

# SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT (SROI)

*“Energy Community Myrmidones”*  
*Farmers taking charge in the energy crisis.*  
(Greece)





## 1 The Social Return on Investment (SROI)

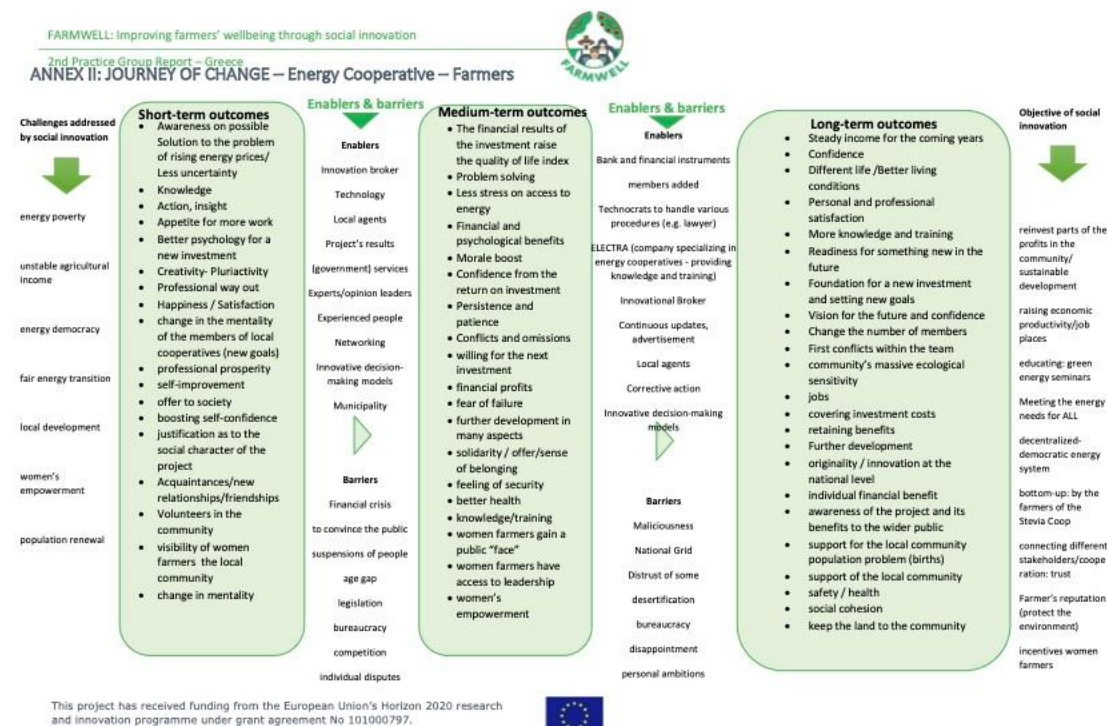
### 1.1 The process of the SROI

The benefits that are usually communicated for energy communities are economic and environmental. But practice shows that several social benefits are also evident and very important when discussing farmer's wellbeing. While the environmental and economic impact of sustainable energy projects are largely measurable (in other projects and in the academic literature), it is difficult to make the same claim about the social impact.

The Energy community "Myrmidones" was put on the table in order to try and identify a Social Return of Investment, in other words we tried to measure change through participation to this energy community.

**During the first stages** of the project we met with different focus groups in order to have an exercise on the "Journey of Change" (see figure). The two groups were (a) the farmers - members and non-members of the energy community and (b) the non-farmers (residents). Both round tables worked on the Journey of Change template prepared by UGLOS team for challenges, solutions and outcomes targeted by the actual social innovation, as well as the enablers and barriers to achieving the outcomes. A head facilitator, assisted by one script, from AUTH team, were appointed in each table to achieve fruitful discussions and facilitate the process. The findings of the JoC tables were written on separate/personal charts. Afterwards both teams joined a common session and all charts were discussed, points were clarified. After the meeting the AUTH team transcribed them to an Excel table, which also allowed displaying of logical (sometimes overlapping) relationships between the outcomes.





During the piloting phase in depth interviews and field notes were used in addition to the distribution of a full questionnaire prepared in collaboration with UGLOS team to farmers in order to provide an evaluative SROI. The project investment template was also filled in order to fully evaluate the social innovation. The investment data related to how much has been invested in the respective social innovation, including both monetary and in-kind contributions etc. It is the return on this investment that the model will then seek to estimate.

