
Learning module 4

Social Farming



EQF definition

Knowledge

- Factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within Social Farming

Skills

- Cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems in Social Farming

Competences

- Exercise self-management within Social Farming contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change;
- Supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of Social Farming

Introduction

Social Farming is seen as a way to reduce disparities between regions through the consolidation of economic, social and territorial cohesion.

It is seen as playing an important role in rural development programmes by supporting the setting up of:

- **rural enterprises involved in co-therapy, social development and inclusion on the labour market**, and
- **services for disadvantaged people using agricultural resources**.

Thus, through cooperation between different administrative and political entities (agriculture, education, employment, health, justice, social affairs), **agricultural services turn into social services**: in addition to basic agricultural activities, social farms invite people from disadvantaged groups to participate in agricultural activities, and social farmers are rewarded.



<https://i1.wp.com/platferma.ro/wp-content/uploads/Brânză-si-legume-borcane-si-ierburi-de-la-Asociatia-Curtea-Culorilor-din-judetul-Timis-800x497.jpg?resize=600%2C373>

What Is Social Farming?

The terms **Care Farming**, **Connective Agriculture**, **Farming for Health**, **Green Care**, **Green Therapies**, **Social Agriculture**, and **Social Farming** describe farming practices aimed at promoting disadvantaged people's rehabilitation and care and/or at integrating people with "low contractual capacity".

Social Farming promotes / provides educational, healing, mental health, and social care services.



<https://www.curtea-culorilor.org/despre-noi/galerie/>

Social Farming conventional operations include **animal production, crop production, vegetable production,** or **woodland management** and **agri-touristic activities** adapted basically in regions where the entrepreneurship benefits of a greater acceptance.

Particular productions based on **bio-production** and **processing** are encouraged including various forms of **short food chains.**

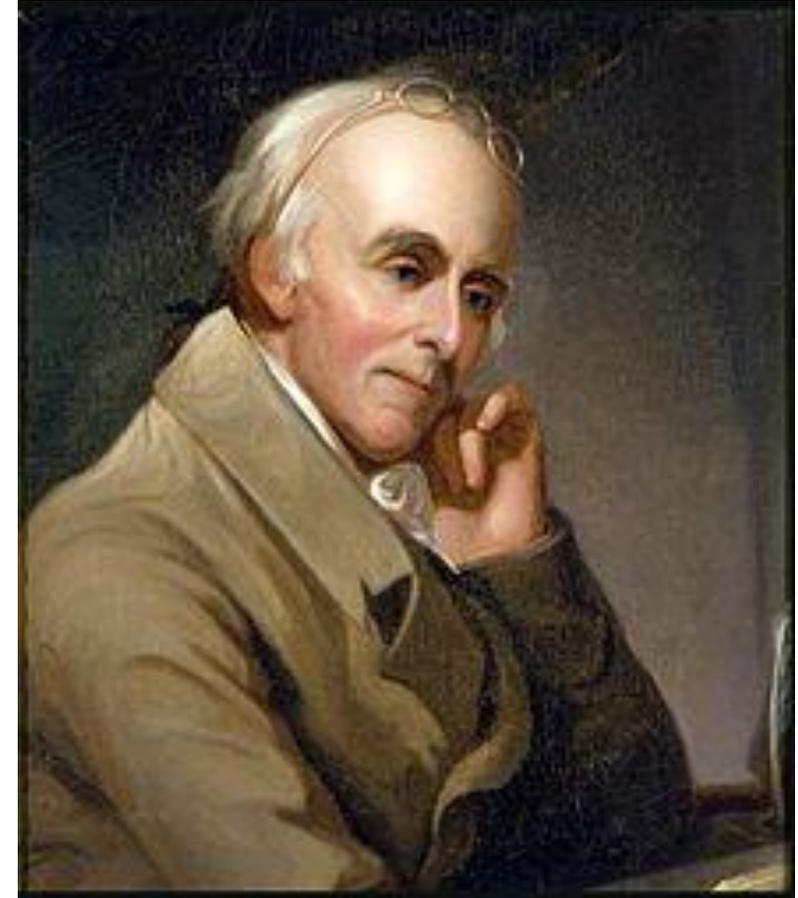
Aside from the agriculture and food processing, **traditional rural crafts** are included incorporating manufactures and handmade local products.



