



**University of
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Working Conditions in Alternative Food Systems: A Case Study of an Agricultural Cooperative in Sicily

GEO 511 Master's Thesis

Author

Nicole Blasko
18-707-299

Supervised by

Prof. Dr. Christian Berndt

Faculty representative

Prof. Dr. Christian Berndt

29.01.2025

Department of Geography, University of Zurich



Universität
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Abstract

This thesis explores **working conditions within an alternative food system**, focusing on the Sicilian agricultural cooperative Terra Viva and its partnership with the alternative Swiss distributor Fairshare. Together, they aim to establish transparent, sustainable and fair food supply chains as an alternative to the negative issues, such as labour exploitation, commonly associated with the conventional food system. Consumers preorder and prepay seasonally harvested and processed foods through Fairshare's online platform. Through 17 semi-structured interviews with actors in and around the cooperative and observations in Sicily, the study focuses on working conditions in Terra Viva's tomato passata and pesto production. Theoretical concepts from alternative food systems and labour geography are applied to analyse how Terra Viva organizes their passata and pesto production, working conditions such as payment and agency, as well as challenges and how these are addressed.

Findings highlight Terra Viva's and Fairshare's efforts to improve working conditions, such as product diversification, strong producer-consumer relationships and monthly payments for farmers. Despite efforts to operate apart from conventional market dynamics, Terra Viva and Fairshare remain dependent on the capitalist economy and face persistent challenges. These include the general inflation causing an increase of living costs, remaining competition within the alternative market, effects of climate change such as harvest loss and fieldwork under severe heat and fieldworkers' wages falling below the national and provincial collective bargaining agreements.

Revealing both, the efforts towards system change and the challenges of Terra Viva and Fairshare, this research contributes to the understanding of the complexities regarding working conditions of alternative food systems embedded in global agri-food systems.

Keywords: Alternative Food Systems, working conditions, Sicilian agriculture, agency and payment in an agricultural cooperative, certification, fair labour, transparency, producer-consumer relationships

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Abbreviations

AFN Alternative Food Network

CCNL Contratto collettivo nazionale di lavoro

CPL Contratto Provinciale di lavoro

FAO Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

FARm Filiera dell'Agricoltura Responsabile

FLAI-CGIL Federazione Italiana Lavoratori Agricoltura Alimentazione e Ambiente

GAS Gruppo di Acquisto Solidale (in engl. solidarity purchasing groups)

GIUZ Geographisches Institut Universität Zürich

GMO Genetically Modified Organism

ISFA International Farming System Association

IP Interviewed Person

1. Introduction

In the summer of 2024, The Guardian and NZZ published news about Satnam Singh, a 31-year-old Indian migrant farmworker, who tragically lost his life in Latina, Italy, after suffering a workplace accident that severed his arm. Instead of receiving medical assistance, Singh was abandoned on a roadside by his employer (Giuffrida 2024; Bernet 2024). This shocking event symbolizes another eye-opener to the systemic neglect and exploitation embedded in conventional food supply chains. The conventional food system is dominated by a handful of internationally leading retailers who mostly profit at the expense of workers' rights and their dignity (Fonte and Cucco 2017; D'Onofrio 2020). The market is concentrated in the power of these retailers who determine who and what is produced for what price (Ferrando 2021; Perrotta and Raeymakers 2023; D'Onofrio 2020). The effects of the conventional market relationships are particularly pronounced in Italy's agricultural sector, known for its reliance on low-paid migrant workers and exploitative practices like the *caporalato*¹ system (D'Onofrio 2020).

Within working conditions such as these, the alternative food networks, used as a synonym to alternative food systems (AFNs) serve as a potential counter-narrative to the conventional capitalist food system, aiming to create equitable, transparent, and socially as well as environmentally sustainable supply chains (Maye, Holloway, and Kneafsey 2007; Kneafsey et al. 2021; Grasseni 2022). This thesis explores these themes by analysing the case of Terra Viva², a Sicilian agricultural cooperative, and its partnership with Fairshare³, a Swiss company, fostering direct producer-consumer relationships and transparent supply chains (Mair and Huwiler-Flamm 2023; Company Website 2024)⁴. For this thesis, qualitative research was conducted on the working conditions of the cooperative Terra Viva while considering challenges in the conventional and alternative

¹ *Caporalato* is an Italian expression which comes from the word corporal, a military officer who command a section or squad of soldiers. The word caporalato has come to indicate a practice of 'illegal' recruitment and control of workers, especially immigrants, call corporal, a 'broker', or gangmaster, who manages the labour market with different degrees of oppression and exploitation" (Salvia 2019, 4).

Thanks to this "service", they keep a share of the worker's remuneration for themselves (FARm 2022, 27).

² Fictitious name

³ Fictitious name

⁴ Company Website anonymized, if interested the source can be provided by the author

food system. To narrow down the research, the case focused on involved actors in the passata and pesto production.

As a result, the central research question explores the working conditions within an alternative production system in Sicily, illustrated by the case study of the agricultural cooperative Terra Viva, which directly delivers their products to the Swiss distributor Fairshare. In order to answer this question, the cooperative's key processes and relationships in the passata and pesto production, income and agency of involved actors and challenges of individuals, Terra Viva and Fairshare are examined. By exploring the interplay between working conditions in the passata and pesto production in an international alternative relationship, this thesis contributes solutions to the challenges mentioned in the conventional system while discussing challenges within the example of an AFN. Therefore, this thesis provides research to fill the gap in working conditions in processing and production within an international alternative food network

To address the research questions, the thesis begins with the **Research Context** *Chapter 2*, including an introduction of the case study and organizations of the cooperative Terra Viva and the Swiss distributor Fairshare, highlighting their efforts to counter exploitative systems through direct consumer-producer partnerships and environmentally sustainable. After that, the **State of Literature** *Chapter 3* provides an overview of agricultural labour conditions in Italy. Secondly, Italy's legal situation relevant to the research context is summarised, followed by an overview on Alternative Food Systems and developments in the Sicilian and Italian contexts. Building on the State of Literature, *Chapter 3*, the **Theoretical Framework** *Chapter 4* focuses on concepts such as AFNs and labels as well as labour, including agency. In order to situate these theoretical concepts, an overview of food regimes is provided. These theories provide a lens through which the research findings are analysed and discussed. The **Methodology** *Chapter 5* includes details on the research approach through qualitative content analysis outlined by Kuckartz and Rädiker (2022), including semi-structured interviews and the analysis of the collected data. Whereas most interviews were held in Sicily, some were done online and in Switzerland. Besides English and German, some interviews were conducted in Italian with an Italian-to-English translator. Based on the interviews, the findings are presented in *Chapter 6 Understanding How Terra Viva Organizes Their Passata and Pesto Production*, *Chapter 7 Working Conditions*, and *Chapter 8 How Terra Viva*

Addresses Their Challenges. Finally, *Chapter 9 Discussion*, including limitations and the *Chapter 10 Conclusion*, synthesize the findings within the theoretical framework in *Chapter 4* and reviews literature from *Chapter 3* regarding the research question. The discussion also includes limitations of the thesis, while the conclusion provides an outlook for future research.

2. Research Context

This thesis is based on the case study of Fairshare, a Swiss company through which I was connected to one of their producer cooperatives, Terra Viva, in Sicily. While Fairshare was the starting point of my research, the cooperative in Sicily ended up being more focused on, as the field research was mostly done within the cooperative. After a short recap on my motivation and positionality, Fairshare, as well as Terra Viva, are briefly introduced below. Additionally, *Section 2.2.3.* aims to give a brief historical and geographical embedding of the cooperative in Sicily.

2.1. Motivation and Positionality

2.1.1. Motivation and Personal Connection

In my Bachelor thesis, I was first introduced to the topic of alternative economy challenging the conventional system, which has since fascinated me (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy 2013). Later, in my master's studies, especially in the module GEO 433, "Global Economic Geographies of Agriculture and Food Systems", taught by Prof. Dr Christian Berndt, I was introduced to an in-depth understanding of the concept of the alternative economy within food systems (Berndt 2023a; 2023b). With work experience related to alternative production forms, my interest in and consumption of organic and fair food and transparent supply chains increased. Personally, I regularly receive fresh fruit and vegetables through box scheme delivery. However, the more I learned about AFNs, the more I also asked myself critical questions. For example, as a person living in Switzerland, box scheme fruit and vegetables, especially during the winter months, means eating a lot of root vegetables and apples. However, where do you go shopping if you want to make a simple tomato sauce or enjoy some chocolate? Is it possible and even realistic to completely do without these foods? Personally, I concluded that while I can adapt to winter vegetables, I would not do without passata or chocolate. So, I mostly ended up buying these food items in conventional supermarkets. While there is a great variety of different labels and brands of, for example, passata, I was dissatisfied not knowing who was behind this product while being aware of the supermarket's power in supply chains. Eventually, after writing the seminar paper in module GEO 433, "Global Economic Geographies of Agriculture and Food Systems", I wondered whether it would

not be possible to have AFNs on a larger geographical scale, including jarred food items. I personally believe consumers would be more likely to buy such products than completely abandon food such as passata, which is embedded in our traditional diet.

2.1.2. Positionality

Regarding my connection to the case study, I had only heard of the company Fairshare shortly before starting my research. Ever since, I have generally perceived the concept of Fairshare and Terra Viva positively, especially when compared to conventional systems, which reflects my own bias. In the topic finding phase, Fairshare reappeared during my research, and I also purchased food as a consumer. Throughout my research, I was in contact with one person from Fairshare, especially in the beginning, as he suggested and connected me with the cooperative in Sicily. However, while I updated my contact person at Fairshare with the most important steps in my research, they were not further involved in my research, and I was able to do my fieldwork independently. They also encouraged me to be critical, which allowed me to view the case more neutrally and still remain curious about my research findings.

The relationship with Terra Viva, on the other hand, grew stronger, especially during the time I stayed there. I was much more involved and included in the cooperative events and the personal lives of some younger employees. Despite spending time with them during my free time, I could separate my research from my personal relationships. Therefore, I did not discuss the details of my research findings with the people I spent my free time with. As a result, it was relatively easy to remain in a professional setting during the interviews. However, contact with some individuals has decreased since I returned to Switzerland while still being in close contact with other Terra Viva employees. I am also part of the cooperative WhatsApp Group Chat and updated on the latest news. The ongoing contact allowed me to clarify remaining questions and gain insight into recent developments, which otherwise I would not have heard of. However, these updates have had no impact on the focus of this research and this thesis remains based on on-site fieldwork.

2.2. Case study

2.2.1. Fairshare

Since 2016, the Switzerland-based company Fairshare has worked towards alternative transparent food systems and stands for fair, organic and soil cautiously produced goods (Mair and Huwiler-Flamm 2023, 1). Fairshare's main goal is to support smallholders in producing organically and diverse, while protecting the soil and environment (Company Website 2024). In achieving this goal, their values are supporting regenerative agriculture, adding value through long-term and trusted relationships, and offering transparent supply chains for the end consumer (Zellweger 2016; Company Website last accessed 27.11.2024). The mentioned goals also aim to address the UNO Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) SDG 1 No poverty, SDG 8 Decent working conditions, SDG 13 Climate action and SDG 15, Life on land and SDG 12, Sustainable consumption and production patterns (Company Website last accessed 27.11.2024).

In short, Fairshare buys foods in bulk and then distributes them among the consumers, as soon as the foods are harvested and processed. The customers preorder and prepay for the foods, which they will directly receive a few weeks or months later. So, the main difference between Fairshare and conventional food systems is the **shared risk** and **distribution** of food without supermarkets (Zellweger 2016). Shared risk as the money from the consumer's prepurchase will already support the producers financially during the production process. In case of harvest loss, the loss is split between the producers, Fairshare and the consumers. Nonetheless, Fairshare is situated in a market-based system where producers are paid wages in return for their products and consumers preorder products on the company's platform (Zellweger 2016; Mair and Huwiler-Flamm 2023).

Since 2022, Fairshare has transformed into a purpose company and follows the principles of steward ownership with the "Veto-Anteil" model (Mair and Huwiler-Flamm 2023, 2; more information on purpose-schweiz.org). This model includes the two principles of steward ownership are self-determination, which includes voting rights being held by active and involved entrepreneurs (Purpose-schweiz.org 2023, 6). An additional principle is purpose orientation, which includes that all profits and assets

serve the company's purpose and are bound to a purpose and reinvested into the company (Purpose-schweiz.org 2023, 5–6).

2.2.2. Terra Viva

As mentioned, one of Fairshare's producers outside Switzerland is the cooperative **Terra Viva** in Sicily. Fairshare also represents one of several buyers for the cooperative. With this, Terra Viva and Fairshare have several customers, respectively suppliers characterising market relationships, even if not present in the conventional market (Berndt 2023a, 6; Gereffi, Humphrey, and Sturgeon 2005, 89). While Switzerland with Fairshare stands for the third largest buyer in terms of volume, Terra Viva has its largest customer basis in Italy, followed by Belgium (IP3, pos. 16). Especially their wine is exported around the globe from the United States to Australia and Japan. However, even abroad, their products are not sold in conventional stores, but to AFNs, organic small stores or high-end restaurants. The cooperative was founded in 1998 by four farmers in a small village outside Palermo. The cooperative can mainly be characterized as a smallholder cooperative as the founding farmers and current associates are smallholders (Berndt 2023b, 1). Initially, the cooperative produced wine, which remains one of the core products. Over the years, the cooperative has not only grown in size through associated farmers and sale channels, but also in product diversity since approx. 2019 (IP4 pos. 71-77). They now also make all different kinds of products, from timilia pasta to basil pesto or tomato passata (Company Website 2024⁵; Dörig 2023). Most jarred foods including pesto and passata are processed in the cooperative's facility (*Figure 1*) which is located in the same town as the cooperative's fields and offices. Besides associated farmers who deliver their products to the cooperative, Terra Viva counts 26 employees (Oral Source, IP3, 20.06. 2024; WhatsApp, IP8, 04.12.2024). Depending on the employees, labour activities range from food production to processing to marketing and advisory. Besides the raw foods delivered from approx. 40 associated farmers, the cooperative also has one in-house farmer, four fieldworkers who work on the cooperative owned fields (Oral Source, IP3, 20.06.2024).

