

‘Spazio Ragazzi’: Social agriculture for young people



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The Italian ‘social agriculture’ model was introduced in the province of Grosseto, Tuscany, in 2009. One of the model’s initiatives focuses on children and young people.



In Italy, social agriculture refers to a range of services available to people in rural and peri-urban areas including: rehabilitation/therapy for those with disabilities; training and job placement; and training and education for underprivileged groups (youngsters, migrants, etc.). Social agriculture relies on the government support and on the participation of the private sector and individuals. Social agriculture is very innovative: it is linked to the management of crops and animals, food production and the provision of services to people and communities.

The ‘Amiata Responsabile’ programme was launched in 2009 in several municipalities located at the foot of Mount Amiata to implement several social agriculture initiatives.

Space for youngsters

One of these initiatives is ‘Spazio Ragazzi’ (Space for Youngsters) which has a budget of €295 323. It is being implemented by the Leader local action group, Fabbrica Ambiente Rurale Maremma, and helped set up a rural community centre for youngsters aged 6-14 in the Municipality of Roccastrada.

The centre, which is now a hub and connecting point for the two involved farms, organises recreational activities for discovering rural life and production cycles.

An ‘educational’ farm explains the productions of vegetables and other agricultural products. The centre also focuses on promoting ways to enhance the landscape, environmental protection, the conservation of biodiversity and the production of electricity from solar energy.

The project also offers summer activities, such as rural camps, and opportunities for children and youngsters to experience first hand the relationship between agriculture and nature during holiday periods. ‘Rural laboratories’ or workshops teach up to 65 young people about the cycle of plants and animals, gardening and beekeeping.

Bottom-up

Spazio Ragazzi is a bottom-up initiative, having its roots in the local community (families and associations). Public bodies, the FAR Maremma local action group and the University of Pisa are also involved, along with the two farms (‘Pietratonda’ and ‘Panierino’) and the social cooperative that manages the rural centre. Several agricultural organisations and associations have also been involved in the project. The structure itself is owned by the Municipality of Roccastrada and it will be managed by Coeso, a consortium made up of public and private bodies, together with the private social cooperatives.

Social agriculture has led to the diversification of farm activities and the engagement of young people in areas of life that they might not come across otherwise. Moreover, the model can be transferred to other rural areas.

‘Spazio Ragazzi’

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