

Case Study

Ghetto Out - Casa Sankara

(Italy)



Improving farmers' wellbeing through social innovation



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000797.



FARMWELL!

Irregular Work- Ghetto Out Casa Sankara

In recent decades, the Italian agri-food sector has grappled with two significant global trends: Firstly, the sector's increased participation in global markets has necessitated changes in strategies to stay competitive, with a focus on reducing production (including labour) costs. Secondly, there has been a growing dependence on migrant labour, particularly during the economic crisis of 2008-2013. As a consequence, the use of irregular workers in agriculture has become widespread, posing challenges for both farmers and workers, the latter facing vulnerable positions, low wages, and poor living conditions. Ghetto Out – Casa Sankara aims to address this challenge mostly from the perspective of migrant farm workers. It is a voluntary organisation established in 2016 continuing the work initially started by a group of African migrants who decided to commit themselves to the creation of an alternative reality to the ghetto, where they were previously forced to live. The aim was to start planning a legal and decent economic and social integration path, to provide themselves with the opportunity of regular employment, and thus better living conditions.

How the situation of **illegal work negatively impacts** on both farmers and farm workers?

How **migrant workers managed to overcome** themselves the seemingly **hopeless situation and dependence on 'caporali'** (illicit intermediation of labour demand from farms, illegal hiring of workers and labour exploitation)?

How FARMWELL brought the **social innovation closer to farmers?**

How is the **high social value** (€6.19 on every euro invested) **generated?**

What could be done **to better sustain social innovations** like Casa Sankara?



GET INSPIRED!

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Watch the **'Reap what you saw'** **short documentary** [here!](#)

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The story of Ghetto Out - Casa Sankara

In recent decades, two global phenomena have profoundly influenced the Italian agri-food sector. Firstly, the participation of agri-food in global markets, which required companies operating in the sector to change or at least adapt their strategies to respond to increased competition. Cutting production costs has become a structural practice of the agricultural system, often a compromise reached by farmers to support company competitiveness.



Secondly, a growing dependence of the sector on the supply of migrant labour. Since the 1980s, foreign workers have constituted an increasingly large pool of the labour force. This situation has been further aggravated in the years of the economic crisis, between 2008 and 2013, during which the migrant workforce - both from the EU and from third countries - has almost equalled the Italian one. Migrants, who have mostly entered the Italian territory illegally, often end up feeding the ranks of the most vulnerable part of the society, which makes them easily blackmailed.

This has translated in a widespread use of irregular workers in agriculture, which represents a social challenge for both farmers (producers) and workers. The former frequently complain about their weak position and low-bargaining power along the agri-food chain, which required them to lower the production costs, starting from reducing those linked to workforce. The latter face the same wellbeing issues, based on the awareness that they need to accept to work under irregular conditions because of their vulnerable position and consequent have low salaries that lead to the acceptance of degraded living conditions and poor sanitary conditions. In this regard, the emergency related to COVID-19, brought out the difficulty to recruit seasonal workers in agriculture and the strong relevance of the contribution of foreign workers in this sense. The pandemic also highlighted the related critical issues, like poor living conditions and human rights violation of workers.

Shacks and old masonry ruins often become a refuge for those thousands of migrants who enter and live in Italy illegally. This is how ghettos – informal/unofficial settlement - are created (that are places where seasonal workers get together and live, often ending up staying for years). “Caporalato” is an Italian term indicating illicit intermediation of labour demand from farms, illegal hiring of workers and labour exploitation perpetrated by corporals (“caporali” in Italian). The risk of poverty and exclusion is higher in those areas where there is a presence of criminal organisations that control the labour market by new forms of caporalato.

In the context of the objectives of FARMWELL - to improve farmers' mental, physical and social wellbeing through social innovation - the Italian team ([Coldiretti](#) and [University of Pisa](#)) decided to focus on the phenomenon of the pressing challenge of irregular work in agriculture that seriously impacts on the wellbeing of both farmers and farm workers.

Read the [Italian Mapping Report of challenges of the FARMWELL project](#)



Born in this context in the Puglia region, Ghetto Out-Casa Sankara is a voluntary organisation established in 2016, continuing the work that already started in 2012, in an informal way, by a group of African migrants who decided to commit themselves to the creation of an alternative reality to the ghetto, where they were previously forced to live.

Their aim was to start planning a legal and decent economic and social integration path, to provide themselves with the opportunity of regular employment, and thus better living conditions.

Check out the FARMWELL social innovation database [here!](#)

Their belief was that in order to take migrants out of exploitation, it was first and foremost necessary to prevent them from depending on the corporals, the illegal middlemen, for their basic needs: a roof for shelter and at least one meal a day. In this way, Ghetto Out has offered a temporary solution to migrants and put them on a path towards legality and integration within the society.

