



International care farming research overview



International care farming

In brief

Care farming or social farming has been practiced around the world in different ways for generations. Modern understanding of care farming is 'the therapeutic use of farming practices' for people with a defined need. It's primarily practiced in the UK and Western European countries but is growing in popularity around the world.

The Netherlands, Belgium, Norway, Italy and the Republic of Ireland¹ have well-developed care farming sectors. In these areas, green care is becoming more accepted and integrated as part of farm diversification.

Care farming across Europe has developed in differing ways. It has varied origins, stages of development, context and support. For example, in Germany, care farming services are mostly provided by health and social care organisations. In the Netherlands, Italy and Norway, care farming is mainly provided by privately owned family farms.

Care Farming in Europe

Care Farming is well established in many European countries. There are regional variations in operations, definitions, and client groups. Care farming is particularly well established in the Netherlands and Belgium. Here, the sectors are highly developed in comparison with many other European countries. In 2018 the number of care farms operating in the Netherlands was estimated to be around 1,250 (Hassink et al 2020).

Variations between countries often stem from the varying origins of each sector. For example, in Norway and Italy, care farming originated with traditional farming. Today, care farming in those areas is still connected with mainstream agriculture. In Germany, the sector began with healthcare providers. Both types of care farming take place in the Netherlands. Here, there are two broad categories of care farm. There are agriculturally orientated farms who may have lower participant numbers. Their main activities are directly farming related. Then there are those who deliver limited agricultural activities, but to more people. These care farms derive a large part of their income from care services.

Care Farming outside Europe

There is less information available on the scale of care farming sectors in countries outside Europe. So, it is likely that where care farming occurs, it is in isolation rather than as part of a wider network or sector.

Different funding models for accessing healthcare, such as the private insurance-based system in the United States, may make setting up and accessing green care services more complex and financially demanding in some areas. See Artz and Davis 2017 and Anderson et al 2017 for more details.

¹ For the purposes of this section, the care farming activities of Ireland are described in the [UK and Ireland care farming pages](#).

There has been some early research into how social farming activities can positively impact rural poverty. In 2015, a United Nations working group examined the subject. The group drew on case studies from the United Republic of Tanzania and Colombia, alongside European examples. See also Yewon Cho et al 2019 for details of care farming development in South Korea.

Sources

- Hassink et al 2020
- Haubenhofer 2010
- Asquith 2017
- Artz and Davis 2017
- Anderson et al 2017
- FAO UN 2015
- Yewon Cho et al 2019

More information

Find out more about [international care farming](#) on our website.

This resource was produced by the Growing Care Farming team at Social Farms & Gardens. Growing Care Farming aims to increase access to health, care and educational services on care farms. Growing Care Farming is part of the Government's Children & Nature programme and is delivered by Social Farms & Gardens, in partnership with Thrive.

Visit www.farmgarden.org.uk/gcf to find out more about the project.

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