⁵ Company Website anonymized, if interested the full source can be provided by the author



Figure 1 Processing Facility of Terra Viva (Blasko, 2024)

Most associated farmers are located near the heart of the cooperative, while some foods, which are grown at a different part of the island, are delivered from associated farmers further away (Oral Source 2024).

2.2.3. Geographical and Cultural Embedding of the Study Site

My research area and the place I was staying was a small town called Colledoro⁶, located in the region of Palermo in Sicily. Upon arriving in Palermo, I was picked up by my main contact, IP3, an employee of the cooperative, who drove me to my accommodation. As we left the city, the landscape transformed into rolling hills and colourful fields (*Figure 2*).



Figure 2 Landscape Palermo region (Blasko, 2024)

⁶ Fictional town name

The scenery featured a palette of yellow-brown wheat fields where traditional grains are grown, interspersed with green vineyards - an iconic feature of Colledoro. As far as I could tell, the ones observed were **small-scale farms** using traditional machines. In Sicily, as in many areas of Italy, the agricultural sector predominantly comprises small-scale, scattered family farms. According to Zollet et al. (2021, 4), 63% of all farms are smaller than 5 hectares. While small-scale agriculture generally promotes product diversity and independence, the number of small-scale farms has decreased while the farm sizes have increased, concentrating power among a few larger farms (Zollet et al. 2021, 4-5; Della Puppa and Piovesan 2023, 887).

The landscape on the drive from Palermo to Colledoro, where the heart of the cooperative lies and where most interviews were done, was marked by the absence of **greenhouses**. This absence only struck me weeks later during fieldwork in Ragusa, another region of Sicily. Ragusa highlighted a contrast to the region around Colledoro, I observed an abundance of greenhouses (*Figure 3*) and a significant presence of migrant workers, which is also mentioned by Palumbo (2016); Della Puppa and Piovesan (2023); Field Notes, Ragusa, July (2024).



Figure 3 Landscape Ragusa Region (Blasko, 2024)

Returning to my initial impressions on the way to Colledoro, **the landscape** resembled a romantic painting. I was surprised to see few people working in the fields, though it was mid-June and likely too hot to work at midday. While the colourful fields caught my eye, my contact person told me about the burning fields. I suddenly recognised that every now and then there were fields completely on fire or there was smoke coming from the fields.

IP3 told me that burning the fields is a conventional practice to increase soil fertility but emphasised that Terra Viva does not support this.

After driving on poorly paved and bumpy roads, we entered Colledoro, a small town with approximately 3000 inhabitants (Elaborazioni effettuate su dati ISTAT 2024). Colledoro was both, the place I was staying and the centre of the cooperative. While approaching the town centre, my main contact told me: “This is it”. Indeed, the town comprised one main road with a corner where young and old met to watch the world go by, especially when foreigners related to Terra Viva came by. In such a small town, everyone seems to know each other, including the cooperative, where employees know other associates and have good relationships. As I could see they also hang out together in their free time. So, despite its sleepy and ancient character, the town also forms a meeting point for all different kinds of people from all around the world. Most employees and associated farmers also live very close by. Thus, when I walked through the town in the first days, I would bump into IP11, turn around the corner and be invited to have a drink with IP7, who was sitting on the side of the main street with an associated farmer.

After driving through the town centre, we entered a gate on a small hill with a tiny forest (*Figure 4*). This hill and gated area are the cooperative’s property. The vinery, guest and employee house, some offices and an Airbnb are all located within the gated area. Further, the area has a beautiful amphitheatre and large field, which was used several times during my stay for events organised by the cooperative, as well as the community house I was staying in.



Figure 4 Heart of the cooperative on hill (Blasko, 2024)

Despite the seemingly tranquil charm, this region has a prominent history of mafia involvement, particularly in agriculture, also highlighted by Grasseni (2022, 69). Grasseni (2022, 69) explains that in Italy, around 5-10% of mafia business is located in agriculture. The involvement especially includes production under the label “made in Italy” and through recruitment of slave-like labour, also known as *caporali*, which is further discussed in the state of literature.

Schneider and Schneider (2003) further studied the rise of the Sicilian mafia in the Palermo region. Additionally, Rizzo (2011), Meiler (2021), Watts (2016) and Perocco (2019) offer further literature on the mafia’s involvement in Sicilian agriculture. As I deliberately chose not to focus on the mafia, I will not further go into detail. It is Important to note that while I was there, I was unaware of any mafia-involved activity in the context of my research.

Lastly, the general unemployment rate in Sicily is important to mention. Having a job is a question of pride, given Sicily’s unemployment rate of 17.3% in 2022, compared to the national average of 6.5% (Macchi 2024).

3. State of Literature

As the world's third-largest producer of industrial tomatoes and Europe's largest producer, Italy, especially the South, is famous for its tomato production (D'Onofrio 2020). As a result of the development of the agricultural system in the South of Italy in recent years, this area has also gained attention through increased labour exploitation in tomato production. The Italian Ministero del lavoro e delle politiche (2022, 7) refer to the term "labour exploitation" when working hours, rest and leave periods are repeatedly violated, payment and compensation are below the minimum wage set by collective bargaining agreements, health and safety rules are violated, or employees have to work under degrading working and living conditions. As soon as violence, threats, seizure of documents or power is abused, it is a case of forced labour (Ministero del lavoro e delle politiche 2022, 6). As the field of literature, especially on migrant labour in Southern Italy, is broad *Section 3.1.* does not aim to include all of them but uses research by Perrotta, and Raeymaekers (2023); Perrotta and Sacchetto (2014); Ferrando (2021); Salvia (2020; 2019); Palumbo (2016); Howard and Forin (2019) to give insights on the labour conditions in the Southern Italian tomato production. Besides the literature on labour conditions in conventional tomato production, the research field on alternative food systems in Italy is provided based on Fonte and Cucco (2017); Giordano, Luise, and Arvidsson (2018); Mastronardi et al. (2019); Zollet et al. (2021); Dansero and Puttilli (2014); Grasseni 2022; Sgroi and Testa (2014). Research on working conditions in alternative food systems in South Italy is scarce and points out a research gap. As a result, this chapter is divided into three parts. *Section 3.1.* includes the most central findings regarding labour conditions in Southern Italian tomato production. As some scholars mention laws in their literature, *Section 3.2.* gives an overview of the legal framework in Italy. Finally, *Section 3.3.* contains examples of alternative food systems in Italy, focussing on the South and Sicily.

3.1. Italian Tomato Sector

3.1.1. Overview

In his research, Salvia (2019) describes how the liberalisation of the economy reshaped Italy into a more export-oriented country. This development is underlined by the number of Italian fresh fruit and vegetable exports, which have increased by 85% from 1980 to 2000 and by 52% from 2000 to 2024 (FAOSTAT 2025; Salvia 2019, 13). With the globalization of agricultural production and year-round availability of food, supermarkets have gained power and dominance over the supply chain (D'Onofrio 2020; Salvia 2019; Barrientos, Gereffi, and Pickles 2016; Barrientos 2013). While Salvia (2019) points out the rise of contract farming, buyers' interventions have led to vertical production, where lead firms control production quantity and quality as well as working conditions and delivery time (Salvia 2019, 9, 14). According to D'Onofrio (2020, 52) the top three supermarket chains hold 36% of the total market share in Italy. Ferrando (2021, 542) argues that while retailers claim 53% of the revenue from an average passata sold at 1.30 euros, farmers receive a mere 8%, which shows the dominance of supermarkets in the entire supply chain.

It is important to note that the organizational structure of cooperatives characterizes the Italian agro-food economy, counting around 5024 cooperatives in Italy (Fonte and Cucco (2017, 294). While 10 out of the 50 largest food enterprises are organized as cooperatives, these traditional agricultural cooperatives moved towards conventional enterprises, focussing on efficiency and profit (Fonte and Cucco 2017, 294). Thereby traditional cooperatives differ from social and community-oriented cooperatives. Scholars including Perrotta and Raeymakers (2023, 2003) and D'Onofrio (2020, 17) highlight that the rise of international production networks has led to outsourcing production to low-wage areas or countries, which also has externalized the corporate buyer's responsibility for environmental and social effects such as pollution or poverty. In the Italian tomato production, the externalization of labour includes a network of informal workers caught in illegality (Perrotta and Raeymaekers 2023). Perrotta and Sacchetto (2014, 75) highlight that labour exploitation dates back to the 1970s when Tunisian migrants came to Sicily. Due to the geographic location of the South, it is characterized by being an entry point for migration and availability of migrant workers, whereof Campania, Puglia, Calabria and

Basilicata are named as hotspot regions for labour exploitation (D'Onofrio 2020, 64; Howard and Forin 2019, 581). The region most mentioned in connection with labour exploitation in tomato production is Foggia, located in the Puglia region, which produces 1/3 of all the Italian industrially processed tomatoes. In comparison to the North, the distances between farms and tomato processing facilities are longer in Southern Italy which increases transportation costs (D'Onofrio 2020, 67). To remain competitive in the market, some farmers lower their labour costs, which leads to labour exploitation. In general, the South is poorer and the production less mechanized than in the North, leading to the increase in demand for manual labour, often done by migrant labourers (D'Onofrio 2020, 70). In her research, Palumbo (2016) geographically focuses on Sicily and explains how migrant workers move around from North to East to Southeast of the island according to the harvesting time of fruit and vegetables such as grapes, oranges and tomatoes. The Ragusa region is especially characterised by its tomato production and the significant presence of greenhouses and migrant workers (Palumbo 2016, 14; Della Puppa and Piovesan 2023).

3.1.2. Labour Conditions

The liberalisation of agriculture markets and the involvement of international supermarkets and retailers, which determine the price, have pressured cheap production, including cheap labour, especially low wages for migrant workers (Perrotta 2014 IN Palumbo 2016, 1; D'Onofrio, 2020, pp. 9–10). According to Palumbo (2016, 26), the pressure on cheap labour to increase the company's profit margin is where labour exploitation begins. Besides the retailers' power over the supply chain, D'Onofrio (2020) names instability, seasonality of production, and competition among players in international tomato production as reasons for the demand for cheap and flexible workforce. D'Onofrio (2020, 80) describes the competition around the price-making of passata as an auction system, where everyone continues offering an even lower price as long as it is above the production costs. Howard and Forin (2019, 588) visualize that out of every euro made, retailers take 0.83 euro, another 0.1 euro go to the tomato processing firms, leaving the remaining 0.07 euro to farmers, fieldworkers or intermediaries. The Italian agricultural sector is characterized by the caporalato system (Perrotta and

Sacchetto 2014; Perrotta and Raeymakers 2023; Salvia 2020; D’Onofrio 2020). The caporalato system is a form of labour contracting where the Caporali [Italian caporal = military officer, commander of a group] are informal local intermediaries, brokers and gangmasters who connect fieldworkers with farmers (Perrotta and Raeymakers 2023; Salvia 2020; Howard and Forin 2019). The caporalato system is mainly connected to the mafia and a method of how they remain powerful and in control over the agricultural sector. Even though the caporalato system was already mentioned as being illegal in the 1919s, it has taken up a new presence which is connected to the intensification of cheap and flexible labour in global production networks in the past 30 years (Perrotta and Raeymaekers 2023; Salvia 2020). Perrotta and Raeymaekers (2023) introduce the term “caporalato capitalism”, which describes the connection of labour brokerage with the capitalist system of agrifood production and public authority.

Many farmers often rely on these intermediaries to decrease labour costs and access a flexible workforce during harvest time (D’Onofrio 2020, 97). Caporali not only have the power to choose who they recruit and connect with whom, but they also determine the fieldworker's wages and conditions and are in charge of handing out the payments at the end of the day or season (Ferrando 2021, 525). In their research Ferrando (2021) and Howard and Forin (2019, 589) point out that it is not uncommon for fieldworkers to receive their pay with delay or not at all. D’Onofrio (2020, 98) explains, *"In the caporalato system, workers typically have to pay the intermediary for transportation 5 euro and food. Sometimes also another 0.5 per basket filled."*

A so called “paga di piazza” is daily announced by the caporali and usually ranges between 3-4 euros per hour (D’Onofrio 2020, 114). Besides the payment per hour, there is also the payment by “cassone”, the chest payment or payment per basket. Some workers try to earn more with payment per chest as every cassone (box) makes between 3-4 euros, which according to Perrotta and Raeymaekers (2023, 2012) sums up to 80-100 euros for the fastest workers and 20-25 euros for the slowest ones. In her research, Palumbo (2016, 15) notes that, on average, olive pickers in Sicily would receive “€3.00-3.50, which adds to a daily income of €30-45 as workers are able to fill 10-15 boxes a day”. Both Salvia (2020, 3) and Howard and Forin (2019, 589) highlight that out of the 25-35 euros earned daily by workers, 2.5-5 euros go to the Caporali for transport and nutrition in an 8-hour day. In comparison, D’Onofrio (2020, 64) explains that the daily wage ranges

between 20-35 euros per day depending on the migrant's ethnicity, 30-35 euros for Eastern European migrants and 20-25 euros for African migrants (Howard and Forin 2019, 589). D'Onofrio (2020, 94) and Perrotta and Raeymakers (2023, 2009) argue that usually only Italian farmworkers earn the payment and hour according to the provincially legalized contract. In contrast, migrant workers are stuck with the "paga di piazza" and mostly work without a formal contract. Despite the payment per hour or basket, D'Onofrio (2020, 63) argues that the payment does not exceed 40 euros per day. This fact is underlined by Salvia (2020) and Palumbo's (2016) research, which shows that the payment is clearly below the national and provincial contract, which defines average fieldwork for 6.5h/d at 62.2 euros (FLAI CGIL 2023; Cibelli and Rettore 2022). Palumbo (2016, 38) states the lack of governmental inspection as one reason for Caporali's ability to pay wages far below the minimal wages defined by law. At the same time, Palumbo (2016, 15) explains that through increased inspections, working conditions have improved to a payment of 50 euros per day for 8 hours for more information on state involvement and the continuation of the caporalato system, see Perrotta and Raeymakers (2023).

