

## **Introduction:**

The “Cooperativa di Sperimentazione Territoriale per lo Sviluppo Sostenibile Soc.Coop. Agr.” was established in 2006 and comprises of the La Buona Terra and the Panta Rei-farm. It is an educational environmental centre certified by the Region of Umbria and was established in 1992. The two farms are based on different knowledge: La Buona Terra, specialises in organic farming and food processing methods, with skills specifically aimed at transmitting knowledge to children about traditional heritage, and Panta Rei focuses on sustainable and environmental activities with special focus on renewable energy sources, ecological materials for buildings, waste recycling, water saving, etc.

They have worked together since 2006 and have formed a cooperative. The two branches are very active towards schools and offer educational programmes on organic agriculture and food as well as sustainable environmental activities. The main activities carried out together are:

- organic agriculture (certified by AIAB/IFOAM)
- organic food (extra-virgin olive oil, bread, marmalades, ham);
- teaching and educational courses on organic farming and food processing for students from primary and secondary schools;
- teaching and educational course on the use of renewable energy resources, waste recycling, water saving, ecological materials for buildings.

## **Promoter Profile:**

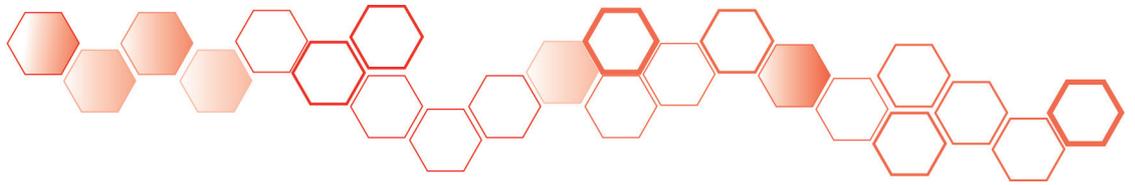
Full name: Sanni Mezzasoma

Age: 40

Gender: Male

Marital Status: Married

Number of children: -



Education and Training: Manager and trainer of trainers and teachers in environmental activities

Years of professional experience: 15

### **Farm Data:**

Name: Cooperativa di Sperimentazione Territoriale per lo Sviluppo Sostenibile Soc.Coop. Agr.

Address: Loc. Le guardie (Panta Rei Loc. Le Pierle) Passignano sul Trasimeno (PG)

Website/Email: <http://www.pantarei-cea.it> ; [info@pantarei-cea.it](mailto:info@pantarei-cea.it)

Year of Establishment: La Buona Terra, 1977; Panta Rei , 1992; Cooperativa di Sperimentazione Territoriale per lo Sviluppo Sostenibile Soc.Coop.Agr. 2006

Hectares: 160

Family Farm workers: Sanni Mezzasoma, Director, and 15 staff members

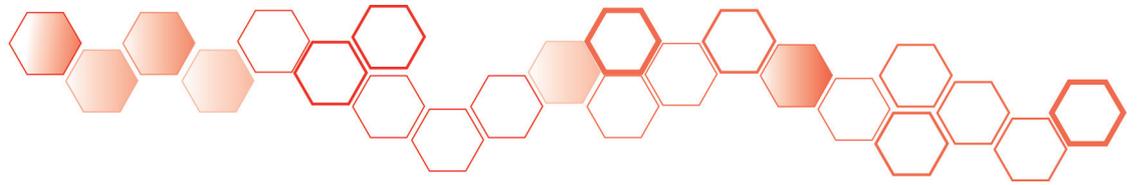
### **Previous situation:**

The farm was originally a dairy farm, where the stables had been destroyed by a fire.

### **Multifunctional Experience:**

A group of young farmers, in 1992, decided to buy property which was abandoned by shepherds after a fire destroying the stables. It mainly constituted of abandoned pastures and woodlands. They immediately established contact with the cooperative “La Buona Terra” which was established in 1977 by people engaged in recovering the unused land surrounding the Lake Trasimeno with the primary objective of promoting organic production and the transmission of agriculture traditional and heritage to the younger generations.

The main reasons why Mr. Mezzasoma decided, with other friends, to pursue this project, was: firstly, the creation of a new practical way to approach issues on sustainable agricultu-



re, reuse of ecological materials, learning by doing with renewable energy resources, and waste recycling with children., Secondly they wanted the use of a rural space as a natural laboratory to spread environmental awareness.

