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**Workshop 5: Meeting of the SOCIAL INNOVATION Working Group**

**Social Innovation: agriculture welcomes the autism – a transferable best practice from Marche Region**

# **Journey into social agriculture of the Marche Region: a new agricultural production paradigm**

*Egea Latini - Regione Marche*

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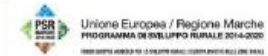


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## Multifunctionality

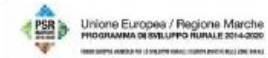
- In the field of social agriculture, the Marche Region has always been a pioneer region: as early as 2010, when the need to review the legislation on the agritourism, it was chosen not only to update the existing discipline, but to rethink the whole Universe of activities that can be taken in rural sphere thanks to the opportunities offered by the new article 2135 of the C.C. which has expanded the spectrum of activities considered agricultural.
- That was an opportunity **to decline the activities to be considered connected to the agricultural activity** that entrepreneurs can carry out and that in essence they represent themselves multifunctionality. The result of the path is the Regional Law of 14 November 2011, n. 21. "Regional instruction regarding multifunctionality of the farm and diversification in agriculture", which, however, has concluded a phase of simplification and further expansion today.



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The list of activities, which is certainly not exhaustive to date, is reported in article 2 of the law that ascribes to the concept of multifunctionality the activities of :

- agritourism
  - **social agriculture**
  - direct sales
  - transformation or manipulation of company agricultural products
  - energy production
  - subcontracting
  - the activities functional to the arrangement and maintenance of the territory, to the safeguarding of the agricultural and forestry landscape, the care and maintenance of the hydrogeological structure
  - transformation of agricultural products on behalf of third parties
  - the hospitality of animals
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The far-sighted choice was to legally frame, in an **absolutely innovative way**, the activity of «**Social Agriculture**», effectively anticipating the path followed in the construction of the national reference law, **Law 18 August 2015, n. 141 - Instruction on social agriculture**.

In fact, **Social Agriculture** expression includes a set of experiences that originate from some traditional aspects of agriculture, such as the link between the farm itself and the rural family, to enhance its social character and propose itself as a place for integration into the agriculture of practices aimed at the therapy and rehabilitation of disabled people, working and social inclusion of disadvantaged subjects, the offer of educational, cultural services, supporting families and institutions.

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The "**social**" concept is, de facto, inherent in the term agriculture and talking about it today has a wider character than what has been made as a goal more than ten years ago in the drafting of the regional law.

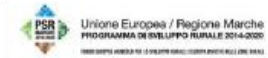
Today by social agriculture we mean not only the place where people with different skills work, immigrants who escaped exploitation or people with difficulties, but everything that revolves around an agriculture that no longer looks only at economic productivity.

An agriculture that takes care of our collective home, of the conservation of the enormous heritage of biodiversity and culture that comes from the generations that preceded us, and then **what we would like to tend is no longer a social job placement, but a job placement with full rights and equal dignity, where each person participates with his own part, even if small, in the process.**

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Over the years, through projects developed between the Assessorato and Agricultural Companies, with the help of the University, of the Research Institutes, of the institutions of the various sectors, the following areas of intervention have been stratified and consolidated :





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These positive experiences that I will describe briefly, have highlighted that the need that is looming today is **to provide methodological and modeling tools** capable of covering every or most of the areas against which the farm, for its own peculiar features of the business, can make its structures available, its own characteristics of naturalness, of large spaces, slowness of the cycles and the particularity of the relative care, and which prove to be able to explore positive tangible effects in all areas of fragility.

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## ASD SOCIO-WORKING INCLUSION

Lastly, in the time line, the **experimental project for the socio-work inclusion of people with the disturbance of the autism spectrum in the agricultural field** that arises from a close collaboration between the **Università Politecnica delle Marche - Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Department of Sciences Agricultural, CRAA - Regional Autism Center for adults** (also through territorial structures **Unità Multidisciplinare Età Evolutiva (UMEE) and Unità Multidisciplinare Età Adulta (UMEA)**, the **regional structures competent in agriculture** (in particular multifunctionality) and in **social services**.

The **Agro-environmental Sector of the Direzione Agricoltura e Sviluppo Rurale of the Marche Region** took care of the connection between the subjects participating in the Technical Board and has prepared all the administrative documents for the launch of the initiative.

Participation initially affected nine companies throughout the Marche region and the evaluation of the planning developed was carried out by a special intersectoral commission (agriculture and social services).





