

ABSTRACT

"When I consider that there is no activity in the world which is older than agriculture and, at the same time, more essential because it gives us something to eat and dress, I am surprised that nowadays men do not appreciate it very much. Yet this is a job that allows you to stay away from the ambitions and greed and to avoid temptation, because there is no greater pleasure than to look carefully to the daily care of our own gardens, kitchen gardens, orchards and fields." The words of Giacomo Agostinetti, although dated 1679, are more relevant than ever. It is very easy for "us" city dwellers (including me) to judge, and thus underestimate the job of the farmer. It is easy to forget the dangers that every man or woman who works in the agricultural sector has to face: the climate, the soil, the seasons, the cataclysms and all those other factors that are part of the life cycle of Earth. It is easy to forget that the farmer is fighting every day to bring home a sufficient harvest. It is also easy to forget how technology is rarely available in small communities and in the more rural areas, which are the places where it could have more influence. Even in Italy, in many areas, farmers are using outdated techniques and technologies of tillage, planting, cultivation and harvesting.

The analysis of my thesis is starting here. The aim of this work is to analyze, from the legislative level to the practical one, how innovation, particularly technological innovation, arrives in the small rural realities. Agriculture has also been a key player in the European unification process, beginning with the fifty-year history of the CAP. For this reason, any consideration of our agricultural sector cannot be separated from an analysis of European policies and its programs.

In chapter 1, I will discuss the 2007-2013 Union's development policy in rural areas, giving a general picture of the structure of European programming, beginning with the EAFRD up to LAGs. The purpose of this chapter is to make the European development policy as clear and schematic as possible as it is often victim of misunderstandings.

Chapter II will instead give the reader a general overview of agricultural innovation in technology as well as in the social and civic life. The purpose of this chapter is to clarify that agriculture is fundamental to every stratum of society.

Chapter III will be a practical analysis of some LAGs in Lazio, after a brief introduction on the specific structure of the LEADER of Lazio. The purpose of this chapter is to analyze how the funds and programs are affecting new techniques and technologies in agriculture.

The hope of the whole thesis is to reconnect the reader to the world of agriculture, making him understand its importance, often underestimated, and its role in the economic, social and cultural development. In addition, I'm going to demonstrate that technological innovation can influence the advancement of agriculture, in Italy, Europe and abroad.

Better farming means bigger harvests, bigger harvests means more food, more food means less hunger.

Despite its long history, the agricultural sector grew hand in hand with the progress of society and the economy is often underestimated, or worse, forgotten in political calculations and reforms. In fact, the social and economic importance of trade in the farming sector are not considered as the enormous difficulties that this job entails.

The CAP served to the purpose of helping and protecting the farmer in a period of strong growth, maintaining old traditions, while increasing the competitiveness of a key sector.

It is also impossible to discuss the economic and social agricultural innovation without discuss the economic and social development of the entire agricultural sector first.

Agricultural Cooperatives demonstrate the strong impact of agriculture in a socially responsible way as "a type of company that can be considered as a model of economic and social integration. They play a central role in creating jobs, stability of economic relations, the enhancement of the production and widespread redistribution of wealth in the European territory. From the point of view of agricultural innovation and future competitiveness of the company, they are among the most effective means of ensuring access to credit, the transfer of knowledge and good practice between economic and environmental partners "

In Europe, cooperation in the primary sector creates a turnover of 300 billion Euros, ie an average of more than 50% of the continental agricultural turnover. The cooperation provides to the industry more than 50% of production factors, and the collection, processing and marketing of more than 60% of agricultural products.

In Italy, agricultural co-operation includes: 5100 companies, with more than 700,000 associate producers, 90,000 employees and 32 billion turnover (2009 data) comprising approximately 25% of the agri-food sector.

Social farming is also used to re-integrate individuals into society, care services, rehabilitation and supportive work.

These data show us that agricultural innovation is crucial. Innovation means progress, improvement of the existing situation and development. Innovation means increase employment, development of rural areas, simplification of processes and sustainability.

This is not only a innovation not only a product innovation but also a process and method innovation.

