

**KATHOLIEKE UNIVERSITEIT LEUVEN**



**POLICY FRAMES REGARDING  
SOCIAL FARMING AND GREEN CARE  
IN FLANDERS AND AT THE EU LEVEL**

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# Executive summary

## **Background:**

Social Farming (also known as Care Farming, Farming for Health or Green Care in Agriculture) might be considered as an element of multifunctional agriculture, rural development and ‘socialisation of care’. Social farming aims to provide social services, health care, education and employment integration to vulnerable groups (people with disability, psychiatric or addiction problems, disaffected youth, long-term unemployed, migrants, children and elderly). These initiatives add to the economic viability of farmers and rural areas, enhance service-users’ quality of life and enable society to supply cost-effective social care services.

## **Objective of the research:**

To provide an overview of potential legal and financial support schemes for social farming.

## **Research question:**

How do different stakeholder groups at Flemish and EU level frame potential policy developments in social/care farming?

## **Methods:**

Qualitative research was conducted using the method of ‘grounded theory’, i.e. simultaneous literature review and face-to-face semi-structured interviews with a total of 33 key stakeholders (informants) at Flemish and EU level, selected by theoretical sampling: practitioners, intermediates/experts, parliaments, governments and public administrations of the various policy domains involved.

**Results:** The study provides an overview of the enormous diversity of social farming initiatives across Europe, and the somewhat special Flemish situation given the recent legislation and subsidy for private, family-based care farms by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. There are well above 400 care farms in Flanders, supported by the Flemish intermediate body Support Centre for Green Care (*Steunpunt Groene Zorg*).

Interview data was analysed according to **frames** (mental lenses that guide how informants perceived social farming):

- A) *Agricultural frame: the farmer and the diversification of his income***
  - social farming as a chance for the farmer to survive
- B) *Welfare frame: institutionalisation & public budgets, or the ‘Dutch model’***
  - social farming as a chance for more efficient care and saving costs
- C) *Social Economy frame: social enterprises and cooperatives, or the ‘Italian model’***
  - social farming as a chance for employment of vulnerable groups
- D) *Regional frame: community-based initiatives and local partnerships***
  - social farming as a chance for community-building
- E) *Quality of care***

**Discussion:** In the Flemish situation, mainly the agricultural frame is used, while social economy or local, community-based initiatives were generally new for stakeholders. The blindness of each stakeholder group is explained by the complexity of political structures and the welfare sector. Also limitations of the Support Centre for Green Care are dealt with, given the strong links with the Flemish farmers’ association. Finally, political interests play a major role in determining which pathway social farming in Flanders will follow, i.e. the Dutch system, the Italian model, partnerships, experimental or territorially-based policymaking.

**Conclusion:** There is no ‘best’ solution for social farming in Flanders. Arguably, local solutions within rural development policies might have the most suitable base, as they succeed to integrate agricultural, social, health care and social economy viewpoints and actors. Partnerships at the local level are crucial, yet the legal framework designed at national or EU level should make innovative, community-based initiatives possible. Flanders should broaden and re-frame social farming beyond economic viability of farmers, to allocate sources within the welfare and social economy sector. Whilst accepting a reasonable increase in administration and quality standards, policymakers should start true cooperation.

**Key words:** *Social Farming, Green Care, Care Farms, Farming for Health, Multifunctional Agriculture, Rural Development, Vulnerable groups, Social Care Services, Policy frameworks*

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My deepest gratitude goes to each and every participant who was willing to dedicate time for an interview. I was lucky to see the most different places and meet interesting and motivated people from the grassroots level up to the European institutions. Often interviews led to broader fruitful discussions that enriched the whole process of researching.

Last but not least, I am thanking my partner, family and friends for their loving support, patience and vital comments.

## List of abbreviations

<b>AAT</b>	Animal-Assisted Therapy
<b>CAP</b>	Common Agricultural Policy
<b>CLB</b>	<i>Centra voor leerlingenbegeleiding</i> (Pupil Guidance Centres, i.e. counselling centres for pupils at Flemish schools)
<b>CoP</b>	Community of Practice
<b>COST</b>	European Cooperation in Science and Technology
<b>CSA</b>	Community Supported Agriculture
<b>DG</b>	Directorate-General
<b>EC</b>	European Community
<b>ENRD</b>	European Network for Rural Development
<b>ESF</b>	European Social Fund
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FFH</b>	Farming for Health
<b>HT</b>	Horticultural Therapy
<b>ILVO</b>	<i>Instituut voor Landbouw- en Visserijonderzoek</i> (Flemish Institute for Agricultural and Fisheries Research)
<b>LDE</b>	<i>Lokale diensteneconomie</i> (Local services economy)
<b>MFA</b>	Multifunctional Agriculture
<b>NRN</b>	National Rural Network
<b>RDP</b>	Rural Development Programme
<b>SoFar</b>	Social Services in Multifunctional Farms - ‘Social Farming’
<b>STH</b>	Social and Therapeutic Horticulture
<b>TH</b>	Therapeutic Horticulture
<b>VAPH</b>	<i>Vlaams Agentschap voor Personen met een Handicap</i> (Flemish Agency for People with Disability)
<b>VILT</b>	<i>Vlaams infocentrum land- en tuinbouw</i> (Flemish Information centre for Agriculture and Horticulture)
<b>VLIIF</b>	<i>Vlaams landbouwinvesteringsfonds</i> (Flemish Fund for Investments in Agriculture)
<b>VOSEC</b>	<i>Vlaams Overleg Sociale Economie</i> (Flemish Platform for Social Economy)

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Figure 1: *Farming for Health (FFH) at the intersection of the agricultural sector and the healthcare sector*

Source: Dessein (2008, 16)

Figure 2: *Evolution of Social Farms in the Netherlands and Flanders after implementation of Support Centres*

Source: Schüßler (2008, 57)

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Source: Hine et al. (2008, 26)

Figure 4: *Target groups on care farms in Flanders, percentages 2006 and 2009*

Source: adapted from Goris & Weckhuysen (2007) and Steunpunt Groene Zorg vzw (2010)

Figure 5: *Evolution of numbers of care farms in Flanders*

Source: Steunpunt Groene Zorg vzw (2010, 2)

# 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Due to the difficulties the European agricultural sector is experiencing, **Multifunctional Agriculture** (MFA) or the diversification towards non-farming activities is often regarded as a means to keep farming economically viable. Probably the best-known approaches of MFA are environmental functions and agro-tourism. Next to these ‘classical’ forms of diversification, social and health care services on farms can play an important role (Di Iacovo & O’Connor 2009, 7; Gallis 2007, 14). Yet there is no commonly agreed definition of the various concepts – i.e. **Social Farming, Green Care in Agriculture, Care Farming, Farming for Health** – dealing with the combination of agriculture and social care services. An immense diversity of social farming practices throughout Europe adds to the complexity of the phenomenon. Social farming yields benefits for society as a whole by providing farmers with additional income and improving their reputation, by providing cost-effective care and enriching vulnerable people’s lives, by maintaining landscapes, by creating social integration and employment and therefore contributing to a process of **rural development**. Main products of social farming, next to agricultural produce, are health, therapy, rehabilitation, (sheltered) employment, education and landscape management (Gallis 2007, 14; Di Iacovo & O’Connor 2009, 7, 8, 11).

Several authors (Van Schaik & Van der Woude 1997; Dessein et al. 2004; Vik & Farstad 2009) elaborate on the radical change in European agriculture since the 1960s. The transition towards intensification and specialisation has resulted in rising costs, declining profits and the loss of social integration of farmers. Hine et al. (2008, 16) add that many farms are struggling to remain economically viable and intend to either diversify or give up farming. The authors request a ‘new’ agriculture that would focus on demand instead of supply, by offering tailored high quality commodities and services to the public such as a clean environment, recreation or social services. These suggestions are in line with the call for more **(social) sustainability** and multifunctionality in farming activities within a process of rural development, as stated by Gallos (2007, 14).

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<sup>1</sup> A longer, more detailed version of this research can be found on <http://www.biw.kuleuven.be/aee/clo/wp.htm>

A parallel evolution can be observed in the health and social care sector. Since the 1980s, most European countries have gradually been moving away from residential institutions towards **community-based social services** where service-users are actively involved in shaping their life (Barnes 2008, 30; McGloin 2009, 106). Dessein (2008, 15) mentions the challenge of the health care sector to leave the biomedical model and achieve service-users’ **integration and empowerment** through holistic, tailor-made care. Likewise, Dedry (2003, 15) and Hassink (2010, 423) connect green care activities to the notion of ‘**socialisation of care**’. This process started in the 1980s-1990s by providing extramural care through small-scale initiatives such as supported living, home care services and day activity centres. However, according to Dedry (2003, 15), socialisation of care also means full participation of vulnerable groups in society, and integration in ‘normal’ companies, schools and public services. Fig. 1 shows the interconnectedness of the abovementioned concepts:

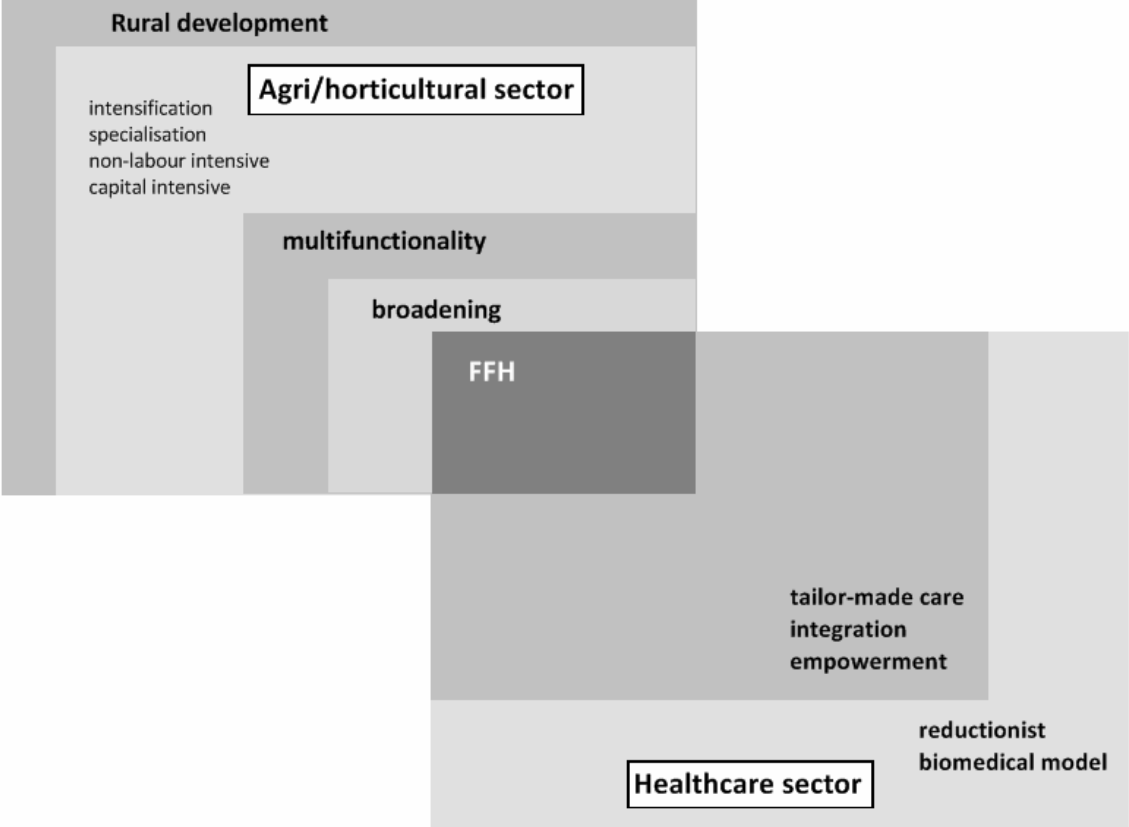


Fig. 1. *Farming for Health (FFH) at the intersection of the agricultural sector and the healthcare sector*  
 Source: Dessein (2008, 16)

Furthermore, Hine et al. (2008, 14-16) and Vik & Farstad (2009, 539) point to the range of current health and social challenges our societies are facing: increasing obesity, type II

diabetes, mental illness such as depression and anxiety, prison overcrowding, increasing re-offending rates, disaffected young people and youth criminality, the disconnection from nature, the distance from food and those who produce it, and so on. As the welfare systems of all EU countries are under strong pressure (Vadnal & Dessein 2009, 149; Hine et al. 2008, 14) and public health expenditures rise every year, social farming might be a part of a more efficient solution, especially in overcoming the current lack of social services tailored to the needs in rural areas.

Some authors argue that social farming is connected to a transition from old to new economic regimes (Di Iacovo & O'Connor 2009, 14; Van Elsen 2009) even beyond the agricultural sector. More sustainable ways of agricultural production are required that would meet the changing needs of society, in order to find a better balance between the values of people, planet and prosperity (Veldkamp et al. 2008). In this regard, social farming yields opportunities for the integration of vulnerable groups through measures of **supported employment** within the social economy (Kalisch & Van Elsen 2009, 92). Besides, some authors link social farming to the concept of **community-supported agriculture** (CSA) and the potential of '**ethical consumers**' (Di Iacovo 2009, 52 and Carbone et al. 2009).

To sum up, social farming may be part of the answer to some of the complex problems of modern society. Considering the beneficial effects of natural spaces and farms on the social, physical and mental well-being of people, health institutions are keen to foster an inclusive, holistic approach of care and sympathise with alternative practices that are more embedded in real life social contexts. Sheltered employment on farms might contribute to the inclusion of disadvantaged groups in society. Farmers get a chance to broaden and diversify their scope of activities towards social services, acquire new sources of income and help to vitalise rural areas (Di Iacovo & O'Connor 2009, 14; Hassink 2009, 23; Hine et al. 2008, 92). Therefore, Van Elsen (2009, 2), Hine et al. (2008, 2) and Dedry (2003, 46) argue that social farming deserves legal and financial recognition.

