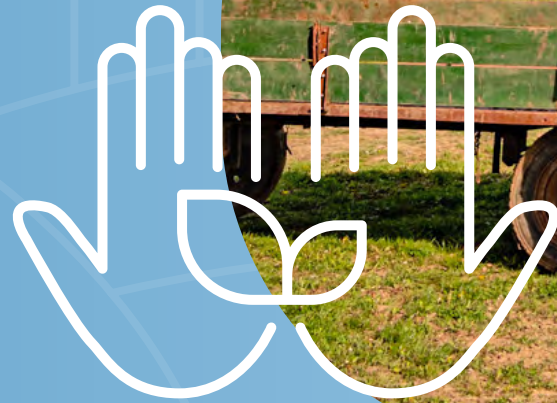


ONLINE SURVEY on Social Farms



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This publication has been prepared within the project Eco-Social Farming

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DRUŽIVA

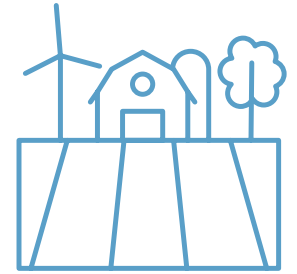
Druživa, o.z., Slovakia
<https://druziva.sk>



Petrarca - Europäische Akademie für Landschaftskultur
<https://www.soziale-landwirtschaft.de>



RESULTS OF THE ONLINE SURVEY OF THE ECO-SOCIAL FARMING PROJECT



One of the project's outputs, which was intended to contribute to achieving its objectives, was an online survey in the form of a questionnaire designed to determine whether and to what extent social farms contribute to the ecological sustainability of agriculture, healthy landscapes, and biodiversity. It was also intended to gain a deeper insight into social farming, particularly its specific social and environmental activities, and knowledge of how social farms improve civic attitudes in rural areas. With the outcome, we also wanted to get the information we did not get in the previous steps of the project.

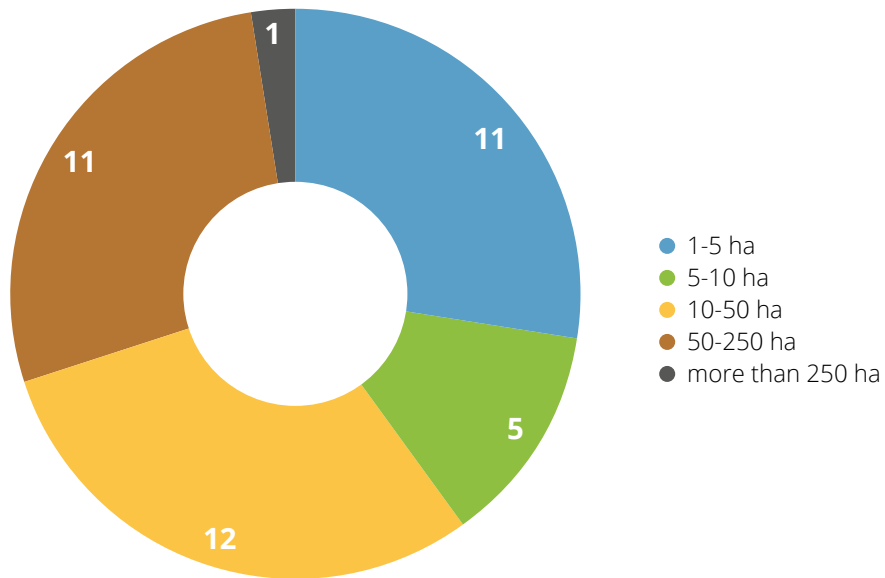
The design of the questionnaire was developed and approved by the project consortium at its second international meeting in Witzhausen (Germany) in October 2023. The basis for its development was to gain a deeper insight into the environmental aspects of social farming and social work. Conversely, the details were still fine-tuned at online meetings. The structure of the already processed Matrix indicators document was decisive when compiling the questionnaire and processing the survey results. The questionnaire was composed of structured questions with pre-selected options and questions with the possibility of replying by text. In the survey, we emphasised the tools and activities used on social farms to meet social, environmental and community objectives. Subsequently, it was processed into a functional electronic form (Google Forms) by the organisation Druiva, o.z., which oversaw this project phase. The project partners translated the questionnaire into their national languages. In November 2023, the project partners sent out a questionnaire to at least seventy email addresses of the target groups (210 in

total) for which the questionnaire was intended. The response time has been set at 15 days. The online survey results and other processing procedures were discussed at the third international consortium meeting in Banská Štiavnica (Slovakia) in April 2024 and online meetings or email communications. The results were processed by the partners, translated into English, and sent to the organisation responsible for the activities of Druiva, o.z. It then turned them into a graphic form. The partners consulted online surveys through meetings and emails in the form of outputs. The questionnaire has been designed to provide valuable answers from social farmers and other target groups, such as ordinary farmers, representatives of social facilities, not active farmers, etc. They, therefore, received questions according to the target group to which they belonged.