After a planning phase with help from the experts from the cooperative, La Buona Terra, and the collaboration of the regional institutions, the first steps began. They were:

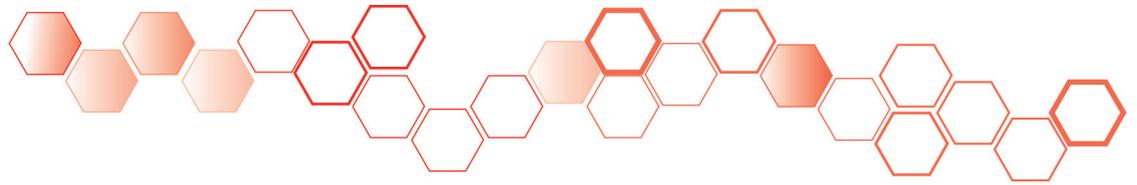
- to use only the original structure of the stables and fill up the space with breathing walls home-made of clay-and-straw bricks;
- to create the common spaces, for example; class-rooms, kitchen and restaurants with large use of glass surfaces to create light areas and naturally insulated roofs, warm in winter and cool in summer;
- to use recycled copper for home made radiators for the rooms, with warm water from steam boiler using biomass (from the trees from the wood, the straw from the fields).
- to create an ongoing collaboration with La Buona Terra to provide organic food to the children from the schools;
- to launch “new age” programmes towards academic institutions and sustainable tourism associations.

The works took many years to achieve the final results, but the costs were quite low due to home made works and reuse of ecological materials. Nevertheless, at the end of the works, the total costs was of around € 1.800.000, of which 50% was granted by different local and rural development funds. As a certified regional centre for environmental education, the project was almost immediately successful, with 2.000 average arrivals per year. Difficulties sometimes occur due to a concentration of bookings in the high season (March-June). September-October are mostly frequented by groups of adults for conferences and meetings of environmental associations and trekking or biking groups.

## **Results:**

Nowadays 15 people live off the farms income. Income security is higher as a result of the planning programme for study visits from primary and secondary schools.

The farm properties, made up by the two cooperatives together, have 160 ha of land, 40



ha of which are for farming, 50 ha for pastures and 70 ha for wood.

The two cooperatives work together with schools, La Buona Terra specializes in organic agriculture and food and Panta Rei specializes in environmental issues.

### **Promoter Competences:**

Mr. Mezzasoma was trained in farm management and accountancy and received scientific training at school. A group of psychologists and pedagogues are involved as members of the cooperative full time. They were trained by the National Council of research in Rome on teaching activities. They also were trained on environmental issues.

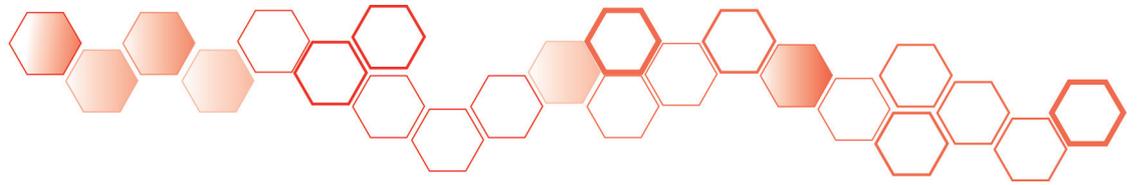
### **Promoter Advice:**

“Sustainability is only possible if people can have a direct experience in environmental issues, learning by doing is the only way to do it”

“The key to the success of my project has been passion for work and competence gained day by day.”

### **Queries and considerations:**

- What do you think about open farms in agriculture, traditional food and environmental issues? Do you think it could be implemented in your context?
- This case study is an example of medium/large financed investment. Do you think that it would be possible to carry out a diversification plan in your farm, also in cooperation with other farmers, according to this financing principle?
- What do you think about the possibility of using ecological materials instead of traditional cement for rural buildings? What about involving directly in this practice children and young people? Do you think that this approach is suitable for your farm?
- What do you think are the social, economic, environmental benefits of such a farm for the wider rural community?



- Which aspects of this case study draw your attention the most?

### **Recommended Training for farmers interested:**

- Business Management;
- Psychological and pedagogic background;
- Renewable Energy Sources;
- Waste recycling;
- Water saving;
- Building with ecological materials
- Organic Farming;
- Short Food Supply Chain Management;;
- Information and communication technologies

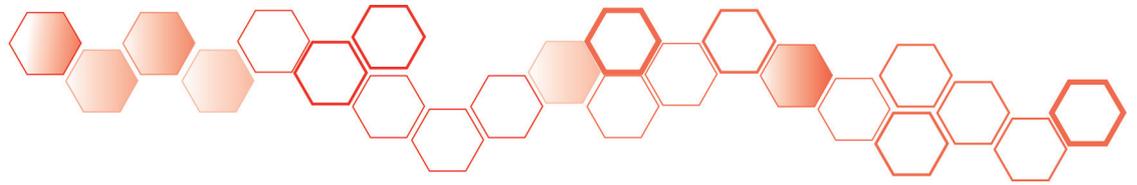
### **Links:**

- <http://www.pantarei-cea.it> (farm homepage)
- <http://www.aiab.it> (organic certification institute)
- <http://www.regione.umbria.it> (Region of Umbria – Environmental Education Centres)

