

Social Work's Role in Sustainable Agriculture: Driving Economic Self-Sufficiency and Social Integration

By Hana Donécová¹, Veronika Zvánovcová², Jaroslav Šetek³, Jiří Alina⁴,

ABSTRACT:

In the context of the social challenges of the global space for implementing projects to promote sustainable agriculture in rural areas, agriculture represents significant potential due to its multifunctionality (economic, social, ecological). In the context of agricultural projects - farms - this type of assistance can increase the labour market potential of disadvantaged populations. This is mainly through employment or social activation activities, which help improve the quality of life of socially disadvantaged people, their economic self-sufficiency, and their integration into society. In the context of sustainable development, agricultural projects play an essential role in maintaining social stability and reliability at the macro level. This paper aims to highlight the importance of social work and its position in projects promoting sustainable development. On the one hand, social work represents the position of a "transfer mechanism" between the management of economic and ecological processes with an agricultural orientation and the disadvantaged clients of social projects on the other hand.

Keywords: sustainable agriculture, disadvantaged groups, client-family, human capital development, global space

1. Introduction

Accelerating innovation trends resulting from scientific advances in all spheres of production, service provision, and civilisational development have led to the gradual removal of humanity from natural determinism. Although natural disasters have accompanied societal development since immemorial, humans have played an equally important role. They have ceased to be mere participants in the social system and have assumed the role of stewards of the global ecosystem. This is based on the development of science, technology, and social structures that will enable the impact of human activities to be predicted and the course of the various natural cycles to be anticipated. In principle, this is an entirely new situation, which in the future will be based on the responsibility for the "management" of the planet. All human decisiveness or indecisiveness in the economic, industrial, agricultural, environmental, and social spheres within developed and developing countries will determine the planet's future toward sustainable or unsustainable

¹PhD student at Faculty of Theology, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, Czech Republic.

²Associate Professor at Faculty of Theology, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, Czech Republic.

³Associate Professor at Faculty of Economic, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, Czech Republic.

⁴Associate Professor at Faculty of Economic, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, Czech Republic.

development. Issues related to the sustainable development of agriculture to feed the world's population will play a crucial role in shaping the world's future. Equally important will be the cooperation between the market¹ and the social world, as social work can benefit the development process of countries with high poverty rates (like the situation in Zambia, where the poverty rate reached 60% of the population in 2022) (Zambia Statistics agency, 2023). A collaborative setup, quality aid management, and sincere concern for local individuals are essential here.

Agricultural production also contributed significantly to the widespread environmental devastation in the 20th century due to the massive implementation of modern technologies in mechanisation and chemicalization (Mellanby et al., 2024). This is also why one of the strategic objectives of sustainable development is generally considered to be the achievement of 'healthy,' sustainable, or 'clean' economic growth. In essence, this one is not associated with environmental devastation (i.e., an increase in resource use or pollution), as expressed by the macroeconomic indicator of gross domestic product growth. This is entirely in line with the concept of the Copenhagen Declaration of the so-called Social Summit of 1995, which outlines a strategy for sustainable development, including economic, environmental, and social aspects of growth.

Based on the facts cited above, the problems and challenges of sustainable development have a global dimension. At the same time, status and concrete options vary considerably from one region of the world to another. The above-mentioned fundamental issue for the planet's future cannot be separated from the multifaceted and interrelated globalisation processes and trends. Although the economic dimension of globalisation is currently the determining factor in the development of human society, the social and environmental criteria cannot be ignored, particularly about the prospect of sustainable development of human society. The position of agricultural production in this context (globalisation, sustainable development) is crucial for more than 80% of the world's population living in developing countries² and very important for the population of developed countries³, as evidenced by the scale of agrarian policy measures and their financial intensity (Lapka & Cudlínová, 2009).

After the start of the 21st century, the principles of sustainable development have also been applied to agriculture. Consequently, agriculture in developed economies does not 'only' fulfil a production function but is also gradually taking on other non-production functions, particularly in the environmental and social spheres. The importance of agriculture in its multifunctional dimensions must be seen concerning the overall development of the rural area. Organic farming is an appropriate alternative that meets the principles of sustainable development to address the economic, social, and environmental problems of rural areas. While this is far from solving all of the issues faced by the area, it can contribute to alleviating them by creating new jobs and providing opportunities for vocational rehabilitation of people with specific health handicaps, including disadvantaged people in the labour market, etc. A typical example is the innovative trends in social farming covered by green care, i.e., the all-round therapeutic influence of nature on human

¹ In the context of the study, the market world is defined as agriculture, economics

² a country which, relative to other countries, has a lower average standard of living

³ a country with a lot of industrial activity and where people generally have high incomes

resources. Social farming can contribute significantly to supporting the strategic objectives of sustainable development in the rural areas of the regions of interest. The helping professions' participation in social work and social services and their quality settings are essential for achieving these goals. In essence, close, high-quality cooperation between several disciplines is the only way to fulfil the objectives of green care. The professions mentioned above, in synergy with volunteer activities, thus represent the position of a "transmission mechanism" between the management of environmental orientation technological processes and disadvantaged workers or social rehabilitation clients within social farms.

2. Theoretical Background

The emerging trend of economic globalisation accompanying the economic system of the post-modern type of society means the removal of national barriers to ensure the free movement of goods, services, and capital. As a consequence of trade liberalisation, national economies are being linked within the world system on the one hand and geographically dispersed economic activities through the market for goods and services, capital and labour on the other. This integration trend is accompanied by increased interdependence of national economies, producers, and consumers. However, the accelerating trend of economic globalisation, aimed at maximising profits by achieving the most favourable conditions in different parts of the world (e.g., labour, raw material and energy resources and natural conditions, etc.), is causing significant social and environmental problems in the global dimension. The mechanism of the global economic system thus set up presents undesirable consequences. These can be observed in two forms: environmental as an unsustainable and rapid consumption of natural resources (Heshmati, 2018) and social as a consequence of increasing inequality between countries, regions, and people. This statement is not fully globally applicable. Significant environmental and social problems have been significantly contributed to since the 1980s by the growing phenomenon of the globalization trend, where the consumption of material goods simultaneously represents the main cultural value and measure of individual success. From an economic point of view, the main characteristic feature of the established trend of consumer society is the excess of supply over demand, when it is no problem for producers to produce and supply a large number of commodities to the market. Mass production means a benefit to producers, because in a significant quantity of products they can easily minimize fixed costs, which would unnecessarily increase the price of the final product. The overproduction phase is followed by massaging the public (potential consumers) with a well-thought-out marketing strategy through advertising campaigns and other persuasive practices. In this way, competition operates on the market along the lines of identical, substitutable and completely interchangeable commodities. The advantage for manufacturers is the consumer's ability to consume more than they need, so they often do not examine their consumer willingness, but what quantity of products they can bear (volume discount sales strategy). The Norwegian social anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen defines the mentioned society with the "big wolf syndrome", which is voracious and greedy (Eriksen, 2010). Similarly, the relationship of the consumer to the world and

especially to nature, the Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman compares society to the attitude of a game hunter without respect for balance or harmony, because his only interest is the next catch (Bauman, 2004). This hunter does not consider it his duty to worry about whether the numbers of game will be replenished after his hunt, and if there is no game left in the forest, he will move elsewhere. Consumer society has thus established a lifestyle based primarily on materialistic values. Traditional values have less and less influence on an individual's life, as an individual's lifestyle becomes his private matter. The manifestation of this phase of the development of a consumer society is the obsession with shopping, the desire for objects, the constantly arising needs and the waste associated with all of this.

The integration of markets within the European Union reduces disparities between wealthier and less affluent nations and among the citizens themselves. Furthermore, the opportunity to engage in the global marketplace has enabled economically challenged countries, such as South Korea and Japan, to lift themselves out of poverty. While there are potential downsides to the worldwide market, it is essential to identify these specifically to ensure accurate and factual criticism.

The central values of green care (where the contact with nature is the most important) include:

- Contact with nature is essential for humans.
- Its importance is often overlooked in modern life.
- People can find solace in being in natural places, being in touch with nature, and caring for plants and animals.
- In addition to this comfort, contact with nature positively affects well-being and brings physical, mental, and spiritual benefits.
- Existing or new therapeutic programs could be improved by incorporating these "green" elements.
- The planning, commissioning, and delivery of all health services should consider potential 'green' factors (Sempik, Hine, & Wilcox, 2010).

The main impact of Green Care is on the individual and their quality of life, which is very much related to maintaining mental health. Mental health is "a sense of well-being in which each individual fulfils his or her potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and can contribute to his or her community." (Manwell et al., 2015)

The impact of economic globalisation is particularly felt in the agricultural sector and, consequently, in the rural area, where, in terms of geography, this sector is seen as just one of many human activities. At the same time, natural and the primary economic systems linked to them are predominant in this space. This is demonstrated by the examples of developing countries, where poverty, social exclusion, and hunger are increasing due to the massive export of agricultural commodities. Zambia's economic data from 2022 reveals a nation with substantial mineral exports, including raw copper and refined copper, as primary export commodities rather than agricultural products. The country's economy shows signs of reliance on mineral resources, ranked 96th and 71st in trade and research complexity, respectively. This pattern contrasts with the challenges some developing countries face, where the focus on exporting agricultural commodities

contributes to increasing poverty, social exclusion, and hunger. While Zambia's export strategy is centred around its mineral wealth, the mentioned issues concern other developing nations that heavily depend on agricultural exports (Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2022). The price volatility of these commodities on world markets also causes considerable insecurity for countries specialising in small-scale crops. Some agrarian producers need more capacity to withstand the pressure of intense competition from imported foodstuffs in their local markets. As a result, they are, in some cases, forced to close their farming businesses. Thus, the entry of foreign producers into the domestic market can result in the exclusion of small farmers who are economically and politically weaker and cannot compete with large agribusinesses. Under these conditions, such unregulated competition means a tendency to force agricultural producers to compete through price with others, thereby achieving "efficiency" even at the cost of externalizing costs at the expense of nature. As a result of unregulated competition in local markets, small farmers (economically and politically weaker in bargaining positions) are forced to compete with large agribusinesses at a fixed price. The aforementioned competition process often leads to the collapse of small agricultural enterprises, further marginalization of these farmers and an increase in their economic instability. This is also one of the main reasons for social problems and the overall backwardness of rural areas. In recent years, this has been a characteristic attribute of economics, sociology, demography and geography.

A possible way of reducing the above-mentioned undesirable phenomena in agricultural production and rural areas, which are linked to significant environmental impacts, can be seen in the emerging trends of multifunctional agriculture, which have been taking shape since the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries. In this trend, agriculture is not only a primary production sector that feeds the population. At the same time, it also takes into account the protection and creation of natural resources (environmental function), the maintenance of the cultural character of the landscape (landscape function), the development of the recreational potential of the environment (recreational and touristic function), the maintenance and development of local traditions (cultural function), and the maintenance of the rural settlement structure (settlement function). Agriculture is essential in renewable energy in rich and poor countries. In these areas, there is a growing trend in biomass production, which includes the cultivation of energy crops, the use of bio-waste from crop and livestock sources, and the use of agricultural vegetation to co-locate photovoltaic plants with crop or livestock production. Particularly after the onset of the energy crisis in the early third decade of the 21st century, agriculture has become vital in renewable energy in many parts of the world, including poorer countries. Agriculture fulfils multifunctional economic, social and environmental objectives within their national economies and contributes to implementing sustainability strategies. It undeniably enhances human, social, cultural and natural capital, which is particularly important in global efforts towards sustainable development (Janiszewska & Ossowska, 2022).

Social farming is about supporting local resources, creating new jobs, and being responsible for natural resources. At the same time, it is part of a project to improve the quality of life in rural areas for people with disabilities, the elderly, the socially disadvantaged, children and young people with educational problems, and other

population groups at risk of social exclusion. It is also an integration of social, economic, and environmental objectives identical to the philosophy of sustainable development. The essential vision of Green Care is to improve the quality of life of users by integrating them into society (Haubenhofner, Elings, Hassink, & Hine, 2010).

Social farms can be an alternative use of commercial and agricultural enterprises to improve physical and mental health through normal agrarian activities. Nowadays, social farming enterprises can also be found in the countries of the European Union. The Netherlands is a superpower in European green care (Elings & HASSINK, 2006), and it is building this approach on social work with the community (Jan Hassink, 2009). It understands the concept of community as a unified group of individuals with their life destinies and needs based on environmental influences. The community here represents a tight grouping, with clear rules and opportunities for the development of the individual (Sempik et al., 2010).

Farmers have become increasingly interested in this form of farming, mainly due to a proper understanding of the potential role of farming. Farmers have begun to realise how beneficial social farming can be for people in particular, both socially, physically, and mentally. Equally, social farming is a new opportunity for farmers. They can expand their activities to include alternative service provision and diversify their activities' scope or expand their multifunctional role in society. This link between farming and social activities offers new sources of income and opportunities to improve the general public's view of farming.

Another possible approach, which is essentially based on human (social) rights, is fair trade. Fairtrade is an approach to market exchange that contrasts with free trade. It can increase the market for small farmers and thus also support their social functioning in their living situation (Ritzer, 2007). Fairtrade mitigates the effects of competition small producers face under free trade. These are mainly individuals who need to be equipped to overproduce their products, emphasising quality and community work by certain groups of families. One of the main objectives of this approach is to reduce the proportion of unregulated child labour worldwide. It also addresses pathologies such as exploitation and other forms of social welfare, such as adequate education and social services funding. It also addresses pathologies such as exploitation and other forms of social welfare, such as sufficient funding for education and social services (Śliwińska, 2023).

3. Fairtrade in support of economic, environmental and social development

In the context of the development of fair trade, the social responsibility of producers, sellers and consumers is increasingly at the forefront of the topics discussed. A significant milestone in developing this phenomenon is the presentation of the Lisbon Summit strategy in 2000 (Pavlík & Bělčík, 2010), which included a call for corporations to be socially responsible. However, the phenomenon appears relatively young; its theoretical concepts date back to the second half of the 18th century. At that time, the Scottish moral philosopher and spiritual father of economic theory, Adam Smith, in his famous 1759 work, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, addressed the issue of altruism and empathy, the human need to care for others and the fact that just as the existence of the 'invisible hand of the market' is necessary, so too is the 'hand that takes care of society' (Haski-Leventhal

& Cooperrider, 2018). A link to Smith's theory can be seen in Howard R. Bowen's 1953 (Lee, 2008) book *The Social Responsibility of Business*. Here, he is one of the first authors to refer to the social responsibility of producers, which he defines as "the obligation of businessmen to pursue those policies, make those decisions, or follow those courses of action that are desirable in terms of the goals and values of our society".

Among the pioneers who defined the concept of social responsibility was Archie B. Carroll. Although he did not develop a specific definition in 1979, he clearly defined the different areas social responsibility should include. Specifically, these were the economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic areas (Carroll, 1979). The European Commission's 2001 position paper, according to which social responsibility is defined as the voluntary integration of social and environmental considerations into day-to-day corporate operations and interactions with corporate 'stakeholders', is widely accepted as one of the first comprehensive definitions. Based on this definition, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development comes up with a more detailed specification of interactions with stakeholders, including improving the quality of life of employees and their families, the local community, and society as a whole (Richard & Watts, 2000).

Fairtrade, as a tool to promote market mechanism development, especially in developing countries (e.g., Africa), is one of the tools to innovatively promote market mechanisms and capital human and natural resource development in countries facing dismal poverty. They can directly use this tool in the context of economic development, sustainability and promoting the country's standard of living. Growing consumer interest in sustainable products, which Fairtrade offers, and pro-social behaviour very positively support an ethical and socially responsible market. Consumption of products that maintain fairness and equality contributes to sustainable development worldwide (Yamoah & Yawson, 2023). Producer social responsibility is thus becoming a subject of increasing interest for integration into the strategic management of a business. A socially responsible company builds on three fundamental pillars that parallel sustainable development, namely economic, environmental and social considerations. The pillars above, defining the producer's behaviour and preferences, can be described as a triple-bottom-line principle with the 3Ps since the focus is on the Planet (corresponding to the environmental area), people (corresponding to the social area), and profit (corresponding to the economic area) (Kuldová, 2010). Within these alignments, producers adhere to established principles for ecology, ethics, social policy and sustainable production, and outwardly contribute to the development of society, the local community, environmental protection, ethical business and helping those in need (i.e. philanthropy). Hence, the concept of fair trade is based on cooperation, responsibility and partnership.

In recent years, sustainability and sustainable development on the supply side have been discussed and sustainable consumption. Consumers are also becoming aware that product choice can have an environmental and social impact, so they are interested in the conditions under which a product is produced and how it is disposed of (Kahraman & Kazançoğlu, 2019). The main idea is to create solidarity and equality between poor and rich countries. By setting a fair price for the product to farmers in the Global South, we directly support human rights that guarantee a dignified life. Fairtrade is ultimately a simple tool to improve trade relations between producers in the Global South and consumers (Mook, 2024). It is, therefore, a consumer label, a right whose primary mechanism is to

ensure equal labour exchanges and a minimum price for the product. People can work in decent conditions, at regular hours and in a comforting working environment. Low and Davenport (2007) present the three spheres of consumer interest as follows: the social sphere (human living conditions), the environmental sphere (environmental improvement, sustainable production) and animal welfare (animal welfare) (Low & Davenport, 2007). Since fair trade products provide social, economic and environmental standards, fair trade sales show remarkable development within the world economy; empirical research and fair trade practitioners have suggested that the general public is continuously becoming conscientious and guided by ethical and human purchasing behaviour (Yamoah & Yawson, 2023). Based on environmental issues, it can be shown that the level of social responsibility of the producer influences consumers' decision-making beyond cultural, psychological, social and personal factors. Responsible activities in different areas can positively influence consumer behaviour and make them buy the product. On the other hand, it has also been shown that unethical producer behaviour can influence consumers more and thus discourage them from purchasing the product.

4. Sustainability strategy as a challenge for a turnaround in the agricultural sector

The agricultural sector has long been perceived as a stable food source in the global economy. Together with forestry, the sector produces the oxygen that makes life on the planet possible. The vegetative cover of fields is an essential factor in air filtration, and soil with vegetation is an important factor in the abundance and quality of groundwater. The agricultural sector is, therefore, a matter of food and environmental security at national and global levels. The theoretical concepts of the Copenhagen Security School confirm this statement.

However, the long-established dominance of the productivist model in agriculture and the lack of respect for the natural regeneration of nature, the landscape, or the socio-economic needs of rural populations contributed in the 1980s to calls for changes to ensure sustainability in agriculture, and thus to strengthen environmental security in a global dimension. In the context of these changes oriented towards ecological issues (sustainability of agriculture and rural areas), there is talk of an orientation towards post-productivist agriculture with an appropriate move away from intensification and the promotion of extensive approaches to farmland management.

Within the framework of the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union, we can also see appropriate efforts to change agriculture by introducing the concept of multifunctional agriculture, which can be understood as agriculture in which food production is seen as one of the possible uses of the landscape. The term 'multifunctional agriculture' itself was first officially used in 1993 as a preference for environmentally friendly production methods, landscape protection, and the development of rural activities with the maintenance of employment opportunities. Although multifunctional agriculture follows the model of the 'production' approach to agriculture, it nevertheless strives for greater sustainability. "Multifunctionality" in agriculture is seen as the ability to produce not only food and raw materials for industry but also to maintain rural landscapes and renewable natural resources, protect biodiversity, create employment, and thus contribute to the overall viability of rural areas (Konečný & Hrabák, 2016)".

Opinions on the direction of multifunctional agriculture are diverse. The strong dependence on the agro-political behavior of the state is thus a frequent subject of criticism, because the structure and administrative management of the agricultural sector differs from other policies and shows a number of specific peculiarities compared to other areas of economic policy. These can be specified as natural (dependency on physical-geographical conditions), economic (guaranteeing price stability, imperfect competition, low productivity of production factors compared to the industry and service sector), environmental and landscape-forming. However, a strong dependence on the agropolitical stance of the state can be problematic. This can be demonstrated on the example of economically strong countries and developing countries. While economically strong countries with smaller primary sectors may lean toward multifunctionality in agriculture, developing countries face significant disadvantages due to these dependencies. The same applies to developed countries focusing on the production and export of agricultural commodities.

5. Multifunctionality of agriculture in the Czech Republic

The established agricultural policy of the previous centrally controlled (socialist) economy until 1989 was to ensure food self-sufficiency. It was about producing the required agrarian commodities without respecting environmental aspects. As a consequence of the transformation of the economy from a centrally controlled one to a market economy and the rapprochement with the European Union, Czech agriculture, since the beginning of the 1990s, has found it challenging to adapt to the new social conditions. The return to the mechanism of functioning of the market economy meant significant changes for agricultural production, as there was a need for necessary responses to new conditions and marketing opportunities in terms of their dimension structure and performance. At the same time, due to the significant decline in agricultural production, the Czech economy lost its food self-sufficiency, and the previously unknown problem of uncultivated agrarian land emerged. At the same time, cheap imports of agricultural products from abroad also contributed to the negative development of agriculture. This is also the leading cause of reduced agricultural employment and low wages, negatively affecting rural areas (Grešlová Kušková, 2013).

It is certain that the transformation process of the Czech economy after 1989 was not completely clear and clean or 100% successful. A typical exemplary example was the agricultural sector, the importance of which gradually decreased from the beginning of the mentioned period (as a share of the gross domestic product) with corresponding negative impacts on employment and wages in rural areas. One of the main causes of the decline in agricultural production can be seen with the change in the allocation of the economy's resources to other sectors, especially to the service sector. The opening of the borders of the Czech Republic to foreign trade with food imports from abroad was also significant for the agricultural sector. They meant a loss of food self-sufficiency. The liberalization process of the price system has clearly changed the rules of the functioning mechanism to a market competitive environment. As a result, producer prices paid to farmers fell and consumer prices for consumers rose. The competitive pressure from foreign producers has fundamentally increased. Agricultural subsidies were also phased out, though never

completely. In general, livestock production decreased compared to crop production, the area of agricultural land, especially arable land, decreased. As part of the property changes from collective ownership to private ownership, many difficulties awaited the new owners in how to deal with their newly acquired property (acquired in restitution or during the privatization process). The aforementioned transformation made it difficult for the agricultural sector to adapt to new economic and social conditions.

Farmers were forced to adapt their production methods, streamline their operations and, in many cases, specialise in higher value-added products to maintain their market position. This process was often complicated and required investment in modern technologies and approaches to farm management. Alongside these changes, wages have evolved in the Czech Republic, which has influenced a range of factors, including economic growth, inflation, and structural changes in the economy. In agriculture, which has traditionally been heavily based on family businesses, the evolution of wages has not been as linear as in other sectors. Family farms often need to pay formal wages in the same sense as industrial or service firms, making it challenging to analyse and compare wage trends in this sector (Volaufová & Brožová, 2008).

After 2000, therefore, the Czech Republic is also in line with the strategic interests of the European Union within the framework of the established agricultural policy strategy to strive for the development of so-called multifunctional agriculture, which also uses non-productive functions of the soil, such as landscape, water management, anti-erosion or recreational functions (Věžník, Král, & Svobodová, 2013). Therefore, the gradual development of an environmental approach in agricultural technology can be positively assessed. Thus, "multifunctional" agriculture can be an essential factor in rural development, i.e., environmental and social functions, with the inclusion of new employment opportunities and chances for disadvantaged groups. In the context of the demographic ageing of the population in the Czech economy after 2030, it also represents an opportunity for employment and leisure activities for social groups of elderly people and caregivers, primarily through the possibility of shared jobs within farms.

6. The principle of subsidiarity and decentralisation to meet environmental and social sustainability objectives

Since the last third of the 20th century, the development of the human, social, and natural capital theory has accelerated considerably in developed market economies. Human resources, as the main priority of any society's wealth, represent a prerequisite for achieving set economic, social, environmental, and other goals. They are, therefore, also the focus of attention in the regional dimension. In line with economic theory, they thus represent a unique integration of two roles. The first role is participation in wealth creation, and the second is using the wealth created to satisfy one's needs. Thus, human resources' quantitative and qualitative structure is also a legitimate focus of attention at the regional level. Each region seeks to retain existing and attract new inhabitants to ensure its future development.

The regions represent considerable potential to face the challenges of the global economy, the concept of sustainable development, environmental and social challenges. Therefore, since the turn of the 80s and 90s of the 21st century, their importance has been

increasing in the world, as they represent a significant driving force in the framework of the whole society's development based on knowledge, through which it is possible to analyze the internal and external environment, look for development opportunities and identify potential threats, set development goals, define strategic development concepts and look for appropriate tools for their implementation. For these reasons, scientific and political interest in regional issues has shifted accordingly. This represents the participation of experts to ensure the standards of the quality of life, because despite all economic, reductionist and financial problems, the person is ultimately the center of attention and all the results of decisions are subsequently determined for him. Through a synergistic effect, indicators of economic growth and environmental conditions as part of national wealth clearly indicate this. At the same time, this is where the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of the development of the quality of life of future generations lie.

For the above reasons, decentralisation movements within society based on the principle of subsidiarity are growing in importance as a stratified and delegated solidarity and one of the fundamental pillars of the principle of assistance. The schools of economic theory (particularly the institutional and sociological dimensions) that subscribe to subsidiarity in their concepts aim to establish and find appropriate ways of ensuring the functioning of small, self-sustaining communities. This can be seen, for example, in the so-called local barter project proposed by Michael Linton in 1984 (that's when the term Local Exchange Trading System was coined) (Linton, 1984). The first attempts at the above project were implemented in Canada, Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand. As early as 1993, around 200 microgroups of the mentioned project were registered all over the world. On the basis of sociological, religious, regional and social-psychological theories, especially ecological authors emphasize the validity of the functioning mechanism of community organization. As a consequence of the interaction of interpersonal relationships established in this way, community commitment and the appropriate voluntary integration of social and ecological aspects in everyday activities are encouraged. In this one can also see the prerequisites for the "spiritualization" of the optimum between requirements and the satisfaction of user needs.

Based on these presented facts, it can be stated the importance of supporting agriculture in environmental and social contexts in the region of interest from the point of view of a sustainable development strategy linked by three goals – economic, ecological and social. The primary basis for this is the interest indicators of the territorial units. The value of some environmental indicators is almost the same for all territorial units, others differ partially or completely based on the dislocation of economic activities. For these reasons (on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity) the transfer of environmental and social economy issues from national to regional jurisdiction is justified. This increases the level of participation in the area of interest, where it is not allowed to impose decisions from the outside, which in this case would lead to the destruction of the environment and the social climate.

In these contexts, the importance of decentralization tendencies in society can be pointed out with the implementation of the principle of subsidiarity. The mentioned tendencies can be dated as early as the beginning of the 70s of the last century in the philosophical and economic theoretical concepts of Erich Friedrich Schumacher with the view that "small is nice" (Schumacher, 1973). In the last two decades of the 20th century,

this is evidenced by futurological studies (for example, Toffer, 1980; Naisbitt, 1992), the theory of bioregionalism (Sale, 1985), ecological decentralism (Bookchin, 1992), deep ecology (Naess, 1989), which sees value changes within the so-called green society, which operates in permanent harmony with nature. The common feature of the mentioned authors and their theories is their interest in environmental issues, but also an ambivalent attitude towards decentralization. They do not always explicitly mention this as the event they are aiming for, although it is clear from their theoretical positions that it would be significantly easier to achieve their goals in a decentralized society. The importance of subsidiarity and subsequent participation for an area of interest can be demonstrated using system dynamics modeling methods, as each area represents a complete system with a target behavior. In combination with an interdisciplinary approach in the scientific research of the area of interest, it brings several advantages for determining the conclusions of forecasts of the future development of the system of interest. It can thus contribute to the interpretation of hidden relationships and counterintuitive causality that might otherwise remain undetected.

7. Social Agriculture and its Genesis in the Context of Sustainable Development

Since time immemorial, people have discovered the influence of nature on their quality of life. The medicinal effects of plants were first observed and cultivated for this purpose. This can already be documented in written records from around 3700 BC when the Chinese emperor Shen-Nung wrote about the healing power of 239 different plant species. Subsequently, in ancient Egypt, stays in gardens were recommended for mentally ill members of the royal family. Also, the most famous ancient physicians and philosophers, Galen and Hippocrates, based on the interaction of philosophy and medicine, shaped new ways of thinking and views on man's position as part of nature, i.e., how natural healing helps man mentally and physically.

The earliest efforts to integrate nature, agricultural production, and the helping professions in the care and support of human resources can be seen in the medieval period. At that time, hospitals, monasteries, and prisons used part of their gardens for therapeutic purposes. In particular, the positive effects of nature's influence on health and mental well-being meant that the trend toward therapeutic care was helpful to patients, inmates, and prisoners with their recovery. In this, we can see the foundations of green care (the principle of the beneficial influence of human contact with nature). One of the earliest documented examples of using this concept is the therapeutic village set up in 1350 in Flanders for mentally exhausted pilgrims to stay for psychological regeneration. Based on this historical experience, farms or extensive gardens were also set up in psychiatric institutions to produce food for the patients' use and sell surpluses. According to current social work and social services theories, these activities could be better subsumed under a therapeutic community.

A significant breakthrough in the treatment of people through the established integration of nature, agricultural work, and the helping professions dates back to the early 19th century, initially through garden therapy. By its very nature, it is an interdisciplinary field, the theoretical and practical part of which incorporates and combines the acquired knowledge of various natural and social sciences (horticulture, botany, occupational

therapy, physiotherapy, pedagogy, psychology, etc.). Much of the credit for its origin and development goes to Benjamin Rush, who is considered the founder of American psychiatry and a more humane approach to patients with mental illness. The essence of his therapy was based on the observation of how poorer patients working in the garden of a mental institution to earn money to pay for medical care recovered more quickly compared to patients with no evidence of work. Based on this practice-tested observation, the first psychiatric facility in the United States, Friends Hospital, was opened in Philadelphia in 1813, based on the principle of the receptive use of nature as part of therapy. Designed in collaboration with a landscape architect, the facility was located in a park, and patients used to take walks along forest paths and meadows and participate in horticultural work to grow fruit and vegetables as part of their therapy. The innovation of these therapeutic methods was thus initially aimed at patients with mental illness, then for the treatment of tuberculosis and the rehabilitation of patients after injuries or fractures. At the same time, the treatment above method has supported the creation of mountain sanatoriums.

Since the 1940s, a developing trend of therapeutic communities has been taking place in rural farms in Western Europe (especially Great Britain, Ireland, and the Netherlands), especially with the founding of the first Camphill community by Karl Konig in 1940. The development of these communities was related to the influence of the Camphill movement, which was based on the principles of anthroposophy (offering mystical insight into the nature of man, nature, and the supersensible spiritual worlds). Farms operating on these principles practised subsistence biodynamic agriculture (after the Austrian philosopher and educator Rudolf Steiner) based on the doctrine of the action and influence of cosmic energy. Physical agricultural work on these farms, as "green rehabilitation" through contact with nature, was used to heal and stimulate patients. Clients were integrated into family life, and the community provided housing, occupational therapy, education, and cultural activities. Unlike traditional treatment institutions, there was no clear separation between the caregivers (most volunteers) and the client-inmates; the emphasis was on shared decision-making and equitable distribution of profits.

Since the 1960s, it has been widely used in green care farming therapy. It involves using the farm environment to engage clients in agricultural and farm work. This includes contact with and care of animals and other parts of agricultural production such as crop production, gardening, orcharding, beekeeping, home processing of agricultural products (handmade cheese making), etc. It is considered an integral part of farming therapy under zootherapy or also chemotherapy, which are broader terms referring to animal-assisted therapy. It is a therapeutic and preventive method that can be successfully used in the education of children in particular, but also adults, healthy or socially, mentally, and physically handicapped. Therapy is carried out by working in direct contact with animals, but it is also the whole process of treating and breeding animals of different species and breeds.

8. Main approaches to the participants used in Green care

In a social farm, it is essential to perceive the user as an individual personality. It is necessary to address their personal needs and demands. The aim is to achieve user

congruence. In humanistic psychology, congruence is a central concept (Sutanti, 2020). In the context of social farms, it is all about users seeking openness and genuineness, which is the basis of congruence. The term user is a commonly used term in Czech social work. A user means that they use the services offered by the state. It is, therefore, a bare possibility of using social security from the state. In certain European countries, the Green Care approach (e.g., the Netherlands) does not use the term 'user' or 'client' but 'participant,' emphasising that each person on the farm is considered an essential part of it. When the user is in congruence, what he says and how he acts aligns with his feelings, needs, and expectations (Goede & Elings, 2012). The most crucial humanistic author of the time (an approach also used by social work) is Carl R. Rogers. The social worker is to be empathetic, non-judgmental, and non-directive; it is essential to understand the user's situation as they perceive it. Rogers carefully ensured that the helper's approach was based on sharing and building a genuine relationship. Here, the social worker should act naturally, not admit superiority (Matoušek, 2001). A humanistic approach is integral to equipping the helper in developing countries. It is necessary to build on participation and acceptance of people in need, using values such as solidarity and humanity in their approach. This action promotes human rights and the possibility of getting to the level of the individual who lives in dismal living conditions.

Another indispensable approach used in Green Care is based on the individual's relationship with the environment; it is the Ecological Perspective. The environment is essential in an individual's socialisation process. The formation of personality by the environment is a clear fact that establishes and promotes the growth of many pathological phenomena. The social environment is a set of external conditions of a person's life that exist independently of their experience and activity (Matoušek, 2022). From this perspective, the social environment is often referred to by the term "living conditions." This view emphasises the optics of the so-called external observer. The attention of the interested observer is focused primarily on the person's dependence on the living conditions to which they are exposed. Within this approach, the social worker plays the role of an external observer who observes, interprets, and influences the impact of the living conditions that affect the individual (Matoušek & Křišťan, 2013). The ecological perspective describes the relationship between the organism and the environment and their adaptive processes and highlights the appropriateness and importance of this relationship for the helping professions. The notion of 'the person in the environment' is central to the ecological perspective. The environmental perspective consists of combining these two perspectives. The work involves understanding the person, their environment, and their interrelationship. Through the process of adaptation, people maintain or improve this relationship. "The goal is to promote growth and development, enhance people's adaptive capacity, remove barriers in the environment, and improve the environment's ability to respond to people's needs (Navrátil, 2001)".

One of the unforgettable approaches that inspired the pioneers in the early days of social farms is the anthroposophy of the philosopher Rudolf Steiner, from which Waldorf pedagogy is based (Dvořáková, n.d.). This approach aims to enable persons to express themselves unashamedly and not to deny themselves needs that they perceive as personally meaningful.

9. Conclusion

In line with the goal of increasing social well-being, the integration tendency of human resources-oriented interests in the context of meeting environmental goals has been growing in importance in developed market economies since the turn of the 2nd and 3rd millennium. The theoretical support of the mentioned integration is human, social and natural capital. In connection with the requirements for the sustainability of the social system (especially as a result of the demographic aging of the population) and the ecosystem, space for completely new specializations in ecological and helping professions is being developed through scientific potential and multidisciplinary. The therapeutic methods of social work with the individual and the group correspond to this. The social farming project is the ideal place for this. This represents a relatively young and innovative area of social enterprise as a component of civil society, which has been developing favourably in recent years. An essential dimension of this type of agricultural enterprise lies in its environmental function, which is to live harmoniously in harmony with nature and to strive to protect it as much as possible from damage and destruction (Todorova & Parzhanova, 2021). These business projects are carried out on social farms that are growing worldwide. They combine an agricultural purpose with a social and ecological purpose, which brings many benefits to society. Therefore, the actors of social farms can be seen in the context of fulfilling human needs by comparing the theory of human needs of prominent 20th-century American psychologists Abraham Maslow (hierarchical pyramids) (Maslow, 1943) and Henry Murray (need-based personality) (Murray, 2008). Within Maslow's pyramid, sustainable development can provide basic physiological needs (such as clean water and food) through sustainable agriculture that does not deplete natural resources. It can also support security needs through a stable and affordable food supply. Social and self-esteem needs can be met through social agriculture and participatory approaches to development that increase the participation and involvement of local communities.

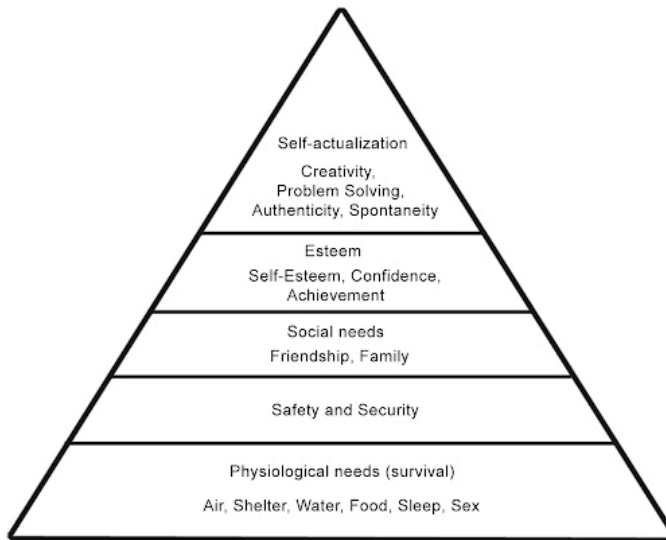


Figure 1: Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 2021)

At the highest level of the pyramid, self-realisation can be linked to personal growth and fulfilling individual and community potential. Sustainable development and social farming can provide a platform for self-actualisation by promoting educational programs, innovation, and access to resources that enable people and communities to achieve their goals and contribute to the broader social and environmental good.

Overall, Maslow's pyramid provides a valuable framework for understanding how social farming and sustainable development can contribute to meeting a wide range of human needs, from basic physiological needs to the highest levels of personal and social development.

In the context of the theory of social work perspective (e.g., according to Czech social work theorist Oldřich Matoušek). Thus, it can be assumed that applying social farming concepts will deserve more attention due to their undeniable benefits for many sectors of society and their therapeutic character. The therapeutic nature and the impact on the health of social farming actors are some of the indisputable advantages of social farming. Related concepts such as green care, aromatherapy, garden therapy, and other associated concepts describing man's relationship with nature thus form the essence of the basic building blocks of social farming projects.

References

- Bauman, Z. (2004). *Individualizovaná společnost*. Mladá fronta.
 Bookchin, M.(1992). *Urbanizatin without cities*. Black Rose Books.

