



# Social Farming Rural Development Strategy

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## ABSTRACT

The paper follows two main objectives: to understand farmers' perception and image of social services and to identify communication levers in order to improve the perceived image of social farming. Orientations in terms of communication are product-focused and aim at enhancing the reputation of social farming consequently with impact on rural development. This paper conducted a questionnaire survey of Romanian farmers' perception toward social agricultural. The empirical study indicated that farmers shown different awareness to social farming.

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## 1. Introduction

This paper purpose is to investigate and analyze social farmers' awareness, purchasing behaviour, based on an empirical survey.

The social agriculture includes all agricultural activities using resources both from plants and animals, in order to promote or generate therapy, rehabilitation, social inclusion, education and social services in rural areas. However, strictly linked to agriculture where groups of people can stand to work together for social family farms.

Social farming can also be regarded as a service provided by subsistence agriculture. This does not mean a reduction in quality of services in poorer areas, but rather serve as a way to improve their effectiveness by linking formal and informal professional services with more than one non-professional (Armstrong, 2000).

Social farming is an emerging concept in Europe that includes various participants interested in its development: farmers, farmer organizations, users of services provided by farms social welfare service providers and other health stakeholders in social and health and local, regional and national.

This is an innovative approach located within two concepts based multifunctional agriculture and social community. Social agriculture includes all agricultural activities using resources both from plants and animals, in order to promote (or generate) social services in rural areas. Examples of services are rehabilitation, therapy, job protected, lifelong education and other activities that contribute to social inclusion.

Social farming is a new concept and also traditional. It comes from traditional rural systems before modernizing agriculture and increasing civil service system. In today's concept was substantially reformed in an innovative way in evolution.

The main products of social agriculture, in addition to marketable products are health and employment, education or therapy. Agriculture provides opportunities for people to participate in various rhythms of day and year, either in domestic livestock. Social agriculture includes agricultural enterprises which integrate people with physical, mental or emotional, firm, providing openings for the socially disadvantaged, for young offenders or those with learning difficulties, people with drug addictions, senior long-term unemployed and actively citizens, strong schools and kindergartens, and more. Disease prevention, inclusion and a better quality of life are features of social farming.

The added value of social farming enables disadvantaged people to be integrated in a living context. The presence of farmers, contact and relationship with people, animals and vegetable crops, specific responsibilities of the person using the service are some of the key features of the social practices of agriculture. (Di Iacovo, 2003).

The financial and ensuing economic crisis has had negative impacts on the majority of enterprises; however, cooperative enterprises around the world are showing resilience to the crisis. Financial cooperatives remain financially sound; consumer cooperatives are reporting increased turnover; worker cooperatives are seeing growth as people choose the cooperative form of enterprise to respond to new economic realities.

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Cooperation is often confused with cooperatives. This is a mistake. We observed a wide range of experiences of cooperation, not involving cooperatives, and usually sound actually more successful than cooperative.

The idea of "cooperative" (or production team) still produces negative feelings among farmers. Even if the old style unions have lost much of their power from the mid-1990s, farmers still remember and therefore official attempts to foster cooperation meet resistance. In the areas studied forms of cooperation are extremely varied, cooperative groups covers a wide range of activities and, in some cases, cooperatives and cooperative groups overlap, so define the content and form another form.

## **2. Material and methods**

Following study is conducted by the researcher to find out the behavior of the farmers, to analyze the preference of farmers, farmer awareness. Descriptive research design was adopted and the data is collected through primary and secondary sources. The method adopted for conducting survey is questionnaire; Simple random sampling technique was adopted for selecting the farmers.

Farmers' perception to the social farming included value, which were influenced by farmers' demographic characters and their economy condition, also by their purchase experience and information from others.

Perception is a mental process, whereby an individual selects data or information from the environment, organizes it and then draws significance or meaning from it.

Attitudes cannot be seen; they can only be inferred from the manner in which an individual behaves. Nevertheless it is crucial that attitudes are measured. This is because an individual with a positive attitude towards a service offering is more likely to make a purchase. Attitudes can be measured by observation, qualitative studies and quantitative techniques (or rating scales).

Observation as a process of measuring attitudes, has both pros and cons. Advantages are that on the basis of past experiences, market researchers can make quick inferences. Disadvantages are that the process is expensive in terms of time and money; further findings may not always be reliable and valid. Thus, the method is used to complement other tools and techniques in research, and is generally not used as the sole method of research.

Qualitative studies: Attitudes can also be measured through qualitative tools and techniques that help identify farmer opinions and beliefs as well as their feelings, by getting them involved in open discussions. Such techniques could take the forms of focus groups, depth interviews, and psychological tests.

A host of psychological tests are available that are used to infer and measure farmer attitudes. Projective techniques are used commonly; for example the farmer may be asked to interpret a picture (Thematic Apperception Test), or fill in a dialogue in a cartoon, or write ten-twelve words describing a figure or an image. They can also be asked to complete an incomplete paragraph (as story writing), or write the first word that comes to mind when a product/service or brand is mentioned or shown.

Quantitative techniques, Rating scales or Attitude scales: Commonly used methods for measuring attitudes is via attitude scales. Farmer survey questionnaires based on rating scales are used to measure attitudes quantitatively. The most commonly used attitude scale is the Likert scale, which measures farmer reactions on a five point or on a seven point scale based on degrees of agreement and disagreement, or liking and disliking. Another scale that is commonly used is the one that uses a bipolar scale comprising opposite adjectives at each extreme; this is known as a Semantic differential scale. While collecting responses may be time consuming, rating scales provide a means for quantitative analysis, and thereby lead to reliable and valid findings. However, care should be taken to choose a sample representative of the sample.

Research methodology is the process of solving the problem systematically by research. The objective of the study is to solve the problem by using available data. Descriptive research can be either quantitative or qualitative. It can involve collections of quantitative information that can be tabulated along a continuum in numerical form, such as scores on a test or the number of times a person chooses to use a-certain feature of a multimedia program, or it can describe categories of information such as gender or patterns of interaction when using technology in a group situation. Descriptive research involves gathering data that describe events and then organizes, tabulates, depicts, and describes the data collection. It often uses visual aids such as graphs and charts to aid the reader in understanding the data distribution. Because the human mind cannot extract the full import of a large mass of raw data, descriptive statistics are very important in reducing the data to manageable form. When in-depth, narrative descriptions of small numbers of cases are involved, the research uses description as a tool to organize data into patterns that emerge during analysis. Those patterns aid the mind in comprehending a qualitative study and its implications.

Sample is the fraction of the population; sampling is a technique or a method of selection of samples. The researcher in carrying out this research adopted the most appropriate sampling technique for research that is the simple random technique. Simple random sampling method, it is assumed that each and every unit in the population has equal chance of occurrence or equal probability of occurrence. In other words the sampling units are selected randomly. An unbiased random selection of individuals is important so that in the long run,

the sample represents the population. However, this does not guarantee that a particular sample is a perfect representation of the population. Simple random sampling merely allows one to draw externally valid conclusions about the entire population based on the sample. Conceptually, simple random sampling is the simplest of the probability sampling techniques. It requires a complete sampling frame, which may not be available or feasible to construct for large populations. Even if a complete frame is available, more efficient approaches may be possible if other useful information is available about the units in the population. The researchers have taken 200 samples randomly from the total population. Primary sources of data collected through questionnaire, magazines, journals and website are referred as a secondary source.

Personal interview is the method of contact used with the respondents. Personal interviewing method is used because sample size is relatively small and interviewer can ask more questions. For collecting primary data, method used is questionnaire. It is the most popular method used when the population and sample size are large. A questionnaire includes a number of questions, printed in proper sequence, for presenting to respondents for their answers. Each question is contributing to research objectives. Questionnaire was designed with most of closed ended questions and only few open ended question. It was designed to cater to all areas and aspects of the study.

