



CASE STUDY

Hungarian Social Farm Association (Hungary)





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Table of Contents

1. THE SOCIAL INNOVATION	2
1.1. Hungarian Social Farm Association	2
1.2. The challenges from the beginning	2
2. THE PILOT ACTION	3
2.1. Experiences from the participant/farmer side	4
2.2. Some of the feedback	4
3. THE SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT (SROI)	9
3.1. The process of the SROI	9
3.2. The SROI outcomes	10
4. POLICY PAPER	14
4.1. Professional policy proposal- Policy paper	14
4.2. Legislative amendment proposals	17





1. The social innovation

1.1. Hungarian Social Farm Association

The Hungarian Social Farm Association's social innovation is the association members' social farms. Social farmers join to the initiative in two ways: as a farmer committed to social responsibility or as a social/occupational rehabilitation organisation for disabled/disadvantaged people. In the framework of the association the members can get help from each other, as well as teach and learn from each other and share their experiences.

The most innovative and powerful part of operating social farms with disabled employees, is the method: cooperative agriculture between sectors, and the process: how to organize a minimum size social farm in Hungary, how to combine the agricultural / social elements with the employment to run a sustainable social enterprise, with employees who enjoy working there.

1.2. The challenges from the beginning

We started the FARMWELL project with the determination that we want to take steps towards creating a more inclusive society, where the number of social farms increases, and thus the well-being of farmers and a safer, more sustainable workplace too. It quickly became clear that the situation in Hungary is not the most advanced in terms of the amount of social farms, but there are also many countries where the concept of social farms is not even familiar. Therefore, participation in the international project offered a great solution, not only because of the opportunity to spread the good example of social farms widely, but also because of learning from others.

We entered the project with the Hungarian Social Farm Association, which already has 38 members. The association in itself represents great progress and help, since cooperation is often a huge advantage, this was also proven during the project, there was always someone to turn to immediately, during the various researches and programs organized on the topic.

Our pilot helped a lot in the process of achieving our goal, which is the spreading of social farms' advantages and the endeavor to encourage as many farmers as possible to start to operate social farms. There was a lot more participants than we expected, from really different parts of the country. We hope, that our 2-day pilot program was an icebreaker for the Hungarian farmers, who were already considering trying to operate their farms as social farms. We tried to be as practical as we can, and the opportunity to meet together in person helped us a lot.

KEY ACTORS:

socialfarmers - 'traditional' farmers (knowledgetransfer)
 farmworkers (from an underprivileged, vulnerablegroup,
 mainlywithreducedcapacitytowork)
 farmworkers' familymembers (realsupportaftertheschoolto reach an
 independent life)
 widersociety (productswithsociallyaddedvalue, socialresponsibility)





Our main recommendation would be to have more of these personal meetings (could be more days if possible). For us, the 2-day pilot was very intensive and useful, there was enough time for a lot of questions and experience changing, and a good, friendly atmosphere could develop.

2. The pilot action

Our 2 day pilot program was held in January with 13 participants, mostly farmers who are open-minded about starting to operate their already existing farms as social farms or just interested about this form of working, and how it helps the farmers' wellbeing. The main aim of the pilot was to spread the idea of operating a social farm and get to know its benefits and advantages not only about the financial benefits but also those that effects mental health.

At the beginning of the pilot, we handed out questionnaires to the participants, because of the forecasting SROI research: we wanted to know what those farmers think about a social farm's advantages who hasn't been or experienced working on any social farm yet, and what those think about it who knows already something about social farms/experienced work on one. We had different questionnaires for the 2 different types of participants.

After the questionnaires, the programs began, the 2-day event included a lot of relevant presentations on the topic of the following: how social farms can benefit a farmer and the workers, how social farms help wellbeing (safety financial environment as well as mental wellbeing), what are the must have resources to be able to start a minimum size social farm, and when will it become profitable, how to operate a sustainable social farm. Beside the presentations, we had a lot of practical programs too, where the participants could not only meet with disabled workers on the farm (and ask them about anything they were interested in), but they were also able to try their job together, in a cheese manufactory. They could experiment with the common work with an experienced disabled employee.