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History of Social Farming

Benjamin Rush (1746-1813), an American educator, humanitarian, physician, politician, and social reformer, is said to be one of the first medical scientists referring to the positive effects of the practice of **occupational therapy** (and of such chores as cutting wood, ***digging in the garden***, ironing, making a fire, scrubbing floors, washing, etc.) on the well-being of mentally diseased.



By Charles Willson Peale - Independence National Historical Park, Public Domain,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=433622>

What Are Disadvantaged People? (1)

There are several types, groups and categories of **disadvantaged people**:

- former and current addicted persons isolated from the active part of the society;
- former and current convicted persons having difficulties to reintegrate into the society after having served time for their unlawful conduct;
- immigrants;
- incapacitated children aged 0-4 and kids until 12 years of age;
- people failing to get employed over long periods of time and with no defined perspective of re-employment;
- persons affected by autism, children or adults presenting specific autistic syndrome symptoms combined or not with other forms of incapacities;
- persons affected by the burn-out syndrome or presenting the distress of burn-out symptoms originating from professional or private environment and where the full employment is provisionally not possible;

What Are Disadvantaged People? (2)

- persons presenting incapacities of psychical or physical nature, challenged or impaired preventing them from complete non-discriminatory interaction with the society;
- persons previously affected by accidents or diseases resulting in severe brain damage impact and facing constraints when attempting to normally act in society;
- refugees seeking protection, asylum applicants expecting to be granted the habitation rights willing to actively integrate the society and customs including employment;
- seniors aged 55+ presenting specific symptoms or being affected by dementia;
- seniors aged 55+ requiring assistance in spending their time;
- youngsters originating from or integrated in education systems dealing with special needs related to psychological challenges and/or interaction issues;
- youngsters somewhat mentally challenged and requiring assistance and support to actively integrate into society.

What is A Social Farm?

Care Farms or **Health Farms** or **Social Farms** are operated by social cooperatives of work integration, on common ground, or on residual land resources left in condition of abandonment. They:

- Employ a significant number of women;
- Integrate a large number of local outer networks;
- Practice biological production;
- Produce added high value products;
- Produce multiple products;
- Provide a sharply „open“ reality to territory and local community;
- Request a lot of manual labour;
- Support connected activities (didactic-educative activities, direct sale of products, hospitality and catering industry, transformation inside the company, etc.);
- Support small-medium farming activities;
- Use eco-compatible productive techniques.



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Social Farming in the EU

Several EU countries have adopted **Social Farming** (and, implicitly, Animal-Assisted Therapy, Animal-Assisted Pedagogic Therapy, and Horticultural Therapy) as a multifunctional innovative strategy: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, The Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg, Macedonia, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom.

Romania is not among them though it has experienced different forms of **Social Farming** beginning with the 90s' by integrating these practices as a novel experience with increased sustainability.

In Romania, they are familiar with **Social Economy**, **Social Entrepreneurship** and **Social Housing** rather than with **Social Farming**. However, **Social Farming** belongs to:

- **Social Economy** (since agriculture is a main branch of economy),
- **Social Entrepreneurship** (since entrepreneurship also belongs to agriculture), and
- **Social Housing** (because it also refers to people without homes in the rural area).

Stages in Social Farming

There are **five stages in Social Farming** that disadvantaged people have to go through:

1. Technical / procedural interaction with plants, animals and tools →
2. Dialogue and relationship with a tutor, with a guiding farmer →
3. Enlargement of the relationships with a larger group of people →
4. Full inclusion and recognition of the work →
5. Economic recognition of the active participation of participants / users.

