



## **Social Farming as a New Opportunity for Agriculture in Korea**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Social farming has emerged as an innovative approach to address social needs by adopting a view of multifunctional agriculture. Despite its appearance from the grassroots as early as in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, it is not yet a well-established or organized system. Social farming refers to all activities that use agricultural resources including plants, animals and rurality so as to provide various social services such as therapy, rehabilitation, employment, education and local development.

The concept of social farming consists of two common components, including doing activities in the farm and addressing special needs of the disadvantaged people (EESC 2012). Social farming has attracted a great deal of public attention in recent years since it is viewed as an alternative farming practice that can support the rural communities by ensuring sustainable production. Not only its significance to agriculture but also it is an economical complement to welfare and health services. Because of being born from the grassroots level, it is resistant to economic crisis and is an economically viable way to the provision of different kinds of social services.

Agriculture in Korean is characterized by traditional and small-scale farming practices that render multifunctional services to the society. But the country is unlike many European countries in development of a multifunctional farming approach as a source welfare, pedagogical and employment resource. In this regard, this paper aims to explore the social farming system in the European countries and then suggest potential strategies for its development under the Korean context.

### **DEFINITIONS AND FACTORS OF SOCIAL FARMING**

It is said that there is no formal definition of social farming. Instead, its tentative definition is based on a traditional and innovative use of agricultural resources in delivering social services, including therapy, rehabilitation, social inclusion, education and other social services in rural areas (Di Iacovo and O'Connor, 2009). It is exclusively rooted in farm activities which are characterized as agricultural multifunctionality. A basic framework for social farming is to create

social benefits of public health, education and training, social inclusion and integration and rural development on the basis of agricultural multifunctionality. Fig. 1 explains multifunctionality in agriculture as a characteristic of the farm production process that interacts with the economy, society and the environment (OECD, 2001).

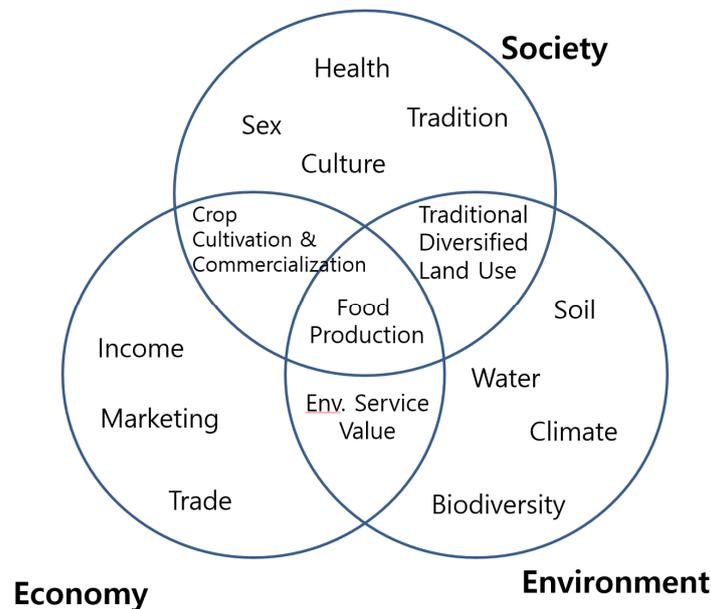


Fig. 1. Agricultural Multifunctionality  
Source: IAASTD(2008)

The causal link between multifunctionality and social farming is bi-dimensional in a sense that the latter can contribute to the former. Direct health benefits accrued from farm activities include healing of or recovery from diseases. Indirect health benefits refer to prevention of illness and promotion of health. These expectations are rooted in a philosophy, postulating a claim that

health is embedded in physical or sociocultural environments (Kaplan 1995; Verheij *et al.*, 2008). Interacting with plants, animals and natural landscapes people can improve their health and well-being conditions and realize growing experience.

There are different terms and expressions that convey social farming-like roles and services. For example, “care farming” or “cure farming” focuses more on mental and physical health through routine farming activities within farms or with rural landscapes (Sempik *et al.* 2010, Gim *et al.* 2013). The notion of “farming for health” embodies farm and care sectors in combination by taking into account social environments faced by farmers and special needs by disadvantaged people. Finally, “green care” serves as a comprehensive term that embraces all the benefits created by nature (Hine *et al.* 2008).

