



Social Farming for the Elderly

Case Studies



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This report is the result of the ERASMUS+ project

FarmElder: Social Farming for the Elderly

Project no. 2021-1-IE01-KA220-ADU-000033663,
involving the following partners:

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



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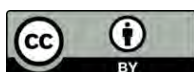
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Case studies from Ireland.....	1
1.1	Camphill Grangemockler.....	1
1.2	Breeda O’Sullivan, Glencar County Kerry.....	6
1.3	Denise McClure, Kenmare, Co. Kerry.....	11
1.4	An Tobar, Silverbridge, Co. Armagh.....	18
2	Case studies from Germany	24
2.1	Hoimahof	24
2.2	SOS Dorfgemeinschaft Hohenroth SOS village community	28
2.3	Grüntal am Postweg Generationsübergreifendes Leben + Arbeiten (Living + working across generations)	33
2.4	Stiftung Pusch – Pflegebauernhof (Assisted living in a farmhouse flat share)	37
2.5	Biohof Steinbock	42
3	Case studies from Portugal	46
3.1	Associação dos Amigos da Pontemieiro	46
3.2	Centro de Educação Ambiental do Município de Vale de Cambra (CEAVC).....	49
4	Case studies from Slovenia	53
4.1	The Slavec Farm We farm not only with our hands and head, but with our soul and heart. 53	
4.2	ŠTORKLJA (STORK) Centre for intergenerational cooperation and social inclusion of elderly in rural areas	59
4.3	SENIOR TOURISM - Mohorko Farm.....	66

INTRODUCTION

FarmElder is a project funded by the Erasmus+programme of the European Union. The project examines the potential of social farming activities for elderly people. This publication combines a collection of case studies gathered by the project partners in Slovenia, Germany, Portugal and Ireland.

As already described in the national reports, the situation of social farming for older people varies greatly in the participating countries. Often social farming is only at the beginning of development. This is also evident in some of the case studies presented, which are still in the planning phase. In contrast, however, there are also case studies with several years of experience.

The case studies also show the diversity of providers, formal frameworks and formats in which social farming for older people is offered.

1 CASE STUDIES FROM IRELAND

1.1 Camphill Grangemockler

Contact details

Camphill Grangemockler
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Abstract

This farm at Grangemockler is one of the Camphill communities. Camphill Communities of Ireland is part of an international movement working with people with intellectual disabilities and other kinds of special needs. In Camphill residents share their home, spiritual and working lives with people who are motivated to see others '*as individuals needing support and recognition for who they are, and not as carer and cared for in the conventional sense*'. Many of the people providing support to those with disabilities are volunteers, coming locally or from abroad, working alongside professional qualified social care staff.

While this Camphill community is not a social farm in the strictest sense, nor does it cater exclusively for elderly people, it does incorporate many aspects of social farming and does have some elderly people among its residents. Being a residential community, it also points to the potential of farms as homely residential settings for elderly people, people with disabilities and other marginalised people.



Photo by Jarrad Ferguson

Profile of the farm or provider

Staff

On the farm there is 1 full-time farm manager, 1 part-time worker and 1 apprentice

In the residential care service there are approximately 30 full-time staff.

History

Camphill Grangemockler is one of 16 Camphill communities in Ireland. Inspired by the anthroposophical movement, a spiritualist movement founded by the esotericist Rudolf Steiner, the Camphill communities were first established in Scotland by refugees from the 2nd world war. Camphill Communities work with people with intellectual and other disabilities. They live in a shared community – mostly on farms and each member of the community contributes whatever they can towards the well-being of others.

There are approximately 200 residents living in Camphill's throughout Ireland, with a further 100 attending day services. The residential communities of Camphill offer people with disabilities a home - a place where their dignity can be supported and their individual needs met. Along with other residents and care workers, Camphill communities attract volunteers who come for extended periods, live in the community and help out with the daily activities of running the care services or community farm.

The Grangemockler Camphill was established in 1991. It was set up by a group of Camphill advocates in collaboration with members of the local community. The farm and buildings were donated to the founders for this purpose. In the early years, the project was predominantly volunteer-led and the community consisted of a mixture of able-bodied people and people with disabilities living side by side. The approach to care has changed significantly in recent years and care services such as Grangemockler and all the other Camphill's, are now regulated by the *Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA)*, meaning that the original system which was much more ad-hoc and fluid is no longer possible. Another factor which has contributed to the change from the original Camphill approach is that it has become more and more difficult to get volunteers.

Situation today

Camphill Grangemockler has 4 residential houses. It also has an 18-hectare mixed enterprise farm where a range of vegetables and crops are grown and animals such as pigs and cattle are raised. A dairy enterprise focused on producing yoghurt is also planned. The farm is managed by Jarrad Ferguson. Jarrad joined Camphill as a volunteer in 2007 and subsequently became a full-time employee at Camphill Grangemockler in 2010.

Some residents help out with the daily tasks on the farm. The farm had been running a social farming initiative where it hosted participants from a local disabilities service prior to the Covid 19 pandemic. However, this has not been re-started as yet.

Why did they engage in social farming – and especially - for elderly people?

Camphill Communities such as Grangemockler would not describe themselves as social farms even though a form of social farming was embedded into their design from the beginning. The original ethos of Camphill communities meant that they were typically established on farms. The Camphill system grew out of the teachings of Rudolf Steiner who advocated a whole systems approach to human development. One of Steiner's major contributions to farming is biodynamic agriculture and this environmentally sensitive approach to food production is incorporated into the community's daily activity. From its inception Camphill Community members who were able to do so actively participated in the farm work.

Service for elderly people

The residents typically have intellectual and/or physical disabilities although some are not diagnosed because our understanding of these issues was much less refined when they made their home in Camphill. There are also residents who suffer from other long-term ailments such as mental illness.

There are four residential houses with approximately four residents per house. The youngest resident is 24 and residents range in age with the oldest being in their sixties. Work on the farm is available for anybody that wants to do it. Not as many work on the farm now as before. The co-working model is no longer as prominent as in the early days. Reasons for this include a reduction in the number of volunteers; a change of emphasis and ethos within the broader Camphill group; and those residents who used to work on the farm before have grown older and are less able to do physical work.

For those who want to, there is a great variety of work available at Grangemockler. The mixed farm system provides tasks such as bringing vegetables to the kitchen for cooking, feeding hens, watering plants, brushing down cows, planting, putting seeds in trays etc. The decision on what tasks are

suitable for a particular resident is mostly determined by the resident themselves. On other occasions, though a task might be recommended by a care plan – e.g if it is determined that a resident needs more exercise, then they might be assigned the job of bringing veg to the kitchen.

One of the points that Jarrad emphasised is that the work the residents do is meaningful, it is not 'busy work'. All the tasks they perform are a necessary part of running the farm. It is really important that this fact is communicated to them and that their work is acknowledged and they receive praise and gratitude for their valuable contribution.



Photo by Jarrad Ferguson

Cooperating or supporting partners of the host

By its nature, Camphill is a collaborative network of farms that all have strong connections. The model is overseen by a central organisation called Camphill Communities of Ireland whose national office is in Naas Co. Kildare. The Camphill community has developed a partnership with the HSE to deliver its services. It receives a capitation grant for each resident and the service delivery is regulated and overseen by the HSE's quality agency HIQA.

Camphill Grangemockler has received significant support from the LEADER Programme administered by South Tipperary Development Company. They have developed relationships with SOS Kilkenny and prior to the pandemic hosted clients from there as social farm participants. Cafe L'Arche in Kilkenny has also been a partner as residents of the Grangemockler community would work there – again prior

to Covid. There is a desire to rebuild these linkages and build new connections now that the pandemic is becoming less prominent, but things are slow to get back on track.

Required training and competencies from the host's perspective and experience

Staff at Grangemockler are required to do a Level 5 certificate in social care. They are also required to do training on managing aggression, medication training and manual handling.

Today's outcomes and current challenges

Strengths	There is a real sense of meaningful work. It is not just occupying people. Good for physical well-being. Working with animals can be a very special experience.
Weaknesses	It is difficult to run the farm, meet care demands and complete farm-related paperwork, care plans etc. This makes it very hard to do justice to the outcomes for participants suggested in the care plans. On paper, the farm can appear to be a financial drain because a lot of the produce is consumed by the residents and therefore does not appear to be giving a financial return. The farm manager's job, while associated with the farm on paper is also very much linked with the social care aspect. This added value of the role is difficult to quantify.
Opportunities	There are opportunities to re-imagine the project as a social enterprise. This might allow for a different structure and allow residents to benefit from shares linked to the business aspects of the project.
Threats	Maintaining a consistent source of funding is an ongoing challenge.

Plans for the future

There are plans to develop a yoghurt enterprise. The milking machine and much of the processing equipment has been installed for this already but the development was delayed by the Covid 19 pandemic.

There are plans to have more day-use social farming participants.

There are plans to increase collaboration between the various Camphills. This would involve identifying the unique offering of each of the Camphills and from this developing tailored day- services for the group as a whole. People with different needs could be placed at the Camphill that most suited their needs.

Quotes from the host

'The goal is to provide meaningful work'

'The service has evolved. It is different now from what was originally envisioned. These changes occurred between 2007 and 2014. The live-in volunteer model became defunct because of regulatory changes and the difficulty of attracting volunteers. This is not necessarily a bad thing – the old way had

run its course. But it did have some fantastic elements. The core ethos of Camphill was living and working together and providing meaningful work for everyone'

1.2 Breeda O'Sullivan, Glencar County Kerry



Breeda O'Sullivan's farm in the Breda Valley is close to Ireland's highest mountain Carrauntoohil (1038m). (Photo by Tadhg Hayes)

Contact details

Breeda O'Sullivan
Shroneaharee East
Glencar, Co. Kerry V93 D2YX, Ireland

Abstract

This farm is part of the Kerry Social Farming (KSF) project, a social inclusion initiative under the umbrella of the South Kerry Development Partnership (SKDP). Breeda O'Sullivan became a host farmer in May 2017, when she was 59 years old and has hosted the same participant continually since then. The participant, also called Breda, attends a day service in Killorglin (24km from Breeda's farm). Since 2020, Breeda has supported Tara, at a host farm at Kilcummin, Killarney (48 km from Breeda's farm).

Profile of the farm or provider

Breeda and her husband Pat own their own farm. It is in a scenic area, popular with walkers, climbers and cyclists, and is close to Carrauntoohil, Ireland's highest mountain. They run a sheep and suckler beef farm. They have 6 adult children, living between Ireland, China, Australia and the UK. This is typical of many families in South Kerry, with adult children educated to the university level, and not returning home once qualified in their chosen career. Breeda also works part-time as a receptionist at SKDP office in Killorglin.

Situation prior to social farming

In 2016, Breeda and Pat were working on the farm. Their youngest son Michael was completing his Leaving Certificate (final secondary school exam). They knew the time was coming when it would just be the two of them on the farm. Breeda heard an item about social farming on their local station, Radio Kerry, and thought it was something she would like to do. She made contact with Joseph McCrohan, SKDP Rural Development Officer.

Situation today

The O' Sullivans host Breda on the farm each Monday and on Tuesdays, Breeda travels to Killarney and collects participant Tara from Kerry Parents and Friends Day Centre. They then travel to Noel Lynch's farm in Kilcummin where Breeda supports Tara.

Why did they engage in social farming – and especially - for elderly people?

Breeda became interested in working with people with disabilities through her work with SKDP. She worked with Amy and Angela, two ladies with intellectual disabilities who each came in one morning per week and did administrative work. She grew very fond of them and felt comfortable working with them. She felt she had more to give in this area. When Breeda heard that radio interview with host farmer George Kelly, social farming seemed to be the perfect fit for her.



Host farmer Breeda (l) and participant Breda at the Women and Agriculture Conference in Europe Hotel, Killarney, in October 2018. (Photo Kerry Social Farming)

Following Breeda's enquiries, SKDP staff came with two potential participants in November 2016. They identified farm safety improvements to be carried out before social farming could begin and Breeda and Pat were happy to do them.

Service for elderly people

KSF currently engages with people in Kerry with physical and/or intellectual disabilities and those engaging with mental health services and facilitates them, through their personal life choices, to engage with the farming community. By way of context, Kerry is the most south-westerly county in Ireland with a population of over 155,000 (Census 2022). In 2016, 16.9% of Kerry's population was over 65, higher than the national figure of 13.4% (Census, 2016).

In setting up KSF in 2013, SKDP's primary target group was people with disabilities, but a secondary target group were local farmers, due to concerns regarding rural isolation. Farmers, especially those who were older, were identified as a group that could contribute through volunteering. *The Rural Vibrancy study in North West Europe study (2015)* found high levels of participation in civil society organisations among older populations, with 28% of people involved in such organisations in South Kerry (a mainly rural area) being over 65 years of age (p. 34). KSF host farmers and participants come from adult age groups with no upper age limit.



Breda receives a warm welcome as she returns to social farming in summer 2020 (photo Kerry Social Farming)

The KSF project is informed and directed by current Irish health policies, principally *New Directions* (2012), which proposes that day services for those with disabilities should take the form of individualised outcome-focused supports, allowing adults to live a life of their choosing following their own wishes, needs and aspirations.

Breda supports Breda with feeding livestock and sheep and looking after lambs in Spring. In the garden, they tend to flower beds and hedges. There is always time for a cup of tea and a chat and a visit to a local amenity such as Molls Gap for coffee and a chat. This social outlet is important for both. Breda gets a great sense of satisfaction from observing how Breda's confidence has developed over the past 5 years.

On Noel's farm, Breda supports Tara with feeding cattle and Noel's cats, putting turf into the fuel shed and other tasks. Breda is pleased that she took on the role of supporting Tara as it adds another dimension to her social farming experience.

Breda hopes to be active for as long as she can. She and Pat value the support which KSF provides and are happy to provide a voluntary service to social farming. Having Breda come to their farm has had a positive effect on family life and her adult children are always pleased to see Breda, when they come home to Glencar.



