



## **Overview of Social Farming and Rural Development Policy in Selected EU Member States**

NRN Joint Thematic Initiative on Social Farming  
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*Connecting Rural Europe*

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Each Member State has established a National Rural Network (NRN) which brings together the organisations and administrations involved in rural development.

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## Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
2. THE SOCIAL FARMING CONTEXT .....	3
3. THE PIONEERING SITUATION .....	7
3.1 AUSTRIA .....	7
3.1.1 Actors, Institutions and Policies Related to Social Farming .....	7
3.1.2 Animal Assisted Pedagogy / Animal Assisted Therapy Programme .....	7
3.1.3 Social Farming Activities within the Framework of RDPs in Austria .....	8
3.1.4 Opportunities and Constraints .....	9
3.2 FINLAND .....	12
3.2.1 Actors, Institutions and Policies Related to Social Farming .....	12
3.2.2 Social farming activities within the framework of RDPs in Finland .....	13
3.2.3 Opportunities and Constraints .....	13
3.3 SWEDEN .....	16
3.3.1 Actors, Institutions and Policies Related to Social Farming .....	16
3.3.2 Social Farming Activities within the Framework of RDPs in Sweden.....	17
3.4 Conclusions .....	17
4. MULTI-FUNCTIONAL AGRICULTURE .....	18
4.1 IRELAND .....	18
4.1.1 Actors, Institutions and Policies Related to Social Farming .....	18
4.1.2 Social Farming Activities within the Framework of RDPs in Ireland .....	19
4.1.3 Opportunities and Constraints .....	20
4.2 UNITED KINGDOM .....	22
4.2.1 Actors, Institutions and Policies Related to Social Farming .....	22
4.2.2 Social Farming Activities within the Framework of RDPs in the UK .....	23
4.2.3 Opportunities and Constraints .....	23
4.3 Conclusions .....	27
5. A RECOGNISED SYSTEM OF SOCIAL CARE .....	28
5.1 Belgium - FLANDERS .....	28
5.1.1 Actors, Institutions and Policies Related to Social Farming .....	28
5.1.2 Social Farming Activities within the Framework of RDPs in Flanders.....	30
5.1.3 Opportunities and Constraints .....	31
5.2 ITALY .....	33
5.2.1 Actors, Institutions and Policies Related to Social Farming .....	33
5.2.2 Social Farming Activities within the Framework of RDPs in Italy.....	34
5.2.3 Opportunities and Constraints .....	34
5.3 Conclusions .....	36
6. ACTUAL AND POTENTIAL INFLUENCE AND IMPACT OF SOCIAL FARMING ACTIVITIES IN RURAL AREAS AND ON RDP IMPLEMENTATION .....	37
6.1 Broad Benefits of Social Farming .....	37
6.2 Stages of Development of Social Farming and Associated Implementation of RDP Funding .....	38
6.3 Obstacles to Social Farming Initiatives Accessing RDP Support .....	40
6.4 Conclusions .....	41
REFERENCES .....	43

## 1. Introduction

In recent years Social Farming activities have come to the attention of an increasing range of rural stakeholders. This is the result of a growing perception of the role and potential positive impact of agricultural and rural resources on the social, physical and mental well-being of people. Social Farming also represents a new opportunity for farmers to deliver alternative services to broaden and diversify the scope of their activities and their role in society. This integration between agricultural and social activities can also provide farmers with new sources of income and enhance the image and utility of agriculture in the public eye.

During the 4<sup>th</sup> NRN meeting held in Seville on the 8<sup>th</sup> of June 2009, the Italian National Rural Network (NRN) proposed the establishment of a specific thematic activity on Social Farming and invited the other NRNs to express their interest in participating. Based on the Italian NRN proposals, preliminary information was collected from the NRNs to understand their expectations and possible contributions to this initiative. Six NRNs chose to participate, namely Austria, Belgium–Flanders, Finland, Ireland, Sweden and the United Kingdom. During the NRN meeting held in Brussels on December 2009 these NRNs agreed on the main aim and objectives of this initiative.

The wider objectives can be summarised as follow:

- To provide policy makers at European and National level with advice and relevant information regarding current and future programming and policy development.
- To strengthen strategic policy linkages between Social Farming (agriculture and rural development) and social, educational, health and other related sectors.
- To raise the profile of rural development as a "*social inclusion policy*" and improve integration with both European and National policies (welfare, health, agriculture).
- To develop more effective coordination at National and European level on policies and programmes related to multi-functional agriculture.
- To enhance the efficiency of RDP measures, in the framework of which Social Farming related activities can be implemented.
- To improve the coordination of cooperation instruments among Member States related to Social Farming.

The specific aim of the Social Farming thematic initiative is *to improve the implementation of RDPs in support of Social Farming and to provide inputs to the development of the future programming period at National and European level*. In support of this the Overview Paper aims to provide a review of the institutions, policies and practices related to the implementation of Social Farming in different Member States, review the implementation of Social Farming activities in the framework of the Rural Development Programmes and analyse the actual and potential influence and impact of Social Farming activities in rural areas in Member States.

Other expected results of the initiative are the collection, organisation and analysis of case studies, efficient dissemination of the case studies and other information collected to relevant EN RD stakeholders, and to design and implement cooperation projects on Social Farming.

The primary stakeholders are other NRNs, LAGs, other networks involved in Social Farming, potential RDP beneficiaries, individuals or groups of practitioners (including farmers, cooperatives, communities, social enterprises) individuals or groups of users.

It is important to underline that the present Overview Paper is **not** a comprehensive document and is not representative of the situation in the EU as a whole. It merely provides an overview of implementation of the Rural Development Programmes in relation to Social Farming based on the information collected by the NRNs' experts in those countries who participated in this initiative. Several of the topics presented can potentially be further investigated.

## Overview of Social Farming and Rural Development Policy in Selected EU Member States

A diverse range of 17 case studies from 6 Member States are presented as an Annex to this Paper. The case studies support the findings of the Overview Paper, although not all of them are examples of projects financed by 2007-2013 RDPs. Nonetheless they do highlight some of the main opportunities for - and obstacles to - accessing EU rural development funding, as well as giving a clear indication of the positive effects that Social Farming activities can have in rural areas.

A selection of the most relevant case studies have also been summarised and inserted into the text of this Overview Paper. These build upon the Social Farming theoretical development framework suggested by Di Iacovo and O'Connor (2009) and help identify the RDP Measures which support the move through these development stages.

Overall, this Paper identifies a series of next steps to continue the progress of the Social Farming sector in the participating countries, and - although by no means a comprehensive document - highlights where and how RDP funds can be best utilised and identified the areas where the NRN's could best focus their activity.



## 2. The Social Farming Context

While there is no universally agreed definition of the concept of Social Farming, there is broad agreement among practitioners, researchers and other stakeholders that it concerns all activities that use agricultural resources to promote, or to generate, social services in rural areas. Examples of these services include rehabilitation, therapy, sheltered employment, life-long education and other activities that contribute to social inclusion (Di Iacovo and O'Connor, 2009).

The term Social Farming is often used interchangeably with other concepts such as care farming, farming for health or green care. Sempik *et al.* (2010) define **care farming** as the use of commercial farms and agricultural landscapes as a base for promoting mental and physical health, through normal farming activity. The concept of **farming for health** is explained by Dessein (2008) as a combination of agriculture and care where the focus is both on the farming system - which includes the farm enterprise and the farmer's social environment, and the care sector, including the service user and the institution. Finally **green care**, sometimes used as an inclusive umbrella term, the essence of which is the use of nature to produce health, social or educational benefits (Sempik *et al.*, 2010).

Dessein and Bock (2010) argue that there are three "discourses" - or frames of reference - around the topic of green care which are used to explain how it is defined, perceived, implemented and regulated in different countries. These frames of reference are based around the approaches of multifunctional agriculture, public health and social inclusion.

Within the discourse of **multifunctional agriculture**, green care is perceived as part of the agricultural sector, a "new" source of farm income and one of the multiple new functions that agriculture can fulfil in an urbanising society. Green care is typically represented as 'care farming', which highlights the importance of the setting within the farm sector. As Sempik *et al.* (2010) have noted, while green care activities can make a farm multifunctional, it may also open possibilities for enhancing some other functions of agriculture, such as landscape management, supporting biodiversity, animal welfare, etc. This is due to the presence of extra labour to assist with these tasks which otherwise would not be done, or by the specific interests of the care receivers to engage in these kinds of activities. Hassink and van Dijk (2006) also note that many of the care farmers in Europe and the UK are the same farmers who are also involved in environmental conservation, leisure and educational activities.

Within the discourse of **public health**, green care is seen as one of many activities which can deliver "caring and curing" – i.e. health restoration and protection, disease prevention and health promotion. Within this model, farmers may be involved as providers of the green (farm) environment but are not perceived as important actors in the therapeutic process. Green care arrangements may take place at various locations but always under the responsibility of health professionals.

A third discourse can be described as the discourse of **social inclusion**, in which green care is not only about the caring and curing of service users who are in ill-health, but encompasses activities such as school visits, initiatives aimed at the involvement of unemployed persons, prisoners or former drug addicts. In addition, engagement in urban agriculture may be classified under the discourse of social inclusion as it promotes the participation in food production and experience of nature as contributing not only to individual health and well-being, but also to social cohesion and inclusion. Looking at those activities from the viewpoint of the providers of care, social justice and an ethic of care are important elements of the philosophy. They feel motivated and responsible for rendering modern society more inclusive and offering a home and sense of belonging to those living on the margins of society.

While Social Farming can primarily be located within the concepts of multifunctional agriculture and social/health care, it encompasses a broad range of stakeholders from

different sectors, institutions and constituencies. Such stakeholders can range from local, regional and national authorities associated with all of the sectors outlined above to service-users of Social Farms and their representatives, farming organisations, rural development actors and service providers associated with health and social care services.

Another hallmark of Social Farming across Europe is the diversity which exists in terms of structure and organisation; the profile of the service users; the nature of the activity; the stage of development; and the institutional and policy environment. For example, Social Farms can be differentiated on the basis of their organisational form ranging from family-based, privately-owned Social Farms, to social co-operatives operated by third sector or non-profit organisations, or institutional farms operated directly by public bodies in arenas such as health, social care, justice or education. Social Farming initiatives can address a range of target groups or service users including those with intellectual, physical or sensory disabilities, people with mental health issues, those with a history of addiction, the long-term unemployed, prisoners and ex-prisoners, the elderly, children, youth and those experiencing social disadvantage.

While the Netherlands is not part of this exercise, it is still instructive to review the evolution and development of Social Farming in this Member State, given that this sector is by far the fastest-growing multifunctional agricultural sector in the Netherlands. Since the end of 1990s, the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality and the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports have stimulated the development of Social Farms, as they are considered to contribute positively to a desired move towards the integration of care into society. Social Farming has become more professionalised with the numbers showing a spectacular growth (from 75 in 1998 to 839 in 2008). Most Social Farms are dairy farms or some type of grassland-based farm and there are relatively few institutional Social Farms (14%), compared to non-institutional family-based Social Farms (86%). An interesting feature of the Dutch situation is that, on more than 40% of the farms, the service-users have a personal budget (Pgb), which can be used to buy supportive or stimulating day activities on the farm. Service-users with a personal budget have a direct contract with a Social Farm, without interference of a care institution.

The rapid development of Social Farms has been supported by different educational courses for farmers run from the late 1990s. In September 2004 the first education programmes for Social Farm managers and for service users began. In addition to these education programmes, at Wageningen University, the study of 'agriculture and care' became a component of the study of rural development. It was shown that Social Farming contributes to the well-being of farmers and their families by increasing their quality of life and the economic and social vitality of rural areas. Care activities on farms were also shown to generate additional income and jobs - almost 600 additional jobs in rural areas in 2006. It has also been shown that 35% of Social Farmers would not be able to continue farming without the additional income care activities attract. Social Farmers also contribute more to landscape quality than conventional farmers due to additional income received and many client groups wanting to undertake conservation work on farm.

Although the number of Social Farms has increased rapidly over the last decade and the positive effect of nature on health is generally accepted, Social Farming in the Netherlands faces many challenges. These include:

- 'bridging the gap' between rural and urban areas;
- extending networks of Social Farming;
- developing sustainable financing structures;
- developing scientific evidence on the beneficial impacts of Social Farms and nature on health and well-being;
- determining the health-promoting aspects for different target groups, and;
- using farms and nature not only curatively, but also preventatively.

Currently there is no direct link with the Rural Development Programme (RDP) and Social Farming in the Netherlands. The Social Farming sector generally includes only farmers and the care sector. The care sector sees the need for improved care which can be given at farm level, so they are willing to pay for it directly.