The data has been collected with the help of questionnaire. And it has been analyzed and interpreted with the help of tables along with relevant descriptions. Appropriate treatment has been done to the raw data and logical conclusions are drawn based on the findings.

The questionnaire survey was conducted with farmers from Braila, Galati, Tulcea, Constanta, Vrancea and Buzau, all being counties of South East Romania's development region, were chosen as the respondents.

200 questionnaires were distributed in above 6 counties and returned 134. After eliminating the validity of the returned questionnaire, 26 questionnaires that incomplete and with logical mistakes were deleted, 106 valid questionnaires were obtained; the effective response rate was 53%. From 106 respondents 82 expressed the intention to develop social farming activities.

All the data obtained from the responses at the questionnaires were transformed into statistics variables and then processed. Descriptive statistics method was mainly adopted to calculate the mean with standard deviation of each variable, and to examine the different levels of farmers' awareness.

The index values of product familiarity were the ratio between each product's familiarity value and the average value.

### 3. Result and discussion

#### Farmer characters

The questionnaire survey gained a total of 106 valid samples and 82 with intention to develop social farming activities. Table 1 shows the demographic characters of respondents.

Table 1. Demographic description of farmers

Demographic Variables	Categories	Subjects no.	Percent, %
Gender	Male	31	37.80
	Female	51	62.20
Age	18-30	24	29.27
	31-40	29	35.37
	41-50	19	23.17
	51-60	6	7.32
	Above	4	4.88
Educational level	<primary school	1	1.22
	primary school	5	6.10
	junior school	18	21.95
	senior school	20	24.39
	≥college	38	46.34

Samples are mostly female (62.20%). They are more inclined to interest in social farming. Women show a higher sensitivity in health and a greater propensity than men. However, the demographic determinants such as age will also be correlated with other determinants such as interest and knowledge of health. The interest in issues related to health and education, for example increases with age. The most common age group was 31-40; educational level college (46.34%). Less than 3 persons had accounts for 50% in the labour number of household.

The education level is correlated positively to the image of social farming. The higher the education level increases, the farmer sees the social farming.

The absence of image of the social farming sector is still seen as a risk by some managers. Indeed, the image can then still be developed and hence be hijacked. To fill this gap in terms of image should therefore be considered as a strategic priority for the social farming sector. Farmers have a confused and slightly negative

image of the social services sector. The image of social farming sector derives from the image of the social services sector.

If a specific promotion of social farming were to be preferred, it should base itself on the positive but often unknown attributes of these types of activities. Indeed, improving the image of social farming sector should be a priority of the public service sector, as it will contribute to improving acceptance of this type of services, on the long term.

Social farming fits with the changing needs of society. Social farming represents a growth opportunity of agriculture and rural areas. After World War II, a strong agric-food sector development was recorded in urbanized regions in Europe. These agricultural and rural areas have changed dramatically (Maris and Veer, 1971). Mechanization, new technologies, increased use of chemical policies specialization led to increased productivity (Veldkamp et al., 2008). These developments have led to an over-specialization and pressures on the environment. This caused the agric-food sector ecological and social limits (Zheng, 2010). In less densely populated areas of Europe, abandoning farms and rural areas has become a problem. There is a great need for more sustainable agricultural production systems, which to the changing needs of society (Xiong, 2010). Social farming is an example of inspiration for a type of multifunctional agriculture more sustainable, referring to social values of agriculture.

