laws

MDPI

Article

Social Farming in EU from Legal to Sociological Perspective: Developing European Solution

Georg Miribung

Faculty of Forest and Environment, Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development, 16225 Eberswalde, Germany; georg.miribung@hnee.de

Abstract: Social farming is a much-studied concept in the European Union, but debates continue on the issues of standardised content and terminology. Therefore, this study involved an empirical analysis of various social farming concepts, outlining a way in which relevant rules can be designed at the European level. Various models of social farming were empirically analysed, with a focus on the (a) aim of the organisation, (b) actors within and outside the organisation, and (c) communication and decision-making structures. This study demonstrates that a European-level legal act should be adopted to achieve standardisation; however, full harmonisation is not desirable, at least not at present. It will be necessary to oblige Member States to catalogue specific activities to be covered by the term social farming in a given legal system. The pivotal point here is the multifunctional idea of agriculture, which ultimately means that social agriculture will have to support traditional agricultural activities, an approach that could be used to promote social farming systematically. The main feature of this proposal is the implementation of an open, subsidiary approach to do justice to the versatility of social farming.

Keywords: social farming; common agricultural policy; empirical legal research; agricultural law; harmonisation of law

check for updates

Citation: Miribung, Georg. 2024. Social Farming in EU from Legal to Sociological Perspective: Developing European Solution. *Laws* 13: 62. https://doi.org/10.3390/laws13050062

Academic Editor: Patricia Easteal

Received: 12 August 2024
Revised: 14 September 2024
Accepted: 16 September 2024
Published: 18 September 2024

Copyright: © 2024 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

1. Introduction

The concept of social farming originates from multi-purpose farming and can be generally defined as "a cluster of activities that use agricultural resources—both animal and plant—to generate social services in rural or semi-rural areas, such as rehabilitation, therapy, sheltered jobs, lifelong learning, and other activities contributing to social integration." (EESC 2013, p. 46). This is a rather general description, however, and while social farming is a much-studied concept in the European Union (EU) and Europe in general (e.g., Jarábková et al. 2022; EESC 2013, p. 46; Di Iacovo et al. 2018, p. 108; Fazari and Musolino 2022, p. 2; Di Iacovo 2020; van Elsen 2020, p. 53; Wiesinger et al. 2013, p. 5 ff.), debates about standardised content and terminology continue.[1]

Further differences exist due to different legal frameworks (O'Connor et al. 2010; Knapik 2018; Di Iacovo and O'Connor 2009, p. 30 ff.; Nazzaro et al. 2021, p. 11). For example, in Italy, there is a specific legal framework that promotes social farming as part of agriculture (Canfora 2017; Prete 2020), and in Austria, the organisation 'Green Care Austria', which operates under private law, offers an important reference point for standardising and promoting social farming initiatives.

It should also be noted that the idea of social farming is by no means new. Generally and historically speaking, taking care of the elderly and children is typical in family farms, where three or more generations stay together and live under one roof, and the people

[1] For example, in the Netherlands and Flanders, the term 'Groene Zorg' ('green care') is widely used, whereas in the English-speaking world, 'green care' and 'social farming' are both used (Di Iacovo and O'Connor 2009; van Elsen 2020, p. 22). In Finland, farms often combine their social activities with caring for endangered breeds of farm animals, while garden therapy initiatives are widespread in England (van Elsen 2020, p. 22).

involved are thus skilled in this kind of social work. However, does this also imply that they might/should also take care of people who do not belong to their family? In legal terms, this implies constructing a legal relationship with third parties and thus taking over responsibilities for these (contracting) parties.

We can also ask what form of 'social' agriculture we actually desire (Jarábková et al. 2022, p. 550 ff.; Elings et al. 2022, p. 442; Bassi et al. 2016, p. 97 ff.; Di Iacovo and O'Connor 2009, p. 33 ff.; Fazari and Musolino 2022, p. 2; Di Iacovo 2020; Murray et al. 2019; Tulla et al. 2014, p. 40 f.; Scuderi et al. 2014, p. 77). Is it about a specialised market segment, or are there starting points for social change? Does this include farms that offer day stays for school classes? Does it also include 'farm holidays'—perhaps only in cases where holidaymakers are actively integrated into the economic processes on the farm to 'join in' and gain farm experience? This raises a crucial question: What actually characterises social farming?

From an (agricultural) law perspective, we can use the concept of multifunctional agriculture as a starting point for linking traditional agricultural activities with a range of social activities (Canfora 2017, p. 7 f.; Prete 2020, p. 369; Miribung 2020b, p. 96; Tulla et al. 2014, p. 43; Hassink and van Dijk 2006; Scuderi et al. 2014, p. 77), such that value (not just in economic terms) can be generated for the agricultural enterprise as well as for its home region. From a legal point of view, it is particularly about a suitable interplay of aspects of business law, social law, and agricultural law. One could thus address specific issues such as liability aspects (in connection with services for third parties) or organisational law, as well as possible agricultural support and/or care measures. Particularly for the latter aspect (i.e., financial support), it is necessary to legally define the concept of social farming such that support measures can actually be taken and development perspectives can be opened up (Scuderi et al. 2014, p. 76; Di Iacovo and O'Connor 2009).

At the EU institutional level, the idea of social farming has been under consideration for some time. In the context of the social agriculture phenomenon, the European Economic and Social Committee proposes to establish a legislative initiative outlining a regulatory framework for Member States, seeking to promote access to instruments supporting the various types of social services established in rural areas (EESC 2013, p. 47).

Despite the establishment of various forms of social farming in EU member states, this has not yet led to a regulatory framework at the European level (EESC 2013, p. 44; Scuderi et al. 2014, p. 76). One legal, albeit meagre, point of reference is provided by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP): Art. 35 para. 1 lett. k of the repealed Reg. 1305/2013 included social farming activities (e.g., health care, social integration, community-supported agriculture, and education about the environment and food) among the types of activities that can be financed by rural development support measures, particularly those targeting the diversification of agricultural activities. However, a definition of social farming is not provided, and the recently adopted legislation for the CAP 2021–2027 (as per Reg. 2021/2115) is also unhelpful in providing a clearer legal definition of social farming at the European level. In fact, the term 'social farming' is only mentioned once (Recital 83). Definitions are, if at all, regulated at the national level (e.g., in Italy by Art. 2 par.1 of law No 141/2015; Canfora 2017; Prete 2020), and this is in line with the general EU approach to agriculture, which still refers to products rather than farming activities (Prete 2020, p. 396; Miribung 2020b, p. 123). The important aspect from the EU point of view is that social farming can be promoted through the CAP and thus developed within the EU, at least if one considers social farming primarily from the perspective of agricultural law.

