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## Abbreviations and acronyms

CSA : Community Supported Agriculture

EHPAD: Etablissement d'hébergement pour personnes âgées dépendantes

EU: European Union

FAM: Foyer d'Accueil Médicalisé

MAS: Maison d'Accueil Spécialisée

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## **Abstract**

Social farming is a concept that uses agricultural activities for social or therapeutic purposes. Social farms may benefit various target groups such as: young persons experiencing difficulties, the elderly, disabled people, prisoners, people in the process of returning to work and others. At the crossroads of agriculture and social matters, social farming activities can offer multiple benefits for its beneficiaries in the form of therapy, social rehabilitation or personal development. The Marie-Louise Foundation aligns with this vision by hosting disabled people on its therapeutic farm. Although the farm setting already benefits a certain number of users, the foundation needs to come up with a better structure for its farm, for it to be sustainable in the long term and to offer services that are adapted to a broad range of target groups. In this perspective, my study assesses the needs and expectations of social farm users with a case study at the Vivaldi farm. The data collected has been used to develop key guidelines that may contribute to the success and sustainability of social farms in general: (1) building a well-thought-out farm design and layout; (2) providing adapted and diversified activities; (3) ensuring security; (4) considering the solid base of human resources; (5) promoting the farm via means of communication. Finally, this paper discusses how social farming is situated within agroecology.

**Keywords:** Social farming, therapeutic farm, disability, sustainability, agroecology

## **PART 1: Introduction and context**

## 1 General introduction

*In this paper, the words “users” and “visitors” are used to refer to the people visiting social farms and taking part in the activities. This includes people with special needs targeted by social farming activities (referred-to in this thesis as residents, patients, participants or beneficiaries) as well as their care takers (e.g., educators or nursing assistants) who assist them in carrying out social farming activities. Thus, activities on social farms are meant for specific groups of people but also involve the professionals who supervise them.*

Social farming (also called green care or care farming), is defined as the use of an agricultural context and natural elements for social, health or educational purposes (Di Iacovo, O'Connor et al. 2009, Haubenhofner, Elings et al. 2010). Therefore, social farming provides benefits linked to care, health promotion and social rehabilitation. Although there is much diversity in social farming, its related activities take place on farms and are aimed at people with specific needs (Hassink, Zwartbol et al. 2007): elderly, disabled people, socially excluded people, long-term unemployed and youth, among others. Social farming is a growing movement in Europe that bridges traditional healthcare and other sectors (Hassink and Van Dijk 2006) such as agriculture, animal husbandry, gardening, and nature conservation. These different types of social farming activities seek to promote rehabilitation, treatment and social integration of the beneficiaries. Moreover, social farming supports services in rural areas. This innovative approach, embedded in the multifunctionality of agriculture, offers services to medical and social care in rural areas (Knapik 2018).

The Foundation Marie-Louise manages seven social- and healthcare institutions in the northern conurbation of the city of Toulouse in France. These institutions take care of adults - called residents – affected by mental disabilities. The Foundation Marie-Louise also owns the Vivaldi Farm, where residents have been welcomed for more than 10 years. This therapeutic farm is designed to enhance the well-being of the residents (see Appendix 1 for information on the foundation).

The therapeutic benefits given to social farming activities are many and recognised (Di Iacovo, O'Connor et al. 2009). These benefits are psychological, intellectual, social, and physical. Social farming opens up new perspectives in terms of diversification of the means of treatment and care of vulnerable people, and thus arouses the interest of many stakeholders.

The Foundation Marie-Louise, aware of the potential of its therapeutic activities, has decided to develop its farm so that it can benefit more participants. The current model of the farm will be re-designed to meet the multiple needs and expectations entailed by different types of disabilities. Designing this new model requires an understanding of the needs and expectations of the farm users. The Vivaldi Farm will be used as the site of a case study in this masters thesis.

This paper will contribute to the field of research on social farming and will also be beneficial for the Foundation Marie-Louise in the set-up of the new farm model. The introduction of this paper focuses on the different aspects of social farming. This is complemented by a literature review focusing on the context of this study: the handicap and the French social and healthcare system (see Appendix 2 for the literature review). The second part describes the methodology that was used to carry out the research. The results are presented in the third part and are finally discussed in the last section of this paper.

## **2 Social farming**

### **2.1 Conceptual framework of social farming**

#### **2.1.1 Definition of social farming**

Social farming entails all the activities that use agriculture (plants and animals) for social purposes, such as for therapy, social inclusion, rehabilitation, education or the provision of services in rural areas (Di Iacovo, O'Connor et al. 2009).

Social farming includes a wide range of activities characterised by two invariable aspects. First, the activities take place on a farm. Secondly, they are aimed at people expressing specific needs (Knapik 2018). The contact with nature and animals can be considered a form of therapy that complements the traditional methods of care (Knapik 2018).

#### **2.1.2 Objectives of social farming**

The main objectives of social farming are illness prevention, social inclusion and the improvement of the quality of life (Hassink and Van Dijk 2006, Di Iacovo, O'Connor et al. 2009). Social farming promotes rehabilitation, education and care of disadvantaged groups such as disabled people, elderly, prisoners, long-term unemployed, drug addicts, and migrants.

Social farming also generates services in rural areas for the above-mentioned groups. Agriculture offers a wide array of activities to which everyone can contribute according to their capacities. Thus, social farming is an innovative approach bridging the gap between two concepts: the multifunctionality of agriculture and social and health care services at a local scale (Knapik 2018).

## **2.2 The history of social farming and typology of welcoming organisations**

Agriculture has been used as therapy for centuries. Historically in Europe, rural communities were developing initiatives and practices to promote social inclusion and solidarity. Before the mechanisation and industrialisation era, the agricultural sector required substantial workforce. This gave people who couldn't have performed other jobs an opportunity to work (University College Dublin 2014).

The first medico-social services in Europe were initiated by religious institutions. In exchange for taking care of the beneficiaries, these individuals had to participate in tasks linked to food production on-site. The products were meant to be sold or self-consumed. Agricultural activities were not used intentionally for therapy, but beneficial effects were rapidly noticed on the general health and well-being of people.

In France, the first forms of social farming appeared during the 19th century, when shared gardens were set up by the church, initially for the working class (Di Iacovo, O'Connor et al. 2009).

Nowadays in Europe, social farming exists in various forms. D'Iacovo et al. describe a typology of farms according to four criteria : the objectives, the type of organisation, the target groups and the main activity (Di Iacovo, O'Connor et al. 2009).

### **2.2.1 The objectives**

#### **2.2.1.1 Therapy and care**

Organisations focusing on therapy and care offer activities fostering health and care. The beneficiaries of these activities are not employed and do not receive any money. Most of the time, the institutions taking care of the patients pay for the services provided by the social farming organisation.

### 2.2.1.2 Job opportunities and/or occupational work

The objectives of these organisations are social and professional integration for people in difficult situations or marginalised from the labour market. The beneficiaries of this type of welcoming organisations can be remunerated or not. Most of the time, this type of objective is carried out by associations, which may receive public funding, but they mostly rely on the sales of their production to cover operating costs.

### 2.2.1.3 Education

The main objective of some social farms is to offer education about nature, mostly aimed at young groups. These farms promote contact with nature, the discovery of farm life and of food production. The clients pay for the services provided. In France, many pedagogic farm networks have been set up, such as “Bienvenue à la ferme” and “Fédération Nationale Accueil Paysan” (Ministere de l'éducation nationale 2001).

## **2.2.2 The type of organisation**

Social farming can take place on different types of farms (Di Iacovo, O'Connor et al. 2009, Hassink, Hulsink et al. 2012).

### 2.2.2.1 Associative farms

Associative farms are the dominant type of social farms in France. Generally, these farms are managed by volunteers and are open to visits from the public.

### 2.2.2.2 Commercial farms

Commercial farms, or production farms, carry out activities related to the production of food along with social activities on the farm. Welcoming people on the farm can be done independently or via a network. In France, the networks CIVAM and Accueil Paysan assist farmers in the development of social farming (CIVAM 2020).

Two main forms of social farming on commercial farms can be distinguished. First, the clients can be hosted regularly or permanently on the farm (elderly, disabled people, young people). Otherwise, people can be welcomed on shorter stays which may also be less regular (Ministère de l'agriculture et de l'alimentation 2015).

### 2.2.2.3 Farms part of public establishments

Social farming has especially been developed in social- and healthcare institutions, hospitals, and education establishments. Most of the time, the farm activities are

managed by the professionals of the institution, although they may be linked to a separate association.

### **2.2.3 Target groups**

Some social farms focus on a specific group while others are open to several groups (for example, schools, healthcare institutions or private individuals).

### **2.2.4 Main activity**

Social farms combine at least two types of activities: agricultural production and social activities. The main activity is the one that generates the largest proportion of the farm income (Di Iacovo, O'Connor et al. 2009). We can distinguish (1) farms where agricultural production generates the mere of farm income, (2) farms which rely on both agricultural production and care, and (3) farms in which care-related activities are the economic dominant factor (Hassink and Van Dijk 2006). Also, the dominant activity of a social farm (in terms of income) is not necessarily the most time-consuming one.

## **2.3 Benefits of social farming on the target groups**

### **2.3.1 Therapeutic benefits**

The interest for social farming is rising due to the benefits that natural space and contact with animals and plants can bring for social, physical, and mental well-being (Elings 2006, Di Iacovo, O'Connor et al. 2009, Hassink, Hulsink et al. 2012).

The activities related to social farming are beneficial for the general well-being of people and for their integration into society. Social farms offer a diversity of activities that integrate people in a concrete and living context, where their abilities are recognized and valued (Di Iacovo, O'Connor et al. 2009). The following table (Table 1) summarizes the benefits linked to social farming activities for the beneficiaries.

Table 1 : Therapeutic benefits for social farming participants. Adapted from (Relf 2006, Elings and Hassink 2008).

Physical benefits	Intellectual benefits	Psychological benefits	Social benefits
More strength	Acquisition of knowledge	Increase in self-esteem	Better social interaction
Better appetite	Development of competences	More self-respect	Belonging to a group
Development of motor functions	Training of the memory	Enthusiasm	Acquisition of social competences
Weight loss	Organisation of thoughts	Calming down	Inclusion
More energy	Verbalisation	Better attention	More autonomy
Use of the senses		More self-awareness	Employment
		Stress attenuation	

### 2.3.2 Personal development optimization

Beyond therapy, social farming allows beneficiaries to acquire new skills, which may be utilised in a professional context. Through farming activities, participants contribute to concrete tasks that create value. They have the feeling that they are useful and that they have responsibilities. This leads to the development of self-confidence (Assouline, Granjon et al. 2012, Bragg and Atkins 2016).

### 2.3.3 Interaction with animals

A relationship with animals is a source of personal fulfilment for any human being (Centre d'Etude et de Recherche sur la Philanthropie 2005). Relationship with animals have been recognised as providing therapeutic benefits. Animals do not judge and are always present. They are a source of emotional support and it is possible to build a genuine relationship with them (Hassink 2005, Elings and Hassink 2006).

Zootherapy is a discipline that aims to connect animals with humans, using animals as mediators to serve various purposes with the client (Picot 2020). Zootherapy is used with children, disabled people, or people in difficulty and has the goals to educate, socialise or cure. The outcomes are many: stress reduction, gain in confidence, motivation, affection, improvement of intellectual and motor functions, overpassing mental blocks, among others (Centre d'Etude et de Recherche sur la Philanthropie 2005).

## **2.4 The multiple stakes of social farming**

Social farming not only impacts the sectors of agriculture and medico-social, but also comes within the scope of the multifunctionality of agriculture and rural development.

### **2.4.1 The multifunctionality of agriculture**

Agriculture has been experiencing political, economic, ecological, and socio-cultural changes for several years. These have initiated a transition from a production-driven model to a multifunctional model. The multifunctionality of agriculture refers to the different functions given to agriculture other than food production. On the one hand, it manifests through the activities linked to the act of production (landscape diversity, natural space management, and contribution to the biodiversity). On the other hand, it entails the activities of diversification that either result from the act of production or rely on it (transformation of products, social farming, energy production) (CIVAM 2020).

### **2.4.2 Rural development**

In Europe, the development of agriculture after the Second World War has led to a rapid increase in the agricultural productivity, the over-specialisation of farms and environmental pressures. The agri-food sector has been facing social and environmental limits that justify the necessity to improve the sustainability of agroecosystems, thus enabling them to meet the new expectations of society (Di Iacovo, O'Connor et al. 2009).

#### **2.4.2.1 Regional program for rural development in the region Midi-Pyrénées**

During the period of 2014-2020, rural development programs have been applied in the ancient French regions (the territorial subdivision was modified in 2015). The region Midi-Pyrénées is characterised by a strong contrast between the metropolis of Toulouse and the rest of the regional territory, predominantly rural. Fifty-seven per cent of the population lives in rural areas, which cover 86% of the regional territory. Thus, the needs in terms of health and care services are high in those zones (European Commission 2014).

