

Scientific report ESF Workshop “Farming for Health”

Wageningen, the Netherlands
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Scientific report

Introduction

With a declining importance of commercial agriculture as a carrier of regional identity in Europe, and an increasing demand for inclusion of people with a special requirement for integration or reintegration in society, the combination of agriculture and health is an extremely promising development

It can not only enhance the quality of life of numerous detached people longing for inclusion, it can also counteract the abandonment of the countryside. At the same time, the broadening of functions of agriculture can contribute substantially to the involvement of urban people in the landscape, thus adding to sustainable rural development.

There's a growing interest in scientific research on the combination of agriculture and health in Europe. It includes research dealing with green care farms, projects on horticultural therapy and projects involving farm animals for therapeutic purposes. Green care farms, horticultural therapy and farm animal therapy is brought together under the umbrella of 'Farming for Health'.

This area is inherently multidisciplinary, though the different research fields are still separated networks. This international workshop is needed to extent and strengthen a multidisciplinary scientific network across Europe and to stimulate the coordination of program and project development in this area.

Summary

The meeting “Farming for Health” brought together more than 20 scientists from various European countries and the US of different backgrounds, including some of the top scientists in the field of Animal Assisted Therapy, Horticultural Therapy, landscape management, rural development and social health care.

A main part of these researchers participated in writing a scientific book about the state of the art of farming for health across Europe. After including the scientific lectures of this workshop, the book will be published by Frontis Book Series later this year.

The basic aims of the workshop were to

- present and discuss the state of the art in research, policy and practice for the combination of farming with social health care in Europe.

- To develop a common conceptual framework concerning the definitions of farming for health and its health promoting mechanisms
- To stimulate joint program and project development including an European survey and joint project proposals to be submitted to the EU

We recognised that the interaction between research, practice and policy is crucial for the development of this new field. Therefore, some policymakers and people that deal with daily practice of farming for health were invited to the workshop to discuss ideas in a broaden sense.

During the meeting we discussed three different themes: 1. The position of green care in a changing society and the effects on clients; 2. Economics and (social) entrepreneurship; 3. Policies in health care, agriculture, urban areas and countryside. Besides two workshops on each theme, the themes were further discussed by several key note speakers.

This meeting offered the participants the opportunity to exchange views and to discuss the relevance, efficiency and quality of ongoing research within green care in Europe.

Due to the motivation of the participants, the aims of the workshop were achieved.

- The establishment of a well-functioning multidisciplinary Community of Practice on Farming for Health has been taken a step further
- An appropriate agenda for international research has been made.
- Agreement on two joint proposals to be submitted to the EU was achieved
- Proposals on a common conceptual framework dealing with the definition of farming for health and the health promoting mechanisms were discussed. Joint papers will be written for a special issue of Horticultural Technology
- Agreement to perform an European survey on Farming for Health, including social and economic parameters was achieved
- A scientific book 'Farming for health across Europe' with contributions of most participants will be published in the Frontis series by Springer autumn 2005.

The workshop resulted also in an ambitious action plan of various other activities for the coming years. All the participants showed a lot of enthusiasm to get actively involved in further activities. Other meetings are already planned (Norway 2006; Belgium 2007) and collaboration projects are starting now.

The representative of the ESF (Prof. Rudy Rabbinge) mentioned in his speech that he looks forward to the results and recommendations of the workshop. He stressed the need to develop a common underlying conceptual framework for this emerging field. In his view 'Farming for Health' can become an important niche market for specific farmers and areas. Mrs. Muriel Grimmeissen (representative of the Council of Europe; CoE) emphasised the CoE is extremely interested in all activities that contribute to social inclusion. She mentioned that producing the book "Farming for health across Europe" is a major achievement and she will introduce the book in the Council of Europe.

All the participants were very pleased with the workshop.

We are thankful to the ESF for providing funding for the event, we would particularly like to thank the Standing Committee for Social Sciences and the Standing Committee for Life, Earth and Environmental Sciences for their contribution.

Scientific content of the event

Dr Jan Hassink (Wageningen UR) opened the workshop with a presentation of the highlights of the book "Farming for health across Europe".