Education and training provide essential skills and information for service users to integrate into the labor market and the society. These popular and useful programs contribute to remedy for the lack of opportunities or accessibility for individuals who are deprived or excluded from socio-economic activities because of their personal or social attributes. Social farms also have

the merit of satisfying task requirements, achieving cooperation among family members, managing finance, changing business structure and employing workers (Foti *et al.*, 2013).

Social inclusion and integration aims to help people in marginal groups promote social cohesion and build a relationship with other people in a regular job context. The marginalized people include long-term unemployed, people with disability, migrants and defectors, disadvantaged youth, older people, early retirees and others who have special needs (Park and Kim 2016). Four types of re-employment opportunities can be identified: (1) transitional jobs where job experiences and on-the-job trainings may increase an opportunity of hiring, (2) sustained jobs that are offered to excluded and disadvantaged people, (3) job integration by public subsidies where most marginalized people such as the disabled individuals can promote social identities and improve work ability, and (4) jobs for social adaptation where substance abusers can improve their socialization such as rule conformity and living a normal life (Davister *et al.*, 2004).

Finally, as a consequence of all farming activities rural development associated with social farming contributes to vitalization of farm sectors and sustainable development. Improved farm household's incomes and job creation in rural areas promote rural viability. Besides, social cohesion among traditional farms, organic farms, cooperatives and civil organizations enhances governance at a grassroots level and play a steppingstone to rural development (Jeong, 2007).

Against a backdrop of the above discussions, this paper attempts to suggest a definition of social farming in a Korean context as shown in Fig. 2. Social farming intertwined with multifunctionality in agriculture provides therapy, social rehabilitation, education and employment for socially marginalized individuals in rural and urban areas, which leads to sustainable development. This revised definition recognizes the role of social farming as a tool for sustainable development and expands geographical application into urban or semi-urban areas.