#### **2.4.2.2 Social farming, an opportunity to galvanise and value rural areas**

Social farming can be considered within the scope of a rural development dynamic. Rural space often offers a limited number of services for the local population. Social agriculture is an opportunity to provide services in rural areas that serve the local

communities, especially in terms of health and care services (Di Iacovo, O'Connor et al. 2009).

Social farming contributes to local socio-economic dynamism. In rural spaces, local activities and production have a positive impact on local development, social cohesion, and the economy (Tulla, Vera et al. 2014). Social farms galvanise rural landscapes by creating employment, connecting local communities and providing services (Tulla, Vera et al. 2014). Social farms often promote local food production and direct sales to consumers. This means of production meets the increasing demand from the consumers for local products and food produced in an environmental and social-friendly way (Tulla, Vera et al. 2014). In France, the concept of community supported agriculture (CSA) has had great success and the number of such organisations has soared over the past few years (Encyclopédia Universalis 2020). The viability of many social farms relies on the possibility to sell the produce at the local level.

Moreover, social farms are often well-anchored on the territory, adapted to their environment, and designed according to local patterns (traditional farming methods, local varieties, and breeds...). These farming practices also usually try to respect natural cycles. In that way, social farms can contribute to the conservation of the agricultural heritage (Tulla, Vera et al. 2014).

Finally, when social farming activities take place on commercial farms, the social aspect of receiving visitors on the farm is a way to diversify farm income (Di Iacovo, O'Connor et al. 2009, Hassink, Hulsink et al. 2012).

#### **2.4.3 The need to structure social farming at the European level**

Social farms are scattered around Europe and no clear legal framework has been defined at the European level. Nevertheless, social farming is developing, and national networks are building up in order to set up a more organised system.

The European economic and social committee has established political orientations for social farming which rely on the three key pillars represented in the following diagram (Willems 2013).



Figure 1 : Political orientations established by the European economic and social committee. Adapted from (Willems 2013).

The definition of a regulatory framework would allow to identify quality criteria resulting in the recognition of social farming activities. In addition, the creation and coordination of social farm networks would favour experience and knowledge sharing and raise awareness around the benefits of social farming. Finally, the training of professionals would guarantee a high-quality level.

Furthermore, social farming can be considered within the scope of the transformations occurring in the medico-social sector. The conventional French model is highly institutionalised and has been questioned due to the substantial expenses it mobilises.

In France, the public funds dedicated to social- and healthcare institutions are rising (Caisse nationale de solidarité pour l'autonomie 2018, DREES 2019). This is due to the creation of new places in social- and healthcare institutions, aiming to meet the demand for public health services. In 2018, the institutions taking care of the elderly have received a total of more than 10 billion euros. The same year, the budget allocated to institutions taking care of disabled people was up to 11,5 billion euros. Along with the rising expenses of public health, the deficit of the social security system in France amounts to 50 billion euros. This high debt burden, partly due to the universal access to health guaranteed by the French welfare system, challenges

its sustainability (Guirado, Valdeperas et al. 2017, Kersulec and Sylvestre 2020). Thus, strategies must be developed to decrease the public health expenses and avoid the collapse of the welfare system.

Social farming can offer solutions to the growing expenses of public health. In the United Kingdom, several studies point out the possibility to decrease public health costs for people benefiting from social farming services (Bragg and Leck 2017). This explains the growing interest for alternative ways of treatment that social farming practices bring about.

Thus, the recognition of social farming in France as a therapeutic medium favours its development. Social farms are diverse but have common objectives: inclusion into society, opening into nature and the environment, well-being and involvement of service users, and diversification of the activities. The Foundation Marie-Louise has been working towards these objectives for 10 years with the development of the Vivaldi therapeutic farm.

### **3 The therapeutic farm of the Foundation Marie-Louise: Vivaldi farm**

#### **3.1 General description of the farm**

The two-hectare property was acquired by the foundation in 2006 in Vacquiers, a village 20 kilometres north of the city of Toulouse. In 2010, after renovation work, the therapeutic farm opened and started to receive residents from the institutions of the foundation.

The project is oriented towards the well-being and stimulation of the residents through contact with nature. The farm is therapeutic and occupational. The activities tend to have a healing effect on the residents and to make them feel healthier (Cambridge Dictionary 2020). There is no objective of production on the farm.

The farm is divided into several parts (cf. figure 2): an orchard comprising a diversity of fruit trees (apples, pears, apricots, cherries, figs, peaches, plums); a vegetable garden including aromatic plants and a plot of grape vines. Animals are also kept in paddocks (dwarf goats, donkeys, horses, a pig and chickens) (Géoportail 2020).



Figure 2 : Aerial view of the farm. The coloured polygons demarcate the sections of the farm. Adapted from: Géoportail, 2020.

During summer, produce from the farm (fruits, vegetables, wine) is sold once a week at the headquarters of the foundation. The money goes to the foundation to contribute to its projects.

The farm receives residents from one of the institutions of the foundation. Fifteen residents from the medical care home come every day to the farm and are involved in taking care of the animals (feeding, cleaning the paddocks and the sheds). According to the seasons, they can participate in other tasks (picking up fruits, mowing the grass, rake up dead leaves, or potting seedlings, among other activities).

### 3.2 People involved on the farm: a mix of employees and volunteers

A lot of different people work on the farm. Volunteers from the foundation oversee the vegetable garden. The foundation also employs one person who is assigned with the maintenance of the orchard and the grape vines. In addition, two to three educators work daily on the farm. They assist the residents in the farm activities and in the actions of daily life (getting changed, having meals, taking medicine). The residents are the beneficiaries of the activities provided by the farm.

### 3.3 Funding

The farm is co-funded by two entities. On the one hand, the medical care home (whose residents come every day) finances the expenses linked to the educational activities. These budgets are allocated by the department council of Haute-Garonne.

On the other hand, the foundation finances the development of the farm (new constructions, renovations).

### **3.4 The primary function of the farm: welcoming people**

By setting up the Vivaldi Farm, the Foundation Marie-Louise wanted to establish a meeting place for various social- and healthcare institutions. By facilitating the participation of the residents on the farm, the foundation hopes that the site is adapted to receive and involve people. The aim is to have a diversity of beneficiaries who can work together, help each other and exchange. In brief, the aim is to foster social interaction and cohesion.

The farm welcomes some of the residents from the six social- and healthcare institutions of the Foundation Marie-Louise. However, the farm is also open to other social- and healthcare institutions. Five partnerships have been created with such establishments in the surroundings of Toulouse, allowing children and disabled adults to visit the farm regularly.

According to the level of disability, the users can contribute to different activities on the farm. Residents with the most capabilities can achieve simple farming tasks such as cleaning the paddocks, feeding the animals or driving a wheelbarrow. However, their ability to work is limited and most of them need supervision for carrying out tasks. People with reduced mobility (people in wheelchairs, walking frames, difficulty to walk) or those suffering from heavier handicaps have less opportunities to take part in farm activities. These residents come to the farm to enjoy the peaceful atmosphere, observe nature, and walk around the farm. However, some parts of the farm are not easily accessible for people with reduced mobility (narrow alleys, muddy ground, gravel tracks), which restricts the number of residents who can benefit from the farm.

### **3.5 Towards a new farm-model: re-designing to improve the farm**

#### **3.5.1 Areas for improvement**

The Vivaldi farm has been contributing to the well-being of its visitors for many years. However, some adjustments could be made in order to offer new possibilities and to attract a diversity of users.

### 3.5.1.1 Improve the accessibility of the site

The environment shapes the way disability manifests. If the environment is adapted, the repercussions of a disability are lessened, and vice-versa.

The residents of the Foundation Marie-Louise are not all able to walk. The physical accessibility of some parts of the farm is limited for people with reduced mobility (cf. figure 3) This can prevent some visitors from benefiting fully from the site (Grellety 2020).

Also, the activities taking place on the farm must be adapted to people with disabilities. Some tasks are too complex for the residents and need to be carried out by the supervisors or the volunteers, such as transplanting seedlings or harvesting fruits. Conversely, the interaction with animals seems to be adapted to the majority of the users.

### 3.5.1.2 Ensure an efficient communication between the people involved

The farm is a place where different people coexist. Volunteers from the foundation and professionals from the social- and healthcare institutions are present daily on the farm, but the lack of communication between the different stakeholders is resulting on misunderstandings and tensions. The educators taking care of the residents would like to be consulted when decisions are taken on the farm. The foundation plans to put in place computer tools to share information and communicate about the farm. This would allow everyone to be kept informed of what is going on at the farm and to feel involved in the functioning.



Figure 3 : Central alley of the vegetable garden. Access to the rest of the garden can be difficult for the residents.

### 3.5.1.3 Overcome the lack of technical skills

Owning a farm means having to deal with technical aspects related to the agricultural context. Some tasks require technical skills to be achieved properly. Currently, the orchard is managed by an employee who has experience with growing fruit trees. A volunteer takes care of the vegetable garden (figure 4)



according to permaculture principles. The animals are dependent on the residents

Figure 4 : A small section of the vegetable garden.

and the educators from the medical-care home who come every day to take care of them. However, when the basic needs of the animals are covered, the educators do not have sufficient skills to master a more specific follow up of the animals.

The foundation has to make sure that the technical aspects of the farm are properly dealt with by bringing in the necessary competence.

### **3.5.2 The structuration of the farm, a central preoccupation for the foundation**

The activities that social farming entails have therapeutic benefits for people. The Vivaldi farm has a high potential for developing activities suited to various target groups. Aware of these opportunities, the Foundation Marie-Louise wants to adapt its farm model so that it is more adapted to the needs of disabled people and more sustainable. Considering the above analysis of the current functioning of the farm, the foundation will have to come up with a clear organisation of its farm. Investments will need to be done in order to arrange the site so that it meets the needs of targeted groups.

#### **3.5.2.1 Study objectives**

The key objectives of my research were identified and developed in collaboration with the Foundation Marie-Louise. The objectives are to: (1) understand to what extent social farming presents therapeutic benefits for people, (2) to identify the needs and expectations of specific groups regarding social farm services, (3) to identify types of services of interest for such target groups, and (4) to identify key aspects contributing to the sustainability of therapeutic farms. Through this master's thesis, these objectives are guiding the development of the new farm model of the foundation. More generally, the key guidelines provided will serve people having developed, currently developing, or wanting to develop such projects.

#### **3.5.2.2 Research questions**

To identify the therapeutic benefits linked to social farming, understand the expectations and needs of the users of social farms, and to identify the main elements that contribute to the sustainability of such farms, I ask the following research questions:

- (1) To what extent is social farming providing therapeutic benefits for people? (i.e., what are the benefits of the participation in activities taking place on social farms for the participants?).
- (2) What are the needs and expectations of specific target groups? (i.e., in terms of services provided, arrangements, activities, equipment available; focusing on specific target groups: mentally disabled people, heavily disabled people, children, people with reduced mobility).

- (3) What are the key aspects contributing to the sustainability of therapeutic farms? (i.e., elements regarding organisation, services provided, farm staff skills, financing).

The following section describes the methodology pursued to answer the research questions presented above and to fulfil the study objectives.

## **PART 2: Methodology**

# **1 Description of the methodology**

## **1.2 Foreword**

I conducted the research for this master's thesis during the restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Hence, the regular daily life on the farm has not been observed. The number of visitors welcomed on the farm was restricted (and limited to around 15 residents and two to three supervisors). Given the limited number of visitors (including residents and supervisors), the activities taking place on the farm were fewer and were mainly focused on animals (feeding, cleaning). The opportunities to observe the residents on the entire site were limited as well. Moreover, the visits from partners (i.e., other social- and healthcare institutions) were adjourned.

## **1.3 Methodological process**

In this research, conducted from June to November 2020 (five months), I used the Vivaldi farm as a case study. The work was divided into several phases following a chronological order. The exploratory phase consisted of the appropriation of the topic and the understanding of the working context. Through this phase, I modified and adjusted the methodology. Following the preliminary phase, the second phase incorporated data collection through a qualitative study. I conducted semi-structured interviews with farm users both at the Vivaldi farm and at other social farms, in order to gather useful material to answer the research questions. Finally, the data-analysis phase was made up of the analysis of the collected data, which were processed according to the thematic analysis method.

# **2 Exploratory phase**

## **2.1 Participative observation**

### **2.1.1 Definition**

Participative observation consisted of immersing myself in the field by experiencing the daily life of the studied environment (Soulé 2007). Taking part in the collective daily life of the farm included my active participation in the farm activities. I worked in the vegetable garden with the volunteers of the foundation, and I have followed the educators and residents of the social- and healthcare institutions through their daily routines (arrival and departure from the farm, activities related to the animals, harvest of fruits and vegetables, meals, time out (rest, personal free time)).

However, I kept some independence so as to be able to step back from this reality and avoid subjectivity. Indeed, observations ought to be as neutral as possible and devoid of judgment. In addition, as an observer I had to show open-mindedness, curiosity and critical ability to understand the topic holistically. I reported the observations from the field in a logbook.

### **2.1.2 Objectives of the participatory observation**

Participatory observation helped me understand the place the Vivaldi farm holds within the many establishments of the foundation, and to highlight the areas of work guiding the research.

