

Introduction

This issue of *Geotema* collects the contributions to the EUGEO 2013 Congress “Europe, what’s next? Changing geographies and geographies of change”, session S06 “Common Agricultural Policy role and value in a changing world. Food - Agriculture - Environment as key factors in order to get through the current global economic crisis”¹. The session, was proposed and organized by the Research Group of the Association of Italian Geographers (A.Ge.I.) named GECOAGRI-LANDITALY, coordinated by Maria Gemma Grillotti, in collaboration with the Sustainability of Rural System Commission of IGU. The session was attended by Ana Firmino, Chair of the same IGU Commission, Maria Gemma Grillotti, two researchers from FAO, 40 participants and 24 presentations including 2 poster presentations².

The GECOAGRI-LANDITALY Research Group, born in 1993, consists of 12 regional operating units (Piemonte, Lombardia, Veneto, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Toscana, Umbria, Lazio, Molise, Campania, Puglia, Basilicata, Sicilia), and more than 40 University professors in 20 Italian Universities. During these years, the group carried out a comprehensive analysis concerning the Italian agricultural systems and developed an original methodology to define them at the different territorial levels – regional, provincial and sub-provincial – in their structural, economic, social and function characteristics. The morphological-descriptive analysis of agricultural spaces, organized according to different types of production, has been followed by the interpretation of the sectoral and territorial capabilities of regional spaces³.

Lately, the working group has expanded its field of action by placing increasing emphasis on landscape and cultural aspects⁴, agricultural policies and, in particular, on the difficult path of

CAP and its directives, not only focusing on the sectoral functionality but also aimed at a sustainable territorial development, that can have positive effects on the environment, the landscape and the territory, giving new functions to agriculture.

After the effort that has led the Geocoagri Research Group to publish two important thematic atlases dedicated to the documentation and representation of the growing complexity of the rural world, the *Atlante Tematico dell’Agricoltura Italiana* (S.G.I., 2000)⁵ and the *Atlante delle Acque d’Italia* (Brigati, 2008), the Working Group has directed the research on the study of non-agricultural activities and new functions of the countryside in close collaboration with the Commission on the “Sustainability of Rural Systems”⁶ and, on the food security front, with FAO in reference to the most recent events organized as part of the International Year of Family Farming⁷.

Afterwards, there were examined new forms of organization of rural areas and the new concept of rurality as a result of the transition of CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) from the sectoral model to a territorial model and of the most recent socio-economic transformations in the suburban areas. The methodology, developed by GECOAGRI-LANDITALY Group, has been adopted at international level and, in the last phase of the research, group members have studied new forms of organization of rural areas and the new concept of rurality, at regional and local scale, taking into account, in particular, three parameters for the evaluation: density, functionality and accessibility.

Finally the research group, currently named GECOAGRI-LANDITALY, faced the problem of identifying the areas of typical and quality productions, through the examination of the envi-

ronmental and cultural heritage values that make them real tools for promoting an integrated regional development.

The study of the new global and local context conditions and of social networks in the field of the food - agriculture - environment relationship, shows contradictory spatial configurations in rural areas such as those related to the impact of excess production, the increase and volatility of food prices in global markets, the food crises and low productivity situations⁸.

Other emerging themes are those related to growing role of new technologies and bioengineering enterprise applied to agriculture in opposite to an approach based on permaculture, quality production, fair trade and the increasing importance of agricultural production and the use of rural space for renewable energy sources and for soil conservation.

The links with these fundamental issues of emerging new agricultural policies in Europe and sustainability in agriculture are all present in this number of Geotema: applied researches on integrated development of agricultural spaces through the offer of new services by farms (tourism, environmental protection, integrated landscape and heritage management, health and education through proper nutrition); case studies about non-agricultural activities, quality production, role of farms in the energy transition.

The session "Common Agricultural Policy Role and Value in a changing World" presents an international debate on the role of agriculture in the European Union also considering the new reforms of the economic policy and the challenges imposed by the global economic crisis. More specifically, it attempts to analyze changes and persistence of relations food - agriculture - environment in Europe's agricultural systems and in rural areas in which the CAP operates.

Grillotti Di Giacomo summarizes such a complex approach through the questions she poses in the session proposal form: "what kind of, and how many results, the incentives of the Common Agricultural Policy achieved, concerning the agricultural best practices? Diffusion of renewable Energy: how many outcomes achieved in agricultural areas? ... Will the next Reform (2014-2018) be able to satisfy at the same time the requirements of sustainability and food safe?". Indeed "Climate changes, environmental damages due to excessive agricultural production, rural areas abandonment, increasing demand for quality label food processing production, the current economic crisis, need a completely new approach to

the primary sector". On the other hand, the recent loss of confidence in financial investment is worldwide causing a significant revaluation of land ownership and the growth of food production.

