

# CASE STUDY

## Irregular work in agriculture -Humus Job (Italy)



<b>Project acronym &amp; number</b>	<b>FARMWELL</b>
<b>Project title</b>	Improving farmers' wellbeing through social innovation
<b>Project coordinator</b>	E40 Group
<b>Grant Agreement No</b>	101000797

<b>Deliverable / Work package number</b>	D.3.3./WP3
<b>Date</b>	30.09.2023
<b>Document Type</b>	R: Report
<b>Lead beneficiary   Primary author(s)</b>	E40   Lucia Palmioli, UNIFI
<b>Document version</b>	V02
<b>Distribution level</b>	PU: Public



## Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>THE SOCIAL INNOVATION</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1.1</b>	<b>Key social challenges addressed &amp; objective of the social innovation</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.2</b>	<b>Activities and stakeholders</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.3</b>	<b>Main outcomes of the activity</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.4</b>	<b>Main recommendations</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>THE PILOT ACTION: THE IRREGULAR WORK IN AGRICULTURE</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2.1</b>	<b>What was the pilot about?</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1.1	Purpose	5
2.1.2	Running the pilot	6
2.1.3	Target group	8
<b>2.2</b>	<b>The main lessons from the pilot</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2.3</b>	<b>The main impact of the pilot</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>THE SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT (SROI)</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3.1</b>	<b>Exploring change</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Evidencing change</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>3.1</b>	<b>Valuing change</b>	<b>12</b>
3.1.1	Evaluative SROI findings	12
3.1.2	Forecast SROI findings	19
<b>4</b>	<b>IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND FARMING SUPPORT</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>The Challenge &amp; Needs – What is the situation?</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Support framework – What is needed?</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>4.3</b>	<b>Recommendations – What needs to be done to realise the support needed?</b>	<b>25</b>





## 1 The social innovation

The social innovation [Humus Job](#) offers farm owners an alternative to cooperate with each other and recruit workforce by sharing costs, investments and equipment. The most innovative aspect is the utilization of a contractual network among farmers as a tool to prevent irregular employment and create and foster enabling conditions for farms and, accordingly, for farm workers too. Additionally, differently than usual, Humus Job was founded by young people living in northern Italy, where irregular work, caporalato and labor exploitation are strong but less evident than southern Italy, and it was designed to address the problem throughout the Italian territory, that is to work as a network able to reach companies from north to south.

Humus Job is a social enterprise that aims to regularise work through job sharing. It offers farm businessmen a network to cooperate among each other and to legally recruit workforce by sharing costs for employment, besides sharing other costs too, investments and equipment.

It promotes a network contract, formally foreseen by the Italian regulation, that realizes a model of cooperation between enterprises that allows enterprises, while maintaining independence, autonomy, and speciality, to implement shared projects and objectives, with a view to increasing innovative capacity and competitiveness in the market. It is up to the enterprises to decide which means of production to put into sharing: they could be equipment, tools, machineries, and workforce. With reference to this last, one of the company of the network directly hires the worker which is then shared with the other according to a secondment contract. The sharing of workforce is based on a job sharing platform accessible to the farms members of the network where workers register their skills, previous experiences, and place of living and farms could look for the required competences.

Humus job coordinates the network, follows the bureaucratic aspects, moderated the meetings among the network members, look for new companies to be included in the network to cover as much territory and skills as possible.

The most innovative aspect is the utilization of a contractual network among farmers as a preventive mechanism to tackle irregular employment, creating and fostering enabling conditions for farms and, accordingly, for farm workers too.

The most novel aspect of this innovative start-up is the posting of workers (job sharing); besides sharing costs, investments, equipment and risks through the network, farms that are part of it also share trained and regular workforce. Humus Job allows farmers to benefit from a greater continuity of regular employed (trained) workers throughout the year and, at once, it ensures workers regular contracts and a stabler employment.





In addition, Humus Job offers its farms the possibility to get the "100% Ethical work brand", hence a showcase and other dedicated channels for their products.

### **1.1 Key social challenges addressed & objective of the social innovation**

Humus Job is a social enterprise that aims to tackle unlawful practices and irregular work in agriculture by applying farming contractual networks as a tool of collaboration and cooperation among farmers.

The main goal of Humus Job is to promote and boost ethical and sustainable work in agriculture in Italy, by intersecting job supply and job demand between workers and farms, and by selling its services to farms.

### **1.2 Activities and stakeholders**

The social innovation promotes the establishment of the Network Contracts among farmers that allow them to share the means of production, included the workforce, reducing the costs of regularisation. The worker, on the other hand, has a regular contract, with all the associated rights, and the possibility of greater work continuity. As intermediary, Humus Job takes care of the administrative aspects of the sharing mechanism.

Besides the three founders, the Key stakeholders involved in the social innovation are of two main sorts:

- on one side there are almost 40 agribusiness and farms coming from different areas of Italy which belong to the network of Humus Job. These companies are provided with the opportunity to employ trained personnel and to benefit from support in bureaucratic procedures.
- on the other side we have farm workers who have the chance to be trained, and to work safely and more regularly thanks to the seasonal circularity linked to different productions.

### **1.3 Main outcomes of the activity**

The application of the social innovation positively impacts of both farmers and farm workers.

Farm owners overcome the mental pressure coming from the high cost of the labour; feel more serene when using a worker already trained, also avoiding the mental stress caused by the daily struggling to find trained workers; overcome the social isolation, boosting the solidarity and the ability to work together. At farm workers level, the social innovation offers them long-lasting regular contracts, which help them to have a dignified life. The workers improve their physical well-being, see their rights respected, and experience acceptance in the community.





#### **1.4 Main recommendations**

Farmers and practitioners may use this social innovation as an example of how to stimulate farmers to rethink their way of cooperating with each other, to tackle the challenge of lack of skilled labourers and overcome isolation, by joining the Humus Job network. On the one hand, the network would allow to minimize labour and equipment costs for farms and on the other hand it would offer opportunities of regular and long-lasting employment.





