



Multifunctional Agriculture in Europe Social and Ecological Impacts on Organic Farms

Final Report

Public Part

Project information

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Executive Summary

The summary describes achievements and outcomes of the project „Multifunctional Agriculture in Europe – Social and Ecological Impacts on Organic Farms“(MAiE). The project has been carried out from January 2011 until January 2014.

The Project „Multifunctional Agriculture in Europe – Social and Ecological Impacts on Organic Farms“ is focussed on the conjunction of farming and social work – also known as “Social Farming” or “Green Care”. Multifunctional agriculture and Social Farming open opportunities for individual personal development and promote quality of life. They foster a sustainable approach of managing nature and the revitalisation of rural areas. Social Farming involves the cooperation of individuals, following common ideals and social values in developing small-scale alternatives to highly rationalised farming and fierce price competition. In long terms, multifunctional agriculture opens prospects for a change in paradigms.

MAiE as a European project, embedded in the Lifelong Learning Programme, has focused on setting up regional, national and European networks to proliferate the added value of Social Farming concepts, as well as the development of vocational training for farmers in order to improve the viability of rural areas with the support of multifunctional agriculture and alternative potentials of work and income. This in mind, the European partnership during the project developed the curriculum “Entrepreneurship in Social Farming”, aiming to qualify farmers to lead their own Social Farming business. To appropriately recognize factual needs of all target groups, the Social Farming sector has been analysed, in order to present state of the art expertise. The ex-ante analysis served as a base for the development of the curriculum “Entrepreneurship in Social Farming”, developed in accordance with ECVET-standards. It recommends European exchange in vocational training and education and thus suggests increased mobility in Europe. The curriculum has been translated into seven European languages.

Sustainability of the project results

To guarantee sustainability of the project results, a Transnational Virtual Competence Centre (TVCC, www.maie-project.eu) has been established by the partnership. TVCC intends to link Social Farming associations and initiatives with each other, aiming to spread Social Farming knowledge at a European level, to inform the general public on Social Farming concepts and existing networks, to provide the curriculum and updated efficient training material.

Furthermore, the European community of Social Farming was enhanced by several project network activities, such as the Summer School, transnational meetings and a follow-up cooperation between partners within a learning partnership project, as well as projects realised on a national level. National Competence Centres (NCC) and national networks have been established and consolidated in MAiE partner countries, to operate and maintain national Social Farming networks, to link Social Farming stakeholders at regional levels, to organize Social Farming events, to advice farmers and institutions on social work and Social Farming issues, to utilise the curriculum in cooperation with educational institutions on national levels. The implementation of the curriculum by educational institutions in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Portugal and Italy also guarantees the long- term use of all project results.

Dissemination of project relevant information

During the entire project period, the project partners disseminated all MAiE project news at various public events (e.g. BioFach/DE, The Economies of Balkan and Eastern European Countries in the changed World/TU, Festa Nazionale Agricoltura Sociale/IT), during self-organised Social Farming conferences and events (e.g. Social Farming – “How to realize?” in Klosterbuch/ DE, Social Farming Conference in CZ/BG). MAiE-partners participated in various meetings/conferences as multipliers for MAiE- project results. In November 2013, the Final Conference of the MAiE – project took place in Lisbon/PT followed by the Farming for Health Conference 2013 also in Lisbon. The dissemination of project results is to be continued, also after the project finalization by:

- Providing project results through the Transnational Competence Centre
- Spreading Social Farming information on national levels via national Competence Centres
- Cooperating with educational institutions, promoting the implementation of the curriculum
- Maintaining the Social Farming network at regional and national levels to bring forward the Social Farming movement in each participating country.

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1. Project Objectives

The overall project objective was to improve the viability of rural areas through support of multifunctional agriculture and alternative ways of work and income.

The specific objectives contributing to the overall objective were set:

- Raising awareness on Social Farming in relevant organisations and institutions and to enhance networking between actors affiliated with Social Farming on the national and European level and
- Developing a Social Farming curriculum, based on the ECVET-instrument, enabling exchange of experience and allowing for mobility of trainees and obtained credits in all participating countries.

