



# Social Farm Thematic Initiative 8<sup>th</sup> NRN Meeting

**Mara Lai EN RD Contact Point**

**8th NRN meeting - Rome 25 March 2010**



## Proposed structure for the workshop

- Introduction
- Summary of the NRN contribution
- Presentations : UK – IT
- Discussion:
  - Identifying common areas of interest
  - Next steps to be undertaken

### 7th NRN meeting – Brussels: main objective of the SF initiative

“To improve the implementation of RDPs in support of social farming and to provide input to the development of future programming at national and European level”



### 7th NRN meeting – Brussels: actions to be undertaken

- Preparation of an overview paper on SF activities – focus on RDPs
- Follow – up meeting in March 2010
- Organisation of field trip
- Commencing social farming case studies collection process
- 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting – September 2010 Belgium (tbd)

## Synthesis of NRN Feedback on Social Farming

- Contributions received from
  - Belgium – Flanders
  - Finland
  - Ireland
  - Italy
  - The Netherlands
  - Sweden
  - United Kingdom
- Additional information about DE, FR, SL



Depending on data availability and the “state of play” in each country, the reports could address some/all of the following issues

- The institutional and policy environment for the implementation of (SF) initiatives and stakeholders involved
- Existing links with other networks
- RDPs and implementation of SF – current status, opportunities and bottlenecks,
- Service provider and users needs and opportunities,
- Actual/potential impacts of SF in rural areas,
- Main themes /areas of activity in SF

## 1. POLICY ENVIRONMENT

### Government support:

- Belgium-Flanders (since 2000): Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Flemish Support Centre
- The Netherlands (since 1990s): Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality; Min Health, Welfare and Sports; formalised arrangements between health/social care services and care farms; Personal budget system
- Sweden: link between farmers and local authorities; Federation of Swedish Farmers (LRF) promotes SF and support farmers who want to start SF activities.



## 2. POLICY ENVIRONMENT

- **Government support is generally weak:**
  - Finland: strong interest displayed by RD actors but SF is an innovation.
  - Ireland: long tradition of SF activities but low level of awareness among society / policy makers
  - Italy: long tradition of “bottom up” initiatives in SF; policy-makers interest is growing, particularly at regional level
  - UK: SF concept is relatively new but there is an increasing amount of interest from many sectors, including farmers.



### ACTORS INVOLVED AND LINK WITH OTHER NETWORKS

- Belgium – Flanders: strong links with other networks and good level of involvement from RD actors
- Italy: strong involvement of Universities and research centres; RD actors are more and more involved
- The Netherlands and Sweden: RD actors involvement underdeveloped
- Ireland: good involvement of RD actors (recently) in regional, national and international networks
- Finland, UK: poor involvement of RD actors and low links with other networks

## 1. RDPs AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL FARMING

- Belgium-Flanders:
  - RDPs and LEADER activities are big drivers in stimulating SF activities since 2000 – and remain so currently
  - **RDP 2000-2006**: education and training; improvement of quality of life in rural areas; support for investment for diversification activities; Leader+.
  - **RDP 2007-2013**: Support scheme proposed but not accepted– permanent support schemes are only possible under axis 2; Axes 3 and 4
- Italy:
  - Promotion of SF activities by LAGs in rural development plans in different regions
  - RDPs 2007-2013 offer possibilities to implement SF activities



## 2. RDPs AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL FARMING

- **Finland:** No clear linkage between SF and RDPs currently but there are opportunities because of the growing need for new initiatives in health and social sector
- **Ireland:** links with RDPs are still weak, but RD actors are becoming more involved, especially LAGs.
- **The Netherlands:** no real links with RDPs; only limited involvement of LAGs (on-farm investments)
- **Sweden:** no links with RDPs, they are emerging in this last period

### BOTTLENECKS

- No clear linkages and lack of coordination between SF and RDPs implementation
  - Belgium-Flanders: Flemish support scheme cannot be introduced in the RDP 2007-2013
- Lack of involvement of other actors / networks (e.g. Finland, UK)
- Needs for strong evidence of the positive effects social farming can have in rural areas and in the society (UK, Finland, Italy)



### OPPORTUNITIES

- Good examples of projects financed in the past programming period (RDP 2000-2006) – Belgium –Flanders, Italy
- RDPs and Leader are big drivers in stimulating SF activities: their potential should be developed
- Several research activities already undertaken in the framework of other projects (e.g. SO FAR)
- Positive impact on the reputation of rural areas
- Positive economic impact on local economy and farms;
- Positive social impact: unemployed, people with disabilities, etc;
- Positive environmental impact

### INITIAL CONCLUSIONS / COMMENTS

- Wide diversity evident in countries in terms of:
  - *awareness* about SF among stakeholders;
  - *the stage of development* of SF in different countries;
  - *support mechanisms* used to assist the development of SF;
  - *use of networking mechanisms* the *use of rural development instruments* to support SF.
- The need to *highlight, demonstrate and exchange examples of good practices in social farming* between different regions and different Member States.
- Limited examples of *programmes such as INTERREG and LEONARDO being used to support social farming* and the opportunities provided by these programmes for rural development actors and social farming networks should be fully explored.



**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION**