ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of the cherry crops in some areas of the Puglia Region represents without doubt a phenomenon of “alternative agricultural crop” to the mediterranean agricultural crop. In fact, the renewal of experiments of new varieties of cherry cultivars in Puglia has increased the amount of surface areas invested such cultivations in substitution of other mediterranean productions. It represents an Economic agriculture operative reply by world research and cherry producers to precariousness and uncertainties generated by the above-mentioned reforms. Principal purpose of the present paper is checking the presence in a particular area of the Puglia Region of a “agricultural microsystema” that could shape like a “Typical Agrofood District”, in a next future.

INTRODUCTION

The normative complex, which has characterized the strategies of intervention in the agricultural field in the last thirty-seven years of the european community history, could be brought back to two big categories. The first one could be emphasized as a strategy in order to support price and market, fulfilled through various means addressed to safeguard the local products of the Community and to foster the supply planning. The second strategy is a structural support one. It was fulfilled through different measure addressed to the whole agricultural filieres having more targets among which we remember the supporting of the company investments and the enhancing of productive units.
Furthermore the second strategy had the task of re-direct the productive potential and to qualify it under the environmental profile (CAP measures). Both strategies have been ruled by various regulations that were interested in the main agricultural products. The management of the market has been ruled as well by specific regulations for different fields, better known as Market Common Organizations (MCO). The particular situation of the markets and of the mediterranean agricultural products imposes deep thoughts to the scientific and industrial world. Until some years ago, in Italy and in the whole Europe, there were present two kinds of agriculture:

?? a traditional agriculture practiced in the major part of the territories and constantly turned to an intensification and to an improvement of the techniques that could allow a better output and a higher profitability (cereals and milk).

?? A specific agriculture practiced in some disadvantaged areas, particularly in the mountains areas.

After recent developments, the traditional agriculture had to face more and more difficulties and a lower rate of profitability, up to the point that the specific model of some marginal areas is totally inapplicable to a substantial part of the territory, particularly in the south Europe. The drop out of the agricultural income, the excess of the agricultural european production, the recent negotiations of the GATT, the threatening desertification of the rural areas, the worry of the european population for the environmental problems and the request of the consumers of differentiate products which have all the hygienic qualifications, are all factors which exhort to develop and to fulfill alternative agrarian policies. The following ajustements of the CAP in the last ten years are symptoms of this evolution. Since many years, the difficult existing context (limited areas, difference in levels, structural obstacles) forces the local operators to search for new and alternative agricultural patterns. In fact, on one hand the agrarian economists are interrogated on the impacts of the reforms (McSharry, Ocm, etc) and on the Gatt agreement about the agriculture, on the other hand farmers demand some concrete answers about the new alternative in respect of the normal coltural regulations actually existing. These problems have driven the research toward the analysis of new crop possibilities that don’t weigh on the budget of the CAP and that allow to the farmers to create production and iwealth without ties and grants from the UE.

An example of this research activity has brought to the light the phenomenon of the apulian cherrycrop. The renewal in Apulia of the experimentationns on new cherrycrops and the following increase of the surface submitted to this crop, in substitution of other mediterranean productions, represent a clear and concrete answer of the producers to that state of precariousness and uncertainty deriving from the aforesaid reforms. The present paper should be a first attempt to verify the presence of a cherrycrop district in the Region Puglia. For this reason the productive and management models of the region will be deeply analysed. The investigation will contemplate the possibility to determine the presence of an agricultural micro-system in a particular area in the Puglia Region. This analysis derives its roots from the results of a triennal research on the cherrycrops of Puglia, research recently issued.
Choice of the field of investigation criteria

The importance of the Puglia region is in the fact that we could consider it as a representative of the cherry crops phenomenon in Italy [1].

In fact, if we analyse the data concerning the invested SAU to the fulfilled production in Italy in the period running from 1990 to 1996, we could notice that two important events are present in the field of Italian cherry crops. The first one is strictly linked up to the productive level trend. It has increased more and more, around the 27% passing from 109,000 tons of the 1990 to 150,000 tons of the 1996. The second trend reveals us the evolution of a arable land invested to cherry that has spent from 23,168 hectares in the 1990 up to the 26,000 hectares in the 1996. This fact shows an increase about at 14% with a productivity per hectare that are by now stabilized around the 6 Tons/ha (Tab. 1).

These data show like this crop, trespassing over a period of re-organisation due to a new social and economical condition, have undertaken the road of a strong expansion that makes us hope for the future.

Breaking the national data we discover many interesting news:
1) Cherry crop is particularly in south Italy (Tab. 2);
2) The Italian cherry production is assembled in only four regions: Veneto, Emilia Romagna, Campania, and Puglia. Puglia covers up to the 80% of the national production and of the invested surface (Tab. 3).

Associating this data with the evolution of production and with the increased cultivated surface in Italy, we are drawn at the fact that, in the last 6 years in the South-Italy, many important investments have been made.

Productions are, in fact, relatively low, comparing them with the arable land invested to cherry. As the production shows, the income is under the half of the national average. We are at the presence, saving disadvantageous climatic events, of young factories which represent the 100% of the increased arable land invested in cherry crop in Italy.

Among these regions only in Puglia the cherry crops is still living a very strong expansion phase witnessed by the data of the yearly production average (56,000 tons of which 70-80% for the direct consumption and 20-30% for the factories) and by the values of the invested arable lands in cherry crops as well. These areas have jumped between 1990 and 1996 from 6,325 to over 15,000 hectares (30% of them specialized). This data is very meaningful because it shows that the apulian arable land in cherry crops represents more than the 40% of the national area, while contributes at the production for a rate of 25%.

We are in front to a phenomenon in ascent. The low yield per hectare, joint to the increase of the invested area, confirms that it deals with the new factories above mentioned which in few years will contribute, for a large part, to the national production.

The apulian cherry crops phenomenon, especially Bari, is due to a happy concomitance of many factors: the commercial strength of the main cultivar (Ferrovia), the calcareous nature of the ground that permits to obtain plants with a precocious fructification and with contained dimensions, a favorable climate and enterpreunerial abilities and agricultural professionalism that setting trust in this plant launching a new challenge to the market.
From a structural point of view the imminent danger glimpse that the crop manifests productive excesses. To the contrary the main problems are in the technical-agronomic and organizational sphere of the productive structure:
- setting up with wrong density of plantation;
- forms of cultivation not proper to demands of an easy operation of harvest, cause of top costs;
- inadequate professional preparation of the operators respect to the techniques of cultivation (pruning and pollination);
- fragmentation and pulverization of the production;
- scarce commercial organization;
- scarce acquaintance of the markets of result.
Any of these problems are limited to marginal areas and the renewal happens by now with technical criterions that has nothing to envy to those adopted for other arboreal crops.

**From Agricultural Micro-system to an Agro-Industrial District ?**

It is well known that the conditions for the existence of the Agroindustrial districts are [2] [3]:
a) the existence of a typical or main product which have contemplated the productive process;
b) the presence of a space within resolve the specialization of the enterprises toward a particular product;
c) the determination of a space within which the enterprises could fulfill relationships in order to create a “market” in which they exchange information, factors, knowledge, job and equipments.
These three conditions seem have been verified in the target area of the analysis.
The agricultural system of the Pre-Murgia Barese is composed by farms that have been integrated through the individuation of an alternative productive process, but typical at the meantime (cherry cultivation), and the specialization of new functions such as “contoterzismo” and the marketing of goods.

