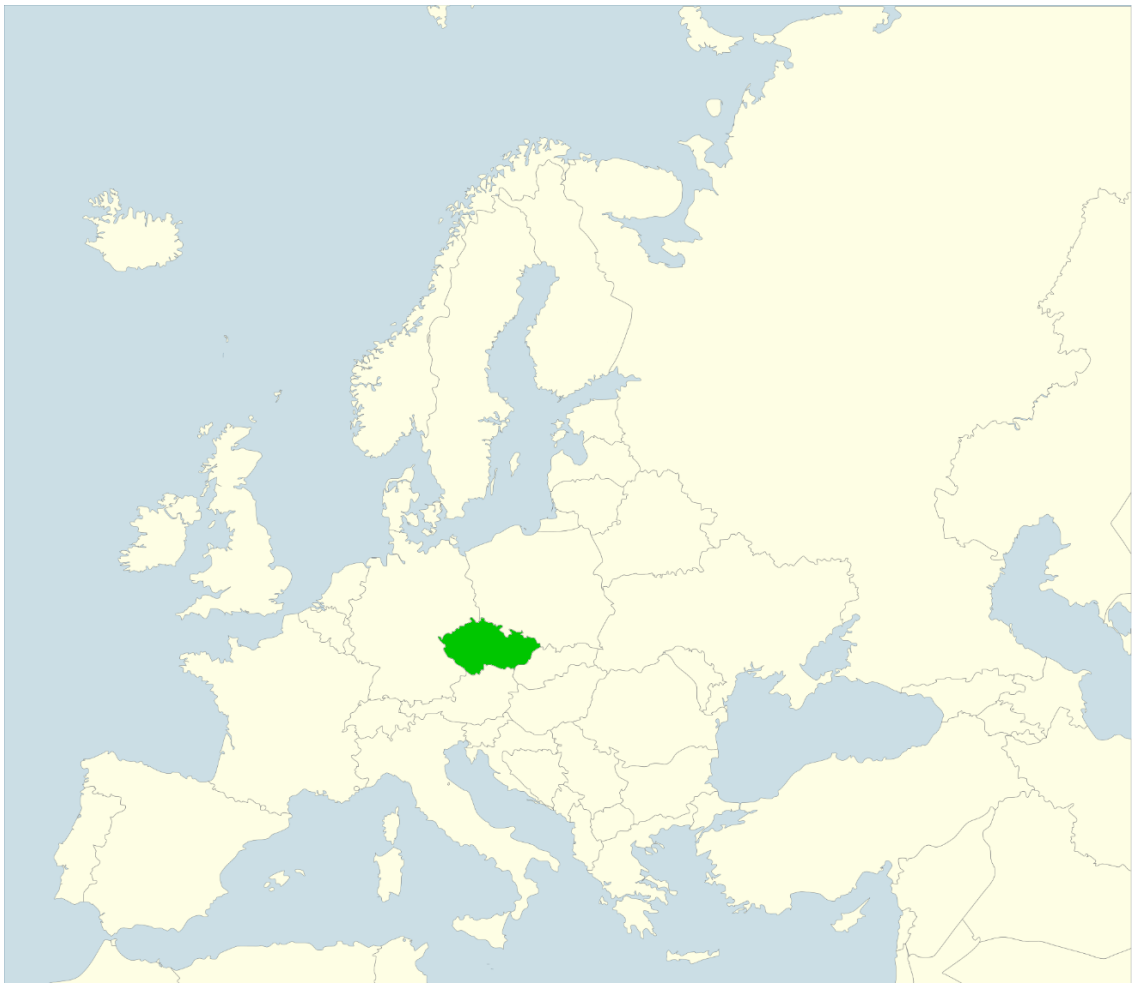
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SOME ASPECTS OF SOCIAL FARMING IN CZECHIA

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Abstract: Social farming (SF) has been developing dynamically in the Czech Republic in the last 10 years and enterprises are emerging and operating where the necessary conditions and environment are created for various people from target groups. The practice in the Czech Republic is to a large extent based on international practice and follows the basic outlines of the practice of mainly European countries. In these facilities, these persons often find employment or engage in various occupational therapy programmes in the provision of social services. Thus, in this analysis, we qualitatively focus on the identification of the basic factors why these farms come into existence and what are the main determining aspects for their functioning, which are based on the long-term experience of running a farm under the social farming concept. A guided qualitative interview method was chosen with respondents who have been operating in the country for a long time in the framework of the analysis, thus bringing in stimulating experiences that accompany them in their activities. The analysis is thus essentially a first experience in this field and raises a number of further questions that could be further deepened and refined, including in an international context.

Keywords: social farming, target groups, adaptation of spaces, conflict resolution, key competencies, social aspects, social environment, specific tools

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Souhrn: Sociální zemědělství (SF) se v ČR v posledních 10 letech dynamicky rozvíjí a vnikají a fungují provozy, kde jsou vytvářeny potřebné podmínky a prostředí pro různé osoby z cílových skupin. Praxe v ČR do značné míry vychází z mezinárodní praxe a v základních obrysech kopíruje praxi především zemí z Evropy. V těchto provozech tak tyto osoby často nacházejí pracovní uplatnění nebo se zapojují do různých programů pracovní terapie v poskytování sociální služby. V této analýze se tak kvalitativní formou zaměřujeme identifikaci základních faktorů, proč tyto farmy vnikají a jaké jsou hlavní určující aspekty pro jejich fungování, které vycházejí z dlouhodobé zkušenosti s provozováním farmy pod sociálně zemědělským konceptem. Byla zvolena metoda řízené kvalitativního rozhoru s respondenty, kteří dlouhodobě fungují v ČR v rámci analýzy tak přinesly podnětné zkušenosti, které je doprovází v jejich činnosti. Analýza tak v zásadě první zkušenosti z této oblasti a vyvolávají celou řadu dalších otázek, které by bylo vhodné dále prohlubovat a upřesňovat a to i mezinárodním kontextu.

Klíčová slova: cílová skupina, klíčové kompetence, sociální aspekty, sociální prostředí, specifické nástroje, řešení konfliktů, úprava prostor

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Highlights:

- How social agriculture works in Czechia
- Selected aspects of the functioning of social farms in the form of qualitative research
- Mapping the experience of farm operators in employing persons with disabilities
- The research focuses on various aspects of the functioning of the social farming

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1. Introduction

The concept of social farming in the Czech Republic has been developing dynamically over the last ten years, with a systemic approach, a number of professional publications and publications for the general public, and examples of good practice published by organisations that partially or fully implement the concept of social farming in their operations and thus provide support to various persons from target groups.

In establishing the basic starting points for defining social farming in the context of the Czech Republic, the basic concept of Green Care was used, which at its broadest level is a term used to describe psychological, educational, social or physical interventions involving plants and/or animals (Haubenhofer, 2010). Green care is an umbrella term for activities that involve health promotion or care in the natural environment (Elings, 2011). Green care is based on the idea that nature, looking at it, being in contact with it or simply being in nature brings people comfort, has positive effects on their well-being, and has positive effects on their spiritual, mental and physical life. Green care seeks to incorporate these positive effects into existing or emerging social (health) services (Sempik, 2010). Last but not least, Green care includes therapeutic and rehabilitation services, as well as health promotion and social health care, with a wide range of social groups, but with a focus on the most vulnerable groups (Dessein, 2013).

