

1.1 Introduction

In the current context of profound socioeconomic changes, Europe foresees a transition towards an economy with a low level of emissions and energy efficiency, in which good economic dynamics are complementary to the protection and enhancement of the social and environmental values. Additionally, the same plan of economic recovery in the EU¹ highlights the need for a response to the crisis that is coordinated at EU, national and regional level and that brings together the different plans of the different EU territories. They all share the sole purpose of fighting against climate change and reducing emissions in a different way.

1.2 Social Exclusion

Nowadays, one of the priorities within the European Union, recognised in Articles 136 and 137 of the 1996 Amsterdam Treaty and also framed in its Europe 2020 strategy, is the reduction of the social exclusion phenomenon that exists towards certain segments of the population, due to social, cultural or economic reasons. Social exclusion, as its name implies,² has a multidimensional nature as it is due to multiple factors. However, among all those provoking such a situation, the lack of a decent job for a long time and its consequent economic and labour exclusion, appear as one of the most important dimensions. In this sense, the current economic crisis has most notably affected the reduction of occupancy rates, which has also influenced a deterioration of the living conditions and an increase in people at risk of social exclusion. These phenomena have mainly occurred in the countries of Southern Europe, thus creating a divergence between north and south which has currently become a topic of particular relevance for the EU, too (European Commission, 2013)³.

As expected, the crisis is not affecting the entire population uniformly, but in certain respects it has worsened the situation of people who were already at a higher risk of exclusion. Thus, the European youth in general, and especially among young people between 15 and 24, has been particularly affected. As it can be checked, more than 20% of young Europeans are unemployed⁴. Moreover, in recent years there has been a sharp increase in the number of young people who neither study nor work (13.2%, which represent 7.5 million of young people) (NEET in English), representing a greater tendency to withdraw from society and hindering their present and future integration. Additionally, in accordance with the Social Investment Package (hereinafter SIP) other young people affected by the crisis have been those who have recently graduated and their possibilities for transitions between school and the labour market have been degraded (77.2% in 2011).

Apart from the fact of being young unemployed, some other factors that increase the risk of social exclusion can be added. They may be factors of cultural exclusion, as being an immigrant, gender exclusion factors, being disabled (bio-psycho-social

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/integration/recovery_plan.htm

² Eurostat, 2000: "Social exclusion is a multidimensional phenomenon that prevent individuals from fully participating in society".

³ European Commission, 2013. Social Investment Package: 'Evidence on Demographic and Social Trends Social Policies' Contribution to Inclusion, Employment and the Economy, Brussels.

⁴ European Commission, 2013. Eurostat regional yearbook- *Labour market*.

exclusion, etc.). Among all of them, because of obvious reasons, being a woman affects at least half of the young unemployed. According to the SIP, women face a higher risk of poverty and exclusion than men. All this is linked to their lowest activity rate (64.9% vs. 77.6% in men in 2011), a higher proportion of women working part-time (33.7 hours per week vs. 40.6 in men in 2011) and a gender pay gap of 17% (gross wage per hour). Among all these elements, the main obstacle to a greater and better participation of women in the labour market is the lack of measures and services that help combine reproductive work and productive work.

However, having a job does not always prevent the risk of exclusion, as while the fall of full-time permanent employment was very deep, it also generated a growing increase in temporary and part-time jobs. These trends have affected young people the most. Thus, over 40% of the EU youth employment is based on temporary jobs, a proportion that has increased during the recession. These jobs do not ensure a decent access to own resources, thus hindering their independence from the family home and sometimes affecting their tenure at risk of exclusion. Moreover, in many cases it is about jobs catalogued as "jobs with no future"⁵.

1.3 Environmental Context

Alongside this context of economic and social crisis more intensely felt in countries of Southern Europe, in line with the Europe 2020 goals⁶ and in relation to international guidelines provided by examples such as UNEP⁷ or the Rio +20 Summit, new market segments and new entrepreneurial and occupational opportunities in the field of green economy and green jobs have arisen. The concept of *green job* is defined by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) as those activities that help reduce negative environmental impact ultimately leading to environmentally sustainable enterprises and economies. They are also jobs that help reduce the consumption of energy, raw materials and water through highly efficient strategies, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce or completely avoid all forms of waste and pollution, and protect and restore ecosystems and biodiversity. They also represent a decent and sustainable work over time, so social welfare and dignity for their employees is guaranteed.

Therefore, the struggle for environmental sustainability creates new opportunities for local economies through the promotion of eco-innovation, the creation of green jobs, or the development of new types of cooperation. Moreover, many Member States that have showed their interest in increasing the number of green jobs in the coming years. Therefore, within the cluster of activities included in the field of green economy, organic farming is one of the essential pillars within this economic sector, because it replaces the linear nature of traditional economy (extraction, production, creation of waste) with that of a circular type with a high content in innovation, which besides adds the reuse of waste and its transformation into renewed raw materials.

⁵ In accordance with the SIP (Social Investment Package), jobs with no future are those that are not a stepping stone to other better jobs.

⁶ Among others, one of the EU goals is "a 20% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the EU with 20% of the EU consumption of energy covered by renewable energies by 2020".