Tara on the farm in Kilcummin (photo Kerry Social Farming)

Cooperating or supporting partners of the host

A number of support groups are linked with this host farmer.

St John of God Services

St John of God Kerry Services, Killorglin, Co. Kerry. St John of God Kerry Services is Breda's service agency and is part of a nationwide service providing training, employment, social and residential programmes for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. It is a registered charity.

Website: St John of God. <https://www.sjogkerryservices.ie/>

Kerry Parents and Friends Association

Kerry Parents and Friends Association, The Old Monastery and Beech Road, Killarney. Kerry Parents and Friends Association provides day, residential and respite care as well as training, employment, and social and residential programmes for adults with intellectual disabilities. It is a registered charity and has centres throughout County Kerry.

Website: Kerry Parents and Friends <https://www.kpfa.ie/>

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/KerryParentsAndFriends/>

Kerry Social Farming

Evelyn O'Connell is KSF facilitator, a role created in 2016 in the context of an identified need for a liaison person supporting day-to-day farming operations. Since 2017, an administrator has been working with KSF, managing farmer expenses claims and insurance.

Support is provided in terms of farm safety reviews and regular review of support plan for each participant. Evelyn assisted Breda in applying for funding for farm improvements, which may be necessary for farm safety or enhancing participant facilities (for example, a shed was renovated recently so Breda can work safely indoors during inclement weather).



KSF farming network of farmers, participants and families at farm walk during FARCURA National Social Farming Conference in Mike O'Se's farm, Dromid, South Kerry, September 2021. (Photo Kerry Social Farming)

Website www.kerrysocialfarming.ie.

Twitter <https://twitter.com/KerrySocialFarm>

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/KerrySocialFarming/>

Host farmers

KSF host farmers have a support network, meeting at farm walks, to discuss subjects of interest, raise any concerns and for information sessions about projects such as Farm Elder. This network provides an important social outlet for farmers and their families, fostering friendships and leading to greater

social inclusion. Breeda frequently remarks on new friends that she and Pat have made through social farming.

South Kerry Development Partnership CLG (SKDP)

SKDP is the local development company for South Kerry, providing the legal governance and structure within which KSF operates. SKDP manages the budget received from the Department of Agriculture and employs two social farming facilitators and an administrator.

Website <https://www.southkerry.ie/>

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/South-Kerry-Development-Partnership-CLG-218661634926271>

Local Link Kerry

Local Link Kerry is the rural network providing affordable transport. KSF host farmers can register as volunteer drivers as Breeda has done. Registration covers the driver (Garda (police) Vetting & Driver's Licence) and the car (NCT and insurance indemnification). Volunteer drivers receive reimbursement for vouched mileage expenses for transporting social farming participants. This scheme ensures that transport is not a barrier for those wanting to avail of social farming.

Website <https://www.localinkkerry.ie/>

Required training and competencies from the host's perspective and experience

The interest in becoming a host farmer has to come from within, you cannot be told to do it. A farmer has to have an interest in working with people, good communication skills, be patient and co-operative. You also need the commitment to be present to, and responsible for, your participant. You need to be able to explain the tasks, not just going on 'auto-pilot'. This is beneficial as you do things the correct way, not just what's most convenient for you.

Breeda completed the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Training and First Aid Responder course, as well as Manual Handling Training.

In 2019 Breeda enrolled with the inaugural group, studying for UCC *Certificate in Practice Support in Social Farming*. She found returning to education a challenge but very rewarding. Their graduation in 2021, was a wonderful day. Breeda had previously attended graduation ceremonies for her children and now it was her turn.

Today's outcomes and current challenges

Strengths	A great strength is that KSF has a committed group of people involved. There is friendship and support available for host farmers and their families. Breeda has learned new skills, having completed UCC Course. New opportunities – as a support worker to a participant since 2020. Breeda has become part of the O'Sullivan family.
Weaknesses	More public awareness is needed about KSF and how it operates. More host farms are needed so more people can go social farming.

Opportunities	New experiences, such as in 2018 Breeda and Breda worked on KSF stand at the Women and Agriculture Conference at Europe Hotel in Killarney. This was a unique public role for Breda. In the coming months, as in-person events return, they are looking forward to attending events such as National Ploughing Championships in September 2022.
Threats	Lack of consistent funding. Possible reduction of funding to service providers who are partners in KSF. Agencies and Government Departments not providing long-term commitment even though they have evidence of what the KSF project has achieved to date on a tight budget.

Plans for the future

When Breeda retires from her office role in 2024, she hopes to host a second participant on her farm.

Quotes from the host

“They are happy, you are happy. What more could you ask for? ”

“All participants fall in love with their farm, and their place.”

“I find it rewarding. We are doing good for someone.”

“It’s an incentive for me to be out, meeting new people and learning new things every day.”

1.3 Denise McClure, Kenmare, Co. Kerry

Contact details

Denise McClure
24 Taobh Linn
Kenmare, Co. Kerry

Abstract

This case study highlights a collaborative effort between Denise and SKDP in Kenmare in developing a garden which will ultimately be open to the community, both young and old, for young people with disabilities, refugees and asylum seekers, and older residents from Taobh Linn. Research identifies many health-related benefits associated with community gardens in rural areas. Sanchez and Liamputong (2017) categorise such benefits as including ‘physical, nutritional, social and psychological’.

Profile of the farm or provider

Taobh Linn is a purpose-built sheltered housing complex with 38 apartments, a meeting place and a day centre for older people in Kenmare town. It was developed by Clann Housing (Taobh Linn - Clann (clannhousing.ie), a voluntary (non-commercial) housing agency. Homes are leased at affordable rent and there is a manager on site who handles repairs and maintenance. Denise has lived there for 3 years and has been a farmer and grower all her adult life. She is now 68 years old. She is a volunteer driving force in the development of a garden to the rear of the Taobh Linn complex. The work on the garden



Denise relaxing in the outdoor seating area within Taobh Linn. SKDP RSS workers built the shelter to provide a safe, covered outdoor space for residents to meet. (Photo by Kerry Social Farming)

is supported by SKDP as local development company. Taobh Linn is an Irish name which translates to English as 'Beside us', indicating the desire to include older people in the life of the community.

Denise grew up in the United Kingdom but moved to Ireland as a younger woman. She previously lived and farmed near Sneem (26km from Kenmare). However, a change of family circumstances meant that the family farm and house had to be sold. She loved farming in Sneem, the family grew their own fruit and vegetables and kept pigs and chickens. Denise found it difficult to leave and searched for a new home which would have space for a garden. This proved difficult, as Sneem, Kenmare and the surrounding countryside are very popular tourist areas, with many second homes and intense competition when houses come up for sale or lease. Denise is also an experienced fisherwoman, fishing locally for trout and salmon.

Situation prior to social farming

The area being developed was previously an unused piece of land owned by Kerry Education and Training Board at the rear of Taobh Linn and close to the local primary school.

SKDP saw the potential to develop a garden there and reached an arrangement with the local school for the use of the land. Local SKDP supervisor Donal McCarthy sourced a polytunnel for the site, with the intention that it be used, initially by RSS workers, for growing fruit and vegetables (see below for an explanation of the RSS Scheme) to supply the kitchen at Taobh Linn. Denise approached Donal and asked if she could use part of the polytunnel and land around it and this was agreed upon.

Situation today

There is one polytunnel and a large garden area around it, which is set out in various plots and raised beds and is currently being used to grow a variety of vegetables and fruit. Denise uses part of the polytunnel and outside area, Patrick and Rachel, RSS workers, use the remainder of the polytunnel and some outside space also.

Denise supplies fruit and vegetables to those residents of Taobh Linn who cook meals for themselves. They tell her what they're planning for meals and she will pick the necessary fruit and vegetables and drop them over to their apartments. She grows lettuce, tomatoes, carrots, parsnips, onions, cucumbers, peppers, and lemons to name a few. She also grows sunflowers, sweet peas and roses. Her trellis of sweet peas is spectacular (see photo) with a lovely aroma.



Polytunnel and garden area showing a variety of produce, including the sweet pea flowers. (Photo by Kerry Social Farming)

Fourteen further raised beds are currently being developed for community use, with the intention that members of Kenmare Children's Special Needs group will have access to gardening as part of their activities (see below for more information on this group).

In the longer term, as part of SKDP SICAP work, the garden will be opened up to asylum seekers who live in the nearby Atlantic Lodge hostel and refugees from Ukraine and other countries, who are living in the Kenmare area. SICAP is the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme, operated under the Department of Rural and Community Development and is the main funding source for community development projects in Ireland at present. (See gov.ie - Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) (www.gov.ie).

Why did they engage in social farming – and especially - for elderly people?

Denise saw the land and polytunnel outside her apartment window as an opportunity. The site was within walking distance and an ideal for her, as she has an upstairs apartment with no garden space. She did not view being an older person as an obstacle as she has been active all her life. In addition to farming, she worked as a carer at the local Kenmare Community Hospital and in the community. This gave her an insight into what life was like for older people and how their lives could potentially become restricted due to illness or mobility.

Service for elderly people

The initial target group were workers who were employed part-time on RSS scheme. RSS workers are engaged with a variety of community groups and can work up to the age of 66, which is the retirement age in Ireland. The first project was to use the land and polytunnel to grow produce for Taobh Linn kitchen.

The next target group are older people living in Taobh Linn complex. The objective is for interested residents to develop their own raised beds and grow fruit and vegetables for their use. Denise is the first resident to get involved, building on her previous knowledge and experience. Her passion and example are now inspiring other residents to become active gardeners or to at least learn more about gardening.

The next group will be younger children with additional needs through the Kenmare Special Needs Group (see below for information on this group). The raised beds and gardens being developed will be a safe space for them to learn about growing plants and vegetables.

Cooperating or supporting partners of the host

South Kerry Development Partnership CLG (SKDP), Henry St, Kenmare, Co. Kerry.

SKDP operates Rural Social Scheme (RSS) which allows low-income farmers and fishermen to do part-time paid work on community projects. This work is a resource to local communities in helping maintain and improve their areas. The RSS scheme has operated in Ireland since 2004, under the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP).

RSS workers initially placed the polytunnel on the land and supported Denise when she expressed an interest in developing the area.

Website <https://www.southkerry.ie/>

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/South-Kerry-Development-Partnership-CLG-218661634926271>



Inside the polytunnel, Denise's section in the foreground, with spaces used by RSS workers towards the rear. (Photo by Kerry Social Farming)

Kenmare Special Needs Group

This is a family-led voluntary group which provides a variety of activities for children in the Kenmare area. It is envisaged the group will have use of some of the new raised beds in the garden area and will be part of the other initiatives being developed.

Website <https://www.facebook.com/Kenmare-Special-Needs-Group-303494406332442/>

Required training and competencies from the host's perspective and experience

Denise believes key skills in gardening are patience and a willingness to learn about growing fruit and vegetables. She believes that you must be willing to learn as you go along and be prepared to experiment and make mistakes. If you lose a plant or fruit, you learn from it and do it differently the next time. If an animal eats your produce, remember they have to live too. If animals didn't have something to eat, that would lead to other problems which could upset the balance of nature. You have to work with nature, not commandeer it.

Get the bed right before you plant, and make sure you have the nutrients correct. Denise advocates buying good quality seeds, using natural fertilisers and making sure to protect the bed until the seed is rooted and settled. A little bit of compost but not too much.

Start small, for example, herbs can be grown in a little pot on your windowsill.

Be realistic about what you can do. If she is feeling tired, Denise will take a break on the bench or go back to her apartment and have a cup of tea. There are days when she does not feel like going to the garden and that is fine also. Take a break and be refreshed for the next time.



Denise busy preparing a bouquet of fragrant sweet pea flowers The raised beds which will form part of the larger garden space being developed can be seen to the right behind her. (Photo by Kerry Social Farming)

Older people were advised to stay home during Covid-19 public health restrictions. Many of them are only now coming back into society and may be nervous about taking this step. It's a great community at Taobh Linn as everyone looks out for each other and this will be the case in the garden also, with everyone looking out for each other's produce.

Being outdoors is positive, she does not like to feel confined. If Denise didn't have access to this garden, she would go outdoors with her painting materials, painting the local landscape.

Chairs and tables which can be repaired, repainted and become garden furniture. Old timber window frames can be frames for raised beds. Since Covid-19 restrictions were phased out, Denise has recycled small Perspex and glass partitions from the school, for covering things in the garden and polytunnel. Also, develop compost on-site for use in the garden. Be resourceful. Let the garden rest during the winter and rotate the produce so that the same vegetable is not grown in the same place every year.

Today's outcomes and current challenges

Strengths	<p>A great amenity is available so close to the residents of Taobh Linn, the town and schools.</p> <p>Great community spirit in the area.</p> <p>Kenmare is a welcoming town with lots of amenities, a library, theatre, shops, night classes, coffee shops, galleries and creative spaces.</p>
Weaknesses	<p>More public awareness is needed on gardening and how to do it sustainably. People need to know how simply things can be produced with only a small space, such as herbs in a small pot.</p> <p>The lure of buying cheap fruit and vegetables can be difficult to resist but this is an alternative.</p>

Opportunities	<p>The project offers opportunities for many people to have new experiences.</p> <p>Promotes integration for different communities, older people, children with disabilities, asylum seekers, refugees, local farmers and fishermen.</p> <p>After the restrictions and limitations of COVID-19 in recent years, people will be keen to get outdoors again and become involved in projects like this.</p> <p>Will help with building up confidence among older people.</p>
Threats	<p>Funding.</p> <p>Interest may wane among groups who are currently involved.</p> <p>Difficulties or misunderstandings may arise among those working in the garden.</p> <p>Ill health or injury to any of the key supporters in the project.</p>

Plans for the future

Denise is working with SKDP in developing the raised beds and nature area to create a real community garden which will be open to all, young and older, young people with disabilities, refugees and asylum seekers and others. This will enhance community integration and mutual understanding for a variety of groups. It is hoped to have fruit trees and shrubs planted and keep chickens and ducks also. She is helping a couple who live in Taobh Linn prepare their raised beds and there are four other residents interested in getting involved.