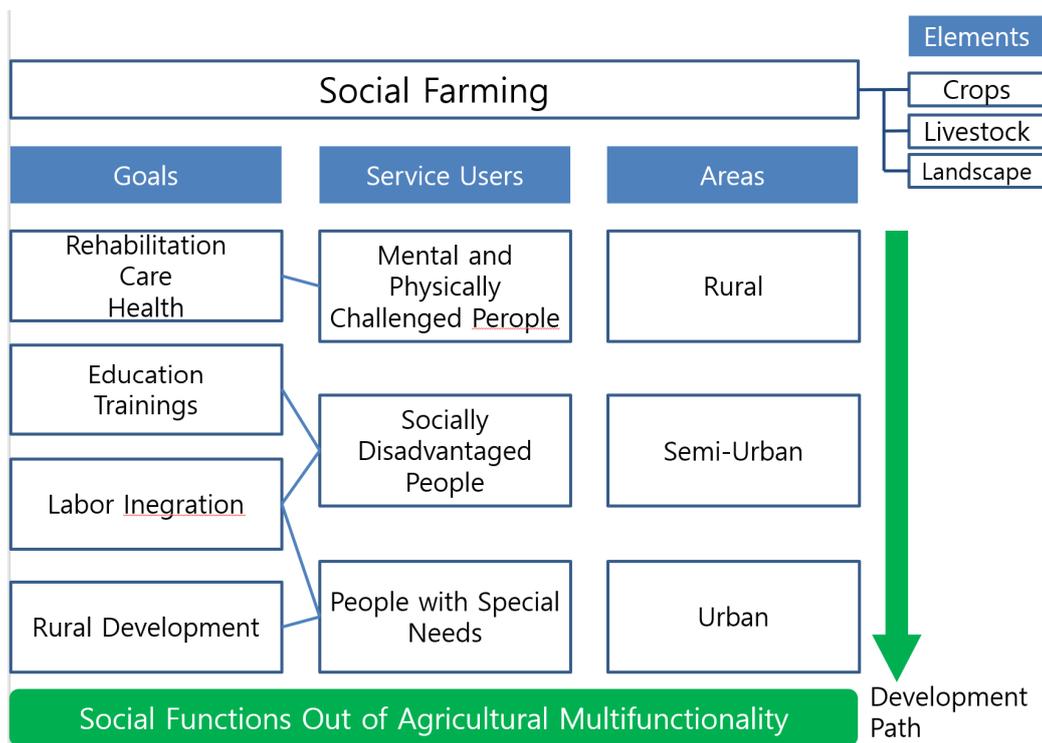


Fig. 2. Definition and Factors of Social Farming

Source: Prepared by author

## HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRENDS OF SOCIAL FARMING

### Social Farms in Europe

The 2<sup>nd</sup> century churches were already known for their care services offered to patients with physical and mental diseases (Christian History Institute 2011). An old form of green care rooted in rural areas was first brought to Belgium in medieval times and the community-based care system has continued up to the present day (Goldstein and Godemont 2003). The gardens or parks attached to medieval churches and hospitals were gradually transformed into institutional care facilities by the late 1800s in Germany. These farms are regarded as a touchstone for modern care farms that have evolved into various forms.

In the early 1970s, Italy replaced institutional care facilities with social cooperatives. “Type A” cooperatives provide children, the elderly and the handicapped with health, welfare and educational services while “Type B” cooperatives focus on social inclusion of the jobless, addicts, prison inmates and developmentally challenged persons.<sup>1</sup> Development of care sectors associated with Dutch churches in the 1970s also led to a boost in modern social farms over the continent. In Belgium, the so-called “care farming” came into existence when a farm association, “*Boerenbond*” mediated a link between farms and service users in 2000. It was however not until early 2000s that the term of social agriculture was publicly acknowledged.

<sup>1</sup> The racists, sexual minorities and the abused are not categorized as service users within the social cooperatives.

Table 1 provides a brief summary of farm types and characteristics of social services in the selected countries. Institutional farms supported by the public sectors are dominant in Germany, Ireland and Slovenia, centering on health. On the contrary, social farms in the Netherlands and Belgium are mostly individual family farms. These small-scale farms look into a health-farming linkage and emphasize the pedagogical function. Finally, France has various farm types with a strong network among farms and community-based gardens.

Table 1. Characteristics of Social Farms in the Selected European Countries

Country	Type of Farms	Focus Activity	Others
The Netherlands & Belgium	Individual family farms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health &amp; agriculture</li> <li>• Education</li> </ul>	Dealing with various service users
Italy	Social cooperatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3<sup>rd</sup> sectors &amp; associations</li> <li>• Socialization &amp; employment</li> </ul>	Socially disadvantaged users
Germany, Ireland & Slovenia	Institutional farms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public areas</li> <li>• Health</li> </ul>	Mentally challenged users
France	Various	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3<sup>rd</sup> sectors &amp; associations</li> <li>• Socialization &amp; employment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networking among farms</li> <li>• Community gardens</li> </ul>

Source: Di Iacovo and O'Connor (2009)

Table 2 shows the number of social farms by their categories. The number of private farms is larger than that of institutional farms in the selected European countries. Pedagogical farms in France outnumber other countries. Norwegian farms offer a program for school maladjusted youths. In the Netherlands, small-scale family farms have evolved into the mainstream care farms since the 1970s. These farms are supported either by certified welfare sectors under service contracts or by service user's personal budget since 2003. The legitimacy of social farms is warranted by the quality certified system and own quality brands.

Table 2. The Number of Social Farms in Selected European Countries

Country/Farm Type		Private	Institution	Others	Sum	Service Users
Belgium		258	38	12	308	2,000
France	Association-led social inclusion Garden			400	400	
	Education				1,200	
	Care	200		300	500	
Germany	Care	12	150		162	
	Education			58	58	
Ireland		2	92	12	106	2,000
Italy	Care/inclusion/social farm/ gardens	150	65	450	675	
	Prison		10		10	
Netherlands		746	83	10	839	10,000
Slovenia		4	6	5	15	500
Total		1,372	444	1,247	4,273	14,500

Note: More recent data provides with Netherlands 1,100 farms, Belgium 807 farms, and Italy 2,000 farms (Buist 2016; Lanfranchi *et al.* 2015).

Source: Di Iacovo and O'Connor (2009)

A landmark development in social farming occurred in 2015, Italy when the country established the National Law on Social Farming No. 141/2015 for the first time in the world. The law aims at labor integration of disadvantaged people, social inclusion service to local communities by using material and immaterial agricultural resources, therapeutic and health services that complement traditional medical therapies, and environmental and food education projects implemented by social or education farms (Senni 2016). To be eligible for a social farm, farm products must represent more than 30% of the farm household's total sales. Public support to social farming includes sales to public restaurants, installation of sales booths at public places, priority access to public lands, and EU's Regional Development Program 2014-2020 under the Common Agricultural Policy.

