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Kontakt/Contact

ZBW – Leibniz-Informationszentrum Wirtschaft/Leibniz Information Centre for Economics
Düsternbrooker Weg 120
24105 Kiel (Germany)
E-Mail: [rights\[at\]zbw.eu](mailto:rights[at]zbw.eu)
<https://www.zbw.eu/>

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Working Paper

How Social Enterprises Contribute to Alternative Food Systems

Anastasia COSTANTINI, Gianluca PASTORELLI
& Alessia SEBILLO

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How Social Enterprises Contribute to Alternative Food Systems*

Anastasia Costantini¹, Gianluca Pastorelli and Alessia Sebillo

DIESIS

European Research and Development Service for the Social Economy

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¹ *Corresponding author*, Diesis, Boulevard Charlemagne 74, 1000 Brussels (Belgium)
(Email: anastasia.costantini@diesis.coop).

Abstract

The dominant trend is an increasing separation between the land and the food products, as well as the extension of the food chain: the increasing distance between places of production and places of consumption breaks the links with nature and culture.

Social economy enterprises are able to develop innovative solutions that increase productivity while delivering better services in social, health, and education services. Their contribution to economic development and well-being has been confirmed by the recent economic crisis, which has highlighted the resilience of social economy and social enterprises as well as their capacity to generate new employment and preserve existing jobs. What does it mean for a social economy enterprise to take food into account? The paper contributes to this branch of studies with the aim of understanding how social enterprises are able to generate alternative food systems to promote food sovereignty and sustainability. Firstly, a review of the relevant literature is presented, with the aim of showing an overview of the relationship between social economy enterprises and sustainable development with a specific focus on sustainable food. Following this, after a description of the methodology employed, the experiences of a number of social enterprises of food sector among Europe that have implemented innovative projects involving sustainability and counteracting the desertification of rural areas, women's employment, migrant integration, decent job conditions and work integration. This leads to a discussion of the results, the interpretation of the new roles of social enterprises, and the identification of the main implications. The main thing that links all these cases is five key elements, which are present in all the experiences we analysed: inclusion, equity, respect, responsibility and opportunity. These elements can be seen as keywords and important aspects for a transition towards more sustainable food systems through social economy enterprises.

Keywords: Social Economy, Social Enterprise, Sustainable Food, Social Innovation, Sustainable Development, Resilience, Food Sovereignty, Rural development

JEL Codes: L31, O35, P13, Q01, Q13, Q02

1. Introduction

A convergence of factors makes the food system one of the most important global issues. Food represents our cultural identity and tries to remind us every day that we are part of Nature. The dominant trend is an increasing separation between the land and the food products, as well as the extension of the food chain: the increasing distance between places of production and places of its consumption breaks the links with nature and culture. Meanwhile, we face a constant decrease in agricultural soil area. Food production causes significant pressures on the environment. According to the FAO (2014), agriculture uses 70% of global freshwater and the food sector accounts for around 30% of world energy consumption. It is essential to reconsider our food system from the sustainability perspective. The Europe 2020 strategy highlights that a resource-efficient Europe needs to *“find new ways to reduce inputs, minimise waste, improve management of resource stocks, change consumption patterns, optimise production processes, management and business methods, and improve logistics.”*

Social economy enterprises are able to develop innovative solutions that increase productivity while delivering better services in social, health, and education services. Their contribution to economic development and well-being has been confirmed by the recent economic crisis, which has highlighted the resilience of the social economy and social enterprises as well as their capacity to generate new employment and preserve existing jobs. What does it mean for a social economy enterprise to take food into account? The paper contributes to this branch of studies with the aim of understanding how social enterprises are able to generate alternative food systems to promote food sovereignty and sustainability. In order to achieve these knowledge objectives, the paper is organized as follows.

Firstly, a review of the relevant literature is presented, with the aim of showing an overview of the relationship between social economy enterprises and sustainable development with a specific focus on sustainable food. Follow this, after a description of the methodology employed, the experiences of a number of social enterprises of food sector among Europe that have implemented innovative projects involving sustainability and counteracting the desertification of rural areas, women's employment, migrant integration, decent job conditions and work integration. This leads to a discussion of the results, the interpretation of the new roles of social enterprises, and the identification of the main implications.

2. Sustainable Food Systems and Social Enterprises: Definitions

According to the FAO, “A Sustainable Food System is a food system that delivers food security and nutrition for all in such a way that the economic, social and environmental bases to generate food security and nutrition for future generations are not compromised”. Sustainability means ensuring human rights and well-being without depleting or diminishing the capacity of the earth’s ecosystems to support life, or at the expense of others’ well-being. The FAO’s vision for sustainable food and agriculture is that of “a world in which food is nutritious and accessible for everyone and natural resources are managed in a way that maintains ecosystem functions to support current as well as future human needs. In this vision, farmers, pastoralists, fisher-folk, foresters and other rural dwellers have the opportunity to actively participate in, and benefit from, economic development, have decent employment conditions and work in a fair price environment. Rural women, men and communities live in security, and have control over their livelihoods and equitable access to resources which they use in an efficient way” (FAO, 2014).

Despite the gradual convergence of social enterprise concepts at EU level, social enterprises are still conceived in significantly different ways and take a range of organisational and legal forms in different countries across Europe. Most of EU Member States have some form of legislation that recognises and regulates social enterprise activity. (GECES, 2016; EC, 2016) In 2011, the Social Business Initiative (SBI) of the European Commission has proposed the following operational definition of social enterprises, that will be used in this paper: *“Social enterprise is an operator in the social economy whose main objective is to have a social impact rather than make a profit for its owners or shareholders. It operates by providing goods and services for the market in an entrepreneurial and innovative fashion and uses its profits primarily to achieve social objectives. It is managed in an open and responsible manner and, in particular, involves employees, consumers and stakeholders affected by its commercial activities”.*

3. The Contribution of the Social Economy to a Sustainable Food System. A Review

The definition of the civil commons McMurtry (1999) gives as *“any co-operative human construction that protects and/or enables the universal access to life goods”* links sustainability with the idea of civil commons. As Sumner suggests, in this way, the civil commons are co-operative, not competitive. She states: *“the structures can range from universities, governments and corporations to NGOs, neighbourhood associations and social businesses, as long as they build*

the civil commons. The processes can include teaching, learning, decision-making, facilitating, governing and researching, as long as they build the civil commons. These structures and processes interact dynamically to create, support and spread the civil commons. The wider and deeper the civil commons – socially, economically and environmentally – the higher the level of sustainability. The more the civil commons is enclosed, the lower the level of sustainability” (Sumner, 2011). According to Sumner, if the concept of sustainability involves building the civil commons, then the sustainable food system would consist of a variety of collectivities that preserve and enable access to the food that humans need. Therefore, the social economy, which we consider to be part of the civil commons as a cooperative human construct, can be involved in the process of building alternative food systems, in order to become more sustainable.