The current CAP is centred on three general and nine specific objectives (Art. 5 f. Reg. 2021/2115). In the context of social farming, the general objective of strengthening the socio-economic fabric of rural areas seems significant, and of the nine specific objectives, attracting young farmers and facilitating entrepreneurial development in rural areas, as well as promoting employment, growth, social inclusion, and local development in rural areas seem to be particularly relevant. Accordingly, possible support measures for social farming are related to providing assistance for setting up young farmers and support for launching activities related to agriculture, forestry, and the diversification of farm income as

well as non-agricultural business activities in rural areas integrated into local development strategies (Art. 75 Reg. 2021/2115; Prete 2020, p. 397 f.). Moreover, such interventions are crucial, not least because Recital 83 of Reg. 2021/2115 specifically lists social agriculture among the projects for the development and implementation of cooperation, for which Member States may grant this type of support.

Taken together, these interventions provide possible reference points for discussing social farming in a consistent way across the EU. It then becomes clear that social farming can only be legally approached within a rather complex framework, at least if the intention is an EU-legal approach. The starting point is the notion of multifunctional agriculture, which is worthy of support because it provides farmers with income opportunities and can support the development and protection of rural areas.

This study sought to better understand whether a more common/harmonised approach based on CAP implementation measures can help to promote social farming. Within the framework of an explorative study, the way in which social farming is organised in different EU Member States was investigated, along with the problems that arise in this context: After explaining the methodological (legal-sociological) approach in Section 2, Section 3 outlines the empirical results. These are then discussed in Section 4 to gain a better understanding of the different approaches to social farming within the various legal systems and their possible effects. The aim was to understand the extent to which the legal framework provided by the CAP needs to be improved, based on which Section 5 proposes a solution to implement a unifying approach at the EU level. This issue is important because agriculture is not only heavily regulated but also, based on EU law, strongly subsidised (Miribung 2020b, p. 86), and as this study demonstrates, social farming should benefit from such a supportive framework.

2. Methodology: Legal and Sociological Issues

In this study, an interdisciplinary approach based on law and sociology (Argyrou 2017, p. 96; Banakar 2000, p. 274) was adopted to understand how, from a legal point of view, social farming can be conducted. Essentially, legal requirements are linked to reality as determined by an empirical study to better understand how legal norms shall be applied or developed. Such an approach is based on the assumption that existing legal requirements and actual necessities often diverge. It helps to better understand whether and how law works in reality, how norm addressees behave, and also whether an existing legal framework actually meets the requirements of norm addressees or whether this framework should be changed or developed further (Baer 2021, pp. 39 f. and 285).

As little is known about how a standardised legal framework for social farming could be developed at the EU level, this study is being conducted on an exploratory basis. This helps to identify commonalities, dynamics, shared perceptions, and understandings (Webley 2010; Argyrou 2017, p. 98 f.; Epstein and King 2002, p. 20; Banakar 2000, p. 274) of social farming, employing a unifying approach to support the convergence of definitions at the national level, which is a prerequisite for targeted funding at the EU level (Scuderi et al. 2014, p. 77; Di Iacovo and O'Connor 2009).

Therefore, the starting point of this study is the harmonising power of EU law, specifically the CAP as a uniform legal framework for national regulations (Miribung 2020a, p. 131 f.). A particular problem that arises here however is the comparability of the concepts that are applied in the different legal systems. This is understandable since, as already mentioned, there is no uniform concept in the EU concerning social farming. This study shall thus contribute to a better understanding of how to design an enabling environment (Raiser 2019, p. 185 f.) for social farming within the EU by, among other things, identifying the challenges of social farming.

To find different approaches to social farming, different legal systems were chosen, one of which—the Autonomous Province of Bozen/Bolzano, Italy—has a clear legal framework (law No 141/2015), while two others—from Austria and Germany—do not. In Austria, a private organisation (i.e., Green Care Austria 2023) currently acts as the driver and is

attempting to develop unifying standards. These countries (in the case of South Tyrol, the province) were chosen because German is used as a legal and everyday language in all three, which makes it much easier to compare the empirical results and the legal requirements.

From comparative law, we know that such comparisons are not so easy: Problems of understanding arise when scholars from different jurisdictions use terms and concepts that appear similar yet differ in meaning and content. It is thus important to understand how similar terms are actually used and what the differences are (Miribung 2020c, p. 17 f.).

A starting point here could be to ask what is meant by the term 'social farming'. This was particularly important in the case of Germany and Austria, and to a lesser extent, Italy, where specific legal rules have been adopted to which the concerned actors must adhere. In this investigation, Law No. 8 of 22 June 2018 of the Autonomous Province of Bozen/Bolzano-South Tyrol (and the related implementing acts), which defines the activities for social farming in Art. 4 (due to historical circumstances, South Tyrol has far-reaching legislative powers) was applicable. This law contains a list of permitted activities (e.g., day-mother services, teaching farm, services for elderly people, services for people with disabilities, eating in the neighbourhood) and emphasises the subservient attitude of these activities to agricultural activities, as defined in Art. 2135 of the Italian Civil Code (Art. 3 f. L 8/2018). The law thereby focuses on the multifunctionality of agriculture, within which additional, non-agricultural activities are permitted to support agricultural activities (not only) economically. As there is no such specific legal framework in Austria and Germany, providers of social agricultural activities must independently clarify how a particular activity is ultimately regulated.

For this study, it was therefore necessary to combine different methodological approaches and legal models. To overcome possible resulting inconsistencies and to establish a standard structure linking the different areas of knowledge together, the project follows a structure based on organisational sociology. This can be used to transparently determine how activities (in this case, those of social farming) can be organised; this approach makes it possible to present the various solutions in a structured way and to explore the topic in more detail (Miribung 2016, p. 191).

In particular, I referred to Preisendörfer's considerations. By providing specific categories to describe the structure of organisations systematically, organisational sociology helps to show how particular organisational processes are (formally or informally) regulated (Preisendörfer 2016, p. 1 f.; Ruiner 2020, p. 2). Preisendörfer points out that organisations encompass various elements, such as the objectives of an organisation, the organisational structure (a distinction can be made here between the formal and informal organisation), or the organisational environment. These elements lay the foundation for what actually happens within an organisation. Particular topics can be described as core problems, including decision-making, communication processes, management problems, power and control issues, and conflicts. It is important to note that these problems are partly interrelated (Preisendörfer 2016, p. 8 ff.; Ruiner 2020, p. 2).

In this project, social farming activity providers were interviewed through semi-structured interviews with relevant actors (on the use of such interview techniques, see, e.g., Webley 2010, p. 936; Argyrou 2017, p. 99). This open approach makes it possible to gain a deeper understanding of the ideas, beliefs, and values of the interviewees, which is the purpose of this exploratory study.

The interviewer followed a guiding thread that was in line with the basic elements and core problems, and three major issues were assessed the following:

- The aim of the organisation (why people participate, what they think about it, etc.);
- Actors within the organisation and actors as part of the organisational environment (who is involved, who is important, how are they involved, etc.);
- Communication and decision-making structures, including conflict resolution issues (how decisions are made, who decides, what mechanisms are used for conflict resolution, etc.).

