

# SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT (SROI)

Learning network on mental wellbeing  
(Belgium)





## 1 The Social Return on Investment (SROI)

### 1.1 Exploring change

We had the opportunity to conduct this forecasting journey of change with members of a learning network that is just starting up in 2022. The group consists of farmers, some working fulltime at the farm, others combine this with a job elsewhere. Some of the farmers have a background or are working in the social or health care sector, so they have knowledge about wellbeing as well as the agricultural sector. Since Ferm voor Agravrouwen, an organisation for female farmers in Flanders, initiated the start-up of the learning network and will support the group when asked for, also consultants of farmers organizations could be seen as stakeholders. We did the journey of change with 5 members of the learning network (9 in total), of which 4 female farmers and the consultant of Ferm. One of these farmers was also present during one of the practice groups, but besides that this exercise was done in no relation to the practice groups.

We did this journey of change exercise at the first meeting of the learning network, which was very much appreciated by everyone, because it was a very good way to think and talk about everyone's expectations of this learning network.

This forecasting journey of change has been strictly guided by the SROI methodology as developed by UGLOS within the framework of the FARMWELL project. With this purpose in mind, a reworking of the standard template has been made, translating the English terms in Dutch. We used posters to have a clear overview on the exercise. Throughout this journey of change we have mapped all the possible changes or outcomes a learning network about wellbeing can generate. To start we let everyone write down on post-its what their expectations are for this learning network, what possible outcomes there could be for themselves, the group and possibly others. During the focus group discussion everyone shared and discussed the things they wrote down. This discussion also was guided by questions put forward by the SROI methodology as these were centered around the expected changes, the time frame of these changes and possible barriers and enablers. We ended the meeting by listing some concrete ideas and practical agreements for the next meeting(s).





The journey of change was experienced as a positive way to learn together, to map expectations, to let you think out of the box about possible outcomes, to clarify the goal and to identify measurable parameters for an evaluation. This could be used at the start of a new idea, project or activity as well as an evaluation of an existing activity.

Another lesson learned about the process of the journey of change, was that it is not easy to categorize the changes in time, the speed with which some things will happen differ for each person, so possible outcomes couldn't always be categorized at one specific time.

Also before starting the journey of change some of the participants felt a bit guilty the learning network was for personal 'gain' through its prime focus on the in-group members. Most of them really would like to find a way to also do something meaningful for other farmers. There was general agreement that, despite the learning network mainly focusses on learning from each other, the outcomes can also include initiatives targeting farmers outside the network. This was more about the concept of the learning network than about the process of the journey of change.

A presentation about the learning network was incorporated in the pilot, an inspiration tour on wellbeing by bus. During this day we did 3 field visits with testimonies from farmers and a few social innovations were presented to the participants. 26 female farmers took part on this bustour.



## 1.2 Evidencing change

The initial questions for the learning network were very good, the only thing we did was add 2 open questions to the prospective questionnaire:

- To which questions/needs could a learning network provide an answer according to you?
- What should you still need or what would stimulate you to join a learning network?

During the pilot the participants had to fill out 4 different questionnaires (pen and paper): one long one at the beginning of the day where we combined the questionnaires of 2 social innovations (training & learning network) about the situation now, a second prospective one after they had the training on how to make problems debatable, a third prospective one after they got information about the learning network on wellbeing and a last one at the end of the day to evaluate the bustour. So two of these questionnaires were about the learning network. One of the key lessons from the data collection has been that dedicated time and support is needed when asking participants to fill out longer questionnaires. Clear motivation should be provided, e.g. discussion on why the outcomes of the survey will be useful and relevant also for the target stakeholders. This has been a challenge in the case of the Learning Network surveying as the programme on the 'academy on tour' has been too dense and participants often did not have the energy to complete the questionnaire in this intense working environment. The retrospective questionnaire (pen and paper) was done on a later date in february, this was during an activity where the participants of the bustour as well as the members of the learning network were invited. Key note speaker Mario Haneca was invited, he talked about changing mindsets, experiences were exchanged and there was a brainstorm on how to let men talk about their feelings/problems. Again all participants were women. 7 (out of 9) women that are members of the learning network were present. Having only 9 people that are a member of a learning network about wellbeing, our data set for this last questionnaire is quite small.