The variation in the development of Social Farming described above is also reflected in the ways in which networks have evolved. Writing on the role of such networks in the development of Social Farming in Austria and the Netherlands, Renner (2010) notes their importance as a stabilising force through fostering collective identity and building collective strength. She argues that they provide the motivation for farmers to continue developing their new practice and enables learning by mutual exchange of information during the "risky process of innovation". She also argues that such networks provide an important infrastructure for Social Farming, which she sees as a relatively new form of social action and an example of social innovation in agriculture. As Di Iacovo and O' Connor (2009) note, in some countries, Social Farming initiatives exist only as isolated projects with little or no support in the form of network mechanisms.

Elsewhere, distinct networks have emerged which are regionally-based or which are representative of different types of service provision or service user. Another form of network structure is the national or regional support centre which exists in those countries where Social Farming is most highly developed. However, as Assouline (2009) notes, notwithstanding the specificities of different networks, generally, Social Farming networks exist to serve a range of functions including to:

- serve as a space for initiating, exchanging and capitalising on experiences;
- be a channel of communication about the characteristics and social contribution of Social Farming;
- act as a tool of political intervention that is engaged in regional and national public policy debate;
- work towards achieving recognition, support and harmonisation measures for Social Farming from European authorities, and;
- develop a body of work that can help to progressively codify practices among European Social Farming professionals.

Turning to the broader issue of how Social Farming can impact on rural areas, Di Iacovo and O Connor (2009) cite a number of ways. Fundamentally, it has the potential to further broaden, diversify and add value to multifunctional agriculture. It offers the opportunity for the creation of new markets for farmers through the transformation of public goods or positive externalities into private and semi-private goods. Social Farming can be seen as a way of promoting innovative patterns of rural development that are rooted in local resources and processes of change. More specifically, Social Farming offers clear opportunities for diversification of on-farm activities. It can involve new family members in providing a different type of service provision, leading to more engagement with sectors such as education, welfare and health, thereby enhancing job opportunities for women and young people.

Social Farming may also represent an opportunity to reduce the lack of services in rural areas and to re-design them in a more innovative way, while at the same time offering new and different solutions to social inclusion in urban and peri-urban areas. Social Farming improves farmers' reputation in society and as a direct or indirect consequence; this can impact positively on farm incomes. By offering a wider range of services to urban citizens, it can serve as a new bridge between urban and rural areas and it creates the opportunity for people to change their perceptions about farming.

In terms of the benefits to wider society from engagement in Social Farming, an important element is the benefit for service-users, in terms of empowerment, quality of life, social inclusion, education, employment and therapy. It may also stimulate innovation in service



provision and delivery in sectors such as social welfare, health care, and education. It can support, in a very concrete way, the transition from a medical to a social model of disability. As Van Elsen (2009) notes, Social Farming can be an important step towards achieving twin objectives of healthy people and healthy landscapes. By providing additional human resources and reducing economic pressures on farmers, Social Farming can represent a win-win situation, providing a means of integrating functions such as caring for vulnerable people with contributing to the development of rural landscapes and maintaining biodiversity.

Di Iacovo and O' Connor (2009) note how Social Farming is at very different stages of development across Europe. These stages provide a useful framework in which to view the Case Studies accompanying this Overview Paper and identify how RDP support is and can be utilised to further develop the sector.

In some cases, Social Farming is in a **pioneering situation**, where there are relatively few examples of initiatives, where it is driven mainly by voluntary efforts and by individuals' own commitment and where there is a low level of awareness by the wider society.

A second stage of development is where Social Farming becomes strongly associated with **multifunctional agriculture**. At this stage the profile of Social Farming is increasing. The interest and awareness comes mainly from agriculture related sectors while there is a low level of awareness from sources related to the health/social care sector. Social Farming is supported mainly by funds from the agricultural and rural development domain.

A third stage of development is where Social Farming is a **recognised system in social or health care**. At this stage there is a strong level of interest and recognition of Social Farming from the health and social care sector and the institutions associated with them. Social Farms are often developed into professionally-based, care-oriented farms that are part of the health care sector. The fourth stage of development is Social Farming as an **inclusive model**. At this stage there is a large number of initiatives, strongly embedded at grassroots level and in wider society that are well organised into regional and national networks. There is involvement from both the agricultural and social care/health sectors.

These different developmental stages are reflected in the subsequent discussion contained in this Paper, which explores the existence and potential of Social Farming in various Member States based on information provided by their National Rural Networks.

### **3. The Pioneering Situation**

#### **3.1 AUSTRIA**

In Austria, Social Farming is not a new phenomenon despite the term itself being unknown before 2005. In 2006, Wiesinger *et al.* estimated the total number of organisations dealing with issues related to Social Farming to be around 20; and the number of individual units runs by these organisations to be probably at around 250. In addition to Social Farming, several other green care interventions have emerged in Austria, especially animal-assisted interventions with companion animals or horses, and horticultural therapy.

##### ***3.1.1 Actors, Institutions and Policies Related to Social Farming***

A wide range of different activities in different fields and Social Farming disciplines take place in Austria in a rather disorganised fashion, many operating at solely an informal level, and including horticultural therapy, hospices for mentally and physically handicapped, psychiatric and geriatric clients, intercultural exchange and migration projects etc. consequently a quite heterogeneous patchwork of Social Farming institutions, approaches and policies exist. In many cases there is no strategic approach to sector development, so patterns emerge as a result of trial and error. Despite, or perhaps because of this unfavorable institutional background and low levels of public support many Social Farming initiatives develop innovative, pioneering interdisciplinary approaches.

Prior to the COST action the numerous institutions and associations dealing with Social Farming had little connection, working independently from each other with little scientific research to support their work. Cooperation and exchange between these organisations was weak, often temporary and rarely focused on common or mutual interest. This resulted in a lack of information among stakeholders, public health administration and politicians, and when coupled with strict legal regulations and structural deficiencies has created obstacles to the development of Social Farming.

Horticultural Therapy (HT) was first presented to the sector professionals and the general public at an international symposium in 2002 in Vienna, organised by the Austrian Horticultural Society (ÖGG). In 2006 a University course on Horticultural Therapy (HT) was introduced by the Austrian Horticultural Society at the Danube University Krems (DUK). Since 2008 this course has been delivered in cooperation with the University College for Agrarian and Environmental Pedagogy and DUK. In parallel the Austrian Council for Agricultural Engineering focused effort on introducing and coordinating Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT). In the field of research a comprehensive national wide survey on integration schemes for mentally handicapped people in agriculture was conducted by the Federal Institute of Less-Favoured and Mountainous Areas in Vienna (Wiesinger 1991).

##### ***3.1.2 Animal Assisted Pedagogy / Animal Assisted Therapy Programme***

One of the most successful variations of Social Farming is the programme developed by the 'Austrian Council for Agricultural Engineering and Rural Development' (transl. 'Österreichisches Kuratorium für Landtechnik und Landentwicklung', or ÖKL). It covers Animal Assisted Pedagogy (AAP)/Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) offered by certified Social Farming teams on agricultural holdings and has been running since 2003. The main goals of the OKL programme are to progress the implementation and professional development of the Social Farming sector in Austria. The programme is both a scientific and practical pilot study to investigate the pedagogical and therapeutic efficacy of farm animals like goats, cattle or pigs for various client groups. Furthermore, the results have led to the development of high quality training for people who want to offer AAP/AAT, including legally-approved certification.

Based on evaluation and feedback, ÖKL has identified the following positive impacts on their clients who have participated in this programme:

- enhanced emotional and social competence,
- improved ability to concentrate,
- greater acceptance of responsibility for oneself and others,
- improved ability to communicate, and;
- increased levels of self-worth.

As part of the drive to improve the quality of the AAP/AAT activities, the ÖKL developed a Quality Handbook based on insights from farmers' practical experience, from professionals in various fields (psychiatrists, legal consultants, marketing experts, etc) and from the ÖKL's own project work (research, empirical studies etc). The ÖKL coordinated these inputs to produce guidelines, examples of best practice and quality criteria. Certified two year training courses have been developed and delivered by ÖKL, the continuing educational body for farmers LFI, provides the local organisation and support for the training.

In addition, a manual has been developed to regulate the certification and financial funding of farmers, outlining the explicit criteria that farmers need to fulfil in order to become certified and stipulating they have to be certified in order to receive financial funding. The certification system for each farmer has been developed by the ÖKL and is approved and issued as a directive by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Agriculture and AMA ('Agrarmarkt Austria' which is the body that promotes agricultural marketing in Austria).

The Federal Ministry for Economy and Labour has agreed that farmers who offer AAP/AAT activities do not have to register them as a trade, instead they are treated as educational activity and so attract lower rates of taxation making them more financially favourable to the provider. Packages have also been developed with two Austrian insurance companies to provide low cost deals for Social Farmers.

ÖKL has also been seeking cooperation with other organisations on areas such as financial, legal, and quality issues to supplement their own expertise. They also network with organisations offering other activities such as therapeutic riding, although such activities are not offered within the ÖKL AAP/AAT programme.

Currently, 23 farms and approximately 45 people across Austria offer AAP/AAT activities on farms and in 2010 the ÖKL started to certify them. To date, approximately 10 farmers/teams across Austria offer ÖKL-certified AAP/AAT activities with approximately 500 clients benefiting from these programmes each year, and the numbers are steadily growing. The farms earn between 5 and 50% of their total income from their AAP/AAT activities.

### ***3.1.3 Social Farming Activities within the Framework of RDPs in Austria***

As far as can be ascertained, the ÖKL is the only Social Farming project in Austria that is financed by the RDP. In 2008 however Austrian Federal Minister for Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, announced in his inaugural speech that more support for diversification was needed and that Austrian agriculture should become more active in social areas. In the National Strategy Plan, Social Farming is not explicitly mentioned, however the need and positive effects of farm diversification in Austrian agriculture is listed as one of its four major goals. Funding Social Farming activities in Austria is only possible via this route of diversification.

Since 2007, the ÖKL has received funding via Axis 3 of the current RDP programme, to support their work on the aforementioned AAP/AAT project, such as the development of certification and training courses, the identification of the pilot-farms, and the evaluation of the effectiveness of the activities. Prior to 2007, the ÖKL was an innovation project, financed by national funding. In addition, certified farmers can apply for funding for their AAP/AAT

activities through measures co-financed by the provinces and the Government, and therefore partially through the RDP programme.

### ***3.1.4 Opportunities and Constraints***

In general, rural regions have much more weight in Austria than in other parts of the EU. In 2005, there were approximately 190,000 farms in Austria, which shows an upward trend from previous years and approximately 10% of these are organic. The majority of these farms are small-scale. More and more farmers are moving into part-time farming and in 1999, every fifth farmer had some sort of additional income on their farm.

In terms of the obstacles to the development of Social Farming in Austria, the lack of clarity around the concept is an issue. The health sector identifies Social Farming as part of the agricultural sector, while the agriculture sector sees it as part of the welfare sector. Consequently, none of the authorities and no single sector feel responsible for Social Farming so it remains low on all agendas. This is one of the reasons why no Social Farming projects, other than the ÖKL programme outlined above, are financed directly by the RDP programme. For this particular programme, RDP funding of certified farmer teams has been undertaken by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Economy and AMA. The disbursement of this funding to farmers is dependent on the political conditions and decision making within each of the nine Austrian counties. This has proved problematic as in 2010 one county ran out of RDP funding and is therefore no longer able to pay their certified farmer teams despite them offering the same animal assisted work as their colleagues from other counties.

In many cases, Social Farming has not yet been recognised as a positive and effective intervention by all stakeholders. The concept is largely unknown by society in general, and sometimes even people who welcome clients on their farm are not aware of the fact that they offer Social Farming. Notwithstanding the work of the ÖKL programme, there is the need to address quality issues in terms of implementation, standards of professionalism, and legal and financial issues. Some of these could be addressed through the development of a national network. Up to now, there has been no such forum to trigger these developments, but the creation of such a network is planned for the coming months. The network will enable bridging or brokering between all stakeholders involved, as well as between demand and supply of Social Farming.

It is recognised that Social Farming in Austria provides many opportunities and has the potential to impact positively on rural areas. Social Farming can contribute to the viability of the farm enterprise and provide additional income on farms. It can also help preserve Austrian rural areas as cultural goods, enabling farmers to maintain their farms without seeking work elsewhere, so they can still fulfil their 'duty' of nature and culture conservation. Many Austrian rural areas lack opportunities for employment, Social Farming could enable rural people with educational, social, or medical backgrounds to find employment close to home, so commuter flows or migration to urban regions could be reduced. In addition, if more farms offered high quality Social Farming more therapeutic and educational services could be delivered in rural areas.