Recognising the urgent need to tackle the multiple economic, environmental and social consequences of food production and consumption, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) calls on the European Commission and Member States to develop a clear EU policy and implementation plan for building a sustainable, resilient, healthy, fair and climate-friendly food system, which encourages cooperation and mutual understanding among all stakeholders along the food supply chain. (EESC, 2016)

Many actors in the social economy have already started developing alternative food systems. All over Europe we can see Community Food Enterprises, social farms, participatory supermarkets, consumers’ cooperatives, solidarity grocery stores, that consider not only the environmental but also the social and economic dimensions of sustainability.

Social farming is a significant example of social sustainability. The term ‘social farming’ refers to a set of practices that use agricultural resources – animals, plants, gardens, forests, landscape – to promote therapeutic and rehabilitative actions of social inclusion, educational and social services useful to the daily life of local communities and rural areas (Di Iacovo, 2008 and 2012). This multifunctional approach to farming has attracted attention from multiple stakeholders such as the EESC, which in 2012 published an opinion containing a number of proposals and recommendations to the Commission, including the definition of a reference legal framework and the possibility of public support for initiatives in various countries. Social farming can be a tool to respond to the growing needs of the population, both in terms of socially, economically and environmentally sustainable agricultural production, and in terms of providing socio-sanitary and socio-occupational services.

In the 20th century, the economist most closely associated with the term ‘entrepreneur’ was Schumpeter, who described entrepreneurs as the innovators whose function is to reform or revolutionize the pattern of production. Social entrepreneurs play an important role in facing social, economic, and environmental challenges, while contributing to job creation, especially at local level, as well as to democratic participation and the improvement of welfare services delivery (GECES, 2016; EC, 2014).

We are witnessing the emergence of social entrepreneurs who are thinking greener, who consider social issues as closely interconnected with environmental issues. These new professional figures – green social entrepreneurs – are seeking to make changes in the relationship between economy, ecology and society through a multilevel approach to sustainable development.

As stated by Zahedi and Otterpohl (2016) green social entrepreneur could play two important roles in sustainable development: first as an innovative community to change the structure of the economy through sustainability and second as a community which creates and changes the norms in a society so as to maintain sustainable development.

Table 1 - Characterisation of different kinds of sustainability-oriented entrepreneurship

TYPE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP	CORE MOTIVATION
Eco-entrepreneurship	Contribute to solving environmental problems and create economic value
Social entrepreneurship	Contribute to solving societal problems and create value for society
Sustainable entrepreneurship	Contribute to solving societal and environmental problems through the creation of a successful business
Institutional entrepreneurship	Contribute to changing regulatory, societal and market institutions

Source: Schaltegger S. & Wagner M., 2012.

The greening of the economy is expressly addressed in the Europe 2020 strategy, which specifies targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and to increase energy from renewables and energy efficiency. Social enterprises have the potential to deliver on these targets, set in response to climate change.

4. Methodology

Literature Review: Synthesis and analysis of existing data through desk research into three different sections: a) social economy, social enterprises and social entrepreneurship and sustainable development; b) the food system and sustainable development; c) the social economy and sustainable food systems; *Semi-structured interviews with experts:* the experts were identified mainly through the network of DIESIS, one of the widest at EU level, bringing together national networks and support structures of social economy enterprises, incubators etc. The experts have a policy background in social economy and specific knowledge in promoting sustainable food and social enterprises; *collection of data on good practices, analysis and conclusion:* so far, we have collected more than 50 examples of social enterprises involved in supporting the transition towards sustainable food systems in Europe. The examples analysed come from collections of good practices (50) made by Anastasia Costantini and discussed in a workshop “How social economy can contribute to sustainable food systems”.

5. Case Studies

The good practices analysed cover the different stages of the food system from production to waste, and so give a whole picture of the phenomenon². Furthermore, we have chosen enterprises with different social aims and with different ways of pursuing them. They are working on issues such as: counteracting the desertification of rural areas; women’s employment; migrant integration; decent job conditions; work integration of disadvantaged workers; raising community awareness of the importance of adopting more sustainable eating habits. The main thing that links all these cases is the strong will to deal with the social and environmental issues of their territory, so that entrepreneurship and local development go hand in hand because they are closely interlinked. Thus, the way social enterprises contribute to increasing sustainability in food production and consumption is a tool to achieve social aims, such as social cohesion or integration and access to the labour market. Through these experiences, we discovered different approaches to achieving similar goals: in some cases we found innovative solutions while in other cases the preservation of tradition showed itself to be the right way to deal with the challenge of that specific territory.

² The case studies are part of previous internal work of DIESIS made by Anastasia Costantini through a workshop and collections of best practices.

6. Observation and Conclusion

We have interviewed experts in the social economy and social enterprises from 14 Member States of the European Union (BE, BG, DK, EE, FR, DE, HU, IT, MT, NL, PT, ES, RO, UK). We aimed at understanding the national contexts around this topic, how much government policies are promoting sustainable food approaches, and the level of awareness, within the community, of the importance of changing our eating behaviour, given the consequences for our planet. From the experts' interviews, it emerged that the principal role of social enterprises in creating more sustainable food systems is their relationship with their 'clients', through which people are not only consumers but stakeholders, who are more involved and have a greater sense of responsibility.