Denise would love to see paths in place so that the garden is truly accessible to all, including those of all ages who may have mobility issues. Also, some shelters are needed so people can go under cover if it rains while they are gardening.



Denise tries to plant one tree every year. Trees give shade when there is heat or rain. She will keep going as long as she can. (Photo by Kerry Social Farming)

Quotes from the host

'If I had to stay in, I'd get cabin fever.'

'Learn as you go along. Experiment, I do a lot of them. If a plant isn't happy in one place, move it around.'

'It's helpful to be connected to your surroundings. Nature is in charge, if it decides to take your cabbage, that's it. Don't get angry with it.'

'Don't be afraid to ask the question. You never know enough about gardening. Every day you'll learn something new.'

1.4 An Tobar, Silverbridge, Co. Armagh

Contact details

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Abstract

An Tobar is a social farm and wellness centre in South Armagh run by the Finnegan family, close to the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The centre offers nature-based activities to a wide variety of age groups including social and therapeutic horticulture, educational classes for children and young people and social farming.

Profile of the farm or provider

The site spreads across the farm, from the buildings and polytunnels to the front, rising and falling over the drumlins, through a wonderland of meadows, forest, trails and hillside. The family keep Dexter cattle, pigs and chickens.

At its highest point, the farm provides panoramic views of the countryside, south as far as Dundalk Bay and across the lush countryside of Armagh and surrounding counties.

The centre is a CIC – Community Interest Company- a company run for community benefit, rather than to benefit private shareholders. It is overseen by a Board of Directors.



Photo by Kerry Social Farming

There is also Libby's tearoom, which opens for events at the centre and Café Amach, a new initiative providing a social outlet for young LGBTQ+ people in the local area.

Staff

There are 6 staff members of whom 4 are involved directly with social farming. They have recently hired an administrator, to help free up more resources for service delivery. One staff member Jackie, who works 2 days per week, lectures in horticulture and also hosts social farming participants on her home farm.

Situation prior to social farming

The farm of 16 hectares (40 acres) was once a beef suckler farm and has been owned by generations of the same family for almost 300 years. The name "An Tobar" is Irish and translates into English as 'the well'. The water from their well, which still exists, was reputed to have healing powers and the Finnegan's grandfather Paddy Muckian was well known and respected as a healer in the locality.

In 1988, part of the farm was developed as a commercial garden centre and plant nursery which operated successfully for many years. It was a very popular and busy garden centre, with customers travelling from surrounding areas to buy plants, trees and shrubs.

About five years ago the family decided they wanted to change from the demanding retail sector. They were keen to use facilities which were already on site, as considerable time and money had been invested in them over the years. They became aware of social farming and contacted **Rural Support**, which oversees social farming in Northern Ireland (see below for more information). In January 2018, they visited a social farm in Co. Derry and the visit confirmed their view that social farming was something they could pursue.



The site of the well from which the centre derives its name. (Photo by Kerry Social Farming)

Situation today

Today the social farm and wellness centre is in operation. Each week 11 people attend for social farming over 4 days. At present 2 participants are over 55 years of age and 1 is 70 years. Participants are referred to the farm from the local health trust via **Rural Support** (see below for details). Visitors across all age groups come to An Tobar to see the amenities and visit Brian's Wood. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, a group of older people came from a local care home. This group came weekly, planted and tended flowers and plants, had refreshments in Libby's café and did other activities such as flower arranging. These visits have not resumed since Covid restrictions were eased but Margaret is hopeful that it may come back again. Margaret recalls how beneficial these visits were for the older people and the great social outlet they provided.

Why did they engage in social farming – and especially - for elderly people?

The Finnegans looked for an activity that could happen on their site, making use of existing facilities. Social farming was something which people could do within their local area, rather than having to travel long distances to day centres or hospitals. Social farming developed in a location which was already important to people and which was already providing services to the community.

Service for elderly people

The initial target group was the local community who were familiar with the garden centre. Social farming came about and it was integrated into their plans. The development of the woodland trails, designed by Margaret, opened up a huge range of possibilities and social farming participants have become key people working on those developments.

Activities for social farming participants include:

- Working with the pigs and cattle, feeding them, putting in bedding.
- Cleaning out sheds.
- Feeding hens and collecting eggs.
- Planting out new hedges and trees, maintaining hedges and native woodland.
- Maintaining garden areas, weeding, and mowing grass.
- Planting and caring for vegetables and flowers in the polytunnels, watering, weeding, and potting.
- Putting up and maintaining signage on nature trails, 120 visual signs and 60 audio signs.
- Working with school groups who come to An Tobar, showing them around the farm.
- Planting trees, vegetables, plants themselves but also doing that work with the groups who visit.
- Providing guided tours to groups who visit the centre.

Cooperating or supporting partners of the host

Rural Support - Advice and Rural Support Northern Ireland

This agency supports to farmers in Northern Ireland, both in terms of farm businesses and also health and wellbeing. Its headquarters are in Cookstown, Co. Tyrone. Rural Support manages social farming with funding from Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). Aoibheann Walsh is social farming service co-ordinator and has worked with An Tobar in developing their social farm.

Website [Rural Support - Advice and Rural Support Northern Ireland](#)

Southern Trust, Local health Trust

An Tobar is commissioned by the Trust to provide social farming. When a person is referred as being interested in social farming, Rural Support liaises between An Tobar and the Trust. The potential participant and key support worker visit to see the facilities and activities on offer. Great care is taken to ensure that participant and host are suited to each other. If all parties are happy, the arrangements are finalised and social farming begins as soon as practicable.

Website <https://southerntrust.hscni.net/>

Newry and Mourne Co-Operative & Enterprise Board, WIN Business Park, Newry, BT35 6PH.

Stephen McClelland worked and supported An Tobar as they began their move away from the commercial retailing sector to become a CIC.

Required training and competencies from the host's perspective and experience

Margaret identifies patience as a key skill. It can take time to make progress. As the family came from a background in the private retail sector, they are familiar with taking risks, and if something didn't work out, there is no safety net, unlike in the public (state) sector.

Another skill is initiative, you have to see the potential in your own place and take the opportunities that come to you. Margaret is keen to engage with children as they are most eager to learn about nature and the environment. Older people are catching but the environment was not on the agenda when they were growing up.

Also, you have to be sustainable and use and reuse what you have. They have used polytunnels that were in the garden centre as classrooms for teaching horticulture to 2nd level students. Also, some tunnels have been repurposed for housing pigs and chickens.



One of the outdoor classrooms at An Tobar. (Photo by Kerry Social Farming)

Margaret studied horticulture at university, including therapeutic horticulture, although that did not resonate with her at the time. When she updated her training, she found that the whole sector had evolved. She updated her skills by studying forest bathing practices. Kathleen up skilled also, from a background in law, she qualified in social enterprise to help with setting up as a CIC. Also, Kathleen trained in mindfulness and forest school. They focused their training on what would be on offer in the centre.

Today's outcomes and current challenges

Strengths	<p>Established location, well-known business.</p> <p>Strong links with Rural Support agency.</p> <p>Committed personnel with an interest in working in this area.</p> <p>Upskilling completed in business, social enterprise training and in training in mindfulness, forest school. Training completed for what the centre offers.</p> <p>Existing facilities are in place so not a green field site. Poly tunnels, growing areas, and woodland are already there with potential for more development.</p> <p>Seeing people work in their own communities, family provides positive role models.</p> <p>Attachment to the farm, other centres may not use all their facilities, we use them all tunnels in use etc.</p> <p>See the benefits people get from working in the centre, health improvement, friendship, fun and a sense of belonging.</p>
Weaknesses	<p>The time necessary for funding applications has been taking away from time for service delivery, especially for Kathleen.</p> <p>Trying to find the balance between both necessary roles is a constant issue.</p>
Opportunities	<p>The recent recruitment of an administrator will free up more time for Kathleen.</p> <p>Cafe Amach is being overseen by Hannah Agnew, Kathleen's daughter, which will bring new impetus to the centre. It has prompted the redecoration of cafe space.</p> <p>New visitor centre under construction, will provide space for more community events, seasonal events (Christmas time) book launches, classes and events they can outsource.</p> <p>Groups visit Brian's Wood - open Tuesday-Friday 10 am to 3 pm.</p> <p>Potential to expand the market for people to visit and do tours, for example, corporate groups. Rural Support visited recently such a visit.</p> <p>Good contact network that can help them access what they may need to grow business.</p> <p>UTV series 'Rare Breeds' has been filming with them during 2022 and are due to return before year-end. An Tobar will be featured as part of this TV series in January 2023.</p> <p>Learn from other social farms, we can't all be the same but we all have something to offer.</p>
Threats	<p>Might take on a project which does not benefit the core work of the centre.</p> <p>At present, if both don't agree on a project, they don't proceed with it.</p> <p>Take on courses for the sake of it, merely ticking boxes for other agencies/services.</p> <p>Funding- social farming brings in funds but has to continue with its own income streams.</p> <p>Keep on top of funding applications also.</p> <p>There is a risk the operation may become too big and the centre becomes impersonal.</p>

Plans for the future



A view across the Co. Armagh countryside from the highest point of the farm. (Photo by Kerry Social Farming)

The family hope to continue developing An Tobar and making it a centre for activity all year round. Brian's Wood is a 16-acre native Irish woodland which is recently planted. Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland and his wife Sabina, planted the first tree here in March 2019. The nature trails designed by Margaret offer a wonderland of learning about botany, biology, nature and geography. There are four themed poetry trails, highlighting land and place, Gaelic Poets and heritage. They have outdoor classrooms right at the heart of the farm and a fairy trail for children. The centre aims to educate people of all ages about nature and the environment but also to be a space where people can learn about local culture and heritage. An Tobar is within the Ring of Gullion Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (see <https://www.ringofgullion.org/>).

The visitors centre will be another asset. Its development will provide new outlets for social farming participants at An Tobar, just as they have been a key part of the development of the woodland trails and tours.



Margaret Finnegan at the rear of the new visitors centre which is being built at An Tobar. (Photo by Kerry Social Farming)

Quotes from the host

'People can be in their own community.'

'We can take heart from other farms.'

'We did the training for what the centre would be.'

'You can't be everything to everybody, remember what your core is about.'

2 CASE STUDIES FROM GERMANY

2.1 Hoimahof

Contact details

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Abstract

The Hoimahof in Bavaria is a family farm. Since 2020, afternoon events for older people suffering from dementia and their relatives have been held on the farm several times a month. As a cooperation partner, the Alzheimer Gesellschaft Lechrain e.V. provides professional and administrative support for the events.

Profile of the farm or provider

The farm is located in Schöffau in the municipality of Uffing am Staffelsee. The village is located in the foothills of the Bavarian Alps, not far from the highest mountain in Germany, the Zugspitze.

The farm includes 56 hectares of grassland and 38 hectares of forest, which are farmed full-time by Josef Hindelang, his family and an apprentice. The farm has 50 dairy cows plus offspring and breeding animals (equal numbers of Fleckvieh and Braunvieh). Besides the dairy cows, there is a small flock of sheep, cats and a dog.

Staff

Anni Hindelang has been a certified master of home economics since 2015 and came to the farm by marriage. As part of the services for older people, she and her husband have made their farm available. In addition, Anni Hindelang shows the elderly people around the farm to inform them of all of the activities taking place and give them the latest news about farming. She also provides them with coffee and cakes.



History and situation today

As part of her training as a master of home economics, Anni Hindelang developed the offer "Miteinand am Hoimahof" (Together on the Hoimahof) in 2015, which initially consisted of programmes for school excursions to the farm. After the initial entry into social farming an offering for people suffering from dementia and their relatives was added, which was developed together with the regional Alzheimer Society Lechrain e.V.

The operational situation has not changed much as a result, since the farm continues to be run on a full-time basis and is not financially dependent on the social farming branch of the business. The diversification through social farming enables a "nice additional income" for the agricultural business at Hoimahof.



The farmhouse (Photo by Doris Kettner).

Why did they engage in social farming – and especially - for elderly people?

The commitment specifically to older people has several reasons. The first trigger was the personal experience with both grandmothers of the Hindelang family, which led to wanting to change something in their treatment of older people. Another reason is the issue of inclusion in the labour market. The youngest daughter of the family has a slight disability. Anni Hindelang and her husband want to give their daughter a professional perspective in caring for older people and have included her in the project from the beginning. Finally, the third reason is society's increasing need and interest in social farming. With the ageing boomer generation, the number of people with dementia will also increase. At the same time, it will become more difficult to get enough caregivers in conventional care. Social farming could create an alternative offer. Anni Hindelang sees great potential for rural regions in the (re)use of farms and their old buildings.

Service for elderly people

The services offered at Hoimahof are aimed at older people suffering from dementia. They usually live with their families and are cared for by their relatives. Hoimahof has been offering farm visits for older people suffering from dementia and their relatives since 2020. The farm visits were initially monthly and now take place twice a month. They begin with an extensive tour of the stables and the rest of the farm, where everyday farming life can be experienced. Afterwards, there is coffee and cake and the opportunity for individual chats. The event lasts about two hours. The organiser is the Alzheimer Society Lechrain e.V., which also bears the costs for all visitors. Two employees of the Alzheimer Society are always present and provide professional support. They are also available during the stay to talk to the relatives and find out how the families are doing and what changes have taken place.



Photos by Doris Kettner and Sigrun Göhly (2).

