THE *POLLAIO SOCIALE* FROM ITALY

WORKFORCE INCLUSION AND FRESH EGGS BY ADOPTING LAYING HENS

November 2026



In Imola, in the Italian region of Emilia-Romagna, the *Pollaio Sociale* celebrated its tenth anniversary in September 2026.

Based on the adoption of laying hens in exchange for fresh eggs throughout the year, the project promotes good practices in food and consumption, while fostering social and integration and interaction among people with disabilities.

The *Social Chicken Coop* was conceived and created by the Social Seacoop Cooperative to offer anyone interested the opportunity to participate actively in a program centered on environmental protection, the well-being of farm animals and the nutritional benefits of consuming fresh produce grown using methods that respect natural processes.



Two wooden structures house 100 laying hens. Surrounded by a fenced pasture, the hens are free to roam and forage for food on their own. The Seacoop cooperative explains that the balanced feed provided to the hens consists primarily of vegetables and scraps from the garden managed by the cooperative; the animals also have ample space to live in harmony with their natural environment. A classical music system has even been installed in the chicken coop to help the hens relax and encourage egg-laying.



The concept behind the *Social Chicken Coop* is that, rather than buying eggs, interested people can adopt a laying hen. For an annual contribution of 95 euros, which covers the cost of caring for and feeding one hen, participants receive approximately 250 eggs, which can be collected directly from the coop. These are ultra-fresh, locally sourced, ethically produced, and sustainable eggs.

The *Social Chicken Coop* was established in 2016 within the Seacoop Social Cooperative. It is managed by young people with disabilities from the *La Tartaruga* socio-occupational Center, one of the cooperative's core initiatives. The Center features a greenhouse and vegetable gardens, and hosts various activities, including ceramics and woodworking workshops. The Social Chicken Coop *is one of the projects run by the La Tartaruga Center*; the young people who attend the Center take care of the coop, collect the eggs twice a day, package them in recycled paper cartons, and deliver them to customers**.**



For the young people working on the *Social Chicken Coop* project, maintaining relationships with those who adopt the hens is a key part of their role. For this reason, and also to uphold the *zero-kilometer* principle of promoting locally sourced products, the eggs are not shipped; they must be collected directly from the coop, despite requests from many interested people to participate remotely.

Created ten years ago, the *Social Chicken Coop* continues to enjoy a great success: the number of adoption requests is overwhelming, and even after doubling of the number of laying hens, the waiting lists remain very long. The project has successfully ensured that participants have access to high-quality, ultra-fresh eggs.

However, the project also aims to provide a point of reference for around thirty young people with various disabilities, offering them the opportunity to work in close contact with animals and nature. They take care of all the necessary tasks: from providing feed and water to cleaning the chicken coop, from collecting and packaging the eggs to distributing them and maintaining relationships with those who *adopt* the hens.

In this respect, the initiative has also been a success for the young people who attend the Occupational Center: interacting with the hens and taking on the responsibility of caring for them have boosted their self-esteem and developed their skills for a hoped-for future job, while their interactions with the people who *adopt* the hens help strengthen their interpersonal and social skills.

This small-scale project demonstrates the important role that cooperatives can play in local communities by creating innovative and sustainable solutions to local needs that also address global challenges, such as the inclusion of people with disabilities in the workforce and the development of sustainable food systems.

Moreover, the project has demonstrated its replicability. Four other cooperatives in the region have successfully adopted the *Pollaio Sociale* model, with technical support from the Seacoop Cooperative, which registered the project's trademark in 2019 to protect its innovative value. Seacoop invites other interested cooperatives, associations, and agricultural businesses to get in touch to explore the possibility of implementing a *Social Chicken Coop* within their own organizations: pollaiosociale@seacoop.coop.











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Pollaio Sociale News 2026

Pollaio Sociale in seacoop.coop

Pollaio Sociale in la tartaruga.coop

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