



EURO+MED

AGRI SOCIAL FORUM

Appeal for its creation

Rome – Tuesday, September 27th, 2016

APPEAL for the creation of **EURO+MED AGRI SOCIAL FORUM**

Introduction

In light of the strategic guidelines defined by Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals established thereby, approved by the **United Nations General Assembly** in 2015, social and care farming is seen as a further evolution of previous agricultural models, apt at supporting sustainable development policies. Social and care farming is defined as being well-established in the local communities, respectful of the environment and able to add value to the work performed, besides being able to establish a fruitful interaction between, on the one hand, the stakeholders involved in the production process and, on the other, a more conscientious and modern welfare system.

Growing interest towards social and care farming can be witnessed in Europe as well as elsewhere in the world, with very multifaceted points of view which may differ considerably from one another. In order to pursue the integration of such different tendencies, to promote a constructive dialogue, and to adapt current policies so to keep the pace with the experiences currently taking place in Europe and in the northern shore of the African continent, while keeping an eye on the rest of the world, **the initiators of this appeal point out the necessity of creating a space where the integration and constructive dialogue among all different experiences on a Euro + Med level can take place. The aim is also to give voice and generate shared practices and common visions of the**

future.

On a global scale, the spread of social and care farming has been characterised by experimentation and research on new aspects of the multifunctional approach, generating services and goods, contributing to the spread of ethical values as well as to strengthening the human capital and social cohesion on a local level. In the countries that lie on Africa's Mediterranean shore, this has been applied to small-scale, family-run and subsistence farming, thus furthering the development of its educational and rehabilitation functions as well as promoting the human rights of local populations.

The current crisis that welfare systems are undergoing in Europe as well as worldwide is a threat to the established social rights of citizens and can lead to an increase in social inequality. Within this complex framework, social and care farming is seen as one of the most effective activities that can contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goals, such as fighting poverty and inequality, the elimination of hunger and the struggle against climate change, to mention a few.

we believe that Social and care farming can contribute to *“creating a way of life that puts dignity above all other things”* and therefore it can have an effect on the structural causes that determine the social and environmental tragedy unfolding today.

Appeal

Besides being a concrete experience, care farming also possesses symbolic significance, as it can reaffirm the importance of a United Europe, as wished by its founding fathers and as envisaged by Ventotene Manifesto.

Furthermore, it can also contribute in an effective manner to a revived relationship between Europe and the countries of the Mediterranean area, where epoch-making changes are currently taking place, redefining inclusion and cooperation policies between the states, in order to promote new relationships based on reciprocity, investing on a revived primary sector that shall produce not only goods, but also relations and dignity.

Care farming is based on the practice of both traditional and innovative values as well as on the interaction between different needs, knowledge and cultures. It constitutes a process that leads to the awareness of responsibility on an individual as well as on a community level, harmonising the concepts of food sovereignty and economic sustainability with responsibility towards the environment, the local community and the territory with its common goods.

In light of these reasons

This Forum and the social and agricultural organisations assembled in Rome on the 27th of September 2016, in the presence of Vice Minister Mr. Andrea Olivero, intend to begin a process of mutual sharing and dialogue on an international level in order to achieve the creation of the **EURO+MED AGRI-SOCIAL FORUM**. This is an association that shall be open to all agricultural organisations, inspired by the principles of social cooperation and education, as well as to organisations of the non-profit sector and social economy, operating both in European Countries and throughout the

Mediterranean area. The Forum shall facilitate free and democratic participation of all interested parties and citizens, supporting cultural, economic and social forces, as well as institutions at all levels, to gain a prominent role. *Euro+Med Agri-Social Forum* aims at the creation of a space for discussion and constructive dialogue on a European level as well as with the countries of the southern shore of the Mediterranean, among all entities and networks that operate in different ways in the field of Social and care farming. A space for political and cultural discussion and research that shall be able to:

- 1- Further spread the practice of social and care farming throughout European Countries as well as the Mediterranean area as a whole;
- 2- Promote social and care farming among Institutions as well as among European bodies dealing with Agricultural, Economic, Social, Healthcare and Work policies;
- 3- Facilitate the exchange of knowledge and good practices among different European entities;
- 4- Develop an efficient communication strategy aimed at raising awareness among citizens regarding the values, ethical principles and opportunities of this innovative welfare system.

The path we envisage is inspired by the following principles:

An innovative welfare system characterised by active participation and connected to the territory

Social and Care farming is able to capitalise on a range of different experiences that can meet the needs of local communities with regards to social and work-related issues as well as health care. It constitutes a highly innovative welfare model, very much connected to each territory's specific characteristics, to their specific values and history. Therefore the social ties and networks that are generated

between agricultural entrepreneurs, social cooperatives, healthcare institutions and citizens enhance social cohesion, social inclusion and a responsible attitude towards the future.

Production of relational goods, innovative services and protection of common goods

Social and Care farming is able to produce food as well as relational goods. Furthermore, it gives us the opportunity to foster social inclusion through work among vulnerable social groups as well as to provide healthcare services to the underprivileged. Its productive processes put an emphasis on active participation of all workers as well as on establishing responsible relationships with users and consumers, having in mind the protection of common goods that are integral part of agricultural activities.

Centrality of the individual

A crucial aspect of social and care farming is its specific focus on human needs as well as the pursue of the individual's and community's well-being. The different realities within care farming constitute concrete actions towards inclusion and against inequality and all kinds of discrimination.

Environmental, economic and social sustainability

Due to its core values, social and care farming emphasises the importance of social responsibility at all levels, also with regards to the environment, the landscape and the generations to come. Its vast range of activities is oriented towards the research of sustainable production techniques, such as the organic ones, which are able to capitalise on the fertility, biodiversity and resilience of each territory and to promote the mitigation of climate change. Social and Care farming is an advanced system that combines competitive levels of production with sustainable growth.

Legal and social responsibility

As previously mentioned, social and care farming embraces a vast range of different experiences. Such variety also means richness of perspectives, it is a spur to innovation and a blueprint for the future.

All such experiences give the utmost importance to each company's social responsibility and emphasise absolute respect of the rights of the employees, customers and consumers. Social and Care farming is actively engaged against all forms of illegality, especially against organised crime, which poses a serious threat to the values of each society as well as to their future. Social and Care farming collaborates with all entities that deal with the management of seized Mafia land assets, it supports their initiatives and promotes their products.

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