"Social economy actors are very close to the people and the territory compared to traditional corporations. They are stronger than traditional enterprises in terms of resilience and social needs as well. Social enterprise is the activator of the sense of the community... for example, urban agriculture is also important because it helps to reconnect relations between neighbours. If you want this type of alternative system to have an impact it is essential to scale up." (Europe Tomorrow, FR)

"Social enterprises have a more direct relationship with producers and consumers. Most large corporations consider people as a resource. For social enterprises, people are not only consumers but stakeholders who are more involved and have a greater sense of responsibility. The best way to promote sustainable food is offering these products in the supermarkets and in the shops". (Make Sense, NL)

"Social enterprises face some obstacles at the beginning, such as financial or legal issues, but they have a huge potential. It works in a local way. In the local economy it is difficult to be competitive, so one should be co-operative". (Social Entrepreneurship Forum, Vienna)

"Sustainable agriculture motivates people to promote and practice economically viable, environmentally responsible and socially fair agriculture. By respecting the principles of sustainable development, it meets today's needs without threatening natural resources for future generations. Only social enterprises can enable it by structuring all four pillars. To address all those challenges related to agriculture and food, actors move our modes of production, processing, marketing and consumption towards more sustainability and proximity. Social enterprises are bringing answers, at the crossroads of the social, economic and environmental challenges." (Avisé, FR)

It is important to note, however, that social economy organisations have a broader role to play than simply supporting the status quo. Sustainable food systems are a multi-dimensional concept, an ambitious objective that can be achieved through different pathways.

From the good practices proposed, we can see that, even if we cannot consider our data significant due to the limited number of enterprises analysed, different approaches are possible to address the same issues. *PermaFungi* sustains the development towards more sustainable food through upcycling and resource efficiency in order to reduce food wastage.

Bees Coop believes that more sustainable food corresponds to making good, fresh, organic, nurturing food accessible and affordable, especially for people with a low income. Sustainable food systems are also synonymous with decent jobs. The project of buying groups like GAS – Gruppi di Acquisto Solidale – or *Local to You* has two main objectives: to make good, fresh food affordable and accessible and to safeguard the small producers and farmers of the territory.

To be sustainable requires participation and the development of a sense of community and social cohesion. The experience of *ASAT* is a good example of participation. This community takes care of its small producers. This simple action has a direct impact on both partners: the consumers eat fresh, seasonal and traditional products from the land, and small producers can continue doing their job in a decent way. But the results are more than the sum of these two parts. *ASAT* contributes to information and awareness campaigns on the importance of healthy food. It believes that the objective of sustainable food systems should be to produce healthy and fresh food for people and not for profit, while respecting all actors – consumers as well as producers. The territory in which a social enterprise grows is an important factor that influences the development of the organisation and its characteristics. The context can also influence the choice of the social business model. Where the context is well developed, as it is in an urban context, we can find social innovators like *PermaFungi*, which have based their business on producing mushrooms from coffee grounds and thus contributing to recycling.

On the other hand, given the different priorities of rural areas at risk of desertification, we find the promotion of activities that meet the needs of the territory. *TerriuS* is a social enterprise created by young people from agricultural backgrounds who wanted to stem the tide of abandoning the countryside to live in towns. They are suffering from the desertification of rural areas, given the lack of youth employment opportunities. This phenomenon compromises the preservation of local culture and threatens small producers of

traditional food. TerriuS has recognised the value of local food and wants to use this factor to keep young people in rural areas and support the autonomy of local food producers, leading to dynamism and local development.

Five key elements are present in all the experiences that can be seen as keywords and important aspects for a transition towards more sustainable food systems. *Inclusion*: Social enterprises play a major role in promoting integration among the community. While we are building sustainable food systems we can contribute to develop a community which is more inclusive and integrated. There are a lot of initiatives that use food as a tool of integration for creating double value – for the environment and the society. *Equity* is an important aspect of a sustainable economy. We should learn to share, given that resources are limited while population keeps increasing. The co-operative model has always been about sharing the value of production. From these cases, experiences emerged where producers and consumers want to cooperate together. *Respect* is important for sustainable development. All the practices base their business on respect for the environment and the community. But they are also respectful of tradition and territory in order to preserve the special characteristics of their land. All of them aim at supporting local farmers and small producers, through action to promote decent working conditions. *Responsibility*. Making our food system more sustainable requires responsibility. All the social entrepreneurs who created these good practices have taken the responsibility to do more for their community. The point is neither profit nor organic food itself: these are a means for greater community involvement and relational empowerment. *Opportunity*. The good practices selected are great examples of the opportunity we have to create decent and equitable employment conditions. These social enterprises turn out to be a solution for creating new jobs, both for young people and for people who need to come back to work.

Barikamà is a great example of opportunity. It is composed of young people from Africa who, starting from a simple but effective idea – the production of organic yogurt – are developing their social enterprise. Moreover, Barikamà works through reciprocal exchange with other members of the community. It gives young people with Asperger's syndrome the opportunity to undertake an internship in the enterprise. These people help Barikamà's members to improve their proficiency in Italian, and in return Barikamà helps them with their social integration.

Social enterprises are a point of reference of the territory which, with the involvement of the community, is making people aware of a more sustainable approach to food. Conversely, food can be a tool to develop social cohesion,

create employment, mitigate social issues and promote local economic development. Social enterprises engender alternative solutions that work at different levels, where actions support each other. All of these social enterprises address various issues through an integrated approach.

Cauto is a social cooperative that manages the food surpluses of large retail outlets and markets in order to recycle it and avoid food wastage. The food surplus is redistributed among other associations, which use it to create preserves, feed the poor, feed animals and make compost. Through this activity Cauto has been able to create a strong local network with other actors in the territory, reduce food waste, give disadvantaged people the opportunity of a decent job and raise awareness of the negative impact of food waste and how to avoid it.

Social enterprises should not be considered as a niche sector of food production; they have the potential to be scaled up to increase their impact. We already have examples of successful replications. We can consider the phenomenon of social farming in Italy. These social farms sell fresh, organic, local food while building a resilient community based on integration and respect for diversity. Frequently they are able to scale up by themselves thanks to collaboration with other actors in the territory. However, it is important to support these social enterprises by providing accessible opportunities in order to ensure the long-term survival of innovative start-ups that are tailor-made to solve local issues while respecting their community.

