

International Conference “Linking rural development and social farming”

Mechelen, Flanders, Belgium

Key points-summary

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 30TH 2010

PLENARY SESSION DAY 1

Welcome and introduction on Rural Development

Johan Verstrynghe, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Flemish Government, Belgium

The EC Council Regulation 1698/2005 sets out a framework for National Strategy Documents and Rural Development Programs for the period 2007-2013. An overall view of rural development policy was presented.

The European Common Agriculture Policy offers in pillar II, Rural Development, some possibilities for social farming.

Rural development policy is subdivided in 4 axes.

- Axis 1, economical issues, has some existing possibilities for social farming (investments related on SF, use of advisory services, information actions,...)
- Axis 2, ecological issues, has indirect possibilities for social farming (SF can help to do task with much handwork on organic farms, maintain hedges,...)
- Axis 3, social issues, has big potentials for social farming (diversification towards SF activities, small scale investments for SF accommodation, support of the establishment and development of social farming relates micro-businesses, improving the quality of life in rural areas by offering social farm facilities)
- Axis 4, leader approach, has big potentials for social farming (small scale social farming initiatives, cooperation between farms and institutions, innovative systems of social farming, networking initiatives).

Conclusion: there are chances for Social farming in cooperation with rural development:

- Optimize the existing opportunities of the Legal Framework 2007-2013 and
- Attempt to convince the EU to create extra facilities for social farming after 2013.

Introduction on Social Farming

Deirdre O'Connor - University College Dublin, Ireland

Social Farming crystallized during the last years, mainly as a result of the “Community of Practice” Social Farming-activities and the EU financed projects “So Far” and “COST action on Social Farming”.

Community of Practice

Farming for Health International Community of Practice (2004) is a blend of people: researchers, practitioners policymakers in the field of care and green environment, meeting together and exchanging ideas with the intention to enhance the scientific and practical knowledge.

SOFAR project

(Social services on Multifunctional farms) research project: project practitioners, researchers and policymakers, are linked and they created a platform that could support future policy makers.

- definition: Social Farming concerns all activities that "use agricultural resources to promote/generate social services in rural areas...that contribute to social inclusion"
- Diversity across Europe: the structures and actors of social farming differ and also the target groups and the organisational systems.
- SWOT analysis of social farming
- Improve the knowledge base about SF, in order to counterbalance under recognition and invisibility of SF
- build networks on SF nationally and internationally
- identifying common elements across judicial and regulatory frameworks and developing a shared vision for SF

COST action

(EU-funded action 866: green care in agriculture): this research-action in which 24 countries are involved

- coordinates existing research/develop of health effect (area 1) and economics (area 2) and analyses policies (area 3) related to green care.
- 2 recent publications "A conceptual framework for Green Care" and "The Economics of Green Care in Agriculture".

National Rural Networks thematic initiative

Thematic initiative on SF of the National Rural Networks, coordinated by the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD).

- review and share existing information on the development of SF in the different countries
- identify the mechanisms by which engagement between RD actors and SF actors is taking place in different member states
- identify if/how SF activities are being implemented within the framework of RD programmes in different member states

Goals of this meeting: explanatory note on the workshops

Koen Wellemans - Flemish Rural Network, Belgium

The focus of this conference lies on identifying possible elements of convergence between Social Farming and Rural Development.

The goal of finding links between countries, networks, programs will be focussed on the three following elements

Networking

How to you find the right partner ; what are the possibilities and bottlenecks, how do you have to network... and why?

Financial aspects

What is the price to be paid for the care if the farmer takes up care, what financial benefit is social acceptable?

Quality issues

Taking care of vulnerable people, there are quality requirements of the client, of the farmer and also of society. How to define quality, how to measure it, what are important quality aspects, is there a need to formalize them?

WORKSHOP 1: NETWORKING ACTIVITIES IN THE START-UP PHASE OF SOCIAL FARMING (THURSDAY + FRIDAY)

Moderator: Deirdre O'Connor

- * stresses the importance of linkages and networking (who, how, why, ...)
- * do not re-invent the wheel !
- * combine formal & informal networks + personal contacts

Case study from the Netherlands (IJsbrand Snoeij)

- * look beyond the entrepreneurial perspective, also focus on societal problems because they influence the development of the care question
- * also look at the past & the future perspectives: you act in one phase of their life (stay in contact in later phases by including institutions in your network)
- * be aware of the social return on investments (important for adding social investors to your network)
- * structure your network for business perspectives (agricultural & rural network, social welfare & care network, knowledge network) by structures AND by levels (local, regional, national) => all have networks & all are interlinked
- * combine heart, head and hands in your vision and in your actions

Case study from the United Kingdom (Rachel Hine)

- * National Care Farming Initiative defined care farming as “the therapeutic use of farming practices”
- * a network of more than 800 actors was built – the next phase will include that the National Care Farming Initiative will be run BY care farmers FOR care farmers
- * all partner organizations brought with them a wide range of contacts through their networks... this enables the message of care farming to be spread more wisely
- * the network developed into the formation of regional groups allied to the UK wide group – it is up to the regions to define their own needs and way forward
- * current challenge: linking regional networks to the national body without losing autonomy

Case study from Flanders (Toon Hamans)

- * look around for the regional problems and the already existing solutions
- * make a first draft network on paper
- * use your network for information, advise, marketing, help and learning
- * keep in mind that networking is about giving and taking

Elements from the discussions

- * most important role of networking: influence the policy (makers)
- * start network by drafting a state of play: who & what & where are networks + what are the needs/priorities => start by answering the bottom-up needs
- * what are the benefits of networking?
 - produce and share information and knowledge on all levels => interconnect policies & influence them
 - coordination
 - training

* what kind of support is needed?

- regulations about social farming
- money
- link agriculture & welfare also on policy level

* what could be the role of the rural development (policy and/or network)?

- first of all the Common Agricultural Policy and Rural Development Policy should be “less business, more social”
- use of their expertise & network (do not re-invent!)
- the Leader-approach could bring an added value, but first we need Social Farming to be mentioned in the Rural Development Programmes of the Member States, regulating the bottom-up support
- creation of “a map of Europe” with basic knowledge from each Member State (organisations, key actors, ...)

KEY POINTS WORKSHOP 2: FINANCIAL ASPECTS OF SOCIAL FARMING

Moderator: Joost Dessein - Institute for Agricultural and Fisheries Research, Flemish Government, Belgium

The key issue in this workshop is to identify the Social Farming elements that could be financed by Rural Development Programs.

Social farming activities have a financial impact on the farm. Besides financing the activity, other elements can also be financed: matching of farmers and clients, coaching, training, networking, start-up projects, ... Member States can have a different idea on the financing of the costs. Some points of view will be presented and discussed.

Case The Netherlands

Wouter Joop, Ulmus Project Realisatie, The Netherlands

- Aspects that can be financed:
 - o at farm level: adaptation of farm, care services
 - o at regional level: network formation, establishing professional organizations
 - o at national level: national support centre, quality system, networking database, research
- financing of care services:
 - o Long term health insurance:
 - personal health budget of client
 - subcontract accredited care institution
 - AWBZ accreditation (AWBZ = Dutch collective health insurance system)
 - o Reintegration budgets
 - o Budgets for participation by municipalities
- Different types of care farms
 - o Helping hand farms: close alliance with care institution, subcontract
 - o Integrated care farms: mix of personal health budget and subcontracts
 - o Care focus farm: mix of personal health budget and subcontracts
 - o Care focus foundation: AWBZ accreditation
- Policy in the Netherlands:
 - o Working towards market orientated organizations of care farmers at regional and national level
 - o Working towards services of these organizations funded by care farmers themselves
 - o Funding by RDP only for specific projects

Case: Social Farming in Italy

Francesco Di Iacovo, Pisa University, Italy

“Social Farming in Italy: feeding conventionally or reshaping innovatively?”

- Social Farming is embedded in two regimes: CAP and WELFARE
- Social Farming is a way of reconnecting local needs and public goods
 - o Social Farming can be part of an exit strategy from a specialized to a more hybrid society
 - o Incorporating social farming means going from individual competition to collective responsibility
- Social farming is on a crossroad between agriculture and welfare
 - o Ethic of the profit market
 - o Ethic of responsibility and reciprocity
 - o Care and state intervention
 - o Social Justice and a supportive society
- Important how Social Farming is approached, a paradigm shift:
 - o As a form of diversification that generates income
 - o As a form of social engagement with a compensation for the costs
 - o Allegory: “let’s have a beer “...
 - Order the beer and drink it (beer as an object)
 - let’s have a talk and have a beer meanwhile (beer as a means)
- Characteristics of Social Farming
 - o Rooted: Locally embedded
 - o Mixed: public/private goods
 - o Multilevel: micro-meso-macro
 - o Hybrid: inter-sectoral, inter-disciplinary
 - o Win-win: users, public, private, local communities

Case Flanders

Koen Wellemans, Flemish Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Belgium

