



SOCIAL AGRICULTURE

case study

GREEN CARE - WO MENSCHEN AUFBLÜHEN **ASSOCIATION GREEN CARE AUSTRIA**

Green Care - Wo Menschen aufblühen (Where people flourish) is a registered brand of Association Green Care Austria, it was founded in 2015. The Green Care Austria Association together with nine chambers of agriculture, forms the competence network for the development and implementation of innovative green care services on active family farms in Austria.

"In the beginning we had to do a lot on awareness. When we spoke about Green Care - Wo Menschen aufblühen to administrations and other stakeholders they thought it was about green mobility! In our opinion the main stages are: awareness, best practices, productdevelopment incl. Farmers and scale- up by involving communities."

Nicole Prop, founder

MODEL IN A NUTSHELL

- **Website**
www.greencare-oe.at
- **Social channels**
[www.fb.me/greencareoe](https://www.facebook.com/greencareoe)
- **Country**
Austria
- **Main sector**
Private public
- **Specific sector**
Agriculture,
forestry,
healthcare- preventive care,
education,
local development, social
- **Stage of development**
Incorporated
- **Our work in SDGs**



FROM FEW TO MANY

Nicole Prop, who founded *Green Care - Wo Menschen aufblühen*, studied economics and worked for many years for international companies in marketing and sales. Her parents did voluntary work on a Green Care farm in the Netherlands. In 2010 Nicole Prop decided to start a new initiative in Austria. She worked to get funding streams going for two years. The Agricultural Chamber of Vienna developed the pilot project and **it started 2012**. Diversification and additional income streams are important factors for farms, to get involved in Green Care. Vienna was not the best state to start a Green Care project, so by the end of 2012 the project was **extended to the other eight states with small-scale farms**.

It is difficult to bring together farmers and social institutions to work on business development. Farmers and social care centres usually don't have the money to pay. That is why we decided to find our own funding stream. The EU Rural Development program is funding the Association *Green Care Austria*. In Austria, we decided that Green Care is part of the Ministry of Agriculture. In 2014 we established the Federation *Green Care Austria*, in parallel to the Association with **23 stakeholders**. All stakeholders contributed to the writing of the Green Care strategy paper with **10 targets**; based on these targets, the Association *Green Care Austria* provides Green Care services, marketing, public relations, educational activities, quality processes etc. Without the overall strategic framework and the Federation it is not possible to go holistic.

Beneficiaries are the farmers, the people that benefit from these activities (target groups): elderly people, disabled people, people with burnout symptoms and children. The Association *Green Care Austria* addresses the direct beneficiaries - farmers but also the clients of the farms, and deals with the stakeholders. The potential market for us is huge as there are currently **162.018 farms in Austria**. According to a recent survey, **3 out of 4 farms** in Austria are interested in Green Care.



FROM IDEA TO ACTION

The motivation to start came from the desire to use my knowledge in economics for something more meaningful. The Green Care concept was very close to that. The Association *Green Care Austria* has the role of a business development unit; trying to understand the world of **health and social care institutions** and work in the field of **agriculture and forestry**. Bringing together both worlds, having a dialogue and understand each other's needs. Our role is a facilitator among educational, social care, health and agriculture fields and try to implement Green Care solutions based on the needs of active farms together with institutions and public organizations (collaboration instead of competition). In other countries the farmers lend their infrastructure to social institutions, we go beyond. We want the farms to **bring in the infrastructure, and the social services** (active participation), this is a new, different approach!

The main activities of Association *Green Care Austria* include:

- Helping farms to develop their Green Care business model- from idea to implementation to continuous support
- Improving awareness, presenting the added economic value
- Development and implementation Green Care high-quality products and services
- Clarification of the legal requirements
- Creating and implementing the quality process
- Developing a Green Care competence network
- Creating financing models
- Promoting an Austrian collaborative effort
- Developing education programs
- Interdisciplinary research to prove the effects and use
- Joining collaborative efforts at European level

We developed with experts an **external certification process**; we use an official certification authority. They are responsible for the audits on the farms. As per November 2020, we have sixty certified *Green Care - Wo Menschen aufblühen* farms, 60 more in the pipeline. In total **120 farms** providing *Green Care - Wo Menschen aufblühen*-services in Austria.

FROM OLD TO NEW

The innovation of our idea lies in our building a bridge between social challenges and challenges at the farm level: stress, active ageing/dementia, unemployment, and other social problems. *Green Care Austria* brings these two sectors together and finds solutions for both. *Green Care Austria* focuses on **"active" farms**, those farms that need additional business as the income from regular farming activities is not enough to keep the farm active (thus the need for diversification). Since 1995, when Austria became a member of the EU, more than 30% of the farms stopped their activity. Often the farmers' wives have a background in social, healthcare or education next to the farmers know how. *Green Care Austria* tries to build **second streams of income** so that active family farms can stay active.

FROM NOW TO THEN

Our strength and success lie in our willingness to have a holistic approach and work together; there is trust, cooperation, and communication. *Green Care Austria* is a facilitator for the rural areas, supporting offering **Green Care services** in the regions together with farmers, social agencies. Green Care services are premium products, flexible social solutions on active farms. *Green Care Austria* can contribute to making people **stay in rural areas** by offering meaningful services for good economic income.

However, this won't be easy, to achieve this we would need:

- Certainty that *Green Care Austria* is part of the **Rural development program 2021 – 2027** funding streams
- Strategic **sponsoring partners** who push the idea to their CSR strategies, and also support as with funding
- **Additional funds** to support our increasing target audience (more clients with dementia, children needing special education, growing number of elderly people)
- More **financial support** for communities to invest in flexible social services like Green Care.