In more detail following objectives were set by the project:

Qualification

Development of an ECVET-based curriculum in partner languages, designed to qualify students, teachers, trainers, social workers, farmers and educationalists in various aspects of Multifunctional Agriculture/Social Farming.

Networking

Multifunctional Agriculture/Social Farming gives partners the opportunity to link across agriculture, social services, health-care, justice and education sectors. One of the project's objectives was to support networking and interlinking relevant stake-holders within the Social Farming sector on the national as well as on the international level, establishing National Competence Centres in all participating countries and also a Transnational Virtual Competence Centre, operating on the international level and thus ensuring the projects' sustainability.

Spreading Knowledge

The involvement of partners and external experts from seven countries and their contributions ensure the dissemination of the curriculum and other project results across Europe. The Transnational Virtual Competence Centre and seven National Competence Centres will generate information on European activities concerning Multifunctional Agriculture and Social Farming, also beyond the project lifetime.

Supporting rural areas

Qualifying people in rural areas, the project strongly suggests alternative methods of work

and income and provides ideas for added value by cooperating with the agricultural-, social-, health-care- and educational sector. This multifunctional model allows for the diversification of the income structure in marginal areas and emphasizes the attractiveness of rural areas.

2. Project Approach

The project approach describes key activities and processes to achieve project objectives, performed within the MAiE - project.

Key activities required to achieve the development of Social Farming networks:

- Active linking with other affiliated European projects and networks (e.g. DIANA, Farming for Health, The Good Seed, Inclufar).
- Listing all relevant institutions and organisations with an anticipated stake in Social Farming on regional and/or national level and developing contacts and relations with these stakeholders.
- Initiating and running active discussions among project partners and other European networks and/or national stakeholders, applying various communication tools, (world wide web, facebook, skype, mail, telephone).
- Development of the MAiE-website, available in seven languages to provide national and European contact data, as well as information related to Social Farming and also to operate as a network platform beyond the project's lifetime.
- Participation and project presentation on agricultural fairs, round tables and organisation of Social Farming events to present MAiE- project results and their utilisation.
- Summer School with partners from seven countries in order to interconnect teachers/trainers and other Social Farming actors, who have not been members of the partner consortium as multipliers, in order to use their dissemination potential.
- Organisation of the Final Dissemination Conference continuing with the Farming for Health Conference 2013 in Lisbon/PT.
- Establishment and implementation of National Competence Centres in partner countries to activate and sustain national Social Farming networks, to link Social Farming stakeholders at regional levels, to advise farmers on relevant Social Farming issues and to take advantage of the curriculum in cooperation with educational institutions on national levels.
- Establishment and operation of the Transnational Virtual Competence Centre to link Social Farming associations and initiatives on the international level, in order to spread Social Farming knowledge at a European level, to inform the general public about Social Farming concepts and existing networks, to provide curriculum and actualized training material.

Key activities required to achieve the development of the Social Farming curriculum:

- Formation of Focus Groups (FGs) of professionals in the Social Farming sector (agriculture, local policy, social institutions, educational institutions) in each partner country to cooperate in the ex-ante analysis of target groups' needs, meant to set overview and index of the curriculum and to develop the ECVET-curriculum itself. Another reason for the establishment of the Focus Groups was to initiate and strengthen networking activities on national levels. (In Bulgaria and the Czech Republic Focus Groups weren't established as these countries are considered partner countries with a pioneer status in Social Farming. Partners from CZ and BG acted as observers, which lead into a good amount of subsequent network activities and dissemination work).
- Carrying out an analysis of target groups' needs to unveil relevant contents for the curriculum analogue farmers' requirements and those of social and educational institutions.
- Collection of relevant information and materials from all countries as a basic input for the Social Farming material pool, known as Expert Text.
- Drafting and finalising the Expert Text - supportive material for curriculum.
- Determining a table of contents, based on the results of the ex-ante analysis and particular materials drawn from the data collection, in order to structure the curriculum.
- Preparation of the curriculum design based on ECVET standards.
- Composition of adequate materials and particular information for teachers.
- Testing elements of the curriculum by Portuguese farmers in a pilot course, held during the Summer School in Cascais/PT. The pilot course was evaluated by a team of international experts (evaluators and observers from FI, IT, CZ, BG, DE and PT) leading into their recommendations regarding the feasibility and practicability of the curriculum and assistance to put the curriculum into practice beyond the project life time.
- Revision and completion of the ECVET-curriculum "Entrepreneurship in Social Farming".
- Development of practical recommendations, ECVET relevant information
- Translation of the curriculum into Portuguese, Italian, Czech, Bulgarian, Finnish and German, (source language was English).
- Development of a web-based resource environment (www.maie-project.eu), where specialists can access information on Social Farming and the curriculum in all available languages, the expert text and prospective teaching material for designing Social Farming course lessons.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