Within green care, the term care farming (CF) is also defined separately, which is also the closest in its concept to the Czech definition of social farming. Care farming (also called social farming) is formally defined as the use of commercial and non-commercial farms and agricultural landscapes as a base for promoting mental and physical health through normal farming activities (Hassink, 2003). The concept of social farming uses all or part of a farm to provide health, social or educational services, job skills and support to different groups of people through the provision of a controlled, structured programme of farming-related activities (Di Iacovo, 2009). The defining feature of CF is the involvement of persons from the target group in agricultural or forestry activities for therapeutic purposes. It is also important to highlight the agricultural component of the intervention as this helps to distinguish care farms from horticultural or animal therapy projects. Nursing farms can function as a social enterprise where income generated by agricultural production is used to fund CF (Elings et al., 2011). Farm choices within the multifunctional paradigm are varied, with the common denominator being the willingness of farmers to accept multiple responsibilities, rethink their prevailing orientation towards primary production and profit maximization, form new cross-sectoral and social alliances, and adopt more socially responsible production and marketing patterns (Dessein et al., 2013; Van Huylenbroeck, 2003; Knickel, 2000; Van der Ploeg, 2000; Renting et al., 2009). Such enterprises provide an important service to local communities by recruiting people on farms (Hine et al., 2008b; Leck et al., 2014), so in this way they can meet the needs of health care facilities that want to find new practices involving disadvantaged people that are more embedded in local social contexts (Hine, 2008; Hine et al., 2008a; Sempik et al., 2010)

A distinguishing feature of CF is that social health services are provided in a traditional farm setting; users receive integrated care and perform activities specific to farm work, land management and property maintenance (Leck, 2014). In the case of the Czech Republic, the Ministry of Agriculture defines the mission of social farming as activities aimed at producing marketable agricultural commodities, offering and creating services, new jobs, educational activities and carrying out various types of therapies for a wide range of people with specific needs, using locally available agricultural resources (Chovanec, 2015).

2. Social farming – conceptual definition

European agriculture has undergone significant changes in the last century. To achieve economies of scale and to maintain economic profitability, farmers have increased farm size, efficiency and external inputs while minimising labour input per hectare. Environmental problems, landscape homogenization, the emergence of contagious animal diseases and reduced animal welfare have led to a poor image of the agricultural sector (Meerburg et al, 2009)

Increasing pressure on the agricultural sector and changing societal demands have changed the focus of an increasing number of farmers in Western Europe, leading to a growing interest in multifunctional agriculture (Vereijken, 2002; Wiskerke, 2003) involving the integration of new activities around the core of agricultural production (Meerburg et al, 2009)

Care farming, green care or social farming is a rapidly developing sector across Europe (Hassink & Van Dijk, 2006; Di Iacovo, O'Connor, 2009). It is an innovation at the interface between agriculture and health care, where the agricultural sector is actively involved in providing care to different client groups. Clients, or

participants in the dictionary of caring farmers, are involved in agricultural production and/or activities related to agricultural production. Care farms offer adult day care services, supported employment and/or residential placements to clients with a variety of disabilities (Elings, Hassink, 2008), including people with mental disorders, people with dementia, troubled youth and people with intellectual disabilities. The size of care farms in terms of number of clients, number of animals, arable land and other measures varies considerably between care farms (Hassink & Van Dijk 2006; Di Iacovo, O'Connor, 2009)

The perceived benefit of care farms is improved physical, mental and social well-being. The mental health benefits are to improve self-esteem and well-being and to improve dispositions. Examples of social benefits include independence, establishing work habits and developing personal responsibility and social skills (Hine, Peacock, and Pretty, 2008).

As such, care farming is an example of multifunctional agriculture that has received little scholarly attention. Care farms combine agricultural production with health and social services. They offer day care, assisted workplaces and/or residential places for clients with different types of disabilities (Hassink & Van Dijk, 2006). Benefits can be seen within the staff and clients as they benefit from the caring nature of these spaces, while the diversification of agriculture can provide a viable income while accommodating human interaction with the natural environment (Hemingway et al., 2016).

Social farms are urban or rural farms with an added therapeutic angle (Pölling et al., 2017), this often allows for an element of added value to these conventional spaces, while also allowing for an additional source of income to complement farming activities. Social farms use existing farmland for the benefit of people, primarily through improving health status, as evidenced by reduced levels of anxiety and depression (Pedersen et al., 2011), improving work and social skills (Hine et al., 2008) and providing a structured daily life for people suffering from dementia (De Bruin et al., 2010). Care farms can be seen as examples of innovative community service providers that can improve people's quality of life (Hassink, Jan, et al. 2010)

Participation in care farming has been shown to have a range of benefits, including reduced anxiety, stress (Leck et al., 2015) and depressive symptoms (Pedersen et al., 2012), as well as increased self-esteem (Hine et al., 2008), self-efficacy (Kogstad et al., 2014), social interaction (Iancu et al., 2014) and psychological well-being (Ellingsen-Dalskau et al., 2016). These benefits emerge through the relationships that develop on care farms and the mechanisms that enable individuals to gain therapeutic agency, such as meaningful work (Hassink et al., 2010; Iancu et al., 2014; Kogstad et al., 2014), social interaction (Elings and Hassink, 2008; Hassink et al., 2010; Pedersen et al., 2012) and encounters with animals (Gorman, 2019; Hassink et al., 2017). Animal care environments have been associated with positive benefits for people with autism spectrum disorder (Oosting, Ferwerda-van Zonneveld et al., 2012), patients with acquired brain injury (Hassink et al, 2007), patients with dementia (Bruin et al., 2009), substance dependence (Hine et al., 2008), emotional and mental distress (Iancu et al., 2014) and within the criminal justice system (Elsey et al., 2018; Murray et al., 2016).

3. Social farming in the Czech Republic

Social farming in the Czech Republic has been defined as a set of activities using agricultural resources, both plant and animal, to create an adequate environment for differently disabled or socially disadvantaged people and the general public in order to provide them with employment opportunities, to assist their integration into society or to contribute to their relationship with the countryside and nature through education and leisure activities. In this sense, the aim is to create conditions within the farm or farming activities that enable people with special needs to participate in normal farming activities to ensure their development and support and to improve their well-being. (Chovanec, 2015). This definition was developed in close connection with the EESC opinion NAT/539 Social Farming, which is also the only pan-European statement on social farming to date.

On the other hand, when compiling this definition, emphasis was placed on the reflection of foreign practice in the field of social farming, especially in European countries that are closest to the Czech conditions and their practices in the introduction and implementation of the concept of social farming are

comparable. Nevertheless, it is necessary to point out that there are many differences between social farms, especially in the scope of agricultural production and care. The differences in social farms are not only in the type of farm and the services provided, but also, and above all, between countries and in the historical, cultural, economic, political and social context that shapes the environment in which social farms are established (Sempik, 2010).

SF emerged from the social and health sciences in the search for synergies between promoting landscape multifunctionality (maintaining extensive agriculture in rural landscapes) and community-based social and health care. SF encompasses all kinds of interactions and activities with the natural environment, such as agroecosystems and farmland, including plants and/or animals. These interventions are carried out to promote the quality of life of a given user group (people with different types of disabilities, children, young people, elderly people, offenders, refugees, trafficked people, people suffering from long-term unemployment, victims of gender-based violence, etc.) with established and well-defined well-being goals (achieving physical, psychological, emotional, social, educational benefits, etc.) (Di Iacovo, 2008; Di Iacovo, 2009).

SF encompasses a different understanding and use of rural space and the rhythm of nature and promotes social services in many different areas, including rehabilitation, care, therapy, lifelong learning, employment promotion and women's empowerment, which contribute to social inclusion, strengthening social safety nets and the quality of life of rural and peri-urban residents (Di Iacovo, 2009). SF also represents a form of diversification of agricultural activities that offers the opportunity to define new strategies for the development of small and medium-sized agricultural enterprises, thereby increasing their chances of survival (Van der Ploeg, 2000; Van der Ploeg, 2009; Di Iacovo, 2009).

Despite several studies on different national experiences in Europe (Scuderi, 2014; Leck, 2014; García-Llorente, 2016), the development of a theoretical framework for the analysis of SF is lacking. Thus, the aim of this analysis is to provide a basic insight into the fundamental aspects of the functioning and principles used in organizations that use the concept of social farming as a tool for employing or providing different types and kinds of occupational therapy methods for different target groups. To this end, the analysis is divided into three thematic units, which are interrelated, but in each of which a different aspect is analysed. Within the first part, the focus is on the practical background important for the functioning and implementation of the concept of social farming in an organisation, in the second part, the focus is on aspects important in setting up the environment and conditions towards the needs of the target groups and in the third part, the focus is on ways and forms of adapting spaces for people from the target groups of the organisation.

