to farmers, often discouraged by high bureaucratic charge.
- Institution of "tutors" in SF (new professional figures based on a specific curriculum comprehending both social and agricultural competencies, working at farm level as well as at local level, and able to create/aid dialogue between farmers, users, welfare workers and institutional officers.
- Explanation of existing EU financial instruments addressed to the work placement/occupation of people with special needs that could fund Social Farms directly.
- Simplify access to the agricultural land to start-up SF initiatives.
- Definition of an EU labeling system for SF products and services
- Institution of support agencies, not only giving operative support to stakeholders, but also producing useful data bases, collecting: data and information on SF, best practices, experiences, models...
- Creation of an European net interconnected with sublevels – national, regional, local (coming back to the first question...)

These points could be translated in the following possible actions:

- Asking EU Regions to create national support agencies for SF development,
- Developing a European Programme recognizing SF, stating a definition and guidelines for SF activities, but also suggesting financial support tools: priority in public calls for proposals, direct contribution, free promotion/marketing for Social farms, tax allowances,...
- Developing research on suitable indicators to assess farms' aptitudes (therapeutic aptitude, work placement aptitude,...) and methodologies for monitoring SF activities and results.

A special emphasis was given to the "territorial perspective". Many participants saw the development of cooperative actions at territory ("local district") level as a key strategic issue – so to involve the wider local community according to a principle of solidarity. In this perspective, SF would develop as part of a wider 'social economy' initiative carried out by local communities/territories. In this sense, some participants referred to some pilot initiatives named "solidarity districts" that are currently being experimented by some regions/territories in Italy. The involvement of the local community/citizens at different levels would allow not only a support to initiatives (e.g. purchase of food products) but also

a direct control/assessment of the quality of the initiatives (avoiding the introduction of excessive standards and bureaucratic procedures). In this perspective, EU initiative could reinforce also the creation and development of "solidarity districts" that include SF as a specific feature.

NETHERLANDS

The participants

For the selection of participants in the second national platform we invited the people that participated the first national platform in 2007. In addition, we invited more stakeholders from different organisations to enrich the group of participants. From the first group (participants platform 2007) 13 people registered for second platform again. From the newly invited people 11 people registered. The composition of the group was diverse and represented a broad variety of stakeholders. The composition of the registered people is presented in Table I.

Table I. Participants of the platform meeting 2008

Organisation	Number of participants
Rabobank Netherlands	2
Triodosbank Netherlands	1
Center for advice and accompanying care farming	1
Center for advice on processes	1
Center for knowledge on chronic care, welfare and living	1
Ministry of Agriculture	1
Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport	1
Streetcornerwork	1
National farmers organisation	1
National umbrella organisation	1
Regional organisation social farmers	3
Care organisation for youth and education	1
Care organisation for psychiatry, adiction and fysical unability	1
Care institution for people with drug and alcohol addictions	1
Care farmers	4
Research (University Groningen & Wageningen UR)	4

Objectives of the platform

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

The objectives were made more explicit and presented to the participants as follows:

- To formulate a framework for a European research agenda
- To make an action program for cooperation between different countries
- To come up with an advice for the national ministries how to focus more on international issues with respect to social farming.

The objectives were warmly welcomed and subscribed by the participants and resulted in sparkling debates.

Results of the platform

Themes for the EU research agenda

The platform lasted a whole day. The morning session was used to discuss the themes that might be worthwhile to add on an EU-research agenda. The afternoon session was used to discuss the methodology for working out the themes into actions and recommendations. To summarize the main themes and propositions for research briefly:

- I. Social farming needs a clear definition, in which its identity (in a national and an European context) and its relationship to the health system in each country is well expressed.
- II. The effectiveness of social farming, its specific qualities and critical success factors have to be worked out. Moreover, a discussion about effectiveness on regional, national and international level has to be started.
- III. The structure and organisation forms of the social farming sector in different countries (network; organisation models) and its embedding in the health chain has to be studied.
- IV. More cooperation between countries should be achieved for exchange of ideas between farmers, health organisations and policy-makers and exchange of clients. Here fore, it is necessary to set up an international database (and website), accessible for different interested parties and adjusted to different levels of information (with different languages)
- V. In legislation ways should to find to fit small scale multifunctional farming into the EU legislation for large scale highly specialized farming and to reduce the gap between policy-makers and entrepreneurs.

Elaboration of the research propositions

In the afternoon sessions 4 themes were further elaborated into concrete actions.