There are four different stages in terms of how agriculture developed social services:

- ◆ Statement of pioneering: At this stage, there are relatively few examples. Private farms develops its own projects, there is a low awareness of the society as a whole (Slovenia is now at this stage).
- ◆ Multifunctional agriculture: At this stage of social agriculture is increasing interest in this sector comes mainly from agriculture, there are local initiatives, both private and public (Belgium is currently at this stage, social agriculture is backed by agricultural and rural development).
- ◆ Social farms as a recognized social work: At this stage, there is a high level of interest in social agriculture health care sector. Public health institutions recognize that social agriculture apply to private and public structures. Germany and Ireland are at this stage now. Professional social farms are often developed as a system of care based oriented farms that are part of the health care sector. Private family farms are still in a pioneering situation in both countries.
- ◆ Social farms as a model including: At this stage there are a number of initiatives, strong-integrated society in general, social farms were organized into regional and national networks.

In many European countries there have been important changes to social economy structures. In Italy since the 1980s we have seen a new cooperative structure: social co-operative, which combines elements of the non-profit (voluntary) organization with that of the co-operative. Thus in contrast to traditional co-operatives where members are of one type (farmers, consumers, workers, etc.) members in social co-operatives may be workers, volunteers, community members, municipal representatives, parents of disadvantaged workers, users of services). But the business operates to a substantial degree in the market in a similar way to that of traditional co-operatives. Several thousand of such co-operatives have been formed. Italy, thus, has a favorable context for social co-ops (and co-ops in general) and has emerged as a leader in this form of social enterprise. But the emergence of similar trends in the development of co-operatives and social enterprise can be seen in many other countries. These include the introduction of new legal status the "enterprise a finality socially" in Belgium (1995), the "social solidarity cooperative" in Portugal (1998), the "social initiative cooperative" in Spain (1999), the "social cooperative with limited liability" in Greece (1999), and the "society cooperative d'être collective (SCIC) in France (2001), and the proposed "Community Interest Company" (CIC) in the UK. The replication of social co-ops in other countries has been a development that indicates there may be isomorphic trends across social economy sectors, responding to new situations in welfare systems, for example. There have also been developments of co-operatives in new sectors, such as Sweden, where social co-ops in the nursery or crèche sector take the form of parent or worker owned structures (Borzaga and Defourny, 2001).

Germany has regulations regarding social agriculture. In Slovenia of social agricultural was recognized by the Rural Development Plan 2007-2013. This means that a farmer may continue to act in social agriculture only as a subcontractor of a social institution (Baars, 2008). Social farming is develop in many social enterprises in rural areas, providing rehabilitation and training, and subsidies for disabled (Zakon, 2007). Social institutions (Zakon, 2007), very often using agricultural activities to broaden the range of activities for user services whitout work capacity. The same goes for protection and care centers that are involved in rehabilitating and training, as well as providing sheltered employment.

Disadvantaged persons, excluded from working life, will not have chances to achieve reintegration into mainstream economic and social life, unless they work together with stronger persons, who are ready to contribute their strengths and their resources.

In Belgium, there are specific regulations for social farms. Rural development funds are used to pay farmers for their services. Regulations shall be limited to private commercial farms. Maximum support is 40 euro / day, regardless of the number of service users (EU Commission, 2008).

In Netherlands social farms can gain access to funds in the health sector. They can become an entrepreneur in an officially accredited institution care. Also they can make use of personal budgets for service users. Environmental support is 60 euro / day / person (Matthews, 2008).

In Ireland, there are no specific regulations on social farming itself. However, all organizations involved in providing services through the use of public funds by the state may pay for these services. Germany and Ireland are mainly oriented health sector. Italy, Slovenia and France are more oriented towards social sectors and Employment and the Netherlands and Belgium to agriculture. Cooperatives Irish Society (ICOS) is structured as a cooperative, managed and controlled by a National Council. The National Council is elected from cooperatives States (currently there are more than 150 cooperatives), which in turn represent more than 150,000 people. National Council structure consists of 31 representatives so most representatives of cooperatives in the dairy sector. Established in 1894, ICOS mission is to lead, represent and support the Irish agric-food sector cooperation in achieving its business objectives. As coordinating organization for cooperatives in Ireland, ICOS provides a range of services cooperatives States and represents national and international organizations. The main features are: coordination in organizing cooperatives in Ireland, business development, rural development training. Funding comes from four main revenue streams: government funding, contributions from member cooperatives, fee-for service and operating income.