**Course of the Area and of the Production**

The cultivation of cherries in Puglia, considered as a profitable crop, has maintained a steady presence for long time. In the last ten years this kind of crop has become object of particular interest and research by many producers, public administrators and technicians. It allows the best usage of bad soils, like the “premurgia barese” with interesting incomes. Despite the obstacles and the damages provoked by very droughty seasons that have strongly damaged fruits but also plants, the cherry crop is still living an expansion phase sustained by the production annual average data passed by tons 19.760 (1984-88) to 30.300 tons in 1989 -1992, and further to 51.000 tons (1992-94). The arable land has jumped from 10.852 to 15.000 ha (1992-94) with a prevailing diffusion in the surroundings of the Bari province (Tab. 4).
Rural effect for typical production in southern Italy

Distribution of the Crop

The crop is located for the 97% in the Bari province, in two circumscribed areas: the first one, at north of Bari, is rather level and is surrounded by Modugno, Grumo Appula, Corato and Trani municipalities, the second one is perimetrically delimited by the municipalities of Casamassima, Acquaviva delle Fonti, Alberobello, Monopoli with an hilly climate, more proper for cherries which need a middle time of maturation.

Referring to the agrarian regions, the provincial territory is always constituted by law in agrarian regions, the surveys of the Regional Agricultural department since 1992 make the cherry result pratically absent from the Murge Ofantine and from the Murge of Altamura, within certain limit present, about 300 has, in the Murge of Andria, Bitonto, Gioia del Colle and in the plain of Bari, strongly present, about 500 ha’s, in the plain of Barletta, 1500 ha’s in the palin of Monopoli and, particulary assembled, about 1000 ha’s, in the Murge of Castellana.

It is historically possible to go back to the origins of the cherry in the province of Bari to the second half of the XVIth century. In the inventory of the Diocesan Archive of Molfetta, dated 1572, the number of the trees is always mentioned, and among these, generally olive trees, and almond trees is also signalled the presence of few trees of “nere”.

The name of “nere” or also said “anere” is still today attributed in order to state the Magaleppo Cherry tree (Prunus Mahaleb L.) which represents the traditional grafting of the cherry in the province of Bari. This kind of cherry tree when it is ripe gives fruits with a blue-black colour.

From some memorials dated to the first half of this century, we could argue that at the end of the last century, the cherry crop was already a real cultivation with commercial purposes.

Business administration typologies and features of the cherry crop cultivation

Cherrycrop in Puglia is strongly characterized by the incidence of the small farms (70%), which resides in prevalence in the country. These farms, using in prevalence family manpower (devoted for the most part to the part time job), confers the cherrycrop of a certain stability in terms of containment of the production costs. There are thousands of families in the province of Bari who draw the primary font of the income from the sale of the cherry.

For as the typologies of cultivation abides, in the province of Bari also, as in the rest of Italy, the cherry is spread particularly as secondary crop. However in the province of Bari, more than elsewhere, it is evident the trend to the specialization of the cultivations, receipt by the official statistics, which today attribute to the cherrycrop about 30% of the whole area. This percentage results to be much more higher than the national average, evidently in the province of Bari the cherrycrop farmers have recognize the cherry an important role. In the rural areas of some municipalities this kind of crop has the absolute leadership in the agricultural field, particularly in the Casamassima, Castellana Grotte, Conversano and Turi territories. These territories are all situated in the south-east of the Bari province. The arable area dedicated to the cherrycrop represents from the 22% to 37% of the whole municipal arable land. The same trend is registered in the rural area of Bisceglie for what it concerns the Northern area.

Technological Level
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The determination of the technological level applied in a cherrycrop depends on two fundamental factors:
1) The kind of rearing;
2) The degree of mechanization.

The kind of cherrycrop rearing, being cultivation rather diffused, was object of attention for the technicals and for the farmers because strongly conditioned by its conduct. Among the obstacles deriving by the massive structure of the trees, particularly weighty is the manpower request need for the harvest of fruits, operation that reveals itself as particularly onerous. The solution to the problem of the massive structure of the trees has been found in the adoption of special rearing and pruning systems, dwarf graftes, dwarf cultivar, compact and high density of plantation. Many farmers are experimenting, obtaining also good results, new high density system with short plants (Short-T) of 3x5 meters that involve the presence of 650 plants per ha.