Social enterprises are able to optimise their economic, social and environmental resources, so that the results are more than the sum of their parts. Social enterprises are able to intercept emerging needs in society and to develop innovative responses to these needs. They ensure that their innovations address social and environmental issues. Based on the special characteristics of the territory and their community, they promote a specific strategy of action in order to be more efficient for achievement of their goals. Through an integrated approach they are able to work at different levels.

Biovilla is a social enterprise that produces quality products while respecting their own natural timings, and sells them at affordable prices. It delivers training and education on sustainability. It is a “living example” of sustainable practices. As a virtuous practice, Biovilla becomes an innovative model as concerns the use of resources – natural, economic and human – based on sharing and community values, as well as closer contact with the natural world.

Our communities’ awareness is a way to make them more participative and responsible for our food systems and show that changes are possible. Social

enterprises, thanks to their formal and informal networks, are able to be closer to the community. They influence the community by making real the change of habits and people part of this change. Social enterprises operate in a way that generates creative solutions, where the crisis is turned into an opportunity. They think differently and work differently. They are flexible enough to address complex issues and consider collaboration as a winning strategy. They think global to act local.

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ANNEX I: BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF GOOD PRACTICES ANALYSED IN THIS STUDY

MARAMAO (ITALY)

<http://www.maramao-bio.it/wordpress/>

The 'Start up impresa agricola sociale' project was started in 2014 by the Crescereinsieme co-operative. In 2016 Maramao achieved a great goal. It became an agricultural social co-operative (Società Cooperativa Agricola Sociale). Maramao cultivates vegetables on private land leased cheaply or free of charge. Private people share with the co-operative the goal of creating a social farming enterprise that cultivates organic products, involves asylum seekers and people under the international protection of SPRAR (System for the Protection of Asylum Seekers and Refugees) in the province of Alessandria. Maramao is a social enterprise that produces vegetables, cereals, grapes and hazelnuts and processes them according to organic farming techniques. Maramao promotes social integration, the well-being of the people involved and builds trusting relationships between the people who cultivate and those who consume the products. Maramao develops training opportunities and job placement for disadvantaged people, especially asylum seekers and refugees. Maramao is committed to recovering abandoned rural areas, promoting local products and revitalising local territories and communities. All its activities are environmental-friendly.

Main Goals

Selling healthy, fresh organic products

Developing a virtuous green economy that does not exploit the land, but recovers the territories

Promoting decent work that respects the person

Recovery of rural areas at risk of desertification

AMATERRA BIOSOCIAL FARM (ITALY)

<http://amaterra.coop/>

Ama Terra Biosocial Farm was born in 2010, as a project of Ama Aquilone Social Cooperative Onlus. The project promoted agriculture as a tool of occupational therapy in the fertile land of the Italian regions Marche and Abruzzo. In 2013 Ama Terra became a brand. The project developed from the will to educate the guests in the facilities in the well-being effects of organic nutrition. About 18 people with pathological addictions work every day in the farm. They are involved in activities like agriculture, stock breeding and the production of organic food, supported by agronomists, professional farmers and production assistants. Ama Terra Biosocial Farm has a short production chain, with an efficient free home delivery service. Ama Terra Biosocial Farm is environmentally conscious, recycles organic materials and nutrients and avoids packaging.

Ama Terra Biosocial Farm is:

Horticulture

Beekeeping

Orchards

Viticulture

Olive growing

Breeding cattle and Suino della Marca pigs

Production of organic food

Cultivation of local ancient seeds like Senatore Cappelli type wheat, Castignano ecotype anise, passerina DOCG offidana wine and much more.

MAIN GOALS

Occupational therapy, support for people with pathological addictions

Work inclusion

Innovative recycling

Preserving cultural food heritage

Producing healthy and organic food

Short environmental-friendly production chain

Promoting local economy

BIOVILLA (PORTUGAL)

<http://www.biovilla.org>

Biovilla is a great project of sustainability. It contributes to the social, economic and environmental development of Portugal through practical and innovative business models. It always keeps sustainability at the centre of its action and brings sustainability to the daily life of everyone, enabling customers to access sustainable products and services at fair and reasonable prices. Biovilla wants to be seen as a brand of reliable products and sustainable services, making available all the tools, new models and services that promote and enhance awareness of sustainability practices and their benefits. It does this through three important pillars: lodging, learning and organic farming.

Lodging: A sustainable kind of tourism in Nature combined with information about the area, bio- construction and the efficiency of energy resources. This pillar also aims to integrate local communities and projects and to create jobs. Profit is reinvested in the Biovilla project.

Learning: Biovilla's investment in social intervention is based on a continuous effort in education, training, community sharing and strengthening of social cohesion, because this is the way to reach a more balanced and sustainable society. Biovilla offers a range of training sessions in sustainability, transition and personal development. The main goal is training for sustainability because providing information and tools on the subject can become part of our daily life and can change everything.

Food: Organic farming (biodynamic and particularly permaculture) allows us to reach the goal of producing and processing different agricultural products and services, while caring for the natural heritage of the Arrábida Natural Park (ANP). The projects in this area are carrying out economic activities in close interdependence with the natural heritage and the local community. Biovilla produces, distributes and sells organic products (fair trade, local farm, consumers). The products are organic, nourishing, safe and certified, and so bring well-being and security to those who consume them.

Biovilla is thus an innovative model of the use of resources – natural, economic and human. This model is based on sharing and community values, as well as a closer contact to the natural world and the systems that surround us in a perspective of symbiosis and synergies.