## 2 The pilot action: The irregular work in agriculture

### 2.1 What was the pilot about?

#### 2.1.1 Purpose

Humus Job is the social innovation that the Italian team has been testing throughout the second phase of the FARMWELL project and that has been implemented at the pilot, in the peer-to-peer exchange among stakeholders. The aim was to bring the social innovation closer to farmers and the farming community, hence, to inspire them on how that social innovation can be used or implemented. Since the pilot also offered the opportunity to collect data from stakeholders that would inform the SROI forecasting exercise, during the meeting we hypothesised the scaling up of Humus Job (SI) in conjunction with the Italian farmers organisation Coldiretti. This allowed us to roll out more widely the SI, while asking farmers to project themselves into this scenario.

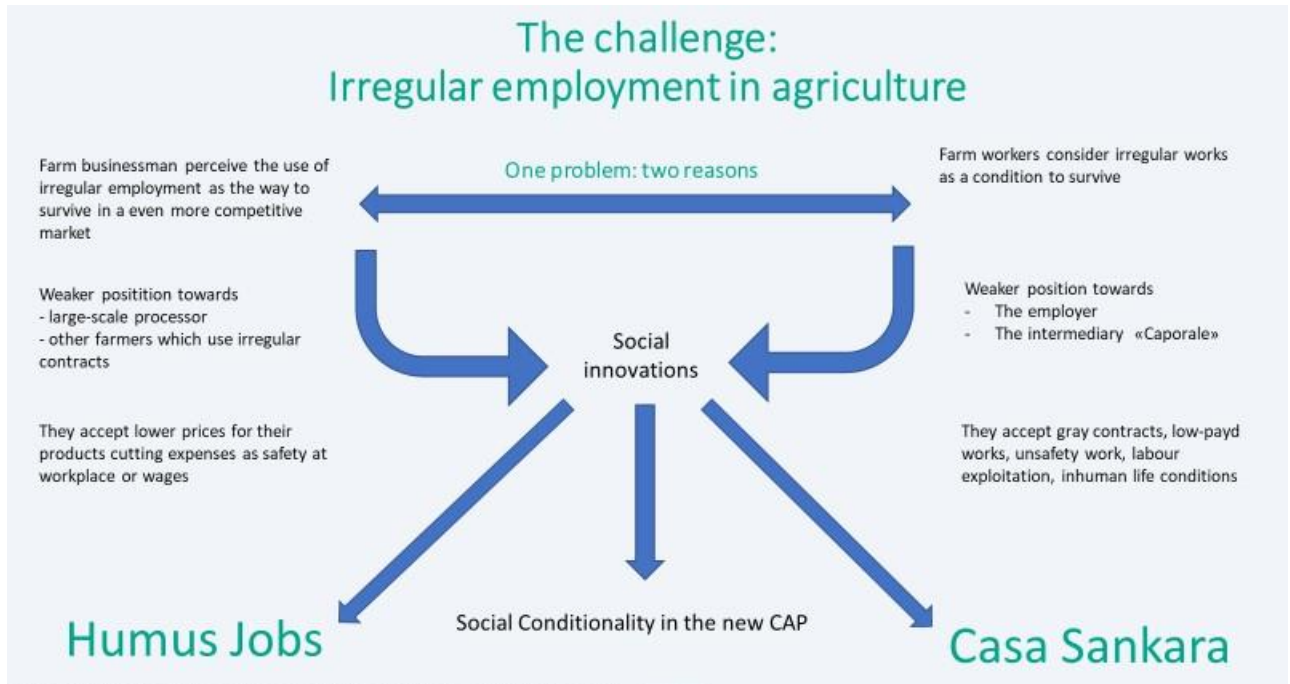
In parallel, we took advantage of the two-day pilot activities to bring another social innovation closer both to Humus Job and farmers too. This second social innovation is Ghetto Out-Casa Sankara.

**Humus Job** is the first Agricultural Job Sharing platform that allows small companies to share labour through territorial network contracts. It was born in 2018, when a network of farms in Piemonte, Northern Italy, met Humus Job, at the time a spin-off of a non-profit organization working in the field of migration and social inclusion, to begin planning a way to give migrants that were hosted in the newborn Reception Center a possibility to get an employment in some local companies. Although born to support migrants, the enterprise is targeted to farms and workers, irrespective of their nationality



The choice of focusing stakeholders' attention on these two social innovations comes from the fact that they tackle the same problem of irregular work in agriculture but from two different perspectives, the one of the farmers (producers) and the one of the farmworkers, as shown in the diagram below. It shows, on the left side, the reasons behind farmers' appeal to employ workers irregularly linked to the need of cutting costs to survive on the market. On the right side, the reasons behind worker's acceptance of irregular contracts, as unique condition for them to survive. The former could find a potential solution in the social innovation promoted by Humus Job, and the latter on the one proposed by Ghetto Out Casa Sankara.

The Italian team presented both social innovations as it felt important that both parties (farmers and farm workers) were aware of the other party's reasons, for a full knowledge of the problem and also a different perception of their own social challenges.



### 2.1.2 Running the pilot

Our pilot action was based on two-day meeting to enable participants to experience elements of two social innovations: Humus Job and Ghetto Out-Casa Sankara. Alongside this, data were collected from participants' feedback and group activities to inform the so-called Forecasting SROI (Social Return on Investment method) on the scaling up of Humus Job in conjunction with Coldiretti organisation.

On the understanding that the Forecasting SROI was focused on Humus Job only (its scaling up in conjunction with Coldiretti), through the two-daypilot meeting, we saw the opportunity to bring two differently target-oriented social innovations closer to farmers at once.