The visitors, most of whom come from the area, often have a connection to agriculture, even if they themselves do not have a farming background but "only" come from villages. The visit to the farm, therefore, ties in with something familiar for them. The current average age of the visitors is in the early to mid-70s. There is no age limit to participate, however, dementia and its progression may mean that participants can no longer take part. The offer also applies to relatives of deceased persons with dementia, who feel "safe" and "understood" in this setting. It is also suitable for married couples where one partner has dementia and who are no longer comfortable going out in public. They also gladly accept the offer.

Cooperating or supporting partners of the host

The most important partner of Hoimahof in the planning and implementation of services for



Alzheimer Gesellschaft Lechrain e.V.
Selbsthilfe Demenz

older people is the Alzheimer Gesellschaft Lechrain e.V. Its chairperson, Doris Kettner, together with a colleague, is the initiator of the programme at Hoimahof. The Alzheimer Society also acts as its organiser, organises the groups of participants and takes care of administrative and insurance matters. Doris Kettner and her colleague are also present at the events and, with their professional qualifications in the health and social sector, ensure that the participants are cared for in a professionally correct manner.

Anni Hindelang receives financial support from the Antonie Zauner Foundation. The purpose of the foundation is to promote education and upbringing, art and culture, youth and assistance for the elderly and to support people in need.

Required training and competencies from the host's perspective and experience

Since social farming takes place on an active farm, Anni Hindelang believes that people should first have the appropriate agricultural qualifications so "that you know what you are talking about with the people. You don't think they need to be told nonsense." Other skills can vary greatly from person to person. That's why she recommends "always working out your own strengths first, and asking where are my strengths? Then getting cooperation partners on board."

Professional qualifications in the health and social sector, such as those of the Alzheimer's Society staff, are another important prerequisite. "And you really shouldn't do it without, because as naturally and calmly as it runs one moment, it can now, I don't know, be something different every minute. You should not underestimate that" (Doris Kettner, Alzheimer Gesellschaft Lechrain e.V.).



Photo by Monika Nebel.

Today's outcomes and current challenges

At the moment, the challenges are particularly in building in the outer area in order to be able to expand social farming on the farm.

The demand for the offer is high. However, the participants come in private cars and sometimes have to travel long distances from all over the county. The Alzheimer Society Lechrain is therefore endeavouring to extend the offer to other farms.

Plans for the future

Full-time farming will remain in operation. The branch of social farming is to be carefully expanded together with the next generation. The eldest daughter will one day take over the dairy farm and can very well imagine doing further training in animal-assisted education.

A common goal of Hoimahof, the Alzheimer Society and the Zauner Foundation is the creation of pilot projects that will make it possible for older people to live on farms. In particular, housing communities for people with dementia are to be established; this could create another diversification opportunity for farmers.

General ideas on social farming and tips for those interested in implementing social farming for elderly people

Anni Hindelang describes the movement as "growing and rising". She also sees a lot of potential for the movement in the countryside as well as in the city and is pleased that the topic is becoming more and more known and important.

Doris Kettner is sure that the movement is only at the beginning and that there will be more projects and initiatives of this kind in the future. From her point of view as a generation manager, she would find it interesting to let intergenerational projects develop on farms. This would promote understanding for each other in society. One of her ideas for the future would also be to incorporate more culture from the respective regions into the social farming projects on the farms.

Initiators should not implement a project like this on their own, but should get an overview of who can support the offer in the long run and then actively approach these persons or organisations (family, various institutions, sheltered workshops, old people's homes, etc.).



Photo by Doris Kettner.

Quotes from the host

"We just went to see what it looked like and how it was going. And now it's picking up speed, the demand is there, people are so grateful. The willingness is there to come and set out for such a project." (Anni Hindelang)

2.2 SOS Dorfgemeinschaft Hohenroth SOS village community

Contact details

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Abstract

In the SOS village community of Hohenroth in Lower Franconia (Bavaria), people with cognitive impairments live and work. For the older of them, a new "Centre" was built in 2021. This residential house enables them to remain in their familiar surroundings even in old age, to be active in agriculture according to their abilities and to participate in the life of the village community.

Profile of the farm or provider

The village community of Hohenroth is located in Lower Franconia near the town of Gemünden am Main. It is run by SOS-Kinderdorf e.V. (SOS Children's Villages), an aid organisation that operates worldwide and provides youth welfare services throughout Germany. It offers various socio-educational services for disadvantaged young people and their families. Hohenroth is a place to live, it is home. Living together, working together, and creating cultural things together - these are the three essential elements of the SOS village community. Today, 162 adults with cognitive impairment live

together in house communities in Hohenroth. In addition, 180 full-time and part-time employees work there intending to accompany the residents to a fulfilled and self-determined life. The residents are given a firm footing in the group by living in house communities. This familial form of living is accompanied by house parents, whereby the residents receive support and stimulation in everyday life, but also their independence is promoted. The residents are individually involved in planning their lives.

Staff

Alexander Seith is the divisional head of work in the SOS village community of Hohenroth and is responsible for the various areas of work, which also include agriculture. Originally, he is an ecotrophologist. He took part in the further training "Growing older together in the village community", which is offered by the SOS Children's Village e.V. for the staff.



Photo by Bethel Fath.

History and situation today

In 1978, the SOS village community of Hohenroth was founded on the former Hohenroth farm estate. Even then, agriculture was a central part of the community. In the meantime, 70 ha of grassland, 30 ha of forest and 20 ha of arable land are managed according to organic farming methods. In Hohenroth, 40 sheep, 25 dairy cows plus 15 heifers, 3 horses and 2 donkeys are kept. In addition to the agricultural work, there are other handicraft areas in which the residents are active. These include a market garden, a dairy and a bakery. All activities focus on building and maintaining skills and experiencing self-efficacy. Currently, the youngest resident is 19 years old and the oldest is 76 years old. Thus, the SOS village community offers the residents a wide range of activities in every phase of life.

Where possible, all products are processed and marketed by the farm itself. Alexander Seith emphasises that independence in marketing to food retailers is important to him. Therefore, wheat for the bakery, fodder cereals, clover and plants for green manure are cultivated on the farmland. The milk is processed into fresh milk, yoghurt and fresh cheese in the village's own dairy.

The village community of Hohenroth, with its labour-intensive agriculture, was originally geared towards young people. They were dynamic and could do a lot. In the meantime, many of these assisted people, some of whom have been working on the farm for more than 30 years, have grown old. In this context, the work on the farm has been adapted more and more to make the work easier. This was one of the reasons why the farm was downsized 8 years ago and a barn with 25 milk-producing cows was closed because it was realised that the assisted persons could no longer manage this labour-intensive task of having two barns.



Photo by Bethel Fath.

Why did they engage in social farming – and especially - for elderly people?

Until a few years ago, it was common for elderly people with increased care needs to move in with their relatives or into a retirement home. About ten years ago, the residents and their families expressed the wish to remain in the village community for the rest of their lives. "Based on this seed that was planted at that time, SOS Children's Village then decided to actually create a facility, a separate building for people with increased care needs." (Alexander Seith)

The motivation behind this offer was to give the residents and their families a perspective on growing old in Hohenroth. Most of the residents have lived in the village community for over 20 years. As a result, the number of people with an increased need for assistance will increase in the near future. The housing form of the house communities could not meet this need, as it was not accessible without barriers and there was not enough care staff available.

Service for elderly people

The SOS Village Community has set itself the goal of guaranteeing the ageing residents a place to live in their familiar surroundings until the end of their lives, but also employment in the work areas while maintaining abilities and skills and accompanying them in a dignified manner.

At a central location within the village community, a centre for people with an increased need for assistance was therefore opened in June 2021. 24 people can live in this new "Centre". The living situation is adapted to the needs of the elderly, as the rooms are barrier-free, wheelchair accessible and equipped with their own bathroom. Nevertheless, it was important during the implementation

that the living form does not take on the character of a care home and that the residents can continue to participate in public life in the village community. The care ratio is higher compared to the house communities. A multi-professional team consisting of special needs nurses, educators, nurses and geriatric nurses takes care of the age-specific needs of the residents. In addition, there is a night service, since dementia that develops in old age results in a loss of the day-night rhythm.



Photo by Bethel Fath.

For the residents of the Centre, there is still a day-structuring offer in the work areas, where they can participate according to their wishes and abilities. The offer is individually adapted to the needs. In farming, this can be taking care of the animals, for example, guiding them to pasture, or minor assistance activities that are, however, important in the area. Other possibilities are mainly in the processing of the products, such as cleaning fruits or grinding and packaging.

Cooperating or supporting partners of the host

A large organisation like SOS Children's Villages, which operates nationwide and even internationally, is already like a cooperation partner in itself. Thus, the association can offer customised internal further training for its employees, provide assistance in the acquisition of funding and the like. But what is also important is the possibility of exchanging experiences with similarly oriented partner institutions of the association in other regions: "How do you do it? Are we doing it right? They also contact us and say: 'Here we have a topic. We would like to build a new stable where older people can also work, or you have opened a centre for elderly people, how did you do that?' " (Alexander Seith).

In addition, depending on the issues, they work together with state administrative bodies, associations and federations. In the case of agricultural issues, this tends to be an association of farmers, while in the case of social issues it is the health insurance funds, the Paritätische Wohlfahrtsverband (welfare association) or the local and regional authorities.

Required training and competencies from the host's perspective and experience

For Alexander Seith, first of all, a solid technical education in agriculture is a basic requirement for this kind of work. These basic requirements also include personal attributes and skills in dealing with people, such as empathy. Through further training, socio-educational competences and skills should then be gradually acquired that are geared to the respective field of work and the corresponding target group. Alexander Seith: "Actually, I have training in working with older people. The training was offered by SOS. Staff from the work areas as well as house parents took part. This training is also offered to other staff members on a regular basis."

For dealing with critical situations, Alexander Seith considers it useful to exchange ideas within the framework of supervision, where certain situations can be discussed with people who are not directly involved.

Today's outcomes and current challenges

The construction of the new "Centre" was linked to the expectation of creating age-appropriate living space for the residents. This could be realised. In addition, this greatly relieved the burden on the house communities, as these are not designed for a high level of care and nursing. For Alexander Seith, it was additionally important to be able to continue to provide good individual care, i.e. to meet the demands of his own work, with the goal that the residents "can have a good fulfilled life into old age". In his view, this has been achieved so far.

Plans for the future

Farming is to be modernised to improve or simplify the comfort and quality of work for the elderly residents, for example through an automated milking parlour.

General ideas on social farming and tips for those interested in implementing social services for elderly people on a farm

For Alexander Seith, the issue of social farming with elderly people will become more and more important. However, he warns against seeing social farming as a "panacea" for farms that are in financial difficulties and hope to financially rehabilitate their businesses. Those interested in implementing an offer for elderly people on a farm should assess their own project with a neutral and realistic view and not build a project purely out of monetary concerns.

He also advises looking at different facilities and projects and critically questioning them. Interested people should look at several already existing institutions and talk to the people. Not only with those who organise and run social farming, but with all those who are there, live there or work there. "They should also critically question everything they see: what are the problems here, what happened to you in the initial phase, what would you do differently? I think that's really the most important thing: to talk to the people who are already doing it."

Quotes from the host

"There are always solutions to every challenge. Looking for and finding these solutions is our job."

2.3 Grüntal am Postweg

Generationsübergreifendes Leben + Arbeiten

(Living + working across generations)

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Abstract

A project planned north-east of Berlin in a former pig farm. The intention is to create offers for several generations, from kindergartens to hospices. Farming will be a connecting element in a variety of ways. The initiators themselves do not have a farming background.

Profile of the farm or provider

The project "Living + Working Across Generations" is currently being built about 40 km northeast of Berlin in the county Barnim on the site of a former pig fattening facility in the village of Grüntal. The 10 ha site includes agricultural land (3.5 ha), forest and fallow land (3.5 ha) as well as stables and farm buildings.

Staff

The two initiators of the project have no direct farming background. Angela Gabriel is the initiator of the social and care sector. She is a registered health and nursing professional as well as a specialist for out-of-hospital intensive and palliative care, a grief counsellor and is also currently studying social work management.

Christian Parzich is an architect and entrepreneur. He is the initiator of the overall project and its financial backer.

In order to acquire agricultural knowledge, both have completed the further education course "Basic Agricultural Knowledge and Social Farming" at the University for Sustainable Development in Eberswalde (HNEE). An agricultural specialist is to be hired later to implement the farming.



Angela Gabriel and Christian Parzich. (Photo by Grüntal am Postweg)

History and situation today

The initial development of the site dates back to the 1950s. During the GDR era, the site was used for pig fattening by an agricultural production cooperative (Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft). At the time of purchase, many buildings were dilapidated. Many contaminated materials (asbestos, mineral wool) and years of rubbish dumping characterised the scenery.

In the project's current initial phase, the site is being cleared of contaminated materials and waste, and dilapidated buildings are being demolished. The liquid manure pits are being sealed or partly reused as rainwater catchment tanks in order to irrigate the green areas and agricultural land.

The planned newly constructed buildings will later be used for residential communities, nursing homes and an inpatient hospice, according to the needs of elderly people. In addition, a daycare centre for senior citizens is to be implemented under one roof with a kindergarten "Kita Blumenwiese". In addition, there will be a doctor's office, administrative buildings, agricultural buildings, commercial halls and a community centre. The latter will offer barrier-free tourism for school classes, families and small groups. After completion of construction work, operations are to start in 2025.



Clearing the site. (Photo by Grüntal am Postweg)

Agriculture is to become a connecting element on the grounds in many ways, from educational and therapeutic offers to self-sufficiency with home-grown produce. Solidarity farming is also planned on the farmland, meaning that the produce will be distributed to the members via harvest boxes. In addition, a farm shop is planned on the property.

Why did they engage in social farming – and especially - for elderly people?

Christian Parzich himself comes from a village and likes the sense of community where “everyone is there for each other as well as the many unwritten community rules. And I grew up with the tenor of community and agriculture.” He, therefore, wanted to invest in the countryside and create a service for elderly people to enjoy for the rest of their lives.