4. Methods

No major qualitative research has been carried out in the field of SF in the Czech Republic that would map farms using the SF concept in more detail and thus provide insight into the basic areas of their functioning. This analysis is essentially a first venture in this field and maps the functioning of farms from three basic perspectives. The analysis primarily focuses on farms where employment, occupational therapy or similarly designed activities occur in relation to different target groups. The first part of the analysis assesses the basic practical background for the functioning of the farm, focusing on the motivation for setting up the farm, and the next perspective analyses the experience and competences of the farm leader relevant for the quality functioning of the farm. The second part of the analysis focuses on the assessment of various aspects affecting the conditions and environment for persons from target groups, aspects in access to persons from target groups, social aspects and conflict resolution. The third part analyses different aspects of the specificity of working with persons from target groups and the extent and intensity of the use of specific tools and adaptation of the premises. The selection of organisations is based on the model presented in the publication Social Farming – Introducing the Concept (Chovanec, 2015), which names three basic pillars of social farming in the context of the country and for the purpose of this analysis, farms were selected that fulfil the definition of Pillar 1 – Employment Focus and Pillar 2 – Social Service and Support Focus.



Fig 1. Three pillars of social farming in the Czech Republic. Source: Chovanec 2015

The third pillar – Focus on education, or farms fulfilling the definition of this pillar were not included in the analysis because these farms are primarily used for education and are primarily intended for different target groups than the previous two pillars. Typically, the target groups for these farms are the public, children, nursery school, primary and secondary school students.

A total of 9 organisations that use the concept of social farming are included in the analysis and are published in the Map of social farms[4]. These 9 organisations were then divided into 3 groups according to the following key:

Group 1 – these are organizations where agricultural production and other primary processing is the dominant component of their income. The organisations employ people from different target groups, especially people with disabilities or health disadvantages. Cooperation with volunteers, young people, etc. is used to a lesser extent. In these operations, there is usually a psychosocial support specialist for the needs of the farm staff, either internally or externally, in addition to an agricultural expert. Typically, these organisations have already been set up as profit-oriented businesses, where a significant proportion of the income is generated by the sale of their own products or other ancillary services (e.g., accommodation, excursions, etc.).

[4] www.socialni-zemedelstvi.cz

Tab 1. Overview of organisations in Group 1. Source: own elaboration

Organisation	Target group
Biostatek[5]	People with social disadvantages, volunteers, NEET, people with mental disabilities, people with mental illness
Sady sv. Prokopa[6]	Long-term unemployed, mildly disabled
Sdružení Neratov[7]	People with moderate and severe mental disabilities, people with disabilities, mentally ill and long-term unemployed

Group 2 – these are organisations where agricultural activities are significantly intertwined with the provision of social services for different target groups. The common element of the organisations in this group is the social service for a certain type of persons from the target groups, which is significantly complemented by the agricultural operation in which the clients of these organisations are integrated. The clients are thus given the opportunity to work based on occupational therapy and thus often gain their first work experience and competences. It is also typical of these operations that some clients can be employed in an employment relationship after meeting certain conditions (i.e., acquiring the necessary level of work qualifications). In the case of our organisations, this involves obtaining employment in a social enterprise that is part of the parent organisation and which these organisations have just created for the purpose of clear separation from social services. In the overall context, it is thus a so-called through employment, where the client first goes through the social service and is offered the opportunity to obtain employment in a social enterprise when a certain level of work skills and competences is reached. The financing of the concept of social farming in these organisations is multi-source and the social service covers the costs associated with the training of persons from the target group and, ideally, the social enterprise generates a profit from its business activities.

Tab 2. Overview of organisations in Group 2. Source: own elaboration

Organisation	Target group
Květná zahrada[8]	NEET, youth, young people at risk, long-term unemployed
Sananim[9]	Drug addicts – adolescents (16–19 years) and fathers and mothers with children
Vila Vallila[10]	People with mental disabilities (and social problems)

Group 3 – these are organisations where the provision of social services in the form of occupational therapy or occupational rehabilitation is completely dominant, where through social work methods in an agricultural environment (e.g., a production garden), clients are guided to acquire, maintain or deepen their work competences and skills. The produce is thus used for the organisation's own purposes (supplies for their own kitchen or for their own consumption). If they keep animals, it is mainly for therapeutic purposes. The operation in the agricultural environment is managed according to the methodologies binding on social service providers; among other things, individual plans are drawn up, according to which the process of therapy or rehabilitation is managed and evaluated. The generation of funds from the sale of produce or products (if the organisation sells them at all – usually in the context of fundraising events) is not the main reason for the functioning of an operation conceived in this way. The main objective is to create a safe environment for its clients to be able to carry out a range of agricultural activities under the guidance of a professional social worker with experience in agriculture.

[5] www.biostatek.cz

[6] https://www.sady-prokopa.cz

[7] www.neratov.cz

[8] https://www.kvetnazahrada.cz/farma/

[9] http://www.sananim.cz/o-nas-1/terapeuticka-komunita-karlov-tkk.html

[10] www.vallila.cz

Tab 3. Overview of organisations in Group 3. Source: own elaboration

Organisation	Target group
Integrační centrum Sasov[11]	People with autism spectrum disorder
Domov sv. Anežky[12]	People with mild intellectual disabilities
DOZP Osek[13]	People with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities

4.1 Data collection

The evidence for this analysis was collected during 2021 in the form of a guided interview with the leaders of each farm. Individual interviews generally lasted between 60 and 100 minutes. An audio recording was made of each interview. The evaluation is thus a summarised transcript of the respondents' messages. At the beginning of each thematic unit, a tabular summary provides a basic quantification of the key parameters relevant to the area and captures key moments to create a clearer picture of the extent and intensity of the phenomenon. The table uses symbols to capture the extent and intensity of the phenomenon and respondents were directly asked to indicate it. Scaling corresponds to 1 symbol = least degree and intensity, 5 symbols – greatest degree, intensity or need. Similar to this table, a graph is always presented at the end of the chapters, showing the complementarity of the phenomena analysed.

5. Results

5.1 Part. I Practical background for the farm operation

Motivation for establishment

Within the Group 1 organisations, one of the main motivations at the inception of the organisation was to create an appropriate environment for its employees from the target groups. At the same time, however, they take into account the product portfolio and overall business model, which is very important for their very functioning. Thus, the business activity occupies only a part (albeit a relatively important one) in terms of their overall income, which in turn also comes from other services provided by the organisations (e.g., excursions, use of volunteers to spread awareness on organic farming, etc.). Another reason for running a farm in this way is the possibility of obtaining funding from public institutions or thematic projects to support job creation and retention of people from the target groups. Another relatively important reason is the reason for operating in an organic regime and with a strong emphasis on preserving the original values in the landscape and environmentally friendly farming methods.

Tab 4. Questions for the area – motivation for establishment – evaluation. Source: self-discover

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Source of income	XXXXX	XXX	
Job creation	XXXXX	XXXX	XX
Expansion of services for social services clients	X	XXX	XXXXX
Employment support to increase job competencies	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX
Production for your own consumption		XX	XXXXX
Provide organic products for the local market	XXXXX	XXXXX	X

In Group 2, the predominant motivation for establishing a farm as a tool for implementing various types of occupational therapy as a logical part of the services that organizations provide for people from their target groups was identified. For organisations in this group, farming activities were a logical step for integrating and developing basic and advanced work skills and competencies of their clients, as working

[11] https://www.icsasov.cz

[12] https://www.anezka-tyn.cz

[13] http://www.domovosek.cz

on a farm requires virtually no initial vocational or occupational qualifications. It is this low-threshold nature that is a very important aspect for the clients' entry into the farm environment. The focus on income from commercial activities is directly dependent on the development of the farm and its management, but the total income from the sale of farm products is always only a part of the organisation's income (in addition to the income from the provision of social services, etc.).

In Group 3, one of the main objectives of the establishment of the farm is the integration of their clients into occupational therapy, which serves as one of the options that social service providers offer for their clients. In all organizations, these are long-established farms that provide a stimulating environment for clients to work or spend meaningful time. A great motivation for their clients is the opportunity to participate at all according to their mental and physical abilities and skills in occupational therapy. A significant motivation for clients to enter the farm environment is the opportunity to be around the growing of various plants and crops where they can watch them grow, flower, harvest fruits, etc. In some cases, the organisation sees this environment as preparing their clients for further employment, e.g., in a social enterprise.

