



FARM' IN

INCLUSION THROUGH
SOCIAL FARMING



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Chapter 3

Networking and Stakeholder Engagement



Networking and Stakeholder Engagement

- **Social farming cannot function in isolation.** By its very nature, it is a collective, cross-sectoral, and socially rooted practice.
- To be effective and sustainable, **it requires the creation of an ecosystem of relationships, trust, and synergies** — in other words, networking with relevant stakeholders.

Identification and Collaboration with Key Stakeholders

What are Stakeholders?

- They are individuals, groups, or organizations who:
- Influence or are influenced by the operation of the social farming enterprise.
- Can offer or need resources, support, or access to communities/networks.
- Can be allies, partners, or even critical observers.
- Mapping stakeholders is a crucial first step for any social initiative.

Benefits of Collaborating with Stakeholders

Benefit	Example
Improved Access to Resources	Collaboration with local suppliers for discounts on seeds.
Expansion of Customer Network	Collaboration with farm-to-table restaurants for increased recognition.
Joint Promotion Campaigns	Collaboration with tourism organizations for agritourism days.
Innovation & Knowledge	Collaboration with universities for new crop varieties.
Financial Support	Collaboration with NGOs for subsidized programs.
Enhancement of Social Image	Collaboration with schools for educational visits.
Risk Management	Collaboration with cooperatives for joint insurance.

Benefits of Collaborating with Stakeholders

1. Improved Access to Resources

Example: Collaboration with local seed suppliers for discounts or free trial products.

Benefit: Cost reduction and improved production quality.

2. Expansion of Customer Network

Example: Collaboration with “farm-to-table” restaurants that feature the farm’s name on their menu.

Benefit: Increased recognition and steady demand.

3. Joint Promotion Campaigns

Example: Collaboration with tourism organizations to organize “agritourism days.”

Benefit: Exposure to new audiences and increased visitation.

4. Innovation & Knowledge

Example: Collaboration with a university for the experimental cultivation of new varieties.

Benefit: Access to research and expertise without significant cost.

5. Financial Support

Example: Collaboration with an NGO or municipality for subsidized employment programs for vulnerable groups.

Benefit: Strengthening of social role and financial assistance.

6. Strengthening Social Image

Example: Collaboration with local schools for educational visits.

Benefit: Creation of a positive reputation and local support..

7. Risk Management

Example: Collaboration with cooperatives for joint crop insurance.

Benefit: Reduction of impacts from weather damage or crop diseases.

How is Collaboration Perceived?

Collaboration should be perceived as a strategic approach.



•Not merely contact or service exchange,

but a strategic commitment:



•joint action, shared goals, and distribution of responsibilities and benefits.

Stakeholder Examples

Stakeholder	Description
Growers / Producers	✓ Local growers and cooperatives
 Businesses	Restaurants and organic stores.
 Public Institutions	Municipalities, regional authorities, and agricultural services
 Educational Institutions	Schools, universities, and training centers
 Schools, universities, and training centers	Organizations that promote social inclusion
 Funders	Banks, investors, and EU funding programs (NSRF/ESPA)
 Mass Media	Local newspapers, radio, and social media

Definition of Networking in a Rural / Social Farm

Networking is *the creation and maintenance of relationships with individuals, groups, or organizations that can contribute to the development, promotion, or support of the farm.*
The goal is to exchange knowledge, resources, and opportunities through mutually beneficial collaborations.

Example

A social farm participates in a local organic food festival, where it meets:

Other producers (for exchanging cultivation techniques)

Farm-to-table restaurants (potential customers)

NGO representatives (opportunities to join social programs)

Outcome:

The farm establishes new partnerships, accesses new markets, and strengthens its visibility within the local community.

