

**Benchmark**  
**SAE 5 : Développement avancée**

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# Introduction :

## Purpose of the benchmark

The purpose of this benchmark is to compare Les Jardins de Cocagne with other associations abroad that operate in the same thematic field. The analysis will focus on understanding the competitive landscape and identifying the key strengths and weaknesses of each actor.

The study will produce a 6 to 7-page report in English, presenting the various organizations and their activities, with a final comparative table highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of each.

## Overview of “Les Jardins de Cocagne”



Les Jardins de Cocagne is a French network of associations dedicated to social and professional integration through organic market gardening. Its mission is to support people facing social or professional difficulties by providing meaningful work, professional and social guidance, and opportunities to regain dignity and self-confidence. At the same time, the association promotes access to healthy and affordable food and encourages cultural openness and community engagement.

The network operates with a strong focus on environmental sustainability. All activities follow organic farming principles and respect seasonal rhythms, aiming to preserve natural resources and increase biodiversity. Continuous innovation is encouraged to improve both ecological practices and the well-being of employees.

In addition to producing and distributing local, healthy food, Les Jardins de Cocagne fosters collaboration with other local producers and offers catering services, ensuring a short supply chain that benefits both consumers and the community. The association also emphasizes education and awareness, teaching people of all ages about environmental responsibility, reducing food waste, and adopting sustainable practices. Active and engaging pedagogical methods are used, alongside continuous training for employees, to reinforce knowledge and skills in both professional and environmental domains.

Overall, Les Jardins de Cocagne combines social inclusion, sustainable agriculture, local food production, and environmental education, forming a unique model that can serve as a benchmark for similar organizations abroad.

## **Methodology :**

The methodology for this benchmark is based on a structured comparison of Les Jardins de Cocagne with other associations abroad that operate in the same field of social integration and organic agriculture. The study focuses on three main aspects: the criteria for comparison, the selection of foreign associations, and the data collection methods.

### **Criteria for comparison**

The analysis will consider several key dimensions of each organization. These include the social mission and impact, the integration and training programs offered to employees, ecological and sustainable farming practices, local food production and distribution, and educational initiatives.

### **Selection of foreign associations**

Foreign associations were chosen based on their similarity to Les Jardins de Cocagne in terms of mission, size, and activities. The focus is on initiatives that combine social integration with organic agriculture, local food distribution, and environmental education. Associations from different countries are included to provide a broader perspective and to highlight innovative practices that may not yet exist in France.

### **Data collection methods**

The main source of information will be internet research, on the official websites of each association. All collected data will be organized systematically to allow a clear comparison of strengths and weaknesses, culminating in a comparative table that summarizes the pros and cons of each association.

# Presentation of Associations

## 3.1 Les Jardins de Cocagne (France)

Les Jardins de Cocagne is a French network of associations dedicated to social and professional integration through organic market gardening. Its mission is to support people facing social or professional difficulties by providing meaningful work, professional and social guidance, and opportunities to regain dignity and self-confidence. At the same time, the association promotes access to healthy and affordable food and encourages cultural openness and community engagement.

### Main Actions of Les Jardins de Cocagne

1. **Social and Professional Integration** – Supporting employees on their integration path by offering meaningful work, training, and social guidance.
2. **Sustainable and Organic Farming** – Following organic farming practices, respecting seasonal rhythms, and promoting biodiversity.
3. **Local Food Production** – Producing and distributing fresh, healthy food through short supply chains, local markets, and catering services.
4. **Education and Environmental Awareness** – Teaching people of all ages about environmental responsibility, reducing food waste, and promoting sustainable practices.
5. **Continuous Training and Innovation** – Providing ongoing training for employees and constantly improving agricultural and organizational practices.



## 3.2 AME Foundation (India)

The AME Foundation is an Indian NGO dedicated to supporting smallholder farmers in arid and semi-arid regions. Its mission is to improve livelihoods through sustainable agriculture, effective

water management, and training programs that empower farmers to make informed decisions. The organization emphasizes environmental stewardship, social empowerment, and community knowledge sharing, making it a strong model for agricultural development in challenging conditions.