⁷ Green Jobs Initiative established in 2007. *International Training Center, 2010: "Estrategias territoriales innovadoras para empleos más verdes" (Innovative territorial strategies for greener jobs).*

1.4 Organic production

Organic production is a general system of farming management and food production that combines best environmental practices, a high level of biodiversity, the preservation of natural resources, the application of demanding standards on animal welfare and a production in line with the preferences of certain consumers for products obtained from natural substances and processes. Thus, organic production methods play a dual social role, providing organic products to a specific market responding to consumer demand on one hand and public goods contributing to the protection of the environment, animal welfare and rural development on the other hand.

Organic farming should primarily be based on renewable resources integrated into local agricultural systems. In order to minimize the use of non-renewable resources, waste and by-products of vegetable and animal origin should be recycled through the return of the nutrients to the soil. Organic plant production should contribute to maintaining and enhancing soil fertility as well as the prevention of erosion. Plants should be nurtured. The essential elements of the organic plant production management system are the management of the soil fertility, the choice of species and varieties, the multiannual crop rotation, the recycling of organic materials and cultivation techniques. Additional fertilizers, soil conditioners and plant protection products should be used only if they are compatible with the objectives and principles of organic production.

Today with the "globalization" international products reach our tables. However, in industrialised countries, compared with a greater availability of food (food security), the standardization of products and the loss of wealth and varieties have led to an increased sensitivity to food security (food safety) dictated by the need to ensure a healthy life. Cultural and economic phenomena with a common vision about food and the relationship between food, the environment and the territory have generated a high level of innovation in the organisation of the consumption, acquisition and organisation of the quality production in food for its distribution through ways of short chain that reduce the number of steps between producer and consumer and enhance interpersonal relationships.

By experimenting with new forms of exchange, meeting and cooperation, those who produce obtain a rising income margin in the supply chain itself, otherwise gnawed by the dominant model of marketing in the food industry, characterised by the presence of intermediaries and the prevalence of retailing. Those who buy short chain products purchase quality products linked with the territory, thus recovering that relationship of trust with those who "show their faces" at the time of selling, developing a new economic expediency, as reducing the number of intermediaries reduces the final price. At the same time, farmers and consumers contribute to mitigating the impact on the environment (reduction of energy consumption and pollution related to transport and mini-storage, with or without the use of reduced packaging, etc.) and "lend a hand" to the local economy and the improvement of the territory⁸.

In this sense, the future CAP will not therefore be a policy only oriented to a small but

⁸ GIARÈ Francesca, GIUCA Sabrina. Agricoltori e Filiera Corta. Profili giuridici e dinamiche socio economiche. Istituto Nazionale di Economia Agraria. INEA 2012

essential part of the EU economy, but also a policy of strategic importance for food security and safety, the environment and the territorial balance. Therein lies the added value for the EU. This policy makes the use of the limited resources more efficient to maintain a budget in sustainable agriculture throughout the EU, addressing important cross-border resources: for example, climate change and the reinforcement of solidarity among Member States, while it also allows flexibility in the implementation of meeting local needs. For these reasons, the proposed action by the CAP 2014-2020 refers to the short chain as a strategic and innovative tool⁹. In this sense, there are some interventions that produce a strong impact on the development of rural areas and in particular the incentives for the creation of a short chain, the formation of producer groups, support for innovation to companies involved in short circuits, incentives for the development of integrated actions able to correlate agriculture and tourism.

1.5 Short Chain

We can define the short chain by referring to its main objectives:

Reduce the steps of intermediary business in order to connect more directly the farmer and the final consumer to reduce the consumption price.

Reduce the geographical and cultural distance the product traverses before reaching the consumer.

Increase the importance of consumers and producers in the food chain, with regard not only to the process of interchange (agricultural product, food) and the underlying biological processes, but also a re-personalisation of the relationships between those who produce and those who consume (McGarry et al, 2005; ... Watts et al, 2005; Brunoriet al, 2012).

Another fundamental thing to consider is the impact that the short chain may have on the sustainability of a territory due to the ability of this type of marketing to spread environmental awareness among consumers. In fact, the shortening of the supply chain allows consumers to learn more about the nature and production methods of the food they buy (Bullock, 2000), and it has been proved that when having the opportunity to learn about environmental benefits of the different production techniques from the producers and not from newspapers and other indirect forms of communication, we tend to look for this type of product (Bullock, 2000). This phenomenon helps create a greener awareness in consumers, not only in purchasing decisions, but also in their behaviour of daily life.

The short chain, according to the ways and places where it exists and the set of activities that it is composed of, requires a differentiated level of organisation and commitment by companies with a diversified level of dissemination according to local contexts, the characteristics of agriculture sectors and the type of products.

As in other countries, in Italy the integration of several actors in the activation and promotion of the collective experiences of a short chain of a concrete nature as, for example, "Mercati della Terra" (Slow Food)¹⁰ or "Campagna amica" (Coldiretti)¹¹ promoted to undertake initiatives that fully express the value and dignity of Italian agriculture are more and more common. The most classic form of short chain, as the

⁹ European Commission, Agriculture and Rural Development, Conference "Local agriculture and short food supply chains", Brussels, 20/04/2012, <http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/events>.