### **Social Farm Enterprises in Korea**

Social enterprises in Korea have been largely driven by civil organizations as a movement of cooperatives. Since 1997, social enterprises have embraced welfare sectors that address the issues of unemployment and poverty supported by the government. Social enterprises rooted in the rural areas began to provide care services in great variety (Ko *et al.*, 2013; Seo *et al.*, 2012;

Korea Forestry Service, 2013; Kim 2015; Kim *et al.*, 2014).<sup>2</sup> Albeit incomplete, these social enterprises may be termed as “social farm enterprises.” Most common services mediated by social farm enterprises in rural care projects are recreational activities and aesthetic sentiments. Majority of service users are the elderly, primary school children, and adults (Gim *et al.*, 2013). On the contrary, jobless, addicts and prison inmates account for a low share of service users.

As of June 29, 2016, there are 1,578 social enterprises, officially registered in the Korea Social Enterprises Promotion Agency (KAPEA). Among which 108 enterprises are assumed to engage in agriculture-related or farming-like activities. Table 3 indicates their geographical distribution with further reference to definition of enterprises. About 34 enterprises are identified as social farm enterprises in a narrow sense. The rest are mainly processed food or marketing oriented enterprises.

Table 3. Geographical Distribution of Social Farm Enterprises in Korea

Province/City	Number of Social Enterprises (%)	Number of Social Farm Enterprises		
		Narrowly Defined (a)	Broadly Defined (b)	(a)+(b)
Seoul	267 (16.9)	0 (0.0)	2 (2.7)	2 (1.9)
Busan	93 (5.9)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Daegu	59 (3.7)	1 (2.9)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.9)
Incheon	90 (5.7)	1 (2.9)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.9)
Gwangju	78 (4.9)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.4)	1 (0.9)
Daejeon	43 (2.7)	1 (2.9)	1 (1.4)	2 (1.9)
Ulsan	54 (3.4)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Sejong	8 (0.5)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.4)	1 (0.9)
Gyeonggi	256 (16.2)	6 (17.6)	3 (4.1)	9 (8.3)
Gangwon	94 (6.0)	6 (17.6)	5 (6.8)	11 (10.2)
Chungbuk	73 (4.6)	1 (2.9)	8 (10.8)	9 (8.3)
Chungnam	71 (4.5)	3 (8.8)	8 (10.8)	11 (10.2)
Jeonbuk	99 (6.3)	3 (8.8)	8 (10.8)	11 (10.2)
Jeonnam	75 (4.8)	4 (11.8)	14 (18.9)	18 (16.7)
Gyeongbuk	101 (6.4)	3 (8.8)	9 (12.2)	12 (11.1)
Gyeongnam	78 (4.9)	0 (0.0)	10 (13.5)	10 (9.3)
Jeju	39 (2.5)	5 (14.7)	4 (5.4)	9 (8.3)
Total	1,578 (100.0)	34 (100.0)	74 (100.0)	108 (100.0)

Source: Compiled from the KSEPA ([www.socialenterprise.or.kr](http://www.socialenterprise.or.kr))

Table 4 summarizes service orientation provided by social farm enterprises. Three types of services are identified: therapeutic, labor integration focused on social inclusion and cohesion, and rural vitality and development. About 74% of social farm enterprises are observed to give priority to labor integration. No enterprise is known to concentrate on provision of care services. Only one food packaging enterprise provides employment opportunity for developmentally challenged persons.

<sup>2</sup> Kim(2011) finds that 40% of social enterprises located in rural areas focus on employment.