- A survey in 2000 pointed out that there were a few social farming initiatives in Flanders, but scattered, with no clarity about whether it was care or unauthorized employment, about insurance aspects, ...
- A Financial support scheme has been worked out to create a framework and common basis for social farming in order to dissolve bottlenecks and problems.
- The financial support is a diversification payment for the time spent on care instead of agricultural activities. It only applies on professional farmers.
- The financial support scheme has been approved under the RDP 2000-2006. The support scheme did not fit into the RDP 2007-2013, because of logistic problems: Axis 3 does only apply for project financing and does not apply for measures with permanent payments.
- Central in the support scheme is the care farm agreement: an agreement between farmer, institution and client regarding legal framework, insurance aspects, with specification of tailor-made activities.
- Quality aspects of the social farming activity
 - o The Farmer does not need specific skills or additional training: he just can stay a farmer
 - o The institution takes responsibility for all the care aspects and the quality of the care
- Thanks to the support scheme:
 - o The number of care farms has increased in 10 years from less than 50 to more than 400
 - o Social Farming has been set on the map: it is appreciated and recognized
- The installation since 2004 of the Support Centre for Green care proves that the farmers’ organization closely follow the initiative
- Further steps still need to be taken
 - o Additional payments for the care provided
 - o Pioneering activities for further development of social farming

Reaction on the cases

As a reaction on the Italian case, J-M Courades described the social dimension of rural development policy; social objectives are not under the primary objectives of rural development policy but indirect goals as part of quality of life in rural areas;

As a reaction of the Flanders case and the support scheme in the RDP 2000-2007, J-M Courades (DG AGRI) indicated that the application of State aid rules imposes limitations for support under Axis 3. Aid is subject to the principle of incentive effect, this means that state aid can only be approved if it is a necessary condition for the activity it is financing, i.e. if this activity would not take place without the aid (if the activity would occur in any case, the aid cannot be said to '*facilitate* the development of certain economic activities'.

Debate:

The three cases point out different paradigms:

- the Dutch model focuses on the financial support for the care activity
- The Flemish model focuses on social farming as a diversification activity
- The Italian model opens the way for looking at alternative financing of social farming (link with organic farming, ethic consumers, ...)
- The paradigm of drinking beer illustrates the different paradigms

In the Rural Development Programs, more effort should be put in the visualisation of the benefits of social farming for society.

To stimulate social farming the following actions can be taken:

- builds hybrid environments
- organize support tools
- manage activities,
- stimulate collective learning
- Exchange experiences between member states

With a joint effort of DG Agri and DG social Affairs steps can be taken to take up social farming as a common goal, which is completely in line with the EU 2020 strategy to work towards integration of the different policies.

Importance of lobbying about social farming on EU level.

- by a EU-level representative organization about social elements of rural areas
- Through agricultural organizations, but paying attention to the paradigm shift.

KEY POINTS WORKSHOP 3: QUALITY ISSUES ON SOCIAL FARMING

Case study from Flanders (Els Roelof & Hilde Weckhuysen): Steunpunt Groene Zorg (SGZ)

- SGZ is a private organisation and is not linked to the government (consequence: the future of SGZ is uncertain)
- There are many forms of care farms for a broad range of vulnerable groups
e.g.: youngsters who have problems at school or at home, persons with a physical handicap, persons who are mentally sick, persons with an addiction, ...
- There are no quality standards for the financial support for farmers and the farmers DON'T need basic skills to practise a care farm ("common sense" is important)
- Only institutions recognised by the Flemish Government are qualified to apply to work with care farms in this support scheme (and every institution has to have a quality book)

- Procedure: interview with candidate-care farmer (questionnaire, visit to the farm, ...) and check conditions (correct statute and insurance, clear goals, ...) => care farm contract. SGZ has developed a quality guide that sets out the ideal situation on a care farm and the ideal co-operation between the farm, the care organisation and service-user.

Case study from Austria (Silke Scholl)

- Farm animals are appointed to the treatment and advancement of different client groups in an educational or therapeutic setting (persons with a handicap, persons who are mentally sick, alcohol abuse, ...)
- The combination of double qualified farmers OR team (farmer – professional from the social, educational or a therapeutic field) together with qualified and trained farm animals (there is an extensive program) is a necessity.
- The need for standards or a certification system is necessary because both the clients and the animals have to be protected. Concrete criteria's are also necessary to guarantee the implementation of professional knowledge in praxis. There also has to be an open and flexible system to cover the diversity of provider's professions, client groups, animal species and farming systems. Unlike SGZ (Flanders), common sense is insufficient.
- Quality management and certification requirements: there are five important pillars:
 - Qualification training course "animal assisted education/therapy on farms"
 - Animal welfare
 - Animal health
 - Farmyard safety
 - Selection and training of farm animals
- Certified farms have a label. Only certified farms receive allowances.

Case study from Finland (Mari Louhi-Lehtiö) – Standards and Ethics for EASEL (Experiential Social Emotional Learning & Therapy)

- A multi professional team with different professional backgrounds gives facilitated trainings. The facilitators are paid according to their professional background.
- Quality services require the facilitator to have professional education AND methodology training in securing, facilitating and guiding the process of everyone involved towards each individual's personal goals and the general goals of the service. The facilitator has to check all the 'perimeters' and take them in account.
- The multi professional team must have:
 - professional qualifications to serve the clients they serve (insurances)
 - a long work experience in the own field
 - a supervisor / Coach training
 - EASEL facilitator training

The same goes for the animals: they are taken care of, handled and trained in a certain way by only few people.