These installation are supported and guided by a carrying structure, and utilize drop system of irrigation. The advantages of these cherryfields are numerous: the yield of the harvest job is high because it happens on the ground without using of stool or staircases. It provides less time lost and smaller risks of accident on the job. The pruning is completely mechanized through the adoption of "decespugliatori" with an horizontal and vertical action. The carrying structure of the plants allows the coverage of antihail nets in order to anticipate the vegetative resumption.

The middle ampleness of the specialized cherryfield in the province of Bari is about 2 ha's. Plantation density vary with the age and the size and shape of the rearing system, from 220 to 240 plants pro ha with the adoption of distance between the row of 6x7 meters for aged cherryfield and with form of rearing called “a volume” (vases). For the recent cherryfields, with form of rearing called “Palmetta”, the density is about 400 to 800 trees pro ha with distance between the row of 5x5 meter or 5x3 meters. The mechanization degree in the cherrycrop has not reached high level yet; the work of the ground, the treatments represent, in fact, those rearing operations that are fulfilled by now through the utilisation of the machines. The operations in which the workmanship still resists are prevalently pruning and harvest. This is necessary mainly in the harvest in the cherrycrop because it is necessary to proceed with care in the phase of separation of the fruits in order to avoid traumatic lesions of the stem and of the fruits. In the average the requirement of job for ha of specialized cherrycrop is about 600 hours of which 85% absorbed from the operation of harvest. Noted of the average of the provincial production and the middle productivity of the job of harvest, 10-15 kg for hour for workers with a maximum which rarely reach the 19-21 kilos for hour, the annual requirement of manpower is possible to be esteemed between 1,5 and 2,1 millions of job hours in the period of 30 days, approximately between May 20th. and June 20th.

The Market

Until today a good part of cherrycrop has been oriented to the production for the industry and in a large part the cherry quota should be about around the 30% of the total production. This datum remains of difficult determination because part of the production (fresh product) when is damaged and nomore usable is destinated to the industrial transformation.

For this destination, the market for the cherry destined to be preserved in syrup appears fairly modest while for the jams the italian industry often helps itself of cheaper semi-manufactured
deriving from the East Europe. Other destinations are those relative to the production of candies, juices (scarce quantity) and mustards (practically in extinction) as shown in the last paragraph. For what concerns the export, since many years, the apulian cherries are always been present on the west europe markets with varying quotas but in increase with the passing of years. The path of the apulian exportation in the last twenty years is clearly represent in a visual form (graphic 1). Its aspect very jagged synthesize in a perfect ay how inconstant is the trend of the market of the cherrycrop on the foreign market and how could be difficult to foresee the future trends. At first sight, the cherry exportation seem to have a casual and uncontrollable development, but through a deeper evaluation of the graphic allows us to effect important discoveries. In fact if on the axle of the abscissas we devide in three parts the considered period of time:

- decade 1969-78;
- decade 1979-88;
- 1989-91.

It could be ascertained that in the first decade the export annual average was of 20,40 qls, in the second decade has grown to 50,400 qli. in the last three years 1989-91 has been reduced to 39.700. In the second decade an increase has been fulfilled, in the period 1988-91 has been verified a relapse of the quantities exported. It is otherwise, indisputable that, in middle annual value, they have stayed of double entity as regards the decade 1969-1978. In conclusion the export of cherry in the uglia Region has been marked by a positive trend that, despite the calamities fallen on the crop in the last years, has allowed the achievement of a supremacy on the other regions in the sector. The export of the area-district is based on the variety Ferrovia, Bigarreau Moreau; other variety such as Fuciletta, precocious at tender pulp, Francia, Forli, Roma have a secondary role.

The prices, taking their course by the trends of the fruit and vegetables markets of Verona, Bologna and Milan in the month of June, show how the apulian cherry enjoy of a privileged position regarding the national production. In the 1994, for instance, the apulian production on the principal market of fruit and vegetables (Bologna, Verona, Milan) has registered a value that is stabilized around 6.000 £it/Kilo. The year 1995 instead has seen to come true a real boom in the first week of marketing. Cultivar Ferrovia, on the two main fruit and vegetables market, Bologna and verona, has been changed with prices that vary from 8,000 to 8,500 £it/kilo for then attest itself on the values of the preceding years. This situation particularly favorable to the apulian products is to attribute to the scarce disponibility of the product that comes from the northern Italy. Shifting the analysis on the course of the prices of the sweet cherry on the german markets the production of the south-east of the Bari province has been able to mantain the own quotas thanks to the appreciation given to the variety Ferrovia.