Benefits of Networking & Example of Collaboration

- Exchange of knowledge and experience
- Institutional recognition and support
- Broader social and political acceptance

A social farm collaborates with:

- OAED/DYPA for the training of beneficiaries
- The local municipality for the allocation of land
- Local schools for experiential activities



Networking Methodology for a Rural / Social Farm

Step	Description
 Goal Setting	Defining clear networking goals
 Stakeholder Mapping	Classification and listing of potential partners
 Creating a Strategic Message	Clear message about the mission and products
 Selection of Networking Channels	Events, social media, cooperatives
 Relationship Building	Ongoing communication and collaboration
 Evaluation & Improvement	Measuring results and making adjustments

Objectives of Strategic Collaboration

- **Enhancement of social impact**
- **Expansion of reach** (e.g., more vulnerable groups)
- **Multiplication of social interventions**
- **Cultivation of a new social culture** (awareness, solidarity)

- **Enhancement of sustainability**
- **Long-term support flows** (funding, volunteering)
- **Possibility of synergy instead of competition**
- **Building resilience to crises**

Highlighting and Influencing Policy

- A strong alliance of social actors can:
- Advocate for policy changes.
- Document positive impact.
- Promote the recognition of social farming's role at the national or regional level.

Building Trusting Relationship

Collaboration is not a "contract," but a relationship. And every relationship requires:

- ✓ Continuous communication
- ✓ Reciprocity and trust
- ✓ Clear definition of roles and goals
- ✓ Recognition of the value of the other party

Relationship building tools:

Methods	How does it help?
Introductory meeting	Identification of common ground and goals
Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)	Formal or informal framework of expectations
Joint action (event/project)	Consolidation of cooperation through action
Periodic feedback	Cultivation of transparency & relationship maintenance

Strategic Stakeholder Mapping

What is it?

Strategic stakeholder mapping is the systematic identification and analysis of all stakeholders who influence—or are influenced by—the activities of the farm. The goal is to understand **who matters, how much influence they have, and how they can contribute to the success of the enterprise.**

What it means in practice

For an agricultural or social farm, strategic stakeholder mapping involves:

Identifying all stakeholders (e.g., customers, suppliers, local authorities, NGOs, educational institutions, funders, media, etc.)

Categorizing them based on:

Level of influence (high, medium, low)

Level of interest in the farm's activities

Prioritizing – focusing on the most important stakeholders based on current goals

Designing an engagement strategy – determining how and with what message the farm will communicate with each stakeholder category

Strategic Stakeholder Mapping

 Stakeholder Mapping Matrix (Two-Axis Model):

- How does stakeholder mapping help?
- In prioritizing key partners
- In understanding their **influence and interests**
- In developing a **targeted engagement strategy**

	High Interest	Low Interest
High Influence	Strategic partners (engage closely)	Key influencers (keep satisfied)
Low Influence	Community allies (keep informed)	Observers (monitor)



Example:

The **Municipality** has **high influence and high interest** → **Strategic partner**

A **school** has **high interest but low influence** → **Community ally**



“Stakeholder Mapping: Step-by-Step Example”

Step	Description	Example (Social Farm)
1)  Defining the Goal	What do we want from the mapping?	To find 3 new stable vegetable buyers.
 Information Gathering	 List of Potential Stakeholders for a Social Farm	15 Contacts: Restaurants, Schools, NGOs, Tourism Agencies
3)  Influence–Interest Analysis	Evaluation of Each Contact on a Scale (Low – High)	The Municipality: High Influence / High Interest The Local Community: Low Influence / High Interest
4)  Placement on the Power/Interest Map	Categorization of stakeholders into 4 quadrants	Key Customers → Engage Closely Volunteers → Keep Informed
5)  Communication Plan	 Communication Plan by Stakeholder Category	Municipality: Monthly updates & project proposals Restaurants: Product tastings & farm visits
6)  Implementation & Follow-up	Actions, Appointments, Contact Tracking & Outcomes	2 tastings with chefs, 1 educational school visit, 1 application to a funding program.
7)  Evaluation & Improvement	 What worked? What do we change? 	Better results from schools → strengthen partnerships with educators.

Stakeholder Engagement Strategies

Engagement Tools:

- Questionnaires / Consultations
- Joint events / Workshops
- Invitation to collaborate from the start (co-design)
- Creation of a local “Friends of the Farm” council

 Active engagement is not just participation — it is co-creation.