**Flanders**, the Northern, Dutch-speaking part of Belgium, may be in a special position in Europe, given the 2005 legislation and subsidy for private, family-based care farms that receive a small number (i.e. less than ten, and often only one or two) service-users per day (Hassink 2009, 33). Challenges regarding social farming in Flanders as identified by Goris & Weckhuysen (2007) include (1) the future financial compensation of farmers, seeing the

continuous rise of care farms during the last years and the strong influence of EU competences in agricultural policy; (2) the lack of structural funding for the Flemish Support Centre of Green Care (*Steunpunt Groene Zorg*) and (3) the lack of contribution by other policy domains involved. Five years after the implementation of the legislation, these challenges call for research into potential ways of regulating and supporting social farming in the future, at Flemish and EU level.

The overall **aim** of this master thesis is to contribute to the scientific evidence and theory building of social farming and green care in agriculture. The study attempts to provide an overview of potential ways to further include the issue in Flemish and EU policies. Eventually, the thesis might add to the awareness of social farming, help to inspire ideas, reforms and frameworks, and become a step in the long-term process of enhancing quality of life for service-users, social farming practitioners, and the wider society.

The thesis has three specific **objectives**. The *first objective* is to scrutinise the range of different definitions, typologies, service user groups, benefits and challenges of green care in a broad sense. The diversity of social farming across the EU is studied by means of a literature review throughout section 2. The *second objective* is to understand how care farming manifests itself in the area of tension between agriculture and health/social care. In this regard, policy challenges are examined to gain insight into possible legal and financial recognition of social farming and green care activities. The *third objective* of the study is then to investigate to what extent the various options of legal and financial recognition of social/care farming might be practical for Flanders and the EU. Consequently, the **research question** in accord with the aforementioned three objectives has been identified as follows: *How do different stakeholder groups at Flemish and EU level frame potential policy developments in social/care farming?*

The thesis is organised as follows. Section 2 provides an overview of potential solutions, i.e. various legal and financial support schemes that exist across Europe. Methodological aspects are thoroughly dealt with in section 3. The analysis of data acquired through semi-structured interviews is conducted in section 4. Section 5 discusses the results, while section 6 provides conclusions and recommendations.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 History and definitions

Social farming is said to be both a traditional and an innovative use of agriculture (Di Iacovo & O'Connor 2009, 11). It is traditional in the sense that before the process of mechanisation and over-specialisation in agriculture began, people with special needs used to find employment and care on farms. Social farming is innovative because it has been introduced autonomously at grassroots level, often on a voluntary basis combined with a strong ethical motivation in absence of any policy framework (Hine et al. 2008, 9; Di Iacovo & O'Connor 2009, 12). The first individual initiatives emerged from the 1960s on. For example, in Italy, the closing-down of psychiatric institutions in the 1980s led to the emergence of social co-operatives that combined farming and care. In the Netherlands and Ireland, social farming pioneers were often inspired by anthroposophic views and Christian principles. Norway concentrates traditionally on farm-based services for schools. In the Netherlands and Flanders, where social farming activities have been legally recognised since 1999 (the Netherlands) and 2005 (Flanders), the numbers of small-scale care farms have been increasing ever since (Schübler 2008, 57), as can be perceived in Fig. 2:

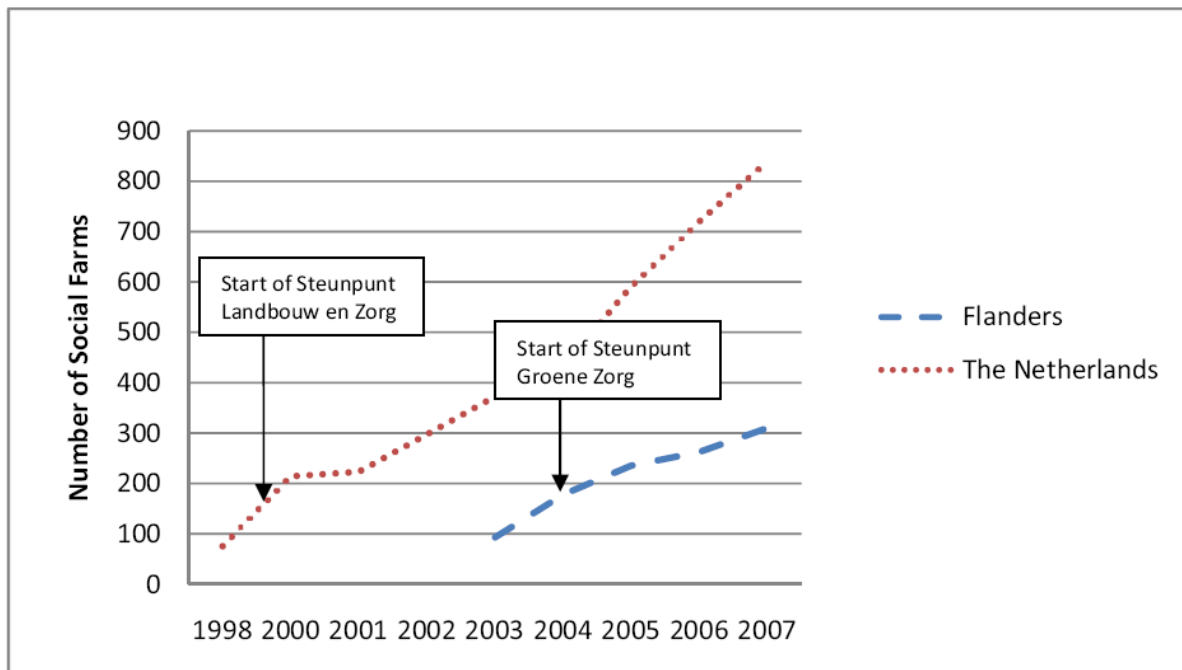


Fig. 2. *Evolution of Social Farms in the Netherlands and Flanders after implementation of Support Centres*

Source: Schübler (2008, 57)

The Community of Practice Farming for Health (CoP FFH, <http://www.farmingforhealth.org/>), an international group of researchers, policymakers and practitioners that meets yearly since 2004, defines '**Farming for Health**' as:

“based on a combination of agriculture and care. The focus is both on the farming system (which includes components as the farm enterprise itself, operational management, the farmer and the farmer’s social environment) and the care sector (including for example, the help-seeker, the institution and the care professional). The result is a very diverse picture of care-seekers involved in on-farm activities.” (Dessein 2008, 15-16)

The SoFar project (<http://sofar.unipi.it/>, 2006-2008), short for Social Services in Multifunctional Farms ('Social Farming'), a multi-country Specific Support Action funded by the European Commission’s Sixth Framework Programme, organised several national and international conferences and meetings, resulting in a SWOT analysis of Social Farming in Europe, a European Manifesto (Van Elsen, 2009), a video documentary and a book containing several case studies, scientific findings and policy recommendations . The book was edited by Di Iacovo and O’Connor who give a comprehensive definition of '**Social farming**':

“Social farming (or 'care farming' or 'green care') are farming practices aimed at promoting disadvantaged people’s rehabilitation, education and care and/or towards the integration of people with 'low contractual capacity' (i.e. intellectual and physical disabilities, convicts, those with drug addiction, minors, migrants) but also practices that support services in rural areas for specific target groups such as children and the elderly.” (Di Iacovo & O’Connor 2009, 11)

Similarly, COST Action 866 'Green Care in Agriculture', (<http://www.umb.no/greencare/>, 2006-2010), defines '**Green Care**' as:

“the utilisation of agricultural farms – the animals, the plants, the garden, the forest, and the landscape – as a base for promoting human mental and physical health, as well as quality of life, for a variety of client groups.” (Gallis 2007, 5)

Likewise, the Flemish Support Centre for Green Care uses a broad definition of '**Green Care**', i.e.

“all possible fruitful combinations of a green setting with the care for a broad range of vulnerable groups in society” (Dedry 2003, 8).

They include active agricultural farms, institutional farms, social workplaces with agricultural activities, and so-called small-scale initiatives, often set up by social workers with an accent on the care aspect. However, the Support Centre’s focus is solely on productive agricultural farms when it comes to support, whereas they merely function as a provider of information for the other types.

Hine et al. (2008, 26) groups the term ‘**care farming**’ under the umbrella of ‘**green care**’, as shown in Fig. 3:

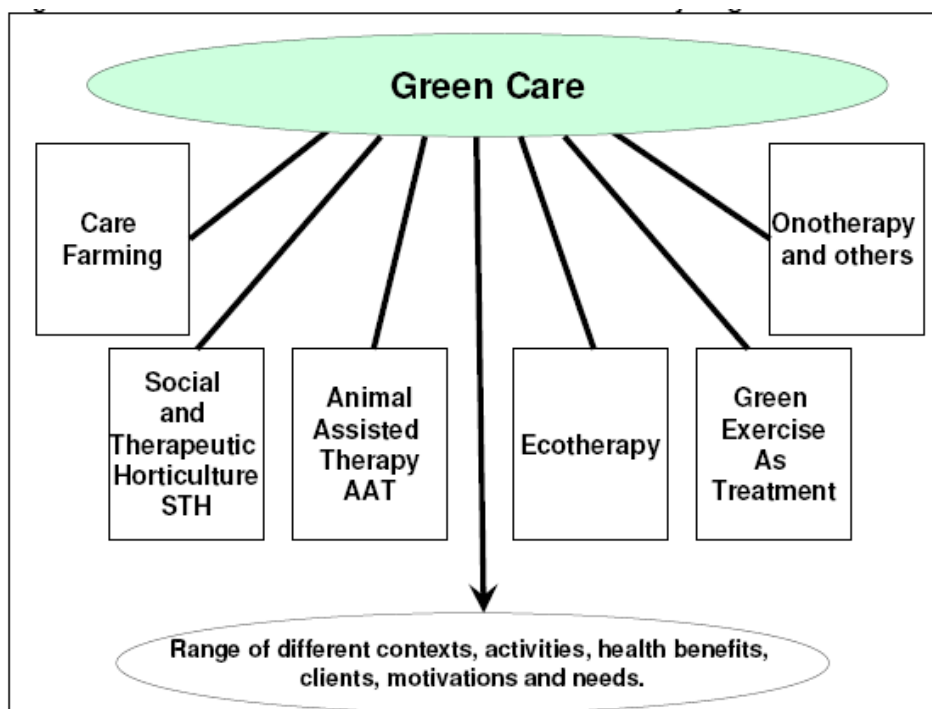


Fig. 3. *Under the Green Care umbrella – the diversity of green care*

Source: Hine et al. (2008, 26)

Other important concepts linked to social farming and green care are ‘**Animal-Assisted Therapy**’ (AAT) and ‘**Social and Therapeutic Horticulture**’ (STH). Thrive, a national charity representing STH in the United Kingdom, defines STH as: “the process by which individuals may develop well-being using plants and horticulture. This is achieved by active or passive involvement” (Hine et al. 2008, 26). Hine et al. (2008, 30) also draw a distinction with care farms according to the principal focus on commercial production that is not present in STH. Dessein (2008) finally clarifies that the different concepts used (Farming for Health, Social Farming, Care Farming, Horticultural Therapy, Agricultural Therapy, Green Exercise,

Green Care...) are not fully synonymous. Therefore, in this study, mainly the concepts 'social farming', 'care farming' and 'green care in agriculture' are used. Combining the three abovementioned definitions, a **broad approach** was chosen for this research: 'social farming' and 'green care in agriculture' embrace all forms of educational, therapeutic, supported employment or other social and care services on agricultural farms; while 'care farming' is mainly used for the Dutch and Flemish situation where small-scale farms providing primarily care services are dominant. Linked to Fig. 3, 'green care' is the broadest term that also includes mere therapeutic activities such as healing gardens, animal-assisted therapy outside a farm environment, or horticultural therapy projects without saleable produce, all of which activities that are not dealt with in this study.

## **2.2 Positive health effects and other benefits**

The Memorandum of Understanding of COST Action 866 (Braastad 2006, 7-9) provides a comprehensive overview of recent scientific research regarding health benefits of 'green care', including AAT, STH and care on farms. However, it states that methodological difficulties are inherent, as some factors on farms cannot be controlled and control-groups are difficult to establish. Also, the long-term effects of green care activities are demanding and costly to measure scientifically, thus the need to develop new methodologies and research is stated. Also Vik & Farstad (2009, 541-542) review the recent literature, stating that green care activities have positive effects on people's health, while stressing that the nature of the relationship is still not properly understood. They categorise health benefits resulting from being in nature and green landscapes; from interaction with animals (having pets or working with animals); and from horticultural activity or other on-farm activities.

Scientific evidence is coming to the forefront, valorising therapy and well-being opportunities in nature, caring for plants and animals (Hassink & Ketelaars, 2003). Generally, service-users on care farms report benefits such as enjoyment of being out in fresh air, having contact with farm animals, spending time with other people and feeling confident as a result of learning new skills (Hine et al. 2008, 70). Rappe (2007, 35) lists benefits of green care such as stress recovery, physical exercise and awareness of healthy nutrition. Sempik (2007, 86) shows that 'Therapeutic Horticulture' (TH) can promote social inclusion, provide social opportunities, develop skills in both social functioning and task-related activities and improve the subjective

sense of well-being as well as quality of life. Long-term effects may lead to actual improvements in health and well-being that extend beyond the time spent at the project and help clients to rebuild their lives (Sempik 2007, 94). Hine et al. (2008, 62-64; 70-75) elaborate on three different categories of benefits for service-users on care farms:

- **Physical benefits** include improvements to physical health (motor function skills, better nutrition, reduction of alcohol or drug abuse) and farming skills.
- **Social and educational benefits** include the development of social skills, personal responsibility, the formation of a work habit and discipline, initiative, motivation and commitment.
- **Mental health benefits** consist of improved self-esteem, improved well-being and improvement of mood with other benefits including an increase in self-confidence, enhanced trust in other people and calmness.

Berget et al. (2008) conducted a randomised control trial study among psychiatric patients with long lasting psychiatric symptoms, on the effects of AAT on farms. Their findings also show a significant increase in self-efficacy and coping ability.

Furthermore, Van Elsen & Kalisch (2007) consider **benefits for the landscape** and nature. Landscape management and nature conservation may be suitable activities for social farming initiatives as these include plenty of diverse manual work combined with daily routine work, especially in winter or other times when there is not much agricultural work to do. Landscape work could function as an advertisement for institutions and promotion for the farm, while allocating extra income through selling services to other farmers or receiving extra payments from environmentally linked CAP (Common Agricultural Policy of the EU) sources.