¹⁰ <http://www.mercatidellaterra.it/ita/network/milano/calendar>

¹¹ <http://www.campagnamica.it/pagineCA/Pagine/ChiSiamo.aspx>

direct sales business and organised points, are phenomena that have been taking a strong momentum in recent years. However, especially in rural areas there are logistical purchase difficulties because the proximity, schedules and direct sales are a deeply rooted phenomenon that usually affects a limited number of producers.

1.5.1 "Rete delle Botteghe di Filiera Corta"

For the reasons explained above, the "**Rete delle Botteghe di Filiera Corta**" project was born, hereinafter the **RBFC**. It is based on the awareness that the most traditional agriculture associated with the consumption of proximity products is one of the pillars to improve the environment and tackle climate change. The project supports the purchase of local proximity or "km 0" products by facilitating access to the commercial channel for small producers who would not have the possibility to access due to their short productivity or lack of time, because their working day is very extensive. From an economic point of view, seasonal products allow savings in production because their natural cycle allows energy savings.

This initiative reflects the changing trends in the consumption of organic products¹². Final consumers are becoming more aware and more sensitive to the characteristics of nutrition and food security. **RBFC** seeks to promote the consumption of proximity or "**short chain**" products that arises from the need to create new forms of organisation, cooperation, sharing, etc. among farming producers, traders and final consumers. On one hand, there would be a direct relationship between producer and consumer, thus eliminating big intermediaries and, on the other hand, the reduction of the ecological trace associated with transport and mobility reduction due to the consumption of local products.

Regarding the relationship between the producer and the trader, it can be used to create a new covenant between the urban and agricultural world with immediate benefits for farmers and citizens. Products labelled as "km 0" should reach short-chain markets, small local shops (and little markets), hotels, restaurants, schools, hospitals, etc. This requires promoting access for small suppliers of "Km 0" products and small businesses located in historic centres in order to create a "network" of alternative distribution. In this sense, the project promotes the creation of young micro enterprises that carry and sell the products on full behalf of the producer, thus creating a covenant between producers, traders and consumers where small young micro enterprises are considered as a single point of contact, closely together with the producers.

Producers shall ensure that the place and production methods, quality certification, traceability of the products and the agreement of solidarity sales in their own products are known by consumers and traders. Traders, on their part, will make the consumer known through advertising and the material and technical exhibition, "km 0" products of the territory and the promotion of their solidarity sale. Consumers, on their part, should be bound to keep track of the regulation of their "km 0" products, to share the execution and to demand the use of promotional and advertising (labelling) material that ensures the quality of the products within the "network".

It should be noted that this network will involve a number of other authorities such as

¹² http://www.agmrc.org/markets__industries/food/organic-food-trends-profile/

the Solidarity Purchase Groups (G.A.S. in Italian), purchasing groups born from a critical approach to consumption and which want to implement the principle of equity and solidarity in their purchases, Certification and Control Bodies, etc. with the aim of creating a strong and well-organised network involving the main actors of the territory.

Therefore, and because of this cooperation, the "short chain" makes the transparency of prices and the evaluation of final consumers possible. For farmers, the ability to decide directly on this price guarantees the opportunity to obtain a better remuneration for their products, thus recovering part of the added value. It also allows the creation of young micro enterprises that carry/supply traders with the products on "behalf" of the producer helping to discover our territory through its identity and creating a new relationship between the agricultural and urban spheres.

1.5.2 The "Km zero. Fatto vicino a casa tua" Label

This label is synonymous with proximity and traceability. Its promotion will be based on informing consumers about the benefits inherent in consumption. The products must come from farmers properly registered within the "network" to control all the requirements established by strict EU standards and must demonstrate the reduction of emissions of particulate pollutants due to long-distance transport. They shall undertake action to ensure the reduction of waste and inorganic waste in their packaging, as they come from local producers and are based on the traditional distribution system. Products labelled "**Km zero. Fatto vicino a casa tua (Made near your home)**" must take place in the environment and minimise the number of intermediaries. This project is expected to help farmers and ranchers in the dissemination of new consumption patterns that are more responsible towards the environment and the survival of our gastronomic traditions, as products labelled as "**Km zero. Fatto vicino a casa tua**" should reach short-chain markets, businesses in small neighbourhoods (but also medium markets), restaurants/catering and hotels (ho.re.ca.), school / hospital canteens and companies. Therefore, controls for the products sold under this brand must be made under a synergistic coordination between public controllers, consumer associations, external certification authorities, etc.

Therefore, GAL Eloro will create the brand "**Km zero. Fatto vicino a casa tua**" which consists of a name and graphic symbol that may be used under the terms and regulations established by the Consortium as a commercial emblem for sales in stores, supermarkets and restaurants. The objective is to enhance the proximity sale or short chain in the agricultural sector. This initiative is promoted for the defence in the interests of farmers and small businesses and consumers as well as for helping the creation of young micro enterprises giving new, smart jobs and making social inclusion and innovation, so contributing in ameliorating the quality of life in the rural-urban context..