Besides the payment, a second crucial factor regarding the working conditions is working hours. Palumbo (2016, 20) and D'Onofrio (2020, 99) state that the working hours range from 10-11 hours, exceeding the hours defined by the national and provincial contracts (FLAI CGIL 2023; Cibelli and Rettore 2022). In addition to the long hours and little payment, the living situation is exemplified in D'Onofrio (2020, 91), where a worker worked 10 hours for 3 euros an hour:

"to pay for a place to sleep, 6 euros a day. I paid 180 euros a month when there were 30 days in the month and 185 euros when it had 31 days. Two hours of work a day went to just paying the rent. Even if you did not work, you still had to pay six euros a day to sleep. It was cheaper to live at the ghetto because you did not have to pay rent, and you kept whatever you earned. At the ghetto, you save one euro a day because the transportation costs only 5 euros."

Howard and Forin (2019, 592) and Perrotta and Sacchetto (2014, 193) underline D'Onofrio's (2020, 91) description of workers' living conditions and picture them as "*amongst the worst in Europe*". Besides the lack of sanitary facilities and waste disposal, workers suffer from heat and lack of water in summer, while winters are freezing due to the absence of heating. Besides the living situation in so-called "ghettos" being

precarious, they are the space where fieldworkers, especially migrant workers, find work through caporali (Perrotta and Raeymakers 2023, 2013; Perrotta and Sacchetto 2014). These migrant fieldworkers either move around South Italy along the harvest peaks or wait for their legal status and then move to the North to find a “better” job, or work for the harvest season but have another job somewhere else or lost their job in the North (D’Onofrio 2020, 61). Due to the illegal status of most fieldworkers, they are even more vulnerable than Italian citizens being exposed to these working conditions and the caporalato system. As a result, blackmailing between farmers or intermediaries and fieldworkers is not uncommon, especially among African migrant workers (D’Onofrio 2020, 94–95).

Caporalato is now commonly also used as a synonym to describe the terrible working conditions such as long working hours, lack of safety regulations under intense heat, and segregation in payment amount and form, and the living situation between African, Italian and Eastern European farmworkers of migrant workers in the South of Italy (Howard and Forin, 2019; Ferrando, 2021; Perrotta and Raeymaekers 2023; see Perrotta and Sacchetto 2014 for more information on segregation in caporalato system).

3.2. Legal Framework on Labour in Italy

Section 3.2. aims to lay out the legal landscape of labour in Italy, especially in agriculture. As Italy is part of the European Union, it is subjected to EU laws. As this chapter will give a brief overview of the legal setting, which is most relevant to the case study, it contains a selection of laws, regulations and agreements mentioned in relation to agricultural working conditions. First, the most important laws and legislative decrees are summarised regarding labour in general, labour in agriculture, and labour around migrant workers. This includes collective bargaining agreements and the unemployment benefit for fieldworkers, as this category is most likely to receive worse conditions than agreed upon by law, as well as general health and safety regulations. Then, the latest governmental action plan on tackling labour exploitation is discussed (Ministero del lavoro e delle politiche 2022).

3.2.1. Collective Bargaining Agreement and Unemployment Benefit

In general, all Italian workers are protected through the **Legislative Decree 104/2022**, which implements transparent and predictable working conditions, including all

employment relationships (Ministero Del Lavoro e Delle Politiche Sociali, n.d.). The employer is required to give information about the identity of the parties, the place of work, the type of employment relationship, the length of the probationary period, the duration of vacation leave or other paid leave, the schedule of normal working hours, the procedure/form/terms of notice in the event of termination, the applicable collective bargaining agreement and company contracts etc. prior to the employment. Employees must be able to access this information at any time (Gianni & Origoni 2022, 1; Ministero Del Lavoro e Delle Politiche Sociali, n.d.).

In Italy, agricultural work, which concerns fieldworkers, is regulated by law and collective bargaining agreements. Even though “*there is no statutory nationwide minimum wage that interacts with those wage floors*”, its implementation is currently being discussed by the Italian Labour Ministry (Adamopoulou and Villanueva 2022, 3; Menegatti 2019). The most important trade union “Federazione Italiana Lavoratori Agricoltura Alimentazione e Ambiente” (FLAI-CGIL) and representatives from the farmer unions “Confagricoltura, Coldiretti, and CIA” negotiate the **National Collective Labour Agreement (CCNL)**, which is renewed every four years (D’Onofrio 2020, 104; Romero 2023, 20, Studio Associato Pelizzari e Bracuti 2024). The CCNL includes the most important elements of work such as hours, wages and leave for fieldworkers (FARm 2022, 5). The National Collective Labour Agreement is complemented by the **Provincial Labour Agreement (CPL)**, where contractual wages, hiring, migrant workers, working hours, weekly rest, piece work, and workers’ health safety are defined. Working conditions can vary depending on the region but cannot be lower than defined in the National Collective Labour Agreement (FARm 2022, 9; Palumbo 2016, 4; Cibelli and Rettore 2022). For this research, the expression collective bargaining agreement is used to describe the Provincial Labour Agreement of the province of Palermo, which is based on the National Collective Labour Agreement.

Hours and Payment

Despite wages being set by collective bargaining agreement, Article 26 in Italy’s constitution entitles workers to a remuneration that is according to the quantity and quality of their work and must be sufficient for a decent life for them and their families (Senato Della Repubblica, n.d.; Cibelli and Rettore 2022)

Law Decree Nr. 66/2003 generally sets working hours at 40 hours per week if not set shorter by collective agreements. The maximum time per week is limited to 48 working hours in a period of 7 days. The maximum daily work time is 13 hours, and employees are to rest for 11 hours after every 24 hours of work. After working for 7 days in a row, workers are entitled to rest for at least 24 hours. Breaks are also agreed upon in collective agreements but must be no less than 10 min every 6 hours (Ministero del lavoro e delle politiche sociali, n.d., 5; FARM 2022, 6). Workers, in general, are assigned at least 4 weeks of paid leave per year of which at least two weeks must be taken at once (Ministero del lavoro e delle politiche sociali, n.d.). According to Palumbo (2016, 5) the national collective agreement defines a maximum of 39 hours per week, corresponding to 6.5 working hours a day. However, provincial agreements are allowed to modify the limit of working hours per week, within the limit of variability allowed in the ordinary weekly working time being 85 hours per year and a maximum of 44 hours per week (Art. 34) (Cibelli and Rettore 2022, 38).

The provincial collective bargaining agreement for agricultural workers includes several levels, which define workers' salaries according to their skills (*Table 1*), their experience and work (FLAI CGIL 2021; 2023; Cibelli and Rettore 2022). Levels G, H and I are only applied in special cases when fieldworkers work in agriculture for the first time or only collect specific foods. The general fieldworker is located on level F, and in 2023, the wage was 62.20 euro per day. This level includes fieldworkers who are involved in several agricultural activities but do not have any specific skills. Levels A, B, C, D and E include more professionally skilled workers, such as farm or winery managers, pruners, tractor drivers, seeders or planters. The provincial agreement includes both temporary and permanently employed workers and their salaries. The payment per day for temporarily employed workers is focussed on as all fieldworkers in this research are temporarily employed. Despite the data being from 2023 and 2021, the assigned skills and tasks per level have remained the same, and the provincial wage level was still in revision at the time of research (FLAI CGIL 2021; 2023).

Table 1 Salary and Levels of fieldworkers according to the provincial bargaining agreement in Palermo (CPL) (FLAI CGIL 2021; 2023)

Level	Skills and Tasks	Payment *
A	artificial fertilization worker, winery manager, nursery manager, mill manager, farmhouse manager, art pruner gardener	€ 79,65

B	treatment mixture preparer with a license, feed mixture preparer, gardener, heavy equipment driver with mechanical operation skills, combine harvester driver, skilled multi-purpose worker, maintenance worker (carpenters, electricians, bricklayers, plumbers and mechanics) who have skills and autonomy in at least two of the above tasks, hatchery worker, cellarer, cook with a diploma from a hotel institution	€ 77,43
C	mechanic, plumber, electrician, bricklayer, grafter, pruner, dairyman, soil steriliser, greenhouse bench fitter, laboratory worker with special duties, half-mechanic milker, driver of heavy machinery, tractor driver, greenhouse vegetable, citrus, fruit and table grape picker, dry stone wall builder, game reserve keeper, agrotourism worker, tree and tree planting worker, wood planting worker, beekeeping worker	€ 74,63
D	fruit and vegetable sorter and packer, animal attendant, oil mill attendant, miller, agricultural product processor (non-exhaustive examples: pasta maker, baker, preserves and jam maker), agricultural machine operator, nurseryman plant breeder, caretaker, irrigation worker, cellarer's assistant, cook, receptionist, winegrower, nursery worker, greenhouse builder, warehouse manager, greenhouse plant operator, processing conditioning, marketing and sales worker for agricultural products, tasting officer, farm butcher, chainsaw operator, qualified multi-purpose worker	€ 72,07
E	hand milker, seeder, planter, assistant cook, plant cleaner, hydroponic and aeroponic crop workers; experimental fieldworker	€ 68,49
F	operators engaged in general agricultural work that does not require specific professionalism and/or skills included in higher qualifications: common labourer, harvester, floriculture worker, room service worker, cleaner and accommodation preparation worker in agritourism farms, laboratory service worker, educational and/or social farm operator. <i>In addition, ex-Article 54 workers engaged in harvesting operations who do not exceed 80 days will be placed in this area.</i>	€ 62,66
G	harvesters of table olives, greenhouse products and fruits (only the picking)	€ 49,53
H	grape, lemon, tangerine and olive pickers (only the picking)	€ 43,60
I	wage level to be applied exclusively to the first-time worker capable of performing general tasks not requiring specific professionalism. The condition of first work experience ceases after a two-year period of employment after which the worker will be paid the wage dependent on qualification or task. The provisions on continuing education will be applied to the worker in question with priority so that they can acquire the necessary skills.	€ 43,58
	*salary per day of 6.5h provincial agreement (in 2023)	

Unemployment benefit

Besides the collective bargaining agreement, **Article 7 from Law Decree No. 61/2023** includes a so-called *Indennità disoccupazione lavoratori agricoli*, in English unemployment allowance for agricultural workers (Studio Associato Pelizzari Bracuti

2024). The unemployment benefit for agricultural fieldworkers who are either temporarily or permanently employed or dismissed during the year in which the benefit is paid, receive a governmental unemployment compensation fee to support their income if they have worked for a certain range of days (Caridi 2024). The range states a minimum of 102 and a maximum of 150 days up until 2023, from whereof it has been 182 days to access the agricultural unemployment allowance. The contribution is calculated by 40% of the daily wage for temporarily employed fieldworkers and 30% for permanently employed workers. Additionally, a solidarity contribution for temporarily employed fieldworkers of 9% per day up to a maximum of 150 days from the calculated amount is deducted for each day of unemployment paid. Permanently employed fieldworkers do not face any deduction for a solidarity contribution (Caridi 2024, 4–5; Cibelli and Rettore 2022).

3.2.2. Labour Exploitation and Anti-Caporalato law

Besides the collective bargaining agreements and unemployment allowance, the exploitation especially of migrant workers is significant in agricultural work. As a result of Italy's geographic location, the country has been a destination of migrant flows. The significant presence of large migrant numbers has also come with human trafficking and labour exploitation. Labour exploitation was first defined by **Legislative Decree No. 286/1998**, which introduced measures against trafficking and labour exploitation by regulating the hiring process of workers abroad and punishing the employment of irregular migrant workers (Normattiva 1998). Thus, non-EU workers are only allowed to enter the country with an employment request by an Italian employer (Palumbo 2016, 6–8). Furthermore, Articles 600 and 601 in **Legislative No.24/2014** contain laws concerning slavery and forced labour as well as human trafficking. The first criminalizes placing or holding individuals in slavery-like conditions through means such as violence, threats, deceit, or exploiting vulnerability, with penalties of eight to twenty years in prison (Normattiva 2014). The latter penalizes human trafficking, including recruiting, transporting, or lodging individuals under similar exploitative conditions, also with prison terms of eight to twenty years (Palumbo 2016, 7). **Law No.228/2003** includes measures **against trafficking in human beings**, including a support programme for victims of slavery and trafficking by offering accommodation, health care and social assistance

(Parlamento 2003; Palumbo 2016 7). As stated in the laws above, the exploitation of fieldworkers has been a topic on the government's radar for some time. **Law No.148/2011** sanctions unlawful gangmastering and brokering activities exploiting workers. The law includes several indicators of labour exploitation, including working hours, health and safety and general working conditions (Normattiva 2011; Palumbo 2016, 7). A large workers' strike in the Puglia region by African labourers in 2011 pushed FLAI CGIL to bring up the issue of labour exploitation on the policy agenda (Perrotta and Sacchetto 2014). In 2016, **Law No. 199/2016 (Anti-Caporalato Law)** was established to target illegal labour brokerage and exploitation, especially in the agricultural sector (Normattiva 2016; D'Onofrio 2020, 104). Furthermore, the law extended criminal offence to agricultural and other enterprises that consciously use the caporali's services (Perrotta and Raeymakers 2023, 2006). This also includes sanctioning labour rules against unlawful working hours, wages, non-payment of social security contributions and health and accident insurance, illegal employment, labour exploitation and forced labour (FARm 2022, 25). Article 603 of the Italian Criminal Code introduced two offences: 1st unlawful recruitment and 2nd labour exploitation. The first offence includes everyone who recruits, also known as caporali, and the second offence everyone who uses, hires or employs workers for exploitation purposes. Labour exploitation is defined by violations against the regulations on working hours, rest and leave periods, wages which are lower than the minimum wage set by collective agreements, violations against health and safety rules but also degrading working conditions, surveillance methods or living conditions (Ministero del lavoro e delle politiche 2022, 7; FARm 2022).