**CASE STUDY 1: Training on 'Animal Assisted Pedagogic (AAP) Therapy on Farm'**

<p><b>Country and Region:</b> Austria, Styria</p>	<p><b>RDP Funding and Measure:</b> Yes - Measure 331 (Training and information)</p>
<p><b>Project Cost:</b> Not available</p>	<p><b>Source of Funds:</b> 83% funded through RDP and 17% by students</p>
<p><b>Background:</b> The Austrian Council for Agricultural Engineering and Rural Development recognised the need to establish training courses for 'teams' who wanted to work in the Social Farming sector with animal assisted therapy. The 'teams' must have qualifications and experience in both land based activity and therapeutic education and all 'team' members learn all elements of the activity. The courses are run by the Austrian Rural Education Institute, last one and a half years, and include 272 teaching units.</p>	
<p><b>Objectives:</b> The training course has been developed to increase the quality of provision of animal assisted therapy on Social Farms. The 'team' approach, usually involving two people, ensures the farm has staff experienced in both rural and therapeutic skills.</p>	
<p><b>Activities:</b> The course covers a range of activity including personal development, basic principles of animal assisted therapy, client groups, animal welfare, operational standards, selection and training of animals, working with clients and business management.</p>	
<p><b>Results:</b> The first course finished in March 2010 with 20 people graduating, two additional courses started in September 2010 with 40 participants.</p>	
<p><b>Lessons Learnt:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The training course enables individuals working together to add to their professional qualifications building the skills and confidence they need to enter the sector</li> <li>• This type of qualification raises levels of professionalism within the sector and may go on to set a baseline standard in animal assisted therapy that is transferable across the EU</li> <li>• The course requires a 'team' approach however if the team members separate neither can retain the qualification individually so remain unqualified until a new suitable partner is found.</li> </ul>	

**CASE STUDY 2:** Guat Leb'n Association

<p><b>Country and Region:</b> Austria, Styria</p>	<p><b>RDP Funding and Measure:</b> Yes - Measure 331 (Training and information)</p>
<p><b>Project Cost:</b> Not available</p>	<p><b>Source of Funds:</b> 30% funded through RDP and supported by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Environment and Water</p>
<p><b>Background:</b> The project was established by Hans Bruckler and Walburga Siebenhofer on their 4 hectare Brueckler Farm. Ms Siebenhofer had studied biology including the positive influence animals can have in the therapeutic rehabilitation of individuals and wanted to set up an independent organisation that could deliver these benefits. It also allowed an income to be derived from a small farm that may have otherwise struggled to survive.</p>	
<p><b>Objectives:</b> The project was set up in 2004 to create an animal based farm environment in which individuals with special needs or behavioural problems have the opportunity to develop their skills and emotional competencies. The owners also wanted to use their farm to raise awareness and increase understanding of Social Farming throughout Austria.</p>	
<p><b>Activities:</b> All the activities within the project are tailored to the needs of each individual, these include animal handling, specific task orientated learning, development of motor skills and learning responsibility. The farm no longer carries out any traditional agricultural production, solely producing food for the animals which are all kept free range.</p>	
<p><b>Results:</b> The farm has over 20 clients that spend between 1 and 4 hours with the project per week. Improvements are seen in their motor skills, emotional competencies and communication abilities. The farm is also used as a practical training model for the certification courses (see Case Study 1 on previous page).</p>	
<p><b>Lessons Learnt:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project is dependent on grant money, an issue which is exacerbated by the perceived lack of understanding of animal assisted therapy at an official level</li> <li>• The farm receives an increasing number of enquiries for its services and has identified an opportunity to involve other farms in a broader Social Farming network.</li> <li>• The farm has only been able to access RDP support due to its certification through the ÖKL training and certification project.</li> </ul>	

## **3.2 FINLAND**

In Finland Social Farming is understood to include all activities where nature is used as a source of, or a means of attaining, mental or physical health, rehabilitation, care or education. Social Farming in Finland is regarded as one approach among a range of green care methods which should include, besides nature, some elements of activity or intervention and social interaction.

### ***3.2.1 Actors, Institutions and Policies Related to Social Farming***

Social Farming takes place on farms and utilises the physical, social and cultural resources of the farm in rehabilitation, education and care activities. At the moment, there is a lot of interest in Social Farming, with the concept receiving attention not just from researchers but also from entrepreneurs, rural development and extension organisations, NGOs, politicians, administrations and educators. SITRA, the Finnish Innovation Fund is now involved in the development of Social Farming, especially regarding entrepreneurial activities in different care settings, rehabilitation or education.

In Finland there are approximately 200–300 farms which are currently involved in Social Farming activities, but little is known about their nature and scale as there is no statistical information available. However, it is known that there are care homes for the elderly, foster-homes and nurseries that use farm settings and that the sectors of horticultural therapy, riding therapy and social or educational activities related to horses have been most active to date. Increasing numbers of rural enterprises have been identified as having carried out these kinds of activities and there is a wish that these Social Farming initiatives are publicly accepted, identified and promoted. The most high profile examples of Social Farming are those involving riding stables, as the practice of horse riding therapy and socio-pedagogic horse activities have already achieved public attention and official support.

As yet, linkages between actors and network mechanisms have not developed but some networking activities are underway among the “pioneering actors” in Social Farming in Finland. The Rural Policy Committee/Theme Group of Rural Welfare Services in Finland has been active in facilitating the development of such mechanisms and in disseminating information about Social Farming. The Theme Group is a co-operative networking body with members from national and regional level administrations, research agencies and rural development actors. It prepares development programmes, disseminates information, organise seminars and acts as a representative voice for rural actors at different public fora.

Researchers have been active in the field of Social Farming through their participation in European research networks (COST 866 Green Care in Agriculture, International Farming for Health Community of Practice) and in rural development funded projects focusing on Social Farming activities. Currently, a multidisciplinary research project (CAREVA) is being coordinated by Agrifood Research Finland to generate evidence about the potential benefits of green care and in particular, Social Farming, for well-being, economy and rural viability.

In Southern Savo, a project is underway to develop green care activities in the region and to build an operational model to develop and strengthen welfare entrepreneurship. This is being carried out through University and research institutes in collaboration with ProAgria Southern Savo Rural Advisory Centre and is financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). Elsewhere, in Central Ostrobothnia, the Federation of Education and the Culture Institute have been managing projects aimed at determining the possibilities and identifying needs for the development of green care in the region.

Rural development actors have displayed the most interest in Social Farming and have expressed a wish to promote them. The health care and social care sectors have remained wary. There is a lot of turbulence in these sectors, given the need to reduce public sector expenditure which means that new models of social services are actively sought and the

private sector has a growing influence in health care and social services. At the same time, the responsibility of arranging the necessary health care and social services still remains in the public sector. Clearly there are a lot of areas where Social Farming could provide a contribution. These could include the care of elderly people, people with social and psychiatric issues and those who cannot be employed within existing societal structures.

### ***3.2.2 Social farming activities within the framework of RDPs in Finland***

There is not yet a strong linkage between Social Farming activities and the implementation of RDPs in Finland. The concept and practice of Social Farming is not well known and there are no institutional frameworks or recognised systems of operation for Social Farms. Opportunities do however exist in the context of the implementation of Rural Development Programmes as there is a growing need for new initiatives in the health and social sectors and a growing need for rehabilitative work experience activities in municipalities in Finland. There are approximately 70,000 active farms in Finland and there are signs of a positive political environment for Social Farming developing.

### ***3.2.3 Opportunities and Constraints***

Potentially the most important positive impacts of Social Farming for Finnish rural areas include:

- the social and economic impact at local and farm level, on the reputation of rural areas, local economies and on farms,
- the well-being of service users, and;
- better quality and more accessible social and health services for all and positive biodiversity and landscape impacts.

In terms of bottlenecks and barriers to development the concepts of green care and Social Farming are still in their early stages of recognition. The lack of a shared concept for Social Farming activities means that the term is applied differently in different contexts. In some cases green care is understood as a synonym for rural tourism or eco-tourism. Also in Finland there are constraints on who can provide rehabilitative work experience activities, these are currently restricted to the public and third sectors. The most important needs to be addressed for service providers are as follows:

- clarifying the definition/concept of green care and Social Farming;
- building networks for co-operation and information sharing;
- developing quality criteria for green care and Social Farming initiatives;
- developing methods of co-operation with the public sector;
- developing financial structures or compensatory mechanisms for those who engage in Social Farming.

In terms of future development, there is an urgent need for a national level co-ordinating body for Social Farming, including "green care". Currently the players are acting independently without common rules, information or support. The main tasks of the co-ordinating body could be similar to those identified by the Flemish Support Centre for Green Care. They would include the following: acting as a one-stop-shop for information; networking all the actors; increasing public awareness of Social Farming, increase awareness among politicians and other decision makers; creating a favourable political climate for Social Farming activities; providing definitions of the concepts used related to Social Farming; promoting the development of quality criteria and systems and developing international contacts and co-operation. Secondly, high profile political engagement is needed to promote the sector perhaps through the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland and the Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners. Information meetings took place in early summer 2010 to set up high level co-operation activity to promote all forms of Social Farming.



**CASE STUDY 3: The Pegasos Project**

<p><b>Country and Region:</b> Finland, South Ostrobothnia</p>	<p><b>RDP Funding and Measure:</b> Yes - Measure 312 (Support for business creation and development)</p>
<p><b>Project Cost:</b> 200,000 Euros</p>	<p><b>Source of Funds:</b> RDP covers 75% of the cost, the owners match with 25% funding from private sources</p>
<p><b>Background:</b> One of the stables is located in the courtyard of a foster home who's managing couple recognised the potential of the two enterprises working together. They contacted an expert who supported them to identify and develop a partnership with a range of stables and child support units and create a portfolio of activity to engage successfully with the client group.</p>	
<p><b>Objectives:</b> The project aims to use socio-pedagogical horse activities as a preventative and restorative method of social rehabilitation to support the development of the children from the projects foster homes.</p>	
<p><b>Activities:</b> The activities are the usual work carried out in a stables on a day to day basis, but are target orientated according to the socio-pedagogical model. Positive interactions are developed with the horses, and the child is then supported to transfer this ability to interact to people in their everyday life.</p>	
<p><b>Results:</b> The project has developed four different packages of activity to support child development, with encouraging results. The different enterprises involved in the activity have worked well together and evaluation criteria are being established to assess the long term outcomes of the activity.</p>	
<p><b>Lessons Learnt:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This form of Social Farming is very rare in Finland consequently raising awareness and understanding, and securing long term financial commitment to the activities is a huge challenge.</li> <li>• The project also focuses on preventative action which can be even more difficult to demonstrate the benefits of the work undertaken with children.</li> <li>• This activity has been funded for two years through the RDP. To become sustainable after this period without the support of a Social Farming network to help raise awareness of the benefits of this type of activity amongst the health and car sectors could prove problematic.</li> </ul>	

**CASE STUDY 4: The Hakamaa Estate**

<p><b>Country and Region:</b> Finland, Nastola</p>	<p><b>RDP Funding and Measure:</b> No – access to RDP funding is limited because it is a publically-owned facility</p>
<p><b>Project Cost:</b> Not available</p>	<p><b>Source of Funds:</b> Part local authority paying per client per day, part by client</p>
<p><b>Background:</b> In the late 1980's people with severe disabilities were living in institutions, small residential units or with older parents. One of the Managers of these institutions recognised that a farming environment had the potential to benefit these user groups, particularly individuals who had spent their formative years in a rural environment. It took much time and background work to convince others of the potential of 'Care Farming' however eventually funding was sourced and a suitable farm was purchased in 1996 by the Eteva Federation of Municipalities.</p>	
<p><b>Objectives:</b> The project aims to provide alternative opportunities for residential care users which provide beneficial work for people with severe disabilities. Within this they also aim to ensure continuity for their clients as many find responding to change very challenging, consequently the introduction of new employees or clients has to be carefully managed.</p>	
<p><b>Activities:</b> There are a range of different activities available on the 12 hectare farm including animal care, horticulture, forestry, catering, crafts and outdoor exercise. As the farm is a public service unit it is not allowed to make a profit, consequently wherever possible all the produce is utilised elsewhere on the farm.</p>	
<p><b>Results:</b> All clients live at the farm which currently caters for eleven adults with learning and developmental disabilities and thirteen with severe disabilities. The Care Farm environment has generated positive improvements in clients well being particularly those who have serious behavioural problems and used to live in suburban areas.</p>	
<p><b>Lessons Learnt:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Securing the right high quality staff has been essential to the Care Farm's success. This has involved attracting individuals with a broad range of skills and all staff being flexible and open to trying new approaches.</li> <li>• The project has identified an on-going high demand for the services offered</li> <li>• As the farm is a publically-owned facility its access to RDP support is limited, however its access to the public sources that many other Social Farms struggle to secure is very strong. In the longer term this situation may inhibit the Farms ability to innovate as client-based funding does not facilitate this approach.</li> </ul>	

### **3.3 SWEDEN**

Green Care or Social Farming is understood as an activity based on combining care with the resources offered by farms for individuals who, for various reasons, are covered by the Social Services Act (SoL) and the Support and Service Act (LSS). There are already farms working with Social Farming techniques, and the Federation of Swedish Farmers (LRF) intends to promote the establishment of new Social Farming enterprises.

#### ***3.3.1 Actors, Institutions and Policies Related to Social Farming***

Some 100 Social Farming companies are active in Sweden, run by farmers and rural entrepreneurs however interest in these activities among other farmers is growing fast. The Swedish government is promoting the creation of small business in this field and at the same time local authorities are actively promoting the involvement of more private actors in Social Farming activities in order to be able to provide the services they are responsible for, particularly in rural areas.

