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AUTHOR'S NOTE

Authors' contributions: Maria Cristina Cardillo: 3. *The Valle di Comino biodistrict*; 5. *Concluding remarks*. Pierluigi De Felice: 1. *Family farming: an institution to be protected and enhanced. A premise*; 2. *The agricultural systems of the Province of Frosinone*. Maria Cristina Cardillo and Pierluigi De Felice: 4. *Field survey: interview with Rocco Franciosa, President of the Valle di Comino biodistrict*.

Family farming: an institution to be protected and enhanced. A premise

- 1 Over the last few decades, a change in the structural organisation of farms has been taking place in the rural world, starting in European and high-income countries (De Felice, Grillotti Di Giacomo, 2019; Grillotti Di Giacomo, De Felice, 2018; Franco, Borrás, 2013; Hilmi, 2012), which are changing their function and physiognomy both in terms of size and in relation to the form of conduction (Grillotti Di Giacomo, De Felice, 2019).
- 2 With reference to the farm size aspect, there is an increase in the number of macro (over 50 ha) farms which result at a disadvantage those of medium-small (5-20 ha) and

micro (< 2 ha) farms. This phenomenon known as land concentration (ibid.) is leading to the centralisation in the hands of a few owners, whom we could define as new feudal lords, of those small pieces of land, laboriously conquered by farmers through civil struggles and agrarian reforms (Sereni, 2006), guarantors of food security and safety and promoters, through the different cultivation techniques adopted over the centuries, of the creation of the “beautiful” rural landscape.

- 3 According to the European Economic and Social Committee, “1% of farms control 20% of the agricultural area of the European Union, and 3% of these farms control 50%, while 80% of farms control only 14.5% of this area” (Comitato economico e sociale europeo, 2015).
- 4 In addition to the size that is changing, often in a relationship of cause (increase in farm size) and effect (change in ownership title), it is also the farm management that loses direct management in favour of indirect management or, while retaining it, degrades its functions and, as a result, weakens the economic, social and cultural values of which the agricultural family institution is a harbinger.
- 5 In this new dynamism, a plurality of elements of the rural and agrarian landscape are at risk, starting with family farming¹ which constitutes a strategic and fundamental value element for the countryside that in recent years has been the object of attention by governmental and non-governmental bodies that have launched processes of awareness, information, protection and development² (Arias *et al.*, 2013; Barrett, 2008; Bienabe *et al.*, 2004; Birner *et al.*, 2007; FAO, 2014). We recall the commitment made by the new CAP 2023-2027, which has recognised the need for more targeted support for small farms, in function of their strategic value in terms of environmental, economic and social sustainability (European Union, 2021).
- 6 In recent decades, in conjunction with the transition of the primary sector, family farming has been undergoing functional and structural changes. This liquidity of forms and functions risks debasing it, causing it to lose those elements of identity and those environmental functions (it guarantees the sustainability of production practices and biodiversity of plant and animal species), economic functions (it is suitable for fighting hunger and poverty because it is widespread in every region of the world and closer to the primary needs of each human community) (World Bank, 2007) and social functions (it hands down and preserves farming, breeding and cultural traditions, giving life to agrifood production and typical rural landscapes of quality) that have always distinguished it (Alexandratos *et al.* 2012; Arias *et al.* 2013; Pretty, 2011; Proctor, Lucchesi, 2012).
- 7 Aware of the strategic and sustainable role that family farming can represent in the rural landscape and in light of the transformations that are taking place characterised by a speculative agriculture that devours family farming, where many countryside areas are presented without any more farmers and several lands without any more crops – in the last ten years, European rural society has lost 4 million farmers and over 3 million jobs, thus jeopardising food security, natural balances and social peace (Forest Peoples Programme, 2015; COWI, 2018) – we believe it is necessary to enhance, incentivise and protect experiences such as the one recorded in the Comino valley, in the province of Frosinone, whose biodistrict represents a good practice of quality agriculture because it values the family workforce, in particular, the woman figure, guarantor of a cultivation tradition, handed down from one generation to the next. It

also empowers these identity processes through the rediscovery of places that become, thanks to the local participating community in these processes, the real enemies.

