

## Long Abstract – Monographic Section

*SOCIAL AGRICULTURE BETWEEN NEW AND OLD SOCIAL WORK PRACTICES, THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND POLICY INNOVATIONS.*

*edited by Angela Genova and Tiziana Tarsia*

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*SOIA, an innovative instrument to evaluate social and work-related inclusion in social farming*  
Nadia Francia, Marta Borgi, Aldina Venerosi Pesciolini, Flavia Chiarotti, Francesca Cirulli

Social farming, which combines support for vulnerable groups with the production of public goods connected to community and territorial life, is increasingly recognised as an element of social innovation with enormous potential for the social and professional integration of people with mental disabilities and/or disadvantaged.

In Italy, there has been a significant growth of social farming projects and the emergence of local community networks, often driven by regional initiatives aimed at diversifying opportunities for social and occupational integration. These experiences have shown that, in order to implement community-based mental health interventions, it is necessary to build community-based models and interdisciplinary teams to support the empowerment of individuals, based on the cooperation between services, farms and civil society. Although the role of social farming in supporting the care of people with mental disorders - or characterized by social disadvantage, especially in the case of social and labour exclusion - is increasingly recognised, the discussion on the quantitative evaluation of the outcomes in this field is still in its infancy and there is little objective evidence of its benefit on behaviour and, more in general, on social and professional skills.

In this paper, we present the “Operational Tool for Socio-occupational Inclusion in Agriculture – SOIA, adopted within the Project Territori Solidali Organizzati -TSO project (Regione Lazio PO FSE 2014-20). The SOIA tool has been used to monitor the individual path of socio-occupational inclusion of 25 participants with fragility and/or mental health problems, selected and managed by the project's farms in the Rome area.

The SOIA questionnaire was administered to each participant at three points: initially (first evaluation), after a minimum of 15 hours of direct observation, and again 3 – 4 months later (second evaluation).

In general, the statistical analysis of the SOIA questionnaires revealed the effectiveness of the socio-occupational inclusion plans designed ad hoc for each of the 25 participants, with improvements highlighted in the areas of general adaptation, behaviour, work attitudes, and interpersonal and social skills, including stress tolerance.

The SOIA questionnaire thus proves to be a useful operational tool for assessing and monitoring work skills and behaviour in participants involved in multifunctional social farming projects.

Keywords: Social farming; Job placement; Mental health; Social integration

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