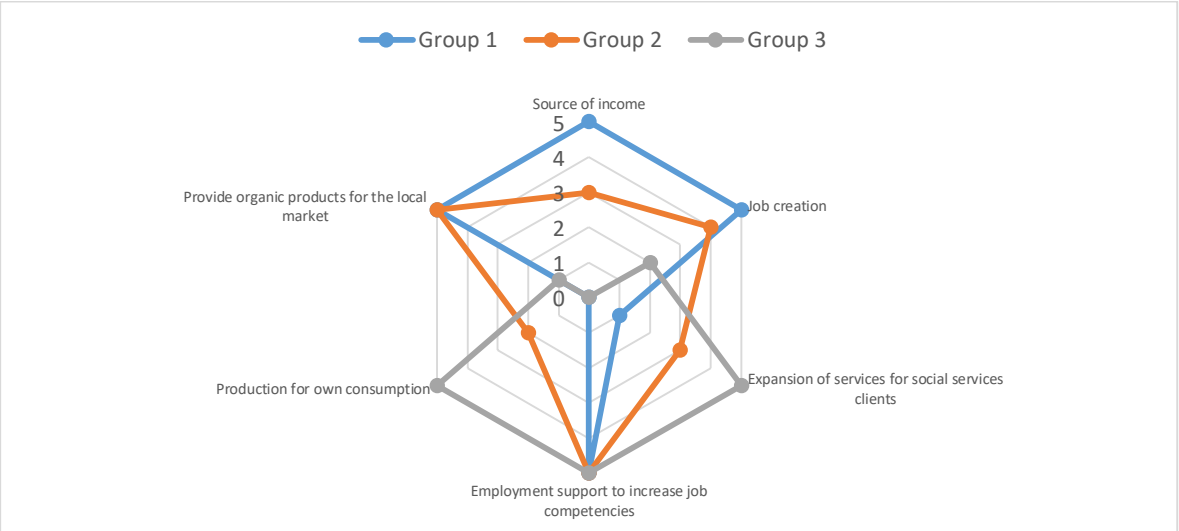


Fig 2. Motivation in the establishment of the farm. Source: own elaboration

Farm leader experience

The experience of the farm leader in Group 1 was always linked to experience from the agricultural environment, i.e., the main leaders had either formal agricultural education (agronomist) or years of experience from farms in the Czech Republic or abroad. However, their work teams also often have other experts (most often in external form) and use their services according to their needs and in the focus that is necessary for their operation.

Tab 5. Questions for the area – experience of the farm leader – evaluation. Source: self-discover

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Previous experience with agricultural operations	XXXX	XXX	XX
External agricultural experts	XXXXX	XXXXX	XX
Need for psychosocial support	XXX	XXXX	XXXXX
Predominant expertise – agricultural	XXXX	XXX	X
Predominant expertise – social worker	X	XXXX	XXXX

Farm leaders in Group 2 must be distinguished from leaders in the therapeutic area, within which various activities related to social work and therapeutic activities are implemented and applied within their service system in relation to their clients. In the second level, these are leaders on the farm who already have specialist agricultural knowledge and skills and then work closely with people from the target groups

directly at the workplaces. In this case, it is a synergy of both leaders, where their activities complement each other according to the needs of the operation and the persons from the target groups, thus providing the necessary environment and conditions for the functioning of the clients in the farm environment. Given the needs of the clients, these activities can be separated quite clearly and the two types of leaders can work with their clients separately or at different times. i.e., e.g., when working on the farm, they only attend to the work activities in the farm operation and at other times they attend other types of support e.g., therapy.

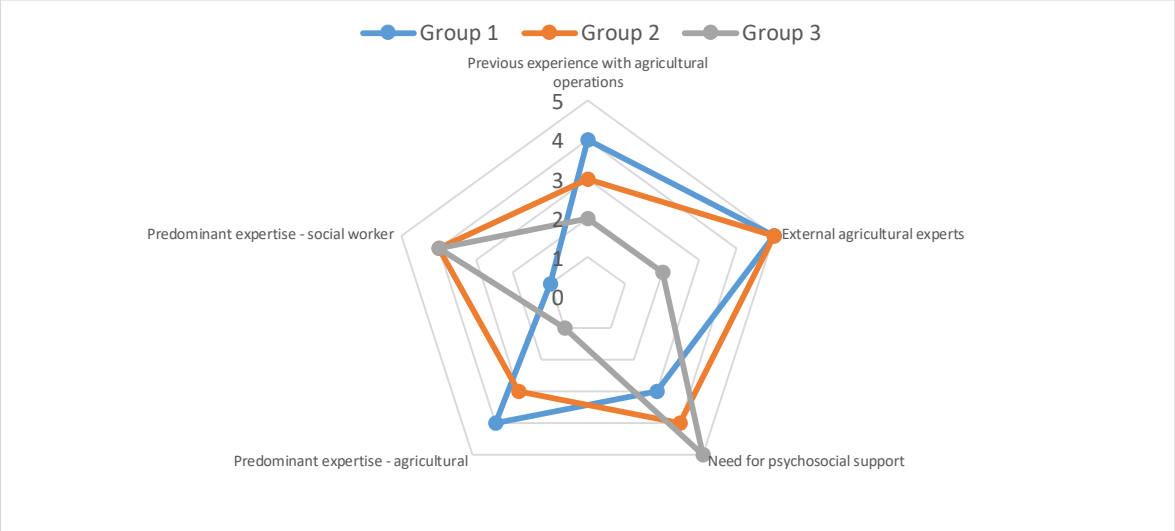


Fig 3. Experience as a farm leader. Source: own elaboration

In Group 3, however, leaders with mainly social work competences predominate. However, they also add to this expertise the knowledge and practices for agricultural activities. The presence of both leaders representing both expertise as in Group 2 is rather sporadic and not present (mainly due to the impossibility of securing a qualified expert in agricultural work in the place of operation of the organization). The work with clients is largely subject to the procedures usual for social services and the presence of an agricultural expert is required rather occasionally and in the form of consultations – typically when setting up various cultivation plans, etc. However, none of the organisations in this group had a leader who did not have at least some basic experience of agricultural practices.

Key competences of a leader

A high level of empathy is a prerequisite for Group 1 in the leader's core competencies, because the moments when it is necessary to plan and think through various activities in much greater detail when working with employees come to the fore. The personality of the farmer is thus a mix of personal and professional qualities of a leader who has mastered agricultural practices and at the same time, it is important that he or she has at least a partial profile in social work. Other key competences include the ability to cope with higher levels of stress and to have overall mental resilience and patience. The ability to delegate work and be consistent is an important aspect.

Tab 6. Questions for the area – key competences of the leader – evaluation. Source: self-discover

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Empathy	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX
Communication	XXX	XXXXX	XXX
Creativity	XXX	XXXX	XXXX
Individual approach	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX
Patience	XXX	XXX	XXXXX
Ability to delegate work responsibilities effectively	XXXXX	XXX	XXX
Consistency	XXXXX	XXX	XXX

The main core competencies of leaders in Group 2 are based on a similar basis to Group 1. Beyond the already mentioned empathy (which is however important for leaders of all Groups), there is also the ability to communicate and a higher degree of creativity when working with people from the target groups. A leader in such an environment should have the ability to reflect on the life situation of his/her clients, but at the same time be able to keep a certain distance both professionally and personally. An important key competence is their ability to prevent various negative aspects such as burnout syndrome.