The participants could also see the farms' animals. In a social farm there are usually some kind of therapeutic animals (because of the disabled/disadvantaged employees) such as horses, alpacas or donkeys. On the visited social farm, there were all 3 kinds, but the best type to do therapies with are the alpacas. Therefore the participants could meet them, touch them and experience how they let everybody close to themselves and be so friendly. We wanted to show them an alpaca therapy because we are sure that these therapies are not only for disabled and disadvantaged people but also means therapeutic effect on all of the other farmers too.

During the 2 day-event we also managed to have some fun experience sessions too, such as wine-tasting, common breakfasts, lunches, dinners and countryside wellness. These all helped the connection and potencial cooperation between the participants from different parts and sides of the country, which could be really promising in the future. We also discussed the opportunity of joining the Hungarian Social Farm Association in the future, where the members can have a feeling of safety because they can connect and get help whenever they want with other members from the association.





Social farm impact: a rural development tool that helps small-scale farms to be socially and economically sustainable. It promotes farmers' well-being by adding a stable, predictable element to their activities, increasing both their internal self-esteem and external recognition, which in turn improves their quality of life.

2.1. Experiences from the participant/farmer side

After the pilot, we asked for feedback and opinions about the 2-day experience. The feedback was not only positive and promising, but it was even touching. We were able to form such a close and open-minded community, that we are really hopeful about the sequel in the near future in some way. In some cases the pilot had such an impact on the participants that they posted about the positive experience before we could ask for it.

2.2. Some of the feedback

„Amazing place! They have interesting programs for all ages. Also, they make great products and support disadvantaged people by integrating them into society ♥„

"I had a wonderful time at Symbiosis and left inspired by the people I met. The highlight for me was the dignity of the people working there and how much pride everyone took in their activities on the farm. Hopefully there will be many more of these farms started all over the world." (Christine van Wyk: a South African student, who now studies in Hungary, at Gödöllő University of Agriculture and Life Sciences. She is interested in having a social farm one day, and volunteered on „Diverzitás” Public Benefit Foundation, which is similar to a social farm, situated in Gödöllő.)





„So far, we have talked little about the fact that we are developing our farm in order to involve young people in state care in the longer term.

Grow and work together with us.

We often think that we have to invent and build everything starting from the very beginning, but in the case of our farm, previous good practices are extremely important.

That is why we visited BaráthegyiMajorság, Miskolc, operated by the Symbiosis Foundation. We also visited the cheese factory, the juice factory and the pottery workshop. They shared with us their own concept of the social farm and why these social enterprises are important.

And why?

Because the people employed here become tax-paying citizens, who can receive active support from passive support.”(Budapest Bike Maffia members: they deliver food to disadvantaged people, mostly to homeless people and mostly with bike, but they have a lot of innovative attitude-grabbing and attitude-changing actions as well in connection with giving food to disadvantaged people. They plan to employ disabled people on their already existing horticulture.)



„Thank you very much for the contact information, I will definitely visit the Kemence Foundation soon, and it is possible that others will arise. Of course, you will also be a useful contact.

I felt good and I think we received new and useful information, but I think it's more the atmosphere in „Baráthegy”Major that you can't experience anywhere else. I congratulate you on this as well, and thank you for giving us the relaxed, friendly atmosphere. Thanks for the effort you put in!” (SzűcsPéter: individual biofarmer in Kocs, where he sells the organic vegetables and fruits he produces as a local producer.)



„We participated in a study trip in Miskolc in the BaráthegyiMajorság. László Jakubinyi, the president of the Social Farm Association, gave us presentations and a practical demonstration in a "Wonderland", the social farm of the Symbiosis Foundation! Its goal is how to provide jobs for disadvantaged workers by creating and operating social farms. We would like to thank Laci for welcoming us and enriching us with great experiences!” (LÉDA Social Association members: they provide agricultural consultancy as well as work with vegetable and fruit trading. They are planning to start to operate their farm as a social farm, they were also interested in the joining the Hungarian Social Farm Association in the future.)







