

Social Food Forum

Green Paper

Social Food Forum: Green Paper

As a legacy of #Matera2019 in Italy, a Social Food Atlas and Social Food Forum are launched today to multiply the diverse ways in which the social dimensions of food create relational value that the world needs.□ This Green Paper (discussion paper) explains:

- 1 | Types of social food projects
 - 2 | The value created by social food projects □
 - 3 | The role of Social Food Producers□
 - 4 | Purpose of the Social Food Forum and Social Food Atlas□
 - 5 | Next steps
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1 | Types of social food projects

Social food projects enhance relationships - between people; between people and place; and between people, places, and living systems.

Social food projects enrich life-critical relationships in diverse ways: community meals; social harvest festivals;□ community-owned food hubs; food-waste projects; re-use of buildings & spaces□ as community kitchens baking and brewing networks; fermentation clubs; urban farms;□ edible school gardens.

By way of illustration, representatives of the following social food projects met together in Matera to help draft this document:

AgriNetural, Matera: transforms disused-spaces into productive and social urban gardens. AgriNetural works with local citizens, artists,

architects and municipal engineers to innovate new kinds of agriculture in an urban context.

OpenAgri, Milano: promotes innovative approaches to peri-urban agriculture in order to revitalise a fringe area of the City of Milan and create new job opportunities.

VaZapp, Italy: curates the Contadinner dinner series for young farmers and those that want to get into farming: 20 dinners, 20 farmhouses, 20 young farmers each dinner.

Rete Semi Rurali (Semi Rural Network): an agricultural cooperative that works with farmers to preserve value and enhance agricultural biodiversity in the countryside.

Avanzi Popolo, Bari: contributes to the reduction of food waste by: enabling food sharing between individuals; education; and by recovering and redistributing unused food from pizzerias, marriage banquets, and conferences.

Germinando, Madrid: training, research, awareness-raising and technical support in participatory urban and food system planning.

Mares Alimentación, Madrid: is a food hub that fosters social economy projects in the food sector – cooperative supermarkets, community kitchen, or self-managed logistic centres.

Simra, Scotland: European network of social innovation projects in marginalised rural areas, with a focus on the Mediterranean region.

Sustainable Food Lab, Sweden: diverse groups - businesses, public officials, researchers - explore pathways to sustainability through workshops, events and interactions around the theme of food and food waste.

Urbaniahoeve, Amsterdam: a lab for food and ecological systems in

public space. Urbanahoeve projects include the implementation of a 45 HA urban food forest.

Doors of Perception xskool: place-based workshops that combine social farming, place-based development, and active learning.

Holis, Poland-Hungary: Holis summer schools explore timely questions in rural locations; their interdisciplinary education method fosters social innovation through collaborative creativity.

Atelier Luma, Arles, France: citizens from diverse cultures develop a range of ideas around food waste, food cycles, local gardening, food accessibility, and shared kitchens.

High Nature Farming Link: EU network that develops and shares collaborative innovation in support of farming systems in areas of exceptional natural values.

2 | The value created by social food projects

Our starting point is that agriculture and food are not just about production and consumption. They are about relationships and care, too, –care for each other, care for the land, care for living systems.

These social and ecological relationships to do with food although damaged by modernity, are being re-made by what we are calling *social food projects*. Such projects are about about care, not just consumption. They are about hospitality and connection – between people, and with place. They are a medium of solidarity among diverse cultures.

Public Policy

In the language of public policy, social food projects create public goods in the form of *social cohesion, active welfare, public health, adaptation to climate change, territorial development, food sovereignty, alternative economic models, learning, innovation, and biodiversity*.

Social food projects help governments meet Sustainable Development Goals and climate adaptation targets.

Social food projects enable citizens to participate in activities, at a local level, that increase their *health and wellbeing*.

Social food projects animate many ‘smart village’ projects in which relationships among social networks are enhanced by digital telecommunication, social food projects increase citizen participation in environmental restoration in ways that benefit ecosystem health and more-than-human biodiversity.

Social food projects contribute to the re-valorisation of cultural heritage; they also revive the social fabric and economic sustainability of Europe’s landscapes.

Social food projects are a medium of connection among actors whose language and culture can be an obstacle to dialogue and collaboration: farmers; researchers; public authorities; policy makers; students and researchers; civil society.