Social Farming Activities

The most common **Social Farming activities**, no matter the type of disadvantaged people targeted, are related to plant production and animal production. We, thus, distinguish between:

Horticultural Therapy

and

Animal-Assisted Therapy



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<http://www.horsemotion.ro/hipoterapie/galerie/>

Horticultural Therapy

Horticultural Therapy or **Social and Therapeutic Horticulture (STH)** designates the engagement of a person in ***gardening*** and ***plant-based activities***, facilitated by a trained therapist, to achieve specific therapeutic treatment goals:

- Direct contact with plants guides the individual's focus away from stress enhancing their overall quality of life;
- The visual aesthetics of plants are known to elicit feelings of inner peace, which generates positive emotions toward a meaningful appreciation of life.

Horticultural Therapy is an active process which occurs in the context of an established treatment plan, and horticultural therapists are specially educated and trained members of rehabilitation teams (made up of doctors, occupational therapists, psychiatrists, psychologists, etc.) who involve the disadvantaged person in all phases of gardening, from propagation to selling products, as a means of bringing about improvement in their life.

Effects of Horticultural Therapy

The significant positive of **Horticultural Therapy** on human health was observed for a wide range of health outcomes, such as **reductions** in:

- *Anxiety* (an unpleasant state of inner turmoil) symptoms,
- *Body mass index* (a measure of body fat based on height and weight),
- *Depression* (a state of low mood and aversion to activity) symptoms,
- *Mood disturbance* (the main underlying feature of mood disorder),
- *Stress* (a feeling of strain and pressure),

as well as **increases** in:

- *Cognitive function* (the mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses),
- *Physical activity level* (a person's daily physical activity as a number),
- *Quality of life* (the perceived quality of an individual's daily life),
- *Sense of community* (an experience of community rather than its structure, formation, setting, or other features).

Animal-assisted Therapy

Animal-assisted Therapy (AAT) is an alternative or complementary type of therapy that involves animals as a form of treatment: seeing animals at rest or in a peaceful state may signal to humans safety, security and feelings of well-being which, in turn, may trigger a state where personal change and healing are possible.

The most common forms of AAT are with:

- **dogs (canine-assisted therapy)** and
- **horses (equine-assisted therapy).**



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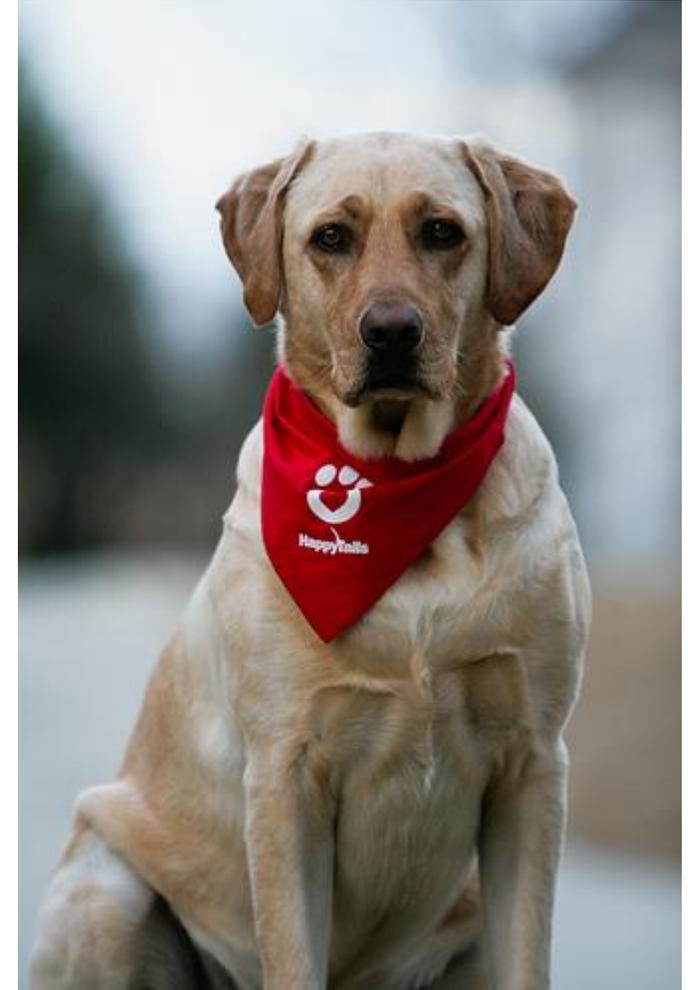
Canine-assisted Therapy