The methodology used for piloting the social innovation of Humus Job to farmers consisted in a peer2peer learning executed through presentations and working groups. First of all, the University of Pisa introduced FARMWELL and the aim of the pilot. After that, one of the founders of Humus Job illustrated their social innovation, and their intervention was followed up by a farmer, a member of Humus Job, who shared her own experience in the network. Before starting the working group, time has been left to participants for a free discussion on the presentations done and networking.



We divided the participants into three groups of 6/7 members, with two-fold aim. One was to gather information on the more general aspect related to the phenomenon of irregular work in agriculture, including its impacts on farmers, farm workers and the wider community; Concurrently, we gathered data to inform the forecasting SROI on the scaling up of Humus Job in conjunction with Coldiretti. In this respect, Coldiretti was mainly used as a means to ask participants, which were Coldiretti associated for the most part, to project themselves into this collaborative network, envisaging both enabling conditions and barriers, advantages and disadvantages. The duration of the group work was 2 hours, and it was divided into three activities. To conclude the group work, we planned a 30 min session in plenary, during which each rapporteur presented their own group key results, while the moderator collected inputs by presenting only the highlights.

As previously mentioned, the agenda included a visit to Ghetto Out-Casa Sankara the morrow (21 October 2022). Therefore, at the closing of the piloting activities (20 October 2022), we briefly introduced the next day visit by sharing a video from Ghetto Out with the attendees. The field visit, based on the method of a rapid fieldwork approach, allowed researchers, farmers and farmers organisations staff members to learn about the reality while walking and engaging with its local actors and owners, then asking questions, prompting discussion, and sharing feedback.

## Agenda

### October 20<sup>th</sup> of 2022

12:30-14:00 Lunch

14:00 - 14:30 Introduction rounds

14:30 - 14:45 FARMWELL - What is it, What we do

14:45 - 15:10 Social conditionality in the new CAP

15:10 - 15:25 From theory to practice - Humus Job

15:25 - 15:35 Concrete case: Soc. Coop. "Il Germinale"

15:35 - 16:00 Break

16:00 - 18:00 Group work

18:00 - 18:10 Break

18:10 - 18:40 Plenary and discussion

18:40 - 19:00 Introduction to the second day - Ghetto Out-Casa Sankara

19:30 Dinner

### October 21<sup>st</sup> of 2022

9:00 - 12:00 Visit to Ghetto Out-Casa Sankara







### 2.1.3 Target group

There were 12 farmers participating in the pilot, three farm workers, two representatives of farmers' organization, a researcher on food law, other than two members of the social innovation Humus Job and the four components of the research team of the partners organizations, University of Pisa and Coldiretti. We had both young farmers and more veteran farmers, coming from different parts of the country selected by the farmers' organization partner of the project, Coldiretti, based on the interest shown on the topic addressed.

It is not possible to state who or which farmer group may implement the social innovation we piloted as none of the farmers explicitly reported that.

## 2.2 The main lessons from the pilot

At the end of the two-days pilot, we asked the attendees (farmers and other stakeholders) to compile a short survey online (created through Mentimeter) to gather feedback on the meeting and understand what they thought of the learning process. They were expected to resume feedback on a scale from 1 to 10 for each question.

Questions: 1. This meeting provided me with new knowledge; 2. The approach and interventions of the speakers were helpful in the learning process; 3. The topics covered were consistent with my working needs and expectations; 4. The topics covered were close to the real problems; 5. The approach used was favourable to the involvement of the participants; 6. I would recommend similar meetings to colleagues; 7. I would attend other meetings like this one). Nearly half of the participants responded to the Mentimeter question format. The results of audience response on the learning experience showed a mean of 6.86 satisfaction.

## 2.3 The main impact of the pilot

Participation in the two-day pilot provided an opportunity for participants to exchange views among colleagues, experts, and researchers that was greatly appreciated. The reactions, even days later, reported by the attending agricultural entrepreneurs, particularly women, were of enthusiasm with respect to both the topic addressed and the experience itself. Some of them reported that is not usual to join meeting to deal with social well-being; other pointed out that they were not fully aware of the conditions in which irregular workers live; other highlighted that they learnt about a topic, the social conditionality, which they were not aware of. Very positive feedback has been expressed by women farmers participating at the pilot. The staff of the Female Movement of Coldiretti, which helped selecting the female participants before the pilot, reported that the women farmers who participated returned "enthusiastic about the experience". One woman farmer commented on her participation saying that it was not only





very interesting for its contents but also important for her well-being since she hadn't been able to find time for herself, just for herself, for many years.

On the other side, some members of Ghetto Out Casa Sankara, representative of migrant workers, who joined the first day of the pilot and then guided the group in the field visit at their premises, pointed out the satisfaction of having had a discussion which dealt with their needs saying that “being here today together, farmers and farm workers, to talk about this is already a big result”.

Further, participants agreed that the scaling up of Humus Job in conjunction with Coldiretti would represent a source of information (knowledge sharing among farmers, and training) for farmers and it would work as a showcase for their products; furthermore, it would speed up the workforce recruitment on the part of farmers, representing a relief for farmers.

Among the indirect impacts, it emerged that the collaboration between Humus Job and Coldiretti could allow farmers to establish greater links with neighbouring companies or with other companies throughout the regional and/or national territory. According to the participants, this would occur when farmers need to plan a rota of shared workforce to fulfil their individual needs, implying collaboration and cooperation among farmers and farmworkers; through the creation of new food chains and products exchange among farmers. At community level, an indirect impact would result from the support that the social innovation could provide in terms of work safety and social acceptance of (migrant) workers.

Among the indirect impacts resulting from the collaboration between Humus Job and Coldiretti, farmers mentioned the potential decrease in the recognizability of the specificity and values of Humus Job within a large organization as Coldiretti (negative impact for Humus Job).