### **2.3 Areas of tension in social farming**

General **challenges** in the field of social farming are the development of more scientific evidence on the positive effects of social farming and green care in general, public recognition at national and EU level, continuous financing structures, aids for structural investments, vocational training for farmers and therapists, networks to share experiences, safety requirements, transparency and quality standards, issues related to insurance and tax, as well as the definition of practical guidelines for social farmers. Striking waiting lists are another challenge to overcome in the case of the Netherlands and Flanders, as well as the wish to use

farms and nature not only curatively, but also preventatively (Di Iacovo & Pieroni 2009, 56; Assouline 2009, 73; Vadnal 2009, 89; Bloom & Hassink 2009, 123, Hine et al. 2008, 65).

Regarding **policies**, social farming links together two sectors that are very differently regulated at EU level: the CAP is the most integrated policy in the EU, whereas national policies and welfare models are dominant in the area of social affairs. O'Connor (2008, 45-54) examines the extent to which policies are acting as a driver or constraint on the development of Farming for Health practices. Given the bottom-up nature of mainly voluntary or community-based social farming initiatives, policymakers have been rarely committed to recognise and support these activities. Her study also illuminates the general **lack of influence** service-users can exert on the policy process of social farming. Di Iacovo (2008, 55-67) studies the various regulatory systems and policy developments regarding social farming, in Italy, the Netherlands and Flanders. His analysis boils down to a model process of change: in the first place, a pioneering situation exists. Social farming initiatives are isolated and few in numbers, carried out on a voluntary basis mainly. As soon as awareness rises and scientific evidence is provided, public bodies might start to formalise and support these activities. Monitoring needs, clear rules and quality systems are established in this second stage. However, such process of **professionalisation and institutionalisation** has side-effects, e.g. strict accreditation standards, compulsory training for social farmers, and possibly a reduction of agricultural production, while becoming more dependent on public funds. This evolution reduces the ability of the social farm to integrate service-users in **real-life** work activities, losing much of its informal advantages (Di Iacovo 2008, 61-63). A third stage for social farming initiatives might evolve when society, or local consumer groups, become increasingly aware of social farming initiatives and are willing to pay for products with an added ethical value (so-called '**ethical consumers**').

A main challenge discovered by most studies is the **economic viability** of care farming. Oltmer & Venema (2008, 165-178) investigate the financial viability of care farm businesses in the Netherlands, concentrating on the share of care farming activities in overall family farm income and revenues compared to costs. They find that generating revenue is often achieved by combinations of sources, for example being part of or cooperating with a health care institution, receiving fees through direct payment schemes (so-called 'personalised care budgets') of clients, or acquiring an accreditation as a small professional care institution. They found that fees received per day differ according to target groups, and that farmers are more

or less well informed about revenues, but have few insights in costs. Fixed costs of social or care farming activities would be investments, interest costs, depreciation, maintenance and insurance, while variable costs consist of gas/water/electricity, food, recruitment of clients, administration, telephone/e-mail, travelling, own labour, and salary for external caregivers.

**Salaries for service-users** are another arguable point. A statement in an earlier version of the Dutch Handbook for Care Farmers (Stichting Verenigde Zorgboeren 2007, 23), reiterated by Maertens & Speecke (2002, 23) for the Flemish situation, could function as a guideline:

“As long as supervision and guidance require greater effort than what the revenue of the service-user’s labour is, one should speak of ‘care’ and this care [or supervision] has to be compensated. Only when the service-user’s labour comprises an economic value for the farm, the situation should be considered as ‘employment’. Then the service-user has to get paid for his/her productivity, often supported by subsidies for supported employment and other integration measures for vulnerable groups.”

Another dilemma is the question of **quality of care** (i.e., enhanced quality standards and control) versus increased administrative burdens. For example Enders-Slegers (2008, 37-44) poses the question whether farmers should be **trained** to become professional caregivers. Elings et al. (2004) compares the specific value of working on a care farm with commercial agricultural production to that of working on a care farm with a primary focus on the care aspect, for people with learning disabilities. The study shows that the presence of a professional farmer, who is not a therapist or social worker, is of significant importance to service-users.

Vik & Farstad (2009) examine why the number of care farms in Norway seems to have stagnated despite sufficient demand for green care services and impressive amounts of political efforts. They show that users and payers tend to be different actors, and discover that the actors live in very diverse social worlds without any ‘boundary objects’. A suggested solution would be to oblige farmers to conceptualise their green care activities in terms that the health sector would find it adaptable to its needs, involving quality assurances. Furthermore, institutional frameworks for the actual matching should be constructed, to enable buyers and service-users to find their way among service-providers without having personal relations or knowledge of them.

## 2.4 Typologies and overview of policy frameworks and funding schemes

The major European research projects and a growing number of scientific articles revealed an enormous diversity of social farming and green care across and within countries. Combining typologies from Hassink (2009, 35-43), Hine et al. (2008, 36-38), Stichting Verenigde Zorgboeren (2007) and Gallis (2007, 210), the scope varies according to:

- *Goals* (e.g. therapy oriented vs. labour market integration vs. children's farms)
- *Balance* of income generated from *agricultural production* vs. *care provision*
- *Target group* (e.g. children vs. people with drug addiction vs. mentally disabled)
- *Number of service-users* on the farm (small-scale individual care vs. group activities)
- *Duration* (day-time activities vs. residential care, short term vs. life-long stay)
- *Organisational structure* (e.g. private commercial farms, charitable status or foundation, social cooperatives vs. community farms and institutional farms within the walls of a hospital, prison, school or welfare organisation).

Evidently, a variety of policy frameworks and financing schemes (summarised following Di Iacovo & O'Connor 2009, Carbone et al. 2009, Hine et al. 2008, Dessein 2008, Gallis 2007, Maertens & Speecke 2002 and Oostindie 2002) evolved across Europe to cope with the enormous diversity of social farming and green care in agriculture. Yet it has to be mentioned that according to Hine et al. (2007, 134) and O'Connor (2007, 46), social/care farms exist largely in spite of government policy rather than because of it. Obviously, the following overview is oversimplified for clarity whereas combinations and mixed funding are possible in reality:

- Outside institutional frameworks, social farming projects have been set up by **volunteers, religious or anthroposophic communities**, often without requiring recognition or funding by the government. Self-sustaining initiatives might also allocate resources through **market-based sales** of their products or landscape management services. External funding is mainly obtained through **charities, sponsorship, banks** and **foundations**. Also **client fees** can be an opportunity. However, these communities often develop their own care methods and quality of care is not always guaranteed.
- Local communities can set up or recognise broader social farming activities, linking them to the concepts of '**Community-Supported Agriculture**' (CSA), **consumer buying groups** and '**ethical consumers**' who are willing to pay for local, fresh

foodstuffs that have been produced with social engagement for vulnerable groups. Connections with local canteens, school kitchens or projects such as social restaurants are also possible. Another option would be ‘**community landownership**’ (see Hegarty 2007), whereby shareholders collectively own the farm.

- Social farming initiatives that provide landscape management and biodiversity actions might allocate resources from **local municipalities** or **nature conservation trusts**.
- Social farming activities can be supported by the agricultural domain through **compensatory payments** to individual farmers, **subsidies for investments**, or financial support for further **diversification measures** that can be combined with care (e.g. the set-up of a processing unit, a farm shop, or landscape management services). Within rural development policies, support might be attained in broader projects involving employment opportunities and enhanced quality of life in rural areas. In the EU, the second pillar of the CAP and the national or regional **RDPs** (Rural Development Programmes), as well as special national agricultural subsidies known as state aid, play a major role in this regard.
- Public payments of the health care, welfare and education sectors can support social farming activities directly by means of **institutional farms**, or indirectly through **contractual arrangements or partnerships** between institutions and care farmers. Individual farmers may have a weak position during negotiations, but could be represented by an **association of social farmers**. A much more far-reaching option is to include care farms within the framework of regular care providers through an **accreditation** process. However, this implies that the farmer might become a professional caregiver or therapist, as accreditation standards are high concerning professional training, safety standards and quality of care. Besides, **personalised care budgets or direct payment schemes** of service-users might be used to pay farmers for their social services. This means that governments allocate funds directly to vulnerable people instead of subsidising welfare institutions. The service-users then use the money without interference of a care institution to buy the care they need, e.g. housing, day activities etc. One possibility would be that the service-users pay the farmer a certain fee per day that they spend at the farm. Generally, a development towards extra-mural, **community-based care** could probably facilitate access to funding for social farming projects, providing the local municipality has the competences, sufficient resources and willingness to include farmers among other social care providers.

- **Social enterprises, sheltered workshops or social cooperatives** with farming or landscape management activities could reach out for resources provided by the domain of social economy. **Supported employment** measures or subsidised contracts enable farmers to employ vulnerable groups regularly on their farm without loss of productivity or revenue. Of course, this option is limited to individuals with a certain level of productivity. Besides, project-based subsidies for training and integration of vulnerable groups can be provided by the **ESF** (European Social Fund) and several national programmes for employment integration.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Research design and procedure

Any research on social farming and green care is inevitably positioned at the intersection of social sciences and agriculture. Regarding the focus on legal and financial recognition in this research, also political sciences as well as economics play an important role. Yet social farming is a hardly acknowledged social reality, manifesting itself at grassroots level and in an enormous diversity within countries and across the EU. Therefore, **qualitative research** methods proved to be a justified choice, borne out of the explorative nature of this research and ensuring a richness of data, i.e. qualities, experiences and perspectives (Baarda et al. 2005) regarding social farming. The method applied to this study may be known as '**grounded theory**' as described by Glaser & Strauss (1967). Their goal is to generate theory out of the actual data by an inductive approach, instead of verifying preconceived hypotheses. Each step in data collection and every interview would help to advance in category development and theory building by the constant comparative method.

Due to language abilities of the researcher and physical proximity, as well as its special position in the social farming arena, Flanders was chosen to be the focal region of this study. However, EU institutions and stakeholders play a significant role given that agricultural policy is a common competence.

The research was conducted from December, 2009 until May, 2010. After the desk research stage, consisting of initial reading and contacting key persons and gatekeepers (people involved with the topic and contacts at the European level), the literature review was carried out. The literature produced rich insights into a variety of models and financing schemes that occur in different Member States and regions in the EU. These were categorised and laid before informants during the field work phase, to generate data on how opinions diverge particularly for the Flemish situation but also at EU level. Contact emails (see Annex 1) to potential participants were sent out from January 2010 on and in total, 30 semi-structured interviews were carried out until early April, 2010. Simultaneously (as typical for grounded theory approaches), analysis and writing was ensued between February and May, 2010.

### 3.2 Population, sampling and recruitment strategy

The definition of a target population within research on a complex subject, such as social farming, poses quite a difficulty. In this study, the levels of analysis are the region of Flanders on the one side, and the EU level on the other. The level of observation would be clusters of stakeholders with an influence on policymaking: governments, public administrations, parliaments, experts and practitioners. The units of observation are then a selection of key stakeholders within each cluster:

<b>Flanders</b>	<b>EU</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Practitioners (n=7):</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Care farmers</li> <li>➤ Welfare organisations cooperating with care farmers</li> <li>➤ Institutional farms</li> <li>➤ Sheltered employment workshops pursuing farming and/or landscape management activities</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Intermediate level (n=7):</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Support Centre for Green Care</li> <li>➤ Farmers' and other associations</li> <li>➤ Researchers and experts</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Parliament (n=4)</i></li> <li>• <i>Government (n=7)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Public administrations</li> <li>➤ Departments (Agriculture, Welfare/Social Affairs, Education, Social Economy)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>European Commission:(n=3)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Commissioner for Agriculture and his cabinet</li> <li>➤ Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs and his cabinet</li> <li>➤ DG Agriculture and Rural Development</li> <li>➤ DG Employment and Social Affairs</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>European Parliament (n=2)</i></li> <li>• <i>European Network for Rural Development (ENRD)(n=2)</i></li> <li>• <i>European Social Fund (ESF) (n=1)</i></li> </ul>

Service-users could not be included due to time constraints and methodological limits, as their participation would require specific long-term psychological measurements and time-consuming observations during farm visits.

Linked to grounded theory, selecting participants was an evolving process based on the patterns, categories and dimensions emerging from the data (Glaser & Strauss 1967). The sample, a subset of the target population, was non-randomly selected on the basis of experts' and practitioners' recommendations, networks of gatekeepers, the literature review, as well as theoretically based investigation of departments and organisations who are possibly involved in social farming. This method is known as '**theoretical sampling**'. Besides, snowball sampling was used to obtain contact information of other potential participants. The participants of this research are described as (key) 'informants'. Contrary to 'respondents'

who are said to share personal life experiences with the researcher, informants contribute knowledge about the general situation wherein they are stakeholders themselves (Baarda et al. 2005, 150-151). The number of individual key informants was kept to one up to three individuals per unit, adding up to a total of 33 participants.

Following fundamental standards of qualitative research (Baarda et al. 2005), **ethical considerations** have been assessed thoroughly. All individuals who participated in the study did so voluntarily and without any negative effects on their personal or professional identity. All acquired data were anonymised, thus safeguarding participant's interests. Informed consent was obtained orally before the start of every interview. All potential interview partners received an informational letter by email which stated the purpose of the research, protection of confidentiality and the expected duration of the interview (see Annex 1).

### **3.3 Data collection and analysis plan**

In addition to the literature review, data were obtained from personal talks to experts and gatekeepers to gather information for a general overview of social farming. For the most part, qualitative data has been obtained, as participants shared their knowledge, opinions and ideas, implying the use of oral, face-to-face interviews of a semi-structured kind. The topic list (see Annex 2) has been fine-tuned during the interview phase to adapt to new insights and ideas. The majority, i.e. 27 out of a total of 30 interviews were conducted individually, while three interviews were carried out with two informants at the same time. This adds up to a total of 33 informants. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcribed material was filtered according to relevant and irrelevant data, inventoried, and sorted. Data analysis was carried out following the guide for qualitative research set out by Baarda et al. (2005) and Glaser & Strauss (1967). Their open coding method has been used to identify, categorise and describe *frames* within the data. Frames are basic cognitive constructions or mental lenses that guide how reality is perceived, essentially making some aspects of a phenomenon more noticeable. Framing analysis as described by Goffman (1974) was therefore used in this study to identify frames (lenses) that informants use to look at the phenomenon of social farming. The analysis began by looking for topics that persisted throughout the transcribed material, and then determining how these topics were framed by different stakeholders. These findings

were combined with the results from the literature review, to develop more general statements rather than a mere summary of personal or actor-specific ideas about social farming.