3. The Social Return on Investment (SROI)

3.1. The process of the SROI

We adjusted our SROI research to our long-term, and at the same time, most important goal, so we measured and examined the investments in creating a minimum-sized social farm by using the method. Regarding the questionnaires, we first asked the farmers participating in the pilot event, we used 2 different questionnaires for this purpose: one was filled out by farmers who do not yet know/have no experience in the world of social farms (therefore, it was filled out at the very beginning of the 2-day program), the other questionnaire was addressed to those who already know the beneficial properties of social farms and/or have experience, 1 of the participants in the program was such a farmer (Márk from Kemence Association). Both questionnaires were about the beneficial effects on the well-being of farmers working on social farms, the thought(prospective) or experienced(retrospective) answers had to be indicated on a scale of 5. After the program, the two questionnaires were sent to additional potential respondents.

Beside the 2 questionnaires for the farmers, there was also 2 questionnaires for the local community. These questionnaires were also about the advantages of a social farm but from a local community member's aspect: someone's opinion on the advantages, who has already known about the operation of a social farm, or even become involved in a social farm in some way, and the other (the prospective one) was about someone's opinion on the advantages of a social farm, who hasn't been involved yet, by imagining to start a social farm or getting involved into one.

Regarding the forecasting template, we added information about the costs and time investments of a minimum-sized social farm, starting from an already existing farm with two farmers(not disabled). The main concept was the assumption that the farmers and the farm are going to become accredited employers after the first year, as they employ disadvantaged people. This would mean a significant amount of state subsidy for them, which would cover the costs of the disabled employers' salary. This helps to focus on the tools, production and the employees' well-being, and of course helps to become a sustainable farm, which on its own contributes to the workers' well-being.

Firstly, we thought, that seeking for pilot participants will be the most challenging of the whole project, but it surprisingly went really quick and well, the number of the participants reached the maximum capacity of the guesthouse on the social farm serving as the location of the program, within a few days. We believe, that the connection with the other association members helped us a lot, just like the social media posts. As we experienced through this program(too), the social media is one of the best ways not only to invite people for programs but also to ask for help and to share the experiences of the different projects, meetings and programs about the farm, especially if the given social media interface has many followers.





3.2. The SROI outcomes

The prospective SROI Impact Map for the Social Farming SIs is given in Table 1 below. In addition to 12 farmers and farm businesses and 120 farm workers, around 90 members of the wider community are forecast to benefit from this SIs over a 5-year benefit period.

Value generation arising from this SIs is fairly evenly spread across four kinds of wellbeing - Social and Community Wellbeing (23%), Relational Wellbeing (20%), Economic Wellbeing (30%) and Personal Wellbeing (25%). Environmental Wellbeing also features (1%) through the increased understanding of food production and farming life expected to be generated by the SIs for the wider community.

The economic wellbeing benefits that are forecast to be generated for farmers arise through not only prospective increases in farm revenue as a result of social farming and diversification activities, but also the additional opportunities that are likely to be generated through the social farming SIs – for farmers in the form of learning, innovation and access to training and other sources of knowledge, and for farm workers in being more readily able to join or be retained in the local labour market.

While these economic benefits which have secondary implications for wellbeing might be expected from a social farming initiative, the extent of additional wellbeing impacts for individuals and communities is perhaps more surprising, and demonstrates the power of the social farming model in improving the lives and fortunes of the agricultural community, and those adjacent to it. While focussed in and around farming, the social farming SIs is clearly expected to have a broader reach of impacts into the surrounding rural community, and in so doing address a number of observed challenges by generating greater respect and understanding of farmers and affording opportunities for international networking between farmers, thus opening the door to the generation of new knowledge and ideas.

And despite the inherent social focus of this SI, the potential for it to improve the lives of farmers, their families and their workers shows up strongly in the findings – with personal and mental wellbeing impacts in the form of confidence, engagement, purpose and self-esteem helping to confirm the case for investing in social farming as a grassroots innovation to address the challenges around farmer wellbeing.