The return rate on the completed questionnaires was 29 %, while our expectations were low. The percentage of respondents by basic breakdown was 66% of farmers and 34% of non-farmers. Of the farmers, 78% were social. Farmers, on the other hand, answered basic questions concerning the parameters of their farms. A pleasing finding was that organic farming practices dominated the activity of the participating farms. The most common farm size was between 10-50 ha (12 units), but farms more significant than 50-250 ha (11 units) dominated in Germany. The rest of farm size differed from 1-5 ha (11 units) to 5-10 ha (5 units), one social farm had more than 250 ha.



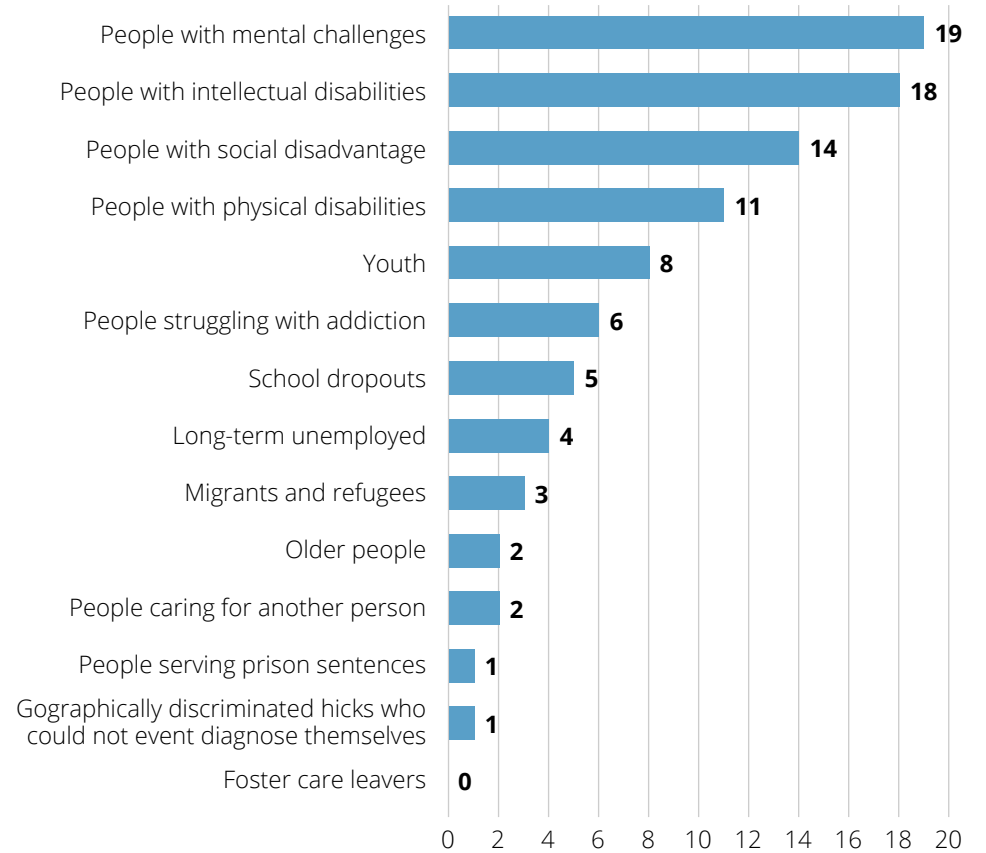
Figure 1. Social farm size in the sample from the online questionnaires.



Source: Online survey, Eco-Social Farming Project, 2024

The target groups and their activities on social farms were quite diverse. It is impossible to determine whether people with special needs had a single "disadvantage" or if, in some cases, it represented a combination of disabilities. It is not thus possible to state if the social farming leaders (31 subjects) work with an absolute number of eighty-nine participants or if the number is lower than eighty-nine.

Figure 2. Participants on social farms from diverse socially disadvantaged groups.