### **3.4 Limitations and trustworthiness of the research**

#### ***Feasibility***

As this research was conducted within a Master's programme, the amount of time and financial resources was rather constrained. The study depended highly on the potential informants' willingness to make time for participation. Furthermore, physical distance from care farmers, as well as figurative distance in the case of influential persons ('big fish'), have been challenges to overcome.

Each study on social farming shows sometimes more of the academic background of the researcher than about the topic, as stated by an informant. Evidently, results are interpreted differently from a sociologist, an expert in landscape design, a psychologist or an economist. This study however aims to look beyond academic disciplines and beyond borders of policy domains, as realistic social farming policy frameworks require a multi-actor approach through partnerships.

#### ***Weaknesses in sampling***

Qualitative research in general and non-random sampling in particular pose limitations to representativeness. But rather than an anonymous questionnaire that would probably have had a low response rate, semi-structured face-to-face interviews revealed a richer insight into attitudes, and allowed to gain insight into ideas behind policy preferences. Evidently, the sampling strategy had to be purposively influenced by gatekeepers and experts, bearing the risk of selection bias. Nonetheless the sample was chosen carefully by including stakeholders at grassroots level (practitioners, e.g. care farmers, welfare workers), the intermediate level (e.g. Flemish Support Centre, farmer's association, researchers) and policymakers (EU and Flemish level). Probably one should have conducted more interviews within the practitioners' group, in order to avoid a domination of elite predispositions that do not represent the actual needs in the field.

Non-response proved to be, against expectations, a minor problem. In almost all selected categories of key stakeholders (see 3.2), one or two individuals could be found who were willing to participate in an interview. Only the level of European Commissioners and their cabinets and the Mental Healthcare division of the Flemish administration preferred a shorter comment by email above a face-to-face interview, while the Flemish cabinets of Welfare and Social Economy rather briefed their respective public servant.

Still, the degree to which the chosen sample differs from the target population remains unknown. It must be assumed that to a large extent, people with a special interest in social farming activities responded positively to the call for interviews. One could argue that the data is dominated by people demonstrating a certain level of sympathy towards social farming activities. Consequently, the study excludes negative statements from a significant group of people who are not interested in or even biased against social farming – possibly people who have impact when it comes to policymaking and financing decisions.

### *Quality of the research*

Qualitative research is often perceived to have a journalistic approach without much scientific value, trying to prove the researcher's opinions and prejudices rather than exploring a phenomenon in reality. To be aware of these pitfalls and to discuss results regularly with different people, helped to keep distance and let go of one's own opinions when carrying out interviews and interpreting data. Assessing 'validity' and 'reliability' in qualitative research makes hardly sense as samples are usually small, there is no 'absolute truth' about a social reality, and replication is often impossible. However, alternative criteria have been developed to judge and evaluate qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba 1985; Guba & Lincoln 1994): Initially, the '**trustworthiness**' of the research can be assessed by four sub-criteria:

- *Credibility* might be understood as similar to internal validity. What matters is the researcher's correct account to a social reality. In this study, credibility was achieved by 'respondent validation' (also known as 'member-checking') - i.e. verifying whether the research results correspond with participants' perspectives. The draft paper was sent to all informants by email and sufficient time for comments and corrections was allowed. Also 'triangulation', using multiple theoretical perspectives, sources of data and methods of investigation, added to credibility of this research that combined a thorough literature review and interviews with a broad range of stakeholder groups.

- *Transferability*, parallel to external validity, is difficult to achieve in qualitative research as social contexts are unique and constantly changing. However, ‘thick description’ as explained by ethnologist Clifford Geertz, ensures that data are analysed in detail, enabling readers to judge if the findings correspond with the raw data.
- *Dependability* is the equivalent of reliability in quantitative research. Lincoln & Guba (1985) refer to an ‘auditing’ approach in that sense, i.e. keeping complete records the whole research process, transcribing interviews and following proper procedures.
- *Confirmability* is similar to objectivity; however, complete objectivity is impossible in social research. Yet the researcher should act in good faith and ensure that no personal values are entangled in the results. For that reason, different opinions and possibilities have been explored, keeping in mind the frameworks and political preferences of each informant while interpreting data.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Current situation of care farming in Flanders

When speaking about the situation of social farming in Belgium, research only addresses the northern region of Flanders. Despite the fact that some competences related to social farming (such as parts of health care, social affairs and agriculture) remain with the Belgian federal government, the regions can develop policies in that field quite autonomously. In Wallonia, the southern part of Belgium, there is however no awareness and no framework concerning social farming. Flanders, conversely, is one of the spearheads regarding social/care farming legislation in Europe. The term ‘care farms’ is mentioned at least two times in the current policy goals document (Vlaamse regering 2009) of the Flemish Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, while other policy domains have remained silent. Still, social farming fits into the general aims of Welfare and Education, such as prevention, tailored care, and client-based mental health care. Furthermore, a number of Members of the Flemish Parliament have brought the issue to the forefront in parliamentary interpellations.

In Flanders, social farming activities are mainly carried out by commercial family farms that receive one to three service-users per day on a small scale. Flanders scores well regarding diversity in target groups. However, a remarkable shift occurred, visualised by Fig. 4:

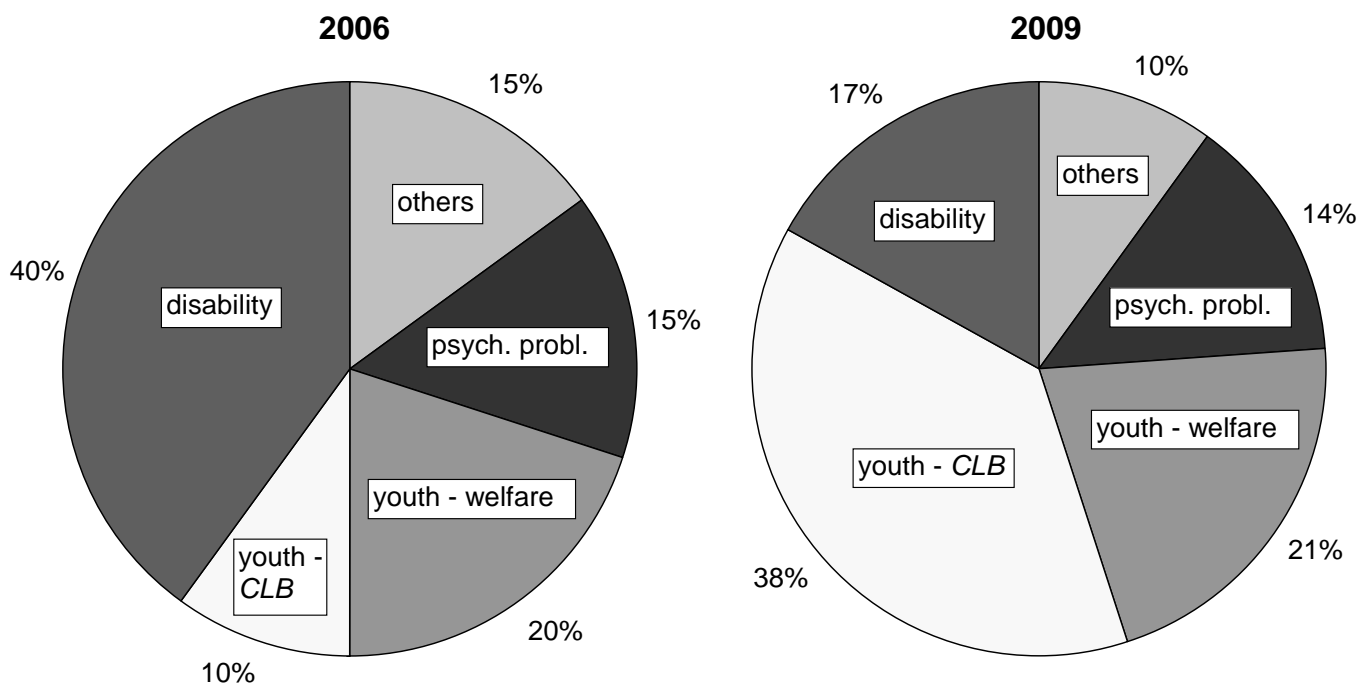


Fig. 4. *Target groups on care farms in Flanders, percentages 2006 and 2009*

Source: adapted from Goris & Weckhuysen (2007) and Steunpunt Groene Zorg vzw (2010)

The largest group in 2006 were people with a disability (40%), whereas their share declined remarkably to 17% three years later. At the same time, percentages remained almost even for people with psychiatric problems as well as youngsters referred to care farms due to welfare or behavioural problems. The group that experienced the most significant increase are youngsters referred to care farms by counselling centres for pupils (*CLB*), i.e. from 10% in 2006 to 38% in 2009. The group of 'others' consist mainly of people with (former) addiction (7% in 2006) and elderly (5% in 2006, no sub-percentages available for 2009). However, one has to keep in mind that the total number of care farms almost tripled when comparing 2009 to 2006. Therefore the total number of people with a disability on care farms stagnated despite the decline in percentage, whereas the total numbers of all other target groups increased significantly.

Generally, a considerable number of placements on care farms is implemented under the scheme of 'employment care' (*arbeidszorg*), i.e. unpaid, employment-like activities in a productive environment for people who cannot cope with regular or sheltered employment yet or anymore, while being supported by social workers or caregivers. At the moment, 'employment care' exists in four sectors in Flanders, i.e. mental health care, disabled people, general welfare work and sheltered workshops (Ronde Tafel Arbeidszorg n.d.).

Starting with a few active care farms in the year 2000, there are now over 400 farmers conducting care activities, with a growth of more than 30% per year, as stated in an overview paper of the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD 2010, 4-5) and by Steunpunt Groene Zorg vzw (2010). Fig. 5 clearly shows the steady increase:

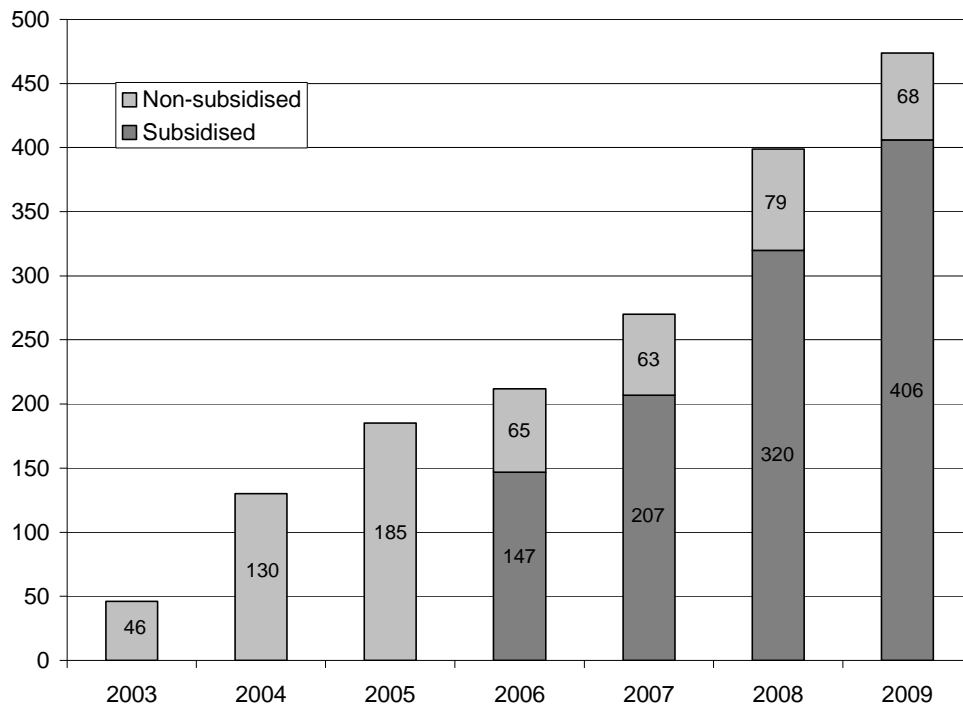


Fig. 5. *Evolution of the number of care farms in Flanders*

Source: adapted from Steunpunt Groene Zorg vzw (2010, 2)

The majority of Flemish care farmers started care activities very recently over the last five to six years, significant catalysts being the launch of the Support Centre for Green Care in January 2004 and the introduction of the legal framework and subsidy scheme in December 2005 (Goris et al. 2008, 84-87). The Support Centre is an important actor in the field providing information, promotion and policy development of green care and social farming activities. In most cases, they also do the initial matching of service-users, welfare organisations and care farms (Dessein et al. 2009, 110-112).

The **subsidy** is projected to compensate the time a farmer spends with service-users, hindering him/her to work full-time on the farm. Different organisational forms exist:

1. active care farm with max. 3 individual service-users cared for by farmer or his/her partner - subsidy: 40 €/day, irrespective of the number of service-users
2. active farm, farmer only provides infrastructure for a group of clients from a care institution accompanied by their caregivers - subsidy: 15 €/day
3. hobby farm; institutional farm, started within or part of care institution (often social enterprises, day care centres...) - not eligible for subsidy

This difference in subsidisation may be explained by the fact that all financial support for care farmers is originating from the Flemish Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (further referred to as ‘Department of Agriculture’) that evidently focuses on the economic viability of the farmer. Initially the subsidy used to be co-financed by the EC within Flanders’ Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2000-2006. Since the new programming round (RDP 2007-2013), the measure was excluded as permanent support is not possible under axis 3, and Flanders has continued to compensate farmers through a ‘de minimis’ state aid regulation (Goris et al. 2008, 87-88; Wellemans 2010, 7). Their goal is to include the measure again in the next RDP in a way similar to long-term payments for agro-environmental actions under axis 2 (Wellemans 2010, 7).