#### Main Actions of the AME Foundation

1. **Rainwater Management** – Helping farmers collect and store rainwater for effective irrigation and sustainable crop production.
2. **Sustainable Agriculture Practices** – Teaching environmentally friendly farming techniques adapted to local conditions.
3. **Training and Capacity Building** – Conducting Farmer Field Schools and participatory technology programs to strengthen farmers' skills and knowledge.
4. **Community Empowerment** – Supporting women and youth in agriculture, promoting informed decision-making, and improving livelihoods.
5. **Knowledge Sharing and Partnerships** – Collaborating with over 130 partners and disseminating best practices through publications like *LEISA India*.



### 3.3 Social Farms & Gardens (United Kingdom)

Social Farms & Gardens is a UK-based charity that supports community-managed farms, gardens, and care farming projects across the country. Its mission is to improve health, wellbeing, and social inclusion by connecting people with land and nature. The organization acts as a national network, providing advocacy, training, and resources for thousands of members engaged in sustainable farming and community gardening.

#### Main Actions of Social Farms & Gardens

1. **Networking and Advocacy** – Uniting more than 1,000 community projects to share knowledge and represent their interests at national and regional levels.
2. **Care Farming Support** – Promoting farms that deliver health, social care, and educational services to people with physical or mental health needs.
3. **Urban and Community Gardens** – Supporting city farms and neighborhood gardens as tools for education, biodiversity, and social cohesion.
4. **Training and Resources** – Providing toolkits, workshops, and consultancy to strengthen management and sustainability of local initiatives.
5. **Policy Engagement** – Working with government bodies to secure recognition and funding for community-led green initiatives.



### 3.4 Korenika Eco-Social Farm (Slovenia)

Korenika Eco-Social Farm is a Slovenian social enterprise that combines organic farming, social inclusion, and rural development. Its mission is to employ vulnerable groups—including long-term unemployed people, individuals with disabilities, and marginalized communities—while producing high-quality organic products. The farm integrates agricultural production with food processing and tourism services, creating a sustainable economic model rooted in social responsibility.

#### Main Actions of Korenika Eco-Social Farm

1. **Employment of Vulnerable Groups** – Offering work opportunities and social support for marginalized individuals.
2. **Organic Farming and Processing** – Producing certified organic vegetables, herbs, and processed foods under the Korenika brand.
3. **Eco-Tourism and Education** – Hosting workshops, tours, and educational programs to raise awareness of sustainable lifestyles.
4. **Community Development** – Contributing to local economic growth by partnering with municipalities and other stakeholders.
5. **European Networking** – Acting as a model project in EU programs promoting social entrepreneurship and sustainable agriculture



### 3.5 Care Farming Network / Red Wiggler (United States)

The Care Farming Network, hosted by Red Wiggler Community Farm in Maryland, is a U.S. initiative that connects farms using agricultural spaces as places of healing, therapy, and employment. Red Wiggler itself employs people with developmental disabilities, producing organic food while promoting social inclusion and community engagement. The network aims to spread awareness, share best practices, and expand care farming across the country.

#### Main Actions of Care Farming Network / Red Wiggler

1. **Inclusive Employment** – Offering jobs for adults with developmental disabilities in sustainable farming operations.
2. **Organic Food Production** – Growing and distributing healthy produce for local communities and vulnerable populations.
3. **Resource Hub** – Creating an online platform with case studies, farm profiles, and guidelines for practitioners of care farming.
4. **Community Engagement** – Building partnerships with schools, social services, and volunteers to foster social integration.
5. **Awareness and Advocacy** – Promoting care farming in the U.S. context and raising recognition of its social and therapeutic benefits.