Networks of English, Scottish and Irish had a funding structure consists of four revenue streams. The most significant impact of the creation of such networks was the way it affected their relationship with the government and how they used their position to influence government policy, as opposed to lobbying for legislative changes and tax favor of agricultural cooperatives.

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English Farming and Food Partnerships (EFFP) is primarily an association formed by members of agricultural cooperatives in England. Revenues are based on fee-for-service consulting and training on behalf of agricultural cooperatives in partnership with the government. It has a small number of members 70 agricultural cooperatives in agricultural cooperative approximately 400 existing in England. This situation is partly due to his lack of maturity as an organization and pressures on agriculture in the UK. However the partnership includes the largest group of agricultural cooperatives as an associate with large food businesses, including recognized brands, Tesco, Morrisons supermarket, McCain, McDonalds restaurants and Waitrose.

Recently established in 2004, EFFP is a network of agricultural cooperatives working in the agri-food supply chain. They combine knowledge transfer in agriculture with expertise in the food industry to provide structural support at trade food system. The main functions relate to business development, regional development, supply chain management, climate change and networking information. Funding comes from four main revenue streams: government funding, contributions from member cooperatives, fee-for service and operating income.

Agricultural cooperative networks Scottish and English received almost half of their annual revenues from government contracts while their business models pursued gradually shift from government dependence to independence and long-term durability.

In the UK, the Department of Trade and Industry has established a Social Enterprise Unit. Part of the motivation of promoting social enterprise is an interest in reforming public services delivery (incorporating co-operatives and non-profit structures into the spectrum of service providers); and partly an interest in involving community/civil society stakeholders combat social exclusion. The activities of this Social Enterprise Unit have played a role in promoting a huge interest in social enterprise in the UK - this can be seen in outcomes such as the development of strategies for social enterprise and new legislation to facilitate the creation of new locally based social enterprise through the community interest company (CIC).

The Community Interest Company is about to be launched as a new legal form in the UK, and it may become an important model of social enterprise. The context for this development is resurgence in interest in mutuality after declines in the co-operative/mutual sectors due to demutualization and poor performance - developments that parallel similar isomorphic tendencies in other countries.

It has detailed a number of modifications to the traditional co-operative form which were initiated to allow it to compete more effectively in global markets: through improving the access to finance, facilitating the separation of economic and social dimensions of the enterprise, and utilizing corporate holding structures to achieve growth through joint venture, merger and acquisition. While competitively may have been enhanced, such measures may also have resulted in a move away from co-operative or social economy values, and in a number of sectors there have been substantial levels of demutualization. However in the last 20 years or so there has been a resurgence of social economy values particularly in new market sectors associated with welfare services. And new forms of social enterprise have been developed in many European countries. This raises the prospect of a resurgence of social economy values reversing the isomorphic trends seen in traditional sectors.

In the UK, new legislation for a Community Interest Company appears to fit within a similar regenerative tendency. However, despite an apparent orientation towards mutualism, it is difficult to argue that the new CIC legislation represents a resurgence of interest by policy makers in the traditional values of the social

economy. Instead, it seems like a very British pragmatic approach to community development focusing on outcomes, but the risk is its neglect of process values will undermine the brand, and miss the opportunity of increasing the capabilities of communities to take part in their own development. Its flexible structure may bring new benefits to disadvantaged communities, but in this strength is its weakness diversity and lack of identity. Time will tell which proves more important.