Financing the care giving aspect “is not a task to be assumed by the Department of Agriculture” (ENRD 2010, 5; Wellemans 2010, 5). The Departments of Welfare and Education have helped to develop the Flemish care farming legislation, but have not contributed to its costs yet (Dessein et al. 2009, 112). The farmer is obligated to work together with a welfare organisation/institution accredited by the Department of Welfare, or a counselling centre for pupils (*CLB*). The ultimate responsibility for therapeutic effects and quality of care remains with these organisations. For this purpose, an official care farm contract (*zorgboerderijovereenkomst*) has to be signed by the service-user, the farmer and a representative of the welfare organisation. This contract ensures everybody’s compliance with rules concerning insurance, social security and labour inspection (ENRD 2010, 5-7; Wellemans 2010, 5). Wellemans (2010, 7) also declares the aim to fit social farming into existing social care schemes in Flanders in the future, recognising that further maturing and professionalisation will be needed to accomplish that.

Besides the compensation, commercial farms are eligible for 40% support for investments relating to social/care activities (e.g. accommodation, a lunch room, special tools or safety measures). This support is provided by the Flemish Agricultural Investment Fund (*VLIF*), as part of the previous and the current RDP. Institutional farms, such as social enterprises pursuing farming activities, have been eligible for 10-40% support for investments if they operate under the legal status of a non-profit organisation (Goris et al. 2008, 89).

Seeing the challenges Flemish social farming initiatives are facing, the question remains how policies will evolve in future and how different stakeholders perceive potential changes.

## 4.2 Analysis according to frames

Within the data allocated by interviewing 33 informants, five important frames have been identified:

- A) Agricultural frame: the farmer and the diversification of his income**
  - social farming as a chance for the farmer to survive
- B) Welfare frame: institutionalisation & public budgets, or the ‘Dutch model’**
  - social farming as a chance for more efficient care and saving costs
- C) Social Economy frame: social enterprises and cooperatives, or the ‘Italian model’**
  - social farming as a chance to employ vulnerable groups
- D) Regional frame: community-based initiatives and local partnerships**
  - social farming as a chance for community-building
- E) Quality of care**
  - social farming as a chance for service-users to receive more qualitative care

In Annex 4, illustrative quotes by informants can be found that underline the statements within each frame.

### **A) Agricultural frame: the farmer and the diversification of his income**

Under this frame, social farming is mainly perceived as a form of diversification and increased economic viability of farmers, providing income that enables farmers to keep farming. Foremost within the agricultural sector, but also within the Flemish Parliament and the social economy sector informants tended to use this frame, arguing that farmers deserve a ‘reasonable’ compensation for their care services, as it prevents them from productive farming and endangers their competitiveness (see Annex 4, quote 1-5). If social farming initiatives would have to survive on voluntary or philanthropic motivation alone, many would cease their services, or deliver questionable quality (quote 6, 7). The welfare sector on the other side was reluctant concerning payments for farmers, referring to differing core tasks and strict accreditation rules (quote 8-11).

Opinions on the current Flemish subsidy for private farms, i.e. 40 € a day irrespective of the number of service-users, diverged to some extent. Many found it to be a ‘humble’ compensation that surely does not enable farmers to become rich, while two informants acknowledged its reasonability (quote 12, 13). Practitioners claimed that the amount should

rise, at least to recognise the extra effort of having two or more service-users on the farm (quote 14, 15). Still, the majority of informants warned that a higher amount of money might attract farmers who would provide social/care services following economic rather than social motivations, leading to increased control (quote 16, 17). Finally, informant 20 stated: “You have to do something that you believe in – not only economically, but also with your whole heart and vision of life”.

On the other hand, informant 3 feared that the Department of Agriculture could cease the subsidy if the number of care farms continues to rise, as budgets are limited. The member of the cabinet, however, stated that there will not be any cutbacks in payments for social aims, but also referred to the recent implementation of the legislation on care farms, therefore waiting for further evolutions (quote 18).

Informant 2 declared that the Department of Agriculture seeks to obtain structural recognition and financing within the 2<sup>nd</sup> pillar of the CAP, so the ‘de minimis’ rule would not have to be used anymore. As several informants explained, within the 2<sup>nd</sup> pillar of the CAP, social farming activities can be included in the national or regional RDP. In the current programming round 2007-2013 under axis 3 and 4, farmers can receive subsidies for investments related to diversification into non-agricultural activities. However, all informants within the Commission, supported by other informants, stated very clearly that the EU provides support for set-up or investment costs, but will not contribute to the operational or running costs of a social farming (or any other) initiative, due to state aid rules and because social affairs and welfare are Member State competences (quote 19, 20). However, concerning increasing awareness and lobby work, the representative of the ENRD referred to the “Social Farming Thematic initiative” that was recently launched by the Italian National Rural Network (NRN). She also mentioned the idea to broaden the concept of public goods provision – farmers are already compensated for environmental activities under axis 2 – towards a compensation for providing “*social public goods*” (quote 21).

Funding linked to social affairs policies of the EU were another path to investigate. However, the focus of the ESF and DG Employment and Social Affairs “*is not agriculture or problems of rural areas, but enhanced participation of vulnerable people in society, employment and training.*” (informant 24). Besides, these are not exclusive EU competences. The ESF also limits support to training and clear trajectories towards paid employment (quote 22-24).

### ***B) Welfare frame: institutionalisation & public budgets, or the ‘Dutch model’***

When looking at social farming from a welfare point of view, the topics of professionalisation and institutional farms, and the cost-saving aspect of more efficient care emerged. Issues also include contractual arrangements between institutions and farmers and personalised care budgets/direct payment schemes for vulnerable people.

A welfare worker, a public servant within Welfare, as well as the Support Centre itself, proposed that the Departments of Welfare and Education should contribute financially to the Support Centre’s task of matching and coaching. However, a Member of the Parliament was critical towards support centres in general (quote 25). A staff member of a social enterprise suggested that the Departments should finance part of the farmer’s wage, whereas a public servant within Agriculture wished that the welfare organisations could add up on the 40 € subsidy. But, as an informant within the Department of Education and a welfare worker mentioned, if Education or Welfare would support care farmers, many other extramural projects where clients receive day care would request support as well. Besides, the preventing effects of care farms cannot be proven in numbers and statistics, such that governments are not likely to allocate extra resources. According to an informant, a lot of resources are currently lost at government levels and large umbrella organisations. He stated that caregivers need to rethink and probably the whole Flemish welfare sector would need to be reformed, an idea supported by other informants (quote 26, 27).

Informant 2 mentioned that hippo-therapy projects do essentially the same as care farms, but do not receive the 40 € subsidy due to their legal status as a hobby farm or non-profit organisation. Besides, differing priorities and the division of the Welfare administration according to target groups, prevent more involvement in social farming: *“They like the initiative, but they don’t give extra financial means for it.”* As informant 13 explained, funding from Welfare is not a desirable evolution because then *“you will have to develop norms and quality standards, and these will be controlled.”*

Opinions on using the general Welfare budget to support social farming diverged to a large extent (quote 28-30). Both the Flemish Departments of Welfare and Education argued that there will neither be direct payments to care farmers nor extra resources for institutions to set up collaborations with care farmers, as this is not their core business and not their first concern given the scarcity of resources. A public servant within Welfare, supported by an

informant within the ESF, linked this to the debate about the boundaries of our welfare system and the efficiency of welfare institution and public services. Besides, institutions tend to overlook future demand, keeping people for too long instead of creating turnover by referring them to (supported) employment (quote 31). A socialist Member of the Flemish Parliament described the structural problem of lacking resources in Welfare to sustain even the basic demand, and said that future needs cannot be financed by public resources alone; therefore service-users will have to pay their share. His ideal scenario for social farming would be to support small-scale, locally based non-profit initiatives, and only incorporate them into legislation after a few years, preferably with project-based instead of structural financing. A public servant within Social Economy also mentioned that it would be revolutionary to make a larger share of the budget available for bottom-up experimental initiatives, instead of continuing to finance large accredited structures such as umbrella organisations.

Concerning the **cost-saving** advantages for public budgets, many informants were convinced provided that care farming would happen on a bigger scale, while others stressed the additional work for institutions that have to make time and resources available for follow-up (quote 32-35). Informant 7 explained that 40 € a day is “*ridiculously cheap if you compare it to closed institutions for troubled youth, or psychiatric clinics*”. Also informant 23 declared that “*the cost to help these people with special needs to become more active, by attending services instead of being passive, is not much higher than cost for traditional housing or daytime activities. You just need to retrain social workers.*”

Linked to this is the debate on the **professionalisation** of care farming in Flanders, following the ‘Dutch model’ wherein subsidies from the Departments of Welfare and Agriculture are combined, the number of care farms significantly rises and the care-giving aspect often prevails agricultural production. Clearly, the agricultural sector in Flanders does not favour the idea of farmers becoming professional therapists, supported by Members of Parliament and the welfare sector (quote 36-38, 40, 41). Quite contrary, informant 30 was enthusiastic about professionalisation of social farming (quote 39). Likewise, informant 24 demanded more quality standards and a higher planning level. Quite contrary, the majority of Flemish informants were against supporting institutionalised farms that generate income primarily through care provision while diminishing agricultural production (quote 40, 41). Many informants within the agricultural as well as the welfare sector were also reluctant to integrate care farms in the general welfare framework, due to obliged training, increased regulation and

administration in that sector (quote 42, 43). A researcher and a care farmer feared that within the Dutch model, farmers would try to get as many service-users as possible, therefore they advised: *“Farmer, stay a farmer!”* Also a public servant within Welfare was against special subsidies for institutional farms, and argued that they have to sustain themselves by production and using their regular personnel and running costs. Another strategy would be to tie subsidies to the gradation of care needs, as informant 7 suggested, i.e. the more high-care clients, the more subsidies for the institution. However, to implement this, he stated that a revolution would be necessary, supported by informant 11: *“Flanders will have to move towards the Dutch model if it wants care farming to grow. But to take the step, and change the whole organisational structure, is immense. You will have to tear down all Flemish little kingdoms – all divisions within Welfare who had secured their funding and will then have to give it to small project!”*

These thoughts could be linked to the general debate on the Dutch system of **personalised care budgets** or direct payment schemes that service-users receive and use to pay farmers for providing care and daytime activities. Opinions regarding this system diverged enormously among the sample. Only within DG Agriculture & Rural Development, as well as the Flemish Department of Agriculture, general open-mindedness prevailed. However, within the Flemish parliament and the welfare sector, the discussion revealed a general reluctance, linked to the perceived incapability of vulnerable groups to spend the money wisely, and the economically interesting aspect for farmers to have as many service-users as possible stay on the farm. The main problematic aspects mentioned were the complexity of the Flemish welfare system and the power of large umbrella organisations that influence policymakers directly.

Rather than personalised care budgets, official contracts whereby the farmer is compensated for his care services by the welfare institution, seemed a more practical solution. Again, informants at EU level considered it a well-working system (e.g. informant 16, 19, 31, 32 and 33), whereas Flemish informants made a number of critical statements related to difficult implementation and the weak negotiating position of the individual farmer (quote . Collective agreements were preferred by informant 20.

***C) Social Economy frame: social enterprises and cooperatives,  
or the 'Italian model'***

Within this frame, informants perceived social farming as a (potential) part of the social economy sector. First of all, the social cooperative model, which exists predominantly in Italy among various types of social farming initiatives, seemed an interesting pathway to investigate. Informants were generally sceptical about the practicability for the Flemish situation. They described different historical and social features: “*Flanders is peri-urban; it’s very different from isolated Italian villages.*” (informant 19). Others mentioned the lack of space, dense population, overregulation and individualistic society in Flanders that would hinder the ‘Italian model’ to develop (quotes 48-50). The non-profit character of the Italian social cooperatives did receive some sympathy, but seemed difficult to implement in Flemish agriculture that is dominated by private commercial farms. Furthermore, countless laws and rules would make this kind of idea impossible in Flanders, as stated by public servants working within Welfare and a Member of the Flemish Parliament (quote 51-53). One informant especially liked the idea of social cooperatives and added that at province or local level, there would be more possibilities. Also a public servant within Social Economy believed in upcoming social cooperatives in Flanders, however they should not be enforced top-town (quote 54).

General attitudes were investigated regarding the potential incorporation of social economy into the care farming concept. Obviously, the four informants linked to the sector were positive about the integration, supported by general open-mindedness of policymakers within Agriculture and Welfare (quote 55-58). As a staff member declared, social enterprises with farming activities and care farms share the same benefits and strengths, such as seasonal connectedness, a small-scale sheltered setting, cost-saving and preventive aspects. Also other informants within the social economy sector were convinced that care farms and ‘employment care’ (*arbeidszorg*) are essentially the same and could be brought together (quote 59, 60). However, the social economy sector tended to tie strict conditions to a potential combination of care farming and social economy. According to the informant within the ESF, care farms are not a final destination, but should lead quite quickly to regular employment. The public servant demanded that the aspect of ‘activation’, or the integration of service-users in society and a clear trajectory towards (paid) employment, should be the focus of care farms if they are to be part of the social economy sector and receive subsidies. Initially, as he explained further, these costs will have to be covered by the Department of Social Economy, but in the long run

benefits will pay off: *“When service-users move on up from a care farm towards employment, albeit sheltered or supported, they will pay taxes and social security fees and cost the state much less than in a traditional care institution.”*

At this moment, there are four to five pioneers in Flanders that combine the status of a social enterprise with farming activities, as stated by informant 9. However, informants 20, 22 and 25 mentioned that the legal status of a social enterprise prevents care farms from receiving the subsidy from the Department of Agriculture. The informant from the Flemish farmers’ association was opposed to integrating care farms in social economy, as *“green care is no work or employment!”*. Likewise, informants feared additional administrative burdens for farmers and criticised the primary focus on productivity within social economy (quote 61-63). Informant 22 explained the entanglement of both care farms and social enterprises with federal (Belgian) and EU rules. State aid and the service directive support foremost people with a disability, whereas other vulnerable groups allocate fewer subsidies. Moreover, there is the issue of salaries for service-users. Due to their allowance related to disability, sickness or unemployment, they are not allowed to receive a wage, or risk to lose their allowance, as explained by informants 17 and 22.