In **Canine-assisted Therapy**, therapy dogs interact with disadvantaged people in animal-assisted interventions to enhance therapeutic activities and well-being including their behavioral, cognitive, physical and socio-emotional functioning.

Therapy dogs:

- comfort patients via body contact;
- engage patients in interactions which can help improve their motor skills and establish trusting relationship with others;
- exhibit a behavior that humans construe as friendly and welcoming;
- possess a calm temperament for accommodating the contact with unfamiliar patients while they serve as a source of comfort.

The interaction between patients and therapy dogs also aids reducing stressful and anxious feelings patients have.



<http://www.friendshipcircle.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Therapy-dog.jpg>

Equine-assisted Therapy

Equine-assisted Therapy or **Hippotherapy** designates a physical, occupational, and speech-language therapy treatment strategy that utilizes equine movement as part of an integrated intervention program to achieve functional outcomes for people with

- *Behavioral* (involving, relating to, or emphasizing behavior) problems,
- *Cognitive* (relating to cognition) problems,
- *Physical* (relating to the body as opposed to the mind) problems,
- *Psychological* (related to the mental and emotional state of a person) problems,
- *Social* (relating to society or its organization) problems,
- *Speech disorders* (disorders affecting the ability to produce normal speech: articulation – phonetic or phonological disorders; fluency – stuttering or cluttering; and/or voice – tone, pitch, volume, or rate).



<http://www.horseemotion.ro/hipoterapie/galerie/>

Effects of Animal-assisted Therapy

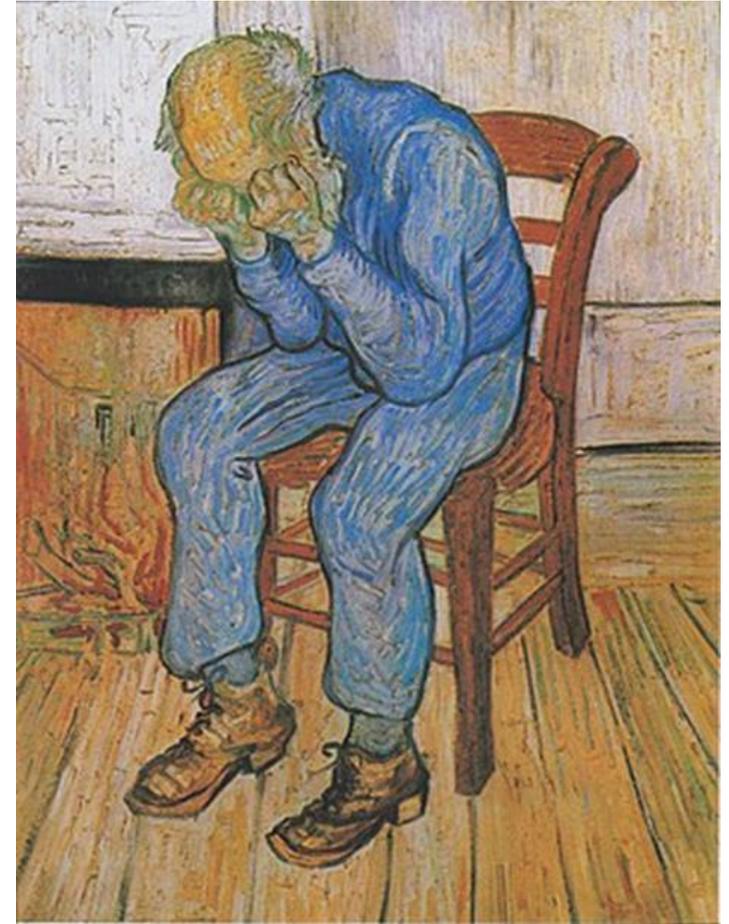
There are many conditions/disorders that can benefit from **Animal-assisted Therapy**:

- *Advanced heart failure* (a condition when the heart is unable to pump sufficiently to maintain blood flow to meet the body's needs);
- *Cancer* (a disease involving abnormal cell growth with the potential to invade or spread to other parts of the body);
- *Chronic pain* (a pain that lasts a long time);
- *Dementia* (a brain disease that causes a long-term and often gradual decrease in the ability to think and remember);
- *Developmental disorder* (a psychiatric condition originating in childhood that involve serious impairment in different areas);
- *Psychological disorder* (a behavioral or mental pattern that causes significant distress or impairment of personal functioning).

Psychological Disorders and Animal-assisted Therapy

Animal-assisted Therapy is effective in such psychological disorders as:

- *Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)*, a mental disorder characterized by behavior without regards to consequences, difficulty paying attention, excessive activity, and regulation of emotions, which are otherwise not appropriate for a person's age;
- *Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)*, a range of mental disorders in which individuals often experience difficulties with social communication and interaction, and restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests or activities;
- *Major Depressive Disorder (MDD)*, a mental disorder characterized by at least two weeks of low mood that is present across most situations;
- *Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)*, a mental disorder that can develop after a person is exposed to a traumatic event, such as sexual assault, traffic collisions, warfare, or other threats on a person's life.



https://img.culturacolectiva.com/content_image/2019/1/24/1548371349575-sad-paintings-show-living-with-depression.jpeg

Why Social Farming?

Cooperative farms and communities, institutional service providers (day/occupational services, mental health services, prison services, etc.), private specialized or mixed family farms, social enterprises offering training, occupational and educational services for the public (specifically including or focusing on people with special needs), and voluntary sector providers (religious and privately run support organisations and services, often targeting specific groups of individuals such as people with autism, people with Down's Syndrome) should involve in **Social Farming** for at least three reasons:

- For both economic and social benefits of the farming family:
 - Helping typically excluded people to become more included;
 - Making a difference in their lives;
 - Seeing the effects of the people who spend time on the social farm;
- For the mental, physical, and social benefits of the clients;
- For the benefits of the wider community.

How to Become A Social Farmer? (1)

When considering becoming a **social farmer**, mind the following stages:

- Exploring possibilities;
- Asking yourself if social farming is for you;
- Taking it further if the answer to the preceding question is "yes" (preparing & planning);
- Delivering social farming.



How to Become A Social Farmer? (2)

Exploring possibilities:

- Identify the sources where you can get more information about social farming:
 - what it is about;
 - what it involves;
- Identify and access social farming opportunities (health and social care policies, services, potential clients):
 - which services are provided by whom;
 - how they are funded;
 - by whom they are funded.



How to Become A Social Farmer? (3)

You can become a social farmer if you:

- You are a practicing farmer;
- Your farm situation can meet social farming needs (Can it accommodate the safety, comfort and welfare needs of people with a range of needs coming to work on it? Can you make changes and adjustments on it? Are you able and willing to make these changes and adjustments?);
- You can easily and practically accommodate the time, energy and work commitments required in meeting the needs of social farming participants;
- Farming family members have the skills or life experience which could be of benefit and relevance for supporting social farming participants.



<https://ypard.net/sites/ypard.net/files/social%20media%20and%20food%20waste%201.jpg>

How to Become A Social Farmer? (4)

As a **social farming family**, you should be ready and willing to:

- Open up your farm and home to engage with and support people with health, social, and personal support needs;
- Commit yourself and your family to provide social farming services for a specified period of time and for specified hours and days;
- Engage fully with service providers and clients in planning and agreeing a clear programme of activities and support;
- Facilitate and promote social engagement between clients and local communities;
- Comply with all relevant regulations, including those relating to health and safety; protection of vulnerable adults; insurance; police vetting and clearance.