The aim is to use these elements to understand how a favourable environment can be created and thus to what extent the legal framework provided by the CAP should be improved.

Between spring 2021 and spring 2022, a total of 11 semi-structured interviews were conducted; 3 of the interviewees were from Italy and 4 each from Germany and Austria. The GABEK text analysis method (Holistic Coping with Complexity—Ganzheitliche Bewältigung von Komplexität, Zelger 2019, p. 5 f.) was used to collate and analyse the anonymised data (statements from the interviews) in a structured manner (Miribung 2016, p. 189 f.). This made it possible to analyse basic values, the applied organisational structures, and the goals of social farming and to outline measures to support it (Zelger 2019, pp. 5, 10). The interview partners were identified via snowball sampling for Germany (four interview partners) and Italy (Autonomous Province of Bozen/Bolzano, three interview partners); the initial contacts were experts from associations and public authorities. The four Austrian interview partners were identified with the help of an internet search and through consultation with the Green Care portal and in almost all cases, they were small agricultural entrepreneurs. In Austria, an interview was conducted with the managing director of a socio-educational organisation in which social farming activities are carried out.

It is well-known that combining a theoretical approach with empirical data can help to identify practical problems and how they can be solved (Baer 2021, pp. 39 f. and 285; Baldwin and Davis 2005, p. 891 f.; Webley 2010, p. 936). The primary point however is not to identify a better model of social farming but to contribute to knowledge about various legal approaches (through analysing differences and similarities). Such knowledge could not only contribute to the verification of acquired knowledge or lead to a better understanding of one's own legal system (Galligan 2010, pp. 981 and 991 f.) but also contribute to the drafting of legal texts: when a state intends to initiate a reform of a particular institution or introduce an unknown one, the legislative proposal phase is generally preceded by a comparison of the experiences of other systems. The methodological approach is thus also rooted in comparative law (Baer 2021, p. 60 f.; Raiser 2019, p. 13; Miribung 2020c, p. 9; Riles 2019).

3. Different Models of Social Farming: An Empirical Analysis

In the next three sub-chapters, the most important findings obtained using the GABEK text analysis method are presented in country reports. The information is structured in accordance with the structure of the interview guidelines: that is, it begins with the aims of the activity, followed by statements about the relevant actors and then information on the decision-making processes and conflicts. However, the transitions between these key elements are fluid or even overlap, as the respondents often interwove the various pieces of information due to the open questions that were asked, as will now be shown in the presentation of the results.

3.1. Italy

The farms that were analysed were in a phase of reorientation; all interviewees pointed out the need to comply with provincial Law No. 8. It is stressed that it is necessary to have an additional mainstay as a full-time farmer to remain economically successful. In other words, it is necessary to specialise in classical agriculture while also using the resources that agriculture offers in a different way. Accordingly, the available resources should be used in the best possible way and to the fullest extent. On one hand, additional fields are leased and on the other, social farming activities are offered as a supplement.

The farmers involved in this study are aware that diversification is important for economic success. In this context, this includes, for example, schooling on the farm and providing child care, direct marketing, and therapeutic measures with the help of animals, while holidays on the farm are also often offered, thus allowing the resources to be used in the best possible way. These various activities reflect the idea of multifunctional agriculture.

The motivating factor behind social farming is that it is possible to provide many positive activities using the available resources, such as producing healthy food while also offering services that can and should help other people socially. The motives behind these activities and the reasons they are carried out are not only financial but also ethical and moral; indeed, agriculture elicits joy by shaping the environment and supporting food production, which motivates participation in these labour-intensive activities.

In the family farms analysed in this study, several generations work together; the competences are assigned and, in many cases, women take on bureaucratic work and social farming activities while men perform the classic farming activities; traditional structures thus seem to be in place. However, this can also lead to conflicts between the older generation (farmers' parents) and the younger generation, as the former may be sceptical of innovations, whether in terms of content (meaning new activities) or the allocation of competences and responsibilities.

To carry out such business reorientations, financial means must be available. Thus, financial soundness is essential. The results show that while a lack of financial means could be compensated for via own work and thus additional time expenditure, for this to be effective, the family members must pursue similar or identical entrepreneurial goals. However, in an agricultural enterprise that is run as a multi-generational household, it may be difficult to implement modern business management concepts based on suitable calculations or the development of suitable key figures.

Moreover, for these activities to be implemented well, the internal processes in the agricultural enterprise must also be transparent in terms of costs, yet it is often difficult to quantify these costs precisely. This can lead to further decision-making problems, as accurate costing is essential for developing suitable key figures for the management of the agricultural enterprise and then controlling them.

Despite such difficulties, in all investigated cases decisions are generally made jointly. Everyone contributes his or her knowledge and competences, regardless of who owns the agricultural enterprise, and due to the clear and transparent organisational structures of family businesses, everyone is involved in both the decision-making process and the subsequent monitoring process.

Social farming offers various potential activities, but they are not always easily implemented in practice. Activities with children and the elderly seem to be easier to implement. However, focusing on people with a migration background—a task on which one of the analysed farms focused—seems to be more difficult, unless they come from the farming environment or the immediate surroundings. Due to the traditional structures in which agricultural enterprises are embedded, there may be scepticism towards these people, although this can always be overcome through practical work and actual contact with these people.

The farmers' union provides advice on the proper implementation of these activities, primarily those that are covered by legal provisions, and also offers appropriate training for this purpose. These support measures also relate to the generational conflicts mentioned above. In general, this seems to work very well. However, if activities are offered that go beyond the legally recognised activities and are thus not provided for by law, specific problems arise. For example, in the case of activities involving people with a migration background, it is not sufficiently clear how the relationship with these people is to be legally outlined. Indeed, there are activities in the context of which these people are to be taught certain work competences. However, this raises the question of whether this quasi-teaching activity constitutes an employment relationship with the corresponding consequences under labour law. One interviewee criticised the legal framework for not providing suitable assistance in this respect; even so, this is a specific feature that did not occur in this way in the other cases analysed. In the other cases, the law and the further training offered seem to be very helpful, providing clarity regarding the various possibilities offered by the law. This enhances planning security, which in turn makes the economic development of the agricultural enterprise more predictable.

Similarly, suitable training for the various activities of social farming is essential. Well-trained staff are needed (i.e., staff with pedagogical and psychological training). Such competences are crucial to correctly and efficiently conduct the activities with people, whether they are old or young, have a migration background, have special needs, etc., and this is also required by law. In general, it is important to know the legal requirements to understand the framework in which farmers must operate and how.