In the United States during the Great Depression, agricultural cooperatives began to be formed in large numbers. Cooperative farm supply purchasing grew from US\$76 million in 1924 to US\$250 million in 1934, and spread to all parts of the USA. It was around this time that Land O'Lakes emerged as a significant regional dairy cooperative. Also there was a rapid growth in petroleum cooperatives supplying farmers; by 1935 there were around 2000 of them supplying products worth US\$40 million. There was government support in the form of credit, but farmers were encouraged to take control of their own cooperative banks. By 1935 there were 10,500 farmer cooperatives with a membership of 3.66 million farmers (Merrett, 2001). National Council of Agricultural Cooperatives (NCFC) is a network of agricultural cooperatives in the U.S., structured in a similar way as the Co-op tuxedo, with 52 national and regional agricultural cooperatives, representing over 3,000 local agricultural cooperative.

Since 1929, NCFC has been the voice of U.S. agricultural cooperatives. NCFC mandate is to promote the business interests of cooperatives and agricultural companies by:

- ◆ support farmers' position in regard to the control of production and distribution activities in the food chain;
- ◆ sustain the economic viability of farmers regarding businesses they own;
- ◆ natural resource management;
- ◆ support rural communities.

The main functions relate to business development, legal and fiscal support, combat climate change, food security, environmental protection, immigration reform, water resources management, agricultural input supply.

Funding comes from contributions from member cooperatives.

In Sweden after the price collapse of 1930, instead of cooperatives giving way to state marketing boards, cooperative federations took control in farm credit, dairy, forestry, eggs, meat and fruit, presided over by a strong National Union of Swedish Farmers.

In a more recent depression in farm prices in the US and Canada, a new type of cooperative was devised that aligns farmer share-ownership to delivery rights, thus enabling farmers to go into food processing. There are around 200 of these 'new generation' cooperatives, and they have raised the incomes of farmers dramatically and revitalized the local economies of North Dakota, Minnesota and neighboring states. More recently, the BSE (or mad cow) crisis in Canada was the major impetus behind cattle producers in Alberta, Canada forming several producer cooperatives in the province (Birchall, 2003). There are networks of national agricultural cooperative systems across Europe, and Canada (in Quebec but also in Ontario and the Maritime Provinces), USA.

Cooperative networks meet the collective needs of those who adhere to these principles and values, and provide a range of basic services, although in varying degrees of concentration. These basic services include: consulting services, promotion and support of research, governmental affairs and representation, information exchange, education training research and development. Membership structures are different from agricultural cooperatives as members, up to agricultural cooperative associations. Although the principles are similar cooperative networks, main functions, sectors and funding structure are different. The main sources of income are most frequently encountered in collaborative networks are government funds, fees for services, fees from members and operating income. Most European networks have all four revenue streams. In France, for example, membership of a federation of cooperatives was enacted, membership in the network, thereby guaranteeing an income stream from taxes. Canada only version of a network of cooperation was seen primarily as an agricultural cooperative business involved in ensuring price and a sales volume of its members, with a term greater than being representative body for member cooperatives. Therefore, revenue streams are represented in this case the fee-for services and operating income. In Canada, there are over 1,300 agricultural cooperatives in a wide variety of sectors across the country without a national network or organization to meet their specific needs on a collective basis. In the USA, the national network cooperation is based solely on income from taxes.

Through a historical analysis of the development of cooperatives, it is noted that once agricultural cooperatives reached a critical mass, there was a tendency to aggregate and form links across the country. Were also stimulated risks cooperatives to join forces against common threats? In Canada, the consolidation has occurred, but not nationally, possibly due to factors such as differences in geographical concentration in Canada to the smaller size, in Europe. A number of other factors hamper the establishment of a national organization for cooperatives, including uncertainties related to the principles, common needs regional cooperation underlying philosophical disagreements leaders of organizations and interests.

