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wg13 - Care farming/Social farming

## **The French social farming model under pressure**

*The role of a territorial network like ASTRA*

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1. What are we talking about?

# Need for clear definition

In SO FAR European project as well as in our regional network ASTRA, we propose the following definition and limits for social and therapeutic farming:

*Social and therapeutic farming is an activity of production and valorisation of agricultural products and services, which allows the hosting of people suffering social, mental or psychic difficulties, for social and professional inclusion, and therapeutic accompanying.*



## 2. In France

# In France, collective initiatives are predominant

A majority of projects is managed by non for profit organisations

- A majority of projects concerns **social inclusion**.  
They are rather well organised into networks of social inclusion farms: several national and regional networks.  
Ex: Reseau Cocagne, ESAT.
- A fewer number of projects in therapeutic farming.  
They are dispersed.
- No legal recognition of what is a therapeutic farm.
- What is legally ruled and funded is: hosting activity, economic/social inclusion.

# Individual farms

- Social family farms receive disabled people mostly on a day basis.
- Networks of farmers or drug addict treatment networks are connected to their “own” family farms to organise people placement. It means also that they have specific certification schemes.
- Hosting families receive remuneration from the county, after being certified.



# Difficulties

- Limited hosting capacity in relation with the demand
- Costly investment to launch the activity and adapt the infrastructure to people
- Lack of professional training for those who wish to host vulnerable people. Would be very useful to propose:
  - basic social and educational training for farmers,
  - basic technical training for educators and social workers,
- Policy fragmentation: social farming depends of health, employment, agriculture, social affairs administrations...
- Lack of recognition of social farming as a specific activity (so no subsidy) and lack of framing rules.



### 3. In Region Rhône Alpes

# Rhône Alpes: a dynamic region for S.F.

A provisional inventory done by ASTRA identified some 300 projects (it is a minimum)

## **Social / therapeutic**

- 70 % are social inclusion projects
- 30 % are therapeutic projects

## **Associative / private**

- 85 % are associative and non for profit projects
- 15 % are private
- 100 % of social projects are associative
- 60 % of therapeutic projects are also associative

# ASTRA: an hybrid network for social innovation

- Set up in 2010: after SO FAR EU research project completion, with funding support of the Region, foundations and county.

On the long term, networking should enrol heterogeneous actors - farmers, family associations, researchers, social workers, medical sector, as they may be all concerned by the development of this social innovation.

## An experimental network

- \* A mobility platform is being conceived and tested:  
to stimulate mobility of users  
from associative farms to individual farms

## A resource network

- \* informations  
in a data base
- \* knowledge
- \* films
- \* film festivals
- \* website
- \* contacts
- \* ...

**ASTRA**  
functions

## A collective learning network

- \* organising  
training days for  
sharing practices
- \* tackling issue of  
double skill:  
educative  
and technical

## A policy network

- \* **on short term:** trains policy makers on what is social farming
- \* **on medium or long term:** should modify the policy agenda  
and contribute to recognition and support to social farming



# Changing the policy agenda: a long term goal for ASTRA and its partners

On short term, regional support to ASTRA on a budget line called « *support to farmers in difficulty* ». They support:

- . ASTRA coordination role.
- . ASTRA function as resource tool which is useful for concerned actors and policy makers;

Does it mean that local actors are ready or able to change their policies? NO

- . ignorance of what is social farming,
- . policy fragmentation and multi-level public policy making (from local to European).



# The French model under pressure (1)

There is a double trend pressuring mainly associative farms:

- *Some social inclusion gardens* see their subsidies reduced and are forced to increase their self-funding , through better valorisation of the production.

Possible negative impacts: some gardens are bankrupted or are forced to recruit less marginalised people able to be more productive.

They also have to face competing direct selling schemes organised by consumers like AMAP.

## The French model under pressure (2)

- *Associative structures hosting disabled people* are absorbed by umbrella associative organisations, representing patients or families. With the support of public authorities, they lead a concentration process, managing several organisations. And managers are in charge of imposing “rationalisation” to structure directors.

This managerial pressure, combined with stagnation or reduction of public subsidies, threatens the identity of therapeutic hosting projects. In several regional cases, agriculture production is considered as too costly by those umbrella organisations.



# ASTRA role in discussion (1)

There is a debate within ASTRA network on how to promote and defend social farming:

- Till now, we have promoted social farming, by supporting project holders and potential ones and providing all kinds of resources.
- But the pressures on some social farm forces us to broaden our role.

By opposing to managerial and cost saving model and defend the humanistic and non for profit one, ASTRA may face political and financial difficulties on short term:

## ASTRA role in discussion (2)

- . The cost saving model is pushed forward by most of the public authorities: can ASTRA afford to be an opponent to those public authorities?
- . Till now, ASTRA depending on public money, may put at risk its financial balance on short term.
- To assume political stand points, we need more financial autonomy, by diversifying our funding sources, on short and medium term. Not an easy challenge!

Most of the social farm professionals, members of the board, are rather reticent to such an offensive political positioning...

# We need to tackle those priorities for European collaboration

Goal: to build, step by step, a bottom up de facto recognition.

European priorities:

- There is no legal recognition:
  - > *let 's work on de facto recognition, at European level, by citizens and consumers, of a socially responsible agriculture, with logo, terms of references and promotion strategies;*
- There is no yet clear evidence of the benefits:
  - > *let 's do European research on the impacts of social farming for health, employment, agriculture, territories, public expenses.*
- We have to face different levels of legislation: regional, national, European:
  - > *Let 's explore the best institutional practices in Europe aiming at building transversality and coordination*

