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## **SUMMARY REPORT OF SOCIAL FARMING**

The SoEngage project partners produced a National Report on the status of Social Farming in each of their six regions: Germany, Ireland, Poland, Romania, Spain, and the UK. Social Farming, where agriculture is used as a beneficial activity for people with support needs, has been in existence for many years. However, the number of Social Farms, the type of farm, the farmers' involvement and the activities offered on the farm varies widely between the partners.

### **Social Farming Practice & Policy**

Partners report that there is no specific national policy on Social Farming in their regions. The responsibility for initiating and delivering Social Farming falls within a number of policy areas across multiple Government departments such as agriculture, rural development, health and social care, education and employment. Funding to support Social Farming comes through a range of national and EU funding programmes.

Social Farming also involves a variety of stakeholders including farmers, farmers' organisations, service users, providers of social and health care services and local, regional, and national authorities.

**Hof und Leben GmbH, Germany** outlined the difficulties facing the integration of Social Farming policy and practice because of how Germany is governed. Germany has a central government with states and municipalities with different tasks and responsibilities. This means that Social Farming in each of these regions can face different rules and regulations. In spite of this there are examples of where farms work together collaboratively to offer a Social Farm model.

**DEFOIN, Spain** identify the key actors engaged in delivering Social Farming as public administrations, local organizations, associations, schools, and local businesses. Most activities offered on farms are carried out by these bodies not the farmer. Agriculture is the responsibility of regional Governments and the national Government must agree delivery with regional Governments which results in a lack of legal framework for health and social care or a common approach to Social Farming.

**ARID, Poland** recognise that rural areas have enormous potential to use Social Farms to offer support to youth, elderly and individuals with disabilities but currently those interested lack expertise and investment. A Regional Operational Programme with Regional Advisory Centres responsible for an initiative to provide a form of social services in rural areas to support dependent people live together in small groups with support from qualified carers. Public institutions in partnership with Local Action Groups set up Social Farms known as Welfare Farms or Green farms.





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**CPIP, Romania** states that although the phrase Social Farming is not known, there are organisations which carry out activities closely related to Social Farming under the form of different practices connected to care, rehabilitation, social reintegration and training of disadvantaged people. The aim is to contribute to their well-being, to facilitate learning, to improve health and social inclusion, to re-establish contact with the natural environment and productive activity.

Only two project partners, **Social Farming Ireland**, and **Rural Support, Northern Ireland, UK** are directly responsible for progressing and developing Social Farming in their regions. Both the UK and Ireland have established a structure for the development of Social Farming with the central focus on farmers delivering a service for the needs of individual users. Rural Support view Social Farming as an innovative use of agriculture to promote therapy, rehabilitation, social inclusion, education and social services in rural areas. Both **Social Farming Ireland**, and **Rural Support, Northern Ireland, UK** are responsible for recruiting farmers to deliver Social Farming, delivering training and collaborating with health, social care, and other services to support participants engaging in Social Farming.

### **Social Farming Participants and Activities**

Social Farming participants include people from a range of support need sectors including those with an intellectual or learning disability, prisoners, ex-offenders, youth, children, elderly and mental ill health who spend time on the farm taking part in activities on the farm. The farm may receive payment for providing these activities. Amongst the most common activities are caring for animals, growing and harvesting produce, carrying out maintenance on buildings and equipment, forestry, cooking, creating local crafts, learning about the flora and fauna of the farm. In most regions participants come to the Social Farm for short periods of time as individuals or in small groups.

### **Conclusion**

Most partners reported similar findings that Social Farming is struggling to grow. It is a niche area with limited awareness of what exactly Social Farming involves, is not regulated or standardised and lacks funding or financial support to help it grow.

However, there is an increasing interest in developing the concept of Social Farming in each region because of the positive impact the service has on participants. Benefits include working in a natural environment, carrying out activities which provide new skills, enabling participants to develop a sense of purpose and confidence and feel part of a community.

This interest in Social Farming is driven by the need to provide farmers with the opportunity to use their agricultural expertise to support disadvantaged people which provides other income generating services for the sustainability of the farm and the rural community.

**For more information please read each Partner's National Reports.**