- 8 The medium-small size of the farms that make up the biodistrict also responds to the functions and vocations of family farming (development, quality, sustainability, biodiversity, fertility), which seeks to counteract that of the market whose priority objectives are profit, growth and speculation.
- 9 The agronomic characteristics of the farms of the biodistrict correspond to the type of family agriculture that must be protected, developed, innovated, as provided for by the United Nations' International Decade of Agriculture (FAO, FIDA, 2019) because it represents a sustainable model capable of guaranteeing food safety and quality, as well as an ecosystem and social balance, without further impacting the environment with intensive production and cultivation, while also ensuring economic resources and counteracting the processes of land concentration that are compromising the environmental and territorial frameworks of rural landscapes, starting with those in Italy.

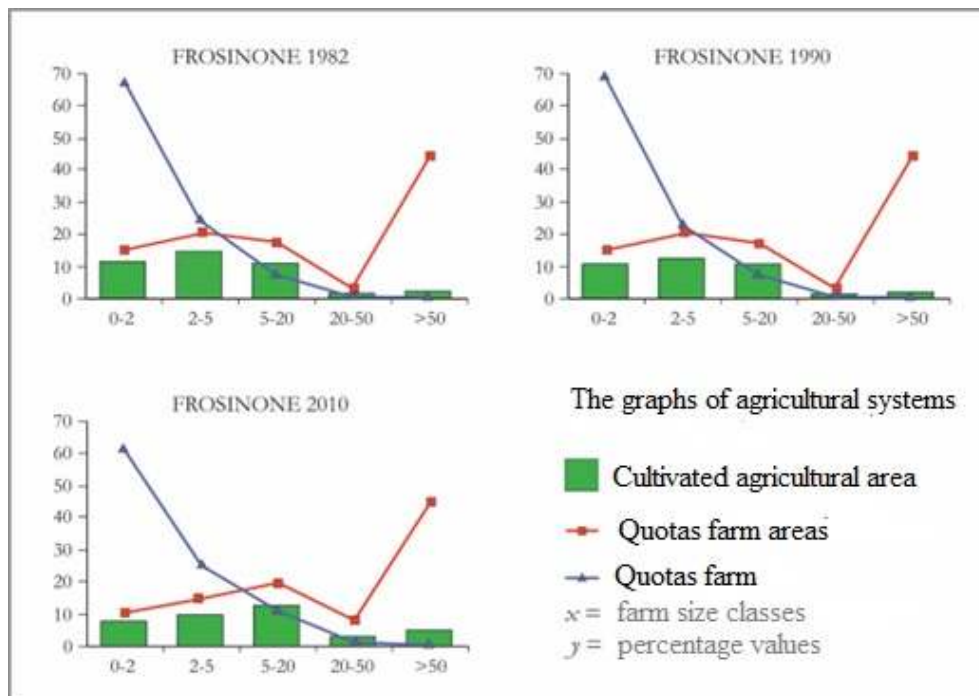
The agricultural systems of the Province of Frosinone