This approach targeted two main objectives:

- (1) Understanding of the functioning of the farm (i.e., people's roles, responsibilities, relationships and visions of the farm).
- (2) Contact with disabled people (i.e., apprehension of the handicap and what it entails in terms of social interaction, capabilities and needs).

### **2.1.3 Justification of the method**

Through participation in the same way as the people observed, I had the possibility to understand internal mechanisms that otherwise would be hard to figure out in a situation of exteriority. The access to subtle information is hence privileged (Soulé 2007).

I found the observation of actions and behaviours in-situ interesting because it illustrates the reality of the field without relying only on written documents or words which can be subjective (Van Campenhoudt and Quivy 2011).

## **2.2 Exploratory interviews**

I conducted exploratory interviews with the persons present at the Vivaldi farm (i.e., four educators, three volunteers, four residents, one employee, and other visitors). These interviews took the form of informal discussions and aimed to explore the different points of view, opinions, and ideas of the different stakeholders regarding the farm. The content of the interviews was noted down during the talks.

## **2.3 Exploratory readings**

My interactions in the field were complemented by the consultation of diverse documents concerning the foundation and its social- and healthcare institutions (i.e.,

presentation leaflets, institutional projects, status, posts descriptions, and monthly news bulletins). The goal of these readings was to deepen my understanding of the topic, needed to ensure the quality of the investigation. Additionally, I reviewed literature on the topic (i.e., handicap, social farming, medico-social sector in France and legal framework).

### **3 Data collection**

#### **3.1 Semi-structured interviews with staff from the social- and health-care institutions visiting the Vivaldi farm**

The Vivaldi farm normally welcomes residents from the establishments of the Foundation Marie-Louise as well as visitors from other social-and healthcare institutions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with twelve members of the staff from ten different institutions.

##### **3.1.1 Objective of the method**

The main objective of the semi-structured interviews was to get information from the different farm users about the services provided on site. More broadly, the goal was to gather the needs and expectations expressed by clients of social farms (focusing on the specific target groups of people with disabilities and children). Each interview dealt with the following themes:

- Current use of the farm by the residents from the institution questioned,
- Reasons for coming to the farm,
- Successes/difficulties
- Needs and expectations related to the farm.

##### **3.1.2 Justification of the method**

A semi-structured interview uses predefined and specific themes associated to open questions. During the interview, I was able to keep some flexibility and could consequently adapt the flow of the conversation according to the interviewee (Feneteau 2015). Hence, this method was appropriate given the diversity of stakeholders interviewed.

##### **3.1.3 Interview sample**

As mentioned above, I conducted twelve distinct interviews with the persons from the ten social- and healthcare institutions using the farm to. The sample includes the six institutions belonging to the foundation, and other institutions taking care of disabled adults or children as well as children with family difficulties. These users

visit the farm at different frequencies and have been the farm's partners for various durations (from a few months to up to five years).

#### **3.1.4 Conduction of the interviews**

I conducted the interviews between July and September 2020. The duration varied between 30 minutes and one hour, depending on the availability of the respondents and their interest for the topic. Ten interviews were conducted face-to-face, the remaining two were done via the phone. For each establishment, one to three respondents (occupying various job positions (i.e., educators, establishment director, head of department) were interviewed.

I used an interview guide (Appendix 1) which oriented the discussion around specific themes, but I did not use it linearly for each interview. I did not record the conversations, but I took notes and summarized according to the different themes.

## **4 Semi-structured interviews with staff at other social farms**

### **4.1 Objectives of the method**

The aim was to discover the way other social farms operate and to collect data on their experience of social farming. Ultimately, the goal of these interviews was to collect data on the factors of success or difficulties for social farms, and to come up with key aspects contributing to the sustainability of such farms. I addressed the following themes:

- General presentation of the farm and its activities,
- Adaptation of the site to the visitors (i.e., infrastructures, equipment, activities according to the target group(s)),
- Successes and difficulties throughout the project,
- Therapeutic benefits for their clients,
- Sustainability of social farms in general.

### **4.2 Interview sample**

I conducted 23 interviews conducted at 20 different social farms (of which 19 are located in France and one is located in Belgium). I identified the farms via internet search, using the words "ferme thérapeutique", "accueil social en agriculture" and "accueil à la ferme" in the search bar. Three types of farms can be distinguished (Figure 5): (1) associative farms only providing social farming services, receiving visitors or social workers, (2) farms existing as part of a social- and healthcare institution (including hospitals), the farm benefiting the people cared for in the

institution, (3) commercial farms combining production and provision of social services on the farm.

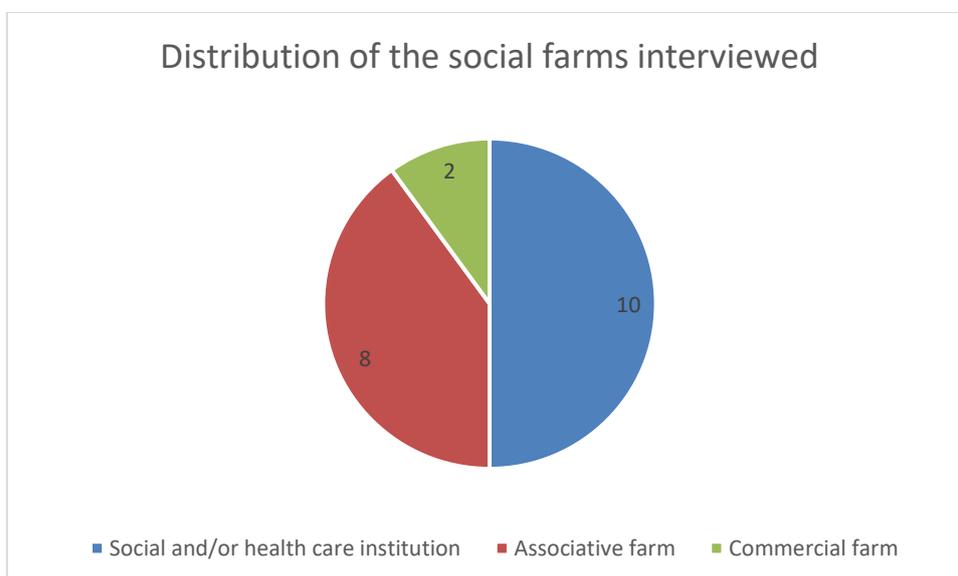


Figure 5 : Distribution of the 20 farms where I conducted interviews, according to the type of farm.

### 4.3 Conduction of the interviews

I conducted the interviews in August and September 2020. The duration of each interview varied between 30 minutes and one hour. Due to the remoteness of the majority of the farms selected and to the lack of availability of the respondents, only three interviews were conducted on the targeted farms. Fifteen interviews were conducted via the phone and two respondents sent their responses via email.

The content of the interview was defined by an interview guide (Appendix 2). I always interviewed one person at a time. I did not record the interviews, but I took notes during the conversations. The interviewees were either educators, president of association, animation coordinator, or a farmer.

## 5 Analysis of the results

I analysed the content of the semi-structured interviews using the method of thematic analysis (Paillé and Mucchielli 2016). I classified the data collected into different themes and sub-themes. First, the themes were identified and noted down

gradually as the content was explored. Then, I organised the data on a separate piece of paper, by grouping the themes previously identified, hierarchizing them, and classifying them into different sections.

### **5.1 Analysis of the interviews with staff at social- and healthcare institutions**

The data collected was classified into five sections:

- (1) Strong points of the Vivaldi farm,
- (2) Weak points of the Vivaldi farm,
- (3) Therapeutic benefits on the residents,
- (4) Needs of the visitors regarding the farm,
- (5) Expectations towards the farm.

### **5.2 Analysis of the interviews at other social farms**

The data collected via these interviews includes general information about each social farm questioned (type of farm, human resources, funding e.g.). I had also asked questions to identify the following sections:

- (1) Factors of success,
- (2) Difficulties,
- (3) Therapeutic benefits for the residents,
- (4) Key aspects contributing to the sustainability of social farms.

## **PART 3: Results**

## 6 Results from interviews with the staff of the Vivaldi farm

The following section presents the results from the interviews conducted with the service users of the Vivaldi farm. The data collected was classified into the six sections previously established in the methods:

- (1) Reasons for the staff to visit the Vivaldi farm with their patients,
- (2) Strong points of the farm,
- (3) Weak points of the farm,
- (4) Therapeutic benefits on the patients,
- (5) Needs and expectations regarding the farm.

The content of each of these sections was divided into several themes, which are presented below.

### 6.1 Reasons for visiting the Vivaldi farm

Figure 6 below presents the reasons for the staff to visit the Vivaldi farm with their patients. The existence of occupational activities, the farm environment being different from that of the institution, and the educative material provided by the farm are the most cited reasons for coming.

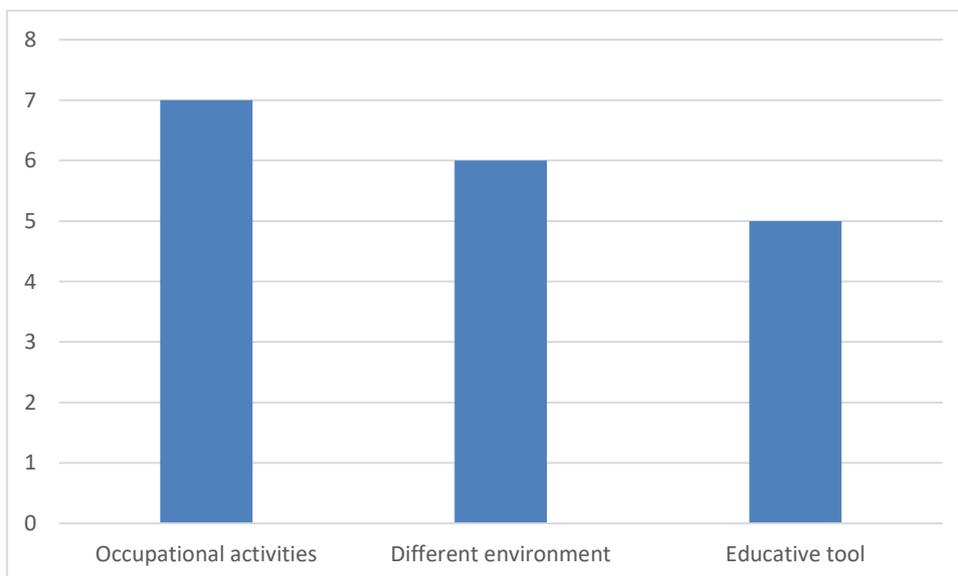


Figure 6 : Occurrence of the reasons for the users to visit the farm mentioned by the respondents. The ordinates represent the number of occurrences for each theme on the abscissa.

### **6.1.1 The farm as a source of occupational activities**

The existence of occupational activities is the primary reason for residents to visit the farm (mentioned by seven respondents). Particularly, the contact with animals is valued by half of the staff questioned. Overall, occupational activities taking place on the farm are said to make the residents feel like they contribute to useful tasks.

### **6.1.2 The farm as a different environment from that of the institution**

The enjoyable environment on the farm motivates the visitors to come, as mentioned by six interviewees. The outings at the farm allow the residents leave their institution where they spend most of their time and live in a community. In that sense, the farm is a place where the residents can evolve in smaller groups and enjoy different surroundings.

### **6.1.3 The farm as an educative tool**

Half of the informants consider the farm an educative tool for their residents. Four of them mention the opportunities to learn and discover on the farm. Also stated by several informants during the interviews is the possibility for the residents to socialise and meet other people.

## **6.2 Strong points of the Vivaldi farm**

Figure 7 shows the strong points of the Vivaldi farm cited by the staff interviewed. Four aspects were mentioned: the contact with animals on site, the enjoyable environment of the farm, the diversity in activities and the possibility to build social ties.

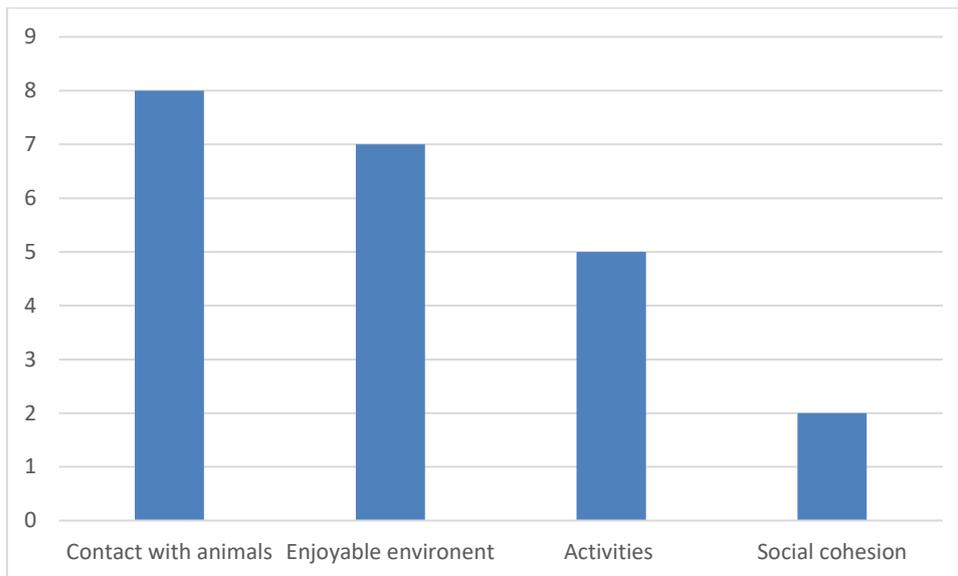


Figure 7 : Occurrence of the strong points of the Vivaldi farm cited by the respondents. The ordinates represent the number of occurrences for each theme on the abscissa.