MAIN GOALS

Produce quality products with affordable prices, respecting their own natural timings

Protect and promote polyculture, reach different ecological niches

Make the citizens more active, responsible, healthy, fair and sustainable

Promote, training and education on sustainability

A living example of sustainable practices such as a unique and unforgettable experience through tourism

Promote networks of local partnerships and support micro and local producers

Access to sustainable products and services at fair and reasonable prices

MAHE-EESTI – ORGANIC ESTONIA (ESTONIA)

<http://www.organicestonia.ee>

Organic Estonia won the Development Idea competition organized by the Estonian Development Fund in 2015. Organic Estonia refers to clean food and a free natural state of being. Half of the Estonian territory is covered in forest, which is all naturally grown. Hence the produce of our forests is actually already organic. Organic Estonia is also in tune with the global trend of appreciating a sustainable and environmentally aware organic way of thinking. The organic way of life benefits everyone, and offers the best chance for a successful future. It is the key to ensuring the health and well-being of generations to come. It is Estonia's trump card to show that as a small country we do things differently – in a sustainable manner. Organic Estonia stands on four pillars: forest, food, cosmetics and tourism.

Organic Estonia aims to bring together the small companies and people that want to work together for sustainable development, to make a system and to bring in some big organisations or groups which have more power. Organic Estonia is mapping the organic areas in the country and is bringing together small organic farmers and producers to make them stronger. Moreover, it aims to increase the local consumption of organic food, which can be more affordable for everyone.

MAIN GOALS

To promote rural development

To develop the local economy through sustainable activity

To create the preconditions for cooperative activities

To preserve the environment

To develop organic farming

To promote healthy, fresh and local food

TERRE JONICHE (ITALY)

<http://liberaterra.it>

Terre Joniche - Libera Terra is based on the principles of the association “Libera. Associazioni, nomi e numeri contro le mafie” (Libera – associations, names and numbers against the Mafia). These principles refer to respect for human rights, legality and social justice. Terre Joniche - Libera Terra is committed to developing the assets it is awarded, confiscated from the Mafia, through the conservation and improvement of local agriculture resources, and the production of organic products and arable crops such as cereals and legumes (marketed under the label “Libera Terra”). The co-operative the purpose of pursuing the interest of the community, human promotion and the integration of disadvantaged people (referred to in art. 4 of the law of November 8, 1991, no. 381). It intends to promote responsible tourism paths, and for this purpose is building tourist accommodation. Terre Joniche - Libera Terra valorises territories by recuperating assets confiscated from the Mafia, obtaining high quality products using environmentally friendly methods and respecting human rights. The use of the land involves crop rotation (for example, rotation between cereals and horticulture, intermingling with the main crops and even furtive crops). The social co-operative uses biological production and promotes training activities for its members.

MAIN GOALS

To restore the dignity of territories characterised by a strong presence of Mafia

To create autonomous co-operative enterprises able to work and create positive spill over to the economy

To propose a virtuous economic system, based on legality and social justice

To promote critical consumption among the community

To increase consumers’ awareness of the significant impact that their choices can have on the economic and social system

GABROVO COMMUNITY BAKERY CLUB (BULGARIA)

<http://www.bread.bg/>

At the bakery, they prepare bread daily for sale to the local community. The flour used is obtained from a particular variety of wheat called Limez, which has unique nutritional properties and permits the revival of the traditions of artisan bread, as a high-quality and healthy food. This social enterprise is a public bakery that focuses on recruiting and training young people coming out of the local institution as well as organising the community kneading of bread and therapeutic work with disadvantaged people, especially with children deprived of parental care. The community bakery club assists local voluntary initiatives by providing space for free and use of the oven, and donates bread to various charity events and institutions.

The club organises initiatives and projects in order to bring together community members with different economic, social and ethnic backgrounds. It is part of the Bread Houses Network: “The mission is to inspire individuals and communities around the world to discover and develop their creative potential and cooperate across all ages, professions, genders, special needs, and ethnic backgrounds through collective bread-making and accompanying art forms and sustainable ecological education”.

MAIN GOALS

Permanent employment of youth at risk

Education and professional development of craft skills

Social inclusion of vulnerable groups

Quality and healthy traditional products

Active, responsible and self-organising local community

BARIKAMÀ (ITALY)

<http://barikama.altervista.org/>

Barikamà was born as a microcredit project: from exploitation in the farm, toward self-entrepreneurship and social inclusion. In 2011, Barikamà started to produce organic yogurt (from 15 litres of milk) at Casale di Martignano. The name Barikamà in the Bambara language means Resistance and it is a project that consists of social and work inclusion through the production, delivery and sale of organic yoghurt.

The project is currently run by Suleman, Aboubakar, Sheikh, Sidiki, Modibo, Seydou and Ismael, who live in Rome, four of whom took part in the 2010 Rosarno revolts against racism and the exploitation of agricultural labourers.

In 2014 Barikamà became a social co-operative and started to produce organic vegetables.

With the growth of the cooperative, we have decided to include Mauro, who has Asperger's syndrome.

Barikamà produces and delivers organic yoghurt and vegetables to local markets, buying groups (GAS), restaurants and bars. Barikamà is respectful of the environment and makes its deliveries by bike. Barikamà contributes to reducing waste by using returnable bottles. It is an example of the circular economy.

MAIN GOALS

Promotion of work and social integration for migrants

Production of organic food products

Promotion of social integration for people with difficulties

Protection of the environment

Reduction of waste and promotion of upcycling

TERRIUS (PORTUGAL)

<http://www.terrius.pt/>

TerriuS is the result of the desire of a group of “young people” linked to agricultural activity to “get their hands in the soil”. The idea emerged at the beginning of 2011, driven by the desire to build a distinctive and innovative project in the agri-food sector, based on the establishment of local partnerships of trust and fair trade with small producers and industries in the region.

TerriuS adds value to local products, including by recovering PDO and PGI certifications, based on local sustainable development, which promotes the preservation of the natural heritage and the recognition of the region. TerriuS works daily to develop new products based on the quality and excellence of the local raw materials. Having innovation and image as differentiating factors allows the valorisation of its products and the Alentejo region.

Activities:

Purchase and negotiation with small producers

Transformation and development of local products into new products of high added value

Agricultural consultancy and training for small and young farmers

Valorisation of local products, in particular through certification

Involvement with the community through workshops, guided tours for schools and groups, and promotion of regional products

MAIN GOALS

The main objective is the sustainable production, preservation and marketing of wild products, fruit and vegetables of excellence from the region.