- 10 The agricultural census data processed by ISTAT and interpreted by means of the GEOAGRI LANDITALY survey methodology (Grillotti 1992, 2001a) allow us to represent, also in a diachronic key, the evolution of the reality of the Italian, European and non-European countryside, bringing out dynamisms and persistences in the structural, economic and social organisation of farms.
- 11 Observing the agricultural system in the province of Frosinone starting from the census data of 1980 compared with those of 1990 and 2010, significant elements of transformation emerge over a 30-year period, starting
 - 12 1) from the variation in the number of businesses classified by size;
 - 2) from the different ratio between Cultivated Agricultural Areas (CAA) and total Farm Area (FA) that returns the crop density declined in congruence (high crop density), incongruence (medium crop density) and specularity (low crop density);
 - 3) by the evolution of the agricultural systems monitored through the CAA in the different amplitude of classes.
- 13 The steady and significant decrease in the number of farms testifies that the systemic crisis of Italian agriculture, swallowed by the processes of industrialisation and the tertiary sector that have favoured the slow but inexorable abandonment of the Italian countryside, in particular those hills that have been reduced "to the bone" (Rossi Doria, 1958). Small and medium-sized farms (2-5 ha and 5-20 ha) are mainly affected which have been made even more fragile by a CAP that in the 1970s-80s promoted only those over 20 ha in size, which increased numerically in northern and central Italy (Grillotti Di Giacomo, 2000).
- 14 The combination of these different elements allows us to draw a geography of agriculture in the province of Frosinone from the 1980s onwards (fig. 1) characterised by the evolution of agricultural systems from micro to medium-small farms, also recording the decrease of micro farms from 70% (1980s and 1990s) to 60% (2010). Furthermore, a slight increase in macro farms is recorded in the 2010 agricultural census, indicative of a process of structural transformation of farms in the Italian and

European countryside towards models of land concentration (Grillotti Di Giacomo, De Felice, 2021).

- 15 This transition leads us to reflect, even more, on the importance of protecting and enhancing the institution of micro farms, of which the Valle di Comino biodistrict is a clear example, an expression of that agri-food quality and environmental, economic, cultural and social protection of the hilly landscape, often abandoned in favour of the flat one, which prefers and favours other business models.

Figure 1. The agricultural systems of Frosinone (Lazio, Italy).



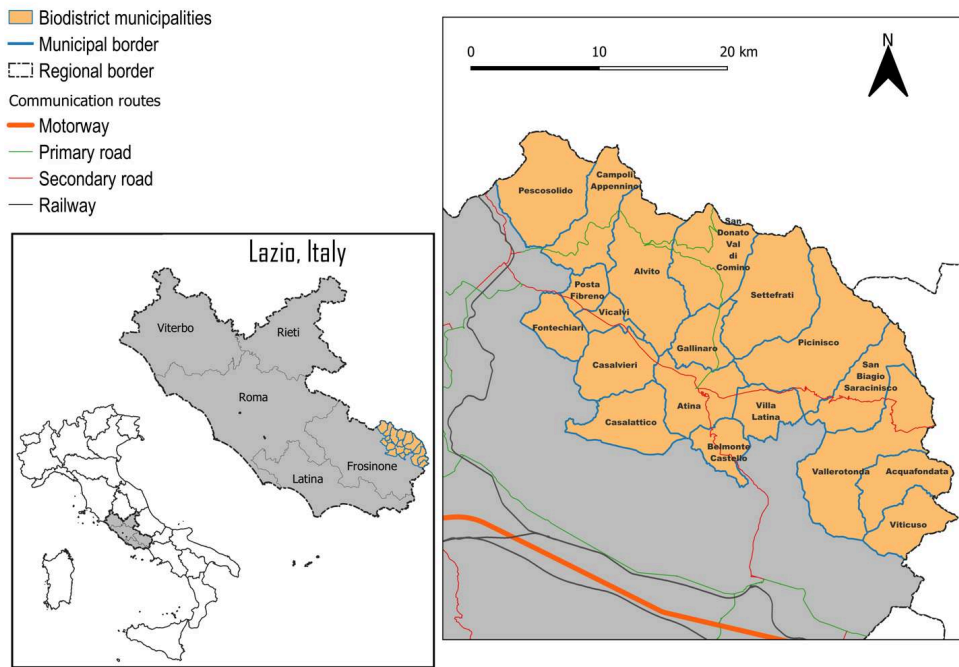
Source: Istat data, processed by the author using the GECOAGRI LANDITALY methodology

The Valle di Comino biodistrict

This Valley was once called Cominio... borders from the East with Abruzzo and especially with Opi, Civitella and other Castles... From the West with the State of Sora, and of Arpino... is about 60 miles distant from Rome, and also from Naples... the whole State is endowed with perfect air, with good, beautiful and fertile territory, abundant grains, barley, millet, legumes, linens, hemp: various fruits, wines... Fibreno produces a species of fish called carpione that is not found elsewhere in Italy (Relatione familiare de lo Stato d'Alvito made to l'Ilmo sig.re Card.le di Como, 1595).