The empirical results show that social farming helps to better connect agriculture to the territory and the rural population living in it. This leads to better recognition and understanding of the agricultural activity: the population of the territory recognises the considerable effort involved in the production of (their) food. Specifically, it creates a better understanding of how food is produced, how agriculture works, what it contributes to society, what happens to waste, what represents a fair hourly wage for such activities, and what it means, in general, to produce healthy food in terms of the use of pesticides or the treatment of animals. In this study, all of the analysed farms stressed the importance of a high level of animal welfare.

These activities thus illustrate the possibilities and importance of small local production cycles and how they can be made transparent. Direct marketing creates a relative dependence on local consumers, who, in turn, have a strong interest in species-appropriate husbandry and healthy cultivation methods, as this leads to better food products. In this context, appreciation is a condition for agriculture to function well. Such appreciation and farmers' commitment to the agricultural profession are components of success, which does not only refer to financial success, as indicated above.

3.2. Austria

As noted, there is no legal concept in the Austrian legal system similar to the one in the Italian legal system. However, the concept of Greencare has developed a guiding function, thus representing the general framework within which the activities of social farming can be oriented. Therefore, how do the interviewees see this situation? The empirical findings analysed via GABEK are detailed in the following passages.

Concerning the basic idea of social farming, one interviewee referred to Rudolf Steiner's idea of supporting so-called neglected young people by bringing them into contact with nature. The aim was and still is to learn about agriculture, that is, to be active in nature, on the soil, and with animals. The objective is to learn that people are a part of what we call agriculture. It is about understanding how human beings can and should connect with nature. This is crucial today because many people have distanced themselves from nature and the natural forces/conditions that are visible and tangible in agriculture.

Specific examples that were mentioned in this context included alpine pasture life, school on the farm, therapeutic riding or vaulting, and contact with animals and nature in general. One interviewee highlighted that social farming can be an instrument to address various group problems, such as bullying and to work towards change. Put simply, it is about showing how people used to grow up on farms in contact with nature. This causes people to feel responsible for animals, the environment, and the territory in which they live (consciousness-raising effect). Moreover, it increases the recognition of agricultural activities by third parties who, as customers, make use of the various offers and services.

The core aspect of agriculture as a life task and not simply a profession is essential, as all these activities could not be carried out if there were no agriculture to provide the necessary facilities, instruments, equipment, etc. It follows then that the various agricultural and social activities must be interwoven in a coherent manner, with the overall concept thus being to use traditional agricultural activities and associated resources in targeted and complementary ways benefiting people with specific needs. In one of the interviews, this has also been described as an all-round activity; that is, the agricultural activity itself provides a framework for practicing a profession where the social idea, i.e., contact with people as human beings with individual needs, can be incorporated. Very simple examples

were given: How do we make our own juice? How does juice pressing work? How do flowers and herbs smell?

These processes of reorientation, referring to the integration of social activities with agricultural activities, seem to have taken place gradually, depending on the resources available. In the foreground is the intrinsic motivation to carry out such activities. Indeed, a considerable amount of time is required and in some cases, private money that can probably no longer be paid back was made available or used.

Gaining appropriate qualifications is another essential element of these reorientation processes. Respondents mentioned several different specific roles and qualifications, clearly depending on the actual activity of social farming, such as life and social counsellor, supervisor, certified nurse, riding pedagogy, riding therapy, and competences in the field of bio-dynamic agriculture.

The persons interviewed agreed that the common goal and the resulting motivation are in the foreground rather than a financial incentive, although it was clear to all interviewees that the financial setting must also be stable. These farms are characterised by special flexibility, which is also reflected in their decision-making processes, which are usually not formalised and efforts are made to raise and discuss issues. The focus is on ensuring that the situation in the farming enterprise and thus the practice of social farming also fits all groups or family members emotionally, which allows the separation of areas and competences, leading to greater efficiency and effectiveness in farm operations.

Much discussion focused on the content of social farming, namely the activities that fall under it and how they are to be implemented. Importantly, it requires many entrepreneurial decisions: Should the sale of agricultural products on the farm be pushed or not? Should a farm be reclassified as a socio-educational farm if children are to spend the night in the hay in the stable? It was noted that the lack of clear definitions hinders creativity and motivation and clear, binding guidance is lacking.

Moreover, it seems that certain activities cannot currently be precisely assigned to an agricultural activity. However, this is essential, as without such assignments, social activities cannot benefit from their agricultural focus and if this were the case, these activities would no longer be worthwhile. Similar problems arise in the area of insurance. It should therefore be clearly regulated that social activities within the framework of social farming are to be classified as agricultural activities. A similar risk can arise in relation to therapeutic riding or with other activities such as oil pressing (in this specific case, a commercial activity had to be registered).

These aspects and indications raise a question regarding the appropriate regulation of these activities. There is consensus among the respondents that a suitable legal framework is necessary and it was pointed out that in Austria there is no suitable legal framework for such activities, which is tailored to the needs and particularities of social farming. The respondents stressed that it is often not clear how the activities can be insured (i.e., as a farmer or not). There was also some criticism that in social farming, agriculture is too much in the foreground, while social activities are added later. For example, it may be that the farm has too little land available to bring the activity of educational riding into line with other agricultural activities in a beneficial way (e.g., pastures could not be cultivated because farmers wanted to build a shelter for horses).

It would also be helpful to have checklists that could guide new actors in social farming, as the flow of information regarding social farming seems to need improvement. Many issues concerning reorientation are lengthy and individuals have to approach the activities themselves and find the necessary information, which is often not available. However, the respondents also pointed out that certain public bodies or other institutions (e.g., schools, Chamber of Agriculture, shops, markets, women's groups, youth groups, universities) provide a lot of useful information. Nevertheless, difficulties arise because there is no clear orientation in social farming, which would require a legal framework. Such a framework could also better regulate the flow of information and reduce the bureaucratic burden.

Greencare acts as a private standard setter. On one hand, the respondents view this positively, while, on the other hand, they also stated that social farming would work without such an organisation. Further, they noted that there are controls with regard to first aid, fire regulations, accident insurance, and so on, but so far, they have had benefited little from marketing. Even so, they stated that Greencare offers valuable information and support and explained how the concept of Greencare is very open, encompassing many activities. In this regard, the respondents also acknowledged that Greencare offers many controls. However, while helping to ensure a certain quality, these controls cannot compensate for the patchy legal framework; farms would need to have legal certainty regarding their activities.

The respondents noted that an appropriate legal framework is needed to better represent and promote social farming, specifically to improve opportunities for specific subsidies, as has already been implemented for agriculture in general. The respondents recommend creating a legal framework that takes the financial pressure off such social activities, as this is a prerequisite for the social aspect of agriculture to be fulfilled to any degree. For example, specific spatial or other conditions must be created so that the activities can be carried out.

3.3. Germany

Having analysed the Italian system, which is based on clear legal requirements and the Austrian system of social agriculture, which attempts to compensate for the lack of legal requirements by using a private standard setter, this section now analyses social agriculture as applied in Germany. The main results of the surveys analysed via GABEK are as follows.