Angela Gabriel also comes from the village. It is therefore important to both of them to integrate natural spaces, agricultural activities and subsequent processing steps into the project and thus bring them closer to the different generations.

They both also want to prove that it is possible to provide individualised care to people with special needs and from different generations according to their needs. In doing so, they want to show that the presence of nature and the sense of community can bring about a reduction in the amount of medication given to the elderly.

Service for elderly people

The goal of intergenerational participation is emphasised. Participation in social farming will be made possible for all target groups who live and work on the site. One idea is to involve the elderly in the

planning of the cultivation. The agricultural products, primarily vegetables, can be processed after a joint harvest. Older people with limited mobility should also have the opportunity to enjoy nature or participate in farming.

"We have the idea that the nursery children, for example, pick up the vegetables and bring them to the daycare for the elderly, or the seniors put the children on the wheeled walker and drive over with them to harvest cucumbers. And then it will be taken to the hospice guests, some of whom can no longer get outside. The nursery, for example, is called Kita Blumenwiese (Flower meadow) because we have a camomile meadow here. The children could, for example, pick flowers and distribute them to the elderly. That way they could come into contact with each other."

"One of my special wishes, for example, was that the patio doors for the hospice should be wide enough so that the care beds can be pushed out easily. The paths should be designed so that the beds can be moved as close as possible to the field or in the middle of the meadow."

Older, bedridden people should also be given a sense of participation, such as through small activities, for example peeling potatoes and cucumbers for the community.

Cooperating or supporting partners of the host

The initiators receive support in the form of advice from various public offices, a start-up consultant and a social bank. Additional ideas come from residents and other people in the municipality.



Applying newly learned agricultural skills. (Photo by Grüntal am Postweg)

Required training and competencies from the host's perspective and experience

In the planned project, as in social farming in general, different professions from the social and green sectors come together. For Angela Gabriel, each of these professions has its own justification and necessity in the farm process. She believes that you cannot turn a social worker into a farmer and vice versa. In the rarest of cases, someone will have completed both qualifications. However, it is all the more important to have an understanding of the work of the other person and, for example, to get to know and understand their profession-specific way of communicating and approaching tasks and

challenges. "When I look at these lone wolf farmers, they can be convinced 100 times over that this is what they want to do. But if they don't want to understand what makes me tick as a social worker, or if I can't cope with the farmer's taciturnity, then it won't work."

For her, it is right to gain an insight into the other professional field in further training, but even more important would be joint further training for farmers and social workers: "I would have liked to see more of this exchange between real farmers in practice and social workers in practice. Because that is also what I was able to get to know here in the project and which then took on an unimaginable, undreamt-of dynamic. This dynamic arises again and again in the meantime because so many ideas come to the table.

Today's outcomes and current challenges

Bringing together the target groups in the project, such as the daycare centre for children and the daycare for seniors under one roof, brings challenges. For the initiators, these lie in the laws and in the acquisition of funding, which is only targeted at the individual target groups. The two have the impression that the legislators do not want people of different ages or with different needs to take advantage of offers together. Other challenges are finding the "right" people who have the motivation to get involved in the project as well as getting to know each other's professional jargon. "When I'm with a lawyer, he talks completely differently than a farmer. A farmer talks completely differently and lives differently than someone from the care sector. And coordinating that is not easy."

Plans for the future

The two initiators can well imagine keeping animals on the grounds, such as chickens, sheep and goats. Angela Gabriel is already looking forward to it: "I think it's excellent that the seniors get up in the morning and collect eggs."



View of the planned site. (Photo by Grüntal am Postweg)

General ideas on social farming and tips for those interested in implementing social services for elderly people on a farm

Providers should align the offer based on the need in the region and find the right people who can support them in setting up.

Newcomers should first think carefully about what they want to achieve with social farming for older people.

The movement towards social farming will continue to grow in importance together with animal-assisted interventions for the care of the ageing population, following the bottom-up principle rather than being initiated by politics.

Quotes from the host

"So people will realise that it's somehow not such a hit to pump the elderly full of sedatives, to have them do 20 minutes of physiotherapy once a week." (Angela Gabriel)

"There is a danger that such projects will be bureaucratised to death." (Christian Parzich)

2.4 Stiftung Pusch – Pflegebauernhof (Assisted living in a farmhouse flat share)

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Abstract

While on the one hand, many farmers are looking for a long-term future for their farm, on the other hand, many elderly people are looking for a place to live that is meaningful, where one can actively participate and have value as a human being, even with increased care needs.

In the shared apartments on the farm of the Pusch family in Marienrachdorf, elderly people live under the motto "Naturally Living on a Farm". The farm has been owned by the Pusch family for 250 years. Guido Pusch has now set up a foundation to spread his idea of a care farm and to support other farms in planning and implementing similar projects. The project received the German Demography Award in 2022.

Profile of the farm or provider

The farm in Marienrachdorf is located halfway between the cities of Cologne and Frankfurt. Farmer Guido Pusch sees himself as the guardian of the future of his own farm, which has already undergone a wide variety of developments since 1771. He wants to "pass the torch, not manage the ashes". In addition, Guido Pusch is a master mechanical engineer and much more: a classic entrepreneur. In 2011, he converted his own farm into a shared farm with assisted living.

Staff

In addition to Guido Pusch, a commercial manager and two project managers are now employed to oversee, among other things, business planning, project management during construction as well as sourcing funding and subsidies. An outpatient care service, which was founded in 2019, is available for the ongoing operation of the care farms. This service specialises in care and nursing on farms, offers its services to all residents of the farms and, if commissioned by the residents, sets up branches at the respective locations.

In addition, the existing farmhouse shared housing is seen as a training centre: The people who move into a farmhouse flat-share are a real treasure trove of life experience. But all of them also bring their own very precise ideas of what they expect from life - and also from the residential community. So the concept of Zukunft Pflegebauernhof (Future Care Farm) was not born out of theory. It is the result of the teaching of many teachers who have already lived in the farm family.



History and situation today

The farm has been owned by the current Pusch family for 250 years. The farm includes cattle, pigs, chickens, cats, geese, bees and alpacas.

In recent years, the farm has been maintained with passion as a sideline, as already Guido Pusch's grandfather could not live from the farm alone and needed another job. In the past, the family did not go along with the extreme changes in agriculture. Today, it still relies on agricultural tradition with a family living community, without factory farming and with less than 30 ha of land. That is why he discovered social farming for himself a few years ago. So that his own grandmother could spend her retirement on the farm, he invested a lot of money and converted a barn and the house. This is how the first farm house flat share came into being in 2011. Two more have been added.

Guido Pusch hopes that farming will once again become a mainstream activity and be valued accordingly. The shared flats in Marienrachdorf are already experiencing this appreciation.

Since its start, more than 1400 people have already visited the care farm, among them many farmers who had the intention of converting their farm to social farming. But few have stuck with it, because the hurdles are big and that deters many.

In September 2022, in addition to his care farm, 12 other farm projects are being planned in 6 federal states. The first care farm, outside Marienrachdorf, will start work around mid-2023.

Why did they engage in social farming – and especially - for elderly people?

The concept was born out of personal experience. With 30 hectares, the farm was too small to survive the movement towards larger more intensive farms. A further intensification of his farm was not conceivable. "When the succession had to be arranged and grandma became ill as well, we were faced with a problem." The search for a solution to this very personal problem gave rise to the commitment to social farming.

Since then, Guido Pusch has experienced a constant demand from interested people who want to come to him from all over. He could only offer a place on his farm to a few. Therefore, he decided to make his experience available to other farms and accompany them in their conversion and farm expansion. For this reason, he first established the Pusch Pflegebauernhof Foundation. In 2021, this idea, which was lived and developed in practice, was given a written constitution and its name: Zukunft Pflegebauernhof.

People should be able to live well (receive housing, care, support and nursing) and also work – an attractive working environment for e.g. nursing and care workers is important too. With the realisation that if you share, you have more, the foundation as the basis of the care farm in Marienrachdorf should grow and also develop and promote other farms.

Small farms in particular have a hard time surviving the grow-or-die pressure of modern agriculture. The conversion or expansion of the farm to an outpatient care farm community can secure the future and lead from a sideline business back to a full-time business.

The target group is the so-called boomer generation, which is now entering retirement age. Instead of growing blinkers alone in their own four walls, this generation is looking for a meaningful environment, new living spaces and new life dreams.

Service for elderly people

Care farms, as the name suggests, enable residents, even those with higher care needs, to stay until the end of their lives.

Today, elderly people live in the flat-sharing communities in Marienrachdorf under the motto "Naturally Living on a Farm". Through the contact of the seniors with the animals and the shared everyday life, communicative skills and the well-being of the residents are strengthened. The seniors receive the assistance they need to cope with everyday life from their own outpatient care service, which is on site 24 hours a day. The care service was founded in 2019 by Guido Pusch and specialises in the care and nursing of people on farms.

A movement towards care and nursing is also possible in other care farms that are emerging throughout Germany. When commissioned by the residents of the residential communities, branches are established at the respective locations.



Cooperating or supporting partners of the host

With the foundation, the initiative "Zukunft Pflegebauernhof" and the care service, Guido Pusch has gradually built a network of important partners through the creation of the farmhouse shared living.

Valuable networks of practitioners and entrepreneurs have grown both internally within the individual farms and in the service and cooperation with other farms. These partners have been involved in the planning and implementation of comparable projects, both in the area of initial investment and construction measures as well as in the ongoing operation (e.g construction, planning, funding, care and nursing).

Since the individual care farm projects are not only in the interest of the individual farms but also - and especially - of the general public, a positive goal and solution-oriented contact and relationship with the local and regional decision-makers is a matter of course.

Required training and competencies from the host's perspective and experience

- Business planning
- Networking, ability to cooperate
- Entrepreneurial hard and soft skills
- Humanity, will, motivation and team leadership

Today's outcomes and current challenges

How can we succeed in supporting and maintaining a small farming landscape? What are the possibilities for turning a part-time farm into a farm that can once again provide a full income?

Guido Pusch has found this out for his own farm. But it is also possible for other farms, although each farm is different and may need to be adapted to local and family circumstances.

Through a suitable and well-thought-out advisory, monitoring and support concept and in cooperation with other partners, even a small farm can again achieve a full income and thus make itself independent of agricultural subsidies and market pressure.

In today's setting in autumn 2022, questions about income and the continued existence of farms are once again increasingly being asked.

In this respect, there are challenges that are growing both on the demand side (residents and also employees for the care service) and in the area of initial investment.



Apart from that, the sector is an absolute future industry in many respects:

- Need for care and housing in connection with demographic change
- Utilisation of vacant farms and securing the future of existing farms
- Social aspects of the community
- New working environment for employees in care professions
- Supporting farms to be able to invest in their property

Plans for the future

- Support for the development of care farms in Germany
- Establishing branches of his care service in Germany.
- Scaling the concept. Also beyond Germany.
- Personal: "growing old healthily in community".

General ideas on social farming and tips for those interested in implementing social farming for elderly people

Early involvement of the necessary and involved authorities and decision-makers.

Apply for possible funding in good time.

Develop a secure financing and liquidity plan.

A care farm means a responsibility towards the people you care for. The entire farm family must stand behind the concept in order to create an atmosphere.

Quotes from the host

"Farm instead of being alone."

"Farm is family."

"Care is craft."

"When people share, everyone has more."

2.5 Biohof Steinbock

Contact details

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Abstract

The Steinbock farm in Thuringia is a family-run dairy farm that has been operated organically since 2000. In addition to pure farming with direct marketing, social farming also plays an important role. On the farm, especially farm-based educational offers are carried out for children and young people, but also for older people. It is special that the offers do not only take place on the farm, but that visits with some of the animals are also made to retirement homes.

Profile of the farm or provider

The Steinbock family's farm is located in the Saale-Orla county. The region is located in the south-east of the federal state of Thuringia in a low mountain range landscape. The farm's land is at an altitude of 550 to 700 metres.

The dairy farm was founded in 1993 and has been managed organically since 2000. For the 200 dairy cows and their offspring, the Steinbock organic farm has 380 ha of farmland (140 ha of arable land and 240 ha of permanent grassland). On the arable land, fodder is grown exclusively for the farm's own animals in order to create as closed a farm cycle as possible.

In addition to marketing milk through a dairy, sausage and meat are marketed directly. They have their own slaughterhouse and meat packages in different sizes can be ordered by the customers.

Biohof Steinbock was selected as one of about 290 organic farms nationwide as a demonstration farm. The nationwide network of demonstration farms for organic farming was established in 2002 on the initiative of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture. The selected farms open their doors and show how wide-ranging organic farming is and how it works in practice.

Staff

Three generations of the Steinbock family currently work on the farm. A total of six people are employed full-time and five part-time on the farm. The farmers' wife Johanna Steinbock is responsible, among other things, for the area of social farming.



History and situation today

Today, social farming also plays an increasingly important role on the dairy farm, especially in the form of farm education.

The main focus is children and young people, kindergartens and schools, families as well as elderly people and nursing homes. Family courses are offered, for example. Once a month, Johanna Steinbock

organises so-called seasonal workshops with children and young people in fixed groups. The children and young people come from all over the district.

All groups start by feeding the animals on the farm before various farm education activities are implemented, depending on the age of the children. For example, potatoes are planted with the younger children in spring, harvested in autumn and then made into delicious potato dishes. In autumn, pumpkins are decorated for Halloween. But with the older children, for example, they also build the pastures for the farm animals.

Johanna Steinbock also takes the farm animals to schools and kindergartens, thus bringing the farm into the institutions and making it a tangible experience.

Why did they engage in social farming – and especially - for elderly people?

Johanna Steinbock is a trained nurse and has worked with people suffering from dementia and mental illness. Because of this professional background, the target group of elderly people is also very close to her heart.