Informant 21 stated that a social enterprise with farming activities is *“a very different system, you cannot call it ‘care farm’ then. Also, weaker service-users without much productivity are left out; this is not a good evolution.”* A researcher also described the advantage of care farms as the 1:1 ratio of caregiver (farmer) and service-user, whereas social enterprises have a ratio of 1:10 and many service-users cannot cope with less guidance. Moreover, informant 14 stated that minors under 18 years of age are legally not allowed to work in a social enterprise. Another interesting point was made by informant 18: *“Don’t do it by accrediting farms as social enterprises. Rather, vulnerable groups should be employed in regular companies; there are a lot of subsidies for this already.”*

#### ***D) Regional frame: community-based initiatives and local partnerships***

With a regional lens, social farming is considered as a chance for community-building and strengthening local initiatives. Again, some Italian projects served as an example. Ethical consumers, local municipalities, schools and other social projects can be engaged around a social farming initiative. Social integration and local cooperation are prevailing in this frame.

Generally, top-down regulations from the EU level were considered inadequate by the majority of informants (quote 64, 65). Also informant 28 doubted the possibility of having one integrated system of social/care farming, and found general guidelines more feasible. According to him, the practical implementation between farmer and service-user is most important, as it is very individual. Therefore, any regulation should be developed according to the local practicalities and specific situations in the field.

Informants within the agricultural sector and a socialist Member of the Flemish Parliament stated that many social farming initiatives cannot be enforced top-down, rather small initiatives growing bottom-up should be supported (quote 66-68). An informant from DG Agriculture mentioned that agriculture only plays a small role in village restoration projects typical for axis 3 and Leader. A staff member of the ENRD however believed in the integration of social farming, schools, transport and public social bodies within rural development policies, albeit in the long run (quote 69).

Local social policies might be an opportunity for Flemish social farming initiatives. However, social policies are a Flemish competence, therefore giving more power to the municipal level *“would mean a whole societal transformation!”*, as informant 4 stated. Besides, informant 7 doubted what would happen to innovative ideas in a right-wing municipality. Nonetheless, he favoured community-based care systems that rely on volunteers rather than care professionals (quote 70).

Some informants reacted quite sceptically on the subject of community-based social farming, linking sect-like presumptions to the concept, as well as criticising potential misuse, lifelong stays, and the disconnectedness from nearby villages (quote 71).

However, selling products directly to ‘ethical consumers’ or local communities self-organised in so-called consumer buying groups might be a feasible solution for social farmers, as stated by informant 16. Nonetheless, informant 3 was convinced that this is only working near bigger towns or cities, not in very remote areas. A care farmer added: *“You have to communicate a lot to sell, and only do things that society approves, for example considering animal welfare. Anyways you will only reach a certain small group of people with that.”* Moreover, informants 8, 12, 25, 26 and 27 mentioned the gap between citizens and

consumers: people's beliefs or interests are not necessarily the same as consumers' concrete actions, as evident by the difficulties small farm-shops or suppliers of consumer buying groups are experiencing in Flanders.

Informant 11 was convinced of a financing system via public services, through partnerships and regional associations. The advantage of social farming according to him is that despite being a small side issue and covering several domains, one starts to see links with landscape management, water policies, biodiversity etc., and therefore alternative financing sources. Generally he found landscape management to be very suitable for care farms, and requested more integrated, territorially-based policies instead of separately operating sectors. He saw opportunities in regional associations of social/care farmers as existing in the Netherlands, that could deal with common accreditation for farmers, organise training etc., and could be financed by membership fees of care farmers (quote 72).

Concerning the cooperation between schools and social farms, the informant within the Department of Education explained that visits of school classes are not covered by the current care farm legislation. He perceived a broad integration of farms in schools as impossible, as the curriculum is the decision of each school, not a competence of the Flemish government. A care farmer suggested other ideas for the future were partnerships with local sheltered workshops, public social bodies or 'meals-on-wheels' initiatives for processing and selling agricultural produce, but he has not found any interested organisations so far. Informant 9 suggested to organise care farms at the local level through the 'local services economy' (*LDE, lokale diensteneconomie*) whereby vulnerable groups involved in employment that is subsidised by the federal and Flemish government, providing services such as eldercare or gardening at the local level. Informant 2 mentioned the potential of local committees that support a farmer who starts providing social services, and referred to consumers as shareholders similar to an English project described by Hegarty (2007).

### ***E) Quality of care***

Generally informants from the Flemish agricultural sector were convinced of the intrinsic value of Flemish care farms: that the "*farmer should be a farmer, and not become a therapist or professional caregiver*" (as mentioned e.g. by informants 2, 3 and 10). They argue that the quality lies within the normal environment, the common sense of the farmer and a warm

family atmosphere. The foremost concern, according to informant 9, is to ensure continuity: “*Not that you have 400 care farms now, and next year only 200 remain!*” He also stated that if green care grows, quality will become an issue and there will be more control and rules.

At grassroots level, so-called ‘dumping’ practices were an issue for the care farmers, one welfare organisation and the Support Centre. Apparently, sometimes care farms serve as a cheap remedy especially in the case of youngsters with behavioural problems, or to bridge waiting periods, often for ‘severe cases’ (quote 73). Obviously, as informant 15 stated, these cases have to be dealt with professionally, and care farms are not equipped to handle such severe problems. A staff member of a social enterprise agreed that “*the farmer has to keep his role as employer and farmer. He shouldn’t act as a caregiver, but refer to other services in case of problems*”. Together with the staff member of another social enterprise, they revealed the dangerous practice when a service-user depends on one person or institution for all aspects of social care (e.g. housing, budget management, day activities) – clearly for them, this scenario has to be avoided.

Furthermore, some informants revealed the fact that some social enterprises or sheltered workshops intentionally keep people with a higher level of productivity, instead of letting them move on up towards (supported) employment in regular enterprises. A staff member suggested that this could be solved by enforcing a rules system with regular evaluations of every service-user as well as targeted competence management. Also the public servant within Social Economy was in favour of a “serious quality system” that will be implemented in the social economy sector in Flanders by September, and probably linked to accreditation and subsidies (quote 74).

Nonetheless, practitioners and all four informants from the Flemish parliament agreed that higher quality standards or compulsory professional training for care farmers were not desirable for Flanders. Likewise, the representative informants within Education and Welfare believed in limited basic quality standards (quote 75-77). An informant within the ENRD however stated that “*social farming on a family farm needs quality standards, exactly like in urban care institutions. [...] Like the Dutch, you have to involve the institutions, you have to have quality criteria and you have to train people.*” As an informant within DG Agriculture & Rural Development said, quality criteria and accreditation would be competences of the Member States.

Professional training for farmers was another issue that often occurred among informants. At the Flemish level, many informants favoured optional information sessions above compulsory training (e.g. quote 78-81). An informant within DG Agriculture & Rural Development considered it a good practice to get training before any activity of diversification is started (quote 82). Another possibility would be regular on-farm coaching of the farmer by the cooperating welfare organisation. One care farmer was satisfied with the current system of telephone contact in case of problems, whereas the other one, supported in his view by the public servant within Agriculture, demanded improved follow-up and better cooperation with the welfare institutions before, during and after the stay of the service-users. As a solution, both the care farmer and a welfare worker suggested entrusting one caregiver in each institution to be permanent contact person and responsible for all care farm placements, or even collectively employing one caregiver by several institutions for that purpose.

## 5. Discussion

The five predominant frames that emerged among the informants of this research, largely overlap with the three challenges of care farming as found in the Flemish literature, i.e. economic viability of the farmer, the process of professionalisation, and the issue of quality of care. Whereas Flemish research did not look beyond the agricultural frame, international research, e.g. from the Netherlands, illustrated that care farming might be beneficial for care institutions and public budgets, so they primarily use the welfare frame. Research from Italy showed that social farming might have links with the social economy, mainly social enterprises and social cooperatives. Also there are opportunities within rural development concerning community-based projects and ethical consumers. These ‘new’ frames were accordingly investigated within the sample of this study.

### *Blindness of each stakeholder group*

However, Flanders is currently quite far removed from an integrated approach. As often found with issues that are broader than one political domain, each sector and level involved in social/care farming refers to others to take on responsibility:

- **Practitioners** (care farmers, social enterprises and welfare workers) are stuck with financial problems, lack of personnel, lack of coaching and follow-up by professional caregivers, increasing waiting lists, ‘dumping’ practices and conflicts with spatial/land use planning. They request the intermediate and political level to provide solutions for these problems.
- The **agricultural sector**, farmers up to policymakers, concentrates perhaps too much on the economic viability of the individual farmer, losing sight of framing ‘social farming’ as beneficial for other policy domains. The Department of Agriculture refers to limited budgets, seeing the rapid rise to over 400 care farms in a few years’ time, and calls for the other policy domains to also contribute to pay farmers for their social care services.
- The Flemish RDP (**Rural Development Programme**) 2007-2013 is still very much focused on agriculture, proven by the fact that it allocates 67% of its resources to axis 1 (Vlaamse overheid 2006, 9). The ENRD’s views in this study were favouring less concentration on farming but broader rural initiatives.

- The **welfare sector** has the tendency to ‘mother’ service-users without letting them explore all possibilities outside institutions. The sector might lose itself in complaining about a lack of resources, while not succeeding in reforming care provision to make it more efficient. Within general refusal of payments to farmers, policymakers state that an institution itself can compensate farmers if it wishes to engage in green care projects; the institutions however struggle with a lack of resources, personnel and time, adding to the general reticence of putting effort into following-up day activities outside the institution, i.e. care farms.
- The Department of **Education** is convinced that financial support for troubled youth staying on care farms is not their core business; while the counselling centres for pupils stated that their funding is too limited to support care farmers and similar providers of time-out projects for youngsters.
- **Social economy** stakeholders limit support to people with a certain level of capability and productivity who have the potential to move on up to paid employment in a reasonable period of time. They refer to the welfare sector to take on responsibilities when it comes to weaker service-users.
- The **European level** is quite far removed from the daily reality of a care farmer in Flanders, and refers to subsidiarity, limited funds and different priorities. DG Agriculture and Rural Development seems to be satisfied with the existing support for start-up and investments related to social farming initiatives, stating that operational costs and salaries for social care services carried out by farmers are national responsibilities. DG Employment and Social Affairs as well as the ESF limit their support to training and activities that stipulate vulnerable groups to move on up towards (paid) employment. Generally, basic guidelines could be set at the European level, but implementation (including legislation and subsidisation) would be a national, regional or local matter.

How come that each frame seems to lose itself in navel-gazing?

### ***Structural complexity***

It has to be kept in mind that social farming remains a small issue both in agricultural and social/welfare policies. Still, that issue reveals the incredible complexity of political structures in Flanders, adding to the fact that some competences remain federal (Belgian) or depend on

EU legislation. Moreover, the Flemish government is divided into vertically organised policy domains, hindering cooperation and partnerships across agriculture, welfare and other departments. Additionally, the Flemish Department of Welfare is subdivided according to target groups. Moreover, the overwhelming power of umbrella organisations in the welfare sector might be a reason why it is so difficult to find resources for innovative experiments that favour different target groups at the same time. These large organisations tend to swallow the main share of the welfare budget, and would almost certainly refuse any reformation towards personal budget/direct payment schemes, community-based social and care services or a shift towards experimental instead of structural funding. More territorially-based policymaking could overcome that challenge and ease the administrative burden for government-supported initiatives.

### ***Limitations of the Flemish Support Centre for Green Care***

The fact that the largest Flemish farmers' association has had significant input in setting up and supporting the Support Centre for Green Care, might clarify the general Flemish focus on small-scale family farms with viable agricultural production when it comes to social farming. Due to these strong connections between the Support Centre and the farmers' association, it is likely that social employment initiatives, social cooperatives, school or prison farms are less favoured developments in Flanders, as they do not help commercial farmers to keep farming. Additionally, the catholic and rather conservative image of the farmers' association might feed prejudices regarding the independence of the Support Centre. One could argue, as a number of informants proposed, to set up independent regional associations, involving not only care farms but also other types of social farming initiatives.

### ***Political interests shaping policymaking***

The simplest but far-reaching explanation of the lack of integrated policies regarding social farming, might be the diversity of interests and political preferences of all stakeholders involved. These interests play an important role in shaping policymaking, as informant 30 declared: "*One thing is what is rational, another what the political interest of different groups is*". Socialist informants tended to believe in the welfare state model and followed the 'Dutch model', concentrating on government-supported, highly qualitative care and therapy. Conversely, liberals favoured to think in terms of the individual that should be stimulated to move on up into (albeit sheltered) employment, preferring the 'Italian model' of embedment

within the social economy. Evidently, future social/care farming policies could be developed on either side of this political cleavage.

A third option would be to keep the status quo of humble compensation payments for farmers, and let pass the potential that social/care farming might have on a broader scale. Alternatively, the funding of social farming activities could be put into practice by several domains paying a reasonable share, i.e. the agricultural sector could continue to compensate the farmer for diversification activities and his time, possibly with subsequent EU resources for investments and landscape management services; the welfare sector could contribute by allocating specific resources to caregivers supporting service-users on farm, or reform their financing schemes to more community-based care approaches and personal budgets, Education could provide subsidies for school farming projects and educational activities on farms, while the social economy and employment sector should invest in vocational training and subsidised contracts for vulnerable groups who want to engage in paid work or 'employment care' projects in farming environments. Admittedly, a lot of political will and creativity is needed to find partnerships and create supporting schemes that ideally fit various types of social farming initiatives. The local level as well as rural development policies seem to provide the most feasible pathway in that sense, as will be described in the conclusion (section 6).