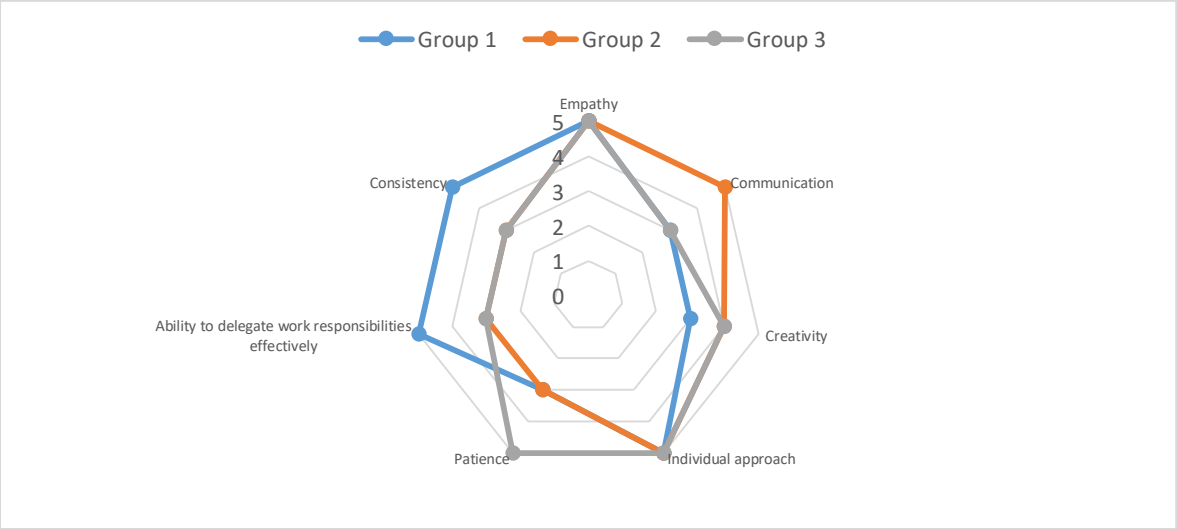


Fig 4. Key competencies of a leader. Source: own elaboration

The key competencies of the leaders in Group 3 were often derived from job profiles referring to the job competencies of professional social workers or social service workers.[14] Beyond these core competencies, the emphasis for these leaders was on an individual approach and an overall effort to individually set the conditions for the clients in functioning in the workplace and in the wider context, so that they possess the will to be more helpful to the clients in their activities on the farm. Other personality traits included willingness to endure certain adversities inherent in farming, i.e., a kind of willingness to endure the effects of nature and terrain, to have the will (basically every day of the week) to be available on the farm, to have patience, whether with clients or with certain partial setbacks in working with them.

5.2 Part. II Functioning of the organisation to ensure integration of target groups

Access to persons from target groups

Respondents in Group 1 describe the basic definition of the role of farm workers towards clients in a way comparable to that of working relationships in normal circumstances. Beyond this, however, they very often point to the need for an individual approach with respect to their work constraints resulting from their disadvantages. Depending on the specific needs of the employees, provide them with work support through a job coach or support in personal development through a psychosocial worker or other professionals. On the other hand, this action on the part of the farm staff is motivated to make the most of the potential of the employees from the target group to ensure the continuity of production and ensure production plans.

[14] This aspect was accentuated in advance for the reason that in this group there is a link between the social service (and especially its formal regulation) and the conditions of its provision according to the legislation in force).

Tab 7. Questions for the area – Access to persons from target groups – evaluation. Source: self-discover

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Working relationships comparable to a normal working environment	XXXXX	XXX	X
Individual approach	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX
Psychosocial support	XXX	XXXX	XXXXX
Exploitation of work potential	XXXXX	XXX	XXX
Restoring/regaining work habits	XX	XXXX	XXXXX

In Group 2, the broader approach to clients from the target groups is to create an environment and conditions on the farms in which basic work habits and competencies are taught, starting, for example, with clients being on time for work and generally prepared for employment (being well dressed, well fed, etc.). Basic routines are followed, with work being continuous and not going on arbitrary breaks as the client wishes. Basically, the elements of self-regulation are taught. Those senior in seniority guide those junior in seniority to observe basic things in the workplace. Clients are worked with in a more directive manner, but with respect for their individual needs.

In Group 3, the employment of people from their target groups is influenced from the outset by the approach of finding the most appropriate activities for clients on the farm that will be meaningful and beneficial to the client and the farm. In many cases, clients are offered a range of therapies within the organisation. This allows the client to experience, in a few days, how they like the farm and the work activities on the farm, what it realistically means to them and whether they would enjoy such work and be motivated to attend regularly. Clients have key workers who plan with clients the activities they would like to participate in and then support them in these activities. The level and intensity of this support is individual and the ideal outcome is to maximise the client's independence in activities on the farm.

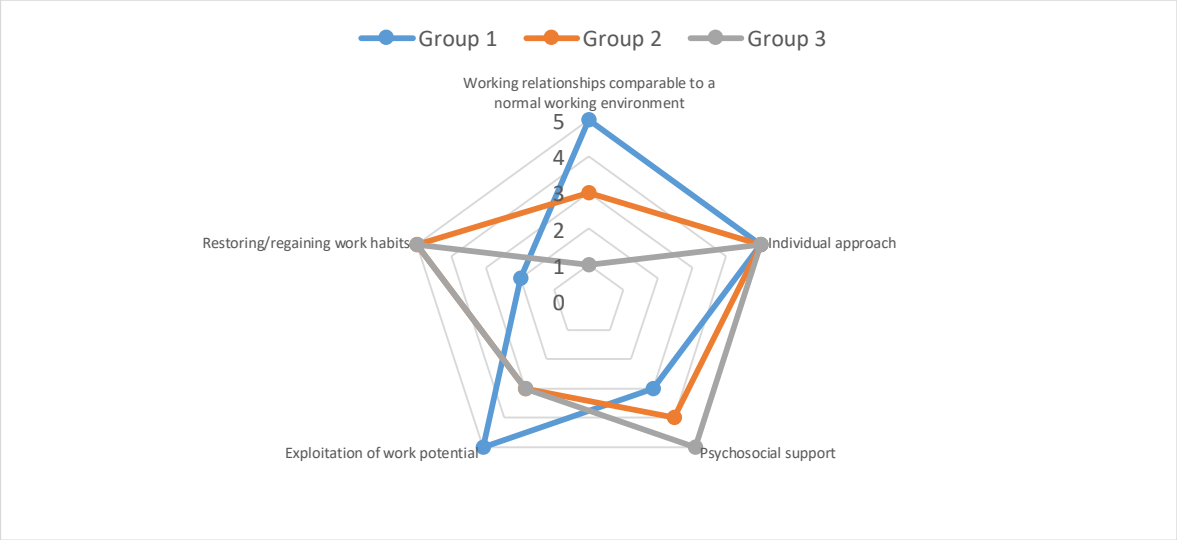


Fig 5. Access to persons from target groups. Source: own elaboration

Social aspects

Within Group 1, the emphasis is on fostering interpersonal relationships, which to some extent has a therapeutic effect whereby employees from the target groups can establish more intimate relationships with each other. They can be more open in communicating their positive or negative emotions and a different social circle is created for them in which they can feel comfortable, which can increase their quality of life outside of work. Respondents point to the experience that in rural settings, employees visit each other on non-workdays. Employees from the target groups are also more likely to appreciate that they have the opportunity to get support from a professional worker or a manager, to confide in him/her, for example, with a personal problem, etc. They feel that they are not alone in their problems or in their

lives. Employees from the target groups also choose to work on the farm themselves because they can work outside and they mainly want peace and quiet and to be away from the normal work routine.

Tab 8. Questions for the area – Social aspects – evaluation. Source: self-discover

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Promoting interpersonal relationships	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX
Positive atmosphere in the workplace	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX
Feelings of belonging	XXX	XXXXX	XXXXX
Strengthening personal skills and abilities	XXXX	XXXX	XXX
Teamwork	XXX	XXXXX	XXXXX

In Group 2, the emphasis is on an approach in which the professional worker provides support primarily in relation to the clients' work tasks and responsibilities but is able to perceive certain limits of the clients' constraints that prevent them from giving maximum performance. In the practical example, this is mainly when a client fails several times in one of the work tasks, where the main objective of the professional worker is to describe the problem and refer it within the organisation to another professional worker who is able to further address the problem with the client. Typically, this is a psychosocial worker position providing a wide range of support to farm clients and their efforts are focused on eliminating or alleviating these particular deficiencies. Organisations also focus on ensuring that the work they do gives clients confidence, that they realise they can achieve something, that they understand something is completely up to them and that they have been given this responsibility.