Thus, it is possible to state that the pilot action positively impacted on physical well-being of farmers, which had the possibility to take some time for themselves; it contributed to their mental well-being, presenting them alternatives to one of the most critical challenge they perceived, such as the overcoming the high competitiveness of the market and the bureaucratic burden in employing regularly; in terms of social well-being, farmers could share values, ideas, practice, and learn about a social innovation which could help them not only with their practical problem of workforce hiring but also overcoming farmers' loneliness and isolation.

From the debate among the participants on further impacts that a collaboration between Humus Job and Coldiretti could have on the local agricultural community and at an institutional level, it emerged the following:





- Recognized value of the network as a best practice that both farmers and consumers, then the wider community, can benefit from. This would result in the guarantee of a safe, sustainable and ethical food for consumers, then an increased liability of the farms.
- Institutional support (farmers organisations, policymakers) to strengthen and widespread a model of corporate social responsibility (CSR) among farms that would be socially accountable to themselves, their stakeholders and the public.
- Economic movement generated from the dynamics promoted by the network (trained workforce, increased in the hires volume)
- Potential agromafia (mafia infiltration in the agricultural sector) meddling in territorial affairs where the network acts.
- Improved reputation and increased renown of the farmers organisation Coldiretti that would result from a collaboration with Humus Job and its ethical brand.





### 3 The Social Return on Investment (SROI)

The SROI methodology, which incorporates social, economic, and environmental values into financial terms, was used to analyze the case study. This framework takes a holistic approach to evaluate the impact of social innovation on people and is used to make decisions about resource allocation. There are two types of SROI: evaluative and forecasting. Evaluative SROI is conducted on established organizations and social innovations. In contrast, SROI forecasting is conducted on potential activities, estimating the social return on investment for a start-up or social innovation.

The present study focuses on the evaluative SROI analysis of Humus Job, and it is guided by fundamental research questions such as: what can be the impact of the network contract on the farms and farm businesses that adopt it? Does this impact the created network and the social return on investment? What is involved in having a 100% ethical certified company? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

To undertake the analysis, the research team first examined the theoretical background and the services offered by Humus Job along with its network. Stakeholders were then involved in screening and validating the possible outcomes that the social innovation could generate. This approach helped in identifying how social innovation can generate a social return on investment by linking financial proxies to the outcomes.

#### 3.1 Exploring change

The Journey of Change (JoC) serves as an SROI (social return on investment) instrument that depicts the effects generated by the analysed activities. It maps out the connections between the resources employed (inputs), the activities executed (outputs), and the resulting outcomes for the stakeholders.

Through a collaborative approach involving stakeholder engagement and information gathering, the JoC proved crucial in determining the tangible outcomes of the Humus Job innovation.

Examining social innovation began with developing a Journey of Change (Table 1) by the research team, which was later refined with a second JoC, made in collaboration with the practice members. This collaborative effort served to validate and refine the outcomes identified in the first phase of analysis. The final JoC was generated by comparing the two versions and extrapolating the most significant material outcomes for the social innovation in question. This analysis was validated through a comparison with the research group at the University of Gloucestershire (UGLOS). One of the most significant challenges faced in this exercise was to present and clarify the JoC to practice group participants, but this was effectively overcome thanks to their cooperation from the outset of the drafting process. With the help of the stakeholders and the UGLOS group, the final draft of the outcomes was





reached. The exercise emphasized the importance of accounting for negative outcomes to gain a comprehensive understanding of social innovation and its limitations.

### 3.2 Evidencing change

The data collection process for the Humus Job survey was executed seamlessly, as the survey design effectively fulfilled its intended objectives without requiring any modifications. This enabled comprehensive coverage of all farmers within the Humus Job network, facilitating the acquisition of essential data necessary for computing the indicators related to measuring "outcome change" for each specific outcome.

A desk analysis of social innovation, in conjunction with data collected during the participatory group process, identified the relevant material outcomes. An outcomes-based survey was then developed to collect data for identifying the indicators to be linked to financial proxies for the final SROI calculation.

This survey was specifically designed to identify indicators within the Humus Job network context and better understand the social network dynamics among its members. The survey was distributed among Humus Job members soon after it was developed and collecting responses took longer than expected. Most likely, they did not perceive the relevance of compiling the survey, which did not benefit; indeed, additional information for research purposes. As a result, data collection was delayed and needed more time to be completed.

Efforts were made to fix the situation by contacting those in charge of social innovation and requesting maximum dissemination of the questionnaire, along with an invitation for completion to allow for full data collection and indicator identification. Eventually, it was possible to collect data from all farmers involved in the Humus Job network.

### 3.1 Valuing change

#### 3.1.1 Evaluative SROI findings

The summative SROI Impact Map for the Humus Job Social Innovation is given in the Table 2 below. A range of well-being impacts over a 4-year benefit period (2018-22) was generated for 40 farmers and 90 farm workers. The results were categorized into four impact pathways, and it was found that social and community well-being had the greatest impact on value generation and positive outcomes.

**Over half of the outcome benefits (58% of the total) are derived from distinct improvements in Social and Community Well-being for farmers and farmworkers.** Two significant benefits arise from these outcomes, primarily consisting of gaining acceptance and respect from farmers in the network and local community farm workers. When farmers gain respect and





acceptance within their peer group (i.e., other farmers), they become more willing to cooperate and support others, fostering a sense of belonging and unity. Rather than seeing other farmers as pure competitors, the respondents indicate the recognition benefits through respect and acceptance. Farm workers on the other hand, it is fair to assume that they are more concerned about their acceptance into the local communities in which they must live and work, while to a certain extent, residents in those communities recognise the potential for enrichment.