## Evaluative SROI for SI "Power to People"-EnrgCom

### Journey of Change:

- workshop with researchers -Feedback and guidelines for the implementation of the JOC were given during a meeting with UGLOS team
- In depth interviews with 2 stakeholders –experts on energy communities
- SROI exercise used focus group discussion during 2<sup>nd</sup> PG meeting (19-20 March 2022). We organised 2 groups in a round table using the printed chart –template of the JOC. The concept of the Journey of change and guidelines for the exercise were given by the facilitator of ATh (16 people-members of the energy community/ out of which 9 farmers)
- Discussion with UGLOS team and Follow up interviews –survey with 1 famer –member of the energy community and 2 women members of the WIOO network (all on-line)





## Evaluative SROI for SI “Power to People”-EnrgCom

### Collecting data for the evaluative SROI:

- Working with UGLOS team to finalize of the evaluative questionnaire
- Hoping to make the interviews during the 1<sup>st</sup> piloting in Lamia at 21-22.9.2022 but...
- During 1<sup>st</sup> piloting only personal interviews (open questions-free discussions) with the farmers participating to the pilot
- Ethics requirements finalized in 15.11.22
- started to plan the interviews on 20.11.2022 by calling and making appointments
- sampling framework (the list of the members of the Myrmidones Energy community a total of 43 members (out of which **32 are farmers**)
- Finalize the interviews and make the entry to the survey portal by 23.12.2022

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000797.





What is evident so far, by the evaluative SROI model of the Myrmidones energy community, mainly refers to the community development aspect of the energy cooperative. Social impact is rooted on higher levels of voluntary work, peer-to-peer learning, reciprocity, community budding and sense of belonging to a greater scope.



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FARMWELL: Improving farmers' wellbeing through social innovation



Outcomes on the short terms depend on whether they are members of the Stevia !!

## Short Term Outcomes [farmer]

Get off my TV screen



I too contribute to something "big"



### WHAT?

- sense of belonging to a team/community
- Access to knowledge/training
- socializing, awareness
- change of way of thinking
- Uncertainty
- Tackle other problems
- operative consciousness
- My perspective for the future starts to change
- Change in mentality

### Why?

- Feels struggling with the crisis (money, climate, social)
- New job opportunities emerging (family members)
- New activities
- Its an innovation
- Everyone talks about it
- It is something new
- communication channels created
- The more you feel confident the better you operate/work
- Starts to feel ways out of the risks

### HOW?

- Intimacy, trust, social capital
- Collaboration- exchange of views and reflections,
- Meetings
- Believe in the initiative
- Reading
- Get to know results from best case studies
- Volunteer work



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## 1.2 Outcomes of the SROI analysis

The summative SROI Impact Map for the Community Energy Cooperative social innovation is given in the table below. A range of wellbeing impacts over a 2-year benefit period (2020-22) were generated for a range of stakeholders including **farmers and farming families (214), cooperative members (257 plus 28 business members) and wider local community members/consumers (556)**. Some outcomes (such as empowerment) related specifically to 114 female cooperative members, of which 68 are farmers, other outcomes relate to all cooperative members, and/or to those living in the wider community.

**Almost half (49%) of the value generated by the project can be categorised as 'social and community' benefits**, including, for example, improved reputations of farmers and sense of trust among community members, increased awareness of networking opportunities, greater involvement in community activities and increased prominence of female farmers in the agricultural community. In terms of value, **the largest contribution, almost one third (31%), is generated by a widespread 'improved sense of trust and belonging'** experienced by cooperative members and local residents. A considerable level of value is also generated through **increased participation in community events (13.6%)** among cooperative members and local residents, and **increased visibility and prominence of women (13.4%)** experienced by female farmers and non-farmers.

**Economic wellbeing forms the second largest category of outcome values (25%** of the total) generated by the Myrmidones Renewable Energy Cooperative project. The values are generated by outcomes related to improved knowledge and skills (among cooperative members) and improved leadership and entrepreneurial skills among female farmers and non-farmers. As the renewable energy project is only in the early stages of development (the SROI only covers two years) no energy has been generated to date. A wide range of future economic wellbeing outcomes were identified during the Journey of Change Phase of the SROI study which have the potential to increase the future benefit streams to cooperative members and thus also increase the overall return on investment of the project.