Research on effectiveness of SF

To get more insight into the effectiveness of social farming requires an adequate research methodology. Here fore, it is necessary to develop 1. internationally used indicators and 2. reliable and validated interview methods. A possible research schedule:

1. Inventory on 'Who is doing What within the EU?' (see also Farming for Health-network; COST actions, etc)
2. Which methodologies are used? Are they adequate?
3. Pilot study in 3 countries on 1 user group
4. Evaluation
5. Implementation and unwinding towards more user groups

Communication and used terminology on quality, effectiveness, potency and future profit

Phase I: farmers and clients from different countries within the EU should meet in brainstorm sessions to discuss the specific qualities of social farming.

Phase II: a professional marketing organisation should communicate the results from phase I in 3 ways:

1. Marketing by publications (journals on different levels and read by different user groups), open days, client participation in societal activities ('opposite integration') and addressing this subject in patient platforms
2. Starting up a lobby (f. e. by the national umbrella organisation) towards different stakeholders.
3. Coupling 1 and 2 with existing or upcoming initiatives on rural development; coupling with the results from research on effectiveness; and making this accessible for the public.

Discussion about the effectiveness of SF on regional, national and international level

The discussion on effectiveness of SF should be started in platforms on regional level, national and international level to generate a spreading of knowledge, awareness and societal support. Issues to be discussed: effectiveness of SF, terminology used in different regions or countries, data (or knowledge) exchange between regions or countries, combining of experiments and measurements on satisfaction by clients and farmers, pilots, etc?

Embedding SF in the health chain and financial support

Phase I, inventory. Study on the characteristics of social farming chains, parties and stakeholders involved, processes and (directing) roles, similarities or differences between countries?

Phase II, tasks, responsibilities and finances. The different players and (potential) fundings within the chains have to be protracted.

Phase III, looking after the interests. Matching of interests between parties and stakeholders. Acquisition and further development of the SF sector and (international) networking.

Concluding remarks during the final plenary session

Crucial for further discussions on social farming:

- Make sure that the diversity within the SF sector is visible
- Put energy on elucidation of the effectiveness of social farming and find a catchy slogan for communication (f.e. 'Slow Care')
- Keep in mind that social farmers are small players in the big European health and care scenery. Take care that financial support for the farmers will be guaranteed
- Come up with clear definitions on quality of social farming. Herein, the client and its interest should have a central role (care for humans as a human right). If so, it will develop the sector anyway.
- In networking and exchange of knowledge the profit for the farmer should be cleared well.
- Make clear what agriculture may offer to society and humans and focus on the diversity of choices for people (both in a sense of 'authenticity' and of 'community care')

Recommendations for the national ministry

To facilitate the national ministry to work out a strategy for international networking, following recommendations were expressed:

- The national umbrella organisation has an important role in exchange of knowledge and lobbying. Use their contacts and results for the research agenda of the ministry.
- Simplify the legislation and – if possible - cancel some rules
- Elaborate fiscal advantages for social farmers
- Contribute (in the communication) to remove prejudices

SLOVENIA

The participants

At the 2nd Slovene National Platform 24 participants were present, who represented 6 groups of relevant stakeholders :

- Representatives of users' organizations – 7 participants from 4 organisations
- Farmers and farmers' organizations – 5 participants (2 farmers and 3 representatives from 2 farmers organisations)
- Care organizations – 4 participants
- Regional development agencies – 3 participants
- Local communities -2 participants
- Government – 3 participants.

The representatives of all addressed users' organisations were present at the platform. Among farmers two of addressed excused their absence owing to illness. The same holds for one addressed care organisation and one addressed local community. From one of addressed local community there was no response whatsoever. Therefore representatives of only two local communities were present. Yet this minus was more than compensated by the new stakeholders from regional development agencies. In case of government, three out of four addressed relevant ministries were present: Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, and Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning. From Ministry of Health there was no response, although they took part at the 1st National Platform.

With exception of health authorities, all relevant stakeholders were represented adequately and participate in the discussion actively. Out of 24 participants of the 2nd national platform 9 (37 %) took part at the 1st national platform: 3 from users' organizations, 2 from the group of farmers and farmers' organizations, 1 from care organisations, 1 from group of local communities, and 2 from ministries.