3.2.3. Action Plan

It is important to note that on a legal level **Legislative Decree No. 149 of 2015 reorganises the inspection system on labour**, social protection, and compulsory social security insurance (Normattiva 2015). Furthermore, the Ministry also leads the SU.PRE.ME Project, which was developed in partnership with the Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Puglia and Sicily Regions and the **National Labour Inspectorate** (2007 del lavoro e delle politiche 2022). Despite the existing laws such as Law No. 199/2016 or Legislative decree No.150/2015 and others, the Action Plan focuses on strengthening the operation of the legislative Decree No.149/2015, which includes an inspection system on

labour, social protection and social security insurance (Ministero del lavoro e delle politiche 2022, 8). The action plan 2020 was launched by the Italian Ministry of Labour and Politics to prevent and tackle labour exploitation, including unlawful recruitment and forced labour in agriculture, through **six policy priorities, prevention and enforcement**, encouraging investment, innovation and producers' association, **labour intermediation**, **Network Quality Work** in Agriculture, **transportation** system and **housing** (Ministero del lavoro e delle politiche 2022, iv, 14-18). The Action Plan was divided into three phases: the first one tackled the causes and effects of labour exploitation, the second one intervened in areas of highest risk, and the third one included policy actions. The identified factors leading to labour exploitation in agriculture are the high demand for short-term labour and isolated workplaces. As a result of isolated workplaces, transport and housing are affected as employees rely on the ones offered by employers. The third factor is the legal status of migrant workers and their general lack of residence and work permit, which increases their vulnerability to exploitation. Labour exploitation is grouped into recruitment, working conditions, and living conditions (Ministero del lavoro e delle politiche 2022, 5).

In order to implement the strategy several priority actions have been defined according to the four strategic pillars, which are prevention, enforcement, protection and assistance, completed by **labour and social integration**. These pillars were built on the international labour standards and European and national legal frameworks to tackle labour exploitation (Ministero del lavoro e delle politiche 2022, 22-28). The priority actions are implemented through multi-level integration across institutions and governmental authorities, including governmental committees, working groups and local authorities, monitored and evaluated by the responsible authorities (Ministero del lavoro e delle politiche 2022, 22-30).

Despite the Anti-Caporalato Law and governmental efforts, Perrotta and Raeymakers (2023, 2019) argue that *“Neither national legislative measures nor the deliberate eviction of migrant environments in the district has conquered the Caporali hierarchy”*. This shows the dominance of the caporalato system and the states' difficulty. Palumbo (2016, 28) also mentions how **Art. 6 of Law Decree No. 91/2014, was converted and changed by Law No. 116/2014**. These regulations established a network to certify companies that respect fair working conditions. Despite these efforts, Palumbo (2016, 28) criticizes that

once a company is part of the network, it is less controlled by the government, which is partly due to the remoteness of agricultural farms and limited inspection staff of the state (Palumbo 2016, 28).

3.2.4. Health and Safety

Besides wages and labour exploitation, health and safety is a third important aspect of Italy's legal framework. The **Regulation (EC) No 178/2002** of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2002, also known as “general food law”, lays down the general principles, requirements and procedures for food safety. This law specifically includes consumer protection and food traceability across Europe and applies to all the stages of food production, processing, distribution and selling (European Union 2002). Additionally, important for workers in processing is the EU **REGULATION (EU) No 1169/2011 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL** of 25 October 2011, which maintains that clear and transparent information about the food must be provided for the consumers, as e.g. via food labelling (European Union 2011).

Besides the European regulation, **Legislative Decree No. 81/2008** includes the employer's responsibility for the workers' **health and safety** in agricultural work (Consulenze Intermediazioni & Partecipazioni (Cip) 2008; Ministero Del Lavoro e Delle Politiche Sociali, 2008). Among other factors, employers are required to provide necessary safety equipment and to instruct workers on emergency measures, prevention and protection services. Furthermore, they need to provide health surveillance if workers are exposed to any risks defined in Art. 18. In Art. 37. Even employees working less than 50 days per year are lawfully entitled to a minimum of 12 hours of risk and safety training (FARm 2022; Consulenze Intermediazioni & Partecipazioni (Cip) 2008). As the cooperative in the case study does not use any chemicals or pesticides, the health and safety regulations are less present in their work on fields. However, this legislation is crucial for the production area, as well as for the employees working where one was only allowed to enter wearing the according hygienic clothing (Ministero Del Lavoro e Delle Politiche Sociali, 2008).

Due to the severe heat during the summer of 2024, the region of Sicily issued **Order n.1** based on Art. 32 of Law No.833/1978, which allows regional and local authorities to address urgent orders regarding health and safety risks posed by extreme heat. These

orders were based on Decree-Law No. 98 of 28 July 2023, converted by Law No. 127 of 18 September 2023, Legislative Decree No. 81 of 9 April 2008 and Article 650 of the Criminal Code. Work exposed to severe heat primarily concerns the agricultural floricultural and building sectors. The orders below immediately came into effect for the entire regional territory of Sicily on the date of publication, 17 July 2024 and was in force until 31 August 2024 (Schifani 2024; Consulenze Intermediazioni & Partecipazioni (Cip) 2008).

1. it is forbidden to work in the agricultural and floricultural, construction and related sectors under conditions of prolonged exposure to the sun, from 12.30 p.m. to 4 p.m., on the days and in the areas where the risk map published on the website <http://www.workclimate.it/scelta-mappa/sole-attivita-fisica-alta/> refers to: ‘workers exposed to the sun’ with “intense physical activity” 12.00 noon, indicates a “HIGH” risk level;

2. without prejudice to the above, with reference to the activities carried out by public service concessionaires or related to public utility reasons, employers shall adopt appropriate organisational measures aimed at safeguarding the minimum levels of performance of essential public services.

3. non-compliance with this provision shall be punished pursuant to Article 650 of the Criminal Code, if the act does not constitute a more serious offence (Schifani 2024, 2, translated using DeepL 2024)

3.3. Cooperatives and Food Alternatives in Italy

Section 3.3. summarizes the most relevant literature on different movements and existing AFNs in Italy, while Section 4.2. will introduce and further discuss the theoretical concept of Alternative Food Systems. In an overview the general AFN landscape is summarized, followed by the Italian cooperative movement and the AFN case example of solidarity purchasing groups in Italian Gruppo di Acquisto Solidale (GAS).

3.3.1. Overview

Zollet et al. (2021, 4) explains that the presence and emergence of AFNs originally developed from dispersed small-scale farms that started setting up direct sales. Dansero and Puttilli (2014, 634) highlight the heterogeneity of AFNs in Italy, ranging from direct sales to shops, markets and solidarity purchasing groups. It is noticeable that there is a

fast-rising number of different types of AFNs in Italy, especially in Northern Italy. While there were 36.000 direct sales in 2001, nine years later, this type of AFN had already risen to 270.500 (Gardini and Lazzarin 2007 and Biobank 2011 IN Dansero and Puttilli 2014, 634; Zollet et al. 2021, 4). While the research on AFNs mainly covers a specific aspect, such as COVID-19 (Zollet et al. 2021), territoriality (Dansero and Puttilli 2014) or measure of sustainability (Mastronardi et al. 2019), they are all characterised by a local and regional focus, in this case, Southern Italy. For example, Mastronardi et al. (2019) analysed different types of AFNs and their effect with regards to sustainability, resulting from the fact that the direct relationship between producer and consumer usually comes with spatial proximity. Their research covers 226 producers working in different types of AFNs, including farmer markets, box schemes and CSA in five larger Italian cities (Mastronardi et al. 2019, 3).

While most of the mentioned literature, highlights AFNs in the North of Italy, Sgroi and Testa's (2014) research illustrates the existence of **AFNs in Sicily**. Of the 20 producers interviewed, direct sales are the most convenient AFN type especially for Sicilian farmers, which correlates with the high number of small-scale farmers in Sicily. Through closer relationship with their customers, producers are rewarded by their customers' loyalty and regular purchases. Sgroi and Testa (2014, 57) mention that the farmers' motivation for direct sales and their involvement in other forms of AFN primarily lies in the increased share received through this method compared to what they would receive by trading with traditional supply chains. Interestingly, interviewed farmers in their research mentioned the necessity of simplifying the bureaucracy and reducing the costs in order to be able to sell at local markets (Sgroi and Testa 2014, 58).

Giordano, Luise, and Arvidsson (2018, 621) focus on "community thought" in agriculture in their three-year research on **neorurals** in Southern Italy. Neorurals are young, educated people with a rural background, who return from their urban life to their original farms to engage with new forms of reflexive agricultural production (Giordano, Luise, and Arvidsson 2018, 621). Another significant development in Italy is the "Slow Food" movement, also mentioned by Giordano, Luise, and Arvidsson (2018). At its core, the **Slow Food movement** has returned to sustainable, traditional and small-scale quality production and has gained international popularity through the label "made in Italy" (Giordano, Luise, and Arvidsson 2018, 628, for more details on Slow Food see Dansero

and Puttilli 2014, 635). Furthermore, a characteristic of neorurals is their engagement in politics. This, as Giordano, Luise, and Arvidsson (2018, 632) explain, is necessary for neorurals to “*gain and defend their place in rural communities [...] the most important part in which neorural practice politics, is the work of the construction of communities [...] built around products or practices [...]*”. In their literature Giordano, Luise, and Arvidsson (2018, 634) present two neorural examples: the *Cumpanatico* network and the *Funky Tomato* project. The *Cumpanatico* network includes producers, intermediaries and consumers who focus on the production of pre-industrial grains from the Campania region (Giordano, Luise, and Arvidsson 2018, 632). The network is similar to community-supported agriculture as consumers, also understood as prosumers, take an active role in promoting the grain and the collective decision-making process. Furthermore, the collaboration and community feeling are strengthened through educational activities and community events (Giordano, Luise, and Arvidsson 2018, 633). The second neorural example is the **Funky Tomato project**. On an environmental side, the project focuses on more traditional and sustainable tomato strains while focusing on a living wage, dignified working conditions and the inclusion of migrant workers on the social side. As a result, the canned tomatoes contain information about the product's origin, producers and additional steps in the supply chain. Additionally, Funky Tomato combines food with African culture through events in art, sports or music, which consumers are also strongly involved in (Giordano, Luise, and Arvidsson 2018, 634).

A further viewpoint on AFNs in Italy is to be found in Dansero and Puttilli (2014, 630), who argue that AFNs change the relationship between food and **territory** by restructuring social, environmental and economic links between places and actors. As a result, they analyse six different AFNs ranging from collective catering, an association for collective orders, a mutual aid association for box scheme, a GAS in Turin, a Kitchen Garden through a form of CSA and a Consortium for high-quality nuts with the concept of territoriality (Dansero and Puttilli 2014, 632, 637-638). The dimension of territory includes **space** in the form of the geographical scale of the actors in space from absolute proximity, also known as “zero” distance, to increasing distance (global). The second dimension includes **resources** varying from specific traditional ties to a territory to more standardised resources. Lastly, **relations** include actors and their relationship to and within the different types of AFNs (Dansero and Puttilli 2014, 632).

A further aspect analysed in relation to AFN is the resilience of small-scale farmers during the **pandemic**. In their research, Zollet et al. (2021) point out and show how alternative food movements can step in through food provisioning and distribution and interact with the conventional food system. Despite the resilience and emergence of AFNs, Zollet et al. (2021) highlight that during the pandemic, conventional food forms such as supermarkets were classified as more essential by the state compared to AFNs such as farmers markets, despite the latter being less dangerous from a health point of view (Zollet et al. 2021, 19). This shows that despite the existence and growing number of AFN, they remain less supported by the Italian government compared to conventional food provisioning. This is not surprising as the large distribution firms also hold more power over the food sector within the political system.

3.3.2. Cooperative Movement and AFN

For this research it is important to add the **traditional Italian cooperative movement** and the relation to more recent social movements, including AFNs, discussed by Fonte and Cucco (2017). According to Fonte and Cucco (2017, 293) the traditional cooperative movement lacks a common vision of how to transform the food economy and is hindered in this transformation by its traditionally hierarchical organization of cooperatives. As a result, AFNs, and other emerging social movements in the agricultural sector should collaborate more (Fonte and Cucco 2017, 293). While AFNs, for example, can profit from cooperatives as they have a long-standing relationship with the state, cooperatives can profit from the AFN nature by combining both social and agricultural aspects (Fonte and Cucco 2017, 293).

The first origins of the cooperative movement in Italy date back to the secular socialist movement in the 19th century, the working-class movement at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, as well as the social solidarity doctrine led by the Catholic Church (Fonte and Cucco 2017, 294). As a result of the multiple origins, separate national federations emerged (Fonte and Cucco 2017, 294). In 1926, alongside industrial growth, the pressure from the fascist regime in Italy led to the breakup of existing cooperatives and the creation of the National Fascist Cooperative Agency, which prioritized an economic model. Existing cooperatives were reorganized under the state-led model,

which promoted fascist policy of national self-sufficiency. This marks the starting point for the transformation of agricultural cooperatives towards market-oriented enterprises (Fonte and Cucco 2017, 295). Throughout the 1960s and even more so in the 1970s, Italian agricultural cooperatives expanded in scale and shifted towards competition, efficiency and economic growth (Fonte and Cucco 2017, 295). As a result, a social movement related to agricultural cooperatives in Italy and across Europe emerged in the 1960s. This countermovement included improving workers' rights and social justice for the environment (Fonte and Cucco 2017, 294). During the same time, general social movements refocused on the original social nature of cooperatives. This movement originated from a community of thought for mentally ill people and their families, which was later integrated into Italian law (Fonte and Cucco 2017, 296). As a result, cooperatives with a social focus prioritized the inclusion of disadvantaged groups. Additionally, this followed the principle of one member, one vote to prioritize member participation and engagement (Fonte and Cucco 2017, 294).

