



STUDY KIT 9

Title: Holistic approach to Farming: Case Study of a natural farming unit belonging to a Social Cooperative Enterprise

Topic: Natural farming methods, Social Economy, Social Cooperative Enterprises (SCEs) in Greece

Keywords: Social Economy, Natural farming, Social Cooperative Enterprises, Fair trade, Solidarity trade, Sustainable growth

Subject: Economy, Economics, Environmental Studies

Cross-curricular Topic: Sustainability, Cultural Heritage (traditional farming), Outdoor activities, Healthy lifestyle, New forms of Economy

Level: UPPER SECONDARY

Age: 15+

Number of students: 30

Duration in minutes: day field trip

Place (classroom, outdoor etc.): Outdoor

Author: Katerina Christodoulou, Nikos Panagiotopoulos

School: RALLEIO GENIKO LYKEIO THILEON PEIRAIA

Language: ENGLISH

Overview: The students will visit a vegetable farm run by a Social Cooperative Enterprise. The farmers use the natural farming method. The students will not be asked to answer questions on a worksheet. Instead, they themselves will interview the farmers about the plants, the farming method and the activities of the SCE. They will then work in the field and have lunch at the farm with products from the farm and from small traditional producers of the area.

**Objectives:**

- To learn about Social Cooperative Enterprises (SCEs)
- To learn about fair and solidarity trade
- To learn about natural farming and the nutritional value of its produce
- To learn about zero waste farm management
- To experience farming activities
- To promote a healthy lifestyle

Learning material and tools:

Annex 1: Information about Social Economy in the EU and Social Cooperative Enterprises (SCEs) in Greece

Annex 2: Information about natural farming

Preparation:

At home: Students read Annex 1 and Annex 2 before visiting the farm and write a set of questions they would like to ask the farmers.

In Greece: When the students are in their multinational groups, they compare their set of questions to the ones of the other members of the group and discuss to form the final set of questions of the group. This group discussion can take place in the bus, on the way to the farm.

Evaluation:

Article about their experience on the farm

Extra material:

pen and paper

Detailed description/instruction:

The aim of the activity is to produce an article to be published in ROOTS site about the particular farm as case study.

Once on the farm, students are divided in 5 groups of 6, with 3 foreign and 3 Greek students in each. All five groups meet with the farmers and interview them about the plants in the farm, natural farming and Social Cooperative Enterprises (SCEs). They note down the answers.

Each group is then split into pairs (1 foreign and 1 Greek student). The first



pair will plant, the second pair will collect produce and the third pair will visit the “zero waste” sites of the farm.

The 6 students of each group get back together and share information and experience. They each undertake to write specific parts of the article. The article must be handed in to the teachers of each country by 30 April 2018. The students will communicate via email, Skype etc to compose the final draft.

Their article should include:

- a. Information about natural farming principles
- b. Information about how the principles are applied to the particular farm with specific examples
- c. Information about the SCE running the farm (i.e. their principles, philosophy and organization)
- d. A few things about their own planting, collecting and farm management experience

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1

SOCIAL ECONOMY IN THE EU

A significant proportion of Europe's economy is intended to make profits for people other than investors or owners. Known as the ‘social economy’, it includes cooperatives, mutual societies, non-profit associations, foundations and social enterprises. They operate a very broad number of commercial activities, provide a wide range of products and services across the European single market and generate millions of jobs. Social enterprises are also the engine for social innovation.

Social Economy Enterprises in the EU

What they are - there are 2 million social economy enterprises in Europe, representing 10% of all businesses in the EU. More than 11 million people – about 6% of the EU’s employees – work for social economy enterprises. They have different legal forms and various objectives ranging from agriculture and banking to provision of employment and sheltered workshops.

Main objectives - the primary objective of the traditional social economy enterprises is to serve the members and not to obtain a return on investment as the traditional mainstream capital companies do. The members act in accordance with the principle of solidarity and mutuality, and manage their enterprise on the basis of 'one man one



vote' principle.

Social enterprises - an important and growing group of social economy enterprises are the social enterprises. Their main objective is to have a social, societal or environmental impact for the general interest.

Policy - when policy-makers work to improve the business environment in Europe, they need to ensure that the specificities of these enterprises like ethos, working style, corporate governance, specific accounting modes, asset lock, profits retaining, special 'social' objectives are taken into account.

Why social economy enterprises are important

Social economy enterprises are important because of their:

Membership - up to 160 million people in Europe are members of social economy enterprises (mostly retail, banking and agricultural cooperatives, as well as mutual societies offering services complementary to social security regimes).

Objectives - social economy enterprises contribute to the EU's employment, social cohesion, regional and rural development, environmental protection, consumer protection, agricultural, third countries development, and social security policies.