The client is in most cases a local authority, a number of which sub-contract their day care activities for the mentally-disabled to farms in rural environments. The Swedish local authorities have ultimate responsibility for providing support and service for individuals who are covered by the Social Services Act. Local authorities are seen as being the primary purchasers of Social Farming. In order to find out more about this market, LRF has made an inventory of the demand by local authorities for care within different target groups in the market analysis known as 'Green Care 2009'. While conducting the inventory, the local authorities were also told about the concept of Social Farming and sounded out regarding their interest in purchasing these services from rural enterprises.

On the farms, different types of farm-based activities are combined with care activities. It may, for example, be a question of providing day care activities for the physically and mentally disabled, day centres for addicts and criminals, and the provision of short-term residence and respite for relatives. The opportunities offered by Social Farming are diverse – for both customers and farmers. There are some farmers who rent out part of their farm complete with, for example, premises, livestock and greenhouses, where the local authority runs its own care activities with its own staff. There are also farmers who conduct Social Farming activities on their farms on a contract basis, and thus also have responsibility for providing care using their own personnel.

The LRF supports those members who want to start Social Farming activities by providing good business intelligence on a political level and on a local, regional, national and international scale.

LRF has developed a variety of instruments, such as information materials, calculations, checklists and analyses which can facilitate matters for business enterprises in their start-up phase. In order to facilitate the signing of long-term sustainable agreements with customers, LRF has developed a profitability calculation which is available together with an instruction booklet. It provides a basis for calculation that has been produced in order to help people who are thinking about starting Social Farming activities on their farms, or who have already done it. With the aid of the calculation, it is possible to assess the financial viability of the activities. The calculation is based on an enterprise that has a turnkey contract for day-care activities on a farm, but can also be used for other types of operations.

LRF is working actively on communication issues in order to make Social Farming better known, and to facilitate members in their contacts with potential customers. A short movie has been produced on one of the Social Farms, illustrating the lives of the farmers and the activities carried out by farmers and their clients.

### ***3.3.2 Social Farming Activities within the Framework of RDPs in Sweden***

Few RDP instruments are used in the implementation of Social Farming activities, and they are mainly related to training activities, such as courses in business economics for farmers and rural entrepreneurs who want to start a new business. Farmers can also get financial support for Social Farming via Axis 1.

### **3.4 Conclusions**

The sector in these pioneering countries tends to be reliant on Social Farming 'innovators' – namely, those individuals that will develop activity due to strongly held beliefs, personal commitment or an entrepreneurial flair without the need for market intervention in the nature of grant support. At this early stage of development the sector in these countries is struggling with the lack of a strategic approach to Social Farming at a national or regional level, exacerbated by only poor connections existing between the relevant institutions that impact upon the growth of the sector.

Despite this broader context there are examples of best practice in all the countries at this stage of development. The work of ÖKL in Austria has provided significant support to the growing sector, ensuring appropriate Quality Management criteria are being met by Social Farming initiatives as they develop. An issue that countries further along the developmental process are now finding a challenge. The work on socio-pedagogic horse therapy in Finland demonstrates how a specific element of Social Farming can receive recognition for the benefits it delivers and so raise awareness of the broader sector generally.

Sweden has taken rather a different development approach to Social Farming than has been witnessed in the other pioneering countries. Despite little or no use of the RDP measures there appears to be wider institutional understanding of the concept and the benefits it brings, and consequently a significantly more demand-led, market-orientated approach to the use of Social Farms. Direct agreements are being made between local authorities and Social Farms with care being sub-contracted to the chosen farm.

However, all of these pioneering countries do have one thing in common – they have identified the need to create a network to support the development of Social Farming and have begun to put the appropriate mechanisms in place.

There is an opportunity to fund this network development through Axis 3 of the RDP at either a regional or national level. The countries where the sector has moved on to the next stage of development – multi functional agriculture, achieved this by providing funding support as an incentive through Axis 4. Working with the LAG's enables individual or localised groups of Social Farming initiatives to develop awareness and understanding of their activities with the fund administrators, far more rapidly than is possible with mainstream RDP funders. Consequently it can be suggested that the RDP can be utilised most successfully at this stage of sector development through Axis 3 to develop national and/or regional networks, and through Axis 4 to support individual or localised groupings of Social Farming initiatives.

## **4. Multi-functional Agriculture**

### **4.1 IRELAND**

While the term Social Farming is not one that is readily recognised in Ireland, the use of agriculture and horticulture as an activity within or closely aligned with care settings such as the Mental Health Services and Intellectual Disability Services has a long history.

#### ***4.1.1 Actors, Institutions and Policies Related to Social Farming***

There are many excellent working examples of good Social Farming practices currently in existence in Ireland although they may not have considered themselves as 'social farms'. Since the late 1980s, there has been a shift in care provision in Ireland from a predominantly institutional setting to a community-based model. In parallel to this, there has been a growth in community-based Social Farming and horticultural initiatives since the early 1990s. From a rural development perspective, of particular interest is the small but growing number of these initiatives which have benefited from the involvement and support of LEADER companies, a number of which have included Social Farming in their development plans, and other community development programmes.

Nonetheless, the dominant type of Social Farm in Ireland is still one which is embedded within an existing institutional setting – whilst privately-owned farms that offer a Social Farming service are still extremely rare. However, there is a new emphasis on person-centred care within the health and social care services and recognition of the need to move away from the artificial living conditions of many institutions. Consequently, the focus is now on the reintegration of service users back into the wider community and also reintegration of the wider community with people that use services. But, such major shifts in policy take many years to take effect and although change is certainly evident, many of the Social Farm situations reflect the traditional background to how these services were delivered.

In terms of mapping the actors involved in Social Farming in Ireland, the key stakeholders include the relevant government departments and state agencies including the Department of Agriculture and Food, the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, the Health Services Executive, the statutory agency concerned with training in the social care sector (FAS), the statutory Agricultural Development Authority (TEAGASC) and the statutory Enterprise Development Authority; a range of service providers; service users and their representatives; the main farming organisations; rural development actors particularly Local Action Groups and representatives from the National Rural Network; other community and voluntary interests ranging from organic farming interests, community food initiatives to disability activists; and relevant research organisations including universities and other third level education institutes.

Research networks have been an important factor in raising awareness and bringing Social Farming stakeholders together in Ireland. Of particular importance in this context was the EU SoFAR project with University College Dublin (UCD) as the Irish research partner. A key component of this project was the identification of key stakeholders in Social Farming in Ireland who participated in a series of discussion platforms on policy measures to support the development of Social Farming at national and EU level. Another relevant research network is an EU-funded COST Action on Green Care in Agriculture (COST Action 866). This is an EU-funded network of researchers across 24 countries, chaired by Ireland, which has the aim of increasing the knowledge base around the topic of Green Care and of identifying areas that warrant further research.

Through their interactions via the SoFAR project, stakeholders identified the need to build an infrastructure for Social Farming in Ireland, through the establishment of a Social Farming network and this initiative is currently under construction. A 'core' group of Social Farming interests - service providers, statutory agencies, community and voluntary interests and

researchers have worked on developing the aims and objectives of such a network which include:

- acting as a representative forum to progress the development of Social Farming in Ireland;
- working to ensure acceptance for the idea and the potential of Social Farming as an opportunity for occupational or therapeutic intervention;
- raising awareness among stakeholders both individual, institutional and statutory of the well-established existence of Social Farming in Ireland;
- raising awareness in the public and government spheres of the broader cultural, social and economic role of farming and promoting the development of Social Farming among the farming community, people who use services and care service providers.

Rural development actors such as Local Action Groups and the National Rural Network in Ireland have been instrumental in the development of this Social Farming network and are active members. Through this forum, Local Action Groups have collaborated with other network members in submitting joint funding applications to a range of agencies and programmes, including the INTERREG programme, and in hosting public events such as information evenings. The Irish NRN also has afforded opportunities to the Social Farming network to hold workshops and other events aimed at raising awareness about the situation in Ireland.

In the absence of an existing body of research on this area it is difficult to determine the current extent of Social Farming activity. Therefore, in the context of the above-mentioned SoFAR project, wide ranging attempts were made to contact organisations and various state and non-statutory bodies and voluntary groups to attempt to develop a picture of the current situation in Ireland. On the basis of this information, it is estimated that there are around 133 Social Farming initiatives, the vast majority of which are based in institutional or community settings. Although small in number, there are isolated examples of private farmers linking up with social service providers to offer Social Farming services, most of which are located in the North West of Ireland. In such arrangements, the farmer may enter in to service contracts with social care providers, and in some instances, these projects have been established with the support of rural development actors such as Local Action Groups.

In Ireland, which until recently was a very agrarian-based society, there is recognition that the incorporation of meaningful activities can yield better results in therapeutic situations and is being used in occupational therapy and long term residential care. This is reflected in the widespread use of Social Farming type practices in these settings. The predominant usage is in the area of horticulture accounting for approximately 70% of activities. However this may also be a reflection of staffing arrangements of many day services operating on a 9-5 basis which may not facilitate the responsibility of caring for livestock.

Notwithstanding this, 30% of initiatives involve livestock including dairy, beef, equine, sheep and other small livestock. In terms of the profile of service users, those with intellectual disability comprise the largest group at 47%, with social inclusion projects accounting for 17% of the total. Other Social Farming initiatives are targeted at those with mental health issues, physical disabilities, prisoner rehabilitation, services for the elderly and drug and alcohol recovery.

### ***4.1.2 Social Farming Activities within the Framework of RDPs in Ireland***

There have been isolated instances of RDP instruments being used to support Social Farming initiatives in Ireland, but this is not surprising given the nature of Social Farming predominantly occurring within institutional settings and the low profile which such activities have had to date. As noted earlier, the limited RDP involvement which has happened is related to the provision of support by LEADER organisations to pilot Social Farming initiatives

on a small number of private farms in Ireland. A number of Local Action Groups (LAGs) have included the development of Social Farming in their strategies, as a means of exploring the opportunity for multi-functionality on small farms. Other initiatives by LAGs have included hosting public awareness seminars related to Social Farming. In general, these have attracted a large turnout demonstrating a growing interest in the sector in Ireland and the need for information dissemination and knowledge development to support its growth.

Through the support of the Irish and UK National Rural Networks, Social Farming stakeholders have undertaken joint workshops to identify mechanisms through which RDP instruments could progress the development of Social Farming. As an initial step LAGs should be encouraged to include Social Farming in their development plans – something which has happened to a very limited extent already in Ireland. It was also agreed that, as Social Farming is an innovative application of farming and rural development, it fits very well within the objectives of Axis 4. In addition would be useful to link in creatively with other axes – for example, it was suggested to link with Axis 1 in terms of business support and link this to Axis 3 and 4.

It was agreed that there are a variety of existing mechanism available that could be utilised to support the development of Social Farming including inter-regional/inter-territorial and trans-national projects and it was suggested that such co-operation could lead to the development of guidelines/plans/best practice/guides for practitioners on how to develop a Social Farming project and so creating learning across Europe.

The Leonardo Programme could be also used in training and development for tangible sharing of experiences. The workshop also identified these key support needs which could be implemented via RDP instruments including the need for 'a development hub'/forum/centre to address common challenges and develop pathways of engagement for all stakeholders. Other necessities included the building of an evidence base about the benefits of Social Farming, e.g. through demonstration/pilot farms to provide tangible examples of practice that are easily disseminated. In addition, farmers need business mentoring and development support if they want to develop care and Social Farming businesses. There is also a need to devise mechanisms to link in with other stakeholder networks e.g. Camphill Ireland and UK networks, disability advocacy networks, local government networks etc.

#### **4.1.3 Opportunities and Constraints**

Stakeholder feedback through the SoFAR project and participation in a variety of awareness-raising events suggests that opportunities exist for the development of Social Farming arising from the fact that it has a clear and positive resonance with service-users, farming people and service providers alike, all of which augurs well for the its future development. Its multi-disciplinary nature means it straddles a number of sectors that can be interconnected through Social Farming. However, there is no evidence of any coherent policy to support the development of the sector in Ireland, either at an integrated level or, indeed, at a sectoral level. This is reflected in the *ad-hoc* nature of many of the initiatives undertaken which are largely determined by the vision of a small number of key stakeholders in each situation and the receptivity of local decision-makers. There is no standard approach across the country but rather isolated and fragmented groups developing according to their needs with little replication taking place elsewhere.

The lack of adequate funding to develop and maintain social services is highlighted by the plethora of training programmes developed in this area and squeezed to fit into programmes aimed at increasing participation in the labour market. Often in practice the project promoter or social care provider may not be interested in employment progression per se but rather finding the means to keep an initiative alive or establish a new project. Another difficulty that severely hinders development in this area is the lack of continuity in funding. While a project may be able to secure funds for a pilot initiative – for example from LEADER sources, it is left with no clear path to follow once the initial funding is exhausted as there is no clear home for Social Farming initiatives.