Economic development and attraction

Retention of young people in rural areas

Support in developing the autonomy of local food producers

Dynamism and local development, based on local potential

Recovery of PDO and PGI certifications

Preservation of the natural heritage and recognition of the region

GRAEFEWIRTSCHAFT (Germany)

<http://www.graefewirtschaft.org>

Graefewirtschaft is a social enterprise which aims to create jobs for migrants and refugees. The company qualifies and supports migrants at the workplace in cooperation with various partners. The association's goal is to promote work integration and improve the neighbourhood's living conditions by supplying needed services. Graefewirtschaft has enabled a migrant group to start its own independent business. The Weltküche restaurant in Berlin has been run since June 2014. In the world kitchen migrants cook daily fresh dishes from their home countries. Graefewirtschaft has developed into a major provider of community catering and canteens, especially for school meals. It offers breakfasts as well as lunches with healthy drinks. It makes everything fresh, and does not use processed products. Graefewirtschaft attaches great importance to processing only fresh products. Its concept emphasises fresh and direct processing of products, as well as a short service life, operating frequently in school kitchens. It tries to find a balance between the desires and needs of children and a balanced healthy diet according to the standards of the German Society for Nutrition. They wanted to create decent jobs for migrants and refugees, and to offer good food products in our neighbourhood. They have chosen to start as a social enterprise, in order to prove that the concept of the social enterprise model works well. The main goal is not to maximise profit: other values are more important to us, like good and fair work conditions for migrants and refugees and at the same time implementing an offer of handmade cooking and organic food within our community.

MAIN GOALS

Fresh and organic food

Handmade cooking

Healthy, multicultural, inexpensive meals

Good and fair working conditions

Integration and access to labour market

Recruitment, integration and training in the social enterprise for young NEETs (people not in employment, education or training)

CHOCOLATES ARTESANOS ISABEL (Spain)

<http://www.chocolates.bio>

Chocolates Artesanos Isabel is a small chocolate bakery in our village, Alcorisa, in the province of Teruel.

They have the ideal environment for creating and exploring with chocolate an uncharted territory of flavours, aromas and forms. They view chocolate as a jewel for the senses. But, as much as they want to please the palate, they are also aware of our responsibility towards the people and the environment.

They work with fair trade and ecological raw materials such as cocoa and sugar cane, and local products like extra virgin olive oil and Marcona almonds. It is really a pleasure to create a wide range of innovative chocolates from the best raw materials in order to offer natural, healthy and fair products. They run a training course to teach a sustainable way to produce chocolate.

They offer free training for single-parent families.

MAIN GOALS

Respect for the person

Respect for the environment

Fair Trade to guarantee a living wage and an improvement in working conditions

Support of female employment

Reconciliation between work and private life

Labour integration

Organic products from local producers

Biodegradable and phosphate-free detergents

Reduction of packaging

LOCAL TO YOU (ITALY)

<https://localtoyou.it/>

Local to You is a platform that promotes social, organic and local farming while paying particular attention to the ethics of production. The project brings together some of the best Bolognese farms and social cooperatives, which work with disadvantaged people to facilitate their return to society. The platform allows you to choose fresh and convenient products cultivated using exclusively organic methods without using synthetic chemicals, in order to enhance the entire agricultural ecosystem and exploit the natural fertility of the soil without environmental impact.

Local to You is a critical and sustainable way to buy food. The platform is an opportunity to make the consumers well informed about what they eat. Local to You sells the best organic and seasonal products, available directly at home with just a few clicks.

The platform offers customised solutions for companies which want to provide their employees with deliveries of organic fruit and vegetables to the office and offers personalised delivery to the best restaurants in the area. Local to You is also present in the major regional markets in the Bologna area, and collaborates with local purchasing groups, linking our producers to final consumers by avoiding intermediate steps. Local to You is a responsible choice for fairer trade because:

It supports local producers by creating a virtuous economic circle and a more sustainable environment.

It allows producers who cultivate excellence to distinguish themselves and offer fair prices.

It believes in and supports social farming, which promotes social inclusion and employment, and is a tool for work integration, especially for people with low skills or disadvantages.

It enables the consumer to make consciously ethical food purchases, which support the local economy and the processes of social inclusion and community-building. The role and impact of social enterprises in the creation of a sustainable agri-food system will depend in the long term on the ability to create a cultural change and critical consumer behaviour as well as on the ability to reach a critical mass capable of innovating and changing the more traditional patterns.

MAIN GOALS

The aim is to make the best products available on the market and to contribute to the economic development of the local area. Through this business model, Local to You wants to contribute to the change towards a more participatory and responsible society.

Increasing the awareness of the importance of what we eat: seasonal, organic and nourishing food.

Supporting local cooperatives that ensure decent work for their employees

Tagurpidi Lavka (ESTONIA)

<http://tagurpidilavka.ee>

Tagurpidi Lavka buys food products, especially organic products, from small farmers in rural areas of Estonia and sells them in and around Tallinn. It sells the products on markets and via an e-shop, where clients can order products in advance and have them delivered to their front door. Tagurpidi Lavka informs its clients and the wider public about the advantages of buying and eating local food.

Tagurpidi Lavka reuses most of its packaging and uses as much biodegradable packaging as possible. It pays local farmers and producers a fair price for their products. It conducts information and awareness campaigns on the importance of proper food choices and improves citizen's awareness of sustainable behaviours. Social enterprise is their tool to create change in society. They want to change the way people understand food and how they relate to food. They want to change how much environmental impact our food system has. In a social enterprise all the decisions are made based on the social aims and not on profit, so in this mind set we can create positive change. Social enterprise thinks differently and in a non-traditional way.

MAIN GOALS

Raising consciousness about healthy local food

Reducing the environmental impact of food

Supporting rural local areas, to prevent their desertification.