The spectrum of activities is highly diverse and providers of social farming define their field of work relatively independently, even though the focus of all activities is on the interaction between nature or agriculture and people. Social farming follows a certain spirit/value and includes, for example, activities for people who have an impairment (i.e., people in special life situations), with the aim of allowing these people to perform everyday activities, such as looking after animals, collecting rubbish, raking leaves, and taking walks in the snow, so that feelings such as cold and warmth can be experienced. Positive experiences are thus in the foreground. Moreover, there are specific offers for school-aged pupils and those in adult education. The focus is always on the contact between people and nature; an example is trainees qualifying to become curative educators. In this case, the students should learn to see and understand the healing effects of nature and agricultural activity on people through concrete examples and activities; and the guiding principles are animal- and plant-friendly husbandry and cultivation methods.

In all investigated enterprises, which are primarily run as family farms, decisions regarding the necessary coordination of classical agricultural activities and those of social farming are made via consensus and not in a formalised way; the same also applies to the monitoring of those decisions. The relationship within the examined enterprises is fundamentally characterised by trust, so formalised procedures are unnecessary; the respondents stated that everyone knows his or her job and what he or she must do.

In conflict situations, the reality is different. In one case, there was a conflict between generations and decisions are now made separately regarding the activities that are carried out separately. Here, the decision-making process has been formalised in a rudimentary way by means of a lease agreement, which stipulates what the younger generation (the children of farmers) may decide on independently and of their own accord.

To resolve conflicts, it is important to talk openly with each other. Conflicts often arise subliminally and it is helpful if other members of the family business, i.e., those not directly affected by the conflict, also give indications of possible conflicts, because ultimately the problems always relate to the whole family since everyone works and (often) lives in the same place.

The respondents acknowledged that activities of social farming will be successful if the operators have a corresponding social thought or spirit and do not only focus on profit.

However, while such a narrow focus would not work, economic soundness is essential, and thus it is also crucial to ensure the optimised and efficient use of resources for the benefit of social farmers. The respondents emphasised that a farm offers everything for each individual to be able to work, such that everyone can find a suitable niche. In other words, the farm and its resources are the basis for social farming—what the farm produces by itself is used.

Social farming represents a support activity for actual farming but is also part of the main activity. In this context, the respondents emphasised that classical farming is no longer worthwhile or attractive from an entrepreneurial point of view: the farmer only delivers and receives what is given to him or her. For this reason, in one case, a clear decision was made not to produce for large corporations and bulk buyers but rather to market the products directly. Social farming activities have thus been added to break free from the traditional system. Specifically, people with special needs now carry out specific work activities on the farm within the framework of social farming and thus support the farmer in his or her food production, which he or she sells directly. This leads to a win-win situation: On one hand, the farmer finds suitable employees and on the other hand, these people—in this specific case, addicts—have access to an activity that gives them structure and orientation in their lives. However, it is crucial to ensure that these employees can carry out the activities that they enjoy.

The combination of all these different activities requires appropriate training and different qualifications (and the associated certifications) were mentioned in accordance with the activities carried out, such as training in curative education, working as an experienced farmer, and practicing as a curative education nurse. It was emphasised that these certifications are helpful, provide a basis for self-confidence and inform social farming providers that they should or may attract an appropriate wage for their activities.

It is also necessary to take an interest in the situations in which the clients or employees find themselves to better understand their life situations. In this regard, a specific certification could be helpful, allowing social farming operators to specifically develop and expand the necessary competences.

The respondents noted that there is no centralised contact point that can provide all the information to support the efficient and effective implementation of social farming activities. This may also be related to the fact that the term 'social farming' is not clearly defined in Germany and it is therefore not clear who would be the appropriate contact for problems that inevitably arise in practice. As a result, suitable contact persons had to be sought out, with the main contact points being the agricultural office, a public authority and, interestingly, to some extent, Greencare in Austria (the latter was mentioned by two interviewees). Due to its wealth of experience, Greencare can point out specific problems, give specific suggestions, and establish contacts with other providers of social farming to facilitate the exchange of experience. It is helpful to be able to profit from these experiences, as new approaches and activities can be discussed along with many practical problems, which often cannot be anticipated in advance. Networks such as agricultural advisory associations or tax advisors are also helpful in obtaining appropriate information.

A particular motivation to continue on the path of social farming relates to the fact that social farming also helps to positively shape the image of a farm. Such feedback comes not only from the people directly involved (i.e., school classes, children, and people with special needs) but also from other customers of the farms, who notice that a farmer has implemented social farming.

Social farming thus makes an important contribution to the development of a territory in many ways. It gives people a job, helps people reconnect with nature and agriculture and last but not least, enables farmers to remain competitive and thus continue to produce healthy food locally and for the local population. In other words, the entire food production process can be classified as sustainable (a) from a social point of view, as jobs are provided, (b) from an economic point of view, as the farm remains competitive, and (c) from an ecological point of view, as ecological issues strongly gain the upper hand due to strong

customer loyalty. All these factors foster a special motivation to continue farming. However, this alone is not enough.

It is necessary to improve funding opportunities so that social farming services can be offered. This is justified, among other factors, by the fact that agriculture has been proven to have positive effects on different groups of people. Special financial support is also important, for example, for necessary conversion work so that people with special needs can carry out activities on the farm (e.g., changing rooms). Capacity building also needs to be improved because people who offer social farming must have very specific know-how so that they can carry out these activities effectively. This requires specific training, which should be promoted accordingly and certified uniformly.

A unifying legal framework is thus essential, encompassing aspects such as financing, qualifications, and the definition of services in a transparent way, to inform the development of support measures. Two respondents explicitly emphasized that a particular contributor to uncertainty is that a farmer often does not know whether he or she is fully insured. A uniform legal framework would also help social farming activities develop and grow because of the security that a legal framework can and should provide. Building on this, the advisory services of the various network partners could also be offered in a more targeted and comprehensive way.

4. Discussion

The different models of social farming studied here are based on similar economic and ethical ideas and values, resulting in a very specific motivation that goes beyond economic incentives, although such incentives form the basis for all activities. The empirical analyses showed both a consistent and inconsistent picture. It is notable that in less-regulated approaches, the discussion about values is conducted in more detail. One reason for this may be that in such settings, a specific discussion of values is required, possibly to justify one's own actions, whereas in legal systems that have developed a specific law, a detailed discussion of values is no longer necessary; here, the legislator has already recognised the importance of social farming for society in general.

Regarding aims, all interviewees generally pointed to the economic development opportunities that social farming offers a farm. Social farming is adopted to make better use of existing resources and to provide specific work opportunities on the farm for other family members, therein offering instruments for making better overall use of a small agricultural enterprise, which is often run as a family business.