Marketing
The marketing of the cherries begins in May and involves the municipalities of Conversano, Turi and Castellana. It sees the presence of two problems: the post-harvest, and the negotiation. If the harvest time represent a fundamental moment of the production, because it characterizes the global quality of the product, the following phase (post harvest) is likewise important because from her depends the duration of the life-time of the product on the market.
The high decay of the product, combined with the hot temperature of the weather in the harvest period, makes necessary the reduction of the gap which intervenes between the harvest and the first processing, in order to delay the senescence and the development of parasitic alterations. Actually, in the area, the product at industrial destination is preserved, in some cases through semi-manufacturing consisting in the “speduncolatura”, “snocciolatura” calibration and breaking in solution of sulphurous anidryd, while those destined for the fresh consumption suffers the course of the market.

For what concerns the mechanism inherent to the negotiation and to the acquisition of such product, this presents notable difficulties because a collection center does not exist yet. The auction happens everytime during the day, whenever the goods arrives. Given the pulverization of the production people have to discuss about the price also with low quantity of product; for completing the load of a truck people need to employ different qualities of product determining a disomogenity of the quality. At the end many are the actors who partecipates to the marketing of a product both from the supply and from the request. It is important to consider that a load of cherry is worth of many millions of Lire and normally is paid to the producer with two or three months of delay this concerns that in case of opposition losses could be considerable.

The solution to such problems of the market could be found in the planning of the rearing industry. It needs to count that in agriculture is present an unique phenomenon; the price of the goods are not linked one each other, while for any industrial manufactured article each year is present an increase strictly connected with the inflation rate, moreover in agriculture there is an oscillation that it is not proportionate not to the inflation neither to the qualitative level.

In a year of unfavorable harvest a cheap product could reach high prices, for the same reason in a year of super production a product of excellent quality could touch the least of the price. The distributive chain of the perishable products or with a low “life-time” as the cherry, is long and scrappy. It is characterized by a low level of organization both in the wholesale and in the retail. Accordingly it presents obstacles to a rapid and efficient transmission of the final request information toward the production and viceversa. Besides the structure of the distributive system contributes to stiffen the request at the origin because of the mechanism of price formation. This mechanism operates in a contrary sense to that of the physical distribution of the goods, raising to the final request on the market to the retail up to the production through various intermediaries.

The distribution is organized more and more in store centrals which have the necessity to plan the supply to the sale points on a daily base.

On the other hand the fruit and vegetables product makes rise particular demands:
- planning of the supplies to the sale points;
- competitive prices, not necessarily lower but at least not taller in order to substain the competition;
- to differ the product in order to satisfy the largest part of the market;
- severe quality controls in order to transfer to the consumer a clear image of quality of the whole sale point.

in the attempt to overcome the numerous limitss and necessities in the relationship with the consumer, the distribution tries to transfer suche difficulties toward the suppliers and principally on the commodity or undifferentiate product. To this purpose the distribution has developed some strategies that could be synthetized as follows:
- differentiation or grading and quality control of the furnished production (certification);
- logistic strategies in order to check the flow of the product and the associate information;
- labelling of the distributor, with the purpose to check the information flow associate with the product.

Conclusions
The ability of the whole cherry firms of the area in modelling the structure of the sector is a point of strategic importance in order to pass from an indistinct geographical area to a cherrycrop district. Through this choices the modern cherrycrop could try to define the rules of the game, such as: the production policies, marketing trends, price policies.

