



ITALIAN CSA WORKSHOP

Parma - 25th October 2015

The Italian workshop was held on Sunday 25th October 2015, in Parma. 23 people, representing organisations referring to Solidarity Economy of different regions of Italy, took part to this event.

The workshop was organised in two sections, one in the morning and another in the afternoon. During the morning the participants exchanged their direct experience or opinion about CSA movements in Italy, while during the afternoon they deepen the potential but also the critical features shown by the Italian expressions of this movement. There was also an exchange of ideas about the possible actions to promote a larger diffusion of CSA model, firstly among the movement of GAS (Solidarity Purchase Groups) but also more generally, among the most sensitive segments of society.

At the beginning of the discussion there was the need to distinguish the experience of CSA, strictly speaking (so referring to the meaning generally attributed to it at the international level), from the most common experience of GAS. Despite the difficulty of quantifying the exact size of the two organisational forms, it is in fact estimated that a few units throughout the Country represent the CSA model, while the GAS movement counts about 2,000 units.

Even if they developed autonomously with respect to the CSA model, GAS are however considered to share with CSA many aspects. Their core vision in fact refers to principles of solidarity, mutuality and sustainability, which underpin the relationships among the group members and with the farmers. The close

relationship with the farmers is generally characterized by friendship, trust, transparency, respect, fairness.

The degree of the sharing of the financial and economic risk and the level of the consumers' commitment towards farmers are indeed recognized as the main point of difference between the two models. In the most of GAS the financial support finds expression in fixing fair prices (that is meeting the farmers' needs and affordable for the consumers) and in various forms of advance payments and funding. Only few of them are trying to evolve towards a closer and steady relationship with producers, through the establishment of agreements aimed at sharing benefits and risks. The CSA currently existing in Italy stemmed from this kind of process.

The considerable increase of the number of GAS during the last ten years has undoubtedly strengthened the movement. However, the adherence to this experience by many people, even external the networks of the solidarity economy, has to some extent slowed down the process of evolution of GAS towards more advanced forms of commitment. The organizations of coordination, at regional and national level, are aware of this deficiency.

Just based on this awareness the participants in the workshop showed great attention to the existing experiences of CSA, in Italy and abroad. They are seen as extremely helpful in order to draw useful insights to understand the mechanisms that can lead members to a greater willingness to commit.

More generally, there was agreement on the importance to support the growth of GAS members' awareness of the possibility of a closer and steady relationship between producers and consumers. To this end, they discussed the opportunity to promote exchanges of information and training activities through initiatives carried out on the territories.

The preparation and dissemination of a formal document (Charter) at European level, focusing on the peculiar characteristics and potentials of CSA movement, was considered as an important learning opportunity and a stimulus in this regard.

This meeting is part of the Common Ground for CSA project run by URGENCI, funded by CONCORD in the framework of the European Year for Development – 2015.