Exchange of information through education and training services have been included among the priorities of all cooperatives. Specific services, such as information sharing and network representation, research training and education are a national necessity. However, most cooperatives have a clear preference for specific services to be available at a regional level. Ability to centralize the development and coordination

of national priority services based on existing infrastructure at regional level effective solution for providing these services. Many countries have successfully developed national networks to provide support in organized agricultural cooperatives: exchange of information and best practice, advocacy, technical support, training and other services specific to the sector. History has shown that the number of agricultural cooperatives became stable during wave specific cooperation actions in times of crisis and uncertainty or low prices. Unlike Europe and the United States, cooperatives and agricultural organizations in Canada do not seek to collaborate on a national basis for the food sector, in turn were organized at regional or provincial.

Throughout their history, a number of factors would seem to preclude the establishment of a national organization for cooperatives, including uncertainties related to cooperative principles, the need for large regional cooperatives, the underlying philosophical disagreements, and to a certain extent, career interests of leaders from a number of organizations. At the same time, as in Canada that in the first half of the twentieth century, farmers began to organize themselves into cooperatives in Europe and the United States. Once many of these agricultural cooperatives in various sectors have reached a critical mass, they seek to achieve closer links between them on a national basis. These networks have their origin in the agricultural cooperative movement that started in Europe and North America in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Agricultural cooperatives are broadly classified as sourcing, marketing, production and services based activity in which 50% or more of their total income is generated by an activity. Examples of these types of cooperatives are presented in the table below:

Last agricultural cooperatives study was conducted in 2003; the study analyzed the evolution of agricultural cooperatives from 1998 to 2002. This was particularly turbulent period in Canadian agriculture as the sector has undergone many structural changes such as consolidation, reorganization, transfer of assets and division.

There are some trends that should not be ignored, for example, the number of agricultural cooperatives remained constant around 1300 for almost a decade, which of course hides fluctuations in the sector, including spin-offs, mergers and acquisitions in the sector. Most assets are owned agric-food cooperatives. Sales of fertilizers and is mostly agricultural cooperatives supply revenue, while revenue from dairy cooperatives are mostly marketing cooperatives revenue. In addition, marketing cooperatives had the greatest contribution to total net value added. However, statistics show that the proportion of debt is higher than the proportion of equity in the capital structure of agricultural cooperatives, particularly marketing cooperatives. This problem was a long-term deterrent in the growth and development of large-scale value-added marketing and processing cooperatives in many developed economies. Funding comes from four main revenue streams: government funding, contributions from member cooperatives, fee-for service and operating income.

The main features are the access to high quality products and services at competitive prices: seeds, fertilizers, equipment, fuel, marketing, processing and distribution (in the grain, pork and poultry), legal services, services training. There are similarities and differences between the main functions of each network. Cooperative networks services covers consultancy, promotion, support the cooperative principles, information sharing, advocacy, and education. Promotion services within the cooperative network are divided into: branding, marketing, information and other. Research services relating to the identification of best practices between cooperatives and cooperative innovation model application in agriculture. Support services refer to assistance of members, based on the principles of cooperation in the management and administration of cooperatives. Representation services cover political representation of the interests of agricultural cooperatives and impact of existing and proposed legislation in the agricultural cooperatives. Service training and education refers to education and practical training of farmers in management and technical agricultural cooperatives and cooperative community-wide, about industry trends, best practices, regulations, etc.

#### **4. Conclusions**

Social farming adopts a multifunctional view of agriculture. The main products, in addition to marketable products are health care, education or therapy. Agriculture provides opportunities for people to participate in the activities of the plant or animal. Social agriculture includes agricultural enterprises that integrate people with physical, mental or emotional, firm, providing openings for the socially disadvantaged, for young offenders or those with learning difficulties, people with drug addictions, long-term unemployed, people the old active engagement with schools and kindergartens, and more. Disease prevention, inclusion and a better quality of life are features of social farming.

Social value-added is the ability to integrate disadvantaged people in a context of social life. Presence farmers, contact and relationship with other living beings - animals and plants, assuming specific responsibilities are some key features of social rehabilitation practices of agriculture. The research results show that farmers have different perception of social farming. The information channels of social farming are mainly from friends, relatives and neighbours.

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