

## A social farm is 'connecting people' in Italy

Providing employment to disadvantaged groups, protecting the environment and promoting sustainability

**Agricoltura Capodarco is a social cooperative situated in the outskirts of Rome that employs people with disabilities and socially excluded people. 'Connecting people' is their main philosophy. The multifunctional cooperative runs two organic farms and two restaurants, produces wine and other products and runs educational programmes and much more.**

The agricultural cooperative was founded in 1978 and has a long history of bringing together and engaging people from different disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. It employs, for example, people with mental and physical disabilities, psychiatric patients, former addicts, former prisoners, people affected by depression, immigrants and asylum seekers. Salvatore Stingo, President of Agricoltura Capodarco, explains: "At the centre of the cooperative is the individual and his/her emancipation through work." The cooperative combines social inclusion and professional integration through agriculture.

Agricoltura Capodarco has three main goals: "Providing employment, protecting the environment and promoting sustainability. All these issues are united in the work we do every day through social, multifunctional and circular agriculture," explains Salvatore. The cooperative wanted to create a community based on equity, social justice and cohesion and has, at its core, the promotion of responsible consumption and the enhancement of the territory. "Agricoltura Capodarco employs about forty people. In addition to this, there are around sixty young people involved in the farm as part of our various projects and initiatives," says Salvatore.

They take a 'multifunctional' approach, the production is highly diversified and in each sector of activity there is room for the inclusion of different skills. Salvatore adds: "We are producers of oil, wine, honey, eggs and vegetables. We carry out transformation of our products on-site. We sell at markets. We have two restaurants, which use many of our products. In addition, we have specific social agriculture activities." The employees work either on the land growing fruit and vegetables, in one of the restaurants, bottling wine, on the market stall and more. Feedback from the employees shows that they appreciate the feeling of being part of a community in which everyone contributes according to their abilities.

The cooperative employs many trainers and support workers engaged in occupational therapeutic activities, rehabilitation, education, training and supporting insertion into the world of work. The cooperative is also involved in many social projects such as a 'shelter laboratory' project, in which fifteen people with learning disabilities or psychiatric disorders work on the farm from Monday to Friday.

In terms of funding, the cooperative receives income from direct selling, public funding and multifunctional activities (events, etc.). Public funds stem from multiple entities including research and development entities and entities from the agricultural, social and health sectors. It also receives some funding from foundations and charities.



Despite their significant work with the local community, on a broader level the cooperative still identifies a lack of awareness about social farming. The cooperative believes that the benefits of social farming for all parties involved needs to be further promoted, including via a legal framework and improved training for both farmers and health workers. Salvatore concludes: "In today's context, interacting with each other through social agriculture is an excellent opportunity and I believe that the future will be increasingly rich because of it."

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### Background information

In May 2023, Agricoltura Capodarco hosted a field trip during a meeting of the [EU CAP Network Focus Group 'Social farming and innovations'](#). The Focus Group was working on how social farming can contribute to innovation in agriculture while strengthening the multi-functional role of agriculture and connecting people from urban and rural areas. Read the [report](#) and [factsheet](#) from this Focus Group here.

- > [Agricoltura Capodarco website](#)
- > [Agricoltura Capodarco Facebook page](#)

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#### Project photos:

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Salvatore Stingo and an employee in the vineyard  
 © Ilaria Signoriello Agricoltura Capodarco



Daily activities on the farm  
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Working at the shop  
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At the workshop for bottling wine  
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### More information on social farming

#### EU CAP Network 'Innovation & knowledge exchange | EIP-AGRI' activities

##### Focus Groups

- > [EU CAP Network Focus Group on Social farming and innovations](#)

##### Publications & videos

- > [EU CAP Network Brochure: Social innovation – solutions for thriving agriculture, forestry and rural areas](#)

##### Inspirational ideas from the network

- > [Inspirational ideas: Healthy, tasty and social vegetables](#) (Romania)
- > [German Operational Group develops job opportunities for people with disabilities](#) (Germany)
- > [Social innovation to find ways to spread solutions and best practices for active forest management](#) (several countries)
- > [Growing organic vegetables – and jobs!](#) (Germany)

#### Operational Groups working on social farming

A number of other Operational Groups working on social farming are available in the [database](#). Some examples below:

- > [Added value of social farming for agricultural production](#)
- > [Organic vegetables: Enabling regional cultivation, creating jobs for people with disabilities, shaping processing, developing sales.](#) (Germany)
- > [Social farming as an instrument for the diversification of agricultural enterprises in Bavaria - Development of innovative model projects](#) (Germany)
- > [Comeragh Uplands and Communities EIP Project](#) (Ireland)
- > [BIOSOCIAL: Small farm organic vegetable production as integrated model between production and local social impact](#) (Italy)
- > [Montessori thought as innovation in social agriculture in the Marche Region](#) (Italy)
- > [MULTINET - Social and organizational innovation for developing multifunctionality in farms: models, co-production, inclusion](#) (Italy)

#### Horizon multi-actor projects working on social farming

- > [Social Innovation in Marginalised Rural Areas](#) (SIMRA) gathered examples of social innovations in agriculture, forestry and rural development in rural areas across Europe and includes some examples on social farming.
- > [The New Entrant network: Business models for Innovation, entrepreneurship and resilience in European agriculture](#) (NEWBIE) thematic network worked on business models for new entrants to farming to encourage innovation, resilience and entrepreneurship in European agriculture, including social farming.