The objectives of the platform

The aim of the platform was to define social farming and to frame the perspective of the evolution of social farming on the country and EU levels. Therefore, four topics were suggested to be discussed:

- How to define social farming in terms of practice and in terms of politics in the EU context?
- How to organise policy networks at regional, national and EU level?
- How to characterise the minimum common features of local projects and practices?
- What should be role of the EU institutions in the social farming further development?

The participants agreed that right topics were raised. They saw them as relevant and useful in terms of on-farm practice, as well as in terms of national and EU policy making. Information on situation in other countries are considered to be satisfactory, yet limited to the SoFar sources. The raised topics can be used for promotion of the green programs of social care, but for the recognition of these programs sound political framework is needed. All the participants share the opinion that the results of the platform can contribute to the EU policy elaboration on social farming.

Results of the 2nd National Platform

In order for EU policy-making in the field of green programs of social assistance/healthcare to make the transition from a sector-oriented towards an integrated approach, the green programs of social assistance/healthcare need to be clearly defined and the types of interests of various groups and society as a whole firmly established.

Key dimensions of the green programs of social assistance

The key dimensions of green programs of social assistance can basically be defined as the interests and needs of three factor groups: the users, the providers and the society in general.

• Users of green programs

Users of green programs are persons with special needs and other persons at a disadvantage in the labor market.

Green programs meet the following user needs:

- special forms of assisted employment;
- preparation for employment;
- work as therapy;
- social integration of persons with special needs;
- increase in quality of life, education;
- personal growth.

• Providers of green programs

Green programs providers are:

1. farms or agricultural holdings,
2. social assistance and healthcare institutions and establishments,
3. companies dealing with an agricultural or other »green« business, such as providing horticultural services for parks, public greens and similar.

Green programs meet the following providers' needs:

- economic:
 - employment,
 - complementing the business,
 - additional income,
 - farm preservation,
 - work assistance,
 - promotion
- non-economic:
 - training,
 - personal growth,
 - ethical aspect,
 - acquiring social recognition

• Society

Green programs also cover the broader interests of the society:

- sustainable development
- preservation of the natural environment
- preservation of the vitality of the countryside
- increase in social integration of vulnerable groups of the population
- restructuring of social transfers
- reduction of unemployment.

Definition

- Green programs of social assistance/healthcare are an option of the social or healthcare assistance, as a rule carried out as a subsidiary occupation on a family farm, where the users work with farm animals, cultivated plants and soil, or use its available resources.
- Agricultural activities (arable farming, horticulture, cattle farming) carried out by companies or social assistance-, healthcare- and educational institutions are also considered as green programs.

Matrix of requisite activities and their providers

The matrix of requisite activities and their providers is divided into three levels:

- level of provider - farm
- level of area – regional and national level
- level of the European Union.

Critical elements for each level are defined, with emphasis on:

- system of key values
- implementation principles
- methods of implementation.

Key expected or requisite activities, logically placed into relevant fields of public policies relevant to the field of green programs of social assistance/healthcare are defined based on the establishment of critical points.

Level	Critical elements	Expected activities	Role of the agricultural policies	Role of the healthcare, social assistance, educational and employment policies
Farm	Entering the activity	Defining the conditions for entering the business by special rules	Exact definition of the contents of a special program, defined as a condition for starting or upgrading social services on farms by measure 311 of the Rural development plan 2007-2013	To include farms as providers into relevant national programs and strategies and their implementing acts (social assistance, healthcare, assistance for the elderly, active employment policies, education), based on measure 311 of the Rural development plan
Level	Critical elements	Expected activities	Role of the agricultural policies	Role of the healthcare, social assistance, educational and employment policies
Farm	Implementati on standards	Defining minimal standards in the field of working conditions		
	• principles	Protection of basic rights of users and respect of the realities of the operating farm or other green business	Implementation of principles of good agricultural practice and sustainable development	Implementation of inclusive-socio-medical models
	• areas	Material conditions (agricultural and	Defining minimal standards of good	Defining inclusive-sociomedically oriented

		additional capacities) Sanitary-medical conditions (agricultural and additional activities) Safety conditions Scope and fields of knowledge of the provider	agricultural practice in the relevant areas in relation to the specific demands posed by the green programs of social assistance/healthcare	standards Defining minimal standards of good practice of regional professional work (social, healthcare, educational) in relation to the specific demands posed by the green programs of social assistance/healthcare
	Transparency of activities	Defining the minimum scope of requisite documentation	Implementation program for the service	Individual user program
	Control	To form a model of professional supervision as a way of helping the provider to achieve set goals To form a model of self argumentation by service users	Agricultural elements of supervision	Inclusive- and socio-medical elements of supervision
	Support	Investment support	Support stemming from activities in the field of countryside development	Support stemming from activities in the field of cohesion policies and equal opportunities policies
		Education and permanent training in fields needed for working with users (psychology, communication, characteristics of persons with special needs, etc.)		
Area	Networking	Establishing the network		
	• principles	Networking should be conducted using the bottom-up approach	Defining minimal standards for inclusion into network	
		Networking upgrades the existing networks formed by governmental and non-governmental organizations	Upgrade of the existing agricultural social networks Defining the role of the Ministry in the network	Upgrade of the existing user social network Defining the role of the Ministries in the network
Level	Critical elements	Expected activities	Role of the agricultural policies	Role of the healthcare, social assistance, educational and employment policies
Area	• provider	Chambers with public mandates and a network of regional units	Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia	Social Chamber of Slovenia
	Communication	To form a communication system and	Implementation of the concept of multipurpose	Implementation of the concepts of inclusion, social cohesion and active

		communication strategy	farming	citizenship
Support offered		to networking	Public co-financing of organizing the social network and expansion of already existing social networks	
		to communication	Public co-financing of preparation of a communication system and communication strategy	
		to research	Call for applications for an interdisciplinary goal research project	
EU	System regulations	Values	To prepare and adopt an (ethical) codex of green programs of social assistance/healthcare	
		Legislation	Directive on green programs of social assistance/healthcare	
	Support	Defining the social platform model	To develop and implement a system of social platforms based on the technological platform model	

34. 2nd European platform

Assessing the participatory process

What is your overall impression?

Positive points:

- The interaction between the participants was good. The visit to a social farm contributed well to the interaction and a shared experience. The translation for all participants was well organized and favourable for a good communication.
- EU staff participation was rather a good signal, even if their contribution was contradictory and finally a bit confusing. The process to include SoFar to EU-policies gained first results. The presentations of the perspectives of SoFar to the members of the DG Agriculture on Friday wake up big interest and demonstrated the great motivation and engagement of the participants of the SoFar group.
- The Topics raised were varied and wide ranging. While different issues were raised in different countries they were all common issues but perhaps not current. It is refreshing to see that Social Farming is not restricted and can encompass any Farming activities that has a social element. This makes for creative innovation and the international element demonstrated a wide range of possibilities. It is good to know that any farming related activities may come under the umbrella of Social Farming as this creates innovation and experimentation.

Negative points:

- We did not really succeed in taking up ideas and thought of the participants into the process of discussion.
- The debates were not well structured: no gradual construction process during the 2 days. Many repetitions on the necessity to have a definition and strategies. First day: dominance of presentations.
- Weak chairmanship.
- We did not come to a concrete outcome (action points, clear themes for an EU-agenda or concrete appointments).
- Clear lack of anticipation and preparation within our team, before Brussels or even at our preparatory meeting the day before..

Which thoughts/ideas did you take home?

- A further common(EU) project can stabilise and intensify the idea in Europe.
- Policy is not easy. You have to know the interests and background of people if you want to understand their words. We can not fight without knowing where to head for, perhaps we are all just too different and well fed and can not focus. The projects end is not so important to me, we missed to talk about future because we feared the end of the project
- Stronger implementation of SF in rural development programs

What is your opinion about the structure of the meeting?

- The scheme of the meeting was the best we could do , due to the group work possibility. Not enough time for exchange and work in small groups.
- The process was well structured and there was largely good balance and opportunity for all participants to air their views. It was useful to have the individual update at the start from each of the partners as it gave a sense of the common threads and the differences across the groups. The discussions could have been more focused by breaking up the discussion topics. The structure was fine otherwise.
- The choice of the themes was good but it is hard to discuss a high amount of items with a lot of people and come to a consensus in the end. Sometimes the participants

had the impression that the European platform had to confirm the ideas of a limited group of people involved in Sofar, in order to have a democratic decision making.

- The country platform presentations in the beginning were interesting but too long. They should have followed by a well done synthesis with all relevant aspects and should have guided to the discussion. No structure in the discussion, missing red line. Missing goal.
- It was not satisfactory that there was a lot of repetition at the 2nd day of our platform and that the goals remained unclear during discussions.
- Interviews could have been more structured. Like others, I think we turned a bit in circles sometimes. We should have decided to stick with one topic for a certain time and then continue.

Do you think that you have been in condition to express and share sufficiently your views? Do you think that your views have been taken into account?