## 6. Conclusion and recommendations

Certainly, social farming and green care in agriculture do have many benefits and advantages for service-users, farmers, care providers and society as a whole. But which of the possible legal and financial frameworks supports best? Maybe no system at all, as informant 16 stated: *“You won’t do any good to social farming if you place it in the spotlight”*, as awareness and recognition might lead to standardisation and strict rules? Maybe the Dutch model, but then, as a number of informants opposed, a large transformation of the Flemish welfare system would be necessary? Maybe the Italian framework of social cooperatives, except that Flanders is shaped differently, in geographical, historical and possibly social terms? Should we concentrate more on the therapy and care aspect, or include supported employment measures in Flemish care farms? These thoughts lead inevitably to a broader question, i.e.: How much of the social care work that is done voluntarily do we want to professionalize? Of course, it should be prevented that care farmers (or any other socially engaged group) would cease their activity due to financial constraints – they deserve a reasonable compensation for the time they devote to care and social integration. But how much welfare do we want to (or can we) finance with public budgets?

Arguably, society as a whole has to take on more responsibilities, or our welfare model might collapse in the coming decennia. In that case, local solutions will have to be found, supported by strong communities. Flanders’ political structure might have to be reformed, towards policy based on territorial regions rather than the currently separated sectors of agriculture, welfare, and social affairs. This research revealed that the only policy domain that succeeds to integrate many viewpoints is rural development, having moved beyond agriculture and involving local social affairs, health and social care providers, education bodies, the local economy and transportation. By focussing on the partnership idea, rural development policies might provide solutions for different types of social farming activities. Still, the main guidelines and frameworks within social affairs as well as agriculture are designed at national or EU level, where the responsibility remains to make community-based, innovative experiments legally possible. Social farming is a very locally-based, tremendously personal phenomenon that should not be overwhelmed by strict rules, leaving virtually no space for social relationships.

The results of this study may be useful for a variety of care farming stakeholders in Flanders, but also abroad. In fact, “*there is no ‘one size fits all’ solution for social farming*”, like informant 16 declared. It is striking that Flemish stakeholders concentrate primarily on the agricultural frame, i.e. the farmers’ income. This might explain why the welfare sector is far from ready to use its scarce resources to support farmers. If Flanders would succeed to incorporate the welfare frame and the social economy frame into its discourse on social farming, i.e. broadening the concept, more resources could be allocated. However, support from the welfare and social economy sector comes with increased administration and quality standards. Obviously, you cannot integrate care farms into the welfare system and request that the ‘farmer should stay a farmer, not a social worker’ at the same time. Basic guidelines are crucial regarding safety and integrity, but excessive quality standards make innovative experiments almost impossible. Either way care farming in Flanders will evolve, partnerships and cooperation are the keys to success. Equal partnerships on grassroots level between individual farmers, service-users and care institutions. True cooperation across the various policy domains, in order to realise sufficient care provision on farms, without forgetting to keep an eye on future needs. Generally, these developments could be facilitated by more community-based care approaches, stronger local communities, and more welfare-related framing of social farming in general. The challenge is to keep the framework open and ‘alive’ while defining clear responsibilities for the different policy domains involved.

The main limitation of this study is the fact that service-users or clients of social/care farming initiatives did not participate. Further research should examine their viewpoints, opinions and expectations, not only for future policies but also regarding the question of financial compensation of their helping hands on farms. Moreover, future research should investigate preferences for any of the policy frameworks on a larger scale, including practitioners, potential and current care farmers as well as institutional farms, social enterprises, prisons and schools, preferably using quantitative methods. Besides, the situation of social farming in Wallonia should be studied. Furthermore, questions to tackle remain the feasibility of social/care farming to solve modern health and social challenges, not only concerning individual benefits but also public cost-effectiveness and quality of care on farms.

This research revealed the importance of looking at social farming through different lenses. It demonstrated the need to think more broadly how to support the phenomenon, to let it thrive without overwhelming its original informal spirit and solidarity - and to start true cooperation.

## Annexes

### Annex 1: INFORMATIONAL EMAIL

#### Master thesis on Social Farming / Green Care

Dear Mrs/Mr [*Name*],

Within my programme "Master in European Studies" at Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium, I am writing my master thesis on Green Care/Social Farming.

These concepts are an important opportunity within multifunctional agriculture, rural development policies, but also the welfare and social employment sector. A variety of service-user groups (disabled people, psychiatric patients, youth, elderly, drug addicts, long term unemployed...) can work on a productive farm and gain new skills and life quality. The farmer on the other side diversifies his activities and reconnects to the local community. Some EU-wide research has been carried out, pointing to the positive effects of green care (e.g. SoFar, COST Action 866, Farming for Health).

My research focuses on legal and financial recognition of Green Care/Social Farming within Flanders' agricultural and social policies, as well as within the EU's CAP and social affairs policies and financing schemes.

EITHER: [*Name of the gatekeeper*] mentioned your interest in the subject. I would like to ask you to take part in an interview of approx. 30-60 min to share your and the [*Name of the organisation/department/party*]'s views and strategies in the matter. Participation is anonymous of course.

OR: I hope that you could give me some guidance or support. The [*Name of the organisation/department/party*]'s point of view, in particular regarding [*agricultural/welfare/educational/social employment...*] aspects of social farming, is of high importance for the research. If you are interested in the matter, I would very much appreciate a personal interview of approx. 30-60 minutes with you or one of your colleagues. Participation is anonymous of course.

Additionally, if you think of any persons working on recognising social farming within Flanders or the EU institutions, I would be very glad to receive their contact information. Please feel free to forward this e-mail to persons who might be interested to help me with my research.

If you have any remarks, advice or questions, you can always contact me via e-mail or my cell phone: 0032-000 000 000.

Thank you very much for your kind assistance.

Best regards,  
Stefanie Friedel

**Annex 2:**  
**INTERVIEW ITEM LIST**

- Short introduction person / job  
→ link with social farming or green care?
- General opinion on green care / social farming (known concept?)
- Positive aspects vs. difficulties
- Win-win situation? Saving public costs?
- Collaboration agriculture – welfare – health care – social economy – education?
- Quality standards  
(e.g. training for farmer, avoidance of exploitation, service-users' opinion)  
! dilemma ! professionalisation/institutionalisation vs. informal, small scale, real life  
(top-down) context (bottom-up)
- Policy recognition? (Flemish subsidy; new CAP after 2013;  
Social Affairs: 'open method of coordination')
- Different possibilities of financing/legal recognition:
  - Subsidy vs. voluntary work
  - By EU/Member States or Regions/local municipalities?
  - Through CAP/Rural Development?
  - Through Social Affairs/Employment/ESF?
  - Through personal budget – Dutch model?
  - Through welfare organisations?
  - Through supported employment?
  - Through social cooperatives – Italian model?  
→ landscape management services?
  - Within broader concept of CSA (community based agriculture)?  
→ including local community (ethical consumers), school,  
eldercare, farm shop, village pub...
- Different rules and financing schemes regarding diversity in social farming?  
→ e.g. regarding different target groups, type of farm, focus on agricultural production  
vs. care, regarding goal (employment vs. education vs. therapy...)

**Annex 3:**

**INTERVIEW MATRIX – FLANDERS**

	<b>Department/Division/Organisation/Party</b>	<b>Interviewed on</b>
<b>Departments of the Flemish government</b>	Department of Economy, External policy, Agriculture and Rural Policy - <i>informant 8</i>	Fri 26/02/10 16:00
	Department of Education, Youth, Equal Opportunities and Brussels - <i>informant 5</i>	Mon 22/02/2010 15:30
	Department of Welfare, Health and Family	→ interview with administration was suggested to be sufficient
	Department of Energy, Housing, Urban areas and Social Economy	→ interview with administration was suggested to be sufficient
<b>Public administration</b>	Agriculture and Fisheries - <i>informant 2</i>	Thu 11/02/2010 12:30
	Welfare, Health and Family Division: Policy development – Youth - <i>informant 7</i>	Tue 23/02/2010 14:00
	Welfare, Health and Family - <i>informant 13</i>	Thu 04/03/2010 10:00
	Education and Training	(Briefing to member of cabinet)
	Employment and Social Economy - <i>informant 22</i>	Mon 15/03/2010 16:00
	Flemish Agency for People with Disability (VAPH) - <i>informant 4</i>	Thu 18/02/2010 10:00
	Flemish Agency for Care and Health	no interview, only answers by email
<b>Parliament</b>	Socialist party ( <i>s.pa</i> ) - <i>informant 6</i>	Tue 23/02/2010 9:30
	Christian-democrats ( <i>CD&amp;V</i> ) - <i>informant 12</i>	Tue 02/03/2010 15:00
	Liberals ( <i>Open VLD</i> ) - <i>informants 17 and 18</i>	Wed 10/03/2010 12:00
<b>Intermediate level</b>	Flemish Support Centre for Green Care ( <i>Steunpunt Groene Zorg</i> ) - <i>informant 1</i> - <i>informant 21</i>	Fri 08/01/2010 14:00 Mon 15/03/2010 9:00
	Institute for Agriculture and Fisheries Research ( <i>ILVO</i> ) - <i>informants 10 and 11</i>	Tue 02/03/2010 11:45
	Flemish farmers' association ( <i>Boerenbond</i> ) - <i>informant 3</i>	Tue 16/02/2010 13:00
	Flemish information centre for agriculture ( <i>VILT</i> ) - <i>informant 28</i>	Tue 30/03/2010 11:00 (by telephone)
	Flemish Platform for Social Economy ( <i>VOSEC</i> ) - <i>informant 9</i>	Mon 01/03/2010 15:30

<b>Care farms / Sheltered workshops</b>	Sheltered workshop with agricultural production - <i>informant 20</i>	Fri 12/03/2010 15:00
	Sheltered workshop with landscape management services - <i>informant 25</i>	Thu 25/03/2010 15:00
	Care farm A - <i>informants 26 and 27</i>	Sa 27/03/2010 17:45
	Care farm B - <i>informant 32</i>	Fri 02/04/2010 15:00
<b>Welfare organisations cooperating with care farmers</b>	Counselling centre for pupils ( <i>CLB</i> ) - <i>informant 14</i>	Fri 05/03/10 14:00
	Psychiatric hospital - <i>informant 15</i>	Tue 09/03/2010 14:15

### INTERVIEW MATRIX – EU level

	<b>Department/Organisation/Committee</b>	<b>Interviewed</b>
<b>Commission</b>	DG Agriculture & Rural Development - <i>informant 19</i> - <i>informant 33</i>	Thu 11/03/2010 10:00 Wed 14/04/2010 11:00
	DG Employment & Social Affairs - <i>informant 24</i>	Wed 24/03/2010 11:30
	Member of Cabinet Dacian Ciolos, Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development	Email contact only
<b>European Parliament (Secretariat)</b>	Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development - <i>informant 16</i>	Wed 10/03/2010 10:30
	Committee on Employment and Social Affairs - <i>informant 23</i>	Wed 24/03/2010 10:00
<b>Other EU institutions / networks</b>	European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) - <i>informants 29 and 30</i>	Tue 30/03/2010 14:30
	European Social Fund – Flemish Agency - <i>informant 31</i>	Thu 01/04/2010 10:00

## Annex 4: QUOTES

### *A) Agricultural frame: the farmer and the diversification of his income*

1. “Green care is interesting for farmers as a means of diversification, because it requires few investments and changes as compared to, for example, setting up a processing unit or starting farm tourism.” (informant 10)
2. “Care farms are a good opportunity to survive as a farmer.” (informant 18)
3. “We have to ask ourselves: ‘Where do we want to go?’ If we are looking from an agricultural point of view, then we have to keep the current system.” (informant 21)
4. “It is additional work for the farmer in this age of competitiveness. Time is money, so compensation is necessary. (informant 33) “Voluntary work is important, but to take care of people permanently, during working hours, requires correct compensation.” (informant 12)
5. “Financial support is necessary, no farmer would do this voluntarily.” (informant 20)
6. “Voluntary work? No, compensation is essential, otherwise you can’t enforce responsibility. Voluntary work often leads to either charity, or the other extreme, exploitation.” (informant 25)
7. “These projects are villages in themselves, living communities. I don’t believe in it and I don’t want them to emerge. There is a constant threat of misuse, no control is possible. It has more dangers than positive aspects.” (informant 33)
8. “Is it a task for Education to help the farmers get out of the crisis through diversification measures?” (informant 5)
9. “Funding the Support Centre is beyond Education’s core business.” (informant 5)
10. “The rules state that the Flemish Agency for People with a Handicap can only give money to accredited initiatives, therefore not the farmers. Besides, the goal is not to make a profitable business out of care farming!” (informant 4)
11. “You always have to ask the question: They are farmers – does welfare have to...? Financial compensation shouldn’t become the motivation, then the farmers become caregivers, while they are informal, family-like caregivers now, and this should be maintained.” (informant 13)
12. “40 €a day, this is not a small amount of money.” (informant 16)
13. “The amount is reasonable, but if you compare it to foster care... foster parents receive hardly half of it.” (informant 21)
14. “It prevents you to take two service-users at the same time. I think it should be more in that case. But beware that farmers do it for the money!” (informant 32)
15. “If I could change one thing, it would be this: to raise the amount of 40 €slightly for those farmers who care for two or three people at a time.” (informant 21)
16. “If you give more money, people will do it for opportunistic reasons, so you will need to increase regulation and control. It’s not worth the extra 5 or 10 €” (informant 8, similarly informant 4 and 21)
17. “40 €is not so much, but if you give too much, there is the risk that farmers do it for the money and not out of a social motivation. (informant 14)

18. “We’re still in the pioneering phase; the legislation on care farms only exists for five years. Wait another five years and see how everything will evolve.” (informant 8)
19. “The EU level cannot support everything. We have a limited budget and certain priorities. Also EU intervention has to be justified. [...] Support is possible, but it’s a decision of the Member States and their RDP, or their national social policies, to define the level of support for social farming, not the Commission’s decision.” (informant 33 and similarly informant 16)
20. “Rural Development doesn’t pay for any social services, not just social farming. No salaries for anybody, it’s a principle. But then all investments, training, certification, definition of standards, networks of social farms can be paid by the Rural Development fund.” (informant 30)
21. “Exactly how farmers are paid to take care of public goods such as birds and the environment and they are still farmers, they could provide social services and still be farmers, and get an extra income for it.” (informant 30)
22. “Employment and Social Affairs are not an exclusive competence of the EU, we only have a coordinating role. The ESF and the Microfinance Instrument (targeting unemployed who want to become self-employed) could be used to for the integration of vulnerable groups, training, or sheltered employment on a farm if you wish. If you attach a best practice to the project, you can get money from the Progress Fund, too.” (informant 23)
23. “The ESF only supports projects working towards the integration of vulnerable groups in employment. However care farms do not fit this condition.” (informant 19)
24. “There is only one link between the ESF and care farms: you have to create projects that lead vulnerable groups towards employment, and care farms could be a step in between. The care farm as a final destination is however not applicable.” (informant 31)