After the beginning of the neorural movement in the 1980s (Giordano, Luise, and Arvidsson 2018), in the 1990s, alternative food movements, AFNs such as farmers' markets, solidarity purchasing groups, or box schemes emerged and challenged the conventional capitalist food system. These focussed on producer-consumer relationships, increasing food quality, local and regional culture and supply chain (Fonte and Cucco 2017, 292).

Today, cooperatives have a relevant standing in the Italian agricultural sector. Ten out of the 50 largest Italian food enterprises are cooperatives, and most cooperatives are also associated with the four main national federations, which have an incredibly high yearly turnover (Fonte and Cucco 2017, 294). The nature of these cooperatives is collective processing, marketing, and commercialisation for conventional distributors, but still very local and regional production. *"Furthermore, while the number of cooperatives is quite evenly distributed in the national territory (45 per cent in the north, 14 per cent in the centre and 41 per cent in the south), the larger cooperatives, that represent 82 per cent of the total agro-food cooperatives' turnover, are predominantly located in the north of Italy."* (Fonte and Cucco 2017, 294) Fonte and Cucco 2017 (292, 294) argue that alternative food movements' sustainability, the embeddedness of the food economy, and re-connection between producers and consumers are absent from the analysis provided

by the Italian state on cooperative, which aligns with today's nature of cooperative organisations in Italy led by economic motives and competition in national and international markets. The absence of new alternative characteristics and focus on the economy is summarized as economic reductionism, which is dominant in the reports on cooperatives (Fonte and Cucco 2017, 292, 294).

The research example of the cooperative *la nuova arca* shows an example of a cooperative which includes both the social and agricultural pillars (Fonte and Cucco 2017, 298). The cooperative members, who were vulnerable groups, developed to be self-sufficient and engaged in the production and processing of food. Furthermore, the cooperative also built-up partnerships with GAS, more is to be found in Grasseni (2022; Fonte and Cucco 2017, 298).

In sum, agricultural cooperatives range from small to large-scale ones, the latter mainly focusing on competition in the market (Fonte and Cucco 2017, 297). This type of traditional agricultural cooperative can be distinguished from social movements focusing on community and social inclusion. In recent times, social cooperatives have started including local agriculture, for example, agricultural tourism and farmers' markets, but these cooperatives focus on rural development and not on characteristics of traditional agricultural cooperatives (Fonte and Cucco 2017, 299).

3.3.3. Solidarity Purchasing Groups GAS

As mentioned by Dansero and Puttilli (2014), Fonte and Cucco (2017) and Zollet et al., (2021) solidarity purchasing groups GAS are increasingly relevant to the recent AFN development in Italy. Grasseni (2022, 5) states that the Italian solidarity purchasing groups GAS, which are comparable to the German *Solidarische Landwirtschaft* (Solawi) are “*networks of families and friends that engage in collective provisioning on the basis of a solidarity principle*”. As result Grasseni (2022) is a key source and one of the few who examines a specific Italian AFN in-depth, including work and life conditions in relation to the situation in Sicily. A further unique characteristic of the involvement of GAS members called “gasistas” is their voluntary, collective and direct involvement in food providing, be it the production of food by themselves or administrative, organisational tasks, or at least being faithful customers (Grasseni 2022, 170). Members meet regularly and decide what and from whom they want to purchase, including food and other household items. The

requirements for the foods are social and environmental solidarity, which includes organic and local production as well as fair conditions for involved producers (Grasseni 2022, 5). The motivation of participating in a GAS is manifold. According to Grasseni (2022), it is the lack of trust people have in conventional food. Therefore, “gasistas” aim for transparent, healthy, re-localised and affordable quality foods under the umbrella of solidarity. Besides the co-provision of food, “gasistas” see their role in supporting producers to sell their foods from outside the conventional market, enabling fairer prices. Since the first GAS was founded in 1994, GAS networks have grown and spread all over Italy. Alone in the Lombardy region, Grasseni (2022, 3, 9) marked 451 registered GAS networks, one GAS usually counting 20-40 families. Many regional subgroups have emerged throughout the country including Sicily, which leads to 18% nationwide involvement in GAS. For example, the GAS in Grasseni’s (2022, 20, 30) research supported Sicilian farmers in their anti-mafia fight and in the context of incredibly high unemployment. The AddioPizzo Associazione is worth mentioning as the cooperative Terra Viva is also related to this association. AddioPizzo is an association located in Palermo that fights for pizzo-free products. “Pizzo” is the protection money commonly extorted by the mafia from farmers, entrepreneurs or shopkeepers (Grasseni 2022, 35, 46, more on AddioPizzo and the mafia see Maselli 2010; Rizzo 2011; Forno and Gunnarson 2010 in Grasseni 2022, 46, 47).

Grasseni (2022, 29) highlights that, while GAS focuses on the direct producer-consumer relationship and neglects conventional distributors, it remains in the capitalist market, exchanges food for money, and sets prices that do not bankrupt producers but are affordable for consumers.

In addition to the state of literature, *Chapter 4*, will cover a theoretical embedding of the research case.

4. Theoretical Framework

Besides the state of literature *Chapter 3*, *Chapter 4* aims to highlight the key theoretical concepts concerning this thesis. After an overview of the development of three food regimes, this chapter focuses on the key characteristics of alternative food systems and labour. Additionally, the topic of agency as a central aspect of labour geography is discussed. Based on the state of the literature and this theoretical overview, the last *Section* contains the research gap and the guiding questions for this thesis.

4.1. Food Regimes

Friedman and McMichael (1989 in Maye 2016, 304) coined the concept of food regimes. They “*argue that agriculture and industry have been more historically linked than generally thought.*” The concept of food regimes embeds the relation of food production, circulation and consumption with the capitalist development since the 1870s within a global and historical context (Maye 2016, 304). The concept has also been used to interpret the historical, social, ecological and political relations in which food is produced and reproduced. Additionally, it is argued that food regimes are key to understanding structured moments and transitions in the capitalist history of food relations and capitalism McMichael (2009, 281).

Three food regimes represent the food system of a given period. The **first food regime** describes the pre-industrial period between the 1870s and 1920s. During this period, settler colonies supplied unprocessed and semi-processed foods. Further, this period was marked by extensive capital accumulation and slowly declined as agricultural production in developed countries began to compete with cheap imports, leading to trade barriers. Through industrialization, labour became internationally divided, with the Global North providing advanced technology in manufacturing and the Global South supplying raw materials and resources (Kneafsey et al. 2021, 95–98; Maye 2016, 305).

The second food regime, also known as the industrial and productivist phase between the 1920s and 1970s, is characterized by its intensification of agri-industrial systems based on livestock production, when more food was consumed, especially meat and processed food. As an effect of the Green Revolution, this period experienced overproduction, which led to state interventions. Through intensive forms of capital

accumulation, developed and developing countries were transformed into commodity production systems (Maye 2007; Kneafsey et al. 2016, 98).

Currently, we are situated in the **third food regime**, which describes the post-industrial period from 1980 until now. It is characterized by the current crisis around the intensification of industrialized farming systems, such as the plantationocene (Goodman, DuPuis, and Goodman 2012). This also involves the global supply of fresh products and its effects on the international division of agricultural labour. This period is *“characterized by a flexible form of capital accumulation and is dominated by agribusinesses and corporate retailers”*, also known as the concept of supermarketization (Maye 2007). The intensified food system is also challenged by alternative food systems, such as the slow-food movement or community-supported agriculture (Berndt 2023a, 17; Kneafsey et al. 2021, 98; Goodman, DuPuis, and Goodman 2012).

The two major transformations throughout history are industrialization and the globalization of food (Maye 2007). From 1870 to 1980, the food supply chain expanded to a global level. Additionally, the once-colonial imports through ships increased over time through new transport options, which especially enabled the global fresh fruit and vegetable trade (Salvia 2019, 10; D’Onofrio 2020, 45). With the uprising of globalization, the first companies entered international trade in the food and agricultural sector. Since the 1990s, a few large corporations have risen in size and power over the entire food sector and supply chains (Clapp 2012, 90; D’Onofrio 2020, 45–48). Clapp (2012, 97)

describes the high corporate concentration in the food sector as an hourglass, visualized in Figure 5.

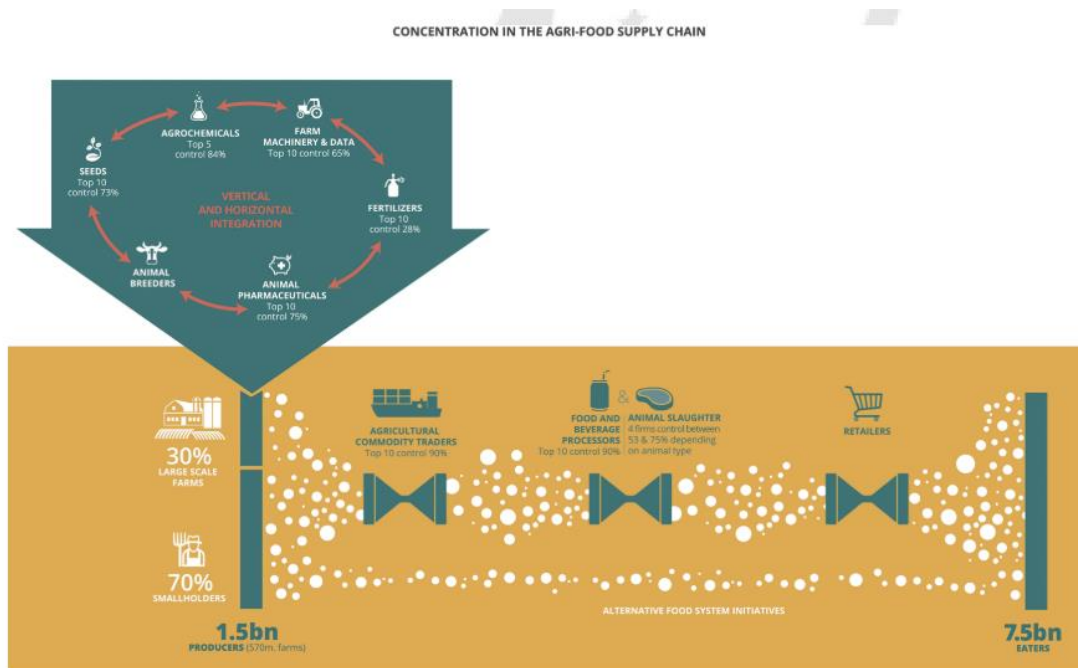


Fig. 1.3 Concentration in the food system, reproduced with permission of IPES-FOOD (2017), *Too Big to Feed: Exploring the Impacts of mega-mergers, consolidation and concentration of power in the agri-food sector*.

Figure 5 Hourglass (Clapp 2012, 97)

Producers such as farmers are located on one end and consumers on the other end. Goodman (2002, 272) advances the discussion by arguing that the world of consumption and production function as two separate categories that only connect through the act of purchase. The commodity must pass through the narrowed bottleneck, where a handful of large corporations are located. Clapp (2012, 97–98) points out that there are many different bottlenecks for each commodity, which characterize the bottleneck based on the steps in the commodity chain and the number of corporations controlling the access of producers and consumers. As most power is concentrated at the bottleneck, it is the point of the hourglass where value is added (Clapp 2012, 114). Clapp (2012, 98) sums up: *“With few players dominating the market in different segments of the world food economy, they are able to extract the most value from agricultural and food production, leaving producers with only a fraction of the final market price of their goods, and with consumers having little choice in terms of sources of their food.”*

The third and current food regime is characterized by a few large corporations governing the product itself, standards and quality, price, quality and delivery dates along the

supply chain. At this point, it is important to introduce the concept of supermarketization which is central to the third regime (Clapp 2012, 90; D’Onofrio 2020, 45–48). The intensification and industrialization, as well as globalization, have led to mono-crop plantations and the use of GMO and heavy machines, which are characterized by decreased biodiversity, soil degradation, species extinction and increased carbon emissions (D’Onofrio 2020; Maye 2016). The outsourcing of production has also shown its social effects, such as land grabbing, labour exploitation and threatened food security (D’Onofrio 2020; Maye 2016; Kneafsey et al. 2021; Goodman 2002). As a result, scholars such as Kneafsey et al. (2021) discuss the current food regime being in crisis.

In the 1960s and 1970s large supermarket chains emerged and drastically changed the food sector. The rapid growth and expansion of supermarkets have displaced small retailers and local wholesalers. Before the time of supermarkets, commodities were sold in individual geographically dispersed shops. The term **supermarketization** emerged with the rise of supermarkets and their dominant role in the global market (Lawrence and Dixon 2015; Kneafsey et al. 2021; Goodman, DuPuis, and Goodman 2012). Through supermarkets, all consumer needs are centralized in one space, allowing the consumer to choose the products based on their availability on the shelves. The concept of supermarkets is to profit from moving large volumes for small margins (Lawrence and Dixon 2015, 214; Clapp 2012). On a global scale, *“the top three leading firms Walmart, Carrefour and Tesco account for 50% of the revenues of the top 10 leading grocery retailers”* (Clapp 2012, 111). These firms located at the bottleneck in the hourglass not only hold most power but can also control the production and consumption over the entire supply chain, such as setting prices at the production as well as the product price in the supermarket, which they are willing to pay (Clapp 2012, 114). By developing the regulatory system, in which food is produced, circulated and consumed, these few retailers ensure their power over the entire food supply chain (Maye 2016, 304). The emergence and increase of firms' positions in the marketplaces between consumers and producers allow them to control the hourglass for each commodity they are a player in (Clapp 2012, 114–23).

One strategy to increase the supermarket's profits is outsourcing the production overseas, where labour is cheaper. Furthermore, supermarkets set their own standards, which are often higher than the governmental regulations, which increase the power over producers (Barrientos 2013, 1058–1062; Lawrence and Dixon 2015; Clapp 2012). D'Onofrio (2020, 54) sums up: *“The dominance of big supermarket chains, their market concentration, and their power to unilaterally dictate terms, prices, and conditions to suppliers have resulted in the worsening of working conditions and job security within supply firms.”* The negative environmental and social effects derived from supermarkets embedded in the third food regime have led to counter movements such as alternative food systems. In this thesis, the knowledge of the concept of supermarketization is used as a contrast to analyse how production looks without these big conventional players.