The preliminary publication was officially handed by mr Rob Bogers (Frontis) to Prof. Rudy Rabbinge of the ESF and to Mrs. Muriel Grimmeissen of the Council of Europe.

After the official handing, Prof. Rabbinge presented the ESF and its activities. He also presented his view on the mega trends in European agriculture and the opportunities for farming for health. According to Mr Rabbinge farming for health can be an important niche market in agriculture. The challenge is to develop theories of underlying concepts and methods.

After his presentation, time was set for discussion. The discussion was led by the discussant of the day. The organisers decided to change the discussant every day of the meeting. The main task of the discussants was to lead the lively discussions in a good way, to summarize the highlights of the day and to draw attention to the workshop aims.

The next day the programme was divided into two plenary sessions, an excursion to a green care farm and a workshop. The first plenary session was a key note lecture by Dr Joe Sempik (Loughborough University, UK) about the benefits of horticulture and gardening for vulnerable or socially excluded adults. He gave us an overview of the results of an in depth examination of 24 garden projects in the UK. From the interviews of clients, staff and carers and health professionals it was clear that social and therapeutic horticulture has a positive effect on the social inclusion of the participants. Comparable research has been done in the Netherlands, with comparable results.

The participants were divided into three groups for the interactive workshops.

The organisers decided to spread the workshops out over two days. The participants stayed in the same workshop during these two days. The reason for this two-days interactive workshop within the programme was to trigger the participants to actively contribute to the subject they had chosen for. This worked very well. Because of these two days-workshops, we were able to discuss more in depth our views and ideas in a smaller group. Exchange of the results of the three different workshops was planned in the programme as well.

In **workshop 1**, the position of green care in society was discussed. On Thursday, the leading paradigms in agriculture and health care were investigated. The group discussed that farming for health initiatives can provide some answers to various problems which are prevalent within our modern and fast society. There was no satisfying answer to whether an actual new paradigm is necessary to socially ground these initiatives.

Jan Hassink (Wageningen UR, NL) started the discussion about possible research methods for studying the effects on clients of working on green care farms.

On Friday, the participants of workshop 1 exchanged research methodologies, and Professor Bjarne Braastad (University of Life Sciences, Norway) presented a Norwegian research project. In this project, a Randomised Clinical Trial (RCT) is used to set up an investigation of the effects of farm animals on the well being of

clients. There's a first indication that the used RCT method results in a considerable variation in scores. In other countries it's often not possible to start a clinical trial as used in Norway, due to ethical dilemmas. The freedom of clients is considered more important than research considerations. The conclusion of the group was that it should be possible to make use of a wide range of research methodologies (RCT, Quasi-experimental control, registration and monitoring etc).

It was considered to be crucial to develop a conceptual framework before even start all sorts of research projects. Two different models dealing with the definitions of 'Farming for Health' and the mechanisms behind the health promoting effects of interactions with plants, animals and being on the farm have been discussed. It was agreed to write some joint papers dealing with this conceptual framework. They will be included in a special issue of Horticultural Technology.

Finally, an overview of and recommendations for research in different countries has been made during the workshop, and can also be found in the different chapters of the book Farming for Health across Europe.

This subject linked to the key note lecture of Thursday evening by Professor Diane Relf (Virginia Tech University, USA). She emphasised the importance of development of theoretical models for research and implementation. A relatively large number of articles is written about the possible positive effects of animal assisted therapy or horticultural therapy. However hardly any literature is published in clinical and medical journals that provide the underlying basis for academic, programmatic and policy decisions. The definition of, as Professor Relf calls it "what we are talking about" is absolutely necessary to develop "a coherent research program that quantifies and qualifies the depth and breathe of the profession and the efficacy of farming for health activities in a treatment or other therapeutic context".

In **workshop 2**, mr. Gert Rebergen (NL) introduced the method of Social Return on Investment (SROI). SROI can be used in stakeholder management, marketing strategies, strategic positioning and resource management. The method is useful to measure the impact of what you are doing, not only the economic framework, but also the social, psychological and ecological framework are important. Farming for Health projects throughout Europe can be compared by using SROI to investigate the influence of the projects on environment and society.

On Friday, the participants of workshop 2 exchanged the experiences of collecting economic data about care farms in different European Countries. It appears that no economic data are available of broadening agriculture activities like landscape conservation, tourism and care activities.