**CASE STUDY 5: Belmont Farm**

<p><b>Country and Region:</b> Ireland, Waterford</p>	<p><b>RDP Funding and Measure:</b> Not directly, but strong links with the Irish NRN and various LAGs</p>
<p><b>Project Cost:</b> Not available</p>	<p><b>Source of Funds:</b> Public sector payment on a sub-contract basis</p>
<p><b>Background:</b> The farm was part of a psychiatric hospital which treated patients with mental illness, alcohol dependency, and provided care for individuals with learning difficulties. When the hospital closed these functions were moved to another site and the farm was taken on by the Brothers of Charity Services who recognised the value of providing a stimulating, flexible farming environment for these user groups. The farm now provides day care facilities for a range of service users with special needs.</p>	
<p><b>Objectives:</b> Belmont Farm aims to provide occupational opportunities for those people in social care with learning difficulties. They have a particular focus on the development of life and social skills which are supported through the Social Farming approach.</p>	
<p><b>Activities:</b> The farm provides a range of activities including dairy farming, beef production, horticulture and animal husbandry. These activities are tailored to the needs of the individual clients to provide them the flexibility required to facilitate each person's choice of living and personal growth.</p>	
<p><b>Results:</b> Psychologists working with the staff and client groups believe there is great value in the Social Farming approach. It provides structure to the client's day, develops a sense of identity, gives them a sense of achievement and value when new sometimes complex skills are learnt and enables social contact with a mix of different people.</p>	
<p><b>Lessons Learnt:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belmont farm would like to broaden the experience of its clients through the development of relationships with external private farms that would enable them to spend time on working farms in the wider community</li> <li>• There are distinct challenges in developing a financially viable farm whose primary aim is Social Farming as each farm enterprise has to be assessed not only for its intrinsic farming value but also its ability to provide therapeutic interventions</li> <li>• As an active member itself the farm has received support from the Irish Social Farming Network which has enabled them to share best practice, and importantly develop strong networks with the Irish NRN, LAG's and actors from the mainstream RDP.</li> </ul>	



## 4.2 UNITED KINGDOM

In the UK context, the concept of care farming is used interchangeably with that of Social Farming to describe the “the therapeutic use of farming practices”. According to the National Care Farming Initiative (NCFI), care farms in the UK typically provide health, social or educational care services for one or a range of vulnerable groups of people. These could include people with mental health problems, people suffering from mild to moderate depression, adults and children with learning disabilities, children with autism, those with a drug or alcohol addiction history, disaffected young people, adults and people on probation. Social Farms provide a supervised, structured programme of farming-related activities, including animal husbandry, crop and vegetable production and woodland management. They provide services on a regular basis for participants who attend the farm as part of a structured care, rehabilitation, therapeutic or educational programme. They are commissioned to provide Social Farming services by referral agencies such as social services, health care trusts, community mental health teams, education authorities and probation services. Clients can also be self-referred as part of a direct payments/personal budgeting scheme or may be referred by family members.

### 4.2.1 *Actors, Institutions and Policies Related to Social Farming*

In the UK, the concept of Social Farming is relatively new although there is an increasing amount of interest from many sectors including farmers, health care professionals and social care providers, the prison and probation services. An initial scoping study in 2008 on the range and number of Social Farming initiatives operating in the UK was conducted and 76 Social Farms returned questionnaires to the University of Essex (Hine *et al.*, 2008). However, the National Care Farming Initiative (NCFI) website directory in June 2010 lists around 125 active Social Farms.

The University of Essex survey included 19 city farms, 16 independent farms and 41 farms linked to external institutions or charities. The size of Social Farms varies between 0.3 ha to 650 ha and the majority of farms all have a mix of field enterprises and livestock. In terms of organisational structure, a third of Social Farms in the study are farms, 29% are a ‘charity and company limited by guarantee’, 25% are city farms and 22% are charities. Although the funding sources for Social Farming varies extensively both between farms and between categories of Social Farm, nearly half of the Social Farms surveyed (49%) receive some funding from charitable trusts and 33% receive client fees from the local authority. Thirty eight percent of Social Farms receive some other funding sources including Health Care Trusts, Social Services, Big Lottery Fund and public donations.

A total of 355 full-time staff and 302 part-time staff are employed by the 76 Social Farms in the survey (657 paid staff in total) together with 741 volunteers. Social Farms in the UK offer many different services including the development of basic skills (87% of farms), of work skills (70%), of social skills (65%) and some form of accredited training or education (63%). Perhaps the biggest variation seen in the farms surveyed features the fees charged by for Social Farming services. These fees vary widely, both in terms of amount and by how they are charged (i.e. per person, per day, per group, for farm facilities etc.). Some Social Farms are providing services for no charge at all, whilst fees on other farms range from £25–£100 per day (most frequently around £30 per day).

The total number of Social Farm users in the UK is around 5,869 per week. However, there is much variation between the levels of usage at different types of farm. As expected more people (230) attend city farms per week, an average of 46 clients per week are seen at farms linked to external institutions or charities and an average of 29 users per week attend privately-run farms. There is also much variety in the client groups attending Social Farms in the UK (over 19 different groups) and most farms provide services for a mix of client groups rather than for just one. Most (83%) Social Farms cater for people with learning difficulties, over half (51% of farms) provide a service for disaffected young people and 49% of farms

cater for people with mental health needs. The majority of Social Farms have clients referred to them by a range of different sources simultaneously including from social services, self-referral or from 'other' sources such as private care providers, the prison service, Youth Offending Teams, community drug teams, individuals on Direct Payments and the voluntary sector. Nearly a half of farms receive clients through education authorities or other education service providers.

Social Farmers reported that the physical benefits experienced by service-users include improvements to physical health and farming skills. Mental health benefits consisted of improved self-esteem, improved well-being and improvement of mood with other benefits including an increase in self-confidence, enhanced trust in other people and calmness. Examples of social benefits reported by Social Farmers were independence, formation of a work habit, the development of social skills and personal responsibility. Survey respondents also discussed the perceived successes of their farms and although they vary widely, three broad themes emerged:

- seeing the effects of Social Farming on people, making a difference to people's lives;
- helping the excluded become included into society and/or work;
- positive feedback from participants, families and referring bodies alike.

#### ***4.2.2 Social Farming Activities within the Framework of RDPs in the UK***

It is against the above backdrop that the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) Network and the National Care Farming Initiative have undertaken a joint project to examine the framework of support under the Rural Development Programme for England in relation to Social Farming. The purpose of the project was to identify practical examples of where RDPE funding has been used to support Social Farmers expand and diversify their business. For example, where funding has paid for capital works such as disabled toilet facilities or wheelchair access or where subsidies have paid for visits by vulnerable groups for instance through the Higher Level Stewardship educational access scheme, or where there are barriers to accessing this funding and the potential for the RDPE to do more for Social Farming. Interviews with delivery organisations explored the opportunity for supporting Social Farming through RDPE measures and identified instances where RDPE had actually supported these farms. Interviews with Social Farmers ascertained their familiarity with regional/local business support agencies and their awareness, pursuit and experiences of RDPE funding. The study is ongoing and some interim findings are reported below.

Half the farmers contacted had explored the possibility of getting funding under RDPE and most of these had made contact with an adviser and had made an application. There was also a good level of knowledge regarding the main organisations charged with delivery of RDP measures such as the Regional Development Agencies, Natural England and Business Link, suggesting that the profile of these agencies as sources of assistance to Social Farming has been successfully established.

#### ***4.2.3 Opportunities and Constraints***

A number of challenges were recognised that may prevent more Social Farms accessing RDPE funding including lack of time, lack of experience in putting together funding bids and complexity of the business model (i.e. difficulty in identifying the "market", or who will pay for their proposed services). Although mainstream RDPE funding for Social Farming tends to be focussed on capital grants and specialist labour/training, their biggest problem is paying for revenue costs, i.e. finding a "commissioner" who is prepared to pay for clients to attend the farm regularly. Finally, Social Farms may encounter differences in how the RDPE is interpreted in their area which can have implications on their eligibility for funding.

There were however some clear opportunities. The delivery organisation contact officers were often either knowledgeable or generally supportive of Social Farming, and on the

surface these activities 'hit the right buttons' to be a supportable activity, such as 'the rural economy', 'business start up', and 'improving quality of life'. Social Farming practitioners themselves were very positive about accessing funding under certain areas of the RDPE, particularly the environmental subsidies through Natural England (already being accessed) or social enterprise funding. A number of Social Farms had also accessed LEADER funding for capital works such as building renovations, disabled toilets and wheelchair access, which had helped them to get their projects off the ground by having appropriate facilities in place to encourage commissioners to use their services.

Interestingly, the Regional Implementation Plans' (RIPs) farm diversification measures were some of the least accessed by Social Farmers and some of the delivery officers were dubious of their eligibility. There are a number of reasons for this, including the proviso that the new diversifying enterprise is led by a member of the farm family, which rules out Social Farming developments with off-farm leadership seeking on-farm location where the farm income benefit takes the form of rent.

Due to the diversity amongst existing or would-be Social Farmers, a prescriptive approach to the provision of RDPE support for Social Farming is neither appropriate nor feasible. Nevertheless, the various regional implementation plans under which the RDPE is being operated suggest three opportunities from which care farmers could hope to benefit:

- Local Action Groups
- Environmental management
- Social enterprise development
- Support to micro enterprises

For this to be effectively achieved requires flexibility in application to be built in to programmes and willingness on the part of delivery organisations to display adaptability in matching enquiries with appropriate sources of support. There are also some specific ways in which benefit from the RDPE to Social Farming might be developed:

1. **Utilising Existing Resources** - there is a case for using existing resources within organisations to help Social Farmers to develop their projects in the terms in which RDP programmes are formulated. This could be undertaken by outside partners with large resource capabilities. There are examples of national charities such as the Salvation Army or Barnados which have developed care farming projects.
2. **Facilitation and Mentoring** - the development of a national mentorship scheme to support Social Farming in selecting appropriate RDPE programmes to approach, and to identify which officers might assist with the application process. This could be undertaken by a national/regional project officer and would enable Social Farmers to present their projects in the terms in which RDPs are formulated and help RDP delivery organisations to recognise the congruence of Social Farmers' motivation and purposes with the objectives of the schemes they are operating.
3. **Regional Groupings** - the formation of groups of Social Farmers in particular regions to prepare collaborative or joint approaches for RDPE assistance should be encouraged. This may help enhance the take-up of certain programmes and could also build on "best practice" where a Social Farming initiative has been particularly successful.

**CASE STUDY 6: Ticwood Care Farm**

<p><b>Country and Region:</b> United Kingdom, Shropshire</p>	<p><b>RDP Funding and Measure:</b> Yes - Measure 214 (Agri-environment payments)</p>
<p><b>Project Cost:</b> Not available</p>	<p><b>Source of Funds:</b> Some through Higher Level Stewardship Agri-environment, some through Charitable Trusts, in-kind labour contributions</p>
<p><b>Background:</b> The project was started by Edward and Anna Dugdale who are the farm owners. Edward has a background in providing supported living for adults with learning difficulties and Anna trained in both forest school leadership and life coaching. Together they recognised the therapeutic potential a farming environment has to support a range of different client groups. They developed a range of activity with no or minimal funding hoping that when they had proved successful the funding for them would be taken on by client organisations.</p>	
<p><b>Objectives:</b> The farm focuses its support on prolific offenders and children with physical and/or learning difficulties. Their objective is to improve the skills and learning of their client groups in order to prevent them from becoming institutionalised.</p>	
<p><b>Activities:</b> The Care Farm offers an unusually wide range of activities spread around the main 400 acre farm and its 270 acre woodland. These include horticulture, animal husbandry, woodland management, coppicing, sensory fossil trails, a forest school and wheelchair woodland walk.</p>	
<p><b>Results:</b> Positive results have been witnessed in all the clients that attend the Care Farm. Parents of clients and visitors to the farm provide much anecdotal evidence of the improvements they witness. Some of these may appear only small progressions however represent significant steps forward in the clients learning and rehabilitation.</p>	
<p><b>Lessons Learnt:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The farm has investigated RDP funding and feels that it is only appropriate for larger applications, however the 40% funding limit makes it impossible for an organisation such as theirs to source the match funding required to deliver a project of that scale. They feel an application through their LEADER Programme provides them with the more flexible criteria they need.</li> <li>• Developing and improving understanding of the Care Farm approach within their Local Authorities continues to be problematic, however effective working with the public sector provides the best opportunity for the farm to become sustainable.</li> <li>• The farms use of the Higher Level Stewardship Agri-environment Scheme to provide funding for some of the conservation activities carried out with client groups is a funding opportunity that other Care Farms could investigate to improve their financial sustainability.</li> </ul>	