Her motivation is to bring children and young people closer to the farm and to show them where our food comes from. "We also want to teach people what is behind ecological and healthy food production and nutrition and, of course, bring them closer to the craft of farming".

Service for elderly people

Among other things, Johanna Steinbock offers biography work in the retirement homes and nursing homes. She comes to the facilities with her animals and does biography work and basal stimulation on site with the help of the farm animals she brings with her, such as sheep, chickens, rabbits, guinea pigs, dogs or cats. In the process, the seniors really blossom and awaken from their lethargy. Even the bedridden residents can simply stroke the animals, especially the rabbit delights the residents.



Cooperating or supporting partners of the host

An important cooperation partner is the Thüringer Ökoherz e.V., the umbrella organisation and promotional association for organic farming in Thuringia. The Thüringer Ökoherz also includes an advisory centre for social farming, which works practically to integrate impaired people into farms. It sees its task in networking the parties involved (farms, participants and social institutions), providing advice and promoting training and further education in social farming.

Website: <https://bio-thueringen.de/>

Required training and competencies from the host's perspective and experience

- Nursing training is an advantage.
- You should be warm, empathetic, talkative and hands-on.

Today's outcomes and current challenges

Strengths	Animals related to people (cow, rabbit, chickens...)
Weaknesses	Many strangers on the farm
Opportunities	Generational work is encouraged and financially supported.
Threats	Poor bus connection to us As a private farmer often not eligible for subsidies

Plans for the future

- Hold courses and organise meetings of old and young.
- The "young" learn from the "old" and vice versa

Tips for those interested in implementing social farming for the elderly

“Take heart”

“Go forward step by step”

“Everything takes time”

“Set small goals”

“Just get started and set yourself a mini goal. Have courage and be determined.”

3 CASE STUDIES FROM PORTUGAL

3.1 Associação dos Amigos da Pontemieiro

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Abstract

One of the main objectives of Pontemieiro's Association is to promote active ageing and fight against population decline. To achieve this, among several other projects/activities, the association has developed social farming social farming based on intergenerational dynamics and organic farming.



© Associação dos Amigos da Pontemieiro

Profile of the farm or provider

Staff

The association is composed of 35 volunteers that have ties with the village, despite the majority of them not living there.

History and situation today

Pontemieiro is an active village, which lives by the same traditions, values and principles passed down through the generations. This village presents traces of rurality and a cultural identity, which, related to its preservation and the collective conscience of its people, demonstrates the ability to fight population decline and abandonment and focus on the future without forgetting the past.

Nowadays, Pontemieiro has about 11-12 permanent inhabitants. The youngest person who lives in this village is about 64 years old.

The Association of Friends of Pontemieiro was created in 2008 when lands were completely abandoned, and full of brambles. At that time, the association decided to buy a community herd of goats for land clearing. After 2 years, they couldn't continue with this herd, so a single individual continued and later opened an artisanal cheese shop.

Over time, the association has been integrating projects to potentiate the environmental sustainability of the village (Rios project, organic garden), to be an inclusive village (Dropi project) and to promote active ageing (organic community garden, autumn walk, etc.).

Social farming began in this village just as the pandemic was emerging. It has an important role in the fight against social isolation and simultaneously it is an excellent intergenerational opportunity.

Service for elderly people

The elderly are inhabitants of the village, about 11-12 people aged between 64 and 80 years old and they participate in activities such as workshops related to organic farming, organic community garden practice (intergenerational dynamics) and sharing of knowledge, values and traditions.



© Associação dos Amigos da Pontemieiro

Cooperating or supporting partners of the host

The municipality of Vale de Cambra – has ensured support in the area of training in organic farming and in raising awareness for the environmental preservation of the village of Pontemieiro

ADRMAG – assumes an important role in local development, in supporting the emergence of entrepreneurial dynamics and in promoting the dynamics of self-organization of the inhabitants

Banda Flor Mocidade Junqueirense – has a significant cultural role as a local music group, reviving identity and tradition

Local business establishments – are very useful for the resident population, being crucial in maintaining the dynamics of the village.

Required training and competencies from the host's perspective and experience

From the hosts' point of view and experience, social skills are needed in particular. These include, above all, communication skills that facilitate the development of activities with older people and the exchange of experiences with other villages and communities.

Today's outcomes and current challenges

Strengths:

- Community openness;
- Knowledge of residents;
- The connection of residents to the village.

Weaknesses:

- People's old age;
- Young people living outside the village.

Opportunities:

- Pandemic context;
- Elevate the activities in a more occupational/inclusive aspect (e.g. small pedagogical farm).

Threats:

- Lack of openness on the part of entities in the area of education (e.g. some schools).



© Associação dos Amigos da Pontemieiro

Plans for the future

- Direct social farming for a more therapeutic response;
- Work the knowledge and traditions in a non-formal teaching logic;
- Create an art festival.

Quotes from the host

“Pontemieiro, a proud village, where our heritage, the taste of our products and the sounds of the fraternal and convivial atmosphere will make you want a reunion.”

“Activities that everyone can do.”



© Associação dos Amigos da Pontemieiro

3.2 Centro de Educação Ambiental do Município de Vale de Cambra (CEAVC)

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Abstract

A main objective of the centre is environmental education, e.g. related to home composting and organic farming. This also includes intergenerational knowledge exchange at home, in schools or in institutions such as private social solidarity institutions. The centre aims to raise public awareness of the need to change behaviour with regard to the environment and organise activities to this end.



© CEAVC



Host profile

Staff

The centre is composed of the following employees:

- 1 Coordinator;
- 1 Biologist;
- 1 Socio-educational animator;
- 1 Sociocultural animator.

History

CEAV is a project of the municipality of Vale de Cambra dedicated to environmental education and sustainability. It is a useful tool for the dissemination of knowledge and acquisition of skills related to environmental protection, contributing to a more active role in reducing waste and in the adoption of healthier lifestyles. The environmental centre was created to allow the population itself to participate in the process of environmental quality, which will have a multiplier effect by training the agents who promote a new environmental perception and attitude.

Service for elderly people

The work developed by the environmental centre is intended for the community in general. There are elderly groups and other groups formed by children and young people. The centre also does some training sessions in organic farming and in the area of aromatic plants.



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Cooperating or supporting partners of the host

- Schools (children and young people)
- Private Institutions of Social Solidarity – IPSS (mostly dedicated to the elderly)
- Elderly Universities
- Local associations

Required training and competencies from the host's perspective and experience

From the hosts' point of view and experience, social skills are needed in particular. Communication, flexibility, empathy, respect, and cooperation are the most important competencies referred to by the team that works with the elderly. Technical skills in agriculture were also referred to as important.

Today's outcomes and current challenges

Strengths:

- Team of collaborators;
- Response to the needs of the territory.

Weaknesses:

- Need for a larger infrastructure;
- Need for a better transport network.

Opportunities:

- Informal partnerships;
- Intergenerational meetings.

Threats:

- Some people's resistance to organic farming and to what is new;
- Logistics difficulties;
- Pandemic context (COVID-19);
- Lack of openness on the part of some IPSS;
- Lack of autonomy/mobility of some elderly people.

Plans for the future

- Expansion of the physical space of the Environmental Center
- Continue to invest in the area of biodiversity and biowaste

Quotes from the host

“All interventions are tailored to the territory.”

“To value, to share and to integrate with all generations.”



© CEAVC

4 CASE STUDIES FROM SLOVENIA

4.1 The Slavec Farm

We farm not only with our hands and head, but also with our soul and heart.

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Abstract

A young farmer, Gregor Slavec, took over the farm from his grandfather and founded it on completely different foundations from the family tradition. He focused on the ecological breeding of native Slovenian animal breeds, the cultivation of raspberries and the development of many complementary activities. In this regard, it is particularly important that, in addition to the production and sale of high-quality organic food, it pays more and more attention to service activities, among which services for the elderly on the farm occupy an important place.

Profile of the farm or provider

The Slavec farm is located in the southwestern part of Slovenia and is focused on the breeding of traditional and indigenous Slovenian animals and berry crops. It is an organic farm that produces dairy products and organic beef, and also takes care of 660 raspberry plants, which it offers freshly picked daily from May to October. Raspberries are pollinated by bees in 30 hives, which also produce organic honey of various types. They also make goat's milk ice cream and pasta.

Recently, the Slavec farm has also focused on the development of complementary activities and offers educational services and social care services for the elderly.



Staff

Gregor Slavec is the young owner of the farm, which he took over from his grandfather 10 years ago and converted to organic production. On the farm, with the support of his family, he develops a range of agricultural and complementary activities. Occasionally, during the summer season, he hires an

additional worker to help on the farm. The wife is still employed regularly outside the farm, which provides the family with greater social security.

He is the winner of the innovative young farmer of Slovenia 2021 award. He was the first from Slovenia to receive the European award for young farmers at the European Congress of Young Farmers for "the best project for the improvement of rural areas".

History

Gregor started almost from scratch ten years ago. The farm he took over from his grandfather was a blank slate, as it had no animals or any other activity that would outline the future path. On the one hand, this was good, because he did not bother with tradition and the old way of farming. On the other hand, reviving the farm was a big financial burden.

According to their abilities, the whole family came to help, so that they could buy the necessary machines for harvesting hay and start livestock farming, initially on one hectare of pasture. They bought the first three goats to start clearing overgrown plots. He soon went from three to five goats, currently grazing 40 goats on four pastures together with 20 cows. So the herd grew slowly, Gregor prepared a business plan for the development of the farm, applied for a start-up subsidy for a young farm takeover and got a job on the farm.

Today, they cultivate more than 40 hectares of agricultural land. About 24 hectares are meadows, pastures and fields, and the rest are forests. With the increase in the scope of work, the costs of ongoing operations also increase. It is also necessary to finance the investment in a multi-purpose facility, which he announced in the business plan in order to obtain a start-up subsidy for young farmers. In the beginning, he saw the potential in goats and goat milk processing, laying hens and egg sales and organic certification, but today he is increasingly developing in the direction of offering educational, experiential and social services on the farm.

Situation today

The farm, which was taken over by Gregor Slavec and was initially focused on the breeding of native Slovenian breeds of animals, today offers coexistence between different types of animals on the farm. The central concern is still devoted to the breeding of Slovenian indigenous species of animals such as the Drežnica goat, the Bovška sheep, the Styrian hen, the Bohinj Cika cattle and the Carniolan bee. In addition to these, he also rears dairy breeds of goats for the production of goat's milk, and three donkeys take care of the variety of the animal park.

They offer their customers fresh milk, eggs, honey and organic beef daily, as well as fresh raspberries in season. They are also gradually strengthening the processing of agricultural products into foodstuffs, which is why they also offer homemade pasta, ice cream made from goat's milk and some meat products. There is a small shop on the farm, and products can also be delivered in case of larger orders. The basic purpose is to offer visitors what they produce on the farm, but the offer also includes products from partner farms (vegetables, cheeses, meats). They are trying to create a common offer of quality local food in one place and to meet the demand of both natural persons and legal entities, especially caterers and public institutions.

In addition to agricultural and food activities, complementary service activities are also receiving increasing attention. The countryside offers plenty of opportunities for development and quality services, which will continue to meet the ever-increasing needs of various population groups in the future.

At the Slavec farm, especially in the spring and autumn, they open their doors to children and young people who come to learn about the work on the farm. They have developed quite a few workshops through which they show the work on the farm and thus give children and young people a practical experience of working on the farm. Programs are adapted for different age groups. They are tested in various tasks such as mowing, feeding animals, observing bees and working in the apiary, harvesting crops...

At the Slavec farm, programs adapted for the elderly are also playing an increasingly important role. For this purpose, they arranged a social space under the haystack on the farm, which is intended for conducting workshops and socializing with different groups.

Why did they engage in social farming – and especially - for elderly people?

Gregor Slavec grew up in a block of flats in Ilirska Bistrica, after high school he studied construction but did not finish his studies. During his student years, he increasingly felt that the office would make him feel cramped, and he saw his future in nature, outside of offices. He mentioned this to his grandfather, who sold the last cow and the last mare in 1991. The family listened to him and Gregor was given the opportunity to realize his vision. He believes that we would have more developed agriculture if the older owners had earlier handed over the farm to the younger ones.

Since the farm he took over did not work and he started the activity anew, practically from scratch, he was not limited by the past and tradition. With a creative approach and innovative ideas, he started to develop activities on the farm that are not usual, but represent a potential for the future and contain many development possibilities. He is aware that he can only succeed in the long term by combining various agricultural and non-agricultural activities, while he will have to maintain flexibility and innovation. In addition to organic farming, which also includes the basic processing and sale of organic food, he, therefore, focused on offering services for various groups of the population, among whom an important place belongs to the elderly.

By offering services for the elderly, Gregor Slavec, therefore, adapts to the modern trends of rural development, in accordance with which he tries to make sustainable use of the natural features of the environment in which he lives. He is aware that the natural environment and the physical activity associated with it bring many benefits to older people. By integrating into the life of the farm, elderly people gain quality of life, and the farm can get an important permanent source of income, which equally complements the resources from other activities and ensures the long-term stability of the business.

Service for elderly people

Services for the elderly at the Slavec farm are provided for individually organized groups and in the form of project cooperation with homes for the elderly.

Cooperation with the Ilirska Bistrica Elderly Home, which is relatively close to the Slavec farm, is particularly good. Cooperation with the home for the elderly allows the Slavec farm to enrich its offer of additional activities, and it enables the residents of the home to spend time in nature, in the fresh air, with exercise, small activities, and monitoring new methods of farming. Eight residents can visit the farm at a time. Transportation to the farm is organized by van. For safety and assistance with movement, residents need to be accompanied by two employees. The estimated duration of the visit is 2-3 hours, in the morning (between 9 a.m. and 12 p.m.) or in the afternoon (between 12 p.m. and 3 p.m.).