- 16 The Valle di Comino covers an area of approximately 585 square kilometres and is located in Lazio in the province of Frosinone, close to the western chain of the central Apennines. Although it is located in a peripheral position with respect to the regional territory, it is well connected, through transversal arteries, to major roads (A1 Milan-Naples motorway) and railway lines of communication linking northern and southern Italy (fig. 2-3-4).

Figure 2. The Valle di Comino biodistrict.



Source: author's elaboration

Figure 3. Comino Valley, northern section. The protection of the National Park of Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise have guaranteed the rural landscape in its environmental and cultural values.



Source: photo by Maria Cristina Cardillo, 2022

Figure 4. Comino Valley, southern section. The building expansion that has developed since the second half of the 20th has generated land consumption in this part of the Valley and was not subject to the protection constraints of the Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise National Park.



Source: photo by Maria Cristina Cardillo, 2022

- 17 The agricultural landscape, alternating between flat and hilly areas surrounded by mountains, is historically marked by the cultivation of cereals but above all vines and olive trees that yield quality products: think of the vinification of Cabernet grapes, started in 1868 in the “Fratelli Visocchi Oenological Establishment”, which, perfected over time, gave rise to the Atina DOC. Also the breeding (cattle but especially sheep and goats) has always been a primary source of sustenance, thanks to the presence of excellent land for the pastures: hence the production of ricotta and cheeses that are still renowned, such as pecorino cheese Picinisco DOP (<https://www.valledicomino.org>).
- 18 The Valle di Comino, recognised as an internal area within the National Strategy for Internal Areas (SNAI), has been showing systemic fragility in the demographic sector for several decades, with a constant decline in the population (from 1971 to 2011 it has decreased by an average of 7% on and continues to fall) and a high old age³ and economic index: for example, we mention the 28% reduction between 2000 and 2010 in the number of farmers up to the age of 39, an indication of the state of progressive abandonment of the younger generation in which rural areas find themselves, and the low rate of tourist accommodation (tab. 1⁴), despite the development potential inherent in the area’s natural (just think of the presence of the Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise National Park) and historical-cultural wealth (archaeological evidence reveals that the Valley was already inhabited in Roman times).

Table 1. Municipalities ascribed to the XIV Comunità Montana Valle di Comino.