***B) Welfare frame: institutionalisation & public budgets, or the ‘Dutch model’***

25. “I’m generally critical towards support centres in Flanders. Rather give the money to the projects on grassroots level, than to pay another staff member in the support centre or give them structural financing. We can’t do both.” (informant 6)
26. Too much financial support is lost in the government administration, too much is financed double, it is just not efficient enough. (informant 20)
27. It’s probably necessary to reform the whole welfare sector and administration... all these large umbrella organisations, political games, hours of meetings without results!” (informant 20, similarly informants 4, 7, 13 and 22)25.
28. “It’s a pity that most of the youngsters stay on the farm for just a very short time. There are few results while there is so much potential! If the government gives subsidies, they should get value for their money.” (informant 26)
29. “You always have to ask the question: They are farmers – does welfare have to...?” (informant 13, similarly informant 4)
30. “You always have to ask yourself: Is it well enough organised? Are you providing the right sort of care and support? Is it always necessary? Do you have to go this far?”(informant 13)
31. “The welfare sector is inefficient, expensive, and too much focused on the current situation instead of anticipating to future needs. It’s fine that there are 400 care farms

- now, but there is no turnover, people stay there till the end of their days. What will you do with all the people who need care tomorrow? They also have a right to qualitative care!” (informant 31)
32. “In the beginning, it’s much work, and the follow-up is also time consuming for welfare institutions. But if social farming happens on a bigger scale, Welfare will be able to save costs.” (informant 3)
  33. “Collaborating with care farms takes a lot of time. Preparations, intake, follow-up and final evaluation... often it’s driving long distances to care farms outside the town. All this time is not compensated by extra financial means, but this work is carried out at the expense of our regular work” (informant 14)
  34. “It’s true that care farming placements involve more ad-hoc work for welfare organisations, but on a time-span of 20 years, the costs will decrease immensely. The ultimate goal should be that you don’t see your client back!” (informant 25)
  35. “Social farming is much cheaper; to take care of a handicapped person in an urban structure is much more costly. Also in nature people are happier and it works better! It will not cost less if it is an additional service. But in the long run, it could reduce the needs.” (informant 30)
  36. “In the Dutch model, farmers compete for the best therapy in order to get as many service-users as possible. Farmer, stay a farmer! That is why Mediterranean countries shiver from the Dutch model: the more quality guides you make, the more quality actually declines. Professionalisation of green care makes weak people out of service-users, this is what we wanted to avoid!” (informant 10)
  37. “I have encountered social workers who wouldn’t listen to my opinion when they were discussing the future of one of the youngsters after his stay on the farm was finished. They say: ‘He is just a stupid farmer’. [...] More respect is needed for our work! I would like to fulfil the quality standards of the social sector, all the reviews and so on, but there is no time. The farmer has to stay a farmer, that’s the strength of care farms.” (informant 26)
  38. “Care farming shouldn’t be for farmers who focus solely on the care aspect – we still need agriculture and farmers! You lose a part of your agriculture if you put it into social economy or welfare. The more you support and subsidise something, the more perverse effects you get and the more you can destroy something.”(informant 4)
  39. “The Dutch model is the best working one. You cannot attack it from any side.” (informant 30)
  40. “Institutional farms may exist, but we won’t support them.” (informant 3)
  41. “If a care farm is just added to an institution, the Agricultural Department will not finance it; this has to be done by the social budget. Agriculture only pays if there would be an sufficient area of farmed land and/or a sufficient number of animals.” (informant 18)
  42. “If you institutionalise care farms as regular welfare providers, then it will get entangled in the same logic as traditional structures and institutions, and exactly this creates exclusion!” (informant 7, similarly informant 3, 5, 10 and 13)
  43. “I am against institutionalisation and in favour of administrative simplification for initiatives likes these. I know that project-based financing leads to administration overload, but this says more about the maker of the rules than about the use of project-based financing. The procedure should be simplified, for example by conducting ex-post instead of ex-ante control.” (informant 6)

44. “If welfare organisations pay the farmer, be sure they will tie conditions to it!” (informant 18)
45. “The system of contracts between farmers and institutions would only work individually, not on a larger scale” (informant 22)
46. “It won’t work 100% as many caregivers can’t think out of the box. Social workers are too often thinking in terms of ‘me and my client’ instead of ‘we and our client and what is best for this client’. [...] Most social workers are talking, instead of actively doing things together with their clients. [...] There are few caregivers who turned the key and are ready to drive to care farms and weed together with their clients while having their weekly talk!” (informant 25)
47. “Individual farmers are in a weak position to negotiate prices with large institutions and the strong umbrella organisations in the welfare sector. Better use collective agreements.” (informant 20)

***C) Social Economy frame: social enterprises and cooperatives,  
or the ‘Italian model’***

48. “The biggest disadvantage is that Flanders is so densely populated, peri-urban. This is at the same time the biggest advantage for projects of the Italian kind. You have to communicate a lot to sell, and only do things that society approves, for example concerning animal welfare. Also, you will only reach a certain small group of people with that.” (informant 26)
49. “It sounds nice, but Italy is larger than Flanders, there is more space for this kind of initiatives. Flanders is overregulated, urbanized, just different than the Italians.” (informant 14)
50. “No, Flanders is too individualistic. Our organic farmers already have trouble, many of the weekly vegetable bags have been stopped. It’s not the people’s fault but the economic system’s.” (informant 25)
51. “I like the idea, it fits in the process of de-professionalizing. But it is not evident to get subsidies, because here in Flanders, you easily roll into rules and policies that are grouped around target groups. Our laws are not made to make these initiatives possible.” (informant 7)
52. “If the farmer is open-minded towards including the local municipality and school, we have to see that our laws will allow some more things, but this is a difficult point.” (informant 13)
53. “This ‘Italian model’ goes quite far. It is nice in theory, but our farmers won’t do it in reality. It appears to be a bit like communes... Flanders thinks too individualistic for this, the village structures are not like they were 50 years ago. For this kind of idea, a farmer hits too many rules and laws. For example there are many rules for child care.” (informant 17)
54. “Cooperatives are again on the agenda, for example social grocery stores or social restaurants. I believe in it, but I question whether they really reach their goals. It shouldn’t necessarily be tied to the municipality, local public bodies and so on. Also it never works if it is enforced top-town, it has to grow by itself and then you can support it.” (informant 22)

55. “The concept ‘care farm’ has to be broadened: do not only look at it from an agricultural and welfare point of view – also consider care farming within the social economy!” (informant 9)
56. “If the issue of ‘activation’ would be integrated in care farms, the farmers could possibly receive direct subsidies from Social Economy or via a ‘third-payer-system’.” (informant 22)
57. “I don’t know enough about social economy, but if it’s possible to include it in care farms, it’s a good thing. I’m open-minded towards the idea.” (informant 8)
58. “I think that the sector will be taken along, it seems very logical to include social economy. The former minister was member of another party and all forms of employment were excluded from the concept of care farms. Now there’s a new minister so we might include it. It’s important not to think in sectors too much – welfare can be applied to all aspects of life and all policy domains.” (informant 13)
59. “The only and foremost link between care farms and social economy is ‘employment care’, they have similar characteristics.” (informant 22)
60. “Care farming is actually ‘employment care’ specialised in farming activities.” (informant 9)
61. “There are possibilities in combining landscape management and growing vegetables as a social enterprise. But it is a different formula because social workers supervise and provide care , and the farmer doesn’t have to add it to his tasks. Also beware that too much administration will be added.” (informant 12)
62. “Social enterprises have to survive to a greater extent through production while they can rely lesser on subsidies. That also means innovation, marketing, management – all of that with a difficult target group.” (informant 9)
63. “Within social economy, there is too much economic focus on productivity!” (informants 19 and similarly informant 26)

***D) Regional frame: community-based initiatives and local partnerships***

64. “Never ever regulate and dictate social farming from the EU level. The only way would be to support it within the RDPs. Let it be a local, bottom-up initiative.” (informant 16)
65. “Some things cannot be done at EU level: the cost of setting up such a structure is not realistic considering the resources at hand and considering the priorities. Better do it at the local level.” (informant 23)
66. “The Italian model is not realistic to happen here, especially if it is enforced top-down from the EU level. We should rather support ideas growing bottom-up.” (informant 3)
67. “I’m not against it, there are maybe even financial means in the RDP. But it cannot be enforced top-down, it has to grow by itself bottom-up.” (informant 8)
68. “Do not enforce structures such as ‘5 Community-Supported Agriculture projects per province’. Let the people do it themselves, there are many sources of financing.” (informant 6)
69. “It’s difficult to get education and the schools in, also transport, and the social department. In the long run it will have to be like this, because rural policy will be much wider than just agricultural policy. But till then, you will have to be realistic.” (informant 30)

70. “Dare to stop rigid stays in closed institutions, and rather organise non-professional, partly voluntary systems such as Youth at Risk, own-power-conferences, individual-future-plans, and also care farms. Their power is exactly that people give care and support who are not paid, they are not professionals but neutral.” (informant 7)
71. “These projects are villages in themselves, living communities; I don’t believe in it and don’t want them to emerge. There is a constant threat of misuse, no control, well it has more dangers than positive aspects!” (informant 31)
72. “A future scenario would be: The Support Centre should be financed by the upper-department of Welfare; the farmer continues to get a compensation from Agriculture, and regional associations should be set up that would be paid by local public social bodies and the welfare institutions that place service-users on farms. These regional associations should also employ social workers, by a ratio of 1:10 service-users, who would coach farmers and follow-up placements.” (informant 11)

### *E) Quality of care*

73. “We have experienced some ‘dumping’, yes. Actually, the goal of placing a youngster on a care farm should be to calm down and to have a new start afterwards – whereas it is often misused to bridge waiting periods for hard interventions such as children’s psychiatry or drug rehabilitation.” (informant 27)
74. “In the beginning, such a quality system requires work and investments, but it pays off after some time due to decreasing mistakes and enhancing productivity. Of course, for individual farmers or small enterprises, that quality system is too heavy. Then baseline quality criteria should be sufficient, or some common organisation or structure could keep an eye on quality on several farms. If the government is smart, they will fund this organisation.” (informant 22)
75. “I’m in favour of basic quality standards for safety on the farm and to avoid exploitation. But don’t exaggerate, because then you make a lot of things impossible.”(informant 12)
76. “I don’t observe any need for large quality controls at this moment” (informant 5)
77. “I do believe in common sense. Of course you have to prevent misuse and exploitation, so you need to find a balance. But do not develop quality policies too fast, it will come by itself after some time.” (informant 13)
78. “You shouldn’t have too many rules, and for sure no obliged training for care farmers. Just make sure that the safety on farms is okay, concerning the machines and so on.” (informant 6)
79. “You have to provide training for farmers, but do not make it compulsory. Especially not in the sense of: ‘this certificate allows you to care for the handicapped, another certificate for youth...’!” (informant 14)
80. “I wouldn’t change anything, but maintain what care farms are. I wouldn’t take a step further, for example make training compulsory, or supervise all the time...” (informant 13)

81. “Considering training, you should distinguish between two types of care farmers. One type is that the farmer guides service-users himself and manages the subsidies himself, then compulsory training should be organised by policymakers. The second type are farmers who sign contracts with welfare institutions, then the institution remains responsible for all administration. For these farmers, informal information meetings would be sufficient.” (informant 22)
82. “For example for rural tourism, there was a lack of management capacities. Therefore training could be a kind of condition tied to financial support.”(informant 33)

### *General illustrative quotes*

“The most beautiful thing that one of the kids who stayed at the farm said to me was: ‘I want people around me who like me, rather than people who want to help me’. This is the added value of care farms: being allowed to be yourself.” (informant 26)

“Whenever I hear the prejudice that care farmers exploit vulnerable people as cheap workers, I say: ‘Farmers do not profit more than any director of a home for disabled people!’” (informant 26)

“Despite the subsidy, we have financial difficulties being farmers. I’ve invested in a small apartment so the service-users can stay overnight, that was a big step. I really hope it won’t go wrong.” (informant 26)

“It’s a pity that most of the youngsters stay on the farm for just a very short time. There are few results while there is so much potential! If the government gives subsidies, they should get value for their money.” (informant 26)

“Care farming... mainly socially engaged people do it for human reasons; but people who have time don’t do it, they just keep sitting on the couch. It’s much easier for them to say ‘I can’t do that kind of things, I don’t have time for that.’ But you get so much in return from the service-users!” (informant 30)

“If the subsidy would be abolished, or when we’ll start our pension... it will be difficult to tell our service-users that they can’t come anymore.” (informant 30)

“Speaking of beneficiaries as ‘clients’, like the Dutch do, implies a marketing approach. This is really not done for the Southern Member States!” (informant 33)

“Welfare operates according to demand and supply, too. If there is enough demand for care on farms, it will appear on the agenda.” (informant 6)

“The division according to target groups within Welfare should be overcome. We have to ensure better governance and better collaboration”. (informant 4)

“We, the whole society have to start living differently! Less focused on money and comfort, because this leads to cancer, stress, depression... – and then we expect that the government will solve all this and organise day activities, how wrong. If people lived more calmly and more socially, a lot of social projects wouldn’t have to exist anymore.” (informant 4)

“You can’t enforce social farming in a top-down procedure. You can only make it possible politically and financially, but you cannot enforce it.” (informant 16)

“There should be more dialogue between agriculture and welfare if we find care farms a valuable strategy. But be honest: this strategy won’t save agricultural sector in Flanders! It could be an element, next to diversification strategies such as farm tourism, farm shops, organic farming... On the other hand: care farms won’t save the welfare sector. But for quite a number of people, care farms could be very valuable.” (informant 12)

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