

Linking Rural Development & Social Farming

Introduction to Social Farming

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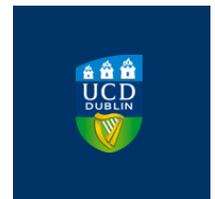
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Overview

- Main purpose is to give a brief overview of key activities/initiatives supporting the development of social farming across Europe
- Research Initiatives
- “Network-type” Initiatives
- Key findings/outputs from such initiatives



Introduction to Social Farming

- Some terminology.....
- Will refer to a variety of concepts such as social farming, green care, farming for health, and use them interchangeably.

“ Social farming concerns all activities that use agricultural resources to promote/generate social services in rural areas (rehabilitation, therapy, sheltered employment, life-long education and other activities that contribute to social inclusion.”



Introduction to Social Farming

Farming for Health:

“ 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”.

Both concepts come under the “umbrella” term of Green Care, the essence of which is

“the use of nature to produce health, social or educational benefits”



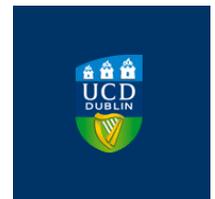
Some Key Initiatives

- ***Farming for Health International Community of Practice*** established in 2004.
- Comprises an international group of researchers, policymakers and practitioners in the field of care in green environments.
- Works to enhance the scientific and practical knowledge of Farming for Health.
- Regular meetings (with published outputs/proceedings).
- A virtual network also established which serves as a site for sharing resources, holding discussions, disseminating information etc.



Some Key Initiatives

- The SoFar (Social Services on Multifunctional Farms) research project
- EU-funded project comprising teams from 7 EU Member States (Italy, Netherlands, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Slovenia)
- Aim was to facilitate the development of social farming through:
 - Linking practitioners to researchers and policy-makers
 - Creating a ‘platform’ of key stakeholders who can support the designing of future policies at national and European level.



SoFar Project – some findings

- **Diverse picture across Europe in terms of**
- **structures:** working farms; sheltered workshops; institutional farms
- **actors involved:** private farmers, public bodies, third sector, volunteers
- **stages:** pioneering, established
- **goals:** rehabilitation, social inclusion, labour integration, education, therapy, service provision in rural areas
- **organisational systems:** single projects, regional/ national networks
- **target groups:** a wide range of service-users
- **results and impacts of interventions:** qualitative evaluation, little scientific evidence



SoFar Project

- **Strengths**

- High potential to offer tailor-made services;
- Potentially large supply of farms willing to offer services
- Many examples of good practice in different types of settings
- Clear potential for innovation and diversification at farm household levels
- Strong support from service users and their families

- **Weaknesses**

- Uncertain legal and regulatory frameworks;
- Gap between demand and supply
- Dependence on public support
- Under-recognition and invisibility
- Lack of evidence re benefits
- Start-up difficulties



SoFar Project

- **Threats**
- Bureaucracy
- Standardisation
- Loss of original value-systems
- Institutional resistance
- Development of opportunistic behaviours

- **Opportunities**
- Increasing demand from society
- Positive reputation effects
- Gives opening to newcomers in agriculture
- multifunctional agriculture
- shift from medical to social model (citizenships instead of patient) of care
- community integration (care by the community)
- broadening /reconfiguring relations and building networks.



Priority Areas for Action (SoFar Project)

- ***the need to define and reinforce the concept of Social Farming*** (analysing existing practices to provide a common knowledge base underpinning social farming; identifying the specificities of social farming; identifying the common grounds and differences at local/territorial level; defining codes of practice);
- ***the need to improve the knowledge base about Social Farming*** (focus on research & education, knowledge transfer and communication for farming stakeholders but also developing greater linkages with other relevant sectors);



Priority Areas for Action (SoFar Project)

- ***the need to build networks on Social Farming nationally and internationally*** (mobilising resources, organising common actions, involvement of new actors, greater interaction with other sectors) and
- ***identifying common elements across judicial and regulatory frameworks and developing a shared vision for Social Farming*** (recognising the importance of different “local” contexts, keeping ethics and values at the heart of regulation in social farming, keeping service-users’ rights paramount in the Regulatory/Legal Frameworks).

COST Action 866: Green Care in Agriculture

- Recognition that there is much practical experience in the utilisation of farms and their resources for rehabilitation and therapy
- Need to improve knowledge and build the evidence base on how the farm environment can affect human mental, physical and social health and well-being.
- Need to understand better the economic and policy issues associated with green care in relation to national health and social care systems, multifunctional agriculture and rural development.



COST Action 866

Green Care in Agriculture

- COST Action 866 is an EU-funded network of researchers across 24 countries whose main aim is to increase the scientific knowledge on the best practices for implementing green care in agriculture
- One specific objective of the Action is to establish a multidisciplinary scientific network of scientists working on different aspects of green care
- Can address cross-cutting issues associated with the topic.



COST Action 866

Green Care in Agriculture

Area 1: Health effects of Green care

- Co-ordinate existing research/develop new research to provide new insights into effects of green care on health and quality of life of clients. Establish appropriate research methodologies.

Area 2: Economics of Green care

- Co-ordinate existing/develop new research on the economics and management of Green care with reference to its cost-benefit effectiveness within the framework of multifunctional agriculture.

Area 3: Policies related to Green care

- Analyse how Green Care fits into current and future national health and social care systems; evaluate its contribution to agricultural and rural development policy; identify how relevant organisational and network systems should be built.



COST Action 866

Green Care in Agriculture

- Recent publications (2010) associated with these research areas:
- *A Conceptual Framework for Green Care*, edited J. Sempik, R. Hine and D. Wilcox, Loughborough Univ. Press.
- *The Economics of Green Care in Agriculture*, edited by J. Dessein and B. Bock, Loughborough Univ. Press.



Thematic Initiative on Social Farming

- Initiative of the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD)
- Purpose is to allow rural development actors and agencies to review and share existing information on the development of social farming in different countries
- To identify the mechanisms by which engagement between rural development actors and social farming actors is taking place in different Member States.
- To identify if/how social farming activities are being implemented within the framework of Rural Development programmes in different Member States



Some Useful Links

- SoFar Project – see <http://sofar.unipi.it/>
- European Network for Rural Development – see <http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/>
- COST Action 866 – see <http://www.umb.no/greencare/>
- Farming for Health International Community of Practice - see <http://www.farmingforhealth.org/>