How is a Strategic Partnership Built?

(Part 1/2)

Step 1: Stakeholder Mapping

- Who are the existing stakeholders in my area?
- What values do they hold?
- What needs or capacities do they have?
- What are the shared priorities?

Step 2: Building a Relationship of Trust

- ✓ Before formal collaboration, nurture the human connection.
- ✓ Participate in joint events together.
- ✓ Extend invitations for dialogue, observation, and involvement.
- ✓ Relationships without trust lead to superficial partnerships or conflicts of interest.

Useful Tool: “Influence and Interest Matrix”

Stakeholders are categorized into 4 groups:

- ✓ High Interest / High Influence → Strategic Partners
- ✓ High Interest / Low Influence → Supporters
- ✓ Low Interest / High Influence → Require Engagement
- ✓ Low Interest / Low Influence → Low Priority

How is a Strategic Partnership Built? (Part 2/2)

Step 3: Defining a Common Goal and Collaboration Framework

- What is the shared mission?
- Who is responsible for what?
- What are the benefits and responsibilities of each party?

This can lead to a memorandum of understanding, a joint action plan, or a co-application for funding

Step 4: Public Promotion of the Partnership

- Joint campaigns, events, and posters
- Press conferences or appearances in local media
- Online presence and social media promotion
- Visibility strengthens credibility and invites others to join the collaboration

Step 5: Evaluation and Renewal of the Partnership

- How did the collaboration go?
- What worked well, and what didn't?
- What can be improved or developed further?
- Are there new opportunities?

Flexibility and continuous feedback are key to long-term partnerships.

Examples of Best Practices in Strategic Partnerships



Costa Navarino – Strategic Stakeholder Engagement

COSTA

NAVARINO

Strategy: Responsible sourcing with an emphasis on local products and the development of new local businesses.

Actions: Procurement of raw materials from Messinia; creation of the brand 'Navarino Icons' for local products.

Stakeholders: Local producers, agricultural businesses, municipalities, high-end tourists. Πρώτα το ChatGPT
Outcome: Promotion of local production, added value to the tourism sector, a model of sustainable tourism. Πρώτα το ChatGPT

Source: costanavarino.com

Magna Grecia (Ancient Olympia, Ilia – Western Greece)



- Strategy: Oleotourism — engaging visitors in production and cultural experiences.
- Actions: Tours of olive groves, participation in harvesting, olive oil & wine tastings, cultural events.
- Stakeholders: Family farm, visitors, tourism agencies, local community.
- Outcome: Support for the local economy, revitalization of cultural heritage.

Source: <https://magnagrecia.gr/>

Fattoria Solidale del Circeo (Lazio, Italy)

Strategy: Collaboration on agrivoltaics with a social farm for energy and social sustainability.

Actions: Installation of agrivoltaic panels, dual land use for cultivation and employment of vulnerable groups.

Stakeholders: Cero company, Fattoria Solidale, local community, vulnerable social groups.

Outcome: Economic and social inclusion, innovative combination of energy production and farming.

Source: powerengineeringint.com





Coldiretti / Campagna Amica Networks (Italy)

Πηγή: campagnamica.it

Strategy: Direct sale of producer products to consumers through farmers' markets.

Actions: Over 1,200 farmers' markets, the brand 'Campagna Amica', quality standardization, educational programs.

Stakeholders: Farmers, consumers, agritourism farms, institutional bodies.

Outcome: Enhanced visibility for producers, consumer trust, financial support for small farmers.