4.2. Alternative Food Systems

Alternative Food Networks also alternative food systems (AFNs) have responded to environmental and social challenges in our current food system (Maye 2016, 309; Goodman 2002). Through their practices, AFNs challenge and resist the dominant conventional food system (Dansero and Puttilli 2014). Generally speaking, the definition of alternative food systems is broad, as they appear in different forms and origins (Kneafsey et al. 2021, 230–233; Dansero and Puttilli 2014, 626). Alternatives vary from different food provisioning and retail channels, different sales of products (labels), or different production forms, including Fairtrade, community-supported agriculture (CSA), Slow Food movement, food cooperatives including alternative retailers over supermarkets, which all contrast the conventional mainstream system (Kneafsey et al. 2021, 231). Maye (2016, 314) distinguishes weaker and stronger alternatives, of which the first includes labelling, certification and product quality, and the latter focuses on supply chains, networks and relations revalorized and embedded in local food systems. One of the earlier alternatives to address certain issues in the conventional food system was the emergence of labels and standardization such as Fairtrade.

4.2.1. Fairtrade Label and Standardization

The early Fairtrade movement in 1950 was initiated by charity and development organizations aiming to achieve justice for producers by ensuring fair prices and

production standards. This movement sought to support small farmers, particularly in the coffee and cacao sectors, who often earned less from global exports than their production costs. For example, whereas certain products and the producers' wages have remained stable in price, the cost for production has increased, including the costs for fertilizers and machinery, (Kneafsey et al. 2021, 244; Maye 2016, 310). With growing awareness of extreme labour conditions, such as low wages, child labour, and excessive working hours, especially in the Global South, labels such as Fairtrade were among the first to challenge exploitative practices in agrifood systems, and address international trade inequalities (Raynolds 2009, 1083; Naylor 2013; Maye 2016, 310). The initial Fairtrade vision was transformed into a set of standards managed by the International Fairtrade Organization. All Fairtrade member organizations, such as cooperatives consisting of small-scale farmers, are audited and certified through a third party to ensure they are producing according to given standards (Kneafsey et al. 2021, 452; Ponte, Gereffi, and Raj-Reichert 2019). With the certification, farmers receive a Fairtrade label on their product, which is then sold in retail stores for a higher price. The added product value and producers' wages justify the price increase. The label is supposed to make consumers aware of producers' better conditions and to convince consumers to purchase the more expensive product (Johannessen and Wilhite 2010, 535). By setting social and environmental standards for food production, labels aim to create more egalitarian commodity networks (Jaffee and Howard 2010; Kneafsey et al. 2021, 244–248). The concept of labels, standards and certification, but also in particular of the Fairtrade label has grown immensely. Furthermore, the field has widened, and more specific labels targeting specific social and environmental aspects, such as those against child labour or rainforest degradation, have entered the labelling landscape.

With the rise of labels, authors such as Raynolds (2018), Jaffee and Howard (2010) and Cheyns (2014) criticize third-party certification for using a market-based approach to fundamentally change the value chain. As Fairtrade products are sold in conventional supermarkets, and Fairtrade has tried lowering premiums for producers and competing in the market, the Fairtrade movement has been criticized as being mainstream and a conventional method while trying to combat the effects of the conventional system (Maye 2016, 310). Critics argue that the current issues are intricately linked to the market-based system. As a consequence of neoliberal policies aiming to reduce state control

over private firms, supermarkets have taken on a more prominent role (Johannessen and Wilhite 2010; Lawrence and Dixon 2015). Johannessen and Wilhite (2010, 540) criticise the distribution of value, as retailers in consumer countries earn the larger share compared to producers. Further, Getz and Shreck (2006) criticize the exclusion of smallholders, as some cannot afford third-party certification or meet the size standards of products such as Fairtrade bananas (Getz and Shreck 2006, 498; Naylor 2013). Additionally, the dominance of export firms overshadows the potential of grassroots movements. Even though certification enables producers' access to the economic market, critics question the effectiveness of Fairtrade for the following reasons (Getz and Shreck 2006; Naylor 2013; Goodman 2002). Through the commercialization and expansion of Fairtrade in the conventional food system, their main focus lies on convincing consumers to purchase foods according to their values (Getz and Shreck 2006, 491). At the same time some critics (Getz and Shreck 2006, 490; Naylor 2013; Raynolds 2018; 2009) argue that producers in the Fairtrade system are mostly not aware of being part of an alternative model nor of their producers' receiving increased payment, which highlights the neglect of actual improvement. As a consequence of the criticism towards Fairtrade labels and standards, this thesis, will focus on strong food alternatives from here on, as is further explained below.

4.2.2. Alternative Economy

As environmental challenges such as extractive intensive agriculture or biodiversity loss as well as social challenges such as malnutrition or loss of income and livelihood remain despite certification and labelling, certain scholars such as Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy (2013) and Healy et al. (2020, 277) suggest revolutionizing the economy. In *Take Back the Economy*, Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy (2013, xvii) explain how the positive perception of growth has led to faster and cheaper production. This type of economy is described as a machine driven by entrepreneurs, investors, banks, and governments. The machine-driven economy is built on growth and efficiency. It functions best with minimal intervention, and it views interference from citizens, unions, or environmentalists as being disruptive. The machinery economy is self-organized and responds efficiently to minor adjustments. However, this economy has been criticized for its continuous consumption of natural resources and its disregard for environmental

consequences, and points toward increasing social inequality by widening the gap between the wealthy and those struggling to survive. The system also fails to regulate financiers' greed and risky behaviour, contributing to economic instability. Furthermore, it reduces individuals to mere cogs in a machine, valued only for their roles as workers and consumers. Lastly, the focus on growth limits the ability to reimagine and reshape the economy to prioritize environmental and social well-being (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy 2013, 2–4).

So as to truly improve the system and address these issues, Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy (2013) argue that the current image of the economy as a machine must be transformed from its core, which means changing the current positive connotation and focus on economic growth. *Figure 6* shows different aspects of the economy: The first row includes the mainstream machinery economy, whereas the third row shows activities that are often not represented in the economy. The middle row represents a reframed economy, which is similar to the machinery economy but contains an alternative component. The alternative economy encompasses various ways people contribute to economic well-being, such as receiving food instead of cash wages or companies prioritizing social inclusion over profit maximation (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy 2013, 2-4; Goodman, DuPuis, and Goodman 2012).

THE DIVERSE ECONOMY				
LABOR	ENTERPRISE	TRANSACTIONS	PROPERTY	FINANCE
Wage	Capitalist	Market	Private	Mainstream Market
Alternative Paid	Alternative Capitalist	Alternative Market	Alternative Private	Alternative Market
Unpaid	Noncapitalist	Nonmarket	Open Access	Nonmarket

Figure 6 Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy (2013, 13)

Additionally, the diverse economy focuses on a holistic view, where the social and environmental dimensions, such as the health of households, communities, and the environment, are joined to a sustainable economic system (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy 2013, 2–4).

4.2.3. Characteristics of “Strong” AFNs

Beginning in the mid-1990s, more fundamental alternatives for food systems have emerged (Dansero and Puttilli 2014, 628) based on Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy's (2013) diverse economy. However, most alternatives do not yet completely function outside the machinery economy. Nevertheless, alternative food systems challenged the issues in the conventional system and were seen as radical to resist the dominant food system (Dansero and Puttilli 2014, 628). Despite the broad definition of alternative food systems, Maye (2016, 310–11) points out the following key characteristics: First, alternative food networks are usually characterized by their spatial and social proximity, which focuses on the products' traceability and community thought along the supply chain (Jarosz 2008 IN Kneafsey et al. 2021, 232). The distance between producers and consumers is shorter compared to conventional supply chains, and consumers receive products via embedded in value-laden information. This characteristic is also connected to the process of relocalization, where products are directly linked to a geographical region. There are two forms of proximity: one where the producer-consumer relationship is strengthened face to face, such as CSA or farmers markets and a second where producer-consumer relationships are more extended for example, via the internet or box scheme (Goodman, DuPuis, and Goodman 2012). Marsden et al. (2000 in Dansero and Puttilli 2014, 629) also categorizes AFNs in three modes regarding their spatial proximity: Face to face, including direct physical contact; spatial proximity, where the supply chain is in the same area; and spatially extended, including forms where production and consumption are further apart. Second, alternative production modes mostly use organic and holistic methods and occur on smaller-scale farms. Alternative purchasing venues, such as food cooperatives or farmers markets, are a third key characteristic of alternative food systems. Lastly, alternative food systems are committed to containing the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of alternative food supply, especially focusing on socially embedded production and relations.

Even though these alternative characteristics seem to be clearly distinguishable from the mainstream system, Maye (2016, 309) criticizes the alternative vs conventional binary and argues that, in fact, most alternative food networks do not function

independently from the conventional food system and economy. Maye (2016, 310) argues that “A simple ‘alternative geography of food’ does not exist”, which highlights the complexity of our food systems and movements that challenge the conventional one. Further, Goodman (2004, 13) argues for the importance of consumers’ active role in the AFN discussion and warns about the accessibility of AFNs dependent on class and income and describes alternative food production as “class diet” for privileged income groups. Therefore, low-income actors must also be involved, and a solution must be found to make organic and nutritious food available and affordable independent of class or income.

4.3. Labour

With the development of food regimes also work and labour forms have changed. Generally, agricultural production systems are distinguished but overlap among subsistence production, which was most dominant in the first food regime, smallholder cooperatives, integrated intensive agriculture, contract farming, and plantation production, of which the latter has gained popularity in the conventional third food regime (Berndt 2023a; 2023b). Viewing the food supply chain, workers and labour exist along this chain and beyond, including work migration or daily commute, as well as the role of intermediaries and labour unions (Castree 2007; Barrientos 2013). Cumbers, Nativel and Routledge (2008, 372) argue, “*Labour in the abstract sense refers to all the work involved in securing continued accumulation in a capitalist system [...]. The key point to make here, however, is that as networks that are bound up in the production of commodities, GPNs⁷ are ultimately networks of embodied labour.*” This shows that labour and work are closely interlinked with our economy and food systems. As a result, the field of **labour geography** is among the most crucial sub-fields in economic geography. Labour geography includes the spatial distribution of labour as well as migration and movement around labour (Cumbers, Native, and Routledge 2008; Castree 2007).

Coe and Jordhus-Lier (2010, 1–2) distinguish four thematic strands in labour geography: collective organization through labour unions and agency in these groupings, the

⁷ GPNs Global Production Networks

formation of geographically specific local labour markets and regimes, intersection of employment relations with personal and workplace identity, and the role of the material landscape shaping labour struggles and their outcomes. A central characteristic of labour geography is the focus on **workers' agency**. However, in the first two phases of labour geography, in neoclassical and Marxist theory, workers were seen as locational factors or passive beings (Herod 1997; 2001 IN Carswell and De Neve 2013, 63; Coe and Jordhus-Lier 2010, 2). Later, labour agency was still mostly limited to collective labour through trade unions and collectives (Carswell and De Neve 2013, 63). In recent literature, the definition of labour agency has widened. Today, workers are not only objects but they own the capacity to comprehend and shape their own geographical visions, which eventually has an impact on the bigger picture, i.e. firms and communities, and also on the economic market, which can become the basis of activism or resistance (Castree 2007, 855; Coe and Jordhus-Lier 2010; Carswell and De Neve 2013). Coe and Jordhus-Lier (2010, 6) highlight workers' agency as differentiated in scope, scale, and effects. Coe and Jordhus-Lier (2010, 6), based on Katz (2004 in Coe and Jordhus-Lier 2010, 6), distinguish workers' agency into resilience, reworking and resistance. *“Resilience concerns the small acts of ‘getting by’ that help individuals and groups cope with everyday realities but do not change existing social relations”*, which are coping strategies (Coe and Jordhus-Lier 2010, 6). The process of **reworking** aims to improve their situation by challenging hegemonic social relations and redistributing power within the capitalist system. Reworking is the strategy most understood by labour agency in labour geography. The last is the strategy of resistance. *“Resistance refers to direct challenges to capitalist social relations through attempts to regain control of labour time and its use in the spheres of production and social reproduction (e.g. non-capitalist cooperatives, alternative currencies)”* (Coe and Jordhus-Lier 2010, 6). Further, Coe and Jordhus-Lier (2010, 11) suggest the embeddedness of labour agency in relation to the arena's capital, state, community and labour market intermediaries. For this thesis, individual and collective agency are considered, and their embeddedness is related to the capitalist system and state (Carswell and De Neve 2013).

In *Segregation on the Farm* Holmes (2013) focuses on working conditions and the workplace, two further key elements in labour geography, by analysing **labour and its organization in agriculture**. His work provides valuable insights for labour analysis as he

analyses the farm according to the duration of employment, form of payment, position of hierarchy, government status, geographical mobility and ownership (Berndt 2023b, 2; Holmes 2013). Additionally, Holmes (2013) includes details about the working and living conditions as well as the relationship of workers across the hierarchy, and he detects structural vulnerability among all types of workers and positions on the farm.

4.4. Research Focus and Questions

As visible in *Chapter 3*, alternative food systems have been emerging particularly in recent years, also in Italy and Sicily and relevant literature on working conditions in agriculture and on AFNs in Italy has been published (Palumbo, 2016; Ferrando, 2021; Perrotta and Raeymaekers 2023; Grasseni 2022; Sgroi and Testa 2014; Giordano, Luise, and Arvidsson 2018; Zollet et al. 2021). However, even though fair working conditions are mostly mentioned in relation to AFNs, AFN literature has primarily focused on organization and processes, and has drawn little attention to labour in alternative food systems beyond geographic borders and processed food (Kneafsey et al. 2013; Maye 2016; Sgroi and Testa 2014 and Fonte and Cucco 2017; Giordano, Luise and Arvidsson, 2018; Zollet et al., 2021; Grasseni, 2022). One key characteristic frequently mentioned regarding AFNs is spatial proximity in the supply chain (Kneafsey et al. 2021; Maye 2016; Maye, Holloway, and Kneafsey 2007). Therefore, there is very little literature that explores cross-border alternative food systems with geographically more considerable distances, which is not surprising as this also depicts the reality. Therefore, this thesis aims to fill this research gap and explore labour in an international alternative food system while focusing on production and food processing (Kneafsey et al. 2013).