Figure 8 : Residents can touch the animals, here while cleaning the donkeys' paddock

Most of the respondents (eight out of ten) value the possibility to interact with animals. As figure 8 shows, it is possible for the residents to enter the paddocks and touch animals. Four respondents report that the presence of animals is an opportunity to organise zootherapy sessions for the residents visiting the farm.

Moreover, the enjoyable environment of the farm is another strength pointed out during the interviews. Several informants consider that the rural and natural environment of the farm is valuable. Indeed, the farm is located in the countryside and is devoted to people with disabilities. The small scale of the site makes it adapted to the visitors and the employees working at the farm are already trained to take care of disabled people, which is reported by two interviewees as being an asset. As also stated by three respondents, the farm is an enclosed site where it is possible for some visitors to wander in security. Finally, more than half of the persons surveyed estimate that the place is conducive to appreciate seasons and develop the sensory functions (smell, tactile, auditory).

As also reported by half of the informants interviewed, the diversification of the activities the residents can participate in is interesting. The farm indeed offers the possibility to care for a diversity of animals, take part in various gardening tasks and other activities linked to the maintenance of the farm.

Finally, two interlocutors claim that the farm is a place of social cohesion and that they value the fact that their residents can meet new people and build social ties with other visitors. Particularly, the mix of different target groups seems to interest the respondents, who consider that the diversity of people can stimulate and even challenge their residents.

### 6.3 Weak points of the Vivaldi farm

Figure 9 below shows the weak points of the farm as noticed by the visitors interviewed. The lack of accessibility to the site and on site is the most frequent difficulty encountered by the visitors.

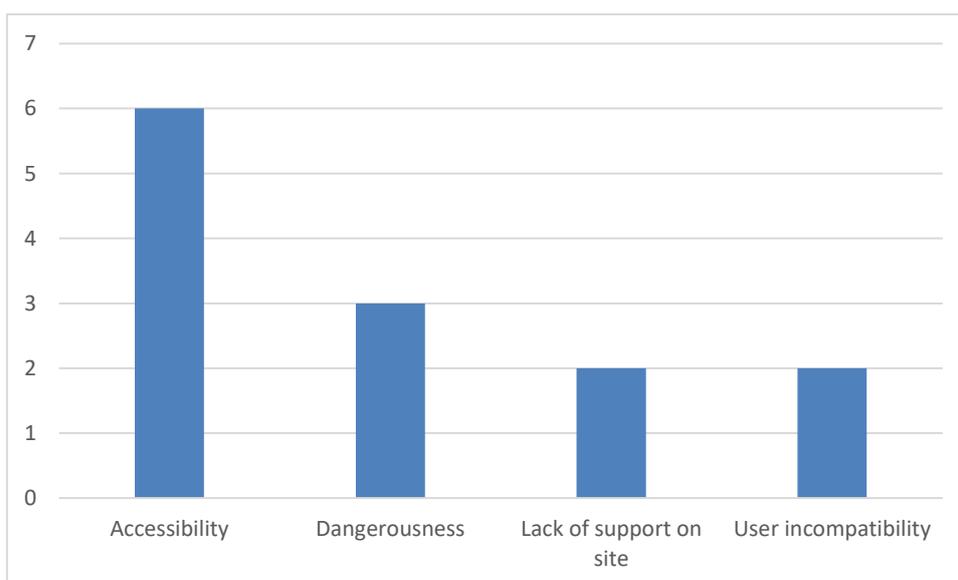


Figure 9 : Occurrence of the weak points of the Vivaldi farm as cited by the respondents. The ordinates represent the number of occurrences for each theme on the abscissa.

The accessibility of the farm is cited as a weakness by six respondents out of the ten interviewed. Two of them mention the remoteness of the farm from their establishment to be a weak point. They regret the consequent limited time they have on site, as much time is spent on travelling to the farm. Moreover, four respondents point out the lack of accessibility on site, particularly for people with reduced

mobility. The ground can be muddy and the gravel alleys make it difficult for people using wheelchairs. Consequently, the educators who come mostly bring to the farm people who can walk, as coming with people with reduced mobility seems too constraining.

Secondly, the potential risks on the site have been noticed by three respondents. For some of them, risks can come from the presence of animals, which can have unpredictable reactions and harm the residents. Then, two respondents point out the lack of securing the agricultural equipment, which is reachable by the visitors as the sheds stay open during the day.

Also, the lack of support on site was reported by two interviewees. Especially during the first visits at the farm, the visitors would need more help and guidance on site (to know how to deal with the activities and where to find equipment for instance). Indeed, there is none on site that is specially in charge of welcoming the visitors and guide them through their visits. Carrying out activities on the farm is complicated for the majority of the educators as they are not used to working in an agricultural setting.

The last difficulty raised by the respondents is the incompatibility of some patients on the farm. The interaction between children and disabled adults may be challenging. While some children can be scared by the handicapped adults, the agitation of the children might bother some residents.

#### **6.4 Therapeutic benefits of the agricultural setting**

The therapeutic benefits of the farm are represented in figure 10 below. Psychological benefits are the most cited although farm users also report physical, intellectual, and social benefits.

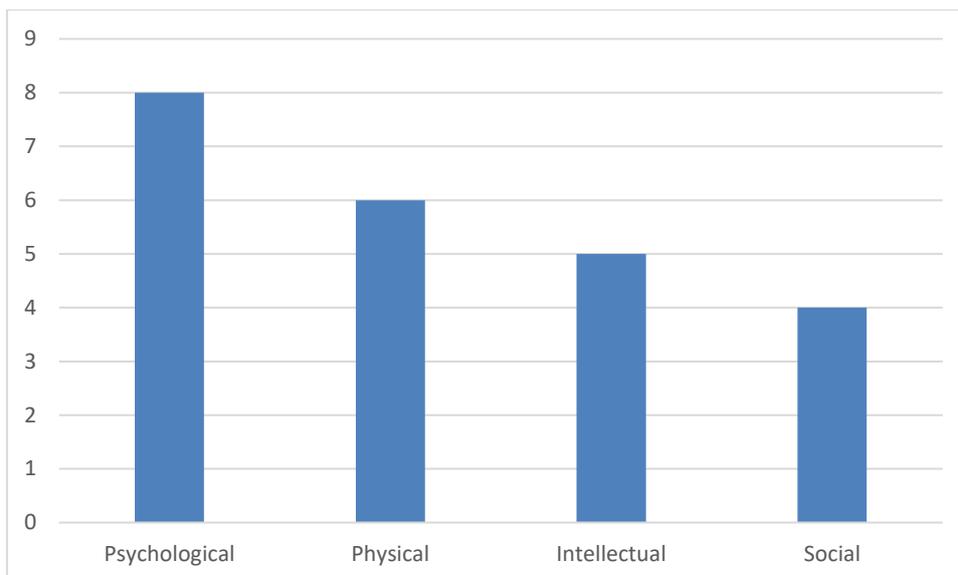


Figure 10 : Occurrence of therapeutic benefits cited by the respondents. The ordinates represent the number of occurrences for each theme on the abscissa.

As shown by the previous graph, psychological benefits are the most reported. Eight respondents are convinced that the involvement of their residents at the farm has positive effects on their psychological well-being. Indeed, through the participation in useful and meaningful tasks, the educators interviewed estimate that the residents feel valued and develop their self-esteem. Moreover, many respondents notice the durable calming effect of the farm on their residents.

Secondly, physical benefits are reported by six respondents. Four of them insist on the importance of being outdoors and participating in farm activities for the residents to exert themselves.

Additionally, intellectual benefits are cited. The activities taking place on the farm are thought to stimulate the sensory functions of the beneficiaries and to help them train their mobility and their motricity. Through the repetition of the same tasks, a lot of educators have seen their residents learn and master new movements, including fine motor functions.

Lastly, social benefits are pointed out by four of the ten professionals interviewed. The farm is seen as a meeting place where residents from different social- and healthcare institutions can work together and interact. Some residents made friends amongst the other visitors and two educators affirm that residents are happy to meet again from one time to the next.

## **6.5 Needs expressed by the visitors**

The visitors interviewed expressed various needs in relation to the services provided by the Vivaldi farm.

### **6.5.1 Adapted sanitary facilities**

The premises on the farm are suited to receive disabled visitors. The sanitary facilities are adapted to people using wheelchairs. However, they cannot be used by visitors who are not able to sit. Very specific equipment is necessary for people suffering from heavy handicaps. A shower trolley is necessary to wash the residents when needed. Also, a transfer-rail is used to move a resident from a wheelchair to the shower trolley. Equipping the sanitary facilities with that kind of tools would ease the visits for some visitors, making the changing of the residents possible on site. Likewise, the sanitary facilities should include a toilet and a tap suited to young children.

### **6.5.2 Outdoor layout**

Some respondents express the need to find on-site some elements of layout that would facilitate the visits with residents. First, they ask for accessible paths and alleys outdoors that would be suited to the circulation of people with reduced mobility. Secondly, the interviewees mention the need to have several shelters at different areas of the farm, enabling the residents to be outdoors while being protected from the rain, the sun or the wind.

### **6.5.3 Adapted activities and material**

As reported by one third of the respondents, the activities as well as the equipment and other material related to the activities should be adapted to the target groups. The activities currently provided by the farm are considered accessible and adapted to the visitors, but some think that certain activities could be complemented by a communication medium (such as signs including drawings, pictures and/or pictograms). A few respondents also refer to the need for small gardening tools for children and at-waist-level planters to make gardening possible for people who cannot bend or who sit in a wheelchair.

## 6.6 Expectations towards the Vivaldi farm

Figure 11 below presents the expectations of the farm users towards the Vivaldi farm.

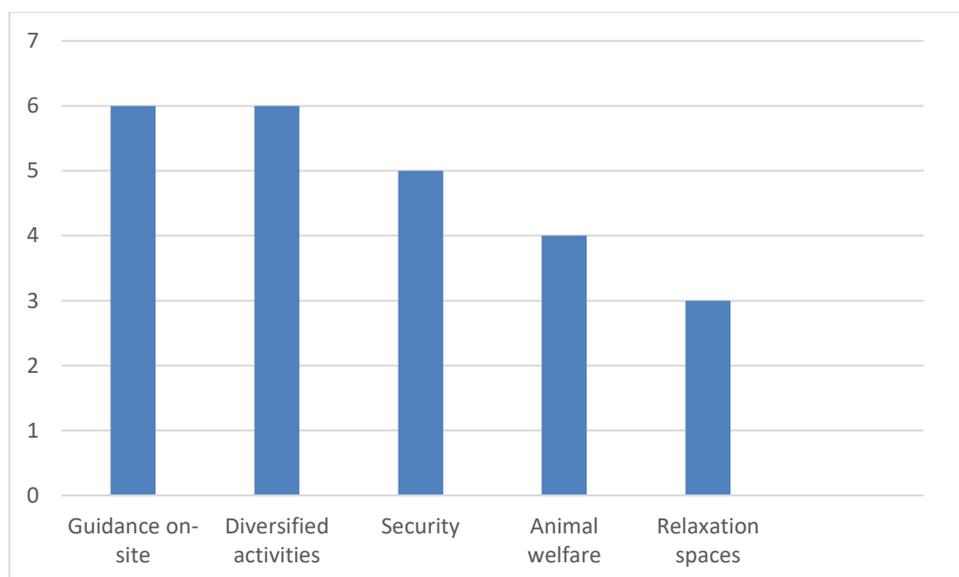


Figure 11 : Occurrence of the different expectations cited by the respondents. The ordinates represent the number of occurrences for each theme on the abscissa.

### 6.6.1 Main expectations

The professionals interviewed seem to value particularly the guidance they can benefit from on-site as well as the diversification and renewal of the activities provided on the farm.

#### 6.6.1.1 Guidance and support on-site

Linked to the lack of support on-site expressed by some respondents, six professionals interviewed insist on their expectation to be welcomed when they arrive at the farm and supported during the visits while carrying out their activities. Respondents say that this would ease the visits and make them more profitable for the residents. Also, two educators mention that they would expect someone on-site to help them handle the animals and assist the contact with them. Indeed, a lot of the educators are not at ease with animals or do not know how to interact with them.

#### 6.6.1.2 Diversification and renewal of the activities

Six respondents expect the activities provided by the farm to be diversified and renewed. According to some interviewees, the residents need novelty so that they

do not get bored by repetitive activities. Half of the visitors interviewed would like their residents to be able to interact more with the farm animals. They wish to be able to walk in the paddocks, touch the animals and make use of the stimulation they can bring about. In this perspective, four respondents would be interested in the intervention of a professional in zootherapy. They think that this person would allow the residents to make the most of the contact with the animals. Additionally, many respondents were inspired to come up with activities they would like the farm to provide, such as thematic workshops, walking paths, or stimulation of sensory functions led by playful and interactive media, among others.