Closely related to this pathway we find that of **Relational Well-being, which impacts about 18 % of the total benefits.**

**Improved access to information and support services** can have a positive impact on both farmers and farm workers. By sharing knowledge and resources, they can **improve their relational well-being, as well as their sense of purpose and belonging.**

**Improvements in Economic Well-being make up the smallest proportion of outcome benefits (7% of the total) for the Humus Job network.** The Journey of Change study revealed two positive outcomes for farmers. Firstly, the backing provided by the network aided in enhancing their financial sustainability and expanding their range of activities, resulting in increased economic prosperity. Secondly, participating in a network firmly established within the local community facilitated the development of farmers' knowledge and skills through active engagement.

**Improvements in Personal Well-being (18% of the total) form another important area of outcome benefits generated.** This is not surprising given that the focus of the Humus Job innovation is to provide greater security for both farmers and farm workers and avoid the problems associated with hiring illegal agricultural labour. The Personal Well-being of farmers is enhanced through **improved emotional quality of life** as a result of involvement with the Humus Job network. In particular both farmers and farmworkers identified an improvement in well-being arising from **reduction in stress and anxiety.** For farmers, being part of a wider network was identified as providing support and reducing the bureaucratic burden associated with finding, hiring and sharing legal workers, while for farm workers it provided an added element of job security by being able to move from one location to another much more easily. By allowing workers to continue their employment in neighbouring companies that operate on different seasonal schedules, this approach indirectly addresses the issue of irregular work due to seasonality. This provides workers with a steady income for a significant portion, if not all, of the year.

Farmers also identified benefits associated with **improvements in self-esteem, confidence, and control** as a result of involvement with the Humus Job network. Such outcomes arise from





being part of a wider network that can assist in alleviating employment issues, enabling farmers to have more confidence in their ability to access quality workers when they are required.

It is worth noting **the presence of a negative outcome (- € 3,311), identified by a small proportion of respondents** over the project period indicating a decline in Economic Well-being resulting from increased costs and commitment to farm management, derived from their involvement with Humus Job. It seems evident that the negative outcome stems from the costs associated with Humus Job membership, which include upfront and management costs that reduce the economic resources accessible to farmers. The pilot study carried out in relation to the Humus Job innovation did identify some negative feedback from farmers who felt they were more than capable of addressing their own employment problems, were less likely to cooperate with others, and did not see the value in paying money to an organisation that they felt would not improve their current situation.





Table 1 – Humus Job JoC

**Humus Job – Journey of Change**

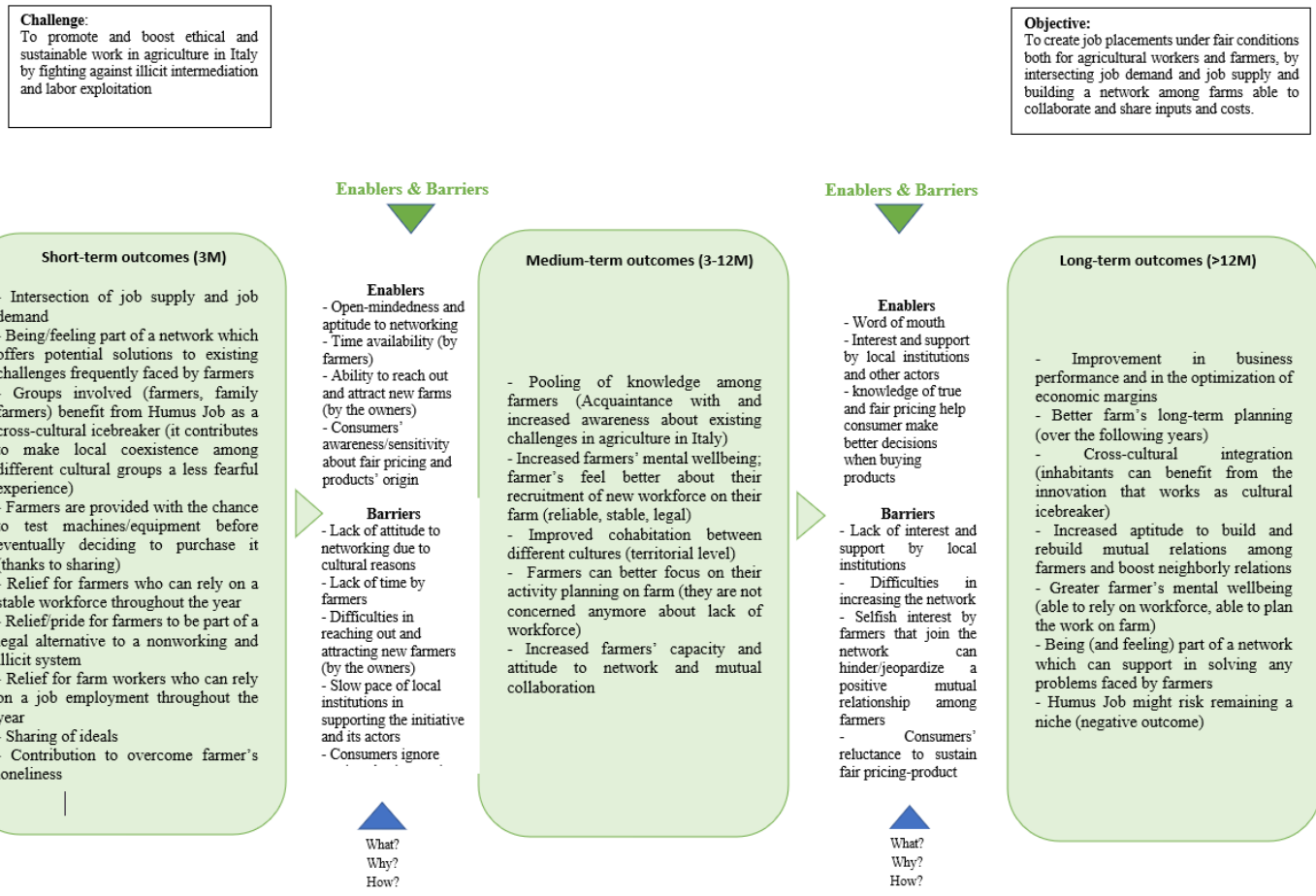






Table 2: Italy Evaluative SROI Impact Map (SI: Humus Job)