The following project outcomes and results have been achieved within:

a) Project management and coordination

- Project Kick-off meeting in Wilhelmshlücksbrunn/Thuringia-DE: The aim of the meeting was to form a partnership in order to agree on a project roadmap and to coordinate aims and tasks and to introduce project reporting and financial issues. Participants were given the chance to have an inside view of the Social Farm “Stiftsgut Wilhelmshlücksbrunn”.
- 2nd Transnational meeting in Schaijk/NL: Partners made themselves familiar with the ECVET- approach to be used in the curriculum development and were presented results of the ex-ante analysis, followed by an evaluation and discussion of the partners, in order to fix contents of the curriculum. Best practice examples of “Green Care” farms in The Netherlands have been presented to the consortium.
- 3rd Transnational meeting in Tusuula (FI): Partners presented an overview on Social Farming projects and networking activities in Europe and discussed the expert text, followed by the presentation of project results (web based online learning platform). In order to distribute the curriculum, different dissemination channels were proposed. Best practice examples in Social Farming (Green Care in the prison of Kerava) have been presented to the consortium.
- 4th Transnational meeting in Rome/IT: One of the meetings aims was to become familiar with the social cooperative “Agricoltura Nuova” as a best practice example in Social Farming. Furthermore, representatives of IFOAM and TP organics presented strategies for dissemination networks. Network meeting with representatives from different Italian institutions (e.g. FNAS, Fattoria Solidale del Circeo, Minor Justice Centre, AIAB, Cemea del Mezzogiorno) offered an ideal basis for exchange and co-operation. Topics like curriculum development, possibilities of curriculum exploitation and dissemination channels, preparation of a summer school and a final dissemination conference, establishment of Transnational and National Competence Centres have been discussed.
- 5th Transnational meeting – Summer School in Cascais/PT: An important issue of the one-week pilot course was testing the curriculum and the newly developed teaching materials in order to provide guidance for the application of the curriculum. The pilot course has been evaluated by a team of international experts - evaluators and observers provided their recommendations regarding the feasibility, practicability and

usability of the curriculum. Another result of the Summer School was interlinking farmers, teachers and stakeholders in Europe.

- 6th Transnational meeting - Final Dissemination Conference linked with the Farming for Health Conference both in Lisbon/PT: All results from three years of the MAiE project were presented and final tasks have been planned and coordinated. The Farming for Health Conference had a very strong dissemination and networking character. The final conference presented a very effective cooperation of many different stakeholders at international levels.
- Progress and final project report were prepared and made the project development and outcomes transparent for the benefactor and the public.

b) Project dissemination and communication

- PR-materials: Project logo, flyer in eight European languages and poster, providing basic information about the MAiE-project, general information on Multifunctional Agriculture, Social Farming, as well as on the situation of Social Farming in Europe
- MAiE website www.maie-project.eu: The project website presents information about the project, its contents, partnerships, outcomes and results. In the last quarter of the project lifetime, it has been transformed into the Transnational Virtual Competence Center - a platform for linking the stakeholders in Social Farming.
- Media relations and outputs to promote the project results: Partners gave TV and radio interviews, presented MAiE at several events, meetings, exhibitions etc. PR-video clips have been produced by AGROBIO, Thüringer Ökoherz. Personal interviews, articles in journals, newspapers were published by each partner. Furthermore, each partner has published MAiE-relevant information on their organization's/ association's websites.
- Transfer of the Social Farming approach to Bulgaria and the Czech Republic by developing National Competence Centres and organisation of a Social Farming Congress in these countries.
- Project information and results have been updated and uploaded on the Leonardo da Vinci - ADAM portal for projects and products.

c) Expert text

- Focus Groups: In order to develop an expert text, focus groups, including specialists from various different professional backgrounds, have been installed. These Focus

groups not only evaluated the expert text, but also accompanied the ex-ante analysis, which was designed as a basis for setting outline and index of the curriculum.