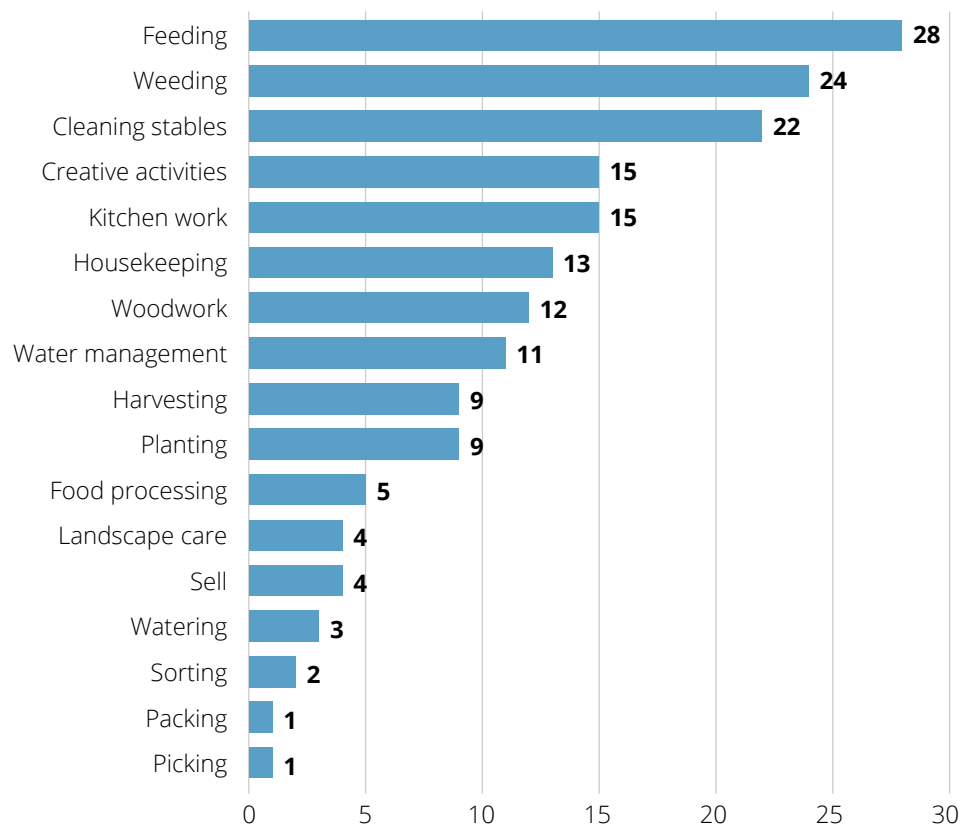


Source: Online survey, Eco-Social Farming Project, 2024



The questionnaires revealed in which activities people with special needs were involved. Suppose we assume that the social farms are small-scale farms with a predominance of environmental awareness. In that case, this integration into work presents environmental justice par excellence when helping and working on the farm.

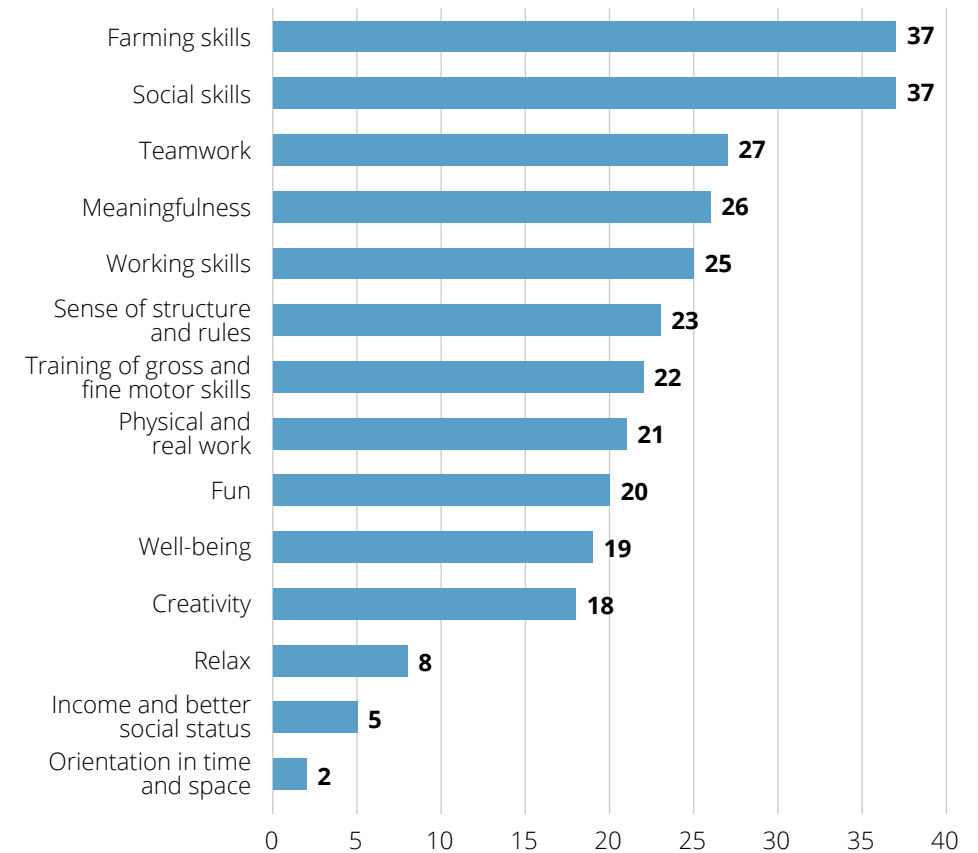
Figure 3. Diversity of participants' activities on social farms.