Impact Pathway	Outcome	Beneficiaries (No.)	Indicator/s of Change	Outcome Change (%)	Financial proxy (Value €/Unit)	Present Value (€)	Present Value (%)
Personal Well-being	Improved emotional well-being and reduction of anxiety	Farmers (40); Farm workers (45)	Extent to which stakeholder feels less anxious about their financial security / worry less about the problems of farming work	39%	Valuation for improved emotional well-being arising through the Common Assessment Framework (€771 per person p.a)	€ 42,969	18%
	Improved mental well-being through reduced bureaucratic burdens (hiring people)	Farmers (40)	Extent to which they spend less time on paperwork related to the employment of farm workers / has it easier to hire quality farm workers	49%	Well-being valuation of improved autonomy and control (€1,487 per person)	€ 14,874	
	Feeling worse about the situation being experienced	Farmers (40)	Extent to which they don't feel particularly satisfied with the way they are / don't think they're interesting / have no particularly happy memories of the past	28%	Value of mental health component of Quality-of-Life Adjusted year (NICE recommend expenditure of QALY is 30K) (€12,394 per person)	-€ 5,058	
	Improved quality of life through self-esteem, confidence and control	Farmers (40)	Extent to which they'll try something even though there is a possibility that it may not work - / feel in complete control of what they do / feel confident in making changes to the way they run the farm /have the ability to find solutions in difficult situations	61%	Cost of Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) to build psychological resilience and self esteem (€1,473 per person p.a)	€ 60,960	
Economic Well-being	Improved skills and knowledge through Humus Job network participation. New ideas and practices.	Farmers (40)	Extent to which they have acquired more skills that help me in work or daily life / has increased levels of knowledge and understanding of issues related to corporate hiring / Are more likely to	59%	Cost of employability skills training in regular sessions with counsellor/coach (€1,732 per person)	€ 21,082	





			engage in new activities/adopt new practices, having learned from other network members / have more awareness of possible solutions to the farm's problems				9%
	Improved economic well-being and finances	Farmers (40)	Extent to which stakeholder feels: more confident in the future profitability of the farm / It has made my farm more financially sustainable; It has enabled diversification / Led to more stable income over a 12-month period / has made farm more efficient	43%	Employment Incentive costs (€4,152 per person)	€ 37,098	
Relational Well-being	Improved access to information and services. Improved sharing.	Farmers (40); Farm workers (45)	Extent to which sharing of knowledge and ideas with others has increased / cooperation with others has increased / have found it easier to access the information / have found it easier to access support and counselling / was able to provide useful information to other farmers in the network	68%	Unit cost of approved social worker (ASW) for community social care (€1,569 per person p.a)	€ 153,636	28%
	Increased sense of purpose and belonging	Farm workers (45)	Feel they joined a network that supports my business and related activities / are now more willing to engage in partnership-type arrangements / feel that if I needed support could ask for help / feel close to the other members of the network /can trust most of the people in the network	71%	Well-being valuation of improved autonomy and control (€1,487 per person)	€ 24,449	
Social and Community Well-being	Increased community cohesion and integration between groups in the community	Farmers (40)	Extent to which they network more with people in their field/ are involved in multiple associations, clubs or interest groups / feel accepted by people in the network / feel that people in the network treat them with respect / there is less	70%	Average annual household spend on recreation and culture (€3,545 per household p.a)	€ 168,617	45%





			conflict between different groups within the community					
	Improved sense of community and migrants' acceptance. Community socio-cultural enrichment	Farm workers (45)	Extent to which people accept migrants and immigrants into the community / Ethnic minorities and migrants are involved in community activities / community has been enriched by the arrival of immigrants and ethnic minority people / Immigrants and newcomers are welcomed into the community.	65%	Value to an individual (25-45) of feeling like they belong in their neighbourhood (€2,392 per person p.a)	€ 117,814		
						<b>Total Benefits</b>	<b>€636,441</b>	<b>100%</b>
						Total Investment	€248,823	
						<b>Benefit-Investment Ratio (BIR)</b>	<b>€2.56 : 1</b>	

The findings of this SROI analysis hold significant potential in enhancing our understanding of the impacts of social innovations like Humus Job. The project's primary objective of fighting irregular work through the consistent employment of legal migrant and non-migrant workers is effectively achieved, as evidenced by the SROI's conclusive ratio. The outcomes demonstrate a multi-faceted enrichment encompassing social, community, and tangible economic benefits for the beneficiaries.

These findings may serve as inspiration for those interested in implementing or studying ethically-driven supply chains that prioritize shared regular workers and cost-effective machinery.

Additionally, the successful implementation of a nationwide network contract, open to interested parties, is particularly noteworthy as it establishes a robust network for the beneficiaries.

Considering the heterogeneity of farmers' backgrounds across various regions in Italy, it is evident that social innovation is adaptable to diverse contexts, resulting in a positive social and economic return on investment.





### 3.1.2 Forecast SROI findings

The summative SROI Impact Map for the Humus Job Social Innovation is given in Table 3 below. A range of wellbeing impacts over a forward looking 5-year benefit period (2022-27) are generated for 75 farmers and 150 farm workers. Outcomes are spread across four impact pathways, with value generation dominated by social and community wellbeing, and the beneficial outcomes related to improvements in relational and personal wellbeing.

The findings of the SROI demonstrate that an estimated €450K investment in the further application and scaling up of the Humus Job Social Innovation represents a potential 320% return to individuals, communities and society with respect to wellbeing impacts for farmers and farm workers. Over the prospective benefit period the overall return for each Euro invested is forecast to be 3.20 Euros. Despite impacting on a larger number of stakeholders over a longer benefit period this is comparable to the equivalent impact of Humus Job between 2018 and 2022. This is largely due to structural differences in the organisations involved.