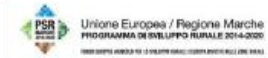
The projects to be selected were made up of a management part and a part of the development of the activity. The in -field help was **€ 450,000.00** in partial coverage of **investment costs** (adaptation of internal and external spaces, structures, plant engineering, purchase of equipment, tools and furnishings strictly functional to carrying out the activity - design, formalization, establishment of networks and/or collaborations between companies and other subjects in the socio -social sphere) and **management** (personnel costs, insurance, consumer materials, utilities, transport, any individual protective equipment), by State aid notified to the European Union under "de minimis" regime.

The design idea was developed and proposed by the individual farms or social cooperatives in full autonomy and in connection with **CRAA** - Centro Regionale Autismo Adulti, also through the territorial structures **UMEE** and **UMEA**.



Starting, we realized how precious for the territory such a planning was and, given that with the budget resources it was possible to finance only a company by province of our region, the regional Giunta, thanks to the will of the Councilor for Agriculture, made an effort by increasing the resources to the budget bringing them to **€ 720,000.00, managing to admit 8 of the 9 participating companies to loan.**

Each company had potentially recognized, in the two-year period 2021/2023, the management costs and those for the realization of investments, up to a maximum admissible value of € 90,000.00.



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The experimentation was accompanied by a preliminary **training activities of the companies** curated by the University and by the ASSAM **Agenzia Servizi Settore Agroalimentare Marche**.

The companies will also be followed throughout the path by **coordination, monitoring and evaluation activities**, which our partners of the technical board will develop through special agreements.

The goal is the definition of a specific "**reception model**" by putting together the know-how of very high technical-scientific content resulting from this initiative, allowing all those agricultural entrepreneurs particularly sensitive to "insert/welcome" in their company people suffering from autism spectrum disorder.

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The contribution of dr. *Vinicio Alessandroni*, representative of the ASUR and head of CRAA who has joined with his staff the companies in the definitive drafting of the life project of the girls and boys identified by the UMEA and UMEE, calibrating the corporate activity proposed by agricultural entrepreneurs to the needs of these young people.

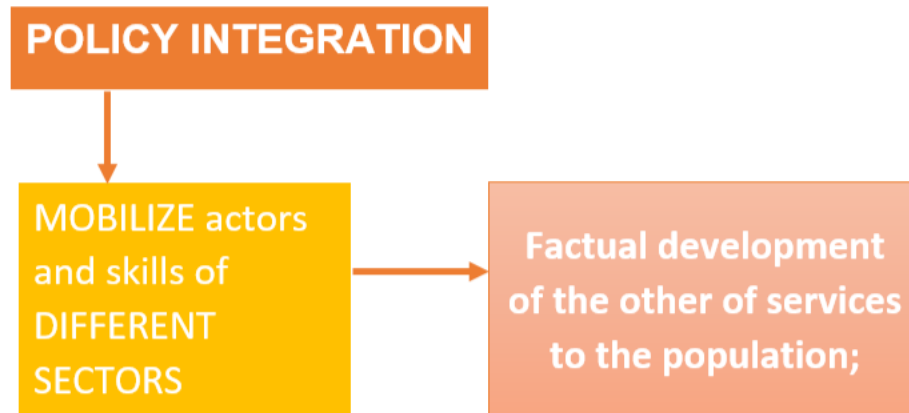
The positive thing about these experimental activities, built *step by step* is to have had a high-value work team and the active participation of agricultural entrepreneurs who, with their experience, have actively contributed to realization of the project.

We do not hide that there have been moments of difficulty, one of all the identification of the most suitable form of convention with which to welcome people.