Source: Online survey, Eco-Social Farming Project, 2024; author's data processing, not yet published.

The last chart shows the benefits of social farming for people with different life difficulties identified by respondents. This information was obtained from social farmers, not from the participants. Thus, it is a perspective based on long-term experience and observation from the leaders' point of view.

Figure 4. Benefits of working on social farms.



Source: Online survey, Eco-Social Farming Project, 2024; author's data processing, not yet published.



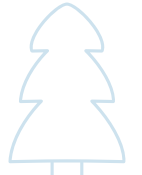
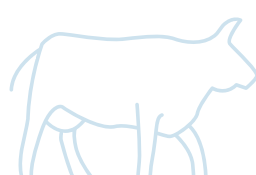
The results from the questionnaire surveys do not directly indicate that simply being active on social farms leads to environmental sustainability and equity or increases participants' awareness of environmental social work. However, such connotations can be inferred given the outcomes from the focus groups and implicitly discover the share of participants on ecological justice and so-called ecological inclusion.



Chapel on the Free Farm at the Confluence, Czechia

The answers to the text questions of the respondents were also interesting as for the findings. For example, how social agriculture could positively affect the environment was also answered by the participants from Germany as follows:

- Service for nature conservation authorities (biotope maintenance).
- As a biodynamic company, we take responsibility for the well-being of our immediate environment, animals, and people. This holistic approach is reflected directly.
- We sow with the supportive community as an action - this event connects us deeply with the spiritual aspect of agriculture, the earth and togetherness.
- Maintaining the field margins through staggered mowing and manual removal.
- Greater appreciation and therefore more careful use of resources through greater understanding of natural processes.
- Avoiding machines, a lot of manual labour, animals as farm animals in the social-therapeutic context - not as food.
- Gentler intervention in nature. More resource-saving work.
- The economic return is the secondary goal; it is primarily about the people. This means that nature is not used as much as on purely agricultural farms. The areas get more rest and relaxation phases.
- Meaningful work to preserve a liveable landscape, climate protection and environmental education.



In the Czech Republic, the following examples were also given:

- Creativity in using forests, fields, meadows, etc.
- Soil without chemical fertilisation when clients work with it.
- It is certainly an appropriate form of farming that cares for the environment by involving organic practices and using smaller and more environmentally friendly machines.
- Certainly, by looking after the landscape, building water retention measures in the landscape, anti-erosion measures.
- Conservation of landscapes and returning gardens, vineyards, orchard fields to smaller units.
- Building draws, retaining water in the landscape, rotating crop diversity, building a relationship of personal physical contact with nature, appreciation of nature and seasonal cycles.

There are also interesting examples from Slovakia:

- By employing disadvantaged people for farming and educating them in organic farming and then using the skills in practice, we create a healthier ecosystem as well as a demonstration space for education for children and adults.
- Development of special plant production.
- The number of unemployed people would be easily employed in agriculture, replacing machines, which would increase ecological approaches.

- Taking care of mental ecology is essential in positively shaping the environment? Is landscaping the main pillar of the cultural article of society?
- Use of local resources, use of local old varieties typical of the place.

The given results will contribute to further discussion about the benefits of social farming and the support of social farms. They will also identify innovative farms and initiatives interested in sharing their innovations and improving their activities related to the project theme. We do not aim to generalise conclusions with the output but to describe the most important trends sensitively. The results of the Online survey, together with the Indicator Matrix of Social Farms, findings from the Roundtables and In-depth interviews with farmers, give the base for the final project report, which is *Handbook on Synergies of Social Farming and Ecological Goals*.



Free Farm at the Confluence, in the fields, Czechia





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