Table 4. Service Orientation by Social Farm Enterprises in Korea

Type\Service	Therapy (A)	Labor Integration (B)	Rural Development (C)	(A)+(B)	(B)+(C)	Total
Narrowly Defined	0 (0.0)	24 (70.6)	2 (5.9)	0 (0.0)	8 (23.5)	34 (100.0)
Broadly Defined	0 (0.0)	56 (75.7)	8 (10.8)	1 (1.4)	9 (12.5)	74 (100.0)
Total	0 (0.0)	80 (74.1)	10 (9.3)	1 (0.9)	17 (15.7)	108 (100.0)

Source: Compiled from KSEPA ([www.socialenterprise.or.kr](http://www.socialenterprise.or.kr))

## THEORETIC BACKGROUNDS FOR SOCIAL FARMING DEVELOPMENT

A couple of theories deserve to review for better understanding of social farming development. One is multi-level perspective under the transition theory and the other is about the social movement theory.

### A Multi-Level Perspective on Transitions

The transition to an innovative system like social farming can be viewed from a multi-level perspective (Hassink *et al.*, 2013). Fig. 3 gives a schematic representation of system innovations that consists of three levels: niches at a micro level, the socio-technical regime at an intermediate level and landscape developments at a macro level.

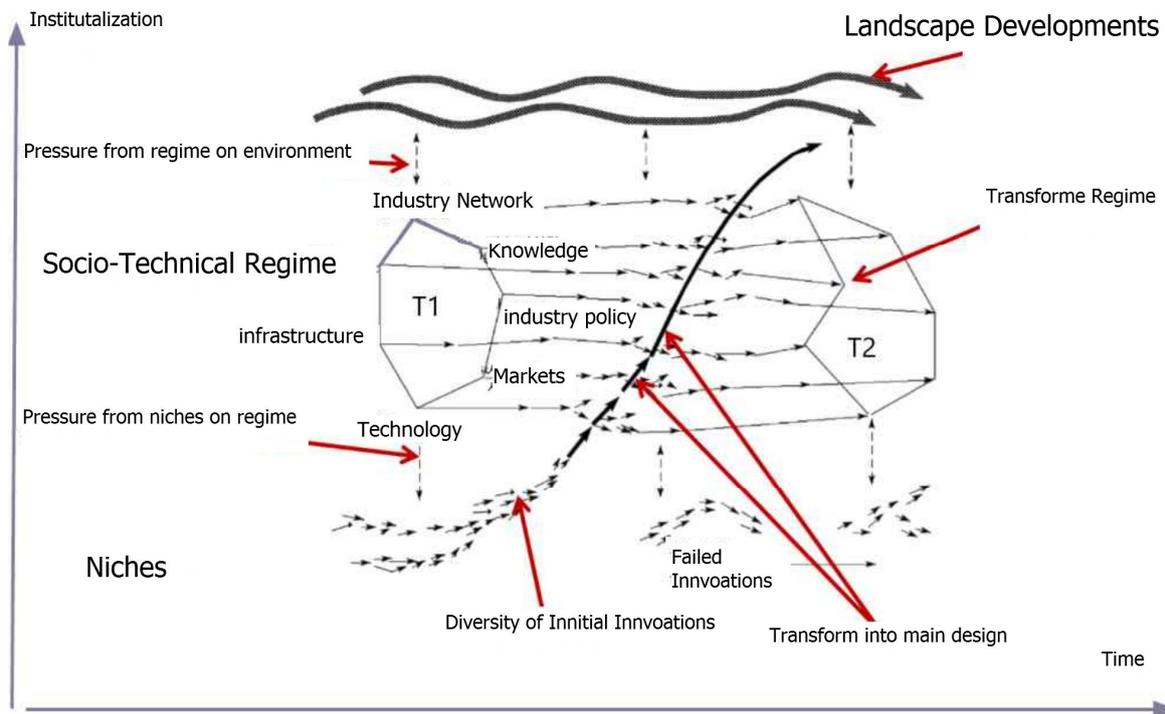


Fig. 3. A Multi-Perspective View in the Transition Theory

Source: Geels (2004); Song (2013)

First, the technological niche level is like a place of incubation where experience-based research and learning occur and stakeholders and agents build dynamic knowledge and competence networks are interacting with one another. In response to demands for social services and other landscape changes, entrepreneurial farmers and farm organizations find niches between agriculture and welfare or healthcare systems and contributes to the development of new knowledge and technology. A variety of novelties on multiple dimensions are invented and processed until successful elements are linked together and evolve into a new regime. The Dutch experience sheds light on the important role of entrepreneurial farmers who dedicate to supply side societal transformations. By adopting innovative ideas and technology at a grassroots level, the Dutch farmers found social farming would contribute to the quality of social services and welfare systems.

