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

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SoFar project *http://sofar.unipi.it*
Social Services in Multifunctional Farms ('Social Farming')

Entry points

- ✓ RD in its traditional concept: *Attract flows of external resources* (the State will do the rest) economy as separated from social intervention
  - ✓ Economy in Rural Development
    - ✓ ideas & initiatives supporting economic activities
    - ✓ rural areas are attractive also for their public goods (nature and communities)
  - ✓ Rural communities
    - ✓ changing communities (elders, newcomers, new families, local inhabitants)
    - ✓ specific needs asking for equivalent services but facing strong difficulties (fiscal crisis, scale economy, lack of innovation)

- ✓ Rural change: *Mobilising internal resource for local needs also than attracting* (integrate economy with social/Health issues)
    - ✓ Lack in rural living infrastructure is a threat for economic development
    - ✓ Economic and social development could mutually reinforce in rural areas
    - ✓ Enterprises may act with responsibility
    - ✓ Local community need to increase their control on living resources

Research

Action

Policies

RDP Axis 3
Social services
Social farming

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

Contents

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

Key messages

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

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

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

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

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

6. Social farmers are claiming for recognition able to increase the general awareness about the idea and to facilitate their activity, not for funding

SF: what is it?
a tentative definition

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

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

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

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

- It mobilises local resources (agriculture and knowledge) for social needs

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

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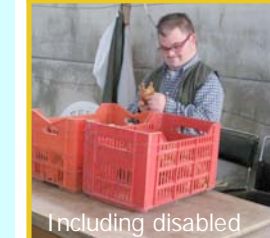- Services paid by families and municipality

SF: some examples

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

BIO Colombini AGRICOLTURA BIOLOGICA
- Family farm
- Organic vegetables
- Didactical and social farm for disabled
- Reputation and added value for product sold

Creating jobs

Including disabled

Coping with nature

dialogue with ethic consumers

Educating younger

Direct selling

fresh food for families

Anna: the second chance in a vineyard

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

SF already exist

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

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

	Private	Institutional	Others	Total	N° users
Belgium (Flanders)	258	38	12	308	2.000
France					
-associative social inclusion farms / gardens			400	400	
-pedagogic farms				1200	
-therapeutic farms	200		300	500	
Germany					
-therapeutic farms	12	150		162	
-school farms			58	58	
Ireland	2*	92**	12	106	2.000
Italy					
-therapeutic/inclusive/social farms/ gardens	150	65	450	675	
-prisons		10			
-pedagogic farms					
Netherlands	746	83	10	839	10.000
Slovenia	4	6	5	15	500

An on going process: quick growth of new projects
recognition of existing practices

SF: bottlenecks
it links many sectors

Agricultural and Rural Policies	Social policies	Health sector, Education, Justice
EU level Common rules and policies	*Member states,* different traditions and culture in welfare systems *At EU level,* common goals, comparative method and exchange of good practices	*Member states,* Diverse welfare systems, some common trends
Farms	*Third sector* Voluntary associations and charity groups Public sector	

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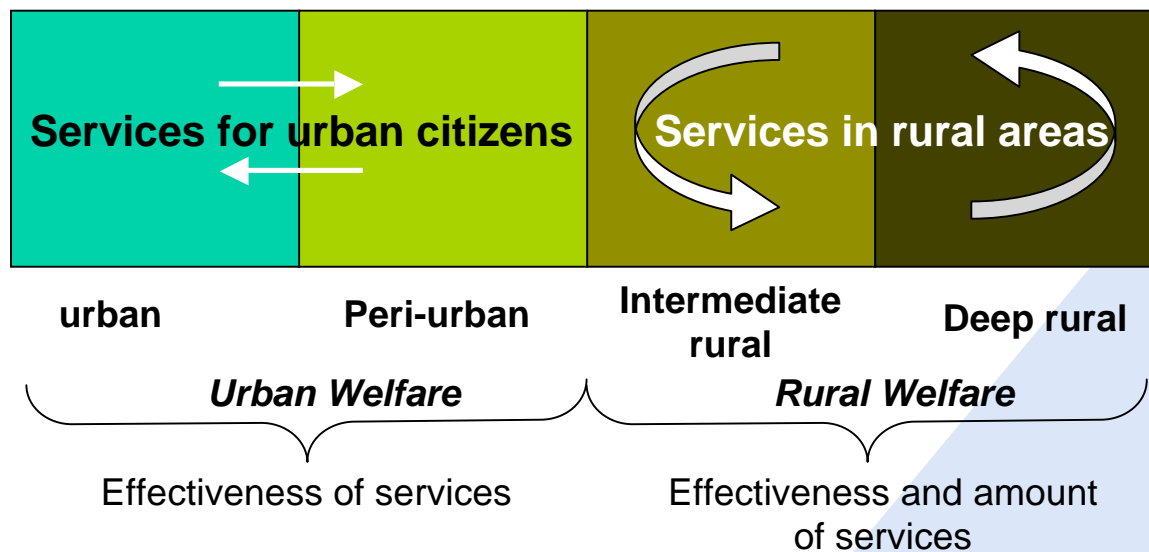
SF: what is new?