This research is based on field research of one agricultural cooperative in Sicily that directly provides food to a Swiss company located in Zurich. Through the Swiss Company, consumers can directly pre-order foods from Sicily (Company Website last accessed 27.11.2024). The field research, focussed on actors involved in the passata, and pesto production, as Italian tomato production is frequently discussed in the state of literature *Chapter 3*, especially considering the focus on severe working conditions (D'Onofrio 2020; Perrotta and Raeymakers 2023; Salvia 2019; Ferrando 2021). Additionally, passata is one of the most frequently consumed popular products, including markets in Switzerland.

As a result, this thesis aims to analyse working conditions in the Sicilian tomato and pesto production that are in close relationship with the Swiss delivery company Fairshare. This resulted in the main research question below:

What are the working conditions within an alternative production system in Sicily, illustrated by the case study of an agricultural cooperative?

In order to answer the main research questions, the following three sub-research questions were defined:

- 1. What are key processes and relationships in the cooperative's passata and pesto production in relation to working conditions?**
- 2. What do the working conditions look like, above all income per time and agency of actors of the cooperative?**
- 3. What challenges do actors face in maintaining decent working conditions, and how are they addressed?**

Based on the mentioned research gap in working conditions in international alternative food systems, this master thesis aims to contribute to this research gap, including food production and process steps.

5. Methods

Empiric studies in social sciences are based on qualitative and or quantitative methodology, which aim to analyse social phenomena from the actor's perspective. While quantitative methods are used to identify how often previously known phenomena occur and standardise the research phenomenon, qualitative methods are open for unexpected results and closer to the research topic without standardising information (Flick, Kardorff, and Steinke 2007, 17; Gläser and Laudel 2009,27). Therefore, in this research a qualitative approach is most suitable to analyse the perception of working conditions in alternative food production along individual cases.

This *Chapter 5* aims to explain the research process. In short, the first step was the **pre-study** *Section 5.1.*, where research questions were defined based on the state of literature *Chapter 3* and the theoretical framework *Chapter 4*. Secondly, the **data collection** *Section 5.2.* included 17 semi-structured interviews. Further, this step included the development of research guidelines based on the studied literature. The last step included the **data analysis** *Section 5.3*, which also contained the transcription process of the interviews, coding the transcripts, the qualitative content analysis according to Kuckartz and Rädiker (2022), and interpreting the findings as well as answering the research questions.

5.1. Pre-study

Gläser and Laudel (2009, 107) recommend a pre-study that prepares the researcher for the actual empiric research. In this process, necessary information is gained to prepare for the interviews and guidelines. For this research, the feasibility of the case was defined, including the research site, topic and actors. This included research about Terra Viva in Sicily and Fairshare in Switzerland as well as several discussions with the person in charge in Sicily to organise research abroad.

Based on this information and the choice of the theoretical concepts, the topic and research questions were defined and narrowed down. At the concept talk held in March 2024 in the research colloquium of the Economic Geography Group at the Department of Geography at the University of Zurich, the topic and research questions were approved.

5.2. Data Collection

The literature research was supported by the snowball principle, the module Geo 433 “Global Economic Geographies of Agriculture and Food systems”, which I participated in spring and by recommendations made by my supervisor and the Economic Geography Group (Berndt 2023a; 2023b; Merkens 2007). After literature research on the case context, the involved actors and the theoretical background, the chosen method to collect the field data was semi-structured interviews (Longhurst 2010, 103). Longhurst (2010, 103-105) defines three types of interviews: structured, unstructured and semi-structured, whereas the latter allows some sort of predefined order while ensuring flexibility during the interview to react and engage in topics brought up by the interviewee. Semi-structured interviews are also known as informal, conversational or soft interviews. They allow the researcher to listen and gather information in a structured, self-defined way while being open to a personal response from the interviewee. As for this research, the perception of actors was central, this method was ideal for gathering information beyond simple yes or no answers (Longhurst 2010, 105).

5.2.1. Guidelines

In order to prepare for the semi-structured interview, guidelines were created for the predefined sample groups (*Appendix A*). Starting with one guideline, this was followed by being slightly adapted for the individual groups. The aim of guidelines for semi-structured interviews is to support the interviewer when memorizing key points and structure through the interview. Helfferich's (2011, 182–85) SPSS approach (sortieren - *sort*, prüfen - *test*, sortieren - *sort*, subsumieren - *subsum*) approach was used to create the guidelines, which comprised the following steps: (1) the questions are collected (2) tested, (3) sorted and (4) subsumed. The collection (1) of questions emerged through questions formulated during literature research, research and discussions about the cooperative. These focused on my research question and were of personal interest related to the research topic. After the collection, questions were tested (2), which eliminated the ones about facts and those not targeting the research questions. Additionally, the questions were formulated more neutrally to avoid leading the interviewed person in a certain direction. In step 3, the questions were sorted thematically and logically for the interview sequence. Lastly, questions were subsumed

(4). This means that a guiding question was chosen and developed to increase the discussion and stimulate the narrative, and more related questions were added based on the guiding question. Furthermore, keywords, such as working hours and payment were added in italics behind the question to serve as an impulse in the interview, when asking about working conditions (Helfferich 2011, 182–185; 2019, 675–678).

A pre-test for the guideline was not possible because the first interview was done with an employee from Fairshare, who was part of the sampling. However, while interviewing farmers and fieldworkers, the interview guidelines were adjusted according to their feedback. During the field research, the guidelines were also adjusted based on their thematic focus. Especially at the beginning, questions about the functioning of the cooperative received more attention, whereas towards the end of this field research, specific working conditions and information from previous interviews were highlighted (Longhurst 2010; Helfferich 2011; Flick, Kardorff, and Steinke 2007).

As I did not speak Italian before defining my master's thesis, I had to rely on **translation** support for interviews in Sicily, especially as I was visiting a remote village where standard Italian was already perceived as a second language and English skills were mostly limited. Initially, I had planned to do the interviews with the translation help of a family friend living in Palermo. However, unfortunately, she was not available, so I had to seek another solution. Eventually, I found three different translators as the first and third supported me for two days each, and the second stayed with me for almost two weeks when I did the majority of the interviews. Translators one and two were found through a mutual group chat where I posted my request, and this message was then forwarded to the translators. For translator three, I contacted a professor from GIUZ who held a field course in Sicily this summer. Thus, I got in contact with a professor at the University of Palermo, who again recommended a research assistant.

5.2.2. Sampling Strategy and Field Access

The interview sample was based on my research question and case study. When defining my master's thesis topic, I contacted Fairshare and asked about fieldwork in Sicily. Through the responsible person of Fairshare, I was then put in contact with the person from the cooperative in Sicily in charge of international sales. Therefore, some interview partners, for example the partner from Fairshare or the responsible person from Terra

Viva, were given. Nevertheless, I defined a broad range of groups, which are most central to the working conditions as my data collection aimed at receiving several angles on their passata and pesto production and process. Additionally, I also aimed to include an outside perspective, through labour unions and or farmers, who are not involved in the cooperative. These contacts and goals mentioned led to the following categories:

- Fairshare, the company in Switzerland
- people at the cooperative such as sales, president,
- production
- cooperative **farmers**
- **fieldworkers**
- labour unions or other organizations
- general; people outside the cooperative

Apart from the interview in Switzerland, I went to Sicily for 4.5 weeks to do the other interviews, in which time it seemed feasible to do 13-19 interviews. A few weeks before my departure, a researcher, from a mutual agroecology group, who was doing her PhD research about Terra Viva and staying on site at that time reached out to me and advised me on some names of potential interview partners that might be relevant. Before leaving for Italy, I reached out to an organization fighting labour exploitation, which was mentioned by the cooperative sales responsible. This organization had recently sent two people to work for the cooperative. I sent an email to the organization and was able to arrange an online call before my field visit. Once in Sicily, my contact person from the cooperative showed me around the facilities and introduced me to the workers there. I then told him who I would like to arrange an interview with and received these people's phone numbers. During my stay, we had daily contact and arranged interviews with farmers. I also used the snowball method to reach fieldworkers (Merkens 2007). When interviewing farmers, I asked them if I could speak to their fieldworkers, and they put me in contact with them. The interview with an external farmer and labour union representative was arranged without the engagement of the cooperative. The first contact was through a mutual group chat; for the labour union, I called the administration office in Sicily.

The **sampling** strategy led to 17 interviews, one of which was with the Fairshare employee responsible for Terra Viva, four from the cooperative office, four farmers, four fieldworkers, two labour organizations, and one external farmer. To respect the interviewees' anonymity, *Table 2* shows a broad overview and does not go into further detail about the people's backgrounds.

Table 2 Interview sample

Interview Group	Number and Background of Interviewees
Fairshare	Responsible for Sicilian cooperative
Terra Viva employees (working in administration)	Head of Production, African (1)
	Head of quality control (2)
	International and domestic Sales (2)
	President (1)
farmers	Directly from cooperative (1)
	Indirect (3)
fieldworkers	Directly from cooperative (2); domestic (1), African (1)
	Indirectly (2); domestic (1), African (1)
labour unions and organizations	Labour unions (1)
	NGO against labour exploitation in agriculture (1)
others	Sicilian Farmer outside cooperative, migrated from South American (1)

One farmer and two fieldworkers are directly employed by the cooperative, including their contract, whereas the other farmers are related to the cooperative but employ their own fieldworkers. Further, two of the four fieldworkers are domestic, and two are from West and Central Africa. The intention was to include diversity, based on the assumption given by the literature that there would be wage differences between domestic and migrant fieldworkers. Ultimately, this distinction proved to be insignificant for the results of this thesis. *Appendix B* contains more details of the interviewed people, date and time of the interview. IP stands for Interview Person and X, for the chronological number of the interview.

5.2.3. Interview and Procedure

Except for the first interview in Swiss German, all other interviews were conducted in either English or English/Italian. Besides the first and second interviews held in Switzerland and online at the end of May and beginning of June, the remaining Interviews were held in Sicily in June and July. As Longhurst (2010, 109) suggests, I tried to find a neutral, informal place that was easily accessible for the interview person. I let my

interview partners choose the place, thus, most interviews were held in the town of the cooperative. The interviews with farmers were held on the field or close to the field. Two out of four farmers were further away, one on the East coast of Sicily, a 1.5-hour drive from Colledoro, and one in the southeast, a 4-hour drive. For the latter, I arrived the night before and stayed in an Airbnb. Generally, the fieldworkers were interviewed in the place I was staying at, one in the field and one in a café. All the other interviewees were interviewed in their offices. The interviews were held individually with me or with me and the translator. Also, in the interviews in the field, no other people were nearby to offer a more comfortable environment.

Longhurst (2010, 110) suggests that recording interviews enables one to fully focus on the interview interaction instead of feeling pressure to note down every word of the conversation. Before the interview, the interviewee was informed about the research framework and their guarantee for anonymity. They were also asked for permission to be recorded, which fortunately, all the interviewees gave permission for. While the interviews were based on the interview guidelines, the questions and their order varied according to the interview person's background and available time.

In the English/Italian interviews, I asked questions in English, which were translated word for word into Italian. The interview partner then answered in Italian, and my translator either gave me a summary or I asked for specific words/phrases I did not understand. My understanding of Italian varied depending on the speaker's utterance speed and pronunciation as well as the topic discussed, and my understanding of Italian improved throughout the interviews. My language level in Italian was sufficient to prove that the translator was asking the question I had asked. Especially in the Italian/English interviews, I had a lot of time in between to prepare for the next questions. However, due to translation, the interviews lasted about one hour and ten minutes on average. Gläser and Laudel (2009, 192) explain that we already begin forgetting during interviews. Therefore, it is even more important to take "memory notes" and write a small report for each interview, which can be found in *Appendix B*, in order to capture the access to and setting of the interview, to note special features during and after the interviews, e.g. interruptions or shared lunches. (Gläser and Laudel 2009, 192). Especially during the Italian/English interviews, I was able to capture key statements and already prepare for the next question (Longhurst 2010). Due to the theft of my laptop and field booklets and

synchronization error with One Drive, I unfortunately lost the notes I took during the interviews. However, I transcribed the interviews again and took notes about the interview settings, special features and key points, which can be found in *Appendix B Interview Reports*.

5.2.4. Observations

During my stay in Sicily, I was able to observe and participate in various activities regarding the passata and pesto production, as well as events organized with and by the cooperative, where I was staying. Laurier (2010, 127) explains participant observation as a “*simple skill of doing and watching that we all do as part of our everyday lives without realizing it*”. Participating in a new environment can offer insights behind the scenes and improve an understanding of the context of the people on site. As suggested by Laurier (2010) I kept notes and took photos and videos of the participant observation. Participation included picking basil on the field, helping in the basil pesto production, and participating in client-cooperative relationships during a tasting event. Furthermore, the cooperative organized a film food festival and an event, which was part of the International Farming System Association (ISFA) convention. As I was staying at the same house in the heart of the cooperative for four weeks, I also spent a lot of free time with employees and gathered information beyond the interviews, such as how they cope with their wages, or when they have free time. During my stay, I kept a journal of all these observations, which can be found in *Appendix C*.

5.3. Data Analysis

For the qualitative content analyses by Kuckartz and Rädiker (2022), the interviews were first transcribed and then coded in MAXQDA, whereafter these coded transcripts served as material to be analysed and interpreted (Gläser and Laudel 2009).