- Ex-ante analysis: The ex-ante analysis of training requirements was developed based on a questionnaire, circulated within each nation's focus groups; a final expert text and curriculum has been developed accordingly. The ex-ante analysis compiles state of the art knowledge in each project country, focusing on educational and curricular demands on social farms.
- Material collection: Screening and analysis of all relevant and available material on Social Farming has been realised in each partner country, yielding into a comprehensive data pool.
- Expert texts as Social Farming material source, available through MAiE website, were developed and finalised by the consortium.

d) Curriculum "Entrepreneurship in Social Farming"

The curriculum „Entrepreneurship in Social Farming and guide“, is based on ECVET-standards. The curriculum was developed in a cooperation of the Dutch, Portuguese and German national teams of ECVET- experts. It contains the ECVET-based curriculum, with annotations for teachers, evaluation of the summer school pilot course, ECVET-relevant explanations. The curriculum has been translated into seven different languages (English, Czech, Bulgarian, Finnish, Portuguese, Italian and German) and is aimed at professionals and trainers in farmers' associations, trainers and teachers in vocational schools, universities of applied sciences, universities of cooperative education, acting in different sectors (e.g. agricultural, social, justice, health, education and regional development).

e) Exploitation within the consortium network

- Summer School: During the pilot course of the summer school, the curriculum was tested, evaluated and introduced to Portuguese trainees, trainers and international observers and evaluators, generating their remarks and recommendations.
- Transnational Virtual Competence Centre: The TVCC has been established to interlink Social Farming associations and initiatives, in order to multiply Social Farming expertise and information on Social Farming concepts, as well as existing networks on the European level. Apart from this, TVCC provides curriculum and training materials.
- National Competence Centers: NCCs are contributing to the national networks' sustainment, to link Social Farming stakeholders at regional levels and to advice

farmers and social institutions of on Social Farming issues. NCCs are providing the curriculum and in Germany, Bulgaria and the Czech Republic, NCCs are also accompanying the implementation of the curriculum into the educational system.

f) Project monitoring and evaluation

An external evaluator accompanied the project throughout its duration and has edited evaluation reports for the benefit of successful project development. The curriculum has been revised, tested and evaluated by external experts and also experts in field of ECVET during the entire project lifetime, ensuring quality and professionalism at the material development stage.

4. Partnerships

The consortium is composed of partners from different backgrounds, all of them involved in various aspects of Social Farming. To enhance the network-oriented and disseminative nature of the project, it was very important to involve partners from different sectors (social, health, education, agriculture, etc.) and also partners/countries with different development stages in respect of Multifunctional Agriculture.

In order to ensure high quality outcomes, the curriculum development required theoretical, practical and methodical expertise, as well as external quality evaluation. Within the Focus Groups, the following bodies provided various categories of expertise:

Universities, research institutes and universities of applied sciences: HAS Den Bosch University of Applied Sciences (Netherlands) and MTT Agrifood Research (Finland), LEI Wageningen UR (Netherlands) and Agrarian University Plodiv (Bulgaria) provided theoretical knowledge and requirements in the agricultural, social, vocational, education and training sectors.

Social groups and farmers' associations: Petrarca (Germany), AIAB (Italy), Thüringer Ökoherz e.V. (Germany), AGROBIO (Portugal) and the Focus Group partners provided practical knowledge and direct connections to farmers and Social Farming stakeholders.

Education Training Centres: AGROBIO (Portugal), AIAB (Italy), Area viva (Czech Republic) and CERCICA (Portugal) provided the methodical background to knowledge transfer.