Professor Saverio Senni (University of Turin, Italy), presented some economic implications related with farming for health. He introduces the term "welfare farming", which refers to agricultural production activities carried on to explicitly generate positive outcomes to specific groups of a population. He defines the effect of welfare farming in terms of social capital as follows "welfare farming foster social inclusion that increases social capital defined as the institutions, relationships, attitudes and values that govern interactions among people and contribute to economic and social development". Professor Senni gave an example of a cost benefit analysis in the north of Italy. He illustrated it is possible and needed to measure economic aspects

and the (economical) impact of welfare farming / farming for health. SROI can be a good method.

Workshop 3 focussed on the influence of policies in health, urban and rural spatial planning and agriculture on farming for health. The participants identified the stakeholders in farming for health, and discussed the ways to influence these stakeholders.

A survey of current policy influences on farming for health showed us that the accent differs per country, though we identified some main issues on European, national, regional and local level. Social entrepreneurship, social cohesion, quality of life, landscape and environment, social services, agriculture, citizens and governance and education and research are important policy domains we have to deal with, mainly on regional and national level.

On Friday, the group of workshop 3 defined an action plan to raise public awareness on farming for health.

The conclusion was that we have to build alliances with umbrella-organisations of client groups and nature protection organisations (slow food). We discussed ways to influence media and stakeholders by publishing (popular) articles and organising an European day for farming for health, including a yearly European prize for best entrepreneurship.

It was concluded that scientists have to work together in research projects. Funding depends on the decision makers, so active lobbying is important.

On Friday morning, Dr Thomas van Elsen (University of Kassel, Germany) put farming for health in the context of landscape management and sustainable rural development. Some farms integrate nature conservation into agricultural production. This means a bottom up approach for a sustainable development of European landscapes. People living and working on a farm become connected to their places, to nature and to the landscape. Farming for health can lead towards new perspectives for sustainable farming for healthy people and for healthy landscapes.

After his lecture, Mrs Hannelore Speelman (farmer in NL) gave us an inside view of her care farm. She told us about the challenges a farmer has to deal with when he or she wants to start a care farm. Her description of the work on the farm with the clients was impressive. After a few days talking about research, theories and policies, she brought us back to the reality of clients who benefit from working with plants and animals in an experiencing and safe farm environment.

Saturday, Dr Piet Driest (NIZW, NL), gave an introduction about long term care in Europe. He put the development of farming for health in the wider context of the health sector. There appears to occur a change of paradigm from the traditional monodisciplinary protocol-oriented medical approach of long term care issues, to a more social, integrated approach. Farming for health fits into this main trend, as well in the trend towards more and more informal family care.

Innovations in long term care generally means a shift from focus on target groups to functions; this implicates a need of cooperation of organisations focussed on different functions. Farming for health should therefore develop alliances with other sectors!

Elderly people will become an increasingly important target group for farming for health initiatives. The number of elderly persons will increase rapidly the coming years. A challenge is to include people with other cultural backgrounds in farming for health projects.

In the discussion, differences between long term care in northern and Mediterranean countries appeared. In northern countries, informal care is a social (non medical) surplus; therefore farming for health is still not recognised as a possible therapeutic treatment, but mostly as a day activity for clients. In the Mediterranean countries, the right on care is not defined. Family care is part of the normal society.

A shift from national approaches in long term care towards a more local orientation can be observed in many countries. This has advantages of more client-oriented responsibilities, but strong risk of ad-hoc financial cuts. Depending on the country, government (tax based health system) or insurance companies have more influence on the financial structure of health care, and therefore farming for health.

List of Actions

We finished our meeting with drawing up an action plan for the coming year.

The organisers are very satisfied with the results of the meeting; we achieved our aims, and did even more than we expected. The risk of preparing a long action list might be that nobody feels responsible anymore, but this is not the case. With enthusiasm participants offered to be the process owner of an action point. This means from now on the Community of Practice Farming for Health is not only a Dutch lead, but is shared by a group of outstanding scientists of different backgrounds from 14 different countries.