| Municipality | Surface (sq.km) | Housing density (pop. res./sq.km) 2021 | Population of residents 2021 | Variation % population of residents 2011-2021 | Index of old age (pop. ≥ 65/pop. ≤ 14*100) 2021 | Beds/ Accommodation in facilities 2016 |
|--------------------------|-----------------|--|------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Acquafondata | 25.32 | 10.86 | 275 | -2.48 | 320.80 | 44 |
| Alvito | 51.72 | 48.51 | 2,509 | -12.02 | 302.00 | 58 |
| Atina | 29.89 | 136.16 | 4,070 | -8.76 | 196.50 | 132 |
| Belmonte Castello | 14.05 | 49.25 | 692 | -11.05 | 253.90 | 0 |
| Campoli Appennino | 32.43 | 49.27 | 1,598 | -8.63 | 224.40 | 11 |
| Casalattico | 28.37 | 18.99 | 539 | -15.91 | 296.40 | 0 |
| Casalvieri | 27.27 | 86.35 | 2,355 | -17.85 | 226.60 | 23 |
| Fontechiari | 16.15 | 76.71 | 1,239 | -5.99 | 162.60 | 0 |
| Gallinaro | 17.74 | 66.51 | 1,180 | -5.29 | 214.10 | 74 |
| Pescosolido | 44.90 | 32.24 | 1,448 | -6.70 | 216.90 | 0 |
| Picinisco | 62.15 | 17.73 | 1,102 | -12.19 | 237.40 | 64 |
| Posta Fibreno | 9.80 | 108.16 | 1,060 | -12.90 | 315.90 | 0 |
| San Biagio Saracinisco | 31.21 | 9.67 | 302 | -16.34 | 369.20 | 6 |
| San Donato Val di Comino | 37.64 | 49.81 | 1,875 | -11.63 | 253.10 | 174 |
| Settefrati | 50.68 | 13.97 | 708 | -10.60 | 243.10 | 151 |
| Vallerotonda | 59.66 | 23.46 | 1,400 | -16.21 | 396.60 | 0 |
| Vicalvi | 8.21 | 90.37 | 742 | -7.94 | 252.30 | 12 |
| Villa Latina | 17.02 | 66.80 | 1,137 | -11.58 | 224.30 | 0 |
| Viticuso | 20.86 | 14.47 | 302 | -18.81 | 358.30 | 13 |

Source: author's elaboration based on Istat data (<http://dati.istat.it>)

- 19 To counteract this condition of socio-economic marginalisation and in order to relaunch the development of the territory by seeking to combine environmental, social and cultural sustainability, a development process was launched in this area based on the decision to adhere to the organic agricultural model, starting from the valorisation of the agri-food chains already present in the Valley. It was at the request of a promoter committee⁵ and after the favourable opinion expressed by the Lazio Regional Agency for Agricultural Development and Innovation (ARSIAL), in 2018 the Lazio Regional Council approved the establishment of the organic district called the Valle di Comino biodistrict (d.r. 115 of 23-02-2018).
- 20 The function of the biodistrict is to promote cohesion between all the participants in the organic production chain and to meet the needs of small businesses in order for them to combine their activities with the requirements of environmental sustainability. Thanks to the distribution through short supply chains and fair trade purchasing groups biodistrict activities also foster direct relations between producers and consumers.
- 21 The territory of the Valle di Comino biodistrict includes the nineteen municipalities that are part of the XIV Mountain Community of the same name. The biodistrict currently includes around 70 companies, mainly small-sized, united in the social promotion association "Valle di Comino Bio – Natura & Salute", which brings together companies from the agricultural world with the aim, among others, of enhancing the production, processing and subsequent marketing of products obtained through organic farming, biodynamic and permaculture methods (<https://www.valledicomino.org>).
- 22 The agricultural landscape of the biodistrict is very varied: cereals and horticultural crops, present in the flatter areas, alternate with fruit trees, olive groves and vineyards

in the hilly areas. The livestock sector is characterised by cattle, sheep and goat breeding, with pastures located at higher altitudes (tab. 2).

Figure 5. Comino Valley, northern section. Rural bocage landscape, which has land that is bordered by hedges, proof of a multifunctional family agriculture that withstands the processes of speculation.



Source: photo by Maria Cristina Cardillo, 2022

Figure 6. Atina: old steel mill re-functionalized as a winery.



Source: photo by Maria Cristina Cardillo, 2022

Table 2. Breakdown by municipality of the farms present in the Valle di Comino biodistrict (2021).