The European rural development policy has the priority of strengthening and upgrading the human capital in rural areas and the creation of collaborative dynamics between business and politics. The goal is to improve competitiveness, efficient management of resources and the environmental performance of rural economies. Obviously, without innovation, the effectiveness of the previously analyzed policies would be amortized, to say the least.

Thanks to the importance of the agri-food sector, innovation in turn becomes crucial while thanks to the policies and investments those policies can produce noticeable changes and practical implications in the area and the rural operators.

The most innovative achievements in the agricultural sector have been achieved by technology. Technology itself is able to adapt according to its target set: in the 70s the goal were to increase production and decrease costs, today the goals are sustainability and food safety.

In what areas can we have new technological innovations? In every agricultural process in substance. It starts by plowing and then seeding, the application of manure, fertilizers and so on.

First, technology innovates through tools: not just one tool, but a list of them according to each need. A better tool achieves a better result with less effort, faster. A drill more suitable to a peculiar field can give a more abundant harvest up to 20%.

Technology innovates through techniques. There are more techniques, each suited to a different situation and with different results. Using the right technique for plowing a field, using a "45 cm" sowing rather than a spacing up to "37.5 cm" may lead to a better result. The same for fertilization : there are different for wheat and corn, each suited to different results.

Finally, technology also innovates through knowledge. Knowing your soil is crucial for a full exploit of its possibilities. An example may be the equipment needed for samples of farm land to be analyzed. Through the laboratory analysis, the farmer may know every detail of his property. In fact, precise knowledge of what the crop needs is crucial for the success.

Technological innovation operates in many areas. Writing down a complete list of areas would be long-winded as well as misleading. This thesis will focus on specific type of crops (and their products), listing all the technological innovations used in its third chapter.

It is sufficient to say that, thanks to technological innovation, a big step forward the entire agricultural sector could occur. Each of these advances has generated big social progress. Technology has brought a revolution, likely to have repercussions on the economy and subsequently into the entire social sphere.

Agriconsulting, a consultancy studio, submitted a "Questionnaire on the LEADER Added Value" to each LAG during the 2007 - 2013 programming after a request of the Lazio Region. The questionnaire has been customized for each LAG, while the elaborate present an extract of a sample questionnaire.

In addition, a short interview to Dr. Valerio Maria Lazzari, administrative and financial director of the Cimino LAG, is included in the annexes .

The entire elaborate aims to bring together two themes seemingly so different, but in reality close to each other: technology and agriculture. The inevitable analysis of European Economic Policy seeks to explain and clarify the complex structures within the EU agricultural department. My aim was also to emphasize the evolution of the simplistic conception of agriculture, dating back to centuries past, in a more modern and inclusive overview.

The credit goes mainly to the introduction of mass technology in the field of agriculture. Also note that the European Union has changed, updated and radically changed its policies, its vision and its prospects in rural areas. Also, do not forget the importance of the Common Agricultural Policy at the beginning of European integration.

The analysis then focused on technological innovation in general agricultural. The improvement carried out in this field has brought to practices, techniques and technologies that are really innovative and potentially revolutionary for both the producer and the final consumer. It is often through technological innovation that we can obtain encouraging results in the preservation of the environment, in crop protection and maintenance of biodiversity.

The last part is for sure the most interesting part of the thesis as I have sought contacts with local LAGs and I have tried to highlight strengths and weaknesses of their action on the ground. It was interesting to see how European policies, starting from the top, come to rural realities with a few thousand inhabitants. It is not easy to make a judgment on how these policies can be improved. Increased independence, less interference from the Region and a simplification of bureaucracy are essential to optimize the work in the area according to the Agriconsulting questionnaire and the interview.

The hope of the writer is to be able to reconnect, albeit minimally, the reader to the rural reality. The final aim of this paper, as well as a general overview on technological innovation in small rural realities, is to tell and show how agriculture is likely to affect the lives of every day and how essential it is for a healthy economy of a country, especially Italy.

In conclusion, despite the many changes that have occurred in recent years in the agricultural sector, the impression is that the agricultural business is still changing. It is so closely linked to society and, as our society is constantly changing, the agricultural sector could change even more in the following years.