- Technical components

- conceptual components

- Social components

Technical components:

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

Services for urban citizens		Services in rural areas	
urban	Peri-urban	Intermediate rural	Deep rural
Urban Welfare		*Rural Welfare*	
Effectiveness of services		Effectiveness and amount of services	

Conceptual components:

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

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

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

- Care/health workers: more tools

- Local institutions: more services at a better value

Social components

Reshaping arenas

- **knowledge**: multidisciplinary and linkages among sectors, collective learning, common knowledge

- **innovation**: a social process, organizational innovation,

- **policy networks**: dynamic process of change, bottom up approaches, networks, identity and motivations

Mobilising resources:
Orti E.T.I.C.I.

www.ortietici.it

society

consumers

Research centre

Farmer

research on efficacy
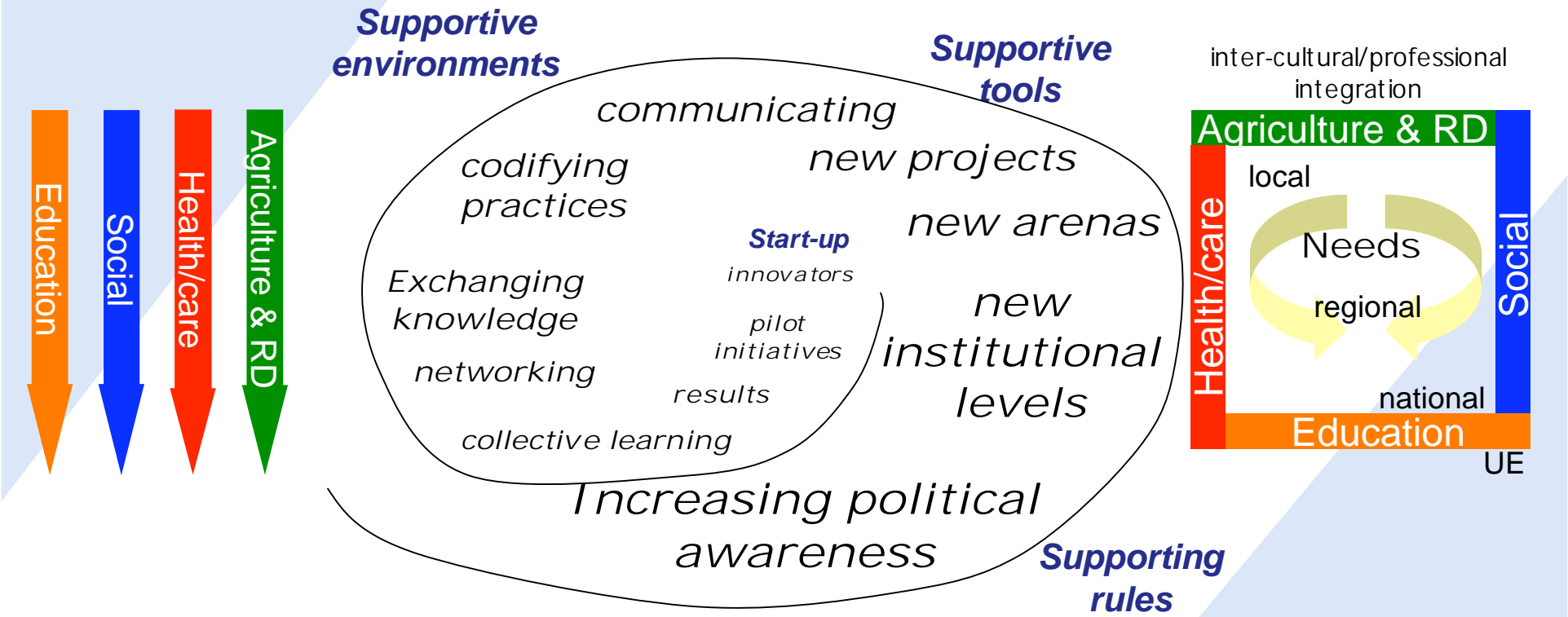
agricultural know how

Reconnect private and public

land

Social know how

Pisa University

Social Coop

students

local community

SF: how it grows?