#### 6.6.1.3 Security

Another key expectation cited is the security on-site. Two respondents are adamant that the sheds used to store farm equipment should be closed and made inaccessible to the visitors. Likewise, three respondents report that they are careful with the animals. They expect the animals to be used to the interactions with humans and to be trained to have contact with humans and with vulnerable groups in particular.

### 6.6.2 Secondary expectations

#### 6.6.2.1 Animal welfare



Figure 12 : In wet periods, some of the paddocks can get very muddy.

The visitors interviewed have shown their concern for animal welfare issues on the farm. Two respondents deplore the living conditions of the animals in winter (muddy paddocks -cf. figure 12) – as well as small sheds and a lack of shade in the summer. They encourage the Foundation Marie-Louise to take actions to improve the living conditions of its animals.

### 6.6.2.2 Creation of relaxation spaces outdoors

The last expectation mentioned during the interviews is the availability of spaces on the farm where the residents can sit to enjoy the outdoors and relax. Ideally, these spaces should be comfortable and should favour relaxation.

Thus, interviewing the staff who work with the residents who visit the Vivaldi farm has made possible the collection of a wide range of information related to the services provided by the farm. This method has been complemented by interviews with people working in organisations similar to the Vivaldi farm, in order to collect more generic data on social farms.

## 7 Interviews with staff at other social farms

The following section presents the results from the interviews with other social farms, using the themes identified in the methodology:

- Therapeutic benefits of social farming,
- Difficulties in relation to the social farming activities,
- Success factor for the project,
- Key aspects for the sustainability of social farms.

### 7.1 General information about the social farms

There were three types of social farms: associative farms, commercial farms and farms belonging to a social- and healthcare institution.

#### 7.1.1 Activities

The activities proposed by the staff at the farms in relation to social farming vary according to the objectives and the type of social farm. Commercial farms base the activities offered to the public on their agricultural productions (feeding cattle, collect eggs, or harvest fruits), whereas social farms as part of a social- and healthcare institution choose their activities according to the abilities of the beneficiaries. Generally, similar activities can be proposed to service users. All the 20 social farms in my study own animals and use them for social farming activities. Moreover, 14 farms have a vegetable garden involving the beneficiaries in social farming activities. Some farms also own meadows that are used to feed the animals and

orchards producing fruits. The activities proposed were thus linked to these living media. Other activities like the maintenance of green spaces (e.g., trimming hedges, mowing the grass, or racking dead leaves) were also reported. A few social farms also set up more creative activities such as nature-based workshops (e.g., making herbariums, carpentry, and cooking).

### 7.1.2 Human resources

Social farms need constant human labour to not only perform the agricultural activities but also to take care of the visitors. The people who use their time, and bring their skills and values to social farms vary in their profile and also vary according to the type of social farm. Table 2 below shows the different persons involved in the maintenance of social farms, as it was reported by the respondents during the interviews.

Tableau 2 : People involved in the maintenance of social farms according to farm type

Type of social farm	Associative farms independent from a social- and healthcare institution	Farms as part of a social- and healthcare institution	Commercial farms
People involved in maintaining the farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Volunteers</li> <li>-Activity leader</li> <li>-Employees in social rehabilitation</li> <li>-Service users (visitors)</li> <li>-Animal specialists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Health professionals and educators</li> <li>-Agricultural worker</li> <li>-Green space caretaker</li> <li>-Residents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Farmer</li> <li>-Health care providers (taking care of the residents)</li> <li>-Residents</li> </ul>

### 7.1.3 Funding

The sources of funding depend on the type of social farm considered.

#### 7.1.3.1 Associative farms independent from a social- and healthcare institution

Social farms belonging to associations get an income from external and internal sources. Funding from external sources comes from donations from private individuals or companies, grants from private bodies or subsidies. Internal sources of funding are of three major types: (1) the subscriptions of the members of the association (2) earnings from the visits (applicable when visitors have to pay to benefit from the services provided by the farm), (3) sales of produce from the farm.

### 7.1.3.2 Farms as part of a social- and healthcare institution

In France, social- and healthcare institutions receive money from the state to operate. Social farms as part of these institutions often benefit from public funding for their functioning. While some institutions cover all farm expenses using public funding, others rely on alternative sources to cover all or part of farm expenses. The money can thus come from the value of farm produce, subsidies, grants, donations, and farms tours, among other sources.

### 7.1.3.3 Commercial farms

Regarding the activities coming within the scope of social farming, farmers usually charge the visitors for the sessions they take part in. The farmer interviewed charges 100 euros for a two-hour session. This income remunerates the farmer as a complement to the earnings generated by the activities of production.

## 7.2 Therapeutic benefits for the residents

As figure 13 shows, the therapeutic benefits for the participants on social farms are of four types. Respondents mainly perceive psychological and social benefits, even though intellectual and physical benefits are also reported.

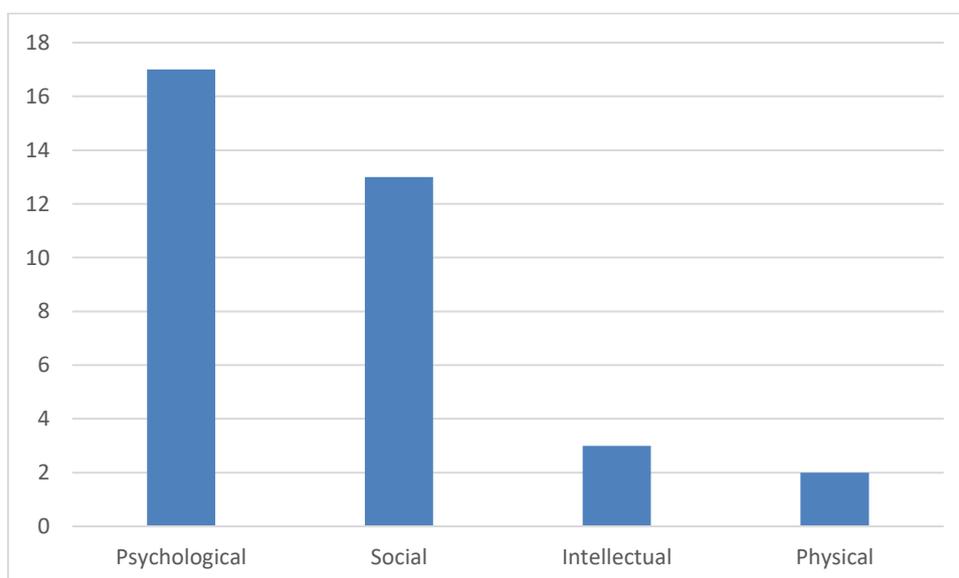


Figure 13 : Occurrence of the therapeutic benefits cited by the 23 persons interviewed. The ordinates represent the number of occurrences for each theme on the abscissa.

### 7.2.1 Psychological benefits

Out of the 23 respondents in total, 17 think that both a natural environment and a farm setting have positive impacts on the psychology of the participants. As 16 respondents mention, being involved in meaningful activities boosts self-esteem and self-confidence. The beneficiaries realise that they can perform tasks and contribute to care for the life of plants and animals. This gives them a sense of responsibility and usefulness. Moreover, twelve interviewees highlight the calming effects linked to the farm environment and its activities. Through the contact with animals and gardening, the beneficiaries are isolated from external perturbations and focussed on the contact with life. Resulting benefits are stress reduction, attenuation of fears and alleviation of behavioural disorders (violence, self-withdrawal).

### **7.2.2 Social benefits**

A farm environment is conducive to social interaction, as reported by 13 persons questioned. To them, social ties can develop between all the people involved on the farm (i.e., beneficiaries, professionals, volunteers). Indeed, farm activities are usually performed in groups which favours cooperation and teamwork.

Additionally, six respondents think that social farming is a way to integrate people into the society. Their work can be valued and recognised (for instance, when the beneficiaries are involved in producing food), and thus they can be stakeholders of their territory.

### **7.2.3 Intellectual benefits**

Intellectual benefits are mentioned by three respondents. First, they point out that the participation to farm activities stimulates motor functions, which consequently allows for the training of cognitive functions. In addition, three respondents are convinced that the farm is a place where the residents can develop their memory, through for instance, the repetition of activities involving specific movements or the use of farming tools.

### **7.2.4 Physical benefits**

Linked to the involvement of social farm users into physical farming activities, two respondents point out the physical benefits on the participants. As previously mentioned, motor functions can be trained, and some tasks require fine motricity (for example, transplanting seedlings) which is a valuable exercise for some beneficiaries.

### 7.3 Difficulties encountered by social farms

All the farms questioned admit that they are encountering or have encountered difficulties linked to the social farm project. Figure 14 presents the difficulties mentioned by the respondents.

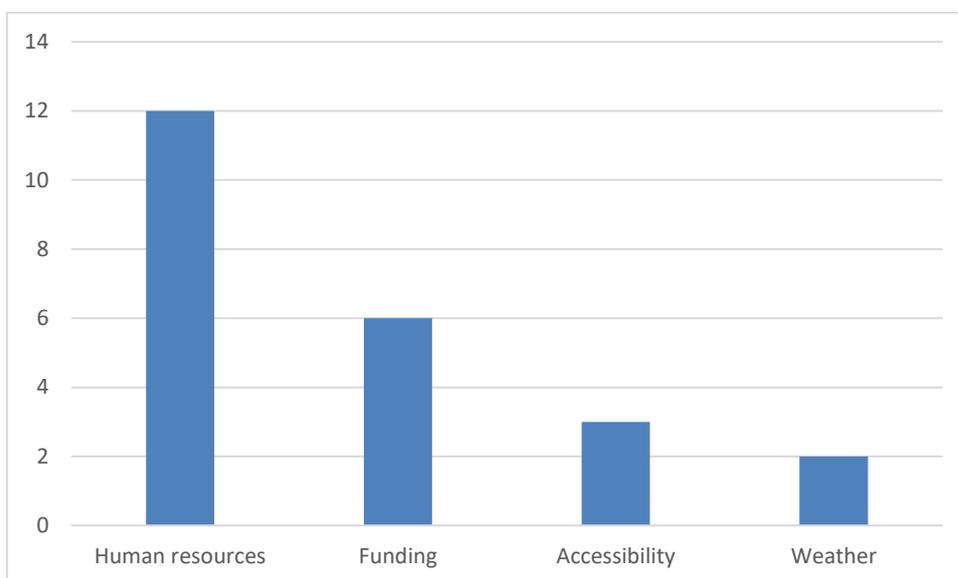


Figure 14 : Occurrence of the difficulties cited by the 23 persons interviewed. The ordinates represent the number of occurrences for each theme on the abscissa.

#### 7.3.1 Human resources

Human resources are cited by nine of the 23 respondents. The difficulties can come from the lack of human resources as well as from the lack of technical skills of the human resources.

##### 7.3.1.1 Volunteers and employees, a balance to establish

Associations rely mostly on the involvement of volunteers to run the farm activities. Three respondents regret the lack of volunteers, whose presence would help further develop their farm. As for farms belonging to social- and healthcare institutions, human resources can come from both volunteers and professionals who work on the farm daily as part of their job. All respondents were adamant that the lack of human resources manifests mainly with the animals, who require a lot of attention and daily care.

##### 7.3.1.2 Lack of technical skills

Two social- and healthcare institutions report the lack of technical skills among the professionals (e.g., educators or healthcare providers). This is not surprising as

these positions are oriented towards education and care, while farm activities require specific technical skills. As pointed out by two interviewees, professionals from the healthcare sector are bound to struggle with farming tasks, which impedes the quality of care provided to the clients.

### **7.3.2 Financial difficulties**

Six interviewees report financial difficulties. Generally, those respondents agree that social farming activities themselves are not sufficient sources of income and must be complemented by other sources of funding (such as production of food on-site, grants, public funding). Farms belonging to social- and healthcare institutions sometimes rely fully on funding coming from the state (received for the daily care of their residents). The budgets are thus limited, and the procedures may be challenging when costly investments are needed.

### **7.3.3 Accessibility**

Depending on the target groups of each farm surveyed, the accessibility to the site for people with reduced mobility was considered limitation.

In addition, the remoteness of some social farms from the closest urban centres was reported as an obstacle by some respondents. An isolated location in rural or mountainous areas makes it more difficult for visitors to come to these farms and limits the interactions of these farms with their environment.

### **7.3.4 Weather**

Farm activities mostly take place outdoors and are dependent on the weather. Two persons surveyed talk about the difficulties they face with the visitors when the weather is not favourable (e.g., rain, heat, or strong wind). Of course, being outside in tough weather conditions may not be enjoyable. When that is the case, visitors are reluctant to come. The visits are then often cancelled and the activities initially planned for the visitors must be completed by volunteers or educators (i.e., feeding animals and cleaning the sheds among others).