According to the agreed program, elderly people on the farm are involved in:

- Visiting the farm, learning about the method and scope of work,
- Viewing and contact with domestic animals, feeding, petting,
- Participation in picking ripe fruits for personal use,
- Participation in the preparation of simple drinks/food, herbs,
- Movement - walking on uneven terrain,
- Performing sensory integration,
- Implementation of cognitive perceptive training.

Cooperating or supporting partners of the host

In the field of offering services for the elderly, the Slavec farm cooperates with the Ilirska Bistrica Senior Citizens' Home. Monitoring the satisfaction of residents at the home showed that they would like to have a wider range of additional activities at their disposal. The idea of farm visits is attractive from several points of view. Most of the residents come from a farming environment. This environment changes with the move to the home. They like to talk about life once upon a time and share stories and habits from their youth. Sometimes they are pessimistic because they think that today's youth are neglecting the land and farming too much. This fact worries them. This is also why a visit to a young farmer is welcome.

When developing complementary activities on the farm, the Slavec farm also uses funds from the rural development program, namely from the development of non-agricultural activities. In this area, he also cooperates with the local action group, which includes the development of accessible and high-quality services for the rural population in its local development strategy. With the aim of effective development of new activities, Gregor Slavec also founded Zavod Zelena pot, which is a social enterprise dedicated to the implementation of social protection activities on the farm.

Required training and competencies from the host's perspective and experience

Although social agriculture is one form of activity in the countryside, it requires very specific knowledge and competences. These also depend on the type of services the farm offers and the selection of target groups. When offering services for the elderly on farms, additional knowledge in the field of social work with the elderly and knowledge of the specific health problems and psychology of the elderly is absolutely necessary. It is also necessary to have good communication skills for assertive communication.

When preparing services for the elderly, it is necessary to know well the requirements regarding adapted infrastructure for their implementation on farms. It is also necessary to maintain proper accessibility of individual buildings and areas on the farm where elderly people move. The ability to empathize with the needs and limitations of older people is crucial here.

From a business point of view, it is necessary to know the characteristics of the operation of non-profit organizations and the acquisition of funds for the implementation of social welfare programs. The skills of planning and project management are very useful here. Farm social service providers also often lack the ability to collaborate with other providers and support organizations. Communicating with the public and presenting the special features of your farm and its advantages is also a very important competence.

Today's outcomes and current challenges

Considering the extremely fast development in the past years, Gregor Slavec is satisfied with the results achieved. The increase in the volume of agricultural production, and especially the successful beginnings of diversification into selected non-agricultural activities, as well as the awards received, are proof that his innovative approach to agriculture brought the first results. This type of confirmation of successful work gives him a new impetus and sets new perspectives even when facing current challenges related to ensuring the optimal scope and quality of the service offer.

The development of new activities in the field of education and social care is connected with high investments, both in infrastructure and in the development of new programs and training. It is necessary to ensure the constant quality of the offer and adaptability to the needs of different target groups, therefore the current challenges are mainly related to connecting with key stakeholders, strengthening cooperation with them in the planning and implementation of services for the elderly on the farm. In doing so, it will be necessary to find a balance between the employment of staff on the farm and business cooperation with external partners who are interested in providing social services in a rural environment.

There is also an open question of updating the legislation governing the field of social care for the elderly, and sources of financing services for the elderly on farms. At the moment, direct financing of services for the elderly is possible only within the framework of individual pilot projects or from the private funds of users, which is not sufficient for the sustainability of resources and the appropriate scope of effective demand.



Plans for the future

Ten years ago, they started from almost nothing, but now they want to expand the farm so much that in ten years they will have five jobs, a well-established product store, and a permanent offer of educational and social services for interested groups. The further development of services for young people and the elderly and, in connection with this, the strengthening of intergenerational cooperation in rural areas are particularly important.

They will continue to work with Slovenian breeds of animals, processing organic goat's milk, and selling organic eggs, pasta and ice cream made from organic goat's milk. They will also remain an educational farm and a recognized meeting point for different generations, who achieve a higher quality of life through direct contact with nature and involvement in various activities on the farm.

General ideas on social farming and tips for those interested in implementing an offer for elderly people on a farm

Social farming undoubtedly represents a good development opportunity, especially for young innovative farmers who are open to the introduction of new activities complementary to agriculture in the countryside. In doing so, everyone who works in this field must be aware that it is an innovative activity where many issues still need to be sorted out on a systemic level.

A prerequisite for successful work in the field of social agriculture is the establishment of good cooperation with stakeholders in the local environment and good planning of services and financial resources based on a realistic assessment of the needs and capabilities of older persons.

The planning and implementation of services should take place in cooperation with institutions that specialize in the care of the elderly or with interest groups that represent the rights and needs of elderly persons. Services for the elderly are complex, their implementation requires a lot of diverse knowledge and personnel who are qualified for this work.

Quotes from the host

"I believe that we would have a more developed agriculture if the older owners had earlier handed over the farm to the younger ones."

"Awards are nice, but they are not our goal. Our goal is the development of the countryside, greater connection and visibility of local farmers on the market, and satisfied customers."

4.2 ŠTORKLJA (STORK)

Centre for intergenerational cooperation and social inclusion of elderly in rural areas

Contact details

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Abstract

Štorklja (Stork) is a renovated traditional farm where intergenerational bonding and social integration of the elderly who live in the local countryside takes place. The area is economically less developed

and plagued by a lack of social and other services. The younger, more mobile part of the population is leaving for the cities, the older population who have lived here all their lives remain, along with the newly immigrated retirees who are looking for a cheaper and better quality of life.

Štorklja offers a programme tailored to the needs of ageing people who want to live close to home and in contact with nature. They are offered activities to maintain their physical and cognitive vitality. Štorklja looks after their interests and helps them to strengthen their joy in life. When designing the program, they start with the needs and wishes of the elderly, who also become co-creators of the program.



Profile of the farm or provider

Štorklja, which operates on the site of a social farm, is a social enterprise that connects activities such as organic farming, social inclusion and employment, implementation of social welfare programs for vulnerable social groups and programs for elderly rural residents. Programs for the elderly are currently preventive, but in the future, may transition to more permanent forms of care. The older people are part of the social farming operation. They participate according to their interests, needs and wishes. They take part in workshops in multi-purpose gardens, in the animal park and in a house renovated especially for them, where they feel at home. For them, Štorklja is a window into the world of the past and the present: a place where they can spend quality time participating in workshops that they enjoy. They can sing old songs, tend flowers, prepare traditional dishes, listen to travel lectures, meet writers, learn languages and use smartphones with which they can contact their relatives all over the world. Štorklja also brings hope to the elderly that they will be able to live close to home even when they need a more permanent form of care and protection.

Staff

About 20 participants are actively involved in the program of multigenerational socializing at the social farm, and occasionally up to 30 elderly people who live near the farm take part in the workshops. They

are led by professionals, employed in the programs of the Mozaik social enterprise, and mentors from the Korenika social farm also participate. They offer life support and advocacy to participants in asserting their rights, managing personal finances or legal matters, as well as creating programs and workshops for them. They also work with the supporting environment such as The Health Promotion Centre, village municipalities, patronage services, the Home for the Elderly, pensioners' associations and other societies.

History

In 2003, the Mozaik association was founded to support the social inclusion of vulnerable groups. By developing innovative forms of employment and entrepreneurial environments.

Mozaik founded the Korenika social farm in 2006, which is located in the less developed north-western part of Goričko in the Prekmurje region. Korenika successfully restored two old farms, revitalized the traditional way of farming, developed its own brand of food products and became an experience-educational tourist destination. (read about Korenika here <https://farcura.eu/case-studies>).

Its founder, the Mozaik society, a social enterprise, developed social welfare programs, social activation programs, and programs for inclusion and care for the elderly in rural areas. The cooperation and integration of the two resulted in the renovation of the Štorklja farm in 2021, especially for the purposes of inclusion and care for the elderly residents in the area, who would like to live as long as possible in their homes or close to home.

Situation today

Today, around 20 elderly participants, come to the recently renovated farm, which was named Štorklja (Stork - after the large migratory birds that return to their nesting grounds in the area every spring). In the house, under professional guidance workshops are held on various topics related to the interests of the participants.

Outdoor activities take place in the gardens around Štorklja: exercise or recreational workshops with breathing and relaxation techniques and care of flowers and herbs. Participants go to the animal park together or individually, where the closeness and affection of the animals delights them. They also like hiking to the nearby Hodoš lake and take trips to nearby and more distant places in Slovenia and neighbouring Hungary.

The participants are still vital enough to live independently and also come to the farm or attend workshops. Individual participants also carry out workshops, thus ensuring the transfer of their knowledge, strengthening their motivation and genuinely integrating them into the emerging community, which consists of program users, professional colleagues and farm mentors.

The community is sincerely interested in each member offering them respect, empathy and support. At personal growth workshops group members talk about themselves and express their needs, concerns and wishes. This builds trust, infuses them with optimism and a sense of security and connection. As a result users are less worried about growing older as they are not alone and have the support of their social network.



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Why did they engage in social farming – and especially - for elderly people?

Štorklja, which today connects different people: the elderly, professional colleagues and mentors, is also the personal story of the participants. Even the idea for its creation, which is connecting the social farm with the elderly residents of the surrounding area, started with a personal story. Pedagogue Lili Milošević – the head of the mentors- was inspired by her experience of having once lived with her grandfather and grandmother on a farm in the neighbouring village of Križevci. The idea coincided with the national Multigenerational Centre project allowing Štorklja to become a unit of the Pomurje Multigenerational Centre. Starting with small steps the program soon came to life and the knowledge of the older generations was transferred to the younger ones and vice versa. Over time, a community of seniors was formed.

The social farm develops activities that are an alternative solution for the elderly who want to live as long as possible in their homes or near them. The services offered are adapted to the needs of the elderly, strengthening their vitality and extending their active life span. By creating conditions for daycare and more permanent forms of care for the elderly, the farm contributes to the modern trend of rural development and noninstitutionalized care for the elderly near their homes. This gives the farm a new purpose, as well as a potential source of new income.

Service for elderly people

Program of social inclusion of the elderly at the social farm:

- a safe, pleasant and accessible place for socializing
- provides content aimed at social inclusion for the elderly;
- prevents loneliness;

- improves the quality of life of elderly people in rural areas.

Štorklja is located in the heart of a social farm and offers:

- therapeutic interaction with tame animals living on the farm;
- easy work, relaxation and exercise in the multipurpose herb garden;
- nature walks;
- observing nature and hanging out on the farm.

Contents and activities:

- workshops for spending time in nature and on the farm;
- workshops on active and healthy ageing;
- Creative workshops;
- manual skills workshops;
- culinary workshops;
- social gatherings and trips;
- conversations about the life of the participants, their memories, wishes and interests;
- gardening and herbal workshops;
- educational and consulting workshops;
- personal growth workshops and group discussions;
- hikes and exercise;
- computer workshops;
- relaxation and social games workshops,
- easy reading and writing;
- socializing with children and young people.

Individual support for the elderly and their relatives:

- conversation;
- counselling;
- informing;
- assistance in arranging various rights;
- support in communication with various institutions;
- accompaniment and advocacy.

Cooperating or supporting partners of the host

Štorklja collaborates with various partners in the development of services for the elderly:

- Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs
- providers of content and workshops from the Health Promotion Centre Murska Sobota,
- Home for the elderly Murska Sobota,
- surrounding associations of pensioners,
- surrounding cultural and other societies,
- local communities and municipalities,
- visiting service of the Health Centre Murska Sobota,
- Centre for social work Pomurje,
- free legal advice service.

The professional staff of Mozaik develops the support environment and the services that the elderly receive. In cooperation with the social farm, Mozaik is creating the conditions for more permanent forms of care and protection for the elderly.

Required training and competencies from the host's perspective and experience

A social farm that accepts the elderly and develops programs for them must have specific knowledge and competences in farming, social work, and in working with the elderly.

Some older people who come to the farm have knowledge in herbalism, gardening or organic farming, which they want to preserve, exchange or upgrade. Part of enjoying the garden is knowing the garden. This requires input from professionals who also facilitate and manage the contact between the animals and the elderly.

When offering services for the elderly in rural areas, experienced social workers are necessary. Caring for the physical and mental health of the elderly requires psychological knowledge and knowledge of specific health problems. The necessary skills are acquired by employing professionally educated personnel and through continuous professional development and cooperation with a supportive environment of specific professional skills. Knowledge of the necessary infrastructure and adaptations for the elderly is also a key part of the expertise at Štorklje.

Mozaik also uses its skills to develop project partnerships and acquire funds for the implementation of social welfare programs for the elderly. They constantly communicate with professionals and members of the public, presenting the message of elderly inclusion and the idea of social farming for the elderly.



Today's outcomes and current challenges

The current operation of Štorklje is intended for elderly users of the program who live independently in the vicinity of the farm. They are happy to come to the workshops, but as they get older, they increasingly need the services of Mosaik's social welfare program "Field Work", which offers them representation, advocacy advice and assistance. At Štorklja, they are satisfied that with their services they can offer comprehensive support to the elderly as well as provide assistance during the ageing process. They regularly create new initiatives and workshops.

One such initiative is an experiential flower garden which will offer the beauty of blooming flowers throughout all seasons to inspire users and offer them experiences of beauty and peace. Štorklja is also prepared to open a day centre program for the elderly but there is uncertainty regarding the Long-Term Care Act and the financing of the program.

The current challenges are therefore related to issues that impact the vision of Štorklja's future. The development of new activities in social care for the elderly is connected with attitudes towards deinstitutionalization. The inclusive European paradigm advocates the right to quality ageing according to personal choice, but in reality, these practices have not yet taken off and institutional care solutions in nursing homes are still preferred. It will be necessary to find the courage to make the leap from idea to practice. For people who grew up or lived in the countryside or on farms, social farms are undoubtedly the right solution. The participants of the programs want further support and protection when they begin to lose an essential part of their independence because they trust the program providers and feel at home in Štorklja.

