



***Social and organic farming:
local innovations and institutional context***

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Introduction

- ⌘ **Social farming** represents a context rich in **innovative experiences** concerning the **relationships between various actors**, coherent with the promotion of **local development models** that are sustainable in economic, social and **environmental** terms.
- ⌘ **Social farming** development is based on the concept of **farms' multifunctionality**, promoting their capacity to respond to the **social needs of the local community**, especially in **rural areas**.
- ⌘ Our research focus on the case of the **Marche region**, analysing the **potential and limits of regional policies** in supporting the spread of innovative practices in **Social Farming**, also in connection with **organic farming activities**.



Methodology

⌘ *Why the Marche region as a case study?*

The Marche region was selected as a case study due to its **geographical position** and the **characteristics of its regional social policy**. In fact, Marche has been named a '**zipper region**' because its social policy framework is quite developed, more than those in the southern regions but less than those in the north.

⌘ *To better grasp the implementation process of Social Farming in the Marche region:*

critical discourse analysis was applied as a theoretical framework of the **qualitative research** to analyse the **policy** and the **practices**.

⌘ *Data are represented by **policy documents**, in a **comparative perspective with other regions** (Tuscany, Emilia Romagna and Umbria), and by the points of view of **selected key informants**, collected through **semi-structured interviews**, in the Province of Pesaro-Urbino.*



Findings and Discussion

1. Social farming policy in the Marche region: a regional comparative analysis

Italian Law No. 141/2015 “Disposition on social agriculture”.

Different regional contexts have developed **heterogeneous policies** as well as **practices**.



Regions with *ad hoc*
regulative documents

*Abruzzo, Campania, Liguria, Veneto,
Molise, Tuscany*



Regions dealing with the topic of
Social Farming within the
agricultural regulative framework

*Marche, Lombardy, Province of Trento,
Friuli Venezia Giulia, Umbria, Calabria,
Sardinia*



Findings and Discussion

THE MARCHE REGION

Regional Law No. 21 of November 14, 2011

*“Regional provisions on the multifunctionality of the farm
and diversification in agriculture”*



Article 2 defines SF as an **activity connected to agriculture** in line with article 2135 of the Italian Civil Code and Decree Law No. 228 of 2001, “Orientation and modernisation of the agricultural sector, in accordance with article 7 of the Law of March 5, 2001, No. 57”.



*It is considered a **form of hospitality**, similar to farm holidays, and therefore considered **integration into farm activities**.*



Findings and Discussion

The Marche Social Farming regional policy
has focused on

OBJECTIVE PROFILE



*Which are the exercisable activities?
(art. 27)*

SUBJECTIVE PROFILE



*Which subjects can carry them?
(art. 25)*



Findings and Discussion

Actions and types of services

Marche

Educational and didactic, farm-nursery schools, social and welfare centres for children, rehabilitation activities, hospitality, social and socio-sanitary integration, pet therapy, farm production products, natural medicines and work reintegration activities.

These activities are specified with a greater degree of detail than those of the other regions.

Emilia
Romagna

Socio-educational/social services, rehabilitation/work reintegration activities

Tuscany

Socio-labour insertion and educational assistance and/or training activities.

Umbria

+Social activities in favour of local communities that use the material and immaterial resources of agriculture to provide useful services to everyday life.



Findings and Discussion

		<i>Providers of SF services</i>
Marche	Agricultural entrepreneurs (art. 2135 of the Civil Code)	Social/agricultural cooperatives <i>Regional list of social farmers</i> (the registration to the list is necessary to access the economic measures provided for in the Rural Development Plan).
Emilia Romagna		Public institutions
Tuscany		Legal persons (voluntary organisations, associations, social cooperatives, etc.-art. 17, par. 2, of Law No. 41 of 2005), also in association with each other, if they consistently and continuously integrate agricultural services with no reference to the connection relationship.
Umbria		Social enterprises, in connection with agricultural activities



Findings and Discussion

Measures to economically support SF activities

Marche
and Emilia
Romagna

Merely financial contributions.