Just over half of outcome benefits (57% of the total) are derived from distinct improvements in Social and Community Wellbeing for farmers and farmworkers. The two outcomes generating benefits relate largely to acceptance and respect by farmers within the network and farm workers within the local community. For farmers an increase in respect and acceptance within a network of peers (i.e. other farmers) creates a desire to cooperate and support others as well as feelings of belonging and cohesion. Rather than seeing other farmers as pure competitors, the respondents indicate the recognition of benefits through respect and acceptance. Farm workers on the other hand are more concerned about their acceptance into the local communities in which they must live and work, while to a certain extent, residents in those communities recognise the potential for enrichment.

An additional outcome recognised by both farm workers and farmers is the improved access to information and support services, and the ability to share information across the network leading to improvements in relational well-being.

Improvements in Economic Wellbeing make up the smallest proportion of outcome benefits (7% of the total) for the HJ network. The two key outcomes identified in the Journey of Change relate to financial sustainability of the farm (economic wellbeing) where the sample of farmers indicate potential for diversification and stability of their financial situation as a result of support from the network in addressing employment issues. There is also a negative economic outcome resulting from the fact that Humus Job can result in greater costs and commitment to farm management (-€ 6,208). Indeed, the pilot study carried out in relation to the Humus Job innovation did identify some negative feedback from farmers who felt they were more than capable of addressing their own employment problems, were less likely to cooperate with others, and did not see the value in paying money to an organisation that they felt would not improve their current situation.

Improvements in Personal Wellbeing (18% of the total) form another important area of outcome benefits generated. This is not surprising given that the focus of the Humus Job innovation is to provide greater security for both farmers and farm workers, and avoid the problems associated with hiring illegal agricultural labour. The personal wellbeing of farmers is enhanced through improved emotional quality of life as a result of involvement with the





Case study: Irregular work in agriculture -Humus Job

Humus Job network. In particular both farmers and farmworkers identify an improvement in well-being arising from reduction in stress and anxiety. For farmers, being part of a wider network is identified as providing support and reducing the bureaucratic burden associated with finding and hiring legal workers, while for farm workers it provides an added element of job security through being able to move from one location to another much more easily. Farmers also identify benefits associated with improvements in self-esteem, confidence, and control as a result of involvement with the HJ network. Such outcomes arise from being part of a wider network that can assist in alleviating employment issues, and enabling farmers to have more confidence in their ability to access quality workers when they are required.





**Table 3: Italy Forecast SROI Impact Map (SI: Humus Job)**

Impact Pathway	Outcome	Stakeholders (No.)	Indicator/s of Change	Outcome Change (%)	Financial proxy (Value €/Unit)	Present Value (€)	Present Value (%)
Personal Wellbeing	Improved emotional well-being and reduction of anxiety	Farmers (75); farm workers (150)	Extent to which stakeholder feels less anxious about their financial security; worry less about the problems of farming work	39%	(8) Valuation for improved emotional well-being arising through the Common Assessment Framework (€771 per person p.a)	€ 113,741	18%
	Improved mental well-being through reduced bureaucratic burdens (hiring people)	Farmers (75)	Extent to which they spend less time on paperwork related to the employment of farm workers; has it easier to hire quality farm workers	49%	(2) Well-being valuation of improved autonomy and control (€1,487 per person)	€ 27,888	
	Improved quality of life through self-esteem, confidence and control	Farmers (75)	Extent to which they'll try something even though there is a possibility that it may not work; feel in complete control of what they do; feel confident in making changes to the way they run the farm; have the ability to find solutions in difficult situations	61%	(6) Cost of Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) to build psychological resilience and self esteem (€1,473 per person p.a)	€ 114,299	
Economic Wellbeing	Improved skills and knowledge through Humus Job network participation. New ideas and practices	Farmers (75)	Extent to which they have acquired more skills that help me in work or daily life; has increased levels of knowledge and understanding of issues related to corporate hiring; are more likely to engage in new activities / adopt new practices, having learned from other network members; have more awareness of possible solutions to the farm's problems	59%	(9) Cost of employability skills training in regular sessions with counsellor / coach (€1,732 per person)	€ 39,530	7%





Case study: Irregular work in agriculture -Humus Job

	Improved economic well-being and finances	Farmers (75)	Extent to which stakeholder feels: more confident in the future profitability of the farm; it has made my farm more financially sustainable; It has enabled diversification; Led to more stable income over a 12-month period; has made farm more efficient	43%	(22) Employment incentive costs (€4,152 per person)	€ 69,559	
	Increased costs and commitment to farm management	Farmers (75)	Extent to which farmer feels that HJ has resulted in increased costs; it has required a greater commitment to the management of the company	37%	(20) Utility bill savings through increased resource efficiency (per farm business) (€133 per farm)	-€ 6,208	
Relational Wellbeing	Improved access to information and services. Improved sharing.	Farmers (75)	Extent to which sharing of knowledge and ideas with others has increased; cooperation with others has increased; have found it easier to access the information; have found it easier to access support and counselling; was able to provide useful information to other farmers in the network	68%	(1) Unit cost of approved social worker (ASW) for community social care (€1,569 per person p.a)	€ 135,561	18%
	Increased sense of purpose and belonging	Farmers (75); Farm workers (150)	Feel they joined a network that supports my business and related activities; are now more willing to engage in partnership-type arrangements; feel that if I needed support could ask for help; feel close to the other members of the network; can trust most of the people in the network	71%	(2) Well-being valuation of improved autonomy and control (€1,487 per person)	€ 122,246	
Social and Community Wellbeing	Increased community cohesion and integration between groups in the community	Farmers (75)	Extent to which they network more with people in their field; are involved in multiple associations, clubs or interest groups; feel accepted by people in the network; feel that people in the network	70%	(28) Average annual household spend on recreation and culture (€3,545 per household p.a)	€ 316,156	57%