All the different possibilities are an expression of the multifunctionality of agriculture and part of a holistic approach, which in itself is nothing new and has in fact always been an important aspect of agriculture. Furthermore, the combination of social farming and conventional farming has shown that specific topics such as sustainability, local cycles, or animal-friendly husbandry are gaining importance, thus showing the future viability of this model. It also results in increased motivation to continue performing agricultural activities in the form of social farming activities. The actors are aware that they have a positive effect on the territory surrounding them while performing their activity.

Questions regarding decisions and conflict resolution, but also in relation to the actors, helped to gain a more precise insight into the processes of the activities. The companies considered in this study are small and family businesses characterised by a high degree of non-formalised structures regarding their structural and procedural organization, which is not uncommon (Froschauer and Lueger 2015, pp. 193, 197). This is evident in their decision-making and conflict-resolution processes.

The organisation of the enterprise is often informal and simple organisational tools are used, such as a common lunch table, common dinners, and a wall calendar. Such tools are sufficient, especially since the number of members of such organisations is generally small, while proximity, transparency, and typically trust are factors that strongly favour informal structures or do not require formalisation (Froschauer and Lueger 2015).

The instruments for conflict resolution are similarly informal, although there is a willingness to seek external help, for example, through mediators. Certain conflicts, namely, generational conflicts, seem to be more difficult to manage. In many cases, different entrepreneurial mindsets clash, which cannot be easily reconciled, and traditional structures seem to exist in some instances.

Specific problems can arise because it is primarily the younger generation that wants to promote innovative approaches such as social farming. However, according to the statements of the interviewees, since social farming activities should by their very nature have a connection to traditional activities and must also be of service in their implementation, such conflicts are not easily resolved.

Appropriate, targeted external advice is also important for success, emphasising the importance of external actors: advisory services for agricultural enterprises wishing to engage in social farming can provide important information on how to develop social farming. Such services can provide important information regarding how to carry out farming in general and social farming in particular. This includes advice as well as specific training opportunities to be able to carry out social farming effectively, while also helping to reduce entrepreneurial risk due to the improved legal certainty and, consequently, to increase competitiveness. Otherwise, the interviewees were critical of the fact that there is a danger that such social activities might be lost in a market economy.

These rather general statements can be found in all models, regardless of whether there is a specific legal framework. The question concerning a suitable legal framework particularly arises in questions dealing with the implementation and design of social farming activities and it is here that the three different models and their approaches to social farming come into play in more detail.

Various models of social farming are embedded in different legal frameworks. For example, in one model (Germany), no guidelines are provided externally (i.e., either by law or by private standard setters), although in some cases standard setters from neighbouring countries are consulted. In these situations, the respondents noted that a suitable legal framework could provide security in the practice of social farming, relating both to security in the market, meaning the activity is easily recognisable by clients, and internal security, meaning the operators of social farming have legal clarity regarding what they are allowed to do and the risks their activity entails.

In the second model (Austria), there are external standard setters (i.e., organisations that define quality standards that must be fulfilled if an operator of social farming wants to have these activities certified). The focus is thus on quality standards that are created by private actors and which are supposed to ensure that the different activities have specific quality and safety characteristics. In these cases, however, there was also criticism that the legal requirements that need to be respected are inconsistent and in many cases, there are no appropriate contact points to help identify the applicable requirements and implement them efficiently and effectively. Here, too, the respondents noted that a specific legal framework could greatly facilitate the exercise of social farming activities and provide legal certainty. Such clarity could subsequently encourage other agricultural enterprises to direct their existing resources towards social farming activities.

In the third model considered here (South Tyrol/Italy), there were specific legal requirements with the aim of identifying social farming as a specific area of agricultural activity and facilitating the exercise of such activities. The actors interviewed confirmed the advantage of suitable legal frameworks, although, here, too, a problem specific to small farms became apparent: The farms are characterised by a large amount of work, which can only be managed if all members of the organisation interact well with each other. This requires that all members of the organisation identify with the objectives of the organisation, which in this case are the general objectives of agriculture and the specific one of social farming. The advantages of specific legal frameworks are that they provide clarity about what is necessary to carry out the activities correctly, that is, in accordance with the rules and that specific training opportunities can be defined based on legal requirements.

The law thus supports the qualitative development of these activities and gives customers the assurance that the activities offered are certified activities that they can rely on. In addition, a clear, specific legal framework allows for the promotion of social farming by public authorities, as well as targeted and comprehensive advice from external consultants.

This is also a specific advantage that can only be generated if clear legal guidelines are in place (O'Connor et al. 2010, p. 40 f.; Raiser 2019, p. 185 ff.). The specific promotion of these activities makes a lot of sense, as social farming can be used to help specific people, such as children, the elderly, and people with special needs. Social farming can take over such activities using existing resources in a targeted, effective, and efficient way. This can also strengthen social structures in rural areas and promote the development of rural areas in general.

A clear legal framework could also have a beneficial effect on internal conflict resolution (Raiser 2019, p. 186), as questions about the appropriateness and implementation of these (new) activities in a traditional agricultural business are easier to answer when there are clearly established legal structures. A clear legal framework could be helpful in that the interplay of activities and the need for this interplay can be presented more clearly, which should ultimately have a positive effect on the allocation of tasks in the agricultural enterprise.

So, how can a suitable legal framework be designed based on EU law?

As mentioned in the introduction, there are similar but ultimately not completely uniform concepts of social farming across Europe. In line with this, the EESC (2013, p. 45 f.) has already emphasised significant differences between national experiences. In some cases, the role of public or health institutions in the definition of activities prevails; in others, the model of private companies dedicated to sociotherapeutic activities prevails; and in further examples, non-profit social cooperatives and agricultural enterprises coexist. Due to the complexity of this phenomenon, an excessively restrictive definition should thus be avoided to prevent a reality that is constantly transforming from being confined within overly rigid limits (EESC 2013, p. 44; van Elsen 2020, p. 55): the empirical analyses of this study show similar results and suggest an open, less strict approach.

Full harmonisation therefore does not currently seem possible (EESC 2013). Briefly summarised, on one hand, this is due to partly differing concepts and the various associated legal anchors in social, subsidy, company, and tax law. On the other hand, although the analyses show a uniform core of activities that can also be represented within the framework of multifunctional agriculture, a uniform EU-wide definition of social agriculture also appears inadvisable because there is no uniform definition of agriculture or agricultural activities (as mentioned, the EU primarily focuses on products and not on activities). A basic condition for defining social agriculture uniformly throughout the EU is thus missing.

I argue that it would be helpful to further develop the existing system by obliging Member States to define social farming in a similar way to Article 4 par. 5 Reg. 2021/2115 regarding the 'active farmer'. In this case, the specifications chosen are rather loose, yet focused on an enabling environment:

> "'Active farmer' shall be determined in such a way as to ensure that support is granted only to natural or legal persons . . . When determining who is an 'active farmer', Member States shall apply objective and non-discriminatory criteria, such as income tests, labour inputs on the farm, company object and inclusion of their agricultural activities in national or regional registers. Such criteria may be introduced in one or more forms chosen by Member States, including through a negative list disqualifying a farmer from being considered to be an active farmer."