The respondents in Group 3 have a slightly more specific setting where the productivity of the clients' work on the farm is measured from different perspectives. First of all, on these farms, the total amount of work on the farm is not motivated by financial aspects and the amount of production needed, so they can afford to have occasional work stoppages, as the production is only directed towards the internal use of the organisation, either for the clients' needs (they simply consume the produce) or they supply it to their own kitchen, where the produce is more of a supplement for the meals of all the organisation's clients. The aim is to make the farm environment safe and stimulating for the clients, to offer the widest possible range of work activities and to have a relaxing effect. It is an environment where clients can feel safe and where their limitations are respected. They are also in a nice environment and have the opportunity to interact directly with animals, grow their own crops, etc. For some clients it is actually already a family environment, as they are often without parents. Good relationships between the clients are fostered through the work on the farm.

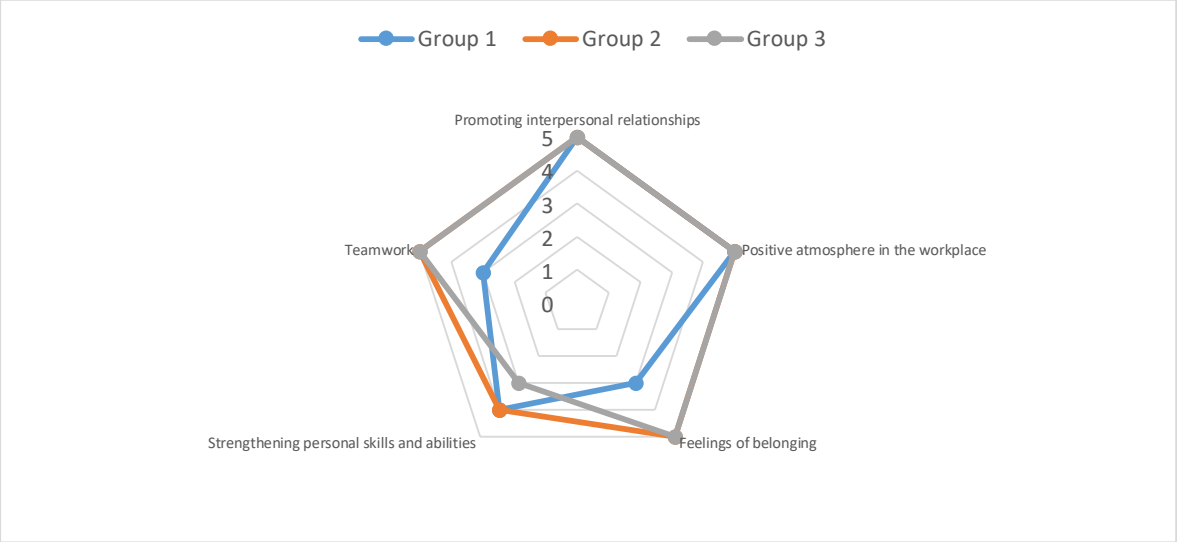


Fig 6. Social aspects. Source: own elaboration

Social environment

The social environment for Group 1 employees on all farms is based on an attempt to create as relaxed a working atmosphere as possible, which is often a prerequisite for good employment conditions. This atmosphere is probably also one of the most fundamental reasons why employees come to the respondents' farms in the first place. Another reason for employees coming to the farm is, among other things, the fact that they were working in workplaces under stress and/or burdens that bothered them and worsened their health. Thus, it is very important for farms to have employees in a calm working environment. On the other hand, the productivity of the work and the overall functioning of the employee in the team is also important. This is the purpose of the so-called adaptation process, which lasts approximately 1 month. During this time, it is possible to map the employee's abilities and skills, what he can do, what he cannot do, what his health condition is, what his work habits and competences are and, above all, what his limitations are, what he is actually no longer able to handle. An important aspect is then to place the employee correctly in the job and in the team of co-workers with whom he will work in the workplace during his employment. The social environment is also related to the general atmosphere around the farm, where it is beneficial if functional contacts can be established and thus get the opportunity to share the farm values with the surrounding area.

Tab 9. Questions for the area – Social environment – evaluation. Source: self-discover

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Quiet working environment	XXX	XXXXX	XXXX
Positive atmosphere in the workplace	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX
Possibility of adaptation process	XXXX	XXX	XX
Collegiality in the workplace	XXX	XXXX	XXXX
Importance of work productivity	XXXX	XXX	XX

In Group 2, the social environment is most often determined by the desire to make workplace relationships informal. The aim is for the leader to be perceived as a colleague and authority figure by the employees in the focus group, but that authority is perceived as kind and accommodating, while giving them but clear boundaries for example: observing on-time arrivals at the workplace, however the leader is able to address with them the reasons for their lateness. Experiential learning is perceived as an important element, for example, in the area of what can be stressful for clients or conversely what can help create a positive atmosphere. Often formalised reprimands are not created, however they are created rather intuitively and randomly as they come up during the course of the farm's operation. On the farms, respondents encounter the practice that clients do not perceive the work in a positive way, it annoys them, they are cranky, however, in the long term context, it is experienced that it is the work experience on the farm that will influence them positively in their future life. Not all of them, but in some cases it does. In these farm environments, clients are also often treated not as subordinates but as equal colleagues – co-workers. It is an effort to do the same/good thing together. Not for the money, but for the work.

In practice, it is very important for clients in Group 3 that informal relationships, peace and quiet are at their best within the atmosphere of the company, so that distractions are kept to a minimum. These factors thus provide a good precondition for a more natural motivation for clients to enjoy working on the farm, to be interested in it in the long term, to be motivated to improve and develop their working potential if necessary. The atmosphere on the farm or in the collective often depends on the emotional state of mind of the client, for example. At these moments, it is already possible to know to some extent what their work performance will be in the coming hours. The farm workers have been working with the client for a long time and are able to predict their behaviour relatively well to a certain extent and reactions that may affect their functioning on the farm. This, of course, has an impact on labour productivity. On the other hand, for the farms in this group, labour productivity is an explicitly relative concept and so good atmosphere and good positive emotions more often than not prevail over the need for work performance.

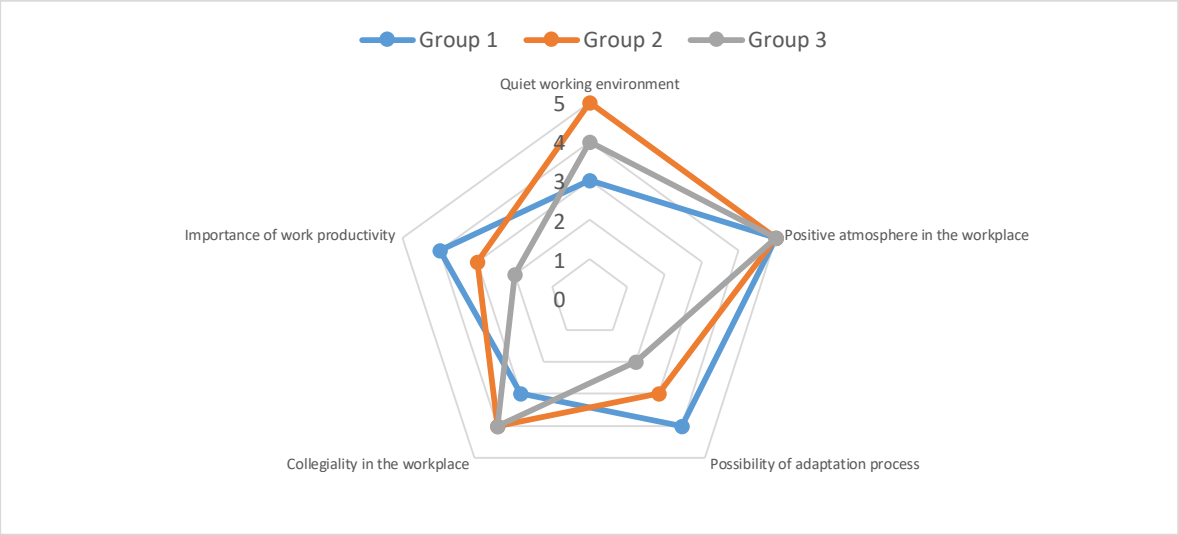


Fig 7. Social environment. Source: own elaboration

Conflict resolution

In Group 1, respondents also encounter that those interested in working on the farm simply do not want to work and come mainly because they need to have a job for financial reasons. This motivation alone is often a source for future conflicts that stem from less motivation to work, to have the will to do their work well and with quality, etc. It is not entirely exceptional that an employee from the target group is unable to work in a team. However, in these cases, we try to find a more suitable assignment or a more suitable type of work within our individual employee groups. This is closely linked to the frequent situations where the mood or general character of a particular employee makes him or her unable to work on a given day. Prevention of crisis and conflict situations is ensured by the respondents by means of methods and techniques used in social work, where prevention is a key role. Thus, various mixing of persons is often used as conflict prevention, so that persons whose behaviour could provoke conflict situations do not work side by side or together. It is also necessary to constantly explain everything.