**Multi-actor projects** are research projects in which end users and multipliers of research results, such as farmers and farmers' groups, advisors, enterprises and others, closely cooperate throughout the whole project. Operational Groups are strongly encouraged to participate in this type of research project.

**Thematic networks** are multi-actor projects which collect existing knowledge and best practices on a given theme to make it available in easily understandable formats for end users such as farmers, foresters, advisors etc.

#### Research needs from practice on social farming

- > **Investigate how social farming services can be made available to a broader target group** (e.g. people with burn-out, care givers, children, refugees) **and thereby also help bridge the gap and understanding between agriculture and society.**
- > **Exploring ecological inclusion: Developing landscape and biodiversity by including participants in social farming.** Research is needed on how social farming can promote biodiversity in farms and facilitate a win-win situation for the different target groups involved, for biodiversity and for climate change.
- > **Examine the profile of a skilled adviser and (social) innovation broker in social farming.** There is a need to identify the profile and skills (not only agronomical skills) of current and potential advisors and innovation brokers for social farming.
- > **How can we quantify the impacts of social farming?** There is a need to identify all impacts. Some of them are quite easy to quantify, but it is also important to quantify the impacts that can be converted into economic values.

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### Innovation, knowledge exchange and EIP-AGRI events 2023-2024

- > **Brokerage event:** [Horizon Europe multi-actor approach projects](#), 19-20 October 2023 - Antwerp, Belgium (Call closed 3/09/2023, )
- > **Focus Group** meetings on:
  - > Regenerative agriculture for soil health
  - > Crop associations, including Milpa and protein crops
  - > Competitive and resilient mountain areas  
([Focus Group](#) call for experts closed 11/09/2023)
- > **Workshop:** [National networking for innovation](#), 30 November-01 December 2023
- > **Workshop:** Circular water management (March 2024)
- > **Workshop:** Boosting women-led innovation (April 2024)
- > **Workshop:** Reversing the decline in pollinators (June 2024)
- > **Seminar:** Skills and lifelong learning (February 2024)
- > **Conference & Competition and award ceremony** focusing on Operational Groups (May 2024)
- > **Ad-hoc national experts meeting** (June 2024)
- > **Cross-visits** (May/June 2024)

### The Common Agricultural Policy 2023-2027

[Common Agricultural Policy 2023-2027](#)

#### Innovation, knowledge exchange and EIP-AGRI in the EU CAP Network

The European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Network 'Support Facility for Innovation & Knowledge exchange | EIP-AGRI' acts as a mediator, enhancing communication and cooperation between everyone with a keen interest in innovation and sharing knowledge for sustainable agriculture, forestry and rural areas.

The European Innovation Partnership 'Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability' (EIP-AGRI) was launched in 2012 by the European Commission in a bid to promote rapid modernisation of the sectors concerned by the need to step up innovation efforts. The EIP-AGRI aims to foster innovation in the agricultural and forestry sectors and in rural areas by bringing research and practice closer together - in innovation projects as well as via the European CAP Network and the national CAP Networks. Also, grassroots ideas from farmers are developed into concrete innovative solutions through 'Operational Group' innovation projects. The EIP-AGRI aims to streamline, simplify and better coordinate existing instruments and initiatives, and complement them with actions where necessary.

More information on [Innovation, knowledge exchange and EIP-AGRI](#) on the EU CAP Network website.

#### EIP-AGRI Operational Groups

EIP-AGRI Operational Groups **are groups of people who work together in an innovation project**. They bring together partners with complementary knowledge. The composition of the group will vary according to the theme and specific objectives of each project. Farmers, advisors, scientists, businesses or other relevant partners

work together to find practical solutions to specific problems or opportunities for European farmers and foresters. Farmers and foresters need to cooperate throughout the project to ensure that the innovative solutions are practical and likely to be quickly applied in the field. Read the [basic principles](#). [Innovation support services](#) (including advisors with a focus on innovation), and in particular innovation brokering, can therefore play a crucial role in getting worthwhile projects off the ground by facilitating contacts.

#### Operational Groups funded under Rural Development Programmes 2014 - 2022

- > 98 Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020 (RDPs) provide support to innovative EIP-AGRI Operational Group projects
- > More than 3 200 Operational Group projects have been notified in the common EU data repository and are currently ongoing (or already finished)\*. Member States will still start more Operational Group projects, which may run until 2025 (under current transitional rules for EU Rural Development Programmes). Find information on all of these projects in the [EIP-AGRI project database](#).

\* May 2023

#### Operational Groups funded under CAP Strategic Plans 2023 - 2027

Within the Common Agricultural Policy 2023-27 (CAP), EU Member States have designed national CAP Strategic Plans combining funding for income support, rural development and market measures. All CAP Strategic Plans have been adopted and their implementation started on 1 January 2023.

26 CAP Strategic Plans include support for innovative EIP-AGRI Operational Groups. In total, 6 600 EIP-AGRI Operational Group projects have been planned.