Size - social economy entities are mostly micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Social Cooperative Enterprises (SCE) in Greece

Categories- According to their purpose, SCEs in Greece can fall into these categories

Social Inclusion SCEs, whose purpose is to assist the social and financial inclusion of citizens who face physical or mental challenges, juvenile delinquents, ex prisoners or drug addicts. At least 40% of the employees in such an SCE should belong to the afore mentioned groups of citizens.

Social Care SCEs, which produce products or provide services of social welfare nature to infants, children, the elderly, the disabled or patients with chronic diseases.

Collective and Productive Purpose SCEs, which produce products or provide services in the fields of civilisation, education, the environment, ecology, local produce, preservation of traditional activities and occupations etc. Their purpose is to promote local and collective interests, to boost employment, to empower social cohesion as well as local and regional development.

Membership- Citizens or businesses can be members of an SCE. There should be at least five members for an SCE to be set up. The capital of the SCE is divided in cooperative equities of the same value each. Equities are paid for in cash. The number of equities and their value are defined in the charter of the enterprise. Each



SCE member holds at least one mandatory equity as minimum participation in the capital of the enterprise. Each member of an SCE has one vote regardless of the number of equities they own.

Resources- They can be the capital of the SCE, donations by third parties, income from the SCE's business activities, funding by the Public Investment Programme, by the EU, by national or international organizations, by municipalities, and, finally, income from the development of its activities in accordance to the SCE's charter. These enterprises have also access to funding from the National Social Economy Fund and from the National Fund for Entrepreneurship and Development.

Administration-The Executive Committee is responsible for the administration and management of any SCE. The Executive Committee is elected by the general assembly of equity holders and has at least three members, including the Chairperson. A majority of two votes is necessary for any decision to be taken. The Executive Committee convenes at least once a month, and the general assembly of equity holders at least once a year.

Profits-The profits are not distributed to its members, except for the members who are employed in the SCE. Every year, 5% of the profits is allocated to the valuation reserve, up to 35% is distributed to the employees as productivity incentive and the rest is allocated to the activities of the SCE and to the creation of new jobs. SCEs do not pay taxes for the percentage of the profit that is allocated to the valuation reserve. The percentage of the profit that is distributed to the employees is taxed at a rate of 10%.

http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/social-economy_en

ANNEX 2

WHAT IS NATURAL FARMING

Popularly known as “do nothing” farming, natural farming (自然農法 / shizen nōhō, in Japanese) is an environmentally sustainable way of growing food founded not on a technique, but on a principal of building communion and kinship between farmer and nature. As a result, individual methods and techniques between natural farmers vary widely.

The most widely known practitioner of Natural Farming, Masanobu Fukuoka was a Japanese plant biologist who, in the late 1930s gave up his career of “examining nature through a microscope” to start field trials in natural farming on his family farm. His methods were popularized from the 1970s onward, through the publication of several books, one of which, One Straw Revolution, was a best-selling title that is often cited as a founding document of the alternative food

This publication was supported by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Commission.

This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein.



movement.

The fact that technique is subservient to principal makes it frustratingly difficult, particularly for a Western audience, to come to terms with what natural farming is. Natural farming is something best learned through the experience of putting ourselves within nature.

Although there are no strictly defined techniques or methods, there are several generally-followed basic principles, all of which stem from the desire to cultivate a respectful relationship with nature.

In general, these principles are:

There is no need to till the field

This is based on the biological understanding that there are millions of living things making their homes in each small clump of soil, and that all of these living things contribute to the health of the soil in some way. When we till the soil, we harm these lives, deplete the soil's fertility, and we create the conditions where fertilizer and herbicides become necessary in order to grow anything.

Bugs and weeds are not enemies

All creatures and plants must be respected. This does not mean 'never cut a weed' or 'never take action to keep bugs off plants' but it does mean that we should work to respect their lives and their roles as parts of this living nature.

There is no need for external inputs into your farm

Biologically speaking, nature is very adept at knowing how to heal the land by itself. In nearly all situations, the soil has the power to grow and regenerate itself, making it unnecessary to bring in fertilizers, pesticides, or literally anything else from outside your farm area.

Let nature decide what grows

Rather than planning around your own desires, or forcing things to grow that are not fit for your climate or area, let nature show you what should grow where

Is Natural Farming Realistic?

Is industrial farming realistic? No production system can afford to continuously extract non-renewable resources on a planet with finite availability of such resources. There is a general agreement by most farmers and researchers who are studying how to feed the growing population of the planet, that the only way to feed the world well into the future is to convert to ways of growing food that are:



1. Predominantly Small-Scale / Local / Regional
2. Biodiverse in nature, incorporating many kinds and varieties of plants
3. Not reliant on external inputs and petroleum-based chemicals
4. Regenerative for the environment instead of extractive (destructive)
5. Based more on local and seasonal growing and consumer habits

<http://www.finalstraw.org/what-is-natural-farming/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_farming

STUDENT WORKSHEET

Your group is to produce an article of about 500 words in English to be published in ROOTS site about the particular farm as case study.