## **7.4 Factors of success for social farms**

### **7.4.1 The presence of animals**

The presence of animals on social farms stands out as a factor of success, as six respondents confirm. In particular, the beneficiaries are said to value the close

contact with the animals (being able to touch the animals or having access to the paddocks for example). One person interviewed points out the importance of having animals of different sizes, textures, and colours to fit a diversity of participants.

#### **7.4.2 Creating social ties**

Three respondents say that the creation of social ties around the activities taking place on the farm is a factor of success. For instance, the organisation of events based on the agricultural setting (e.g., fruit harvest, haymaking, or spring celebration) are thought to bring people together and create good memories. In addition, one respondent points out the importance of welcoming and caring for the visitors, by building relationships based on trust with them. Being available, guiding people as they move around on the farm and respecting everyone's individuality is considered a sign of quality regarding the service provided.

### **7.5 Key aspects contributing to the sustainability of a social farm**

The persons interviewed were also asked about the key elements to consider in order to ensure the sustainability of a social farm (figure 15). The respondents had different interpretations of what sustainability means, but their responses converge on the same themes. Respondents mostly refer to the importance of the presence of human resources as a key element of durability.

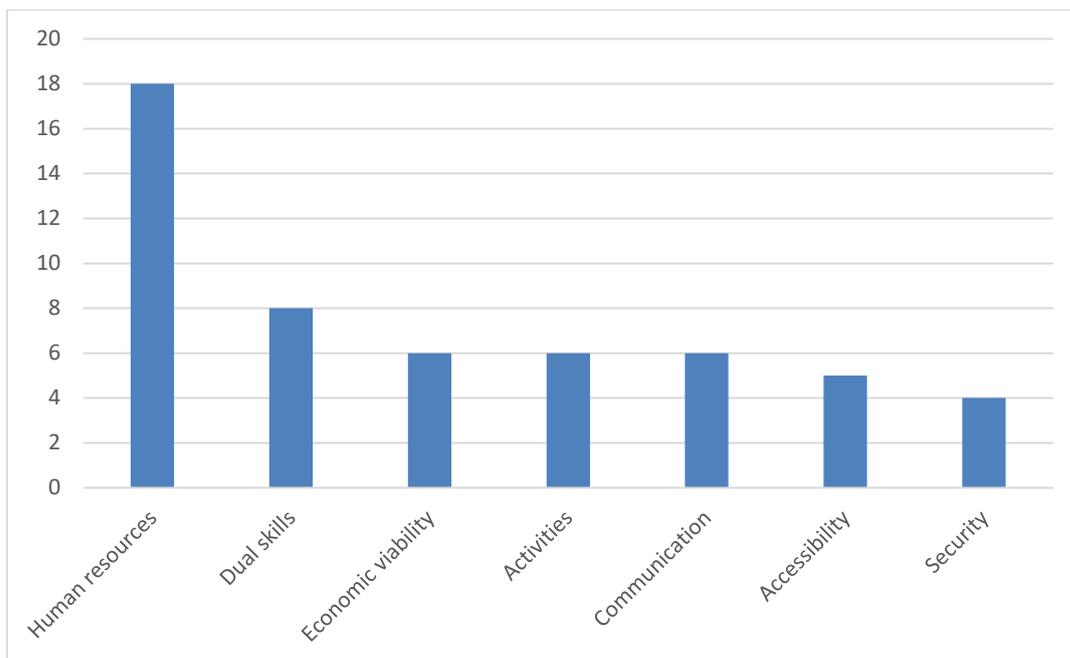


Figure 15 : Occurrence of the different themes cited by the 23 persons interviewed when asked how to make a social farm durable. The ordinates represent the number of occurrences for each theme on the abscissa.

### 7.5.1 Human resources, a corner stone

According to 18 respondents, human resources are essential for the durability of a social farm. Human resources consist of volunteers, employees of the healthcare sector, farmers and the people in other positions related to agricultural or educational activities.

Nine professionals report that the involvement of people in social farms is crucial, at each level in the hierarchy. In particular, the motivation of the professionals assisting the beneficiaries participating in the farming activities is considered indispensable. Indeed, they are the ones who must inspire the beneficiaries to carry out the tasks. In the interviews, another important aspect of human resources came up, namely the coordination of the team, which ensures a consistent organisation. Two respondents refer to the necessity of putting in place efficient organisational tools within the supervising team to maintain good relationships and contribute to the durability of the project.

### 7.5.2 Training the supervising professionals to guarantee dual skills

Social farming is at the crossroads of two sectors: agriculture and health/social care. Hence, this multidisciplinary activity requires both social skills (for the aspects of care and education of the beneficiaries) and technical skills (related to the

agricultural setting). Almost half of the respondents are convinced that dual skills in social farming is key to build a strong project.

Regarding social- and healthcare institutions, the skills of the professionals is usually oriented towards health and care. There is often a lack of skills to master the agricultural activities (i.e., taking care of the animals, or managing a vegetable garden). However, some of the professionals interviewed have experience in agriculture, either from previous jobs, personal interest, or specific training they have followed in order to develop their skills. As reported by the respondents, professionals employed on social farms have often been hired because of their special interest or abilities for outdoor activities and nature.

On the commercial farms, the farmers interviewed were also the ones welcoming the visitors on their farm. One of them was working in education before starting farming, while the other decided to develop skills in education while already running the farm.

Thus, the dual competence of people taking care of the beneficiaries on social farms is crucial and is considered a key factor contributing to the quality of the services provided and the durability of a social farm.

### **7.5.3 Economic viability**

Six informants mention the importance for a social farm to generate income. Associative farms state that regular sources of funding should be found. Farms belonging to important associations or foundations are thought to have better access to funding than the other farms in the study. Furthermore, two interviewees admit that being in contact with people who can promote the farm on the political scene may be an asset when seeking support for the project.

### **7.5.4 Activities proposed to the visitors**

Six respondents estimate that the activities involving farm users influence the sustainability of a social farm. Activities must be adapted to the different types of public they receive, they must be diversified and regularly renewed. Nevertheless, priority is given to the quality of the activities over their diversity. Moreover, not only the activities should be adapted to the targeted beneficiaries, but also the educative media utilised (e.g., equipment or visual communication).

### **7.5.5 Communication**

Communication was addressed by the informants as a key aspect of the durability of a social farm. Among the 20 farms surveyed, some were handling their marketing only by word of mouth, whereas others needed to be more visible in order to reach potential clients and sources of funding. The means of communication most frequently cited were internet websites, social media and the local press.

### **7.5.6 Essentials to initiate the farm project**

Accessibility and security were addressed by the informants as key components in a social farm project. On the one hand, the notion of accessibility concerns the location of the farm: it needs to be accessible for the public. On the other hand, the accessibility on-site is also important to consider. For instance, the presence of wide and flat alleys is a strong point for people with reduced mobility. Secondly, a farm receiving visitors must be secure, as four respondents claim. The activities proposed to the users must be safe and security guidelines should be clearly conveyed.

## **PART 4: Discussion**

The following discussion section is divided into two parts. In the first I sum up key guidelines to consider when carrying out a project of social farm. In the second I discuss how social farming is situated within agroecology.

## **1 Key guidelines promoting the sustainability of social farms**

### **1.1 Building a well-thought-out farm design and layout**

A social farm must promote mental and physical health as well as well-being and comfort (Cooper Marcus and Sachs 2014). According to my respondents, the therapeutic intent of the farm should be visible through its design and also favour social coherence and community, as also pointed out by Elings and Hassink already in 2006 (Elings and Hassink 2006). Therefore, my interviewees emphasized that the design of a social farm should create an environment which is enjoyable and conducive to activity and relaxation in nature.

I found that the farm environment should be suited to all types of targeted groups. Through a universal design, it is possible to create connectedness on-site and to facilitate the involvement of all. Creating diverse outdoor layouts may offer opportunities for people's needs. For instance, relaxation spaces, places for social gathering or solitude, or spaces where participants can experience sensory stimulations were often mentioned during the interviews and also appears in the literature (Elings and Hassink 2006, Freeman 2019).

Another aspect to consider is the accessibility for people with reduced mobility, combined with an overall accessibility throughout the space. Most of the respondents mentioning this aspect insist on the presence of flat and wide alleys and paths on-site. They also suggest raised garden beds and adapted seating as ways to make the farm accessible. These types of arrangements can also be found in literature on the topic as recommendations that facilitate the integration of all groups on social farms (Bergerie Nationale 2009).

Moreover, respondents report that the design of the farm should include signs for information and navigation on-site (Freeman 2019). Using signs that are visible, understandable and simple (in the form of pictograms or pictures for example) helps the visitor's orientation on site, including for people who have difficulty to read (Bergerie Nationale 2009).

Finally, the aesthetics and maintenance of a social farm matter. If the place is welcoming and appealing, it supports its role of healing environment. In doing so, the patients feel assured that the farm is devoted to their well-being and health.

## **1.2 Providing adapted and diversified social farming activities**

The activities provided by social farms to their clients should be adapted and diversified. Much value is given to activities that favour the creation of social ties and the possibility to work in groups.

Firstly, the activities should be within the participants' reach. Likewise, the equipment and educative media utilised should be adapted to whom may take part in the activity. The activities available at a farm influences the way patients are involved and challenged (Hassink and Ketelaars 2003). The beneficiaries should be put at the centre of the activity and be a player in it. This way, the person can feel valued and supported (Bergerie Nationale 2009). This is particularly highlighted by the interviewees who consider that social farming activities contribute to the self-esteem of the participants.

Secondly, the findings of my study show that the activities provided on the farm should be diversified, in order to meet the needs and abilities of a wide range of participants. Activities related to gardening were said to be interesting because a garden is seen as a safe space and provides a peaceful setting. Plants are non-discriminating and non-threatening, which can be particularly healing for some (Elings 2006, Elings and Hassink 2006). Taking care of animals is also very popular and the presence of animals at a social farm is appreciated by clients, as reported by most of the respondents. Moreover, as pointed out during the interviews and as also stated in the literature, the activities should be imagined so that senses can be stimulated and engaged, combining colours, textures, smells, sounds, fragrance, patterns and taste (Elings and Hassink 2008). Indeed, the stimulation of all senses enhances learning processes and contributes to stress-reduction. Overall, by understanding the needs and the abilities of the beneficiaries of therapeutic farms, it is possible to design activities that are meant to achieve specific goals for the participants (Wiesinger, Neuhauser et al. 2006). Moreover, some professionals interviewed think that by experiencing nature fully, the beneficiaries can see the regular patterns of seasons, learn how living beings grow and develop and

appreciate the landscape in its entirety, as also shown by Elings and Hassink (Elings and Hassink 2008).

### **1.3 Ensuring security**

Persons questioned attach importance to security and safety, which are considered fundamental aspects of a social farm. This way, the staff and the beneficiaries can work in a non-threatening environment. It has been shown that a person's health can only be enhanced when that person experiences sufficient safety. Feeling safe is the basis for people to open up to any kind of activity (Hassink and Ketelaars 2003). Consequently, a social farm must be free of any danger (for instance, agricultural tools and equipment should be stored in a closed space) (Bergerie Nationale 2009). In addition, care takers assisting patients on farms were adamant that farm animals should be accustomed to contact with humans, reliable and manageable. This aspect is also pointed out in the literature as a key guideline for social farmers, and as a way to make social farming a safe activity (Hassink 2005).

### **1.4 Considering the solid base of human resources**

#### **1.4.1 Skilled human resources**

As reported in the results above, I found that human resources are the corner stone in a project of a social farm. First, there should be enough staff on the farm to take care of the participants. Secondly, the staff should be trained in both farming and care. The challenge is that the sectors of agriculture and care differ considerably. Professionals in both sectors are usually trained in their specific field of competence (farming or care), and it is difficult to find employees that are skilled in both. However, those dual skills are crucial for the quality of the services provided: they allow the staff to feel responsible, confident and in control. When both the agricultural aspect and the healthcare aspect are managed, appropriate conditions can be created for taking up cooperation on the farm (Hassink, Grin et al. 2013).

Moreover, some of my respondents recognise that skilled staff is intrinsically linked to the notion of safety discussed above. When professionals of the health care sector have knowledge about farming, they are more at ease with supporting and guiding the participants on the farm (Elings and Hassink 2006). For instance, if they

have experience with animals, they are able to facilitate the interaction between participants and animals in a better way, while ensuring security. Social workers who do not really have these competences should follow training in agriculture, as suggested by several interviewees.

#### **1.4.2 Welcoming and guidance on site**

My respondents argued that it is primordial to have someone in charge of welcoming the visitors and of guiding them on-site. Professionals interviewed also insist on their need for support in carrying out the activities on the farm with their patients. Indeed, professionals from the health care sector who are not used to a farming environment may be challenged by the agricultural component of a social farm. Furthermore, as mentioned by Hassink and Ketelaars, the presence of a guide or someone who knows the place and feels confident is a key element in making the visitors feel secure (Hassink and Ketelaars 2003). This way, people know they are taken care of and receive all the information they need to make the most of their visits (Bergerie Nationale 2009).