Second, the socio-technical regime refers to the linkages between necessary elements to achieve societal functions. These elements include rules, social networks, artifacts, capital, labor, knowledge, infrastructure, etc. The rules and institutions provide stability and guide actions. As an alternative business model based on agricultural multifunctionality, social farming is increasingly recognized as an effective tool to deal with social problems. New organizations and infrastructure are being formed at local and national levels for development, commercialization and exchange of knowledge and innovations. Such an institutional arrangement may increase social farms' conformity to standardized practices or homogenization of organizations. But more demand side welfare provisions are likely to warrant the diversity of social farms and their activities.

Finally, landscape developments convey aspects of the wider exogenous environment. They may include growing concerns on climate change, food safety, ethical consumption, sustainable development, financial uncertainties and social inclusion. These changes put pressure on current regimes to open up and contribute to creating new opportunities for social farming.

In a nutshell, social farming under the transition theory aims to transform the traditional socio-technical system to a new and innovative socio-technical system under the wider window of opportunities and landscape developments including agricultural sustainability.

### **The Social Movement Theory**

Social movements are collective efforts to initiate social change. They intend to reform markets by forging collective identification and mobilizing collective action with articulating collaboration (Johnston, 2011). Rao (2009) explains innovations with a “hot cause” and “cool solutions.” A hot cause triggers pride, anger, motivation or awareness. Cool mobilization is to generate communities of feeling and social experiences in solution such that people can live up with meanings and values attached to a social movement.<sup>3</sup>

As a non-profit network pursuing social inclusion of people with disabilities, the “*De Omslag*” in the Netherlands ([www.deomslag.nl](http://www.deomslag.nl)) led an early social farming movement by criticizing and then mainstream agriculture and care systems. In shaping this radical innovation, the idealist group formed a new collective identity and mobilized support by exploiting hot causes and cool solutions. Since 1999, Support Centers in the country have harnessed social farms with healthcare sectors and publicized their services with the identity of innovative agriculture.

### **AN SWOT ANALYSIS AND THE ROAD AHEAD**

Changes in the ins and outs of farm sectors are opening a window of opportunity. Mounting interests in sustainability, well-being, health, health care and welfare coupled with the aging society arouse greater demands for quality social services. Besides, spread of urban agriculture lays out vision for green future as one of the latest movements to challenge the traditional view on farming.

Against a backdrop of withering agriculture and flourishing welfare sectors, setting in a social farming system can be a creative and smart endeavor to a sustainable society, because it will generate economic and social values while providing a range of public and welfare services. It is also a win-win strategy with which farmers can stabilize their incomes and the society can access to quality services. However, social farming is still in its early stage of development in Korea and many challenging problems have to be solved in order to make it economically and socially sustainable.

Table 5 summarizes Korea’s strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities and threats the country faces.

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<sup>3</sup> For example, in the Slow Food Movement in Italy, the hot cause was “fast food” crystalized by McDonald and the cool mobilization was “slow food” of local and seasonal cuisine (Rao, 2009).

Table 5. The SWOT for Social Farming in Korea

Strength	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multifunctionality created by agriculture</li> <li>• Sustainable farming</li> <li>• Provision of social services in economically viable ways</li> <li>• An increase in social values by a tie between private and public sectors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human capital deepening from urban to rural migration</li> <li>• Promotion of convergence and 6<sup>th</sup> industry movements</li> <li>• Sustainable consumption including local food</li> <li>• Alternative agriculture in economic crisis</li> <li>• Boon in urban agriculture</li> <li>• Increasing demands for welfare services and upward pressure on the compilation of budget</li> </ul>
Weakness	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aging farmers and limited entrepreneurial, innovative farmers</li> <li>• Distance separation between farms and service users</li> <li>• Unstandardized farm structure and social activities</li> <li>• Subsidy and support dependence</li> <li>• Low agricultural productivity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uncertainties in farm incomes</li> <li>• Low awareness of social farming</li> <li>• Negative perceptions for hiring disadvantaged people</li> <li>• Lack of regulatory and administration systems</li> <li>• Potential conflicts with existing welfare and health care organizations</li> </ul>

