

## **ONE-DAY INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

**Decent work and sustainable development: the perspective of  
existential psychology for innovation and social inclusion**

**Abstract**

**Social agriculture: experimentation of a  
sustainable inclusion laboratory**

*Florence, 21st September 2018*

---



The first social farms were born in the Netherlands in the 1990s and developed rapidly thanks to social policies supporting agricultural production integrated with structured activities of social nature, addressed to vulnerable groups of people, to improve the physical and mental wellbeing through viticulture, horticulture, contact with animals, dairy and vegetable products processing and sale to the public. With the new millennium even in Italy we have started to speak formally of social agriculture thanks to the Decree, no. 228/2001, which raises the rural enterprise and provides the possibility of educational initiatives to broaden the functions of the agriculture farms and help the growth of these organizations. It will take more than a decade to see the approval of law No 141/2015 with the provisions on social agriculture.

Among the activities of the social agricultural enterprise, special attention is given to social inclusion to people with disabilities.

The research presents in this paper, in addition to offering a comprehensive overview of social agriculture in Europe and Italy, presents the results of a survey of 1197 social organizations such as social farms, public institutions, cooperatives and other entities of which 367 with parameters that are useful for the investigation and among these beneficiaries there are 200 people with disability.

The research offers European and national legal sources and referring to 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda "Ensuring that no one is left behind".

Considering the relevant data it is interesting to point out that, with respect to the sample of 200 questionnaires: 2039 people with disabilities, particularly intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorders, mostly male, are annually involved in initiatives to social inclusion with rehabilitation and social support, such as projects aimed at environmental education and the preservation of biodiversity, to the knowledge of the territory.

The modalities of involvement are represented by tools like job exchange, internship or from being working member or employee. The report highlights that being a working member of a cooperative makes the person with disability actively involved within the organization while the temporary condition of other forms of work destabilizes the psycho-physical balance with the risk of insecurity, isolation and uselessness.

Natural spaces normally involve well-being and especially agricultural activities have positive effects in those who care for plants, flowers, vegetables and help to establish a direct contact with the ground and the production cycles with soil preparation and harvesting of the products. In the case of people with disabilities in a social agro-environment, the passage from being recipients of care to become people who care of the garden or of the animal. The people with disabilities acquire the skills, to get self-esteem, to build relationships and improve quality of life.



Yet there is also an economic and productive value in social farming and entrepreneurial activities, there are also data relating to investments, sales and revenues on the social farms analysed. The number of consumers interested in purchasing the products is increasing and it continues to spread through fair trade groups.

The research is devoted to good practice and the five realities described encourage confidence for the future: learning that the agricultural cooperative "Agricoopetto" in Piemonte produces and transforms "the cherry of Pecetto" with 6 employees of which 3 with disabilities or pioneering agricultural cooperative "Capodarco" of Grottaferrata (Rome) with 36 employees of which 6 people with disabilities produces oil, wine, honey, biscuits with organic certification and organizes many other training, hospitality, catering, gives hope for a possible inclusion of disadvantaged people in the context of quality, perfect overcoming of traditional daycare.

Equally interesting are the activities of three other social cooperatives in Veneto, Umbria, Calabria. The social farm "Conca d'Oro" in Bassano del Grappa, born with the renovation of an ancient rural building made fully accessible to people with disabilities, promotes training and job placement in conjunction with services in the social area and the municipal administration. In addition to horticulture, fruit growing and organic olive growing, the company started a small production of silkworms for the production of wires for the jewelry industry. It was also opened a store of farm products and a renowned restaurant with disabled young people employed in the service and in the preparation of food.

In Spello (Perugia) the agricultural cooperative "La Semente" was conceived by an Association of parents of people with autism spectrum disorders in collaboration with the local Administration, to help young people with autism to achieve the greatest possible degree of autonomy. The multifunctional activities include workshops, organic productions, a farm and a restaurant.

Finally in Calabria the feminine cooperative "Agricole", is composed of a group of women, some of which are of rom ethnic origin, others with disabilities and single mothers. The context is borderline, the youth unemployment rate (nearly 50%) and the presence of crime organizations represents a constant threat causing intimidation such as the burning of cultivated land made available by the Diocese of Lamezia Terme. Despite the difficulties, the agricultural productive activity of the cooperative, integrates with the supply of cultural services, social, educational, health care, education, employment of disadvantaged people.

We've analyzed these practices of social agriculture and the criteria and methodological assumptions to determine their transferability and assess whether they are able to guide public decisions on the adoption of such models and whether there is the ability to promoting the sharing of experience and knowledge.



Particular attention is given to social inclusion through the construction of a model that includes the custom project centered on subjective needs of the person with disabilities, aimed at providing employment with permanent active participation in the socio-organizational contexts. To get good results, it's necessary to proceed by contemplating some areas such as reception and orientation, assistance and job placement and assessment.

We've examined how these steps have been implemented in each of the experiences described referring the model described above in relation of the paradigm shift introduced by the United Nation Convention that defines disability "result of the interaction between people with disabilities and barriers environmental behavior and prevent the full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others". In fact, agricultural enterprises do not focus on the deficit but on potential, skills and resources creating and facilitating contexts. Benefits are not only for those directly involved but also for their families, local reference system, the network of social services and the final consumer. Share and cultivate the values of solidarity and social inclusion means generating unquantifiable but evident wealth. What is detectable is that the people with disability employed in social farming activity enhances their potential and can capture an identity aimed at the construction of a project of independent living.

Social farming provides a response to the growing needs of the entire population in terms of sustainable farming, promotes educational community that collaborate in the promotion of health and quality of social life where every person contributes to the common good: a laboratory for inclusion, to inspire building a society more equitable and respectful of the rights of all.

The report is available on site: <http://oa.inapp.org/xmlui/handle/123456789/229> (free charge).

For further information please contact: [d.pavoncello@inapp.org](mailto:d.pavoncello@inapp.org)

---