Thus, the social innovation has been created and still is managed by former victims of labour exploitation. Oppressed victims were able to reverse their status quo and partially the illegal system they forcibly belonged to, becoming entrepreneurs and owners of their own farm activity.

Ghetto Out – Casa Sankara as a social innovation



The most innovative aspect is therefore, has been the ability of founders to create space for themselves within the society and become part of the local economic system, legally and decently contributing to the overall food system. Remarkably, this social innovation exists and has kept on improving thanks to the contribution and support of local institutions, and the EU, which reflects the networking ability of migrants and local institutions.

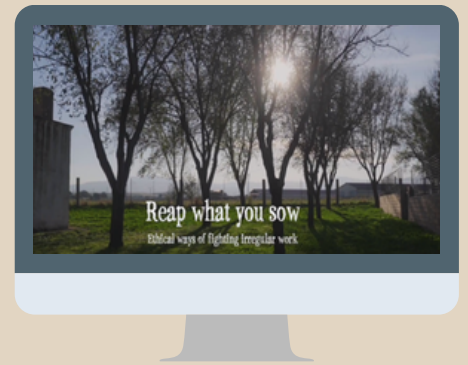
The story of FARMWELL to respond to the irregular work challenge

The University of Pisa and Coldiretti, one of the main farmers' organization in Italy, partners of the Italian team of the FARMWELL project, after having discussed with the rural stakeholders involved in the so-called practice groups and having collected data from the literature, came to the decision to focus its activity on the challenge of irregular work as it largely impacts on the physical, mental, social wellbeing of both farmers and farm workers, with wider implications on the rural community.



Reap What You Sow - Ethical ways of fighting irregular work

Labor exploitation practices harm farmers and farm workers. The episode of the Farm Well video series talks about potential solutions for farmers and farmworkers from innovative organisations all over Italy. The short documentary presents the challenge of irregular work, the reasons behind it and two inspiring solutions that help overcome these challenges.



[Watch the short documentary!](#)

In response to this challenge, the FARMWELL project identified social innovations - including Ghetto Out- Casa Sankara - which have been further debated with the stakeholders in practice group meetings.

In order to bring this practice closer to farmers, the Italian team involved its rural stakeholders in a field visit to the premises of Ghetto Out- Casa Sankara. This happened in the framework of a two-day peer-to-peer exchange implemented in the framework of the FARMWELL project. The pilot action brought the rural stakeholders in a territory where the use of irregular works is highly widespread, and made them more aware of both the practical consequences of irregularities, above all for migrants, and of the solutions to overcome these. On the first day of the pilot, the Italian team let the stakeholders get to know better the social innovation named Humus Job (see dedicated FARMWELL case study) and on the second day, the social innovation Ghetto Out- Casa Sankara. Both social innovations addressed the problem of the irregular employment but from two different perspectives, Humus Job from the perspective of farmers (producers) and Ghetto Out - Casa Sankara from the perspective of farm workers.

The summative Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology used to assess the social (often intangible) impact of Ghetto Out – Casa Sankara demonstrates that impacts over a 5 year benefit period (2017-22) were generated for 1,000 migrant workers (over two thirds of whom are farm workers) - with the combination of personal wellbeing and social and community wellbeing outcomes accounting for around 80% of all value generated by the social innovation. The SROI model indicates that investment in the Ghetto Out (GO) project generates a 619% return on the investment of resources over the benefit period. Those benefitting from the improvements in wellbeing include individuals (migrants, including those involved in farming), local communities, and society more widely.



Casa Sankara aims to combat irregular work by welcoming migrants, trying to integrate them within society with a job, and teaching them the Italian language. However, the social innovation needs to raise funds every year for the maintenance of the facilities, to pay people who work within the association, for the production of tomato sauce, to continue activities like Italian classes for migrants, driver's license courses, advanced courses in agricultural practices, and many others. Due to the high social value generated by Casa Sankara, a more stable financial situation would be needed.

Thanks to the work of Casa Sankara many migrants manage to get regular work for most of the year. Unfortunately, this is not always possible for everyone, as the timelines for administrative process to be regularly hired are too long. Lengthy procedures leads to a decrease in well-being for those who are unable to get a job. In this regard, it might be helpful to reduce the timelines for hiring on a short-term basis for workers from Casa Sankara (and the other NGOs). Also, a greater collaboration between Casa Sankara and local employment centres should be fostered.



FIND OUT MORE!

Check out the full case study: [here!](#)

Check out the FARMWELL Toolkit for more information & inspiration [here!](#)

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