CAMPAGNA AMICA



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Mini Case Study: Terre de Liens (France)

Organization: Terre de Liens – Network Supporting Socially Responsible Agriculture



Goal:

Promote sustainable agriculture with a social mission



Method:

Create synergies between producers, local authorities, and citizens

Acquire and lease land to social farms



Results:

Over 300 collaborating farms

Thousands of cooperative citizen members

Preservation of agricultural land and promotion of community farming



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Challenges and Risks

- Goal incompatibility (e.g., differing criteria between NGOs and the farm)
- Bureaucratic obstacles from local authorities
- Over-dependence on a single stakeholder
- Difficulties in communication or role allocation

What We Can Do:

- Clear collaboration framework
- Intermediate “mediators” (e.g., facilitators)
- Option to withdraw without conflict
- Flexibility and alternative partnerships

SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis helps an agricultural or social farm realistically assess its ability to develop and maintain partnerships.

It identifies internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats, to shape a targeted networking strategy that maximizes benefits and minimizes risks.



Strengths

- Collaborations with local stakeholders
- Access to existing social and professional networks



Weaknesses

- Dependence on a few partners
- Lack of clear definition of roles and expectations



Opportunities

- Creation of new partnerships
- Participation in cross-sectoral or cross-border projects



Threats

- Bureaucratic obstacles
- Goal incompatibility
- Loss of trust due to non-transparent communication

Checklist: Are You Ready for Collaboration?



Have you mapped all potential stakeholders?



Is there a shared vision and common goals?



Is there a framework of trust and clear role allocation?



Are there engagement tools in place (e.g., consultations, co-design)?



Do you have a plan for evaluation and feedback?





Reflective Exercise: "What Would You Do If...?"

-  **Scenario:**
The social farm "Land of Hope" has been successfully operating for two years.
- It collaborates with the local Environmental Education Center (KEPEA), an NGO supporting people with disabilities, and has the support of the Municipality. Suddenly, the Municipality proposes to use the farm for other social activities (e.g., a rehabilitation program), without consulting existing partners. The farm feels sidelined and worries about a possible conflict of objectives.



Reflective Exercise: "What Would You Do If...?"

? Discussion or Group Work Questions:

- Which stakeholders are directly and indirectly affected by this decision?
- What would be the ideal framework for managing the situation?
- Who should take the initiative to start the dialogue?
- What is the shared vision that needs to be rearticulated?
- How can trust be maintained among partners?
- What participation or mediation tools could help?
- Are there risks of over-dependence on one stakeholder? How could these be addressed?

🎯 Exercise Goals:

Understand the importance of continuous communication and consultation.

Practice analyzing roles and influence. Strengthen skills for conflict resolution in collaboration networks.

? Questions & Sample Answers:

- **Who are the stakeholders directly and indirectly affected?**

- **Directly affected:**

- The social farm (main organization)
- The Municipality (authority/proposer)
- The NGO collaborating for people with disabilities
- The beneficiaries of the existing program

- **Indirectly affected:**

- Volunteers
- Local community
- Families of the beneficiaries
- The new rehabilitation program



? Questions & Sample Answers:

What would be the ideal framework for managing the situation?

- Immediate tripartite meeting with the Municipality and NGO.
- Establishment of a dialogue framework including all parties.
- Identification of common goals and complementary actions.
- Clear allocation of space, time, and roles.
- Appointment of a coordinator or mediator if necessary.

? Questions & Sample Answers:

What is the shared vision that needs to be rearticulated?

“A rural space where not only food is cultivated, but also dignity, social inclusion, and healing.”

Collaborative use of the farm centered on people.

Activities that do not compete, but rather complement and strengthen each other.



Questions & Sample Answers:



How can trust be maintained among partners?

- Through transparency, mutual information sharing, and joint decision-making.
- Reaffirmation of each party's commitments.
- Creation of a written collaboration agreement (Memorandum of Understanding).
- Regular meetings and feedback sessions.



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? Questions & Sample Answers:

✂ What participation or mediation tools can help?

- Joint workshop (co-design) for the new use of the space.
- Third-party coordinator (e.g., facilitator).
- Questionnaire for beneficiaries to assess their needs.
- Creation of a joint committee to monitor the collaboration

Conclusions

- ✓ Social farming is not an isolated act but a link in a social ecosystem.
- ✓ Its success depends not only on the field but on:
 - synergy with organizations,
 - networking at local and supra-local levels,
 - collective construction of meaning and action.