| Municipality | Companies | Surface (ha) | Production |
|--------------------------|-----------|--------------|---|
| Alvito | 7 | 207 | aromatic and medicinal plants; cereals; fruit; wine; beef cattle and sheep; bees; agrotourism |
| Atina | 8 | 435 | cereals; wine; beef cattle and sheep; dairy sheep and goats |
| Casalattico | 2 | 79 | horticulture; olive cultivation; dairy sheep and goats |
| Casalvieri | 2 | 60 | horticulture; fruit; dairy sheep and goats |
| Gallinaro | 2 | 51 | horticulture; cereals; fruit; olives; horses; agrotourism |
| Pescosolido | 1 | 6 | olives; wine making |
| Picinisco | 16 | 1,544 | olives; beef and dairy cattle; dairy sheep and goats; horses; pigs |
| Posta Fibreno | 3 | 34 | horticulture; cereals; fruit; olives, agrotourism |
| San Biagio Saracinisco | 6 | 253 | beef cattle and sheep; dairy sheep and goats |
| San Donato Val di Comino | 5 | 268 | fruit; olives; beef cattle; dairy sheep and goats; horses; bees |
| Settefrati | 10 | 926 | olives; beef cattle; dairy sheep and goats |
| Vallerotonda | 3 | 206 | beef cattle; dairy sheep and goats |
| Vicalvi | 1 | 190 | beef cattle |
| Villa Latina | 3 | 250 | aromatic and medicinal plants; cereals; beef cattle and sheep; dairy sheep and goats |

Source: author's elaboration based on Valle di Comino biodistrict data

- 23 The statistical data examined and the interviews with some of the main biodistrict referents reveal that only 30% of the farmers are under 40 years old while over 45% are over 50. This data, in addition to the shrinking population and the high old-age index, reflect the typical situation of abandonment of inland rural areas that is widespread throughout the country, although in the Valle di Comino a reversal trend has been emerging for some fifteen years.
- 24 The relative peripherality of the biodistrict has benefited to the advantage of the selection at local level of certain plant and animal species, which has given rise to certified products of excellence of organic production⁶ and with the DOP, DOC, IGT and PAT that make up approximately 9% of the recognised trademarks in Lazio⁷. These include Cabernet Atina DOC, Fagioli Cannellini DOP of Atina, Pecorino DOP of Picinisco⁸, Tartufo PAT of Campoli Appennino, Torrone PAT of Alvito⁹.
- 25 The certified products of excellence, the result of a long agri-food tradition, give the biodistrict and the entire Valle di Comino a marked identity mark linked to a quality historical rural landscape that can act as a driving force for the overall development of the entire area. As a matter of fact, the biodistrict aims at promoting food safety, knowledge of food production places, traditions and peculiarities of the territory, while at the same time guaranteeing, with organic, sustainable and short supply chain productions, greater environmental and landscape protection.

Field survey: interview with Rocco Franciosa, President of the Valle di Comino biodistrict

- 26 The Biodistrict was created thanks to the sensitivity of a number of local farmers, agronomists, entrepreneurs who recognised a clear element of environmental, economic and social value to be protected and enhanced in the Comino Valley. Rocco Franciosa, currently President of the biodistrict, had a strategic role in this doubly sustainable experience both for its origins which originated from a bottom-up participation process, and in terms of its purposes, aimed at opposing speculative agriculture, favouring small farms that guarantee quality and respect the environment. We believe his observations, which we gathered during the field study, are useful and functional to better understand the motivations, purposes and objectives of this project. This is why we have transcribed hereunder the brief interview that took place with the president.
- 27 1) What were the motivations that led the promoting committee to setting up the biodistrict?
- 28 *The geographical recognition of the Comino Valley and, in line with the principles that animate biodistricts, the promotion of the development of the territory in a sustainable way, enhancing the expansion of organic farming already widely practiced and/or chosen by existing farms.*
- 29 2) Who is involved in this?
- 30 *Everyone who lives in this territory, no one excluded. Citizens, local authorities, organic and non organic businesses, accommodation facilities, associations, because the idea behind biodistrict is the maximum inclusion.*
- 31 3) What difficulties have been encountered in the implementation of the biodistrict's establishment process?