Table 1: Hungary Forecast SROI Impact Map (SI: Social Farming)

Impact Pathway	Outcome	Stakeholders (No.)	Indicator/s of Change	Outcome Change (%)	(ID No.) Financial proxy (Value €/Unit)	Present Value (€)	Present Value (%)
Social and Community Wellbeing	Improved social responsibility (social and environmental awareness)	Farmers (12); community members (90)	I am more aware of social and environmental issues facing society and my local community	77%	(18) Annual price difference of buying food from a farm shop compared to the supermarket (€ 349.00 per person p.a)	€ 37,448	23%
	Improved social wellbeing	Farmers (12); farm workers (120)	I often help the community or get involved in community events	91%	(13) Average annual household spend on recreation and culture (€ 843.00 per household p.a)	€ 139,247	
	Improved community cohesion and collective awareness	Local community (90)	There are now more opportunities to participate in local community events and initiatives; there is a greater sense of connection and confidence in the community	90%	(13) Average annual household spend on recreation and culture (€ 843.00 per household p.a)	€ 93,898	
	Improved links between farmers and local communities	Farmers (12); farm workers (120); local community (90)	There are strong links between local farmers and the local community	79%	(13) Average annual household spend on recreation and culture (€ 843.00 per household p.a)	€ 202,019	
Relational Wellbeing	Increased respect and understanding of farmers in the community	Farmers (12); farm family members (12); local community (90)	I feel respected by people in the local community; I feel understood by people in the local community	80%	(8) Valuation for improved emotional well-being arising through the Common Assessment Framework (€ 400.51 per person p.a)	€ 50,072	20%
	Increased national and international networking with other farmers	Farmers (12)	I am networking more with other farmers in Hungary; I am networking more with other farmers internationally	89%	(15) Cost of a networking / training event and one hour of time devoted to networking at the average hourly earnings rate	€ 13,212	





					(€ 48.00 per person p.a)		
	Improved sense of trust and belonging	Farmers (12); farm workers (120); farm family members (12); local community (90)	I feel close to people in my local area	87%	(4) Value to an individual (25-45) of feeling like they belong in their neighbourhood (€ 1,242.75 per person p.a)	€ 345,909	
Economic Wellbeing	Improved life and work skills	Farmers (12); farm workers (120); farm family members (12)	I have opportunities for new learning and innovation in my business	84%	(9) Cost of employability skills training in regular sessions with counsellor / coach (€ 899.58 per person)	€ 38,815	31%
	Improved accessibility to training and other sources of knowledge	Farmers (12)	I have greater accessibility to training and other sources of knowledge	84%	(9) Cost of employability skills training in regular sessions with counsellor / coach (€ 899.58 per person)	€ 3,235	
	Improved business resilience through succession planning and quality trade marks	Farm businesses (12)	My farm business is resilient to external market or policy factors	80%	(20) Utility bill savings through increased resource efficiency (per farm business) (€ 68.99 per farm)	€ 236.26	
	Improved revenues through diversification	Farm businesses (12)	I have been able to generate additional revenue through diversification of farm activities	69%	(5) Value of increased and safeguarded sales for agriculture and forestry through LEADER (AXIS 3) (€ 725.31 per farm)	€ 2,142.28	
	Improved financial situation	Farmers (12); farm workers (120); farm family members (12)	My farm revenue has increased as a result of my social farming activities or status	73%	(22) Employment incentive costs (€ 2,157.00 per person p.a)	€ 311,802	





	Improved reintegration into labour market	Farm workers (120)	There are now more opportunities for farm workers to join or be retained in the labour market	79%	(22) Employment incentive costs (per person p.a)	€ 281,191	
Personal Wellbeing	Self-esteem	Farmers (12); farm workers (120); farm family members (12)	I feel optimistic about my future	80%	(6) Cost of Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) to build psychological resilience and self esteem (€ 765.18 per person p.a)	€ 121,216	25%
	Improved mental wellbeing	Farmers (12); farm workers (120); farm family members (12)	I feel optimistic about my future	80%	(6) Cost of Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) to build psychological resilience and self esteem (€ 765.18 per person p.a)	€ 121,216	
	Improved competence, engagement and purpose	Farmers (12); farm workers (120)	I feel optimistic about my future	80%	(33) Cost of BSY professional development course in self awareness (€ 145.89 per person p.a)	€ 21,185	
	Improved self confidence	Farm workers (12)	I will try something even if there is a chance it might not work	86%	(33) Cost of BSY professional development course in self awareness (€ 150.00 per person p.a)	€ 21,287	
	Reduced social isolation	Farmers (12); farm workers (120); farm family members (12)	I feel close to people in my local area	88%	(4) Value to an individual (25-45) of feeling like they belong in their neighbourhood (CCP) (€ 1,242.75 per person p.a)	€ 216,557	
Environmental Wellbeing	Increased understanding and awareness of food production and farming life	Local community (90)	I have a good understanding of how food is produced and marketed	55%	(18) Annual price difference of buying food from a farm shop compared to the supermarket (€ 349.00 per person p.a)	€ 23,756	1%
Total Benefits						€2,044,444	100%
Total Investment						€804,622	
Benefit-Investment Ratio (BIR)						€2.54 : 1	