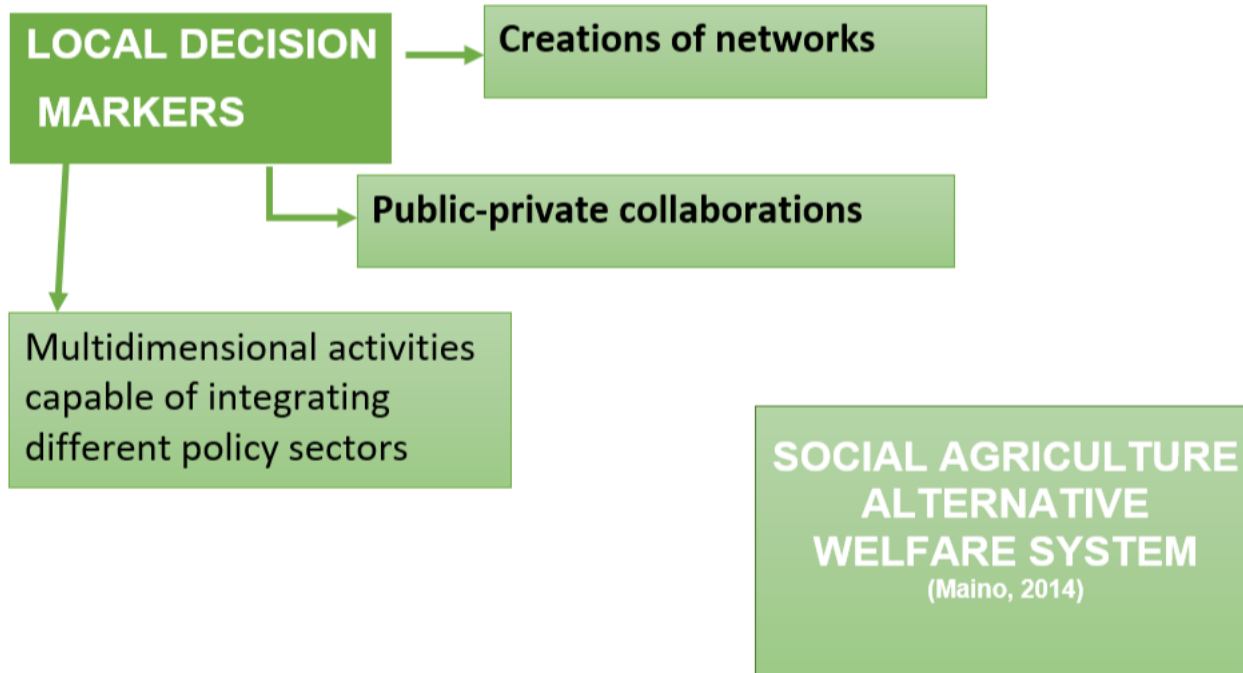
The shared path led to the identification of 4 types of reception: **TIS (SOCIAL INCLUSION INTERNSHIPS)** and **SCHOOL WORK ALTERNATION** (for children who are still in a school path), the transfer of users of **DAY CENTERS** and **THE OFFER OF WELCOME OF FRAGILE PEOPLE AS THE COMPANY'S ACTIVITY**. The type of agreement chosen was followed by a suitable insurance form where it was necessary.

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Summarizing the path that has lived so far has taught us that the steps to be taken are still many and above all :



**Interdisciplinary collaboration is fundamental and absolutely necessary.**





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National Law 141 of 2014 intervened in order to build a certain and common reference framework to all the territories of our country, even if the strong necessity expressed by the local communities has quickly and in fact exceeded the institutional resource distribution system, generally adopted in this field.

Today we have asked ourselves for greater effort in going to meet the person through a welfare more and more social oriented, which becomes a tool for local development, redefining what has been done so far, with a view to service and integration between sectors and resources, with the creations of networks between local actors and institutions and among the institutions themselves.

We can therefore define it **governance together multi-actor and multi-level** (Bepa 2010) .

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And in this context that is outlined what we have experienced: **Social Agriculture goes beyond the multifunctional role that is proper to it.**

All these initiatives to leave need enlightened agricultural entrepreneurs, but also and above all a strong integration between the aspects of taking care of people's health and social.

For activities related to active longevity and to autistic spectrum, in particular, it is essential to include them in the **Plans of Ambiti Territoriali Sociali** such as further possibilities for users and local decision makers.

In addition, it is absolutely appropriate to expand the work boards also to the **health level**, with the identification of professional paths and figures that can be placed as the right conjunction between the services and the community, implementing and qualifying the services offered in the area.

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## ACTIVITIES MADE AND TO DO

**EXSPERIMENTAL**, with a decisive character of innovativeness, capable di introduce adequate methods, approaches, and intervention fields

**Modelable and potentially transferable**

Produce effects (**which must be evaluable**) on the social dimension

The experience conducted so far brings us to the conclusion that in a farm we can experiment with new inclusion routes and that the nature of the possible activities starts from the definition of an **individual life project** that concerns each individual person to take care of.

Precisely for this reason the modeling to which we often refer is not to be understood as "standardization".

**It is in this that social innovation lies:** in contamination between sectors becoming able to offer new and sustainable solutions, which translate into role changes and relationships between the actors, which promote the exchange of ideas and values and joint use of public, private and non -profit resources (Phills Jr. et al. 2008).



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***“Working the earth, working with the earth, getting in touch with the earth, through fatigue, the own experience but also that of previous generations (...), is something that puts the hands, the senses, the heart, the head, memory, something that puts in contact with the world as it is, directly, without mediation, as well as manual crafts, such as walking, like dance and liturgy; something that here and now seems residual, almost archaic, even heretic towards the virtuality to which this world seems fatally voted”.***

(English translation from Massimo Angelini, *Prefazione* in Roberto Brioschi, *L'agricoltura è sociale*)

Thank you for your attention

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SETTORE INFRASTRUTTURE E FORESTE – SDA AP/FM***