The partner's overall opinion towards the project is positive – both, in terms of its implementation, as well as its relevance for their societies. The cooperation among the project members, regarding perceptions and understandings, project objectives, key concepts, roles and responsibilities, started with largely differing expectations. Much of this was clarified and harmonised, but a lack of clarity in communication between the partners can occasionally be observed in objectives and results, as well as in key concepts. Some partners don't experience this as strong as others, whereas other partners have to struggle with it. It has been crucial to revisit and redefine objectives and results, based on a realistic understanding, the partners have gained in respect of their individual national and the transnational context.



5. Plans for the Future

To guarantee sustainability of the project outcomes, all partners have initiated following activities, lasting beyond the MAiE project lifetime:

AGROBIO anticipated the development of the Portuguese Social Farming Network, supports the Portuguese Competence Centre and the Transnational Virtual Competence Centre, promotes the implementation of the course "Entrepreneurship in Social Farming" into AGROBIO's course system.

AIAB projected the development of the Italian Social Farming Network, supports the Italian Competence Centre and promotes the implementation of the course « Entrepreneurship in Social Farming » into AIAB's course system. AIAB initiated the LLP Grundtvig project "The Good Seed" in which MAiE partners are participating, enabling them to advance networking and experience exchange at national and international levels.

AREA viva initiated further development of a Czech Social Farming Network, supports the Czech Competence Centre and the Transnational Competence Centre, cooperates with the University of South Bohemia and the Jabok School of Social Work and Theology, both of whom are planning to implement the Social Farming course into their course system.

Agrarian University Plovdiv initiated the further development of the Bulgarian Network and strives to effect political interest for Social Farming. The Agrarian University Plovdiv will support the Bulgarian Competence Centre and currently plans the implementation of the Social Farming course at the Agrarian University.

Petrarca projected the development of the German Social Farming Network. Petrarca will supervise and link regional networks and spread knowledge on Social Farming, European Social Farming networks and best practice examples in international project meetings, Social Farming events on national and international levels etc.

Thüringer Ökoherz e.V. anticipated the development of the Thuringian Social Farming Network, is fundraising in order to finance the Thuringian Advisory and Competence Centre for Social Farming, currently develops an upgraded training course "Entrepreneurship in Social Farming"

in cooperation with the University of Applied Sciences Erfurt, which will start in the 2014/2015 winter semester, belongs to the round table at the University of Applied Sciences Eberswalde, also planning the implementation of a Social Farming course. Furthermore, Thüringer Ökoherz e.V. will try to initiate a follow-up project, to be applied by an educational institution in order to advance the ECVET-accreditation. Educational institutions in the Czech Republic, Bulgaria and Hungary have already shown big interest in participation in such a

project. Thüringer Ökoherz in cooperation with AGROBIO and AREA viva will ensure the operation of the Transnational Virtual Competence Centre.

6. Contribution to EU-Policies

Inclusion and the integration of the handicapped into all aspects of society is a leading objective of European Policies. The project contributed to this at various levels. Within project presentations and visits, carried out by Thüringer Ökoherz and Petrarca, the MAiE-Project was presented to several policy and decision makers, agricultural and social stakeholders (e.g. European Representative Office of Thuringia and European Economical and Social Committee). In discussions with these stakeholders, the importance of Social Farming, especially for the development of rural areas and diversification of agricultural business, as well as the inclusion potential of Social Farming, has been highlighted. On the political level, among others activities, Social Farming is described as a framework and an objective in several European structural funds like ELER, EFRE or ESF. These funds are interlinked with European and regional policies. As regionally acting consortium, most of the partners have the political aptitude to contribute their ideas into regional policies. In the federal state of Thuringia, the Thüringer Ökoherz e.V. presented Social Agriculture and MAiE mainly to two different committees: ELER – Steering Committee and the Working Group of Organic Agriculture in Thuringia. Following permanent and continuous political contributions and interacting in political discussions on the common agriculture policy, it was possible to fix the Social Farming topic into Thuringia's operational framework and political agenda. On this basis it shall be possible to finance educational measures and technical advice for farmers in the future.