Marche

Pilot experiences: *Agrinido, Ortincontro, Longevità attiva, Inclusione sociale*

Tuscany
and
Umbria

Possibility of granting part of **regional heritage** to the social farms.

Measures to facilitate the knowledge and marketing of agri-food products from social farms (public canteens, promotion in AFNs or the creation of dedicated platforms)



Findings and Discussion

2. Social cooperatives and social farming local practices

Table 1 -Characteristics of the organisations and their representatives

	Social Cooperatives		
	<i>Alpha</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>Gamma</i>
<i>Cooperative</i>			
<i>Farm size (ha of UAA)</i>	10 ha	8 ha	5 ha
<i>Year of commencement of the business</i>	2012	2008	2015
<i>Turnover (€)</i>	>100,000 €	50,000-100,000 €	>100,000 €
<i>Production systems</i>	Arable crops	Fruit growing Horticulture Breeding	Arable crops Horticulture Olive growing
<i>Services offered</i>	Retail trade services	Training internships Work inclusion	Job placement Social inclusion
<i>Model of production</i>	Organic	Organic (not certified)	Organic
<i>Number of employed</i>	20	3-5	8-11
<i>President of the Cooperative</i>			
<i>Year of birth</i>	1970	1959	1960
<i>Working time in the cooperative</i>	Full time	Full time	Part time
<i>Qualification</i>	High school diploma	Graduate	Graduate
<i>Possession of the requisites Law No. 141/2015</i>			NO



Findings and Discussion

Table 2 - SF practices

	Social Cooperatives		
	<i>Alpha</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>Gamma</i>
<i>Specific project(s)</i>	'Emporium' project.	Work placement, educational activities, active longevity.	Work placement, environmental education, therapeutic activities with vegetable garden.
<i>Main activities</i>	Production and retail.	Educational farm, apiculture.	Production and retail, environmental education.
<i>Beneficiaries</i>	Psychic disabled.	Psychic disabled, children, aged people.	Disabled people, prisoners, minors and adults with addiction problems.
<i>Project duration</i>	Ongoing since 2010.	Ongoing since 2008.	Ongoing since 2015.
<i>Strengths of SF projects</i>	Establishment of a network between social cooperatives and farmers that allows better interaction with public bodies.	Increase of social collaboration between public and private. More attention to disabled people.	Growing interest in social farming by public social services. Increased consumer sensitivity towards the quality of agri-food products. Development of the rural areas.
<i>Weaknesses of SF projects</i>	'Long times for the Region to understand the importance of our activity'. 'There are still few regional public funding for the social sector'.	'There is still too much distance (and diversity) between the social world and the agriculture'.	'The support for the growth of farms is still insufficient'. 'Difficulty of collaboration between farms and social cooperatives'.
<i>Public funding</i>	Regional subsidy (R.L. No. 5/2003).	EU, national and regional subsidies.	Main economic support from private foundations.
<i>Suggestions to develop the SF</i>	Sensitise citizens on the use of organic products. Expand the educational projects on social agriculture.	Facilitating collaboration between social cooperatives, farmers and public bodies to foster integration between agriculture and the social world, especially in inland areas.	The Marche region should believe more in job placement projects as well as invest in <i>agrinido</i> projects and active longevity.



Conclusion

- ⌘ The comparative analysis of SF policy frameworks in the Marche case study **confirms the heterogeneous regional policy context as well as in local practices**, highlighting the gap between formal institutional policy frameworks and local practices.
- ⌘ One of the most challenging aspects of SF: **overcoming the barriers** between policy areas in a complex multilevel governance system.
- ⌘ As highlighted by the SF cooperative case studies, several social cooperatives have proposed **sustainable experiences in social, environmental and economic terms**, able to respond to the needs of local communities (in particular in marginal area) which, however, **would need adequate support by regional policies**, in line with the approach taken at the European level.
- ⌘ The mismatch between national and regional policies as well as between regional policies and local practices has outlined a **controversial scenario** characterised by fragmented SF institutional frameworks and local practices, with the **risk of narrowing the innovative potentiality of social agriculture**.

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