## 1.3 Valuing change

The summative SROI Impact Map for the Learning Network Social Innovation is given in the Table below. Impacts over a forward looking 5-year benefit period (2022-27) are generated for 80 male and female farmers through 13 outcomes across 4 wellbeing impact pathways. Impacts are dominated by the value created for personal (45%) and relational (44%) wellbeing, with general knowledge and skills attained through participation in the network having potential for benefits accrued through economic wellbeing.

The findings of the SROI demonstrate that an estimated €102K investment in the learning network represents a potential 314% return to individuals, communities and society with respect to wellbeing impacts for farmers. Over the benefit period the overall return for each





Euro invested is projected to be 3.14 Euros as farmers are estimated to benefit from increased agency, competence, skills and confidence as a result of participating in the network.

The SROI estimates indicate the potential that the learning network has to induce changes to the personal and professional lives of the farmers who join it. Relational wellbeing impacts relate to changes in the way that they relate to and are supported by others with respect to their wellbeing, as well as the transference of knowledge to others in the network, with the most significant impact relating an improved sense of having others to rely on in times of difficulty.

Personal wellbeing impacts which impact on the resilience, self-awareness and positive functioning of network members, relate principally to those that are felt by individuals in the network but also their family members, including the mental wellbeing and emotional awareness of children. In this sense the wider impacts of the learning network may be underestimated by the model over the longer term, as a greater cohort of individuals may benefit, especially if the network grows at a faster rate than is currently forecast.





**Table: Belgium-Flanders Forecast SROI Impact Map (SI: Learning Network)**

Impact Pathway	Outcome	Stakeholders (No.)	Indicator/s of Change	Outcome Change (%)	Financial proxy (Value €/Unit)	Present Value (€)	Present Value (%)
Relational Wellbeing	Improved sense of having others to rely on in times of difficulty	Male and female farmers (80)	I always seek help from other people if I need it	66%	(4) Value to an individual (25-45) of feeling like they belong in their neighbourhood € 3,418 per person)	€ 88,671	44%
	Improved access to wellbeing advice and information	Male and female farmers (80)	I find it easy to obtain help, advice or support in relation to personal matters	72%	(1) Unit cost of approved social worker (ASW) for community social care (€ 2,241 per person p.a)	€ 31,547	
	Transference of knowledge and insight to others	Male and female farmers (80)	I am able to impart my knowledge and insights around wellbeing support to others	70%	(9) Cost of employability skills training in regular sessions with counsellor / coach (€ 877 per person p.a)	€ 22,657	
Personal Wellbeing	Increased competence, engagement and purpose	Male and female farmers (80)	I feel that I am making a difference in my life	63%	(3) Value attributed to positive functioning volunteers based on additional median wages earned (€ 4,589 per person)	€ 57,686	45%
	Improved resilience and self esteem	Male and female farmers (80)	When things go wrong in my life it generally takes me a long time to get back to normal; in general I feel very positive about myself	55%	(6) Cost of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to build psychological resilience and self-esteem (€ 2,104 per person p.a)	€ 22,748	
	Increased sense of agency and empowerment	Male and female farmers (80)	I feel I am in full control of what I do; I feel empowered to make changes in my life	65%	(3) Cost of Empowerment (for Women) coaching programme	€ 24,635	





					(€ 736 per person)			
	Increased self-awareness	Male and female farmers (80)	I feel I am the kind of person I want to be today	67%	(10) Cost of leadership management training course (€ 1,188 per person)	€ 15,537		
	Improved mental wellbeing	Male and female farmers (80)	The wellbeing of my family is generally very good	64%	(26) Mental health service costs per individual (anxiety and depression) (€ 682 per person p.a)	€ 5,326		
	Improved self-awareness and emotions in family	Male and female farmers (80)	I am able to proactively build self-awareness and positive emotions in my children	72%	(10) Cost of leadership management training course (€ 1,188 per person)	€ 4,349		
	Improved confidence and motivation	Male and female farmers (80)	I will try something even if there is a chance it might not work	63%	(10) Cost of leadership management training course (€ 1,188 per person)	€ 14,610		
Economic Wellbeing	Improved knowledge and skills	Male and female farmers (80)	I have a wide range of skills and knowledge to help me at work or in my daily life	72%	(9) Cost of employability skills training in regular sessions with counsellor / coach (€ 2,474 per person)	€ 35,010	11%	
						<b>Total Benefits</b>	<b>€ 322,776</b>	<b>100%</b>
						Total Investment	€ 102,850	
						<b>Benefit-Investment Ratio (BIR)</b>	<b>€ 3.14 : 1</b>	