Supportive environments

Supportive tools

inter-cultural/professional integration

Education

Social

Health/care

Agriculture & RD

communicating

codifying practices

new projects

new arenas

Start-up

innovators

Exchanging knowledge

pilot initiatives

networking

results

new institutional levels

collective learning

Increasing political awareness

Supporting rules

Agriculture & RD

Health/care

local

Needs

regional

Social

national

Education

UE

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

The Valdera case (IT): from pilot project (2002) to public recognition (2008)
Responsible Amiata (IT) kick off 2009

Lesson learned

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

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

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

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

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

Policy remarks:

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

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

3. Social farming is not demanding for subsidies but it's struggling to operate under a better integrated umbrella

Setting the political agenda

1. Policies can be supportive for social innovations like SF

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

2. Combating poverty and social exclusion in rural areas

    - is highly demanding in terms of policy integration,
    - especially in order to mobilise local unexplored resources, like for SF
    - Rural development policies are contributing to the process of change but the process is still at the very beginning
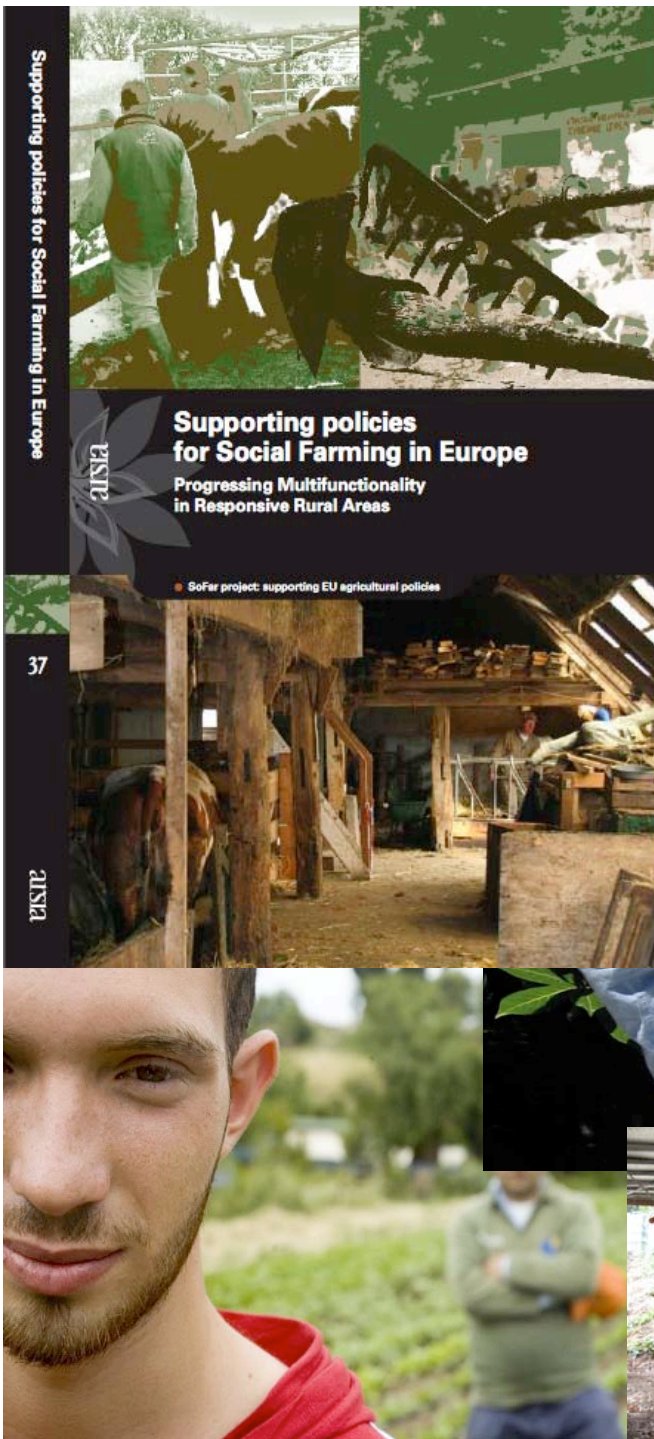
Summing up

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

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

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

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

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

Thank you

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Building the change

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

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

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

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

INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES

Actions
Local
Regional
National/EU