- The possibilities to express my views could have been a little bit more. Nevertheless it had been basically taken into account.
- I think there was enough possibility for everybody to express him/herself.

Results of the platform

What is your opinion about the topics that were raised?

- They gave a good impression about the differences between countries. Moreover, they gave a good impression on both the possible role of the EU and the impossibilities of the EU : some developments have to start at country level or have to emerge from individual initiatives within countries (Topics raised at local platforms were very rich) or from cooperation between.
- The meeting inspired me to continue the search for cooperation. The national platform meetings resulted in enough ideas for an EU-agenda. The meetings also contributed to more recognition of social farming at local and EU-level.
- Then the way to shift from local realities to EU strategy proposition was too fast and not enough shared with participants staying outside.
- the discussion about definition comes up often too often without a result (goal?)

Did they inform you about the situation in other countries? Did they give you new insights?

- There are a lot of things to think about after the second European platform.
For example:
 - there is a big variety in groups of patients within social farming
 - broadening of agriculture can focus on 'guided work for social vulnerable people'
 - the (still increasing) contrast between the therapy of social farming, and the offer of labour for the involved groups of patients.
- The platform presentations were well done and informed about country situations. After that it was just about SoFar- project end and political issues I couldn't follow. There was no work on a common European view and no discussions
- I am sure it will contribute to recognition of social farming somehow, even if there were only few participants from the European administration. It was valuable to discuss and it will contribute by the results of the SoFar project.

Do you think they can contribute to a recognition of SF at local and EU levels ? Does it contribute to an EU policy elaboration on social farming?

- The meeting fostered the coercion of an enthusiastic group. These people might push SF further, yes.
- Informally participants were talking a lot of this necessity to go forward with network consolidation and concrete projects. A way to make exist the EU network is to

develop study and training trips, among close countries: For instance between France, Italy, Germany etc... There is high motivation and expectation on such possible outcomes.

- It is not possible to recognise an activity that is not studied within the European context. It becomes clear that there is a wide diversity in social farming within the different European countries. Although a lot is discussed within the platform, the most effective tool to have a recognition of social farming is a short message with relevant data from both care sector and agricultural sector.
- The declaration of Witzenhausen can be the guideline of the manifest of SoFar. Lacking is up to now a clear and broad definition of SoFar. Recognition to include SoFar to an EU policy should be enhanced by countrywide networking.
- The attendance of two representatives pointed in a certain direction which in my opinion is worth to be considered.
- The European platform is an essential tool to bring the European administration to action. It is a good basis for lobbying and offers a forum for preliminary exploration in such a way that a European compromise becomes feasible.

Did they inspire you for your work?

- The outcomes of the local platforms were probably more enriching for continuing the work at regional level.
- At EU level, we should have focused our discussion on how and with whom consolidate EU network. This should have been the main strategy and action to propose to EU. This was on what people had worked in their local platform.

What did you expect of the Platform Meeting? Were your expectations fulfilled?

- I expected the formulation of more concrete actions. In this respect the meeting did not fulfil my expectations. Maybe I hoped for more tangible outcomes. But it all takes time...
- Contacts, exchange, nice people. Yes, this was satisfactory.
- The topic and goal was as difficult as the meeting itself
- The elaboration of a definition of SoFar and the manifest had been started

What should be addressed in the next future? Next steps that are important, topics to be elaborated, priorities to be made, alliances to be entered, other stakeholders to contact etc...

- Concerning the networking strategy :
 - . Intensification of the international networking and organizing mutual visits. Exchange among countries should be intensified, but on a more practical level (like exchange farm visits across Europe for practitioners).
 - . Other stakeholders: farmer associations, esp. bio- and biodynamic, policy makers in the agro-field, contact with national client organizations (parents, churchly...). They are a strong stakeholder, which has been bit neglected till now.
- Continuation of the research process:
 - . On effectiveness and impacts of social farming and possible difference between countries;
 - . On completing the inventory, in our countries and in a larger number of countries: we are 7 on 27 countries. Not enough for an EU policy.
 - . Specific projects with a defined goal, duration, input and output should be pushed forward.
- Concerning the project: Workable outcome listing the solutions and possible paths for social farming in Europe and its support possibilities through politics. Best also who could apply for what under which circumstances?
- More discussions with and interference of EU-commissioners in the follow-up.

- More communication on national level on the phenomenon social farming and its international character (lessons learnt, best practices, etc).