4. Policy paper

4.1. Professional policy proposal- Policy paper

The social farm provides services that promote mental and physical well-being and the transfer of knowledge. Our primary goal is that, by supplementing domestic legislation, a regulatory environment can be created in Hungary that promotes the fulfillment of the social function of agriculture and develops the self-sufficiency of disadvantaged groups. Our goal is to strengthen the positive vision of the local farmers, and by activating disadvantaged groups, we connect them to the mainstream of the local economy, thus contributing to the strengthening of the economic potential of the countryside.

The social farm initiative meets the international trends and recommendations in the field of social responsibility of agriculture, as well as the various domestic rural development initiatives. Our proposal fully serves the practice-oriented implementation of the CXXII. of 2013. act on the mission of the law on the transfer of agricultural and forestry land, the introduction of which already uses the term "production community".

Our proposal for the creation of social farms does not initiate the creation of a new organizational form, but tries to create the operational legal framework conditions for the social aspects of multifunctional agriculture.

The social farms definition could be the following:

The SOCIAL FARM is a form of cooperative farming that works in accordance with social and solidarity principles, for the sake of shaping social and environmental attitudes, which carries out agricultural production, processing, and service provider activities with the involvement of disadvantaged people; and performs complementary activities related to agriculture for a wider range of society. The different types of social farms: Rehabilitation Farm, Care Farm, Social Farm.

- Rehabilitation Farm, or farm for social/rehabilitation purposes: the main characteristic of it is the involvement of disadvantaged people by employing them within the framework of a social institution.

- Caring Farm: the main characteristic of it is the involvement of disadvantaged people by those who carry out agricultural activities, at the place of agricultural activity.

- Social Farm, or cooperative farm: the main characteristic of it is attitude formation for a specific group of people and/or involvement in employment of people who carry out agricultural activities at the place of agricultural activity.





Socialfarms = the source of mental and physical well-being and attitude formation

Definition	Device system
→ based on the principle of social solidarity,	→ involving/benefiting disadvantaged people
→ form of cooperative management	→ agricultural producer, processor, service provider
→ which also has an attitude-forming role	→ informative and educational activities

The primary target group of social farms consists of two subgroups:

- a) Persons in need of care who are unable to improve their situation without help (disadvantaged people, people with altered workability, children placed in the child protection system, convicts, refugees and patronized people). According to their characteristics and needs, training, employment, socialization, resocialization, habilitation, and rehabilitation services can be provided to them.
- b) Among other things, environmental education, development of knowledge and skills related to equal opportunities, and health promotion services can be provided to the younger generation (kindergarten students, students of educational institutions, and volunteers). The secondary target group of social farms is the wider community, whose members can find educational, leisure or employment benefits in social farming. The services that can be provided to them: development of knowledge and skills related to environmental awareness, sustainability, equal opportunities, opportunity-creating programs, prevention, lifestyle, health promotion.

The operator of a social farm can be an individual entrepreneur, a business association and an individual company, a primary producer, a social association, a body appointed by the Government to perform the tasks of maintaining social institutions, a local government, an association of local governments (state operator), a non-governmental organization (foundation, association), ecclesiastical legal entity.