Communities

Social food projects are a medium of public dialogue in which diverse groups of citizens can explore alternative futures for their community.

Social food projects are a medium of hospitality, learning and mutual respect among local citizens of diverse cultures.

School gardens and canteens in public sector organisations are sites of social learning that can amplify and accelerate economic localisation efforts.

The exchange of ideas among social food projects enhances a community's capacity for social innovation.

Farmers and food producers

Social food projects reduce the social isolation experienced by many farmers; this enhances their lives and, in consequence, the resilience of a region's food systems.

The direct participation of citizens in farm-based activities can diversify income for farmers. So, too, can the design and innovation of new services that enhance relationships between city and country, farmers and citizens.

Citizen and community-led projects on food waste can reduce the costs associated with resource leakage, and increase farm incomes through the innovation of new products.

Local and regional government

Connecting the cultural meanings of food and agriculture, to stories of person, and place, adds value to tourism in a region.

Social food projects can be catalytic in the relocalisation of food and fibre systems.

Social food projects are central to the emergence of new rural economies; they enable new urban-rural business partnerships. Social food projects can involve socially-excluded people in on-farm activities.

Measuring the value of social food projects

In order for government agencies and other funders to provide financial support to social food projects, they usually require a combination of evocative stories and verifiable numbers to measure the value created. Here are some examples of how such value is being in ways that are useful to both projects and funders alike:

[Growing Health](#) A study by Garden Organic and Sustain, in England, demonstrates the contribution of community food-growing projects to physical and mental health and wellbeing.

[Kilowatt Social Impact Analysis \(Bilancio di Impatto\)](#) Urban regeneration requires social cohesion, trust and positive relationships between the public, the private, the third sector and civic society. Kilowatt publish annual Social Report that reflect on results achieved, lessons learned, and impact created.

[True Value: Community Farms and Gardens](#) The Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens, also in the UK, assesses the impact and value of community farms and gardens in terms of opportunities for engagement, volunteering, training, capacity building and empowerment.

[Food for Life Initiative : Social Return on Investment](#) In Scotland, the Food for Life Initiative provides healthy school meals to primary pupils. Social, environmental and health benefits, and resulting financial values, are calculated using the SROI methodology.

[Local Food Programme: Social Return on Investment.](#) In Gloucester, England, knowledge of food growing was shown to improve diet and physical health over the longer term. Reduced social isolation through volunteering was shown to lead to an increased sense of belonging and improved resilience and self esteem.

Wellbeing and Resilience Measure (WARM) In England, the WARM method “takes the temperature of local communities”. WARM combines existing data about localities, such as jobs and health, with new ways of thinking about how the resilience of communities.

3 | Social Food Producers

Social food projects do not organise themselves. They happen thanks to the work of Social Food Producers and Curators.

These individuals identify opportunities in communities, and explore how neglected assets – projects, places, or individuals – can be connected in events and enterprises.

Social food producers design the conditions for successful collaboration and, by so doing, enable a wide variety of stakeholders to collaborate. Among their most valuable skills are hosting, convening, facilitating, animating, and co-ordinating.

Many social food producers work independently. They can be geographically scattered and socially disconnected – even from each other. Their work is not well understood by public authorities and policy makers. As a result – despite the valuable public goods their work creates – they are economically precarious.

□4 | Social Food Forum□□

Social food projects create value that the world needs. The Social Food Forum is being launched to help Social Food Producers do more of this work, in new places, and with new partners, after Matera 2019 is over at their inaugural meeting during 7-9 March 2019, a working group of 15 social food producers decided to focus on two main ways to achieve this objective:

1) Make social food projects visible:

The Social Food Forum has launched an online Social Food Atlas that makes visible – and findable – a wide variety of social food projects that, until now, have been little known – even to each other.

2) Improve relationships between public policy, research institutions, and social food actors.

Actions under consideration include cross visits between learning sites and offsite experiences outside the usual institutional contexts; expanding the Atlas as an archive of case studies; place-based workshops to enrich alternative innovation narratives; and the delivery of social food courses to emerging project leaders and public officials.

5 | Next steps

Members of the Social Food Forum decided to focus on three action lines for coming six months:

1. Expand the scope and quality of the Social Food Atlas;
2. Expand membership of the Social Food Forum;
3. Consider a second meeting in the autumn 2019 (at the same time experimenting with new hybrid online and offline formats).

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