Case study: Irregular work in agriculture -Humus Job

			treat them with respect; there is less conflict between different groups within the community					
	Improved sense of community and migrants' acceptance. Community socio-cultural enrichment	Farmers (75); farm workers (150)	Extent to which people accept migrants and immigrants into the community; Ethnic minorities and migrants are involved in community activities; community has been enriched by the arrival of immigrants and ethnic minority people;/ Immigrants and newcomers are welcomed into the community.	65%	(4) Value to an individual (25-45) of feeling like they belong in their neighbourhood (€2,392 per person p.a)	€ 508,149		
						<b>Total Benefits</b>	<b>€1,440,921</b>	<b>100%</b>
						Total Investment	€450,176	
						<b>Benefit-Investment Ratio (BIR)</b>	<b>€3.20 : 1</b>	







## 4 Implications for policy and farming support

### 4.1 The Challenge & Needs – What is the situation?

Illegal hiring has strong negative economic and humanitarian implications.

On the first point, unfair competitions against regular businesses, which aim to reduce costs in order to increase profits, inevitably jeopardize public finances. Tax evasion leads to a reduction of governmental revenues. Moreover, undeclared workers are excluded from any form of social protection and retirement's contributions (they weigh on public finances by reducing taxes and social security revenues).

Although we must consider regulatory and administrative costs that companies have to deal with when trying to counter the illegality: *"One concept must be clear - underlines Francesco Mutti, CEO of Mutti Spa (Italian company specialized in preserved food, particularly in the tomato sector) - striving for legality does not make the economic level of agriculture unsustainable, but the exact opposite is true. It is in the presence of illegality that costs increase, in particular those that must be borne by companies that operate in fairness. Legality is above all an ethical and moral prerequisite, but it is also a prerequisite for healthy competition."* (La Repubblica, 2020).

The phenomenon of caporalato also entails a humanitarian problem, especially at community level, and consequently at national one too. We are witnessing to the modern face of slavery and the spreading of slums in rural areas where hundreds, thousands of foreign people live (depending on the harvest periods), with inevitable implications in terms of socio-economic degradation, cultural heritage loss, sanitary implications and risk of contracting diseases for employees. We know that Italy's agriculture is heavily dependent on regular and irregular foreign workers; this dependency has become even more evident when seasonal workers were blocked due to movement restrictions in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, tipping the agricultural sector over the edge and jeopardizing the sowing and harvesting periods (Il Fatto Alimentare, 2020).

Not to mention moral implications. The use of illegal labour destroys the civil and social sense; the normalization of the phenomenon, the toleration of irregularities and the violation of human rights (use of corporals and low-skilled and low-paid workers as a practice) have a decaying and demeaning effect on social equity.

#### Extract from a farmer's opinion

One of the farmers we had the chance to get a talk with told us that although acknowledging that Humus Job is an appreciable reality, he would not be interested in joining a network "born to tackle problems and obstacles that as an entrepreneur he had





already solved by himself to survive and be economically sustainable in the long run". In short, he does not see any crucial reasons to join Humus Job. Furthermore, he talked about potential decrease in identity of a farmer and of his farm that could occur by joining Humus Job. Also, he mentioned, more generally, the individualism that farmers always tend to preserve, including himself. Indeed, lack of cooperation culture among farmers is a bottleneck that prevent the social innovation to grow and expand throughout Italy. In terms of the legal environment, one of the experts we interviewed argues that Humus Job has provided itself with tools that would allow the achievement of what it aims: the posting of manpower (job-sharing) in fact guarantees that the worker can turn to several subjects for the satisfaction of the credit, therefore it induces solidarity also in the employers' parties related to the network. She added that promptness and a capillarity action from Humus Job would help the social innovation overcome contexts fragmentation throughout the territory, then make it able to meet different needs among farmers.

Costs for entering the network represent a bottleneck, as the network gradually grows, the costs might gradually decrease.

#### 4.2 Support framework – What is needed?

The main goal of Humus Job is to promote and boost ethical and sustainable work in agriculture in Italy, by creating new connections among companies, and by intersecting job supply and job demand between workers and farms. It offers farm businessmen a network to cooperate among each other and to legally recruit trained workforce by sharing costs for employment, investments, risks and equipment. Humus Job allows farmers to benefit from a greater continuity of regular employed (trained) workers throughout the year and, at once, it ensures workers regular contracts and the possibility of greater job continuity. Furthermore, Humus Job offers its farms the possibility to get the "100% Ethical work brand", hence a showcase and other dedicated channels for their products.

#### 4.3 Recommendations – What needs to be done to realise the support needed?

To help expand the Humus Job's network, existing farmers organizations such as Coldiretti could create a partnership with Humus Job or incentivize companies to join the network. Specialised support organisations could experiment with pilot projects by spotting virtuous farms. So far, no specific agreements have been finalized but information about the social innovation proposed by Humus Job has been presented to key Coldiretti figures dealing with contractual aspects in the agribusiness sector for them to consider possible synergies.

The 100% ethical label could become an acknowledged label at institutional level similarly to the Network of Quality Agricultural Work, that is the first and concrete initiative aimed at developing positive actions to fight illegal work and caporalato in agriculture. The goal of the Network is therefore to ensure some sort of quality or ethical certification, giving life to a sort of white list of farms that are considered ethical and responsible. This white list would allow





companies to sell their products to large-scale distributors. In a smaller scale, Humus Job seeks to reach the same goal. Recognising the 100% ethical label of Humus Job at the same level as the Network of Quality Agricultural Work would contribute to publicize the social innovation then expand the network. Suggestions for steps / lessons learned to achieve such an outcome to (1) specialised support organisations and/or (2) policymakers.