In a similar (open) way, Member States should be encouraged to define at a national level which activities are to be subsumed under the term 'social farming' and care should be taken that these activities take a subordinate (serving) position within the meaning of the multifunctionality of agriculture. This may mean that some of the activities found in this study cannot be legally recognised as such, at least not under the approach proposed here. However, this seems necessary to ensure that social farming is eligible for support

under the CAP, as derived from Art. 38 ff. TFEU (Scuderi et al. 2014, p. 76; Di Iacovo and O'Connor 2009; Martinez 2021; Miribung 2020b, p. 86). The focus must therefore be on agricultural activities, not social activities.

Furthermore, the European legislature should provide Member States with specific possibilities for support under Pillar II, which go beyond the general requirements—by this I mean the interventions under Art. 69 et seq. Reg. 2021/2115, which were briefly mentioned in the introductory part of this study. Through more specific interventions, social farming can be better established. Indeed (and unfortunately), provisions such as those in Art. 35 para. 1 lit. k of the repealed Reg. 1305/2013 cannot be found in the new CAP Regulation 2021/2115 but would make the idea of social farming more visible and be very useful when designing content. A framework defined in this way provides an open concept into which the various national legal approaches can be coherently integrated and which can, for example, be coordinated with the respective national fiscal provisions. Moreover, due to the clarity gained regarding permitted activities, this would also open up the possibility of suitable insurance coverage.

All of this would result in more legal certainty and fewer bureaucratic hurdles. In this approach, it is ultimately left to Member States to decide which social farming activities are recognised as such, provided that the connection between agriculture and social activities (in the sense of multifunctionality) persists.

Member States should also ensure that suitable advisory structures (cf. also Art. 15 of Reg. 2021/2115) are established for the activities thus identified. This is necessary to ensure an enabling environment. Appropriate advisory services could reduce (generational) conflicts between agricultural family members, place the activities on a sound economic footing, aid in obtaining appropriate subsidies, and last but not least, help to establish a quality control system based on a legal foundation.

Ultimately, as the analyses performed here have shown, the legal establishment of social farming within the CAP can help to achieve other EU goals, such as the establishment of local economic cycles, the creation of jobs in rural areas, and better animal welfare (De Vivo et al. 2019; Cork 2.0. 2016; Nicolosi et al. 2021; Nazzaro et al. 2021, p. 7 f.; Tulla et al. 2014), thus highlighting why social farming is worthy of support.

5. Conclusions

Based on an empirical analysis of different concepts of social farming linked to different legal systems, this study attempted to outline a way in which rules can be designed at the European level such that social farming can be embedded in a unifying legal framework within the EU. To this end, various models of social farming were analysed, with a focus on the (a) aim of the organisation, (b) actors within the organisation and those within the wider organisational environment, and (c) communication and decision-making structures.

This study has shown that a specific initiative by the EU is a necessary and desirable objective; however, full harmonisation seems neither expedient nor possible (not least because of the various types of social farming). It is important to impose an obligation on the Member States to compile a catalogue of activities that are to be covered by the term social farming in a given legal system. The pivotal point here is the multifunctional idea of agriculture, which also means that social agriculture ultimately has to provide support for traditional agricultural activities. This could also lead to certain activities that are currently regarded as social farming in certain Member States no longer being referred to as such in the future. However, this does not prevent them from being regulated within the framework of another conceptual category that embeds care measures in agriculture.

This approach could be used to promote social farming systematically. Like many other studies (e.g., EESC 2013; Nazzaro et al. 2021, p. 11), this research illustrates the usefulness of such a regulation but goes beyond previous analyses by elaborating a regulatory proposal that should be possible under European law. The main feature of this proposal is the implementation of an open, subsidiary approach to do justice to the versatility of social farming.

Finally, considering the exploratory nature of this study, a micro-comparison of the applicable individual legal rules was not performed. Future studies may go further and include, for example, an examination of the European and national rules on subsidies. An in-depth analysis could also address tax law, among many other issues, as the respective tax regimes may promote or hinder certain developments.

Funding: This research was funded by Free University of Bozen grant number ReSoFa.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The Study has been approved by the ETHICS RESEARCH COMMITTEE of Free University of Bozen-Bolzano on 25/10/2021, Prot. n. 6/2021. No ethical issues are risen. The project is approved.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: Data is unavailable due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

Argyrou, Aikaterini. 2017. Making the Case for Case Studies in Empirical Legal Research. *Utrecht Law Review* 13: 95–113. [CrossRef]
Baer, Susanne. 2021. *Rechtssoziologie. Eine Einführung in die interdisziplinäre Rechtsforschung*, 4th ed. Baden-Baden: Nomos.
Baldwin, John, and Gwynn Davis. 2005. Empirical Research in Law. In *The Oxford Handbook of Legal Studies*. Edited by Mark Tushnet and Peter Cane. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 880–900. [CrossRef]
Banakar, Reza. 2000. Reflections on the Methodological Issues of the Sociology of Law. *Journal of Law and Society* 27: 273–95. [CrossRef]
Bassi, Ivana, Federico Nassivera, and Lucia Piani. 2016. Market opportunities for social farms. *Italian Review of Agricultural Economics* 71: 97–110. [CrossRef]
Canfora, Irene. 2017. L'agricoltura come strumento di welfare. Le nuove frontiere dei servizi dell'agricoltura sociale. *Diritto Agroalimentare n. 1* 2017: 5–25.
Cork 2.0. 2016. DECLARATION "A Better Life in Rural Areas". Paper presented at the Cork 2.0 Conference, Cork, Ireland, September 5–6; Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
De Vivo, Carmela, Michela Ascani, and Marco Gaito. 2019. Social Farming and inclusion in EU ESI Funds programming. *Italian Review of Agricultural Economics* 74: 53–60.
Di Iacovo, Francesco. 2020. Social Farming Evolutionary Web: From Public Intervention to Value Co-Production. *Sustainability* 12: 5269. [CrossRef]
Di Iacovo, Francesco, and Deirdre O'Connor. 2009. *Supporting Policies for Social Farming in Europe. Progressing Multifunctionality in Responsive Rural Areas*. Firenze: ARSIA.
Di Iacovo, Francesco, Roberta Moruzzo, and Cristiano Rossignoli. 2018. Social farming and policies in Tuscany, between social innovation and path dependency. *Italian Review of Agricultural Economics* 73: 107–31. [CrossRef]
EESC. 2013. *Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on 'Social Farming: Green Care and Social and Health Policies' (Own-Initiative Opinion)*. Brussels: European Economic and Social Committee.
Elings, Marjolein, Deidre O'Connor, Siebe Briers, Catie Burlando, and Ilaria Doimo. 2022. Social Agriculture in Selected EU Countries: A Market Outlook. *European Countryside* 14: 439–55. [CrossRef]
Epstein, Lee, and Gary King. 2002. The Rules of Inference. *The University of Chicago Law Review* 69: 1–133. [CrossRef]
Fazari, Erika, and Dario Musolino. 2022. Social farming in high mountain regions: The case of the Aosta Valley in Italy. *Economia agro-Alimentare* 24: 1–33. [CrossRef]
Froschauer, Ulrike, and Manfred Lueger. 2015. Informalität als organisationaler Basisrhythmus. In *Formalität und Informalität in Organisationen*. Edited by Victoria von Groddeck and Sylvia Marlene Wilz. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, pp. 191–213. [CrossRef]
Galligan, Denis J. 2010. Legal Theory and Empirical Research. In *The Oxford Handbook of Empirical Legal Research*. Edited by Peter Cane and Herbert M. Kritzer. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 976–1001. [CrossRef]
Green Care Austria. 2023. Available online: https://www.greencare-oe.at/ (accessed on 8 November 2023).
Hassink, Jan, and Majken van Dijk, eds. 2006. *Farming for Health*. Dordrecht: Springer. [CrossRef]
Jarábková, Jana, Marcela Chrenekova, and Lukáš Varecha. 2022. Social Farming: A Systematic Literature Review of the Definition and Context. *European Countryside* 14: 540–68. [CrossRef]
Knapik, Wioletta. 2018. The innovative model of Community-based Social Farming (CSF). *Journal of Rural Studies* 60: 93–104. [CrossRef]
Martinez, J. 2021. Art. 39 AEUV. In *EUV/AEUV. Das Verfassungsrecht der Europäischen Union mit Europäischer Grundrechtecharta*. Edited by Christian Calliess and Matthias Ruffert. München: Beck, pp. 770–76.