Complet list of action points resulting from the ESF workshop:

01. Survey and translate quality and competence systems (either sophisticated or implicit)
02. Develop guidelines to enhance the process of developing and demonstrating quality
03. Promotion of European day of farming for health
04. European prize for social entrepreneurship in farming for health
05. Develop video on care farms
06. Collect data on (socio-) economic performance of green care initiatives : parameters
07. Social return on investment initiative; comparing initiatives in different countries
08. Put articles, research concepts and results on website
09. Set up discussion groups
10. Develop and maintain website
11. Set up mailing list
12. Develop newsletter
13. Enlarge Community of Practice south- and eastward
14. Survey on care farms across Europe including economic and social data
15. Exchange education and training programmes
16. Pushing joint research proposals
17. Develop web-based dictionary/glossary on care farming
18. Special issue of Horticultural Technology; theoretical frameworks

19. Further meetings of the CoP (2006: Norway, 2007: Belgium)
20. Finishing and publishing of the book 'Farming for Health across Europe'

Recommendations from the workshop for a research and policy agenda

Research

- Develop a multidisciplinary scientific network that coordinates a joint program and develops projects in this new field
- Develop a common underlying conceptual framework defining the content of Farming for Health and explaining the health promoting mechanisms
- Initiate an European survey in the field of farming for health to get a clear picture of the number, size and diversity of social projects in agriculture
- Initiate common multidisciplinary research projects including among others agronomists, sociologists and psychologists
- Compare different methodologies to study the effects of green care and other farming for health projects for the well being and development of clients. Integrate qualitative and quantitative research methods, compare results of different target groups and stimulate the use of control groups
- Develop a common methodology to quantify and compare the economic, social and ecological performances of farming for health initiatives.
- Compare the impact of farming for health initiatives in rural and urbanized regions and determine the contribution to rural and urban challenges like revitalizing the rural area, social cohesion, preserving the landscape, inclusion and diminishing feelings of insecurity and annoyance

Policy

- Create awareness of the potential contributions of farming for health initiatives to challenges in different areas like health care, agriculture and welfare
- Facilitate initiatives that try to connect urban demands and rural qualities
- Facilitate farmers, clients and health care organisations that initiate innovative farming for health projects
- Stimulate that all European countries can learn and benefit from the experiences in countries that are most experienced in farming for health

Final Programme

ESF Exploratory Workshop "FARMING FOR HEALTH" Wageningen, 16 – 19 March 2005

FARMING FOR HEALTH will be an interactive conference to present and discuss innovative practice and research experiences with the combination of social health care, farming and landscape management.

Programme ESF Exploratory Workshop "FARMING FOR HEALTH"

2005	Wednesday 16 March	Thursday 17 March	Friday 18 March	Saturday 19 March
<i>Theme</i>	GETTING TOGETHER	INCLUSION	FARM LIFE	SOCIETY
9:00 – 10:00		key note address: <i>Integration and quality of life: a question of integrity and identity</i> <i>Dr. Joe Sempik Loughborough University (UK)</i>	key note address: <i>Sustainable rural development and social health: landscapes of the future</i> <i>Dr. Thomas van Elsen. University of Kassel. Germany Hannelore Speelman. Care Farm the Noorderhoeve Netherlands</i>	key note address: <i>Public responsibility and individual involvement: crossing borders</i> <i>Piet Driest, NIZW, Netherlands</i>
10:00 –12:30		Workshops . Themes: 1: Effects for clients 2: Economics 3: Policies in health care, agriculture, urban areas and countryside	Workshops (see Thursday)	Future activities and follow up actions: action plan
12:30 –14:00	<i>lunch break</i>			
14:00 –18:00	registration; check in accommodation; optional activities	excursions and on-farm activities	creative happening Group discussions on future activities and follow-up actions;	
18:00 –20:00	<i>diner break</i>			
20:00 –21:30	conference opening; Presentation ESF Presentation Council of Europe book presentation. <i>Farming for Health in Europe and the US.</i> <i>Dr. Jan Hassink (NI)</i>	Key note address: <i>Farming for Health: Research lessons from the United States</i> <i>Prof . Diane Relf Virginia Tech University United States</i>	Discussion around specific themes that were put forward during the workshop exchange of experiences Continuation of discussing future activities	
21:30 - ?	welcome reception	café chantant	café chantant	

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