Qualitative content analysis originated from classical, quantitatively oriented content analysis that focuses on counting and statistical interpretation. The qualitative content analysis was developed as an extension of Weber’s three aspects: reference to the analysis of media/texts, centrality of quantitative argumentation, and topic-oriented analysis (Weber 1988 IN Kuckartz and Rädiker 2022, 33–34). Instead of opposing to classical quantitative methods, qualitative content analysis is seen as a necessary expansion of those methods, addressing the limitations of quantitative approaches

(Kuckartz and Rädiker 2022). Kuckartz and Rädiker (2022, 39) define qualitative content analysis as a systematic method for interpreting and scientifically analysing the content of communication, such as texts, images, or videos, to identify patterns, themes, or categories, including both explicit (manifest) and implicit (latent) data (Kuckartz and Rädiker 2022, 38). Kuckartz and Rädiker (2022, 106) define the process of qualitative content analysis along the steps: text work, the building of categories, data coding, analysis of coded data and presentation of results. All these steps interact and reflect upon the research question (Kuckartz and Rädiker 2022, 106).

5.3.1. Transcription of Interviews

All the audio files from the interviews were transcribed with the built-in word transcription service, including speakers and timestamps (Kuckartz 2005, 31-32). The word transcription service offers a base of transcription but also needed revision. For example, more speakers may be created than are actually in the interview. Also special words or scientific jargon are mostly wrongly transcribed. Generally, the interviews were transcribed word for word and as closely as possible to the original audio, while making it as understandable as possible. Some interviewees spoke in a very confusing way, so I slightly adjusted the sentences and included brackets with more context to make these parts more understandable for a third person. Regarding grammar, I slightly corrected it. However, I did not change the sentence structure, so some of the texts from the interviews contain grammatical errors.

Some interviews were in English and some in Italian with English translation, one in Swiss German, which was “translated” into standard German. The other interviews were transcribed in the interview language, so it was English in English and Italian in Italian. The English interviews were transcribed using the English set as the language in the automatic Word transcription, and the Italian/English interviews were automatically transcribed using Italian. The reason for this was to have the Italian parts better transcribed than the English parts, as my English level is significantly higher than my Italian language level. However, the automated transcripts in English and in Italian/English had many errors and needed much revision. I frequently checked the Italian parts with DeepL translation during the transcription to make sure it made sense. Parts that did not make sense were marked and discussed with my second translator.

However, to work with the transcripts in MAXQDA, I kept the original names of people and places and anonymized them in the direct quotes integrated in this thesis. In order to assure the anonymity, the transcripts, *Appendix D*, were handed to my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Christian Berndt.

According to Gläser and Laudel (2009, 193) there are no generally accepted transcription rules, so I came up with my own rules (*Table 3*). However, Kuckartz (2005, 43–44) was used as the basis for the transcription rules and adjusted accordingly:

In order to create a narrative flow, repetitions such as “we, we, we” were reduced to one “we”. Additionally, non-verbal sounds, such as coughing, laughing or stuttering are not included unless they change the meaning of the word or sentence (Gläser and Laudel 2009, 193). In *Table 3* you can find an overview of the transcription rules.

Table 3 Transcription rules

\$	for agreeing sounds from the Interviewer. For example, after a long passage, to assure the interviewed person that I am still following them.
[xyz]	to give background information or details about special situations. Especially when interview partners referred to a discussion outside of the interview or gave explanations of left-out parts or interruptions.
[]	left out parts
[interruptions]	for interruptions e.g. other people, phone call, ...
[...]	long pauses, more than 3 seconds
I:	passage of interviewer
IP X:	passage of interviewed person [Nr. of Interview]
T X:	passage of translator. [Nr. of translator]
...	unfinished sentences
(?)	for incomprehensible words, passages

The Italian/English transcripts were then translated with DeepL Pro in order to analyse in MAXQDA.

5.3.2. Qualitative Content Analysis

The quote by Berelson (1952, 147 IN Kuckartz and Rädiker 2022, 53): „*Content analysis stands or falls by its categories (...) since the categories contain the substance of the investigation, a content analysis can be no better than its system of categories*“ resembles the importance of categories to qualitative content analysis. Categories order people, ideas, characteristics, thoughts, and more according to shared features (Kuckartz and Rädiker 2022, 53–54). In this analysis, a **hierarchical code framing** was chosen, including main categories and subcategories (Kuckartz and Rädiker 2022, 61–62). Categories are related to each other and serve the purpose of supporting

and analysing the research material. Therefore, they must be linked to the research question and be clearly distinguishable from each other. The code framing was built through the mixed form of inductive category building as well as deductive category building also known as a-priori category building. (Kuckartz and Rädiker 2022). Categories according to a-priori building were, in this case, based on the interview guidelines, theory and state of the literature. The a-priori method was complemented through the inductive category building, which, in contrast to the a-priori method, builds the categories based on the empirical data. Mayring (2015, 85–87) summarizes the process of inductive category building, where categories are directly built along the collected data. Kuckartz and Rädiker (2022, 56) define different types of categories of facts, i.e. thematic, evaluative/scale-based, analytical, theoretical, natural and formal categories. In this research, the categories focus on thematic and theoretical ones.

While coding the empirical data, new categories were built, while others were merged or eliminated. In the end, the empirical data was revisited with the final code framing. For the inductive method, I collected keywords while transcribing the empirical data. These keywords were used as a basis for the code framing, in addition to the a-priori theory, interview guidelines. The first code framing was applied to the first transcripts and complemented through subcodes. Each transcript was read, and text passages were thematically assigned to the codes or subcodes. After the first round of coding, the transcripts were revisited and partially recoded with the newly formed codes. During the coding, important excerpts and thoughts about coded segments were noted in a separate document, which served as a basis for the analysis. Therefore, the coding process and code framing were a fluid process and were constructed through both a-priori and inductive methods. The final code framing is to be found in *Appendix E* (Kuckartz and Rädiker 2022).

After coding all the transcripts, the data was further analysed which can either be category- or case-oriented (Kuckartz and Rädiker 2022, 39). The category-based approach and **structured qualitative content analysis** were chosen for this research. Therefore, the analysis was conducted according to the previously defined main categories, the relationship between subcategories among themselves and subcategories to their main category (Kuckartz and Rädiker 2022, 149). Patterns, clusters but also frequency and combinations in the data were analysed in this process. It was

visible, for example, by its frequency that the subcategory *wage* was crucial to working conditions as it was assigned to most text passages. At the same time the subcode ‘wage’ most often appeared in combination with *working hours*. Thus, I analysed the intersection of these two subcodes. As suggested by Kuckartz and Rädiker (2022) short thematic summaries were created of the most frequent and most relevant codes for the research question. These short thematic summaries were complemented by and compared with the notes taken while coding. The information from the state of literature *Chapter 3* and the theoretical framework *Chapter 4* eventually served as the foundation for the results of the thesis *Chapter 6, 7 and 8*.

5.4. Reflection of Method

5.4.1. Sampling and Field Access

During data collection, I was able to cover the pre-defined sample, including the interview groups. However, in hindsight, it was not necessary to create two separate guidelines for employees in processing and employees at the cooperative, as their interview questions eventually turned out to be quite similar.

Given my research question and interest, I aimed to include different actors. Looking back, if I had had more time or could have delved deeper into specific content, I would have concentrated on just one or two actors, such as the farmer – fieldworker dynamic. However, it already took me several interviews to fully understand the organization of the cooperative, and before the field visit, I was not sure about getting access to fieldworkers, who eventually proved to be the most challenging group to reach.

In general, the field access was easier than I had anticipated. My main contact at the cooperative was very helpful on-site and he connected me to the people I had told him were of interest to me. The most difficult group to access was the fieldworkers working for Terra Viva farmers, who first had to be contacted by their employing farmer. One farmer who specifically plants tomatoes, did not reply after multiple attempts by my contact. One fieldworker who was directly employed by Terra Viva, was working at Terra Viva in the beginning of my stay and first promised to do an interview but then moved to a larger city for a different job. Although he continued to express interest, he stopped responding when I tried to schedule a specific time. While the sample group could have

been expanded to gather additional insights, I was able to cover all sample groups during my stay.

5.4.2. Interviews and Translation

In general, the 17 interviews went well, and the participants spoke freely about the topic leading up to my research questions. Most interviews were longer than anticipated because participants often elaborated on some background reasoning for their current situation. Even though this meant transcribing more hours, the information in the interviews was crucial, and especially towards the end of the interviews, most people came up with more important and personal matters. Unfortunately, the interviews were often interrupted because we were in shared spaces of the cooperative. However, these spaces were chosen by the interviewees, so when we were interrupted, I paused the audio recording. Retrospectively, I could have offered to come to their home, where there would have been a quiet space. Especially when interviewing the fieldworkers, I was happy to communicate with them individually and without their employers near us. A crucial factor in conducting the Italian interviews was finding translators, which proved to be rather challenging. Therefore, I was content to be able to cover a lot of days at the beginning with three different translators. Overall, it went well, and some interviews would not have been possible without translators. However, as translator two stayed the longest, we were able to create a routine, and each interview went smoother as the translator also got to know the research topic, and my Italian had also improved. Additionally, the professional translator was more used to translating and offered more efficient and accurate translations. With translators one and three, I had less time to develop an interview style, and especially in the first interviews, I still had to make clear exactly what was to be translated. Prior to the interviews I discussed the compensation with my translators and clarified their expectations. All three translators were financially compensated per hour of interview and/or costs for transportation to get to the interview site. Retrospectively, I realize it would have been beneficial to carry out a test interview with each translator to establish clear guidelines on what, how and when to translate. Naturally, the translation of interviews inevitably leads to some simplified information, and it would have been ideal to speak Italian fluently. Nevertheless, I started learning Italian as soon as I knew I was going to Sicily, and it was good to know the basics and

understand parts of the interviews. Additionally, I acknowledge the limitations given by the nature of qualitative research. As the information from the interviews is subjective there is a remaining risk of incorrect information spreading through the interviews.

5.4.3. Transcription and Coding

The most challenging parts of the transcription were the Italian passages. For the parts, I did not understand, I was able to consult my second translator and generally verified the Italian passages with DeepL. The overall process of transcribing took more time than anticipated, as I had lost some transcripts and Italian passages through the theft of my laptop, which pushed me back a couple of weeks in my master's thesis schedule. Especially after translating the interviews before I started coding them, I realized that had I spoken Italian some minor problems, such as certain questions, misunderstandings or summarized passages, could have been solved more easily. However, this mostly concerned IP7, which was quite long and tiring and IP15, which was the most difficult one to follow content wise. Overall, the interviews done with the second translator contained fewer misunderstandings or questions because we did more interviews and spent a lot of time together, so translator 2 fully understood the focus of the interviews.

As I spent a lot of time with the transcription, I already had an idea of what codes and categories were important. However, the challenge was to create a code framework which worked for a broad variety of actors. Additionally, the information provided through the interviews ranged from personal/detailed to systemic/broad information. Due to the interconnectedness of the topic, it was, at times, difficult to categorize the passages. I tried to solve this issue by creating new codes and merging others.

Despite some hurdles collecting and analysing the data was successful, and I was able to gather insights relevant to answering the research questions. The three following *Chapters 6, 7 and 8* present the findings from the data collection and their analysis.

6. Understanding How Terra Viva Organizes Their Passata and Pesto Production

Considering the research questions, including alternative food systems, it is important to understand the cooperative's development and key processes. *Section 6.1. Facts and Figures* gives an overview of the cooperative's origin and explains core principles that shape actions and processes. This overview also includes the relevant actors involved in the passata and pesto production. *Section 6.2.* focuses on key processes such as member acquisition, production process, and price setting.

6.1. Facts and Figures

6.1.1. Origin of the Cooperative

In 1995, before the cooperative was officially founded in 1998, the heart of the cooperative was the headquarters of a Salesian religious community (IP7 pos. 20). Through the arrival of Salesians and cooperation with the Italian government, a semi-free structure was established for minors convicted of smaller crimes (IP7 pos. 46, 56). Later, the director of this facility, who was also to become the first president of the cooperative, sought purposeful activities in agriculture around the town for these young people and therefore asked the current president, who was then a farmer, for help (IP7 pos. 34). IP7 (pos. 17, 28), the current president and co-founder of the cooperative, explains that the involvement of these young people and the establishment of the facility was the starting point of the cooperative (IP7 pos. 44). The social and inclusive nature remains to this date, and the cooperative employs several ex-convicts, people on parole or people who might have difficulties finding employment elsewhere (IP3 pos. 186, 226).

A further important aspect of the founding history is the cooperative's organic nature at its starting point. IP7 (pos. 90) explains that he was already transitioning to organic agriculture when *“I found some friends who were willing to make this conversion from conventional to organic farming”*. The cooperative was formed with the facility's director, the current president and two other farmers (Oral Source 2024; IP3, 20.06.2024). Although, at first, they believed it to be a transition from conventional to organic production, IP7 (pos.123) explains that *“it was not enough to go from conventional to organic, but we had to totally revolutionise an entire supply chain.”*, which included

seeking alternative sale channels and reformulating producer-distributor relationships (Giordano, Luise, and Arvidsson 2018; Grasseni 2022).

Despite Terra Viva not legally being a social but an agricultural cooperative, Terra Viva was founded during the cooperative movement in Italy. With its religious background, the cooperative most likely falls into the category defined by Scalvini 2001 in Fonte and Cucco (2017, 296) of a ‘social solidarity cooperative’, an expression of Catholic activism. At the same time, Terra Viva was legally classified as an agricultural cooperative and aimed to improve members' living and working conditions (Fonte and Cucco 2017, 292). Therefore, different from both traditional agricultural cooperatives, which expanded on a global scale and got involved in the conventional market, and social cooperatives that, over time, added agricultural practices to their social core, Terra Viva emerged from a social background, but the cooperative itself had its focus on agriculture from the start. While agricultural production was the focus, the social side is equally characteristic for Terra Viva (Fonte and Cucco 2017, 294–295). In recent developments, Terra Viva has also engaged in AFN practices such as GAS, Fairshare, and farmers’ markets.

6.1.2. Actors and Equality

As mentioned above, the conversion to organic production came along with finding like-minded customers, distributors and producers. The international export started “*with a project in Belgium, and we also opened a shop