Miribung, Georg. 2016. Genossenschaftliche Netzwerke in Südtirol: Versuch einer rechtssoziologischen Betrachtung. In *Rechtstatsachenforschung-Heute, Tagungsband 2016. Recht & Gesellschaft: Forschungsstand, Perspektiven, Zukunft: Tagungsband 2016*. Edited by Michael Ganner, Caroline Voithofer, Julia Dahlvik, Andrea Fritsche, Walter Fuchs, Hemma Mayrhofer and Axel Pohn-Weidinger. Innsbruck: Innsbruck University Press, pp. 179–218.

Miribung, Georg. 2020a. Agro-Food Production and Climate Change: Some Reflections on the New CAP. *EFFL (European Food and Feed Law Review)* 15: 126–37.

Miribung, Georg. 2020b. Defining Agricultural SCEs with Several Steps. In *The Agricultural Cooperative in the Framework of the European Cooperative Society*. Edited by Georg Miribung. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 85–201.

Miribung, Georg. 2020c. Research Background. In *The Agricultural Cooperative in the Framework of the European Cooperative Society*. Edited by Georg Miribung. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 1–46.

Murray, Jenni, Nyantara Wickramasekera, Marjolein Elings, Rachel Bragg, Cathy Brennan, Zoe Richardson, Judy Wright, Marina G. Llorente, Janet Cade, Darren Shickle, and et al. 2019. The impact of care farms on quality of life, depression and anxiety among different population groups: A systematic review. *Campbell Systematic Reviews* 15: e1061. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

Nazzaro, Concetta, Anna Uliano, and Giuseppe Marotta. 2021. Drivers and Barriers towards Social Farming: A Systematic Review. *Sustainability* 13: 14008. [CrossRef]

Nicolosi, Agata, Valentina Rosa Laganà, Donatella Di Gregorio, and Donatella Privitera. 2021. Social Farming in the Virtuous System of the Circular Economy. An Exploratory Research. *Sustainability* 13: 989. [CrossRef]

O'Connor, Deirdre, Mara Lai, and Sarah Watson. 2010. *Overview of Social Farming and Rural Development Policy in Selected EU Member States. NRN Joint Thematic Initiative on Social Farming December 2010*. Brussels: European Network for Rural Development.

Preisendörfer, Peter, ed. 2016. Einführung: Organisationssoziologie im Überblick. In *Organisationssoziologie*. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, pp. 1–17. [CrossRef]

Prete, Filomena. 2020. Le attività dell'agricoltura sociale in Italia, tra legislazione regionale e decreto di attuazione della legge naziona. *Diritto agroalimentare* 2: 367–98.

Raiser, Thomas. 2019. *Grundlagen der Rechtssoziologie*, 5th ed. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Riles, Annelise. 2019. Comparative Law and Socio-Legal Studies. In *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Law*. Edited by Mathias Reimann, Reinhard Zimmermann and Annelise Riles. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 771–804. [CrossRef]

Ruiner, Caroline. 2020. Bedeutende empirische Studien der Organisationsforschung und deren Beitrag zur Theorieentwicklung. In *Handbuch Organisationssoziologie*. Edited by Maja Apelt, Ingo Bode, Raimund Hasse, Uli Meyer, Victoria V. Groddeck, Maximiliane Wilkesmann and Arnold Windeler. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, pp. 1–16. [CrossRef]

Scuderi, Alessandro, Giuseppe Timpanaro, and Salvatore Cacciola. 2014. Development policies for social farming in the EU-2020 strategy. *Quality-Access to Success* 15: 76–82.

Tulla, Antoni Francesc, Ana Vera, Anna Badia, Carles Guirado, and Natàlia Valldeperas. 2014. Rural and regional development policies in Europe: Social farming in the common strategic framework (Horizon 2020). *Journal of Urban and Regional Analysis* 6: 35–52. [CrossRef]

van Elsen, Thomas. 2020. Perspektiven Sozialer Landwirtschaft in Europa. In *Perspektiven der Sozialen Landwirtschaft unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Entwicklungen in Italien*. Edited by Susanne Elsen, Sergio Angeli, Armin Bernhard and Sara Nicli. Bozen-Bolzano: BU PRESS, pp. 39–60.

Webley, Lisa. 2010. Qualitative Approaches to Empirical Legal Research. In *The Oxford Handbook of Empirical Legal Research*. Edited by Peter Cane and Herbert M. Kritzer. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 926–50. [CrossRef]

Wiesinger, Georg, Erika Quendler, and Christian Hoffmann. 2013. *Soziale Landwirtschaft. Situation und Potenziale einer Form der Diversifizierung land- und forstwirtschaftlicher Betriebe in Österreich, Südtirol und Trentino*. Vienna: Bundesanstalt für Bergbauernfragen.

Zelger, Josef. 2019. Einführung. In *Erforschung und Entwicklung von Communities*. Edited by Josef Zelger. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, pp. 1–19. [CrossRef]

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.