#### **1.4.3 Coordination and communication of the staff**

Coordination of the staff is the result of a thorough organisation including all the stakeholders involved. According to the respondents in my study, good coordination makes everyone's responsibilities and roles clear and is a way to make sure that every task is achieved on the farm. Respondents also working on farms were adamant that communication is very important in order to work together. Thus, attention must also be paid to assuring good communication within the staff, which is crucial to maintain friendly relationships and avoid any misunderstandings or unnecessary tensions. Communication strategies should be established, and regular evaluation of these practices should be conducted. Ideally, there should be someone responsible for ensuring good communication on the farm.

### **1.5 Promoting the farm via means of communication**

By marketing the farm, some respondents to my study say that it is possible to reach potential clients and to attract more visitors. Depending on the surroundings of the farm, several communication media may be used, e.g., press, internet websites, or social media. Furthermore, as also stated during the interviews, good publicity may attract potential sources of funding. The Vivaldi farm is a good example of how

useful communication may be. Through a marketing campaign, the farm was able to attract sponsors and the foundation has raised funds to start implementing the new farm model.

What is more, communication about a social farm project is an opportunity to introduce social farming practices to a larger audience and to society in general (Ogier 2016).

## **2 Social farming and agroecology**

### **2.1 Definition of agroecology**

Agroecology integrates various disciplines including agronomy, ecology, economics, and sociology. It aims to promote viable agri-food systems that respect both humans and the environment. To do so, agroecological systems aspire to value the ecological, economic, and social aspects of the territory through the integration of various stakeholders.

Moreover, agroecology assigns value to the services provided by natural processes. It aims to create relationships within agricultural systems between the living beings (plants, animals) and the social context on the territory. From this perspective, agroecology is linked to the multifunctionality of agriculture and fosters a sustainable agriculture providing various services (Hazard, Monteil et al. 2016).

### **2.2 The multifunctionality of agriculture: a crossroads between agricultural and social functions**

The term multifunctionality in agriculture refers to the multiple functions rendered by agricultural activities that satisfy various societal requests (Durand and Van Huylenbroeck 2003). Multifunctional agriculture has been increasingly explored over the past two decades, for the environmental, social and economic benefits it provides (Durand and Van Huylenbroeck 2003).

Multifunctionality is a way to combine food production with social functions such as providing a space for recreation, protection of the environment, or care for disabled people (Van Elsen, Günther et al. 2006). Thus, social farming offers potential for multifunctional farming (Hassink, Hulsink et al. 2012). As my study shows and aligned with what the literature says, the combination of functions of agriculture and social care generates positive emerging properties like the diversification of

agricultural production and sources of income for farmers, employment in rural areas, improved health, education or therapy, and integration of agriculture and society (Elings and Hassink 2006).

Moreover, multifunctional agriculture may contribute to rural development. Indeed, it may generate income and employment, and contribute to the transition towards a new agricultural system that meets the needs and expectations of society (Hassink, Hulsink et al. 2012).

### **2.3 Social farming, a practice contributing to rural development**

Social farming is a way to integrate the social dimension into a sustainable agricultural approach (Assouline, Granjon et al. 2012). Social farming considers both the social and territorial context. It impacts a range of target groups and generates activities that contribute to local and regional development (Tulla, Vera et al. 2014).

#### **2.3.1 Benefits for a variety of target groups**

As largely reported in the interviews, social farming can be a tool to foster social inclusion, rehabilitation, therapy, and education for different client groups. The environment of a farm offers the possibility to participate in many activities involving animals and plants, while interacting with people in a natural space. These conditions are associated with many benefits for the participants (Hassink and Van Dijk 2006, Tulla, Vera et al. 2014).

All respondents agree that social farms are places where people with special needs can benefit from good living conditions, and where their individual capabilities are valued and strengthened. In that way, social farms enhance their integration into society (Profarm 2017) and has the potential to meet the local needs for that kind of services (Assouline, Granjon et al. 2012). This is especially valuable in rural areas, where healthcare services are often limited (O'Connor, Lai et al. 2010).

Through the case study of the Vivaldi farm, it seems that not only the participants benefit from the farm environment but also the people who are employed on the farm and/or who assist the participants in activities on-site. A lot of them affirm that the working environment is very enjoyable, which may also positively impact their personal well-being.

### **2.3.2 Farm economics and farmers' socio-personal satisfaction**

Social farming is a way for farmers to diversify their activities and thus generate new sources of income and employment in rural areas. Diversifying sources of income via social farming may increase and even improve condition the viability of a farm when agricultural production itself is not sufficient to sustain the farm (Hassink and Van Dijk 2006, University College Dublin 2014). This may help preserve local heritage and nature by limiting land abandonment (O'Connor, Lai et al. 2010). Moreover, in France, social farming activities on commercial farms are often initiated by women, which values the role of women farmers (Assouline, Granjon et al. 2012). One farmer interviewed brings up the fact that beyond the economic aspect, other motivations drive farmers to offer social farming activities on their farm. She mentions her personal interest to contribute to the well-being of people in need by allowing them to enjoy and be involved on natural environment. The literature is in accordance with this idea, stating that social motivations for farmers to start social farming activities on their farm are: (1) a desire to contribute to the well-being of other people, (2) personal interest and (3) self-realization (Oostindie, Van der Ploeg et al. 2002). Thus, the relationships that emerge from the interactions between a farmer and visitors are likely to generate mutual benefits. As service users benefit from social farms, they may deliver positive environmental impacts and satisfaction of the farmer in return (Leck, Evans et al. 2014).

### **2.3.3 Strengthening urban-rural connections**

Social farming links agriculture to society at a larger scale. Oftentimes, the beneficiaries of such activities (i.e., psycho-socially challenged children, drug addicts, disabled people) come from urban centres and are given the opportunity to experience the quality of life on farms in rural areas for care or rehabilitation (Hassink and Van Dijk 2006). This is especially interesting as farmers tend to become more and more isolated from the society (Leck, Evans et al. 2014, University College Dublin 2014). Thus, by involving service users, care providers, farmers, livestock, plants, and the agricultural landscape, social farming facilitates the connections between people and space. Leck et al. state that social farming “helps farmers to connect with people and people to connect with agriculture” (Leck, Evans et al. 2014, p.323).

#### **2.3.4 Landscape preservation**

Social farms often use environmentally sound farming methods, so they are less likely to harm the surrounding landscape and biodiversity (O'Connor, Lai et al. 2010). Usually, the farming practices are not as intensive as on regular farms. However, social farms may not always use ecological farming methods. Indeed, social farms are sometimes initiated by professionals from the healthcare sector who do not necessarily have sufficient knowledge about agriculture in general or about ecological farming methods. On the Vivaldi farm for example, the orchard and the vineyard are cultivated according to the principles of conventional agriculture. The pesticides used on the farm could harm the environment and the people. This inconsistency comes from the fact that the Vivaldi farm was set up by people from the healthcare sector, who lacked knowledge and education in farming. The management of the farm was established using regular farming methods, which may not be adapted to such a farm. Thus, the level of environmental coherence on social farms may vary according to the motivations of the project promoters and their available knowledge of agriculture.

As for commercial farms, the opportunities for extra income through social farming activities are often a solution that replaces the intensification of agricultural production as a way to gain efficiency (Assouline, Granjon et al. 2012). Also, for many social farms, food production is not the main priority (O'Connor, Lai et al. 2010).

Moreover, social farms can contribute to landscape development (Hassink and Van Dijk 2006, Profarm 2017). It has been shown that social farmers are often more sensitive to nature conservation and sustainable agricultural practices (Hassink and Van Dijk 2006). Oftentimes, social farms develop activities around landscape development and nature conservation (O'Connor, Lai et al. 2010), which can be interesting ways to diversify the activities for the clients.

#### **2.3.5 Building sustainable communities**

Care farms are a potential basis for the development of supportive communities by (1) providing a therapeutic environment for human health and (2) bringing people together and engaging them in what is considered to be worthwhile activities (Sempik, Aldridge et al. 2003, Milligan, Gatrell et al. 2004). Sustainable communities are characterized by strong economic, ecological, cultural and social capital, and

the communities emerging from social farming activities have been shown to fulfil these aspects (Leck, Evans et al. 2014).

Furthermore, social farms foster the development of local networks of clients, partners, and consumers. For example, the vegetables and fruits from the Vivaldi farm are sold to people living nearby and to the families of the patients. The produce from the farm seems to be valued by these consumers and the sales are attracting regular clients. At other farms I conducted interviews, I found that the produce of the farm was either consumed on-site or sold to local clients, sometimes involving the residents. Thus, the provision of local produce may have a great impact on local development and may support local agriculture, while also allowing direct contact with consumers (Tulla, Vera et al. 2014). In addition, consumers are increasingly focusing on ethics, ecology, quality, health and proximity when it comes to purchasing food (Tulla, Vera et al. 2014). Social farms produce have the potential to attract consumers, thus contributing to local connections and to the cohesiveness of society, which is a basis for local development.

#### **2.3.6 Employment opportunities**

Social farms are enterprises that offer employment opportunities for people in rural areas (O'Connor, Lai et al. 2010, University College Dublin 2014). On the one hand, these employment opportunities apply to people involved in taking care of clients (healthcare professionals, farmers and especially women farmers). On the other hand, employment opportunities may also concern the initial beneficiaries of social farming activities, who are able to work (for instance former inmates, young people who failed in school or disabled adults), who will either be employed on the social farm or receive training to later enter the workforce in farming (Assouline, Granjon et al. 2012, Tulla, Vera et al. 2014). Employment on farms helps to stabilize the population in rural areas and provides more attractive levels of services in those spaces (Tulla, Vera et al. 2014). On the Vivaldi farm, for instance, most of the employees and educators live in rural areas relatively close to the farm, which makes the farm a source of employment outside of urban centres.

## Conclusion

Social farming initiatives seek to promote empowerment of different target groups through agricultural activities. The objectives include areas such as therapy, education, occupation, or social integration for the participants.

The results of this research indicate that social farms are places that can potentially offer many benefits (i.e., social, physical, psychological) for the participants. Using the Vivaldi social farm as a case study, this research allowed to identify key guidelines intended for social farms taking care of disabled adults. These guidelines are focused on key elements that contribute to the sustainability of social farms. It was highlighted that such farms should provide adapted activities in a safe and accessible environment. Moreover, the implication, motivation and skills of the staff are crucial, as well as the consistent organisation of the professionals and the communication within the staff.

Social farms bridge the gap between the agricultural and healthcare sectors. Social farming is characterized by high levels of social, economic, environmental, and cultural capital. It focuses on the well-being of people and the environment rather than on high farming intensity and productivity. Social farms are embedded in the multifunctionality of agriculture and have the potential to galvanize rural areas, towards sustainable rural development. Such multifunctionality might place social farming as part of agroecology.

The data provided by my thesis may serve people who would like to set up such a farm or to improve an existing farm model (including commercial farms wishing to develop social farming activities). The results may also be useful for professionals of the healthcare sector who are interested in investigating social farming services for their patients.

Further research should focus on delivering thorough results to showcase the many positive effects of social farming activities on participants. Furthermore, the exchange of this research knowledge, along with professional and practical knowledge, at the national level and beyond is essential to legitimate social farming interventions.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 : Presentation of the Foundation Marie-Louise

#### 1) The origins of the foundation

The foundation was created in 1984, nearby the city of Toulouse in France, by a group of parents of disabled children. Concerned about the future of their children, they started an association with the aim to create innovative ways to take care of disabled adults and contribute to more openness in society towards various disabilities. The association, and later the foundation, bears the first name of Mrs Marie-Louise Sicard, the grandmother of a disabled child, who gave a plot of land to the association (Fondation Marie-Louise 2020).

This site made the construction of the first institution of the association possible. A specialised care home (in French Maison d'Accueil Spécialisée, MAS), was opened in 1989. Thanks to the motivation of the parents and the involvement of volunteers, many events were organised to promote the activities of the association. The first sponsors were reached, which helped develop further projects.

During the following years, several other social- and healthcare institutions were founded. The association was growing fast and gradually found itself having to bear heavy administrative responsibilities. To face up to these new challenges, the association shifted to the legal status of foundation. The Foundation Marie-Louise was recognised as promoting the public interest in 2017 (Fondation Marie-Louise 2017). The transition from the status of association to the status of foundation recognised as promoting the public interest has permitted it to clearly dissociate the managerial activities from the actions of solidarity (Fondation Marie-Louise 2017).

#### 2) The social- and healthcare institutions of the Foundation Marie-Louise

Today, the Foundation Marie-Louise manages seven institutions located in the northern conurbation of Toulouse, of which six are social and healthcare institutions and one is a therapeutic farm. Three of the institutions are drop-in centres who take care of mentally disabled adults. Three are specialised care homes (in French Maison d'Accueil Spécialisée, MAS) which host heavily disabled people and mentally disabled people. Two are medical care homes (in French Foyer d'Accueil Médicalisé, FAM) which welcome people affected by slighter mental deficiencies.

Finally, one is a home which hosts elderly suffering from neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's disease. The French acronym EHPAD (Etablissement d'Hébergement pour Personnes Agées Dépendantes) refers to this type of social- and healthcare institution.