Within the limits imposed by the economical conditions of the sector and by his own resources, the producer could try to define the rules of the sector in a more favourable way in the long period. In the emerging field in which we are interested in, a strategical variable of conclusive relevance is constituted by the capacity of the firms to make functional choices in order to the defense and to the development of the cherrycrop sector. The success of the enterprise in the first phase depends, at least partially, from the behavior of the other enterprises operating in the area, for what concerns the aspect regarding the image of the field, its credibility, and the disorientation of the potential buyers.

Normally it needs to start toward forms of standardization, checking the quality standards and present in a uniatrian way so to form a critical mass beside buyers, sellers, public institutions and financiers. This new model of interaction among different partner of the filieres with other “pieces” of the economical system of the target area, determins automatically the birth of a new “subject” different from the precedent standard which could easily considered as typical district having implications on the local economy.

Since we have been called to value the rural effects and the agro-industrial problems given by the cherrycrop section elevated to district, we need to proceed to a verification of what the european actions, through the structural policies and the strategies of rural development, will be. In fact if we apply the philosophy and the methodology of the Leader programme to the target area we could notice that the social and economical parameters as well as the territorial and structural values, are all deeply influenced and characterized by the existence of a considerable cherrycrop filieres operating in the area.

Since the revision of the policies and of the european institutions (Santer packet), the revision of the structural funds (report on the cohesion policies, Forum about cohesion) and the revision of the agrarian policies (strategy paper, Conference of Cork on the rural development) will determine a deep changement in the european action about the rural areas such as the area here involved, we consider that an ex ante verification about those actions is strongly needed.

The leading datum which characterizes the area is the non loss of population between the two censuses and the entry in the agricultural world of a percentage of youths higher than the regional average. In fact, the planning of the interventions and of the incentives system is articulated in the following proposals:
- a sole program of development for the rural areas in each region, with the elimination of the numerous relatives programs descending to different regulations (Cork);
- the program in its objectives and in its instruments should be articuled for cherrycrop areas (Cork);
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- elimination of the complex procedure of planning based on the Substaining Community Cadre and on the next operative programs and adoption of an unique planning document.
- the local finance resources should have an heavier weight in the development programs. This implies an higher enterpreneurial partecipation;
- this enterpreneurial partecipation is to combine with a better employment of the credits and with technical of financial engineering, mainly where the projects seem to have a better economical and financial yielding; (Cohesion report);
- for those initiatives with an high occupational impact, for instance the small and medium enterprises in the cherrycrop sector, is woth to utilize a major reduction of the financial costs.

Through the application of this new philosophy clearly derives that the better partecipation of farmers and transformers, the technical and financial involvement of Cooperative Banks, the higher occupational impact of the cherrycrop “filiera” connotes furthermore the evolutive trend of the local system acquiring the dignity of cherrycrop district.

This is also confirmed by the side of Feoga-policies and by the GATT in the fruit cultivation sector. The new professional organizations designed by the european regulation 2200/96 and the COM foreseen by the call for proposal of the last March set the agrarian subject at the center of the activity, structurally linked to the other subject of the filieres and to the local context. The cherrycrop section has to answer with just in time systems that impose the organization of a net system which involve extra agrarian subject in the area as well.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

[7] Istat (anni vari): Annuario statistico

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Rural effect for typical production in southern Italy

Tab. 1 - Evolutive tendencies of production surface (ha), Total Product (tons), Harvest Product (Tons) and Average yield per hectare (Tons/ha) of cherry crop in Italy - 1990 - 1996

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<td>Total Product</td>
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<td>5.6</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.3</td>
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* Estimate

Source: Our calculation on ISTAT data

Tab. 2: Evolutive tendencies of Surfaces and products in the four "vocational" cherry crop Italian region. (Value in ha and Tons)

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Source: Our calculation on ISTAT data

Tab. 3: Evolutive tendencies in southern Italy of cherry crop. (value in ha and Tons)

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Source: Our calculation on ISTAT data

Tab. 4: Evolutive tendencies of cherry crop in Puglia Region. (Value in ha and Tons)

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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ISTAT data

Graf. 1: Market evolutive tendencies of pugliesi cherry.