# Comparative Analysis

Association	Strengths / Advantages / Assets	Weaknesses / Drawbacks / Challenges
Les Jardins de Cocagne (France)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strong social mission: integration of unemployed individuals through farming.</li> <li>- Proven model of community-supported agriculture (vegetable baskets).</li> <li>- Wide national network of gardens across France.</li> <li>- Clear focus on both food access and social reintegration.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dependent on public subsidies and volunteer engagement.</li> <li>- Limited scalability beyond French socio-political context.</li> <li>- Basket distribution model may not fit all consumer needs.</li> </ul>
AME Foundation (India)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expertise in dryland and sustainable farming.</li> <li>- Strong focus on water management and agroecology.</li> <li>- Extensive training and knowledge dissemination (Farmer Field Schools).</li> <li>- Partnerships with 130+ organizations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Impact limited to specific regions of India.</li> <li>- Reliance on donor funding for scaling.</li> <li>- Farmers' adoption rate depends on cultural and social acceptance.</li> </ul>
Social Farms & Gardens (UK)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National network supporting 1,000+ projects.</li> <li>- Strong advocacy and policy influence.</li> <li>- Variety of initiatives: city farms, care farming, gardens.</li> <li>- Solid training resources and toolkits.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Highly diverse approaches make replication complex.</li> <li>- Dependent on UK-specific policy and funding.</li> <li>- Fragmentation across many small projects.</li> </ul>
Care Farming Network / Red Wiggler (United States)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Integrates therapy, employment, and education on farms.</li> <li>- Recognized model for rural development.</li> <li>- Supported by universities and policy initiatives.</li> <li>- Strong social inclusion outcomes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Difficult to standardize practices across farms.</li> <li>- Requires substantial coordination between social and agricultural sectors.</li> <li>- Limited visibility outside Germany.</li> </ul>
Korenika Eco-Social Farm (Slovenia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Combines organic farming, processing, and eco-tourism.</li> <li>- Economic self-sufficiency through product sales.</li> <li>- Employment of vulnerable groups.</li> <li>- Recognized EU best practice in social enterprise.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High investment costs (infrastructure, certification).</li> <li>- Requires strong commercial and entrepreneurial skills.</li> <li>- Model may be hard to replicate in less supportive environments.</li> </ul>

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1 Lessons Learned from Foreign Associations

The comparative analysis highlights several lessons that can be drawn from international experiences:

1. **Diversification of Activities** : Both Korenika (Slovenia) and Social Farms & Gardens (UK) demonstrate the value of combining farming with education, processing, or eco-tourism to ensure financial sustainability and wider community impact.
2. **Knowledge Sharing and Capacity Building** : The AME Foundation's systematic approach to farmer training illustrates the effectiveness of structured educational programs, which could inspire similar initiatives within European contexts.
3. **Economic Self-Sufficiency through Social Enterprise** : Korenika's integration of production, processing, and branding highlights the importance of entrepreneurial skills and diversified revenue streams for long-term resilience.

### 4.2 Opportunities for Improvement for Les Jardins de Cocagne

Based on these insights, several opportunities emerge for Les Jardins de Cocagne to strengthen its model:

1. **Diversify Revenue Sources** – Inspired by Korenika, the association could expand into product transformation (e.g., preserves, sauces) or eco-tourism, reducing dependence on subsidies.
2. **Enhance Policy Engagement** – Following the example of Social Farms & Gardens, Cocagne could intensify its advocacy role at national and European levels to secure greater recognition and resources.

# Web Presence Comparison

## Les Jardins de Cocagne (France)

- Professional website focused on national network and local gardens.
- Clear information for volunteers, subscribers, and partners.
- Mainly French content → limited international visibility.
- Moderate use of social media, oriented toward local communities.

## Foreign Associations

- AME Foundation (India): Website in English, strong visibility of projects and publications.
- Social Farms & Gardens (UK): Very dynamic site with resources, interactive tools, and strong social media engagement.
- Care Farming Network / Red Wiggler (United States): Informative but academic/professional, oriented toward policy makers and researchers.
- Korenika (Slovenia): Combines website and social media for eco-tourism, product marketing, and social projects.

## Conclusion

The benchmark of Jardins de Cocagne and other social farms in Europe and beyond highlights several key points. Jardins de Cocagne stands out for its strong social mission, integrating unemployed individuals through farming, and for its proven community-supported agriculture (CSA) model. Its robust national network and dual focus on food access and social reintegration are significant strengths.

However, the French model shows some limitations: dependency on public subsidies and volunteers, challenges in scaling beyond the French socio-political context, and a distribution format that may not suit all consumers. Comparatively, other associations studied—such as the AME Foundation, Social Farms & Gardens, Care Farming Network / Red Wiggler (United States), and Korenika Eco-Social Farm—offer complementary approaches with more diversified models (therapy, education, agroecology, eco-tourism) and stronger international digital visibility.

This analysis suggests that while Jardins de Cocagne is a solid and exemplary social model, it could benefit from diversifying distribution channels, increasing economic autonomy, and enhancing digital presence to expand its visibility and impact beyond France. Overall, the network represents an inspiring model of social agriculture, with further development potential informed by international best practices.

# References

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