In total, the seven homes of the foundation welcome 275 residents and employ 300 full-time equivalents. The private foundation is an important stakeholder of the medico-social sector around the city of Toulouse.

## **Appendix 2:** The handicap: typology, political orientations, social and medical healthcare sector in France

### 1) Definition of the handicap and different types of disabilities

#### 1.1) Definition

This is considered a handicap: Any limitation in the activity or participation in the life of the society encountered by a person in its environment, due to the alteration of one or several physical, sensory, mental or psychic functions (Ministère des solidarités et de la santé 2005).

In this definition, the handicap is referred to as the combination of two factors : on the one hand, the inherent deficiency of an individual, on the other hand the opportunities of interaction between the individual and its environment (accessibility, expression, understanding) (Comité national coordination action handicap 2020). According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), four types of handicap can be distinguished (OMS 2001).

#### 1.2) Mental disability

Mental disability (or intellectual disability) corresponds to an interruption of the intellectual development or an incomplete intellectual development which implies significantly reduced abilities and overall level of intelligence. Mental disability thus affects cognitive functions, speaking, motor functions and social functioning (OMS 2001). In France, 700 000 people suffer from mental disability. This type of disability represents 20% of the total number of handicapped people in the country (Unapei 2005).

### 1.3) Sensory disability

#### Hearing disability

Hearing disability alters the sense of hearing partially or completely. This impairment can be from birth or occur later in life. In France, 0,3% of the population is affected by a total deafness and more than 7 million people suffer from hearing deficiency (DREES 2019).

#### Visual disability

Blind people or partially sighted persons are affected by visual disability. In France, 1,7 million people bear this handicap (DREES 2019).

### 1.4) Physical disability

Physical disability is characterised by a limited ability to move and to perform manual tasks.

The amount of people affected by this handicap is hard to determine as a physical disability has a wide range of causes (limitations due to ageing, obesity, pregnancy, degenerative illness, among others) and is expressed in multiple ways.

### 1.5) Mental disorders

Mental disorders result from psychological illnesses. They are generally characterised by a combination of abnormal thoughts, perceptions, emotions, behaviour, and relationships with others. Mental disorders include depression, dementia, bipolar disorder, psychoses, and developmental disorders like autism (WHO 2019).

## 2) Political framework of the handicap

### 2.1) A global strategy of the European Union linked to fundamental rights

The European strategy 2013-2020 for disabled people aims to promote the rights of disabled people and to ensure their full participation in the society and the economy (European Commission 2010). This strategy is linked to the Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union (EU), which states that the EU recognises and respects the right of disabled people to benefit from measures aiming to ensure their autonomy, their social and professional integration and their participation to the

community life (EU 2000). The EU supports member states in the implementation of the European strategy.

## 2.2) Disability policy in France

In France, the disability policy is stated by the law of the 11th of February 2005, for the equality in rights and chances, participation, and citizenship of disabled people. This law guarantees disabled people the freedom to choose for their own life, and also aims to encourage their participation in social life (ANAP 2013).

To that end, the law is centred around two strategies. The first is accessibility in terms of health, education, employment, quality of life and activities. The second aims to compensate the disability by alleviating the functional incapacities of the concerned individuals (Ministère des solidarités et de la santé 2015).

## 2.3) Regional institutions, representative of the national policy

The social- and healthcare institutions are financed by the Caisse nationale de solidarité pour l'autonomie (CNSA). The funds are allocated on the entire French territory. The regional health agencies (ARS) make the connection between the CNSA and the social- and healthcare institutions for the distribution of these budgets (Agence régionale de santé 2017).

Regional health agencies (ARS) adapt the national policy to the regional particularities. Each region has a regional health scheme, including specific measures for disabled people.

## 2.4) The role of department councils

### Responsibilities of department councils

French departments implement social policies and coordinate resulting actions (Ministère des solidarités et de la santé 2004). Department councils set up various measures in favour of disabled people (social aid, assistance, transportation, services...). In collaboration with regional health agencies, they manage the funding, follow-up and inspection of all the social- and healthcare institutions of the department (Conseil départemental Haute Garonne 2020).

### The scheme in favour of disabled people in Haute-Garonne

This research took place in the area belonging to the department of Haute-Garonne, within the region Occitanie. The scheme in favour of disabled people under the department, written for the period 2019 to 2023, is based on two axis. The first focuses on the social inclusion of disabled people whereas the second deals with the development of services adapted to their needs (Conseil départemental de la Haute-Garonne 2019). The department has a budget of 182 million euros to meet the needs of the 100 000 inhabitants of Haute-Garonne supported in their disability.

#### *An increasing demand for social and health care services from the department*

The amount of people recognised as suffering from disability in Haute-Garonne is increasing (Conseil départemental de la Haute-Garonne 2019). The social and health care services do not offer sufficient assistance to meet the needs of the population. For instance, there are often waiting lists to get a place in a social- and healthcare institution. In 2017, 214 disabled people under the department were waiting to get a place in a specialised care home (Conseil départemental de la Haute-Garonne 2019).

#### 2.5) The heterogeneity of the French social and healthcare sector

The social and health care sector is managed by the state. Its actions aim to promote the autonomy and protection of disabled people (Ministère des solidarités et de la santé 2002). The social and health care sector is complex and heterogenous. In France, it is represented by more than 30 000 institutions offering around 2,4 million places. It involves multiple managing bodies, many types of establishments and services, as well as funding from various sources (public or private) (ANAP 2013).

#### 2.6) Social and healthcare institutions taking care of disabled adults

##### *Specialised care homes (Maisons d'Accueil Spécialisées, MAS)*

Specialised care homes host adults with very limited autonomy and/or suffering from multiple and heavy handicaps (mental, physical, sensory). These persons need constant assistance for the essential actions of daily life (ANAP 2013).

The MAS provide medical and paramedical care. The residents are often boarders who sleep and eat at the establishment. Activities take place during the day in order to maintain and develop their intellectual and physical abilities. These activities are also an opportunity for them to socialise within and outside the establishment.

The MAS are funded by the health insurance, whose funds are allocated by the regional health agency. In France, around 650 MAS host over 26 000 residents (ANAP 2013).

#### Medical care homes (Foyer d'Accueil Médicalisé, FAM)

Medical care homes welcome residents who are more autonomous than the residents in MAS. These adults suffer from intellectual deficiency or physical disability. They need assistance for most of the actions of daily life.

FAMs support their residents in performing and learning essential actions to care for themselves. FAMs also provide medical and paramedical care. They propose many activities (social, intellectual, physical, cultural) and are in charge of educative support of their residents (ANAP 2013). Thus, FAMs are devoted to care and education.

Medical care homes are co-funded by the health insurance and by the department council. In France, 834 FAM host 25 000 persons in total.

#### 2.7) Social- and healthcare institutions taking care of the elderly

The French acronym EHPAD (Etablissement d'Hébergement pour Personnes Agées Dépendantes) refers to establishments hosting elderly people who are not able to take care of themselves, and who need medical and paramedical care. Some of these institutions care for people suffering from Alzheimer's disease. In France in 2019, 7 519 EHPAD offer around 600 000 places (Caisse nationale de solidarité pour l'autonomie 2020).

Thus, the issue of the handicap is complex and entails many issues. The disability policy is oriented towards a holistic and personalised care of disabled people. Moreover, alternative forms of care are developing and attracts a growing interest from the social and health care sector. Social farming is gaining importance in Europe. It comprises a large spectrum of activities and manifests in various forms.

**Appendix 3 : Semi-structured interview guide directed towards Vivaldi farm users**

**Semi-structured interview guide – Farm users**

The current users of the Ferme Vivaldi are social- and healthcare institutions of Toulouse and its surroundings, belonging or not to the Foundation Marie-Louise. The diversity in age and disability of the visitors makes the farm and dynamic environment where different people evolve.

Using the case study of the Ferme Vivaldi, the staff accompanying residents on the farm have been questioned through semi-structured interviews. These are aimed at understanding the needs and expectations of therapeutic farm clients when visiting a farm to either take part in farm activities or just enjoy the natural environment. Moreover, the interviews aim at collecting the therapeutic benefits on the patients provided by the farm environment and activities.

The respondents are professionals from the health care sector visiting their patients. This data is being collected as part of a masters thesis on the sustainability of social farms and therapeutic benefits of these. The interviews were mainly conducted face to face, but some of them were conducted on the phone due to COVID limitations. The duration of the interview ranges from 45 minutes to 1 hour and 30 minutes. The interview is not recorded.

- I- Introduction: presentation of the interlocutor and of the social- and healthcare institution

QUESTIONS	OBJECTIVES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is your position and associated responsibilities?</li> <li>- What kind of institution do you work for? (institution type, profile of clients/patients/residents, roles).</li> </ul>	<p>Understand the interviewee position and her/his role(s) in the hiring institution.</p> <p>Identify the institution type and the associated patients.</p>

- II- Farm utilisation

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is your project with the farm ?</li> <li>- What kind of patients do you accompany to the farm?</li> <li>- How often do you visit the farm and at which time of the day ?</li> <li>- What farm activities do you take part in when on the farm ?</li> </ul>	<p>Understand the reasons for coming to the farm</p> <p>Grasp the abilities and limitations of the participants</p> <p>Understand which activities are suited to different kinds of disabilities</p>
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- III- Benefits for the beneficiaries

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What do your patients like? What do they dislike? Why?</li> </ul>	<p>Estimate the attractiveness of the farm support for the visitors. Understand</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How to make your patients interested and stimulated on the farm?</li> <li>- Do you notice any benefits for your patients from being on the farm? If yes, which ones?</li> </ul>	<p>why some elements are appreciated or not, according to the visitors.</p> <p>Identify key elements that could enhance therapeutic benefits</p> <p>Collect data on the potential benefits that offers the farm environment and activities</p>
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IV- Services provided on the farm

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is adapted to your patients or not (in terms of infrastructure, welcome and accompanying on the farm, communication, equipment provided on site, activities) ?</li> <li>- What are the needs that the farm should meet in order to be adapted to your patients?</li> <li>- What expectations should the farm meet?</li> <li>- Is there anything that is missing on the farm and that you think would be interesting to have?</li> <li>- What are the assets of the farm?</li> <li>- What are the downsides of the farm?</li> <li>- Would your institution agree to pay for the visits at the farm?</li> </ul>	<p>Assess the level of adaptation of the farm to the different types of visitors</p> <p>Highlight the specific needs that need to be met for certain types of clients</p> <p>Collect the expectations of the clients regarding therapeutic farms (services provided, quality of the infrastructure)</p> <p>Identify factors of success of such farms</p> <p>Identify hindering factors</p> <p>Assess if the visitors would consider paying for taking part in the activities on site</p>
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**Appendix 4 : Semi-structured interview guide directed towards other therapeutic farms.**

**Semi-structured interview guide – Other social farms**

In France, social farming takes place in various types of farms: production farms/commercial farm, associative farms or farms included in a healthcare institution. This diversity of organisations makes social farming activities available to a wide range of beneficiaries.

This interview is meant for other organisations in France and Belgium that offer services related to social farming. The interviewees are professionals working on the farm (either head of the organisation or employed worker) and interacts with the beneficiaries of the farm.

Through this interview, the objective is to understand the diversity in types and functioning of social farms. Then, the aim is to collect data on the supporting and hindering factors for social farms. The ultimate goal is to highlight the key elements that ensure the sustainability of such a farm.

This data is collected as part of a masters thesis on the sustainability of social farms. This interview is conducted on the phone when the farm is remote, whether farm closer to Toulouse have been visited for the interview. The duration of the interview varies between 45 minutes and 1 hour 30 minutes. The interview is not recorded.

I- Introduction

QUESTIONS	OBJECTIVES
- Could you please introduce yourself (identity, position, associated responsibilities, professional background...)	Get to know the interviewee

II- Description of the organisation and its functioning (check this word)

- What kind of organisation is your farm (association, commercial farm, healthcare institution)?	Get to know the organisation
- Can you briefly describe the history of the farm?	Understand how the project was set up
- What kind of target group(s) does the farm aims to reach?	Understand the type(s) of visitors
- About the workforce: who does the farm rely on? Who works on the farm? How do the workers coordinate? How is the work organised?	Understand what professionals are involved on the farm (job positions and roles) and how they work together

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What activities take place on the farm? Which ones are meant for the farm clients? To what extent are these activities adapted to the clients' needs?</li>   <li>- Is the farm adapted for persons with reduced mobility? If yes, what makes it possible?</li>   <li>- How is the farm funded?</li>   <li>- What are the main partners of your farm (e.g., funding bodies, clients, advisors)? To what extent do they contribute to the farm?</li>   <li>- Is the farm geographically accessible for clients?</li>   <li>- What means of communication do you use to promote the farm ?</li> </ul>	<p>Discover the activities of the farm, be they related to social farming or not. Link the activities to the type of clients.</p> <p>Know if and how the farm layout is adapted to people with reduced mobility</p> <p>Get to know how the farm is funded, which sources are used and how the farm can generate income</p> <p>Understand the interactions between the farm and its environment</p> <p>Establish the links between geographical location and accessibility for clients</p> <p>Know more about the ways in which social farms reach potential clients</p>
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