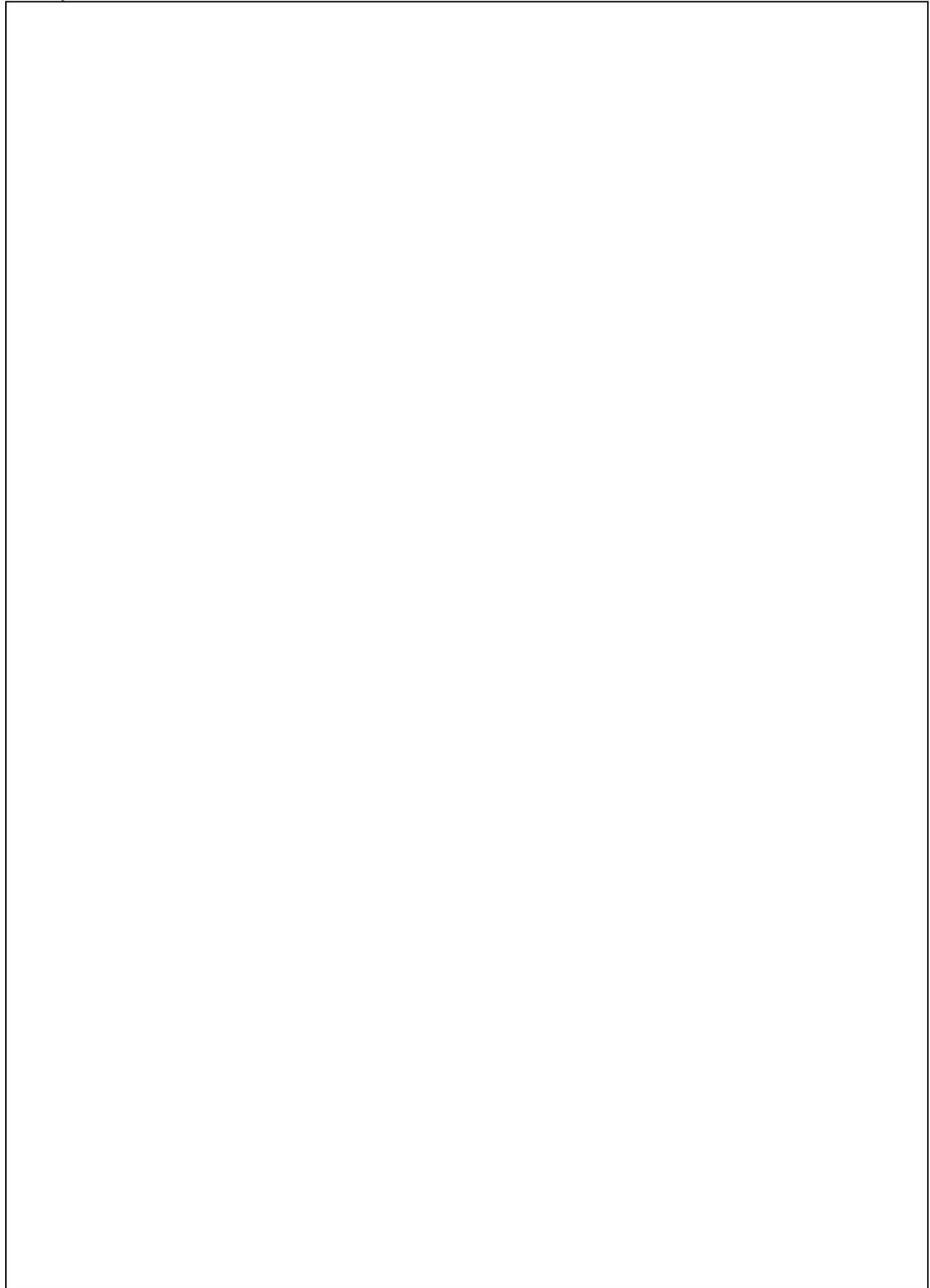
Your article should include:

- a. Information about natural farming principles**
- b. Information about how the principles are applied to the particular farm with specific examples**
- c. Information about the SCE running the farm (i.e. their principles, philosophy and organization)**
- d. A few things about your own planting, collecting and farm management experience**

In your group you will share information and experience and each one of you will undertake to write specific parts of the article. The article must be handed in to the teachers of each country by 30 April 2018. Once you leave Greece, you will communicate via email, Skype etc to compose the final draft.

STUDENT NAMES

NAME	NATIONALITY



This publication was supported by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Commission.
This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein.