Source: Prepared by author

First, one of strength-opportunity (SO) strategies would link social farming to urban agriculture. In principle, social farming aims to provide its services in the rural areas where the farms are. Service users visit the farms and engage in various activities taking advantage of on-site agricultural resources. However, such a first-best policy would not be fully functional in the Korean context, because most potential service users, including older adults with dementia and disabilities are living in a cosmopolitan atmosphere.<sup>4</sup> To overcome the mismatch between the demand for social service and the supply, it is important to ensure accessibility to farms (Di Iacovo and O'Connor, 2009; Dessin *et al.*, 2013). The boon to urban agriculture could serve the purpose being developed as a range of small-scale farms, including vegetable gardens, park & urban gardens, the rooftop gardens, school fields, as a second-best policy (Kim, 2014).

In addition, these farms at arm's length can provide care services associated with traditional day care centers. Another strong merit of urban social farms is their flexible and tailored services corresponding to diverse and changing demands. Interacting with networks of welfare and health sectors, educational organizations and rehabilitation facilities, urban social farms could develop new and modern programs that attract greater participation and easily collaborate with social welfare workers, therapists, medical experts and administrators.

<sup>4</sup> The ratio of population in the urban areas exceeds 90% and about a half of the total population live in the Metropolitan area—Seoul, Incheon and Gyeonggi Province (Statistics Korea, 2014).

Second, as a strength-threat (ST) strategy, the country needs to set up a regulatory system that supports the legitimacy of social farming and infrastructure for networking key stakeholders. Setting in legal ground would lead an integration of social farming into mainstream welfare and health care system, which would lessen potential conflicts with vested interests in the existing welfare system (Hassink *et al.*, 2014).

The linkage with labor and education laws and regulations would also pave the way for furthering service users and their participation. Mutual dependency is likely to be reinforced by cultivating cooperative relationships among central government, provinces, municipalities, agricultural research institutes, and agricultural extension centers, etc.

Third, a weak-opportunity (WO) strategy would include training innovative and entrepreneurial farmers who dedicate to the provision of social services and sustainable development. Especially, young or experienced migrants from urban sectors can play an important role in delivering user-friendly services and adopting new socio-technical systems.

As a necessary measure to get subsidies or public support, social farms need to get the legitimacy of their social services by standardizing care programs and satisfying safety and quality rules and regulations. Standardization and certification should be facilitated with training and education programs for farm operators and close collaboration between supervising and supporting organizations. Besides, promotion for agricultural products with a specific brand or certificate would help improve farm profitability.

Finally, weak-threat (WT) strategies would include endeavoring to raise awareness or perceptions of social farming and increasing support for relevant R&D. The fact remains that a cultural prejudice against people with special needs is still a considerable problem. Make and use of social farms for people with disabilities and special needs in neighborhood may face discrimination or opposition. It is consequently important to maintain or improve good relations with neighbors and communities where the social farms are or planned to be. It would be also useful to publicize their successful stories and achievements to the public.

R&D support will contribute to social farms' adoption of new technologies and profitability. Also, investments in statistical infrastructure will facilitate to build and collect relevant data and information that could be used to find effective ways to improve the innovative systems.

## CONCLUSIONS

Social farming is perceived as an innovative approach to make a win-win solution between rural and urban problems. It creates a new socio-cultural framework and brings the two sectors in to a renewed relationship (Foti *et al.*, 2013). Despite their substantial contribution to agricultural multifunctionality and dedication to sustainable development, the farm sectors are confronting a number of challenges on the supply side, including aging farmers, lessened profits, ever increasing import competition, etc. In the midst of such challenges and threats, social farming can serve as a breakthrough in ties with the society.

On the demand side, Korea is under pressure to address the mounting demands for welfare and health care services arising from a rapid increase in the number of people with special needs and the prolonged economic crisis.<sup>5</sup> Political awakening is also taking place under the fact that Korea ranks the lowest share of welfare in the national budget among the OECD countries.

This paper suggests to cultivate this opportunity along with the development of urban agriculture. Even though social farming is still in its early stage of development, it is on the way

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<sup>5</sup> For example, there is about one million people with dementia, which is forecast to increase, rapidly.

of incubation from appearance of many innovative and entrepreneurial farms, emerging networks of key stakeholders, interactions with and collaboration among welfare, health, education and other public sectors, and the growing perception of well-being and sustainability.

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