**CASE STUDY 7: Future Roots**

<p><b>Country and Region:</b> United Kingdom, Dorset</p>	<p><b>RDP Funding and Measure:</b> Yes - Measure 312 (Support for business creation and development) via a Leader LAG</p>
<p><b>Project Cost:</b> £128,600 (approx. 160,000 Euros)</p>	<p><b>Source of Funds:</b> 100% funded through Axis 4</p>
<p><b>Background:</b> The project was established by Julie Plumley on the family small-holding in West Dorset. Julie had grown up in a farming family and had then followed a career in health and social care. Recognising the therapeutic benefits of growing, animal care and outdoor working, whilst working with older people who often had a background in rural skills Julie decided to pilot the Care Farm approach initially targeting young people with mental health or behavioural problems. Rather than responding to a recognised need Future Roots was established to meet the opportunity which Julie had identified.</p>	
<p><b>Objectives:</b> Future Roots primarily works with young people and aims to create experiential learning and personal development activities which enable each individual to develop self confidence, self esteem, life and employability skills, and where appropriate gain basic qualifications.</p>	
<p><b>Activities:</b> The farm provides a broad range of activities including horticulture, animal husbandry and conservation alongside training in practical rural skills. A new social enterprise making soups and smoothies from the food produced has been established and run by the young people themselves. Future Roots also delivers overnight sessions providing respite care.</p>	
<p><b>Results:</b> Parents, cares and teachers of young people attending Future Roots have all noticed a substantial improvement in their behaviour, motivation and self esteem. All those who have been referred to Future Roots having been excluded from mainstream education have gone on to achieve a National Vocational Qualification.</p>	
<p><b>Lessons Learnt:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding of the project and support for developing an application was significantly better through their Leader LAG than the mainstream RDP. Julie had previously applied for RDP funding through the mainstream funds under Measure 311, but was unsuccessful.</li> <li>• Taking up training opportunities to support the running of a multi-faceted project such as a Care Farm was important to its success.</li> <li>• Developing close working relationships with the local Public Sector Social Services departments was essential to ensure sustainability of the initiative.</li> </ul>	

### **4.3 Conclusions**

The UK and Ireland have both developed awareness and recognition at a localised level of Social Farming and the benefits it brings. This has enabled more individual Social Farming activities to be developed, using the experience of the initial 'pioneers', with funding support sourced primarily from the Leader Programme and the LAG's. They have seen strong growth in the sector as more farmers have become aware of the opportunity to diversify their income base, however understanding of Social Farming remains limited to predominantly the agricultural sector itself.

Both countries have established Social Farming Networks that have become active in supporting the growth of the sector through support to Social Farmers and awareness raising activity to improve understanding amongst regional and national administrations. These networks are in the early stages of development, however they have already had a significant impact on the coherence of the sector.

The UK and Ireland are good examples of countries that are progressing towards the next stage of development (Section 5), where Social Farming is seen as a recognised system of social and health care. The networks that have been established will be a particularly important part of this process and instrumental for increasing understanding of the potential of the Social Farming sector at a regional and national level. This improved understanding should then facilitate the greater recognition of Social Farming as a legitimate aspect of rural development and subsequently leads to far more significant use of further RDP measures.

Since a robust Social Farming network is clearly key to the further development of the sector, it is recommended that greater use is made Axis 3 for activities such as training to develop and strengthen the growing networks at either a regional or national level. Furthermore, as the more innovative individual Social Farming projects funded through Axis 4 prove successful, the next wave of initiatives should also look to Axis 3 to provide start-up funding to establish themselves within the sector.

## **5. A Recognised System of Social Care**

### **5.1 Belgium - FLANDERS**

In Belgium (Flanders) the concepts of “caring for” and “taking care of” are already embedded in the very nature of farming. To earn their living farmers dedicate most of their time to the care of crops and livestock. It is this approach of caring and respect that makes a farmer able to deal effectively with people with particular needs in a way that is different to other therapeutic settings. Watching how things live and grow and experiencing the daily farm-life routine is very beneficial for those people who need balance and routine in their lives. In today’s farms, much like in any other enterprise, efficiency is very important. Devoting time and resources to non-profitable activities is not always an option. Nevertheless farmers involved in Social Farming provide time to work with those in need therefore financial support is required in return for delivering these activities.

#### ***5.1.1 Actors, Institutions and Policies Related to Social Farming***

In 2000 the number of farmers adopting a Social Farming activity was well below 100, and these farmers were confronted with several problems. These included financial issues, arising from the lack of budgetary resources from social institutions to support Social Farming and a lack of understanding in government circles of the benefits of Social Farming activities, which meant they were reluctant to devise a permanent support scheme. In addition there were legal issues associated with the need to distinguish green care from various forms of social employment and the need to address insurance issues from the perspective of both farmer and service-users. There were concerns about quality control issues and the nature of the farmer’s role in Social Farming.

The Flemish government took several steps to address all of these issues and requested a study assessing the nature of Social Farms in Flanders. At the same time, pilot projects investigated the possibilities of Social Farming as “time-out” projects for troubled youths. The Flemish Government also started addressing the legislative constraints and devised a financial support scheme for Social Farms.

In order to obtain a legal basis for these schemes, including an EU-level basis, a support measure was proposed in the Rural Development Programme 2000-2006. This work was done in close collaboration with all the stakeholders active in the field of Social Farming which included Government ministries (agriculture, welfare and education); farmers and farmers’ organisations; welfare institutions and organisation and the Support Centre for Green Care, an independent organisation promoting Social Farming. The result of this financial support scheme is not only a legal recognition of existing Social Farms, but also a stimulus for other farmers to start a Social Farming initiative.

In December 2005 the financial support scheme for Social Farms began. Starting with less than 100 professional farmers offering care, there are now over 400 Social Farms. With a growth of more than 30% per year, it is clear that despite the small financial reward many farmers are willing to take up this service to the community. Farmers can get financial support up to 40 Euro per day for supervision of one or more clients on the farm. This support is intentionally not related to the number of clients or to the intensity of the care. The support scheme is conceived as a reward for the time the farmer cannot put in his professional farming activities. As a result, some Social Farming initiatives cannot apply for the support scheme. Small farms, hobby farms and institutional farms do not get paid for their Social Farming activities. This is a problem that regularly leads to misunderstanding.

The welfare and education departments have concerns relating to quality issues. Their greatest concern is that farms might become mini-institutions led by non professionals where the impact on the mental health of the clients is unclear and not properly monitored. Therefore, two important elements are brought into the support scheme, which is developed

around the Social Farming contract. Firstly, only Social Farm contracts with officially recognised institutions are eligible for support. Secondly, the Social Farm contract specifies the details of the farmer, the institution and the client; the possible tasks of the client; insurance details; clarifications noting mutual responsibilities; the monitoring of the client by the institution and a statement that the agreement is not an employment contract.

The farmer does not need to have specific skills to be a Social Farmer but "common sense" is important. For the client staying at the farm is different from their normal "therapeutic" environment. The therapeutic aspects of client care and the quality of the farm experience remain the responsibility of the institution's representative. This is judged by making visits to the farm on a regular basis and giving feedback to the farmer on how to deal with the service user. In the Social Farm contract, the tasks for the client are described – what they are good at and their likes and dislikes, and what kind of tasks are to be avoided.

The key actors in Social Farming in Flanders include the Department for Agriculture and Fisheries which has assumed the role of dealing with the administrative and financial issues of the support scheme. As stated in the legislation, only institutions recognised by the Flemish Government can apply to work with Social Farms within this scheme. This helps ensure that the required quality standards are met.

The Flemish Support Centre for Green Care ('Steunpunt Groene Zorg') has officially existed since January 2004. Its primary goal is promoting Social Farming in Flanders. However, as the Support Centre for Green Care is a private organisation, not linked to the government, it does not have guaranteed financing, which means its future development is uncertain. Currently, the Support Centre is available to care organisations, active Social Farms and interested farmers or horticulturalists seeking information. It can also establish contacts between interested care organisations and interested agricultural or horticultural farms. Therefore it has established a contact point in each province. These contact points are financed by provincial governments, often as a part of the local rural development policy. The Support Centre provides support for the start-up of co-operation between care organisations and farms. It engages with active Social Farming initiatives in providing information and demonstration days, study visits, consultation platforms, study groups, working groups and screening of new Social Farms. It provides an initial matching of service-users, organisations and farms.

Behind the scenes the Support Centre also works on the promotion of the Social Farming concept, establishing appropriate conditions for Social Farms, preparing policy and consultations with public authorities, extending national and international contacts, engaging in research projects, and making contributions regarding quality systems for Social Farming initiatives. It was involved in the SoFar Project, an EU-funded 6<sup>th</sup> Framework project which examined the status and potential of social farming in seven EU Member States - Italy, France, Ireland, Germany, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Belgium (see Di Iacovo and O Connor, 2009 and <http://sofar.unipi.it>). It is also involved in an inter-regional project between Flemish and Dutch local partners. This project aims to improve the quality of the matching process between the supply and demand of Social Farms.

The Support Centre for Green Care has also developed a quality guide. It sets out a model for a Social Farm and a model of co-operation between the farm, the care organisation and service-user. The guide contains a general description of a quality Social Farms, testimonies by people involved and many practical tips.

Social Farming in Flanders can be found in many forms, on a daily or residential basis, it may focus on reintegration into the labour force; it may provide therapeutic relaxation, personal development or learning social skills. It may involve short-term or long-term stay, in close or loose co-operation with the care institution. In most cases, Social Farming initiatives in Flanders are small-scale initiatives that care for a limited number of clients. It appears the largest number of initiatives target young people, people with a learning difficulty and people with psychiatric problems.



Different models of Social Farming can be identified in Flanders. The first consists of an active Social Farm and individual clients. In this situation, via a care institution, service-users are received on a working agricultural or horticultural farm. Here the service-user is involved in the daily work on the farm as much as possible. The farm provides care "to order". The care institution is responsible for follow-up. Most often the care institution works with one farm; some institutions are developing a network of Social Farms that they can call upon. In a number of cases there is co-operation with animal shelters, riding schools, nature reserves, etc.

A second model is where working agricultural or horticultural farms put their infrastructure at the disposal of a care institution, but they themselves have to spend no or limited time with the service-users. Supervisors from the care institution are responsible for the care of the service-users. Here too, there can be co-operation with e.g. animal shelters, riding schools or nature reserves.

A third model is the institutional farm which exists within a care institution. In Flanders they are often sheltered workplaces, labour care centres, day care centres, or other distinct services within the care institutions. Combinations of these models may be found as well. They may be, for instance, a care institution that has its own institutional farm but also co-operates with a working agricultural farm.

The farms involved in the first and second models are financed by the support scheme developed by the Department for Agriculture and Fisheries. The farms involved in the third model need to find other financing sources, mostly related to the financial support available from the Public Health and Family policy areas.

### **5.1.2 Social Farming Activities within the Framework of RDPs in Flanders.**

In Flanders the RDP has been a key driver in stimulating Social Farming. Starting with the Programming period 2000-2006, under *Education* measures, a number of demonstration projects, aimed at highlighting good practice were supported in 2001, 2002 and 2005. These were proposed by the farming organisations, the Innovation Support Centre and the Green Care Support Centre. Such projects included:

- *Care Functions on the Farm* (2001-2002);
- *Searching for New Forms of Care on the Farm* (2002-2003);
- *Starting-Up as a Care Farm: Experiences of the Daily Practice* (2002 – 2003);
- *On the Way to Quality Care Farms* (2005-2006).

The Farmers' Training Centres delivered courses about Social Farming including how to start a Social Farm focusing on administrative tasks, the areas that need most care and attention etc. Under Axis 3 of the 2007-2013 RDP of Flanders, the following projects were funded:

- *Green Care Eastern Flanders: Farming on Welfare* (2004–2006);
- *Exploitation of a Green Care Network in the Rural Areas of the Province of Limburg* (2005 – 2006);
- the *Green Care Support Centre*.

Under the *Support for Investments for Diversification Activities* measure, farmers were able to get financial support for the investments they need to provide facilities for their service users e.g. bedrooms or a common room. Under *Leader +* (2000-2006), support was provided to *Stimuli for New and Recently-Started Care Farms in the Pajottenland* (LAG Pajottenland+). For the Programming period 2007-2013, under Axis 1, the farmers' training centres are continuing to provide courses on Social Farming. The emphasis has broadened since to include coverage of quality control aspects. Under Axis 3, the following projects have been funded:

- *Embedding the Green Care Sector in the Province of Antwerp* (Green Care Support Centre);
- *Announcing and Implementing a High Quality Intermediate Service for Care Farms in the Province of Limburg* (Green Care Support Centre);
- *Professionalisation of Green Care Support* (Support Centre Welfare Eastern Flanders);
- and various *Support for Investments for Diversification Activities*.

Under Axis 4, funding was provided to Welfare farm Dorenshoeve via Loenhout through vzw NEST - LAG MarkAante Kempen.

### **5.1.3 Opportunities and Constraints**

To-date the two rural development programmes for 2000-2006 and 2007-2013, as well as the previous LEADER+ programme, have been used to create a strong foundation for the Social Farming sector. Further opportunities relate to:

- Education measures - demonstrating that Social Farming is good practice, sharing experiences and training farmers;
- Development measures - Social Farming in LEADER+ regions and development of quality aspects, and;
- Investment measures - building of facilities on farms as farm diversifications.