Plans for the future

The Štorklja farm has been renovated according to standards for care of the elderly. It will be able to start daycare as soon as other conditions are created for it (e.g. legislation, financing...). The plans also include the renovation of other parts of the house, and a larger house with an outbuilding. Several houses in the village could be renovated for housing the elderly in residential units, which could be done in cooperation or support of the local community.

In the meantime they will continue to implement the existing program and maintain a community within which services, supports and assistance are tailored to individual needs. They will develop programs and activities to satisfy as many needs as possible, as well as continue to strengthen cooperation with partners and the support environment.

General ideas on social farming and tips for those interested in implementing an offer for elderly people on a farm

Social farming is an innovative activity which is unique in every case. Farms can practice it if they have the desire and willingness to work with the elderly, develop complementary activities and earn additional income. Involvement of the elderly on the farm can also be successfully undertaken by a social enterprise that combines rural development, agricultural activities and social welfare programs. Certainly, all individual cases only show the way to more permanent forms of social farming. Although a lot of heart and goodwill is needed by the pioneers because there are still many systemic issues to be sorted out.

A prerequisite for successful work in this area is the establishment of good partnerships with the key players in the development of social farming, cooperation with stakeholders in the local environment, and good planning of services and financial resources based on a realistic assessment of the needs and capabilities of older persons. This requires professional, highly responsible and at the same time very heartfelt work.

Quotes from the host

"Empathy for the elderly means that you empathize with your own future as well. Creating the conditions for a friendly old age is one of the highest forms of love for oneself and one's neighbour, and an investment in a successful society of the future, which man can only create in cooperation with nature."

4.3 SENIOR TOURISM - Mohorko Farm

Contact details

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Abstract

The Mohorko family farm has shifted from tourism to social farming for the elderly. The owner of the farm, Matjaž, gained work experience in a small rural home for the elderly in Austria, where he learned about the specifics of elderly care and also recognised a development opportunity that he wanted to use for his own family farm. By adapting the premises and introducing a service for older people to live on the farm, the Mohorko farm improved its occupancy rate and developed a range of new services. These are successfully complemented by services from support partners and other agencies involved in social care services for older people in the local area.

Profile of the farm or provider

The farm for senior tourism, managed by Matjaž Mohorko, is located near Lenart in Slovenske gorice (Slovenian Hills), in the north-eastern part of Slovenia. It is a small farm whose main goal is to enable older people to spend the autumn of their lives in the countryside and live with people of the same age. It offers 6 larger single or double rooms with private bathrooms and home-cooked meals, as well as an active leisure programme for the residents. Residents are provided with three meals a day, as well as laundry for personal clothing and bedding. Their rooms are suitable for people with limited mobility. By prior arrangement, residents can also bring their pets.



Staff

The staff of the farm consists of the four-member Mohorko family, all of whom are involved in complementary social services on the farm. In recent years, the farm has evolved from predominantly mixed agricultural production to offering first tourist and later social services.

Matjaž Mohorko is the manager of the farm. He is a trained geriatric nurse and previously worked in neighbouring Austria as the manager of a small rural nursing home. During his work, he gained relevant experience and was motivated to expand the social farming operation on his home farm.

Together with his wife and children, he ensures that the guests are provided with everything they need. They offer a full service with accommodation, meals and additional activities. In cooperation with external contractors, they also enable the guests to benefit from medical and other special support services.

History

The Mohorko farm is traditionally linked to agriculture, which was the basic activity in the Slovenian countryside that enabled earlier generations to survive. With the development of society, younger generations were given the opportunity for diverse education and found work in production and the service sector, locally and further afield. Meanwhile, elders maintained limited farming, mainly for self-sufficiency.

Over time, the younger generation also rediscovered the benefits and quality of life in the countryside. Therefore, the owner Matjaž Mohorko made it his mission to revive the farm and enhance it with new activities that meet today's needs. Initially, the family planned tourist activities on the farm and acquired suitable premises, but due to the pronounced seasonality of tourist visits to the farm, they remained unused for most of the year. Therefore, they decided to look for additional possibilities to exploit this accommodation capacity. First, the existing accommodation conditions were adapted to

the needs of older people and then programmes were developed that would also enable older people to have an appropriate form of active participation in everyday life on the farm. Contacts were established with both individual users and groups, and participation in the implementation of various projects under the rural development programme was achieved.

Situation today

The Mohorko farm is today mainly a tourist farm with a specialized offer for older tourists. In addition, it has also developed programs and support services for the permanent residence of the elderly. The basic agricultural activity serves them mainly as a source of raw materials for offering home-grown food. They mainly grow vegetables and fruits, but also raise pigs, sheep and goats. Additional food needs are met by purchases from the surrounding farms.



The Mohorko farm is equipped so that older people can live there permanently or occasionally. Each room has its own bathroom adapted to the needs of older people and people with disabilities.

The family provides its guests with high-quality, home-grown food and offers them the opportunity to interact with family members as well as fellow residents.

The service on the farm includes a stay in a furnished single or double room, various activities on the farm according to one's own wishes and interests, and three meals a day. During the stay, users are provided with health monitoring, advice on active ageing and nutrition.

Daily activities are adapted to the residents' respective wishes and needs. These include, for example, walks on the farm and in the surrounding area, reading books and newspapers, playing board games, socialising with other residents, feeding the animals on the farm, participating in various workshops and events, helping with seasonal work on the farm, visiting an exhibition about old farming activities and others.

Why did they engage in social farming – and especially - for elderly people?

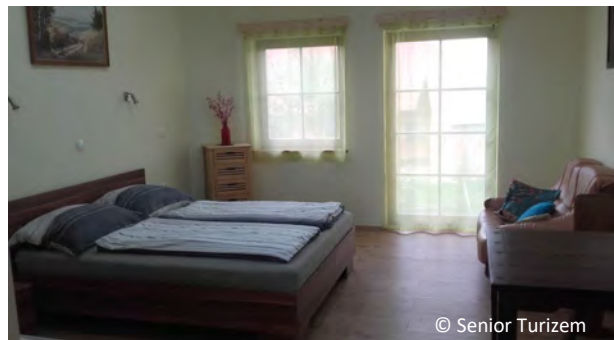
The Mohorko farming family faced the challenge of securing sufficient financial resources for the continuation of the farm because of the decline in income from primary agricultural activities caused by technological and general social change. In doing so, based on their experiences abroad, they focused first on tourism and later on adapted forms of senior tourism. As there is a great need for longer-term accommodation for older people and their long-term care in Slovenia, they also joined development projects looking for new ways to provide social security for older people and developed a programme for short- or long-term stays of older people on their farm.

The newly designed programme helps to ease the burden on the long-term care system and gives older people additional options in planning their lives in old age, allowing residents to live more comfortably in old age in a peaceful environment.

Service for elderly people

On their farm, the Mohorko family offers accommodation for the elderly in a separate facility specially arranged for this purpose, where they offer residents as follows:

- Rooms for independent living, which are approx. 30 m² and include all costs (electricity, heating, utilities, TV).
- Three main meals per day and one snack of home-grown food.
- Options of a private or shared garden.
- Supply of consumer goods or their joint purchase.
- The presence of the owner, who also maintains the building and its surroundings.



In addition to the use of a private room, users also have access to a common space for socializing and various activities. These include the following:

- Presentation of local dishes with cooking and baking workshops,
- Cooking with home-made ingredients from the garden,
- Participation in harvesting and processing fruits for daily use in the kitchen,
- Making juice from elderberries, grapes and cherries,
- Harvesting and drying apples and walnuts and using them in baking,
- The opportunity to participate in tending the animals on the farm,
- Making ornaments and decorating the rooms according to the season and holidays,
- Playing board games,
- Knitting and crocheting seasonal products,
- Guided walks and visits to the surrounding area,
- Visits to neighbouring farms,
- Music evenings and other cultural events with the local associations.

Cooperating or supporting partners of the host

Two organizations cooperate as supporting partners, each complementing the activities of the Mohorko farm in their own way and enabling the elderly to receive a comprehensive range of social and health services at the farm.

DEOS, integrated care for the elderly, d. o. o., is a privately owned company. The company's key activities include the institutional care of the elderly in eight centres for the elderly in Slovenia, the provision of social welfare services in assisted living apartments and the provision of home assistance and social services in the vicinity of the centres. Today, DEOS unites eight centres for the elderly throughout Slovenia and employs more than 800 people who take care of around 1,400 residents. DEOS' biggest contribution to the partnership with the Mohorko farm is professionally trained employees with knowledge in various areas that are important for working with the elderly.

Zavod Aktivna starost so.p. is a social enterprise and a voluntary and non-profit organization that works in the field of social care for the elderly. With the help of professional and motivated staff, business partners and the local community, the Active Aging Institute organizes and implements programs adapted to the elderly, intending to improve the quality of life in the third period of life. The institute offers a wide selection of services for the elderly, provides counselling for relatives and trains providers of work programs with the elderly. They offer programs of active care for the elderly with various activities, facilitate intergenerational socializing, encourage the involvement of volunteers to connect the elderly with volunteers, and educate about the adaptation of activities for the elderly population.

Supporting partners offer the following services to the Mohorko farm and their guests:

- Professional care (training in the field of holistic treatment of the elderly, i.e. health field, physiotherapy field, social field, occupational therapy field).
- Helping users with installation, finding additional help if necessary, advising during the stay, etc.
- Help in finding a different accommodation in case of deterioration of the elderly person's condition.

Required training and competencies from the host's perspective and experience

After the initial implementation phase of the housing services for older people at Mohorko Farm, it is evident that the interest of potential users is high. However, many people who would be eligible for accommodation at the farm need at least some help with care and the mere offer of accommodation is not enough for them. Extending the offer to include at least some elements of elderly care (help with dressing, health monitoring, help with showering and bathing, etc.) would significantly increase the number of interested people who would opt for such a service.

Of course, this means that it is necessary to train staff for this purpose or to ensure a better connection between the accommodation service and other long-term care services.

The service of long-term accommodation of elderly people on the farm also includes work with socially vulnerable groups. Therefore, it would be good if training for service providers in basic social work skills for working with the elderly were a precondition for providing services. When the tasks of caring for older people on the farm are expanded, the necessary skills will also need to be developed. If the

service is permanently integrated into the long-term care system, it would be useful to review the training programme with a competent institution (e.g. the Social Chamber of Slovenia).

Today's outcomes and current challenges

At the Mohorko farm, they are satisfied with the initial phase of introducing services for the elderly on their farm, as it contributes to better utilization of the available capacities and offers additional income. The introduction of new activities on their farm takes place gradually, from the adaptation of accommodation facilities through the introduction of basic services for the elderly to the adoption of more demanding social and health services. They are aware of the importance of continuous learning, which is also the answer to the many challenges they face.

One of the biggest challenges is securing financing for the services provided by the farm. Currently, only direct user payment is possible, but it is relatively high and therefore not accessible to a wider circle of people. At the national level, the possibility of payment from insurance for long-term care and/or co-financing by municipalities should be regulated.

They also note that problems often arise due to the local jurisdiction of providers of supportive health and social services, as their guests come not only from the local environment but also from elsewhere. For the duration of the stay on the farm, it is necessary to arrange a personal doctor and involve the local outpatient service and providers of public home assistance services. Users have the right to these services in their place of permanent residence, but not at the farm.

It is also necessary to define more precisely the role of relatives in terms of the services that need to be provided - transportation, doctor's visits, arranging financial matters, etc. as well as the responsibility of the service provider for individual accidents that may occur (fall, injury etc).

For the effective and transparent implementation of services, additional legal definitions and the establishment of external experts (e.g. multidisciplinary team, committee, etc.) are needed to monitor the stay and assess eligibility. As an additional contribution to the development of these farm stay services in the future, they see the strengthening of cooperation between the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food. With the possibility of cooperation also with the Ministry of Health.

Plans for the future

In the future, the Mohorko farm plans to continue to implement all-day and day-stay programs for the elderly, as this contributes to additional income. For the successful implementation of such programs, they will continue with the training and upgrading of the necessary skills for all members of the farm, who are involved in the implementation of services for the elderly.

They also expect greater local support as well as the interconnection of farms that offer services for the elderly. New programs and new activities for the inclusion of the elderly are also a possibility. These could include short-term holiday stays for the elderly, the possibility of trips to farms from homes for the elderly, and the implementation of daily workshops and intergenerational meetings.

These additions would contribute to greater development of the countryside and its agricultural holdings.



General ideas on social farming and tips for those interested in implementing an offer for elderly people on a farm

Diversification of activities into care for the elderly provides farms with an additional sustainable source of income. At the same time, following the strategy of a long-lived society, it contributes to relieving the long-term care system through the active ageing of the population and the deinstitutionalisation of the elderly. The programs for the elderly offered by the farms enable the elderly to make an additional choice within the framework of social welfare programs, which, in contrast to traditional forms of institutional care for the elderly, enable them to age actively in their home environment.

In addition, social farming programs for the elderly also have wider social effects, especially as complementary programs to other social welfare programs in the field of long-term care, which contributes to relieving the burden on providers in this area.

The initial stages of the development of social farming for the elderly should therefore serve as a foundation for further diversification of farm activities. It makes sense for all interested farms to familiarize themselves with the institutions and programmes of the social welfare system and the experiences of those farms that have already started implementing the activity before they begin. A good connection with local supporting institutions and farms that develop social farming activities is also of great importance. The readiness for continuous professional development of all persons involved in the delivery of services, as well as the adaptability of social farms to the many changes that can be expected in a rapidly developing sector where working with people is the primary activity, is extremely important.

Quotes from the host

“The countryside is changing its image and the role of farms is to adapt to this by offering products and services that are needed by people in our environment. In doing so, we put people and their needs first.”