- 32 *The difficulties have been and are of an operational nature, given the transversality and multiplicity of the parties involved. The positive aspect to consider is that the recognition process has led the way for the other biodistricts recognized in Lazio.*
- 33 4) What is the profile of the biodistrict's farmers (average age, gender, educational qualification, resident in the biodistrict or from other municipalities)?
- 34 *We do not have a precise census on the age of the farmers, but there has certainly been a turnover in farms between old and new generations. So an average age of 30/40 years, with a prevalence of women and secondary school qualifications. There is also a good amount of university graduates and returning farmers and/or by choice who return to farming after working in completely different fields of employment.*
- 35 5) What criteria have determined the choice of organic agricultural products to be grown?
- 36 *There are no specific guidelines regarding cultivation, certainly prevailing are the vineyards that fall under the Atina DOC, the cultivation of DOP cannellino beans and different varieties of cereals, local fruit (sour cherries), with an assortment that changes and/ or increases from year to year.*
- 37 6) Has the biodistrict changed pre-existing cultivation models and processes and what impact has it had on farms?
- 38 *The Biodistrict is in a development phase and is not yet perceived as an integral and essential part of the production process; rather, it seeks to provide incentives to the production process so that production is perceived as a process of the territory as a whole. In other words, it does not matter what is produced, but how it is produced and, above all, that the product is of the Valle di Comino as a whole.*
- 39 7) Which markets does the biodistrict address?
- 40 *The target market is mainly local in view of the productions (which we could define as niche) with an eye and commercial outlet in the Roman market. In any case, it is the firm intention of the biodistrict to encourage the on-site consumption of the products and/or the on-site spending of those who visit the area.*
- 41 8) Has the biodistrict participated in and/or promoted development, training and/or communication, information and awareness initiatives in synergy with public or private research bodies since the establishment of the biodistrict?
- 42 *On this point we are still at an initial stage, although contacts have been made especially with the University of Cassino and the agricultural institute of Alvito.*
- 43 9) Has the biodistrict led to a development process for the businesses and the territory since its establishment?
- 44 *This we will see over time, as already mentioned, we have provided suggestions and/or given a different outlook of the Comino Valley territory. The goal, as mentioned in the beginning, is that once the geographical recognition of the Valle di Comino is completed, we can finally share a common project. In other words, we can be an integral part of a single territory and proud to live and work in it.*

Concluding remarks

- 45 The biodistrict represents the true engine of sustainable development for the Valle di Comino, even if there is still a long way to go.
- 46 At present, the biodistrict's action remains limited to the circle of primary producers, even if the work of empowerment carried out in recent years has contributed to an increase in conversions to organic farming.
- 47 The decision to adhere to an organic production chain by the farmers is in itself an indication of a desire to protect and safeguard the land (although sometimes purely economic considerations prevail). Moreover, the absence of mechanisation in production processes is a guarantee of a lower environmental impact.
- 48 On the other hand, however, critical elements have emerged that slow down the path to full sustainability. With this in mind, the biodistrict should do more to spread the organic culture, for example by organising professional training courses and food and environmental education; increase opportunities to meet and compare with other Latium biodistricts and other associations of the Valley; collaborate with the various territorial stakeholders to carry out initiatives linked to environmental education; urge the public administration to buy organic products for school canteens, hospitals and public bodies promote local products more, by participating in fairs and conferences; involve the local population more, so that they feel an integral part of this community; create a network of collaboration with other productive sectors, such as catering or tourism; constantly update the website and social profiles to make the Valley and its products known and to enhance the tourist routes in the area¹⁰. Last but not least, the presence of the National Park and the great historical-environmental value of the entire area could attract conspicuous tourist flows, if the number of accommodation establishments present were to be increased, especially the agritourisms, which would allow slow tourism enthusiasts to fully experience the territory and to enjoy the local products immediately.
- 49 *The hope is that the Valle di Comino will increasingly become a "Bio Valley" where sustainable cultivation is accompanied with respect for the environment and with a view to economic growth for the entire area (<http://www.valledicomino.org>).*