- Carroll, A. B. (1979). A Three-Dimensional Conceptual Model of Corporate Performance. *Academy of Management Review*, 4(4), 497–505. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1979.4498296>
- Dvořáková, K. (n.d.). Antroposofie jako myšlenkový základ pedagogiky Rudolfa Steinera. Retrieved from <https://www.waldorfb.cz/skola/antroposofie-jako-myslenkovy-zaklad-pedagogiky-rudolfa-steinera.html>
- Elings, M., & HASSINK, J. A.N. (2006). Farming for Health in The Netherlands. In J. A.N. HASSINK & M. van DIJK (Eds.), *FARMING FOR HEALTH* (pp. 163–179). Springer Netherlands. https://doi.org/10.1007/1-4020-4541-7_13
- Eriksen, T. H. (2010). *Syndrom velkého vilka: hledání štěstí ve společnosti nadbytku*. Sociálně-ekologická edice.
- Goede, M., & Elings, M. (2012). *Ontmoeting tussen Boer&Zorg*. Wageningen: Plant Research International B.V. Retrieved from https://www.hva.nl/binaries/content/assets/subsites/kc-mr/assets_4/ontmoeting-tussen-boer-en-zorg_totaal-2?1348862307000
- Grešlová Kušková, P. (2013). A case study of the Czech agriculture since 1918 in a socio-metabolic perspective – From land reform through nationalisation to privatisation. *Land Use Policy*, 30(1), 592–603. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2012.05.009>
- Haski-Leventhal, D., & Cooperrider, D. L. (2018). *Strategic corporate social responsibility: Tools & theories for responsible management*. SAGE.
- Haubenhofner, D. K., Elings, M., Hassink, J., & Hine, R. E. (2010). The development of green care in western European countries. *Explore (New York, N.Y.)*, 6(2), 106–111. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.explore.2009.12.002>
- Heshmati, A. (2018). An empirical survey of the ramifications of a green economy. *International Journal of Green Economics*, 12(1), 53. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJGE.2018.092359>
- Jan Hassink (2009). *Zorgboerderijen dragen bij aan empowerment en eigen keracht van deelnemers. Rapport: Vol. 299*. Wageningen: Plant Research International B.V. Retrieved from <https://edepot.wur.nl/14952>
- Janiszewska, D., & Ossowska, L. (2022). The Role of Agricultural Biomass as a Renewable Energy Source in European Union Countries. *Energies*, 15(18), 6756. <https://doi.org/10.3390/en15186756>
- Kahraman, A., & Kazançoğlu, İ. (2019). Understanding consumers' purchase intentions toward natural-claimed products: A qualitative research in personal care products. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 28(6), 1218–1233. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.2312>
- Konečný, O., & Hrabák, J. (2016). Czech and Slovak agricultural geography: transformation, entry into the European Union... and next? Multifunctionality? *GEOGRAPHICAL JOURNAL*, 68(2), 151–169. Retrieved from <https://www.sav.sk/journals/uploads/06301314Konecny,%20Hrabak.pdf>
- Kuldová, L. (2010). *Společenská odpovědnost firem: [etické podnikání a sociální odpovědnost v praxi]* (1st ed.). OPS.
- Lapka, M., & Cudlínová, E. (2009). Any Lesson from the History of Sustainable Development? *Journal of Landscape Ecology*, 2(2), 5–17. <https://doi.org/10.2478/v10285-012-0015-2>
- Lee, M.-D. P. (2008). A review of the theories of corporate social responsibility: Its evolutionary path and the road ahead. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 10(1), 53–73. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2370.2007.00226.x>
- Linton, M. (1984). The LETsystem: A local currency that works. *Governance*. Retrieved from <https://www.context.org/iclib/ic07/linton/>
- Low, W., & Davenport, E. (2007). To boldly go...exploring ethical spaces to re-politicise ethical consumption and fair trade. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 6(5), 336–348. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cb.226>
- Manwell, L. A., Barbic, S. P., Roberts, K., Durisko, Z., Lee, C., Ware, E., & McKenzie, K. (2015). What is mental health? Evidence towards a new definition from a mixed methods multidisciplinary international survey. *BMJ Open*, 5(6), e007079. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2014-007079>
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50(4), 370–396. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346>
- Maslow, A. H. (2021). *Motivace a osobnost* (1st ed.). Portál.
- Matoušek, O. (2001). *Základy sociální práce* (1st ed.). Portál.
- Matoušek, O. (2022). *Strategie a postupy v sociální práci* (1st ed.). Portál.
- Matoušek, O., & Křišťan, A. (2013). *Encyklopedie sociální práce* (1st ed.). ortál.
- Mook, A. (2024). Fairtrade. In C. Overdevest (Ed.), *Elgar Encyclopedia of Environmental Sociology* (pp. 280–285). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781803921044.ch49>
- Murray, H. A. (2008). *Explorations in personality* (70th anniversary ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Navrátil, P. (2001). *Teorie a metody sociální práce* (1. knižní vyd). Marek Zeman.

- Naess, A. (1989). *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Naisbitt, J. (1992). *Megatrends 2000*. Bradlo.
- Observatory of Economic Complexity (2022). Zambia Profile. Retrieved from <https://oec.world/en/profile/country/zmb>
- Pavlík, M., & Bělčík, M. (2010). *Společenská odpovědnost organizace: CSR v praxi a jak s ní dál* (1. vyd). Management. Grada.
- Richard, H., & Watts, P. (2000). *Corporate social responsibility: Making good business sense*. Geneva: WBSCD.
- Ritzer, G. (2007). *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*. Wiley.
- Sale, K. (1985). *Dwellers in the land*. Sierra Book Club.
- Sempik, J., Hine, R., & Wilcox, D. (2010). *Green Care: A conceptual framework : a report of the working group on the health benefits of green care*. University of Loughborough.
- Schumacher, E. F. (1973). *Small is Beautiful: A study of economics as if people mattered*. Blond and Briggs.
- Šliwińska, M. (Ed.) (2023). *Fair Trade and Sustainable Development*. Routledge.
- Sutanti, N. (2020). Understanding congruence in person-centred counselling practice: A trainee counsellor's perspective. *ProGCouns: Journal of Professionals in Guidance and Counseling*, 1(2). <https://doi.org/10.21831/progcouns.v1i2.34615>
- Todorova, S., & Parzhanova, A. (2021). The role of multifunctional agriculture for sustainable rural development. *Scientific Papers Series Management, Economic Engineering in Agriculture and Rural Development*, 21(2), 645–652. Retrieved from <https://www.cabidigitallibrary.org/doi/pdf/10.5555/20220014658>
- Toffler, A. (1980). *The Third Wave*. W. Morrow.
- Věžník, A., Král, M., & Svobodová, H. (2013). AGRICULTURE OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC IN THE 21ST CENTURY: FROM PRODUCTIVISM TO POST-PRODUCTIVISM. *quageo*, 32(4), 7–14. <https://doi.org/10.2478/quageo-2013-0029>
- Volaufová, L., & Brožová, K. (2008). *The economy and the environment in the Czech Republic after 1989*. CENIA, Czech Environmental Information Agency.
- Yamoah, F. A., & Yawson, D. E. (2023). Promoting global well-being through fairtrade food: The role of international exposure. *International Food and Agribusiness Management Review*, 26(2), 243–266. <https://doi.org/10.22434/IFAMR2021.0078>
- Zambia Statistics agency (2023). *2022 POVERTY ASSESSMENT IN ZAMBIA*: Zambia Statistics Agency. Retrieved from <https://www.zamstats.gov.zm/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Highlights-of-the-2022-Poverty-Assessment-in-Zambia-2023.pdf>