Promotion of active ageing through activities in rural settings: monitoring and trial results

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28/03/2019

Rural Development Innovation Week

ANNUAL EVENT OF THE TUSCANY REGION RDP EAFRD 2014-2020
Overview

- The significance of active aging promoted by rural farms
- The "Active Longevity in Rural Areas" project designing and development
- Main findings of the research
- Conclusion and perspectives
Aging society and welfare policies

- Population aging is the most relevant factor that will redirect the characteristics of the Italian welfare.
- The current state raises questions about the quality of life of the elderly with particular attention to the phase of prevention of frailty.
- It becomes increasingly urgent to devise appropriate solutions for the prevention of functional impairment and to compensate for the unavoidable vulnerabilities of old age.

Source: our calculation on ISTAT databases.
Goals of the Marche Region project “Active Longevity in Rural Areas”

- To promote cooperation between public institutions and agricultural enterprises in the development of innovative services for the elderly
- To measure the impact of these initiatives on participants

Timeframe of the project: December 2014 - January 2016
Active Ageing Policy Framework (WHO, 2002)

- Optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age
- Allowing people to realize their potential for physical, social, and mental well being throughout the life course and to participate in society according to their needs, desires and capacities
- Adopting a new paradigm, that views older people as active participants in an age-integrated society
Social Farming

○ Enabling the participants to be protagonist in the various activities
○ Providing for a diversification of activities in relation to user characteristics
○ Offering a variety of experiences settings into the farm
○ Inserting therapeutic aspects such as outdoor exercise
○ Paying attention to relational aspects with regards to participants, professionals and families
○ Providing for an intergenerational approach
Target and objectives of the regional programme

Target group
- Disability free people aged 65 years and over

Objectives
- Maintenance and stimulation of psychophysical capabilities
- Social isolation prevention
- Prevention of disability
Activities

1. Gardening and farming
Gardening and horticulture, care of the farmyard animals, training on agronomic practices, visits to the olive grove, harvesting olive or fruit, handicrafts

2. Food education and healthy cooking
Food laboratory with educational lunch, smoothies making, homemade pasta training for kids, cooking garden products

3. Leisure and socialization
Free subject talking, memory of rural traditions, journal writing, dancing, music therapy, lunches with family members and grandchildren
Research tools

Qualitative Study
Focus groups with two follow-ups on:
- Motivation, expectations
- Long-life learning and life style
- Psychosocial aspects

Quantitative Survey
- Cognitive status Short Portable Mental Status Questionnaire (SPMSQ) (Pfeiffer, 1975)
- Social network frequency of contacts
- Quality of life Whoqol-age (Caballero et al., 2013)
- Lifestyle habits VAOR-ADI (Landi et al., 2000)
Subjects who participated to the study

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Total number of participants 112
## Sample Characteristics

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<th>MEMORIA QUERCIA</th>
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Main outcomes

- Social Integration: 91% increased contacts with network members
- Health: 63% increased exercise or felt more energetic in carrying out daily activities
- Healthy Diet: 66% increased daily consumption of fruit and vegetables
Qualitative analysis

Psychological dimension: “the experience has been a sort of awakening”

Social dimension: “it’s a chance of staying together”

Physical dimension and autonomy: “I retrieved a bit of my autonomy”

Long-life learning and life style: “I learned new things to enjoy with grandchildren”

Mental health/memory: “it helps memory being reconstructed”
Change in network size: mild cognitive impairment group

The increase is statistically significant (p<0.05)
The increase is statistically significant (p<0.05)

Change in network size: no cognitive impairment group
Subjective evaluation of quality of life

No cognitive impairment group

Mild cognitive impairment group

Before | After | Before | After

3.1  | 3.4   | 3.8  | 3.9

3.2  |       | 3.7  |       

3.3  |       | 3.6  |       

3.4  |       | 3.5  |       

3.5  |       | 3.4  |       

3.6  |       | 3.3  |       

3.7  |       | 3.2  |       

3.8  |       | 3.1  |       

3.9  |       |      |       

Before: Before intervention; After: After intervention.
Conclusion and perspectives

The findings support the beneficial effect of participating in farm-based social and educational services: policy makers should promote programmes encouraging services for older people, together with measures to improve health and well-being.

The “Model of active longevity in rural areas” developed by the Marche Region and INRCA will be further applied to finance new project of social farming for older people including “seniors cohousing” and “sensory gardens”.

Further steps might include the creation of a wide European partnership to develop farm-based innovative initiatives for active aging.
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Thanks for your attention