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NOTES

1. Family farming is a complex institution, starting from its very definition as recalled by Garner, O Campos (2014) who identify as many as 36. The different definitions confirm the complexity of this institution that manifests itself differently depending on the environmental, territorial, economic, cultural and social context while maintaining its clear identity. FAO (2014) has defined Family Farming (which includes all family-based agricultural activities) as a means of organizing agricultural, forestry, fisheries, pastoral and aquaculture production which is managed and operated by a family and predominantly reliant on family labour, including both women's and men's. The family and the farm are linked, co-evolve and combine economic, environmental, social and cultural functions.
2. Recall the VI Summit of Agriculture Ministers held in Berlin on 18 January 2014 at the World Forum for Food and Agriculture where a declaration in favour of family farming was issued. The Declaration of the Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in 2014 in Havana, Cuba; The AIAF Ministerial Conference for Asia and the Pacific (2014); The Declaration of the Latin American Parliament on Family Agriculture (26 August 2014); The International Year of Family Agriculture promoted by the FAO in 2014; The United Nations Decade for Family Agriculture (2019-2029).
3. In some municipalities there are more than 300 over-65s for every 100 young people (tab. 1).
4. For comparison, the corresponding data for Lazio are given here: surface 17,242 kmq; housing density 331.45; population of residents 5,714,882; variation % population of residents 3.85; index of old age 172.9; beds/accommodation in facilities 363,352.
5. The organizing committee consists of the municipalities of Alvito, Atina, Campoli Appennino, Gallinara, Picinisco, San Donato Val di Comino, Settefrati and Vicalvi, the Union of municipalities Valle di Comino, the National Park of Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise and the Valle di Comino Association Bio nature & health.
6. In the Biodistrict, the certified organic agricultural UAA is about 26% of the total UAA.
7. In the Lazio Region, 61 recognised marks with designation of origin are identified (15 PDO, 10 PGI, 30 DOC/DOCG, 6 IGT) and 393 Traditional Food Products (PAT) as of 2015.
8. Both Cannellini and Pecorino, renowned far beyond regional borders, are still cultivated using traditional methods handed down from generation to generation.
9. This centuries-old production has its roots in the 18th century.
10. The Association I Cavalieri dei Tratturi organizes excursions on foot, on horseback or by bicycle along the paths and tracks used during the transumance.

ABSTRACTS

The Valle di Comino (Lazio, Italy), recognized as an internal area within the National Strategy for Internal Areas, has been experiencing systemic fragility for several decades both in the demographic, with a constant decrease in the population, and economic, with a sharp decrease in the number of young farmers and a low rate of tourist accommodation, areas.

In response to this marginality, partly due to the lack of the planners' long-term outlook, a new development process has begun in this area based on the intrinsic richness of the rural landscape.

The authors analyse the new development processes of the countryside of the Valle di Comino

starting from the establishment of the agri-food biodistrict involving as many as nineteen municipalities, representing for this territory the real engine of sustainable development with a marked identity imprint linked to the quality of the historical rural landscapes.

La Valle di Comino (Lazio, Italie), reconnue comme zone intérieure dans le cadre de la stratégie nationale pour les zones intérieures, connaît depuis plusieurs décennies une fragilité systémique tant sur le plan démographique, avec une diminution constante de la population, qu'économique, avec une forte baisse du nombre de jeunes agriculteurs et un faible taux d'hébergement touristique.

En réponse à cette marginalité, due en partie au manque de vision à long terme des planificateurs, un nouveau processus de développement a été amorcé dans cette zone, basé sur la richesse intrinsèque du paysage rural.

Les auteurs analysent les nouveaux processus de développement de la campagne de la Valle di Comino à partir de la création du biodistrict agroalimentaire impliquant pas moins de dix-neuf municipalités, représentant pour ce territoire le véritable moteur du développement durable avec une empreinte identitaire marquée liée à la qualité des paysages ruraux historiques.

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Keywords: Valle di Comino, Italy, biodistrict, family farming, rural landscape

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