There do however remain bottlenecks or obstacles to the development of Social Farming. As mentioned previously, the Flemish support scheme cannot be used in the current Rural Development Programme under the current circumstances. In principle operating costs are not eligible with the exception of start up digressive costs. Flanders therefore needs to take into consideration the possibility of long term support for Social Farming in Axis 3, in a way similar to the agro-environmental payments in Axis 2.

In order to support the continued development of Social Farming there is a need to create connections with welfare and health support schemes and develop greater recognition of the mental health benefits of Social Farming so it can be included. The aim is to fit Social Farming into existing social aid schemes, so that the care for the service-user is being compensated. Further maturing and professionalisation of the sector will lead to the recognition of Social Farming as a worthy alternative to other care approaches.

There is also a need to further embed Social Farming within the RDP. Unfortunately, the Support Scheme was not accepted as a measure under Axis 3 in the Flemish Rural Development Program 2007-2013. The application of State aid rules was the reason for withdrawing this measure from the Programme. Permanent support schemes are only possible under Axis 2 which currently does not contain opportunities for Social Farming, while Axis 3 is subject to the principle of the incentive effect under the State aid rule so is merely meant for actions which need a financial kick-start, such as investments.

The most immediate goal is to develop a framework to provide this kind of support to Social Farms grounded in a legal basis within Rural Development Programmes as a more institutionalized support scheme is required.

**CASE STUDY 8: Implementing a High Quality Intermediate Service for Care Farms**

<p><b>Country and Region:</b> Belgium-Flanders, Provinces of Limburg and Antwerp</p>	<p><b>RDP Funding and Measure:</b> Yes - Measure 331 (Training and information)</p>
<p><b>Project Cost:</b> Total of 79,455 Euros</p>	<p><b>Source of Funds:</b> 19.5% funded through Axis 3, 45.5% through public funds and 35% private funding</p>
<p><b>Background:</b> The project was started by the Flemish Support Centre for Green Care which was set up in 2004 with the aim of promoting 'Green Care' in Flanders. This training activity was identified as a vehicle to enable more organisations to enter the sector and improve the quality of green care provided throughout the region.</p>	
<p><b>Objectives:</b> The Flemish Support Centre works with farmers already offering Social Farming services and those that wish to start, in order to expand the sector in Limburg and Antwerp, and improve the quality of care provided.</p>	
<p><b>Activities:</b> The Centre offers a range of training courses including horticulture, therapeutic use of animals, needs of target groups, legislation, funding and business management. All new care farms also receive support throughout their start up stage.</p>	
<p><b>Results:</b> The training and support provided has improved the quality of green care in both provinces and supported individual farmers to manage their Care Farms more effectively. The work of the Centre has also improved co-operation between Care Farms and public institutions, and enabled local farmers and NGO's to establish a Flanders Green Care Network.</p>	
<p><b>Lessons Learnt:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training farmers is an essential activity to ensure baseline quality standards and secure the provision of high quality care for user groups</li> <li>• The support services offered have stimulated an increase in the number of 'Green Farms' in the areas</li> <li>• This project has developed coordination and co-operation between the RDP Managing Agent and appropriate Government ministries to improve understanding of the sector and access to funding.</li> </ul>	

## 5.2 ITALY

In Italy Social Farming is quite a recent phenomenon, however several interesting examples in the sector were developed in the early 1970s. Only recently have researchers and policy makers defined these activities as Social Farming. Most are currently related to so-called "social co-operatives", of which there are two main types: Type A co-operatives offering social services on behalf of the State, and; Type B co-operatives supporting disadvantaged people back into the work place.

Several social co-operatives run activities in rural areas and/or in the field of agriculture. Disadvantaged people can become members and users or employed workers of these co-operatives. Recently, some private farmers have also become involved in Social Farming initiatives and contributed to the growing social action being developed at a local level.

### ***5.2.1 Actors, Institutions and Policies Related to Social Farming***

Even though there is no official data on Social Farming in Italy, various research initiatives have estimated the numbers involved at more than 1,000 farms. Generally these initiatives are strongly embedded in their social and cultural context and are developed in collaboration with health, education and legal institutions, mostly at local level. Neither are there standard Social Farming practices as these also depend on specific local contexts - local institutions, social and human capital, needs, etc. and are also a consequence of a lack of State initiatives in the social and care sectors.

A range of public and private sector actors and institutions are involved in Social Farming initiatives in Italy. For example, health sector interests at local or municipal level approach social co-operatives or private farmers to provide activities for service users. They may provide funding for such initiatives and they oversee quality control and the effectiveness of the interventions. Social co-operatives, private farmers and service-users' associations propose initiatives involving public institutions targeted at specific needs. They offer social services and/or employ disadvantaged people. Consumer purchasing groups and retailers have developed mechanisms to buy the food products from these Social Farms.

Regions support the initiatives with some RDP measures and in some cases they also promote Social Farming in their Strategic Plans and on a more operational level, organise events and disseminate information to promote Social Farming in the regions. Recently, some regions such as Tuscany, Friuli, Venezia, Giulia and Campania have begun to develop a legal framework for Social Farming which has led to a proposal for a national legislative framework.

There is a strong link between the growing attention that Social Farming is attracting in Italy and the development of networks. The first networking mechanisms, promoted by the regional agency for rural development in Tuscany and the University of Pisa provided a platform for discussion, exchanging experiences, promotional activities and awareness-raising. It involves numerous field operators and different stakeholders at regional level. The regional agency for rural development of Lazio also has a regional network with the same objectives. In Sicily there is a network promoted by associations, co-operatives and farmers that work in Social Farming or are interested in promoting these activities. There is also a national network, "*Rete delle fattorie sociali*", which connects involved stakeholders including research institutes, farms and private associations with the aim of promoting knowledge and know-how on Social Farming.

The Social Farming sector does not have structural links with other sectors at national and regional level, there are no specific programmes which relate the services supplied by Social Farms to specific social and health needs. At the same time, there are agreements among local health agencies, municipalities, co-operatives, farmers, and associations to use Social Farming as a means of meeting a specific community's needs.

In terms of the range of Social Farming activities underway in Italy, initiatives have been undertaken in the fields of training, work placement, employment, therapeutic horticulture, other therapies involving plants and/or animals, educational initiatives and the care of children. Some initiatives are focused on a specific target group while others provide differentiated services for different needs. In Italy, the employment-oriented initiatives are directed at people with different problems and disabilities: moderate physical disabilities, people with mental health difficulties and learning difficulties and people experiencing social exclusion. This type of initiative involves agricultural activities such as horticulture, vine or olive growing, animal care, food processing, selling products on-farm, or other activities such as an on farm-restaurant. In this way, employed people have the opportunity to increase their capability and skills, improve their social life and reduce the period of medical or hospital care. These experiences are particularly important in peri-urban areas, where usually there is lack of social and health care services. Other recent initiatives focus on education and child care sectors: some farms organise initiatives which are specifically addressed for children and students and ensure they are directly involved in the farms activities. In these cases the services which these farms offer to rural and urban populations provide an important contribution to the Italian social welfare system.

### ***5.2.2 Social Farming Activities within the Framework of RDPs in Italy***

In the context of the Italian National Strategy Plan (NSP) 2009, the importance of Social Farming initiatives is reflected in key actions mentioned in Axis I and Axis III. The NSP key action related to Axis 1 emphasises and suggests promoting the modernisation and innovation of agricultural holdings and includes Social Farming initiatives as an example of an action to enforce the competitiveness of agricultural entrepreneurship.

Focus on Social Farming is also identified in Axis 3 where two priority objectives are aimed at (i) improving the quality of life in rural areas and (ii) supporting diversification into non-agricultural activities. According to the NSP, Italian RDPs implement these priority objectives by addressing measures to target areas characterised by lower levels of income, an unfavourable demographic situation, higher unemployment rates, a slower development of the tertiary sector, weaknesses in skills and human capital and a lack of opportunities for women and young people.

Social Farming activities are developed also in line with the RDPs' strategies on the Axis 3 objective "Maintenance and/or creation of employment opportunities and income in rural areas". The strategies proposed are taking into account the diversity of situations, ranging from remote rural areas suffering from depopulation to peri-urban areas.

### ***5.2.3 Opportunities and Constraints***

The most important constraint on the use of the RDP to develop Social Farming in Italy is the geographical coverage of related measures in the context of Axis 3. As a consequence only rural areas can benefit from these specific funds whilst other typologies of areas are excluded. This limitation is seen as particularly problematic where peri-urban farming could benefit a high number of potential users.

At the same time the existence of specific measures in Axis 3 can lead to the misuse of opportunities in other Axis. Nothing prevents people from using Measures in other Axis to support Social Farming however practitioners believe that activities must be funded by special Measures in Axis 3. Farmers could be encouraged to also use those opportunities in Axis 1.

NRNs could work to disseminate the knowledge of both existing best practice and support policies for Social Farming. It could improve linkages between local actors including institutions, farms and private associations by promoting seminars, meetings and others events.

**CASE STUDY 9: Oasi Agrituristica 'Baugiano' and The Youth Milkshop**

<p><b>Country and Region:</b> Italy, Tuscany</p>	<p><b>RDP Funding and Measure:</b> Yes - Measures 121 (Modernisation of agricultural holdings) and Measure 311 (Diversification into non-agricultural activities)</p>
<p><b>Project Cost:</b> 100,000 Euros</p>	<p><b>Source of Funds:</b> Renovation of infrastructure - 35% Measure 121 with 65% private funds  Establishing the Youth Milkshop - 25% Measure 311 with 75% private funding</p>
<p><b>Background:</b> The Baugiano Farming Oasis Social Farming activity started in 2005 flourishing into 24 different teaching and training projects covering archaeology, rural life, environment and culture and is used by 12,000 children a year. The Youth Milkshop has been established by a group of children who attended the farm through a summer holiday learning many farming skills including how to make yoghurt. They have established the business in partnership with the farm which provides technical and infrastructural support. The Youth Milkshop has enabled the children to embed their activity into the farm itself and so increase their participation on a day to day basis.</p>	
<p><b>Objectives:</b> The Farm itself aims to nurture future generations of sustainable farmers. The Youth Milkshop aims to provide children with the entrepreneurial skills which come from establishing a business, hands on experience of working in a farm and developing its diversification, and establish them and their activity more firmly in the life of the farm.</p>	
<p><b>Activities:</b> The Youth Milkshop produces yoghurt for sale in the 'White Bar' and in local school canteens, it also has an annual milk day to demonstrate the production and processing of milk, delivers a milking training course, manages the 'White Bar' farm cafe, and runs an Entrepreneurs Week aimed at skills development.</p>	
<p><b>Results:</b> The Youth Milkshop is managed by 20 children between 11 and 16, producing 2,400 yoghurt pots a month for distribution to local schools and has recently started attending two weekly farmers' markets. The children have developed a strong sense of place and ownership of the land, the products they are producing and the business they have developed.</p>	
<p><b>Lessons Learnt:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practical on farm enterprise development teaches aspects that traditional education can't – entrepreneurial skills, self-sufficiency, independence, self-esteem, assertiveness, team working and business management.</li> <li>• Involving local children on the farm, and developing a product that is recognised locally helps embed the farm and it's other client groups within the broader community with learning benefits for all.</li> <li>• RDP funding can be used effectively to add value to existing Social Farming activity to extend services or provide new opportunities for client groups</li> </ul>	

### **5.3 Conclusions**

Awareness of Social Farming is significantly higher within public administrations and amongst the general public in Flanders and Italy than in any of the other countries reviewed.

Flanders has developed a Government support scheme which provides direct payments to registered Social Farming initiatives, whilst Italy has a strong history of local health and social care institutions working with Social Farms at a very local level. Unsurprisingly both countries also have a well-established and effective national Social Farming support network which has helped to co-ordinate the sector, enable the sharing of best practice, and importantly develop links between Social Farms, regional and national government and health care institutions.

Regional RDPs in both Flanders and Italy have been utilised effectively for the development of demonstration projects, and to provide education and training courses for Social Farmers and those interested in entering the sector. Many new initiatives are now accessing Axis 3 to provide start-up costs for their new enterprises.

Nonetheless, despite Social Farming having become a recognised element of rural development policy there is still a need for the sector to develop greater awareness within health and social services in order to also become embedded within these sectors.

## **6. Actual and Potential Influence and Impact of Social Farming Activities in Rural Areas and on RDP Implementation**

Social farming activities are viewed very favourably by service users, farmers and service providers in the countries analysed in this overview paper. Furthermore, several research studies undertaken within European projects, such as SoFar and COST, confirm the positive effects of these activities and the possibilities for their development.