The quality of life of the target groups can be significantly improved by the activities carried out on the social farm. Along the dimensions of Rahman's complex quality of life model, the development of family and friendship relationships, emotional well-being, and the feeling of belonging to the local community can be formed; improvement in health; improvement of the financial situation; the balanced, green environment strengthens the feeling of personal security; farms improve the quality of the environment in the case of environmentally conscious or organic farming. Social farming can also bring benefits to farmers. The farm becomes more open to the outside world, with groups and individuals regularly coming to visit or work. Caring, leisure and educational services can offer the economy new sources of income. Farmers can make new connections and friendships and learn new skills by coordinating the work of farm helpers.





For the new activities, the infrastructure must be created, mentally prepared to receive the new arrivals, time must be spent to the planning and implementation of the activities. It may be expedient to precisely demarcate the spaces open to the farm helpers and the private spaces of the farmer (family). Social farms can create new job opportunities for the countryside and reveal its values to the outside world.

The legal framework for the implementation of the complex model of the social farm is currently not available in our country.

The key aspects of the problem:

- I. Definition of social farm: Legal incorporation of the social farm's definition
- II. Recognition of "social farm service" as an agricultural (supplementary) activity
- III. Recognition of the Social Farm community as a group performing agricultural activities operated by organizations/institutions bringing together social and other vulnerable groups with the involvement of the target group (for example: community of small producers of disadvantaged people with special legal status = rehabilitation farm)
- IV. The solution to the land use and land utilization of the Social Farm community - which creates opportunities for the operation of social farms

The primary goal of establishing legal environment favourable to the social farm is the creation of a new system of economic enhancing tools, which, by expanding its activities, benefits both existing farmers and organizations that assist disadvantaged target groups and perform other basic social activities.

Our aim is to make the rural environment attractive, to involve the disadvantaged in passive care and to spread the active, work-based vision widely.

According to our vision, the expansion of the number of social farms and their development can bring the following more important results: the retaining power of the countryside increases; appreciation of farmers; the quality of life of the disadvantaged improves; the national expansion of social farms can generate job creation for thousands of people; opportunities for rehabilitation and employment of social, child protection, health service providers and institution maintainers are expanded; commitment to nature widens; social integration is developing significantly in practice. We hope to be able to report on hundreds of social farms within a few years.

In order to achieve this goal, in addition to the legal proposals, we suggest the establishment of social farm "startup" support; starting a system to help institutionalize the presentation of good examples; we also established the Hungarian Social Farm Association.

The primary goal of the association, according to our plans, is to operate and develop the network of social farms and to represent the domestic social farms. In order to ensure and communicate quality activities, the Hungarian Social Farm Certification Trademark was registered.





4.2. Legislative amendment proposals

The list below shows our "most pressing" and important proposals for changes in agricultural regulations:

1. Proposal: placement in the Land Transfer Act (Act CXXII of 2013 on the transfer of agricultural and forestry land)

- the definition of agricultural activity (e.g. matching the list of additional activities) as a social farm service activity

-regarding the exceptions for land lease holders ("does not qualify as transfer of use"), the inclusion of the social farm as an organization that combines a form of activity as a fourth actor among the exceptions

- In connection with this, it would be advisable (in the framework of the 38/2014. legislation (II. 24.)) to settle the rules for the recognition and registration of social farms within the framework of a government decree or within the framework of another new decree.

2. Proposal: on the basis of the strategic plan of Hungary's „KAP” 2023-2027, which supports solidarity farms and solidarity farming, Solidarity farming should be included in the subsidy decree, when defining the range of beneficiaries. An excellent opportunity to lay the foundation for the development process.

3. Proposal: In the small producer decree (FVM decree 52/2010. (IV. 30.)) on the conditions of small producer food production, production and sale), social farms should be included alongside small producer individuals as a group of "small producer communities", where e.g. at least 50% of the involved people are disadvantaged. Therefore, to extend the scope of the small producer regulation to persons operating social farms. With all of this, the operating conditions of the rehabilitation farms would be created!

4. Proposal: the social farm and its details should be defined in the upcoming Plant Regulation Decree. It is an important opportunity to clarify unclear questions.

5. Proposal: during the amendment of the Hygiene Decree (FVM-EüM joint decree 64/2007 (VII. 23.) on the food hygiene conditions for placing food of animal origin on the market and food production at the point of sale), there may be a chance to in connection with designated marginal activity, include the reference to social farms and to broaden it to other product ranges.