How to Become A Social Farmer? (5)

Questions Before Applying for Social Farming:

- Is everyone in the family agreeable to giving it a go, are there any worries or issues which still need to be talked about?
- Are the family members ready and willing to make the regular time commitment over the period of however many weeks or months, involved in a social farming contract?
- Are there any kinds of physical, mental, social and learning/intellectual needs which you as a family are particularly interested in working with, and any you do not feel comfortable or confident to work with?
- What kind of activities and services can you offer on the farm, within your current range of operations, for the groups of individuals you feel would be a good match for you?
- Are you ready to ensure full compliance with all health and safety requirements, and to take whatever additional measures may be necessary to safeguard potentially vulnerable adults, who may have limited capacity, and little or no experience of farms or farming activities?



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How to Become A Social Farmer? (6)

Social farming clients should be ready and willing to:

- Commit to a regular day or days and times for a mutually agreed period;
- Take on tasks which would include working on the land and/or taking care of animals and/ or helping out with maintenance and other physical work;
- Engage socially with the farm family members and others working on and around the farm;
- Comply with any required health and safety practices including use of protective clothing and equipment.



<http://www.horsemotion.ro/hipoterapie/galerie/>

How to Become A Social Farmer? (7)

Questions Before Applying for Social Farming Client:

- Why would you like to try social farming?
- What do you hope most to gain from it?
- How do you feel about working outdoors, about working physically, maybe in mucky conditions, or in bad weather?
- How do you feel about interacting and working with animals? Are there any kinds of animals you would particularly like to work with, or would definitely not want to work with or be around?
- How do you feel about working with soil and plants and getting your hands dirty?
- Are there any aspects you think you might find difficult, or feel nervous about?
- What kind of support and assistance do you think you might need, including practical areas such as transport, mobility, health and other issues?
- Do you think you will be ready and able to give the necessary time and commitment to make it a success for you?
- What emotional and practical assistance can you expect to get from family, friends, care assistants or other service staff?

How to Become A Social Farmer? (8)

Taking it further – Preparing a Farm Profile:

- Farm photo & location;
- Farm size, farm aspect, farm surroundings, land use, kind of crops, kind of livestock, other activities (making cheese, making preserves, etc.);
- Farm activities / jobs throughout the year (harvesting, lambing, potato picking, etc.);
- Farm projects (diversifying into cheese making or into fruit production, drystone walling around a farm area, establishing a bog garden, establishing a herb or an organic vegetable garden, installing a wind mill, installing solar power, etc.);
- Community / locality agricultural co-operative(s), churches, cinema, government offices and services, health centers, post office, pubs, schools, sports facilities, etc.;
- Family farm story & photos (how or why you got into farming, why you are interested in social farming, whether you have children, what interests you have, etc.).



How to Become A Social Farmer? (9)

Taking it further – A business plan should include details about:

- What kind of business you are in and your model of service provision (how you are structured, organised, registered as a legal entity; whether you are a multifunctional farm, a social enterprise, engaging in social farming as part of farm diversification);
- What activities you want to pursue over the number of years covered in the plan (activities, associated range of abilities, horticulture, agriculture, indoors & outdoors, physical & non-physical elements of the services you are offering);
- Current assets and resources (financial, human and material assets);
- What further resources you need to enable you to carry out your planned activities (financial, human and material resources);
- Where and how you propose to get these resources (access to credit, reinvestment of income back into business, proposed purchase of equipment, recruitment of personnel);
- Financial information (what your costs are; your anticipated income; your anticipated profits, i.e. your projected income less your costs; summary budgets for the period of the plan).

How to Become A Social Farmer? (10)

Delivering social farming taking into account the following support issues:

- Mobility (steadiness / accessibility);
- Communication methods used by person;
- Likes / Dislikes;
- Dietary issues;
- Health Issues (diabetes, epilepsy, personal / intimate care needs, allergies, medication, tetanus vaccine history);
- Sensory issues (visual, hearing, etc.);
- Road and traffic awareness;
- Smoking.



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