The fifteen papers that are published here treat problems and case studies that, in the diversity of topics and approaches, well illustrate the close relationship between food - agriculture - environment on which the Common Agriculture Policy, directly and indirectly, also impacts strongly.

This issue of Geotema is divided into two parts. In the first part Political and Territorial issues of the relationship between Food-Agriculture-Environment there is an exam of problems and interpretations of policies and requirements related to the regionalization processes in agriculture and in rural areas. The report of Grillotti introduces the themes and provides an interpretive framework that connects all interventions. In subsequent reports the researchers considered the will and actions of the European Union to intercept, directly and indirectly, the capacity of agriculture to change their role in responding to the current global crisis (Maria Patrizia Marino) through the processes of innovation (Andrea Sonnino, Delgermaa Chuluunbaatar, John Ruane), developing new values through food production (Valeria De Marcos), also reconsidering the utility, even economic, to know and promote local identity (Maria Fiori) and adopting an ethical vision of territorial organizations (Isabella Varraso).

The second part contains case studies of Italy: which are published in geographical order. Riggio, De Felice analyze the new functions for rural areas through the production of biomass energy (Northern Campania); Varraso, Dimitro examine bank loans to the agricultural enterprises in Italy and in Apulia. The new form of rurality in Apulia are studied by Nicoletti (quality production), Tatsion (cultural tourism), Calignano (agritourism in Salento *in the so-called "era of the internet"*), Bozzi (multifunctional agriculture), Lombardi (rural landscape through cinema) and Russo (proper nutrition). From the territorial reality it emerges, among other things, a 'reading' of the aspects of agriculture in Southern Italy, which bears testimony to the particular vocation together with the current efforts of change and innovation, despite contradictions and resistances.

The diversity of issues and approaches manifests the richness of the themes and the great vitality that the agricultural sector is currently manifesting. It also expresses the need to address the issues of agriculture with interdisciplinary logic, perhaps urging researchers in frontier research interests. The rigorously used methodolo-



gies illustrate, quantitatively and qualitatively, the agricultural processes analyzed, and use largely the fieldwork research, both as a key of interpretation of the examined phenomena and as feedback of the analysis. The relations between food - agriculture - environment are read locally by always revealing the impact on the territory specific organizations and landscapes, as well as the effective complexity of the examined reality, even at the local scale.

Notes

¹ EUGEO is the Association of Geographical Society in Europe, <http://www.eugeo.eu/>. IV EUGEO Congress was attended by about 500 participant from all over the world. For the congress programme and abstract see *EG EUGEO ROME 2013 5-7 Sept*, ISBN 978.8888.692.-88-3.

² The list of participants at the Session S06 and abstracts are in *EG EUGEO ROME 2013 5-7 Sept*, 100-105, ISBN 978.8888.692.-88-3.

³ On the first phase of the Research Group, see especially the series of theoretical and regional volumes "Geografia dei siste-

mi agricoli italiani", published by Reda (Roma); "Geotema", 5 (1996), "Geografie e agri-cultura per «seminare meno e arare di più»"; Grillotti Di Giacomo M.G., Banini T. (2004), *Geografia comparata delle aree agricole europee ed extraeuropee (GECOAGRI)*, A.Ge.I. "Progetti di ricerca dei gruppi di Lavoro", Bologna, Pàtron.

⁴ Bryant C.R., Grillotti Di Giacomo M.G. (Eds.) (2007), *Quality Agriculture: Historical Heritage and Environmental Resources for the Integrated Development of Territories*. Proceedings of the International Colloquium, Brigati, Genova.

⁵ Grand Prix de la Cartographie 2001.

⁶ On this IGU Commission see <http://igu-online.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/C12-35-Sustainability-of-Rural-Systems-2012-2013.pdf>; on the relationships between GECOAGRI and Sustainability of Rural Systems Commission see the Proceedings Grillotti Di Giacomo M.G eds. (1998), "I valori dell'agricoltura nel tempo e nello spazio", 3 voll., Genova, Brigati; "Processi di crescita e riorganizzazione degli spazi rurali", Atti del XXVIII Congresso Geografico italiano, vol. II, Roma, 2000. GECOAGRI has worked the organization of the *International Conference on the sustainability of rural systems*, UGI 2005.

⁷ On the relationships between GECOAGRI and FAO, see Grillotti Di Giacomo M.G. (1995), *Guida alla mostra "Campagne nel mondo: rapporti e paesaggi da salvare"*. Dedalo, Rieti (exhibition was held at the FAO Headquarters).

⁸ For an introduction about this theme, see Grillotti Di Giacomo M.G. (2012), *Nutrire l'uomo, vestire il Pianeta Alimentazione-Agricoltura-Ambiente tra imperialismo e cosmopolitismo*. Franco Angeli, Milano.