**Personal wellbeing generates 22% of the total outcome values of the project.** The largest proportion of value within this category (67%, or just over two-thirds) comes from **'reduced stress and anxiety** through taking action to improve energy security' experienced by farmers and their families. This is not surprising given the level of concern expressed by farmers in relation to rising energy costs and the lack of control over farmers have over those costs. Locally produced renewable energy offers a reliable and secure means of reducing future costs, providing optimism for their future as well as contributing to a more sustainable development. Generation of renewable energy will, in the future enable local farmers and the wider community to contribute to a reduction in carbon emissions, (albeit in a small way) although this potential was not valued in the SROI model, which has focused on 'social' benefits rather than environmental impacts.





Table: Greece Evaluative SROI Impact Map (SI: Social and community development of the Myrmidones Renewable Energy Cooperative)

Impact Pathway	Outcome	Stakeholders (No.)	Indicator/s of Change	Outcome Change (%)	Financial proxy (Value €/Unit)	Present Value (€)	Present Value (%)
Personal Wellbeing	Reduced stress and anxiety through taking action to improve energy security	Farmers (214); farming families (214)		67%	Cost of Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) to build psychological resilience and self esteem (€ 823 per person)	€ 84,043	22%
	Improved agency and self confidence	Cooperative members (individuals) (257)		18%	Cost of self-esteem course (€ 141 per person p.a)	€ 8,448	
	Empowerment of women - in the community and in their personal and professional lives (including improved self-efficacy and self-confidence)	Female farmers (68); female non-farmers (46).		71%	Cost of Empowerment for Women coaching programme (€ 288 per person p.a)	€ 15,519	
	Empowerment of cooperative members	Cooperative members (285)		71%	Cost of personal development course on 'delivering beyond yourself' (€ 393 per person)	€ 16,998	
	Improved reputation of farmers as custodians and protectors of the environment	Farmers (214); farming families (214)		21%	Valuation for improved emotional well being arising through the Common Assessment Framework (€ 431 per household p.a)	€ 25,777	
	Increased working relationships and public private partnerships	Cooperative members (Businesses) (29)		56%	dFT estimation of business time savings (€ 2,515 per business p.a)	€ 26,768	
	Increased retention of women in the local community	Female farmers (68); female non-farmers (46).		71%	Annual membership of The Future of Women online	€ 23,485	





Social and Community					community for connection, learning and leadership. (€ 813 per person)		49%
	Improved sense of trust and belonging (including trust in working with others)	Individual cooperative members (257); Local consumers (556)		67%	Value to an individual (25-45) of feeling like they belong in their neighbourhood (€ 1,336 per person)	€ 90,998	
	Increased regional, national and international networking and collaboration	Cooperative members (285)		69%	Cost a networking/training event and one hour of time devoted to networking at the average hourly earnings rate (€ 46 per person)	€ 3,243	
	Increased municipal, community and organisational support for other community projects and enterprises.	Cooperative members (285)		69%	Average size of a charitable donation in the UK (€ 244 per household p.a)	€ 31,968	
	Increased participation in community and charity events	Cooperative members (285); Local consumers (556)		70%	Average annual household spend on recreation and culture (€ 100 per person p.a)	€ 39,248	
	Increased visibility and prominence of women in the agricultural and wider community	Female farmers (68); female non-farmers (46).		71%	Value to an individual (25-45) of feeling like they belong in their neighbourhood (€ 1,336 per person p.a)	€ 38,572	
	legitimisation of local ideas/projects to a wider community	Local Community (556)		75%	Cost estimate for Local Authorities of implementing proposed duty to promote local democracy (€ 28,234 per district/community)	€ 7,553	







Economic Wellbeing	Improved life and work skills and knowledge	Cooperative members (285)		76%	Cost of employability skills training in regular sessions with counsellor/coach (€ 967 per person p.a)	€ 74,718	25%
	Improved leadership and entrepreneurial skills	Female farmers (68); female non-farmers (46).		71%	Earnings differential realised by completing an HND/HNC qualification (€ 1,320 per person p.a)	€ 71,255	
Environmental Wellbeing	Increased awareness of the level of energy use	Cooperative members (285); Local consumers (556)		79%	Reduction in energy bills as a result of increased awareness of energy use (€ 158 per household/business)	€ 22,201	4%
<b>Total benefits</b>						<b>580,794</b>	<b>100%</b>
Total Investment						166,454	
<b>Benefit-Investment Ratio (BIR)</b>						<b>3.49 : 1</b>	