### **6.1 Broad Benefits of Social Farming**

Due to its interdisciplinary nature, Social Farming has the opportunity to be interconnected with a number of different sectors in rural areas such as agriculture, enterprise start up, welfare, health and environmental improvements. This multi-functional nature enables Social Farms to develop a range of benefits, including:

- 1. Additional sources of income for farmers** - Social Farming activities are clearly seen by all the NRNs who participated in this initiative as an important source of diversification for farmers and as a potential new source of income for the farming household. The availability of this new opportunity can be crucial for small farmers, with many of the Case Study farms being classed as small farms or small holdings. This new activity can provide the additional income required to enable these small farms to continue, thereby reducing the risk of land abandonment and helping to preserve local nature and cultural traditions;
- 2. Enterprise start up** - many Social Farming projects are established as new enterprises based on farms rather than as a farm diversification themselves. These new enterprises offer employment opportunities to local people in rural areas, reducing the commuting phenomenon and the loss of young people from the area that in some countries, such as Austria, and in some peri-urban areas, continues to be a significant problem;
- 3. Improvement of the quality of health services offered in rural areas** - most of the NRNs have identified this as one of the most important benefits Social Farming initiatives bring to rural areas. The accessibility of services in many rural locations remains limited however the implementation of Social Farming projects enables access to a range of services for people with learning and physical disabilities, children with behavioural problems, and in some cases also services for elderly people or kindergartens and other forms of child care;
- 4. Enhancement of the efficiency of the welfare system** - in many countries the welfare system is experiencing an increasingly difficult financial situation, and in some cases is less able to respond to the specific needs of service users. The Case Studies have highlighted the ability of Social Farming initiatives to offer services better tailored to these specific needs than the welfare system is able to achieve. Clients are able to experience a real working environment, enjoy activities specifically designed to meet their needs, take responsibility for farm activity and interact with a range of people outside of their specific client group. This improves their social capability, and enhances their self-esteem;
- 5. Environmental improvements** - many Social Farms practice environmentally sensitive farming methods and so have the potential to impact positively on the landscape and biodiversity of rural areas. Food production is not the main priority for Social Farms consequently any loss of yield associated with environmental practices is less of a concern. Many therefore choose to practice less intensive methods of production whilst also utilising the opportunities for conservation activities and improving biodiversity on farm as a form of therapy for many client groups.



As well as these specific benefits Social Farming initiatives have a more general role in improving the viability and vitality of local areas including enhancing their reputation, generating increases in economic activity and importantly improving the general public's impression of agriculture and agricultural areas.

## 6.2 Stages of Development of Social Farming and Associated Implementation of RDP Funding

By revisiting the different stages of development of Social Farming as noted by Di Iacovo and O'Connor (2009) and discussed in Chapter 2 a model of the different states of evolution of the Social Farming sector in countries across the EU can be developed, and the associated impact on, and opportunities for RDP funding can be more clearly categorised.

- a) **Pioneering situation** - this first stage of development can be considered as the 'baseline' situation which all the countries included in this study have achieved. At this point relatively few Social Farming initiatives have been established and those that are have been implemented by sector innovators or 'pioneers'. These sector Pioneers have generally established Social Farms due to their own strongly held personal belief in the therapeutic benefits that can be generated. They have rarely received funding through the RDP or any other public source as awareness and understanding of the value of Social Farming at this point in its development is low, and the nature of sector Pioneers means they are less inclined to apply due to the bureaucratic nature of public funds.

Examples of this stage of development have been assessed in Austria, Finland and Sweden. Awareness of Social Farming in these countries is low and very little use has been made of RDP to support the development of the sector. Despite this all these countries have useful examples of best practice in individual projects and also the processes they are utilising to develop Social Farming. In these cases little or no public funding has been utilised to develop the sector.

- b) Social Farming becomes strongly associated with **multifunctional agriculture** - after the sector pioneers have proven the feasibility of Social Farming activities the 'second wave' takes place with further initiatives established. The reports from Ireland and the UK who are at this stage of development indicate that in order to encourage a move from the pioneer stage to the multifunctional agriculture stage funding has to be available to practitioners. Due to the continued low level of understanding of the benefits of Social Farming the most effective avenue of funding at this point appears to be through Axis 4 and the Leader approach. As these funds are administered at the local level it is easier for this second wave of Social Farms to develop the links, awareness and understanding with their local funder to enable the benefits to be understood and the funding secured. LAGs are heavily embedded in their local communities and can strongly support the improvement of communication and networking between Social Farming practitioners and appropriate institutions. This improved communication and networking among different actors involved in Social Farming also supports the movement to the next stage of development and is considered crucial for spreading Social Farming concepts and practices.
- c) Social Farming is **a recognised system in social care** - this third stage occurs once a certain critical mass of Social Farming initiatives has been achieved with a resulting growth in awareness at a regional and national level. The commonality in countries moving to this stage is the introduction of Social Farming Networks or specific Support Centres, as seen in Belgium – Flanders, and Italy. Broadly these seek to raise awareness of the sector amongst regional and national public sector bodies, facilitate the sharing of

best practice, deliver training initiatives and develop quality 'criteria'. To move to this stage of development the support services and networks access funding through Axis 3 of the mainstream RDP. The increased understanding brought about by these new networks then enables further Social Farms to also access funding through this element of RDP.

- d) Social Farming is an **inclusive model** - this is the final stage of development and the goal each participating country is attempting to achieve. By this stage understanding of the benefits of Social Farming is wide ranging with many Social Farms established. This level of understanding enables Social Farms to source sustainable financing through the social and health care sectors themselves, resulting in the 'market' meeting the financing requirements and therefore there is no further requirement for public funding through the RDP.

Moving from one of these developmental levels to the next appears to involve particular types of development that have historically been funded through different routes of the RDP. It may be possible therefore for NRN's to assess the stage of development areas of their country are in and then effectively target lobbying activity, networking and awareness raising initiatives at the appropriate RDP fund holders and Social Farming sector participants to enable improved communication and a noticeable increase in successful funding applications.

Once the connections between appropriate funder and Social Farming practitioner have been made the RDP offers several alternative options for funding Social Farming projects. Usually in the National Strategy Plans and in the RDPs it is possible to find some reference to this type of activity, however these references are usually vague and do not specifically detail Social Farming as an example of an activity that can be supported. This means that a range of different Measures can be used with the main funding opportunities identified in the following measures:

**Measure 311 "Diversification into non-agricultural activities":** From the Case Studies presented it is clear that this Measure is less well used. As many Social Farming projects are established by a family member other than the farm owner they are more normally formed as separate business entities on farm rather than a diversification of the farm business itself and consequently they are not eligible under Measure 311.

**Measure 312 "Support for business creation and development":** This Measure is clearly the route through which most Social Farming activity is receiving RDP funding whether mainstream funds or through the LAG's, indicating that most Social Farming enterprises are being established as separate legal entities.

**Measure 321 "Basic services for the economy and rural population":** Few Social Farming activities have been funded through Measure 321. This may be associated with the funders perception and understanding of Social Farming initiatives which are still broadly seen as business start ups or farm diversifications as opposed to activity which is delivering broader services to the community. As the sector moves through the developmental stages and understanding grows it is expected that this Measure will be more commonly utilised.

**Measure 331 "Training and information of economic actors operating in the field covered by Axis 3":** This Measure is being utilised for the establishment, or on-going activities of, Social Farming Networks and Support Centres that then deliver these training services on a national or regional level.

These four measures are considered the main routes to access RDP funding for social farmers or farmers who wish to diversify their activities. Some NRNs, for example Italy, have also considered the use of Measure 313 "Encouragement of tourism activities" to support this activity, however eligibility under this Measure would depend wholly on the nature of the

Social Farming activity being developed, and may only be relevant for a small amount of farmers.

Some NRNs have underlined that there is potential for the development of these activities through Axis 1, in particular:

- **Measure 111** - "Vocational training and information actions"
- **Measure 112** - "Setting up young farmers"
- **Measure 114** - "Use of advisory services"
- **Measure 121** - "Modernisation of agricultural holdings"

It must however be noted that the Axis 1 Measures can only be used where the activity of the Social Farm is still strongly related to agriculture, which should remain the main activity of the farm. The majority of Social Farms that have established themselves as separate entities would not themselves be eligible under this Measure.

Axis 2 Measures do not have a clear link with Social Farming activity, however many farms where Social Farming activity is taking place are being managed in an environmentally sensitive fashion, including organic and biodynamic. Also in many cases service users are involved in activities related to the protection of biodiversity and the maintenance of the landscape. Accessing Axis 2 funding could be seen as an opportunity to add value to funding received through Axis 3.

### **6.3 Obstacles to Social Farming Initiatives Accessing RDP Support**

Despite the broad range of benefits Social Farming can bring to rural areas and the obvious links between the stages of development and RDP funding opportunities, in many countries farmers are still not utilising the RDP, as is the case in Sweden, Finland, and partially in Ireland and the United Kingdom. The main difficulties identified by the NRNs are:

- **The lack of a clear definition of the sector** which adds to the low levels of awareness amongst administrative bodies. This may be further exacerbated by the variety of different names – Social Farming, Green Farming, Care Farming, given to this type of activity. This situation also makes it difficult for countries to identify Social Farms within their regions and so target information and support;
- **Lack of knowledge** of the opportunities offered through the RDP amongst farmers and other rural actors involved in Social Farming activities. Many are unaware that their Social Farming initiatives are eligible for support through the RDP. Sometimes this lack of knowledge is shared by the NRNs and other networks active in the field of rural development, making the dissemination of information more difficult. Many Social Farming practitioners also have little experience of the application and reporting processes of grant funds so can feel overwhelmed and choose not to apply.
- **Lack of coordination** between Social Farming practitioners, their networks where they have been established, and the administrative bodies in charge of the implementation of the RDPs. This lack of coordination creates confusion and inefficiency in the circulation of relevant information.
- **The existence of eligibility criteria** and other administrative barriers can exclude Social Farms from accessing grant funding. The exclusion of peri-urban areas to the application of Axis 3 Measures in Italy is an example of the possible problems the eligibility criteria can create. In the UK the large proportion of match funding required to access Axis 1 & 3 funds is a major barrier to many Social Farming applications.
- **Legal issues** are mentioned by almost all the networks as a major problem. Of course these can only be solved at national level, but it has been noted that the dissemination of

information on the implementation of Social Farming in different countries and the organisation of possible cooperation actions, even bilateral, can have positive effect in solving these problems.

- In most countries reviewed there is a **lack of coherent policy** to support the development of Social Farming as it falls into the “middle ground” between welfare and agricultural policy.
- The lack of **strong evidence of the positive impacts** Social Farming can have on rural areas. Much available information is anecdotal and a body of research work should be considered as the basis for further implementation of these activities.

Besides the opportunities offered by the RDPs also other funds, European or national, can offer financial opportunities to Social Farming. For example training activities can be potentially financed by the European Social Funds, if the demarcation rules allow organising training for farmers.

### 6.4 Conclusions

Social Farming can have beneficial impacts on the viability of rural areas and there is significant potential for the sector to be developed further. There is general agreement amongst the NRN's of the broad range of benefits Social Farms bring and an enthusiasm to see Social Farming initiatives develop and thrive.

The framework utilised throughout this paper has highlighted the use of different elements of RDP funding depending on the level of sector development within each country. The Case Studies accompanying this Overview Paper illustrate how the use of Axis 4 funds and the involvement of the LAG's can help and support Social Farms as the sector develops from the 'pioneering' stage. Examples of how Axis 3 funds are then used to develop national or regional Social Farming networks as well as supporting further Social Farming initiatives have been identified, demonstrating the change in use of funding as the sector matures further.

RDP funds combined with strategic NRN support do therefore have a significant role to play in supporting sustainable growth in the sector and should be targeted at the following types of activity:

- Bring local actors together with LAG's to develop understanding of the sector and identify Social Farming as an explicit target group within their Delivery Plans.
- Develop national, or where more appropriate, regional support networks involving key stakeholders from all the relevant sectors including health and social care. Seek funding for this through Axis 3 of the RDP. Harness the network to provide a policy lobbying role, raise awareness and understanding of the sector, deliver training and educational courses, develop quality criteria, and act as a 'match making' service for Social Farms and health care providers.
- Disseminate key RDP information to all existing and potential Social Farming initiatives, including highlighting the opportunities under Axis 2 for landscape management support and Axis 1 for infrastructural changes. Circulate this information to RDP fund administrators.
- Provide mentoring support to new and existing Social Farms to provide funding advice and support as well as specific business advice.
- Consolidate existing research, identify key gaps and conduct further relevant research to build the evidence base of the beneficial outputs and outcomes of Social Farming.

## Overview of Social Farming and Rural Development Policy in Selected EU Member States

Expand this research to provide information on the economics of delivering Social Farming initiatives. Develop a shared and accepted definition of Social Farming.

- Develop a network of Best Practice farms to support the dissemination of information to sector practitioners and importantly the health and social care sectors. This activity could be co-ordinated at a European level.
- Work trans-nationally to develop cross boarder initiatives which further support the growth of the sector. With each country following a similar development pattern Social Farming provides an ideal opportunity for successful transnational co-operation.

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