ASAT (ROMANIA)

<http://asatromania.ro/>

ASAT is organised as a voluntary-based initiative which builds a direct relation between smallholders and responsible consumers. ASAT is part of the community supported agriculture system which is being developed in Romania with URGENCI support. ASAT supports a form of alternative development for semi-subsistence households in the country, which can offer products of superior quality, under a mutually beneficial partnership, geared towards natural farming, fair payment, risk sharing and the benefits of quality agriculture and solidarity relationships between urban consumer groups and small farming. ASAT aims to contribute to sustainable agriculture and to promote solidarity between cities and the countryside. It aims to provide consumers with healthy food at a fair and affordable price. The ASAT model focuses on the need for new forms of solidarity between rural and urban areas.

How it works:

It forms groups of consumers (15-40 families) who decide to support a local producer through a partnership during the year. Consumers pay an advance (an early form of microcredit), and they share the organic farming risks with the farmer. The farmer undertakes to cultivate organically, as a condition of transparency about the price and the budget calculation. Producers also have to be transparent regarding farming activities (through a participative guarantee system) in order to build confidence and a long-term relationship with consumers. The price paid by consumers is a fair price, covering all the costs of production, labour and social security, and allowing a decent living for the farmer. ASAT contributes information and awareness campaigns on the importance of healthy food.

MAIN GOALS

The human-scale production of crops and livestock adapted to a specific local context.

Preserving the environment and biodiversity, production without chemical fertilisers or synthetic pesticides.

Good food in terms of taste, health and with a low environmental impact.

Support for local and sustainable agriculture.

Decent work and respect for social standards for employees, including temporary and seasonal staff.

Promoting transparency in the purchasing, production, processing and sale of agricultural products.

No intermediary between producers and consumers.

Setting each season, a fair price between producers and consumers.

BEES COOP (BELGIUM)

<http://bees-coop.be/>

Collaborative supermarkets are emerging as a new, more family-friendly alternative to large retail stores. BEES Coop, the first such supermarket in Brussels, operates thanks to its “special customers”.

This “cooperative and participative” model is based on its members’ engagement, where buyers, owners and workers participate in the management of the small structure. The food products are organic, fair, short circuit and respectful of the environment, while the price policy is fair for all consumers while rewarding the producer properly for his work. BEES Coop is a Brussels economic and social ecological cooperative. The idea, which was launched by more than a hundred people, aims to “make high-quality food financially accessible and allow people to reappropriate their food”. The co-operative wants to reconnect the consumer to the reality of production. Through food, BEES Coop becomes a space for living and communicating, which promotes diversity and mutual assistance, thereby strengthening the social network of the city. Launched in September 2014 by a group of citizens, the BEES Coop idea rapidly materialised around a buying group, whilst work on the opening of the supermarket got under way. The buying group tested products, initiated dynamic participation and informed itself on the subject of distribution. While waiting for the supermarket to be fully operational BEES Coop chose to test the system with a buying group and dry goods.

Bees Coop wanted to transfer our values and principles into a legal model that could represent us. In the logic of new governance Bees Coop wants to create a place of cooperation and participation, and to reduce costs to make food more accessible in contrast to unsustainable and improper consumption. The social economy organisation is almost the only choice to reduce costs and make high-quality food more affordable for everyone. BEES Coop has become a space for living and communicating that promotes diversity and mutual assistance, promoting and supporting social cohesion and a sense of community. BEES Coop aims for cost-effectiveness and financial independence, but does not aim to make a profit (it pays no financial dividend). In this spirit, BEES Coop has adopted the form of a cooperative company with limited liability and with a social aim, certified by the CNC (Conseil National de la Coopération in Belgium).

MAIN GOALS

Making sustainable food accessible to the people

Promoting local economic growth

Creating a convivial area enabling the strengthening of social cohesion

Creating a fair price policy, for both consumers and producers

Adopting a policy of transparency regarding the products available, as well as the functioning of the supermarket

Raising public awareness of current consumer habits and their consequences on our health, our ecology, our economy, etc.

Fighting against food waste and overpackaging by promoting the sale of bulk food

PANECOTTO (ITALY)

<http://www.panecotto.it/>

The Panecotto® project is the result of the ambition to promote and develop the resources of its territory by enhancing different aspects of the local traditions. It is an ethical business model, and more specifically an ethical franchise. The key concept of Panecotto® is to promote the territory, from culture to tourism, wine and food, through a meeting place that is not only a tasting place or a restaurant, nor a bar or a cultural café, but rather is a glimpse of Basilicata “to enjoy”. This quite traditional concept is linked to an innovative, fascinating and involving image and to a management style that represents an added value in terms of a stronger involvement in social cohesion and in terms of paying greater attention to niche companies.

Panecotto® works with small local farms, recovering slow-food products that are little known and of great value. It is located in the stony landscape of Matera, a place recognised by UNESCO and of great tourist and cultural value.

MAIN GOALS

Valorisation of the typical products of Basilicata

Promotion of the territory and its social, environmental, artistic and cultural features

Slow food system

Social integration of disadvantaged groups into the labour market

The impact is defined by our network, developed over 5 years

SOLIDALE ITALIANO (Italy)

http://www.altromercato.it/it_it/prodotti/solidale-italiano.html#more1

Solidale Italiano Altromercato was born in 2011 to promote products made in Italy by cooperatives, consortia and organisations active in problematic areas of the country, which adhere to fair trade values. Solidale Italiano Altromercato is a platform where you can find excellent organic products which respect biodiversity. The good food market respects workers and the land, and contributes to the development of communities and territories.

The products present on the platform are selected according to the methods and principles of social and sustainable agricultural production, such as:

- the involvement of disadvantaged workers
- the recovery of assets confiscated from the Mafia and areas subject to depopulation
- a direct relationship between the producer and the consumers

The short chain guarantees a fair distribution of value across the chain, ensuring good economic sustainability for all the players.

Solidale Italiano Altromercato is an agreement between social enterprises. The goal is to bring together social enterprises that produce high-quality food in a single platform to reach a wider and more sustainable market. Altromercato launched the Manifesto del Solidale Italiano, in collaboration with the Italian Association of Agricoltura Biologica (AIAB), the cooperative group CGM and Slow Food Italia.

