Danish Testing Ground Community Supported Agriculture and Municipal Engagement

Soil Health Challenge
land managers generally have little incentive to invest in healthy soils, as they cannot sufficiently capture the value generated by these ecosystem services

Location

This Testing Ground is located in Denmark near Aarhus and is organised around a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm.

Goal

Create a regenerative CSA farm that is economically viable, capable of protecting soil health, supporting the farmer, and ensuring long-term continuity through increasing involvement of the local community.

Innovation

Combination of regenerative agriculture, local participation, and experimentation with community governance and ownership. The model aims to gradually transform a farmer-led farm into a structure that is more deeply rooted in the local community.

SHBM Description

The model is based on a CSA financed primarily through member subscriptions, providing the farmer with a more stable and predictable source of income.
The farm combines vegetable production, self-harvesting, and community activities, while relying on practices that support soil health. Members contribute not only as consumers, but also as active participants in the farm's activities through community engagement.

Actor Network

- Farmer
- CSA members (subscribers and active community participants)
- Voluntary strategic group
- Aarhus Municipality
- Local civil-society actors
- External advisers
- Wider support local network

The model also relies on non-human and institutional actors, they support the creation of economic, environmental, and social value while contributing to the farm's long-term development.

Value Creation Mechanism

Value is generated through activities combining agricultural production, soil analysis, self-harvesting, social events, and collective work on the farm's financing and future development.
These activities mobilise a wide range of resources, from farming and volunteer labour to legal, technical, and strategic expertise. The resulting benefits are delivered to members through access to food production, ecosystem services, and learning experiences offered on the farm.

Dominant Value Rationales

Green
Focuses on improving soil health, biodiversity, water protection, , gentle cultivation, and ecosystem-service provision.

Market
Seeks to ensure the farm's economic viability through subscriptions, pricing, and improved economic stability.

Industrial
Relies on monitoring, indicators, agreements, and organisational structures to stabilize the business model

Civic
Emphasises local engagement, trust, participation, shared responsibility, and the ambition for community-based ownership.

Project
Reflects the collaborative and experimental effort to develop new approaches to ownership and local participation.

Main Results

It illustrates how a social innovation functions by combining regenerative farming with experimentation in ownership, governance, and local participation. It has strengthened member engagement and trust, while revealing the need to balance community values with economic viability, formal governance structures, and long-term organisational stability.

Barriers and Challenges

While regenerative farming practices are well established, building a stable organisational structure remains challenging. The transition towards collective ownership and the management of generational change have revealed tensions between different values, priorities, and strategic visions.

Lessons Learnt

- Community support should be complemented by strong organisational structures
- Social and environmental values depend on strong governance and risk-sharing.
- Municipal support strengthens the project's legitimacy and visibility.

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Contact
https://soilvalues.eu/
info.soilvalues@kuleuven.be

Erik Mathijs, *Project Coordinator:* erik.mathijs@kuleuven.be

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Watch the Testing Ground in action