### **Strengths and weaknesses:**

#### **Strengths:**

- Diversification of income
- Direct contact to and involvement of costumers



- Whole value chain in own enterprise/ independence of trade business

### **Weaknesses:**

High amount of investment

### **Multifunctional Criteria:**

#### **Social/ Economic/ Environmental/ Cultural Aspects:**

#### **Social aspects:**

- involvement of society in agricultural production
- Information/ education of society in agriculture and sustainable use of resources
- strengthening of the region through business cooperation

#### **Economic aspects:**

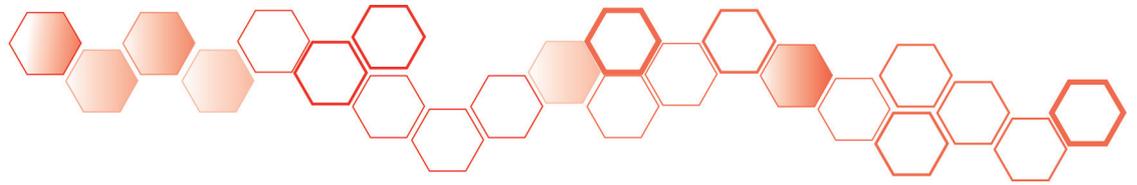
- diversification of income
- alternative ways of agricultural marketing

#### **Environmental aspects:**

- sustainable use of agricultural land (organic production)
- use of renewable energy

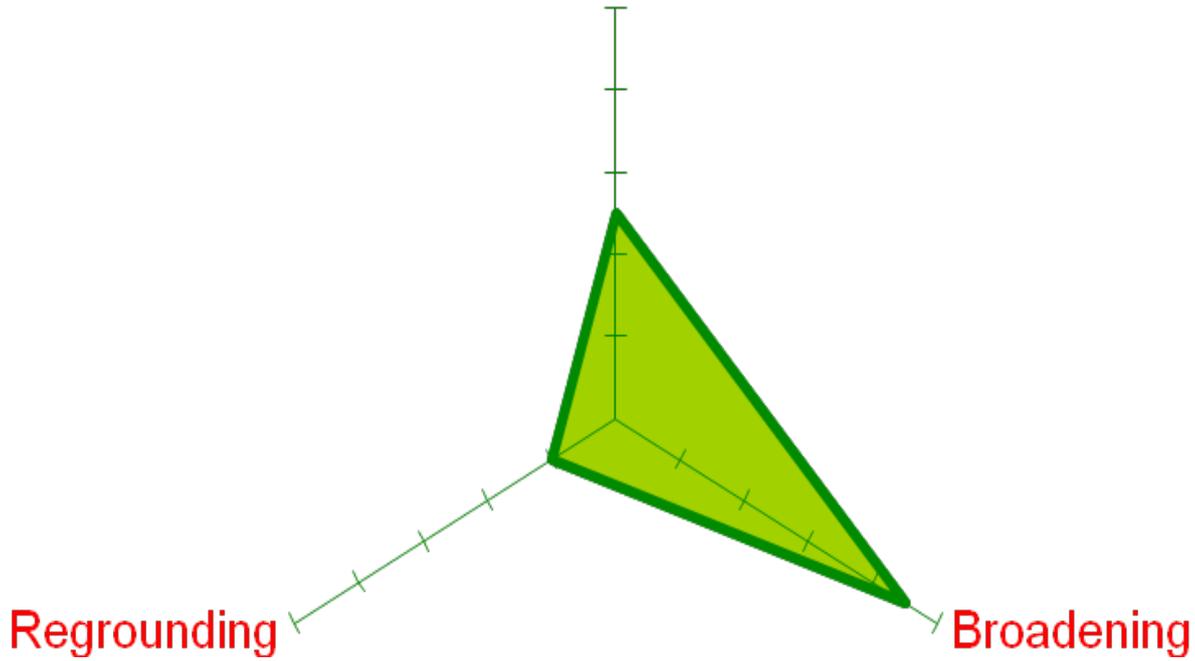
#### **Cultural aspects:**

- use of historical buildings/ landscapes



**DEEPENING/ BROADENING/ REGROUNDING**

**Deepening**



**Key Words:**

- Whole Value Chain
- Organic Farming
- Farm school
- Processing of agricultural products
- Renewable Resources