- The client will especially look at the relation 'therapist – horse'. There has to be a perfect balance between those two. The therapist has been tested on relevant animal handling competences and showed understanding and application of EASEL's theoretical framework, tools, facilitation principles and experiential activities.

Final conclusions of workshop 3: quality issues on Social Farming

- The quality standards differ from country to country. The kind of social farming is also different per country.

- The basic standards are the same in every country. These standards have to be adjusted by the country itself.
- There has to be a difference between 'the standards' and 'the methodologies'. The goal is equal, but the method of working/procedure is different in each country.
- **Question:** How must the standards be evaluated? (Internal control? Government?)
- **Question:** What system? Bottom-up or top-down?
Answer: There can be a parallel ongoing system (e.g. working on and developing the standards AND PR on country level).
- **Question:** Could all the terms (social farming, green care, ...) have the same meaning in the different countries?
Answer: Not the term/word is the most important, but the goals are. The people have to agree with each other and aim for the same goal.

THURSDAY AFTERNOON: EXCURSIONS

FRIDAY OCTOBER 1ST 2010

PLENARY SESSION

Remarks of Community of Practice Farming for Health

Dorine Rutter - ETC Foundation, the Netherlands

The Community of Practice Farming For Health is a open community. It is a blend of people: researchers, practitioners policymakers in the field of care and green environment, meeting together and exchanging ideas with the intention to enhance the scientific and practical knowledge.

To exchange knowledge and experiences the community organizes meetings including lectures, workshops, field visits, social dinner (Pisa 2009, Norway, the Netherlands).

Next community meeting: UK 2011

Meanwhile these meetings members can also use other media to be in touch of experiences, knowledge and evolutions. Dorine gave a large range of possibilities:

- www.farmingforhealth.org website Farming for Health
- farmingforhealth@list.lboro.ac.uk mailing list Farming for Health
- www.linkedin.com the LinkedIn group of Farming for Health, where you can find other people who are active in the field of care farming, animal assisted intervention, horticultural therapy etcetera
- www.facebook.com Farming for Health group
- www.flickr.com also pictures on Flickr
- www.youtube.com films of green care can be found here
- www.twitter.com twitter
- <http://maps.google.com> google maps can locate social farms

Remarks of National Rural Networks for Rural Development

Mara Lai - European Network for Rural Development Contact Point

Starting from the perception that there are no clear linkages and there is a lack of coordination between rural development programmes and social farming, the idea of an thematic initiative of the NRN's on social farming crystallized.

The Social Farming thematic initiative of the National Rural Networks aims to improve the implementation of rural Development Programmes in support of Social Farming. It is also the

intention to provide input to the development of future programming at national and European level.

By writing an overview paper (final version December 2010) it becomes possible to learn about the state of play of social farming in the member states, it becomes possible to focus on the links between social farming and rural developments and the opportunities. The overview paper is not comprehensive...

Putting together some case studies experiences in different countries can be shared (obstacles, other financing funds,..).

This knowledge has to be disseminated and the contacts and the exchange of experiences between different actors has to be supported.

In the future the national rural networks can work out further analyses of the possibilities offered by the rural development programmes in different member states and the national rural networks can also help to identify and analyse of the main administrative barriers existing in the implementation of social farming-projects.

The national rural networks can also create a web platform to support all this national rural networks- actions and the cooperation between social farming and rural development. Maybe the national rural networks can also help to organise an social farming-organisation to lobby for social farming by EU policymakers.

Concluding remarks

Patricia De Clercq - Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Flemish Government, Belgium

The conference was organised to bring rural development and social farming together to get to know, to find and create links that might result in cooperation initiatives...

Since 2005 the number of social farms has been growing in Flanders. The diversification subsidy not only resulted in the increasing number of social farms (50 – 500) but also the recognition enhanced. In Flanders Social Farming became important. The subsidy started in December 2005 as a diversification measure in the Flemish rural development plan 2000-2006. Since 2007 this subsidy is no longer accepted in the Legal framework RD 2007-2013 and the subsidy became a state aid measure. It was not possible to finance this diversification measure on a no-project basis in axis 3.

On the 20th of September the Flemish minister of agriculture organised an informal visit of the European Council of ministers of agriculture on a social farm in Flanders. It seemed that the ministers were very interested and even enthusiastic about (the surplus value of) this diversification-activity.

The Flemish policy level is aiming to reintroduce the diversification-subsidy for Social Farming in the 2nd pillar of the CAP.

During this conference several links and networks were made. Hopefully these will be sustainable and result into some structural collaboration concerning rural development and social farming!

Many thanks to the rapporteurs of the plenary sessions and the workshops!