MAIN GOALS

Ensuring fair wages and prices for producers and consumers

Building direct, transparent and traceable supply chains for citizens' safety

Protecting the rights of people and the environment against any exploitation of workers and land

Facilitating the distribution of products from socially responsible enterprises

Encouraging the social integration and economic sustainability of marginalised people

Involving more and more manufacturers through clear, verifiable and shared criteria

Permafungi (Belgium)

<http://www.permafungi.be>

PermaFungi is a project for urban agriculture and circular economy whose mission is to help make our cities more resilient. PermaFungi recycles coffee grounds into two valuable products: oyster mushrooms and compost. This technique completely transforms waste into two useful products. PermaFungi actively promotes sustainable development through social, economic and environmental actions in Brussels. This social enterprise produces and sells fresh mushrooms and compost, and is developing a network of decentralised production. At the same time, people are important and PermaFungi wants to be a place where everyone can contribute: in fact, the enterprise has established a participatory management and socio-professional integration programme and employs interns and volunteers. From the start, social and environmental issues were critical factors for the founders. When they started their enterprise, they wanted to show that production and consumption habits could be changed by focusing more on environmental and social issues than exclusively on the logic of profit. The social enterprise model represented the best way to develop their mission based on the three pillars of sustainability.

MAIN GOALS

Upcycling agro-industrial waste

Producing healthy and organic food

Creating low-skilled jobs

Becoming independent from fossil energy sources

Promoting local economy

CAUTO (ITALY)

<http://www.cauto.it/>

Cauto was born in 1991 as an association to recover food surpluses from the local markets. In 1995 it became a cooperative, which rescued food from large distributors. Cauto is an acronym for 'Cantiere autolimitazione', which means 'construction site for self-restraint'. Food retrieved by Cauto is used for human, animal or composting purposes. Food which is still edible is redistributed among associations that are committed to helping indigent people, whose numbers have, unfortunately, increased in recent years. At the same time, Cauto has links to networks of small farmers who collect food to feed their animals.

Fruit and vegetables which are oddly shaped though still edible can be used to make jams and preserves.

Cauto has a circular economy model. It also promotes food education projects on reducing food waste in schools and in the territory. Cauto works to avoid good food being wasted. Food is also a social tool to reconnect the community and to help integration, especially of disadvantaged people, through paths of labour integration.

Cauto was born in 1991 as an association of youth that recovered surplus food from the local markets. It became a type B social cooperative whose mission is to integrate people into the labour market. Cauto believes that the group is the key factor, because within the group each member can be valorised, and especially the weaker ones can become stronger. Through manual work the group can recognise the dignity of people and becomes part of society. Cauto's other important mission is to protect the environment. We have only this world. We need to learn to limit ourselves. The strength of cooperatives is to know the territory. They aim to solve problems and meet the needs of the community.

MAIN OBJECTIVE

Job Integration, especially of vulnerable people

Preservation of the environment

Reduction of the food waste

Dignity of labour

Development of the territory

Build paths of reciprocity

Build networks with local actors

HOPHOPFOOD (FRANCE)

<http://www.hophopfood.org/>

HopHopFood aims to develop food solidarity areas, while reducing food waste of individuals and households, via a free digital platform. HopHopFood is a platform which geolocates and connects people who have, at any given moment, not enough good food and those who occasionally or generally have too much food or want to donate it. This simple, fast and fun platform will be launched in France before the end of 2017. It will be accessible from any smartphone, tablet or PC. HopHopFood creates spaces of solidarity and food exchanges or donations. They are at the heart of the 3 sustainable economies: circular, sharing, and social and solidarity economies.

Circular economy: HopHopFood participates in the recycling of food and the reduction of food waste.

Sharing Economy: HopHopFood creates spaces of solidarity between populations that otherwise do not meet. It also participates in the economics of platforms because its model of solidarity creation uses an electronic platform.

It is a collaborative economy where the internet and populations “collaborate” in exchanging food.

Social and solidarity economy: HopHopFood is a non-profit organisation, one of the traditional statutes of the social economy in France (and in Europe). It is also part of the solidarity economy because it aims to have a positive social impact on vulnerable people.

MAIN GOALS

The objective is to promote food sharing by means of a simple, fast and pleasant geolocation application.

The approach is that there is no reason to stigmatise those who have less or blame those who have too much. It is the difficulty of bringing these two populations closer together that must be combated.

ORTI SENZA FRONTIERE

<http://www.comunitamonzabrianza.it/news/orti-senza-frontiere>

CS&L Consorzio Sociale is a consortium of 35 social cooperatives. It was created to promote the development of social and business networks between social cooperatives within the framework of the law of Italian social cooperation, which divides the areas of work into two: social services and work integration. The Orti Senza Frontiere project carries out vocational training for work in farms and agricultural cooperatives. The aim of the project is to train asylum seekers and refugees and give them useful skills to develop an active integration and to help them to find a way to regain their independence, even in the case of political refugees whose asylum applications have been rejected. It is a model to build job prospects and patterns of integration. It includes a horticultural training course based on organic and synergetic agriculture principles, and one on forestry, which covers several interconnected plant species. This is a training course designed for people who are in transit. The initiative respects and enhances the person and the community, generating fresh, tasty organic products without using land, but by recovering land that otherwise may remain abandoned. The project aims to develop short-chain markets through buying groups (GAS). This initiative allows people to save money and eat healthily, while promoting an environmentally friendly model of production, which is certainly a valuable investment for the future of the territory and its community.

MAIN GOALS

The aim of the project is to test training courses that can teach some basic skills in agricultural practices, in order to successfully integrate migrants and refugees into society and work.

The project gives migrants the opportunity to learn new techniques, natural and manual, in an area that interests them. The training course will help them find employment in Italy. In the medium to long term, the project aims to promote their autonomous participation in social and economic life.

The project wants to cultivate organic gardens and recover local practices and traditions.

This yearly series of working papers (WP) aims to publish works resulting from the scientific network of CIRIEC. The WPs are subject to a review process and are published under the responsibility of the President of the International Scientific Council, the president of the scientific Commissions or the working groups coordinators and of the editor of CIRIEC's international scientific journal, the *Annals of Public and Cooperative Economics*.

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Université de Liège | Quartier Agora | Place des Orateurs 1 | Bâtiment B33 -
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