Tab 10. Questions for the area – Conflict resolution – evaluation. Source: self-discover

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Conflict prevention	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX
Active individual work	XXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX
Supervision	X	XXX	XX
Conflict resolution by a psychosocial worker	XX	XXX	XXXXX

In Group 2, the crisis situations and the resulting conflict situations are based primarily on the personality traits of the individual clients and their behaviour in the workplace. Due to the fact that most of the clients in the target groups have been known to the farm managers for a long time, prevention and follow-up work in conflict resolution is dominant in this group as well, but this is mainly in the hands of social work professionals or others according to the staffing capacity of the farm. An example of a crisis situation is, for example, a slaughter, where clients who know that the sight of the slaughter process itself or the fact that the herd will be reduced will trigger stress reactions. In these moments, we try to work with the situation in advance, for example, by informing clients about it, justifying why it is happening and what it is so far. On the other hand, even among the respondents in Group 2, typical conflict situations occur, as in other workplaces, but prevention is very important because otherwise the good atmosphere in the workplace would be disturbed and ultimately lead to fluctuations in work productivity. Thus, most conflicts are basically tried to be resolved immediately, in the circle of those concerned and together with others. At the same time, regular supervision is carried out with the psychosocial worker (if employed on the farm).

Respondents in Group 3 point out that they make significant efforts to make the atmosphere on the farm, or at the individual workplaces, as comfortable as possible while respecting the current health and mental/emotional state of the clients. In cases where the clients are not, for example, in a positive emotional state or are otherwise medically indisposed, the attention of the farm's professional staff is focused on compensating for these conditions through, for example, appropriate choice of work activities, accompanying techniques to compensate for their condition, transfer to another type of work, working to restore motivation, etc. In general, the clients in Group 3 are very difficult to work under pressure and stress and any deviation in their work makes them uncomfortable and reduces their concentration and consequently their motivation. Among the main sources or entry conditions for creating a positive atmosphere is a certain degree of openness on both sides, where the client has the opportunity to share his/her current state, his/her worries, problems, etc., which may affect his/her work performance and generally his/her way of functioning in the workplace. Knowing this information from the client is important in the sense that it is easier for professionals to find ways to support and help the client individually in their professional life at the workplace and in their personal life. Respondents also point out that managers should monitor the level and intensity of relationships with individual staff members. This is mainly due to situations represented by a certain degree of overuse. An example of this is when clients overuse, and at times even abuse, this confidential environment to deal with their personal concerns for most of their working hours instead of the normal work activities for which they are employed. From the perspective of the professional, it is thus important to set a clear boundary between when their psychosocial support ends and when workplace management begins.

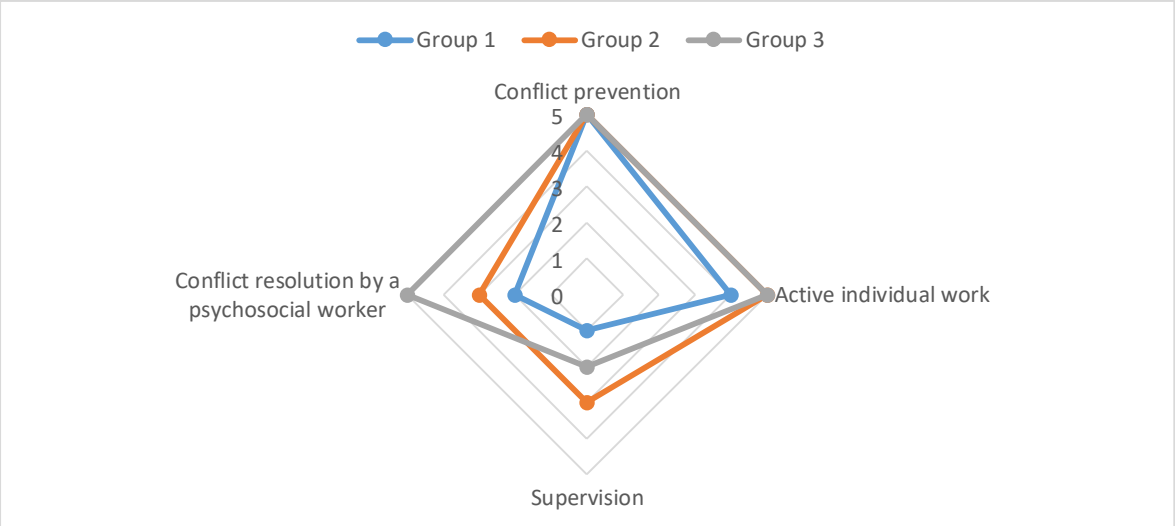


Fig 8. Conflict resolution. Source: own elaboration

5.3 Part III. Adaptation of premises and environment

Focus and specificity of activities when working with target groups

Employees in Group 1 are mostly involved in typical activities related to the normal operation of the farm. For our respondents, these are work activities related to the orchard, i.e., apple picking, tree tending, etc., and employees are also involved in related activities such as storage, drying, etc. On the other hand, there are limits to this, as some of the work cannot be entrusted to employees from the target groups. For example, operating more complex machinery, driving a tractor, setting up or adjusting various machines, etc. In principle, a list of specific work activities is not formally used, but the assignment of work is based on individual experience with the employees and the effort is to prepare tailor-made work that will bring something of value to the particular person. Organisations also work with the length and dynamics of the working week. It is an effort to combine activities according to good agricultural practice with the weather, although this is not always possible. All farms offer indoor and outdoor activities just in case of bad weather or during the winter months.

Tab 11. Questions for the area – Focus and specificity of activities in working with target groups – evaluation. Source: self-discover

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Use of job assistants	X	XXX	XXX
Creating individual development plans		XXX	XXXXX
Adapting work activities to good agricultural practice	XXXX	XX	X

In Group 2, clients are involved in virtually all the activities that the farm entails and that are currently required. The work is often distributed with regard to the individual abilities of each client and staff member, especially in terms of their particular work limitations resulting from both their diagnosis and their current psychological state. Organisations use work assistants to help clients with routine work activities. The abilities of the clients have long been known to the farm staff and they plan work for them accordingly. However, there are limits in the area of psychosocial stress, which mainly concerns clients who self-harm or regress to more psychotic states under various stressful situations or pressures. An important aspect is the accompanying activities within the functioning of the farm, where for example lunches are regular, where all the staff meet together and have the opportunity to talk over meals. Often these are small, little things, but they can play a big role for the clients. The fact that they feel like they belong somewhere and can gain a sense of belonging is a big part of it.

In Group 3, there is a strong emphasis among respondents on individualisation and some profiling of each client on the farm. For the clients, the rule is to develop an individual plan that is followed and that captures the basic activities that the client performs on the farm. This individual plan is gradually adapted and supplemented according to the client's ideas and current situation and the needs of the farm. This individualisation corresponds to their specific working abilities and skills. It is an effort to respect the diagnosis and the complex possibilities of the clients, which are limited by certain types of diagnoses. On the other hand, this also includes an assessment of their current psychological state, as these are clients with different types of disabilities, where the predictability of their behaviour is not entirely straightforward.

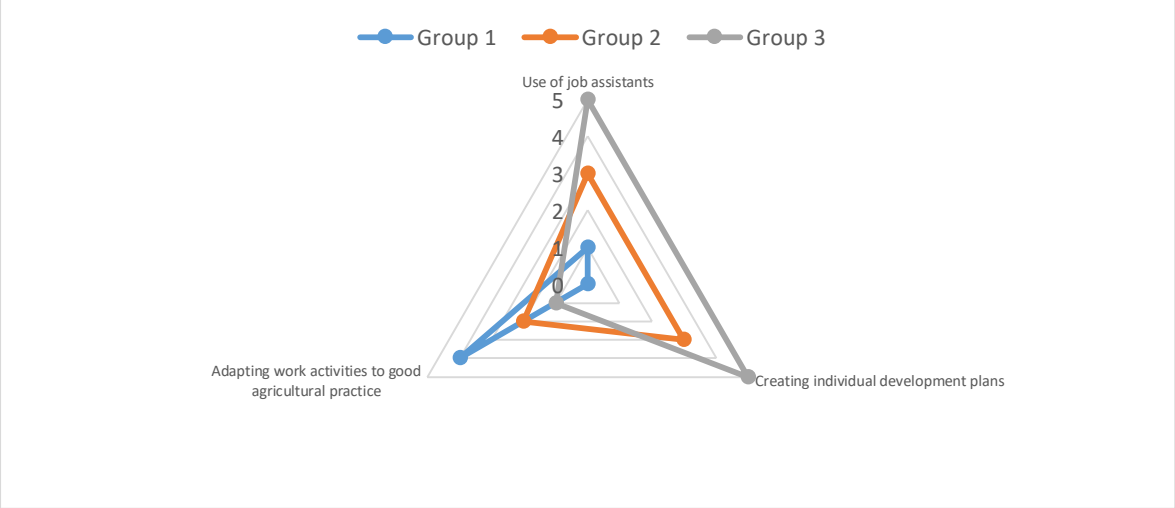


Fig 9. Focus and specificity of activities when working with target groups. Source: own elaboration

Use of specific tools and adaptation of spaces

In the overall context of Group 1, the farm is conceived in such a way that the very nature of production and working procedures are adapted to the capabilities of the target group. This is represented by efforts to select work activities or jobs that are in line with their working abilities. Thanks to this approach, the employees from the target group themselves are motivated to do such work, and at the same time, the performance is also in line with what is needed to be done for the job in relation to the farm and the current events in the sub-production processes. On the other hand, it should be pointed out that there

is only minimal use of complex machinery on the farms that would require any high degree of mechanisation or increased demands on their operation by the target group employees.

Tab 12. Questions for the area – Use of specific tools and adaptation of spaces – evaluation. Source: self-discover

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Adaptation of the premises on the farm	X	XX	XX
Use of special working tools and implements		X	X
Complementary activities (presence of spaces for leisure time, lunches, etc.)	XX	XXXX	XXX

Workplaces and working conditions for clients in Group 2 are rather partially adapted, with e.g., raised beds, partial wheelchair accessibility, specially adapted places for relaxation and rest for clients and other farm employees. These are mainly places for social gatherings, common rest or in case of bad weather. On the other hand, it is necessary to create a safe working environment for clients and to lock up more expensive equipment such as tools or various technical means for specific activities.

Even in Group 3, the premises and conditions are in principle not particularly adapted to the needs of the clients. Clients generally work manually and use simple tools and instruments that are bought from regular shops. However, there is a fundamental emphasis on respecting the diagnosis and the degree of disability or disadvantage in relation to long-term work activities. This information is obtained from the medical records, which are used as a basis for ruling out inappropriate work on the farm.

6. Discussion and conclusion

This analysis is basically the first qualitative probe to identify the range of practical starting points for the functioning of the farm in the concept of social agriculture in the Czech Republic and can also be the basis for other studies of a similar nature that are being or will be created mainly in EU countries. In three interrelated parts, the analysis aims to provide a basic insight into various aspects important for their functioning, especially in terms of employment and provision of various forms of occupational therapy for people from different target groups, and shows the differences in the approach of organisations divided into several groups according to their focus.

The results of the analysis thus point to common elements that link the different organisations – for example, very similar motivations in the reasons or motivations for introducing the concept of social farming and in references to the necessary qualities, skills and abilities of the leaders of these operations. Thus, in this context, similar motivations are evident for setting up farms such as L'Olivera Cooperative, which aims to organise rural resources to meet the needs of the community and manages health and social services through the employment of socially disadvantaged people. However, there was no evidence of major differences in perceptions across organisations. Nevertheless, even in the case of this analysis, we reach a certain limit where further analysis would be needed, also at the European level, in order to explore in more depth the relationship between agriculture and social policy, and thus an integrated public policy to support the development of social welfare in the SF environment (Genova, 2020). These limitations are mainly due to the fact that, to date, no studies or researches have been published on this or similar topics, based on similar parameters and starting points. At a more general level, the problem in the Czech Republic is similar to that in Italy, where the regulatory context of social agriculture is currently strongly characterized by a dominant perspective of multifunctionality of agriculture, with little attention paid to highlighting the added value of social agriculture for society (Cirulli, 2011).

There are more noticeable differences in the functioning of the organization to ensure the integration of the concept of social farming in relation to the target groups, especially in the assessment of the different aspects of access to people from the target groups. These differences stem mainly from the differences in approach resulting from the basic orientation of the operation – whether the farm produces products primarily for sale or for its own use or for therapeutic effect. In fact, this aspect is the fundamental reason

for all the differences in the perceived degree, intensity or need for specific phenomena. In the experience of the leader, it is mainly about combining knowledge, skills and abilities from agriculture and social work. These dual skills are crucial to the quality-of-service delivery and enable staff and clients from the target groups to feel responsible, confident and safe in the farm environment. When both can be combined appropriately, the right conditions are created for collaboration to take place (Hassink, 2013).

There is also a relative balance within the different sub-areas within Part II. Thus, the evaluation of these aspects builds on the finding that social farming has important positive effects on health indicators in addition to contact with nature, by reducing stress levels, improving mood, facilitating social contacts and providing opportunities for personal development (García-Llorente, 2016). It is also confirmed that just being in a natural environment can bring relief to persons from the target groups (Di Iacovo, 2009). Ultimately, in addition to therapy, social farming allows beneficiaries to acquire new skills that can be used in a professional context. Through agricultural activities, participants contribute to specific tasks that create value. They feel that they are useful and that they have responsibilities. This leads to the development of self-confidence (Assouline, 2012; Bragg, 2016). However, the most differences between organisations in this analysis can be identified in Part III. Adaptation of spaces and environments. On the other hand, all organisations are shown to have no particular need for and do not use any complex equipment, machinery or production facilities to be operated by people from the target groups overall. In particular, typical forms of adaptation such as raised beds[15] (Bergerie Nationale, 2009), which are also common in other farms of this type, appear. However, individual planning or taking into account the individual abilities and skills of staff and service clients is a common feature. It has also been fully demonstrated that the activities available on the farm influence the way in which patients are engaged (Hassink and Ketelaars 2003). There are also specially designated areas within the farm premises for spending time together, which are used for relaxation, communal lunches, etc., which are also spaces that are described as common in farms (Elings, 2006; Freeman, 2019).

6.1 Recommendation for further research

This analysis had the ambition to open up a qualitative perspective on the underlying aspects that have led to the creation and functioning of the various organisations employing and providing social services within the concept of social farming. This analysis should be followed up by further qualitative research focusing on the already specific aspect mentioned for the sub-sections of this analysis and making a separate qualitative assessment of it, including the use of international comparison and a finer scaling of the findings, which also has its limitations, as there is no analysis of the value of SF activities in terms of services that can be complementary to existing social services or completely new, such as the possibilities of home-based services in the context of agriculture or any other social services offered within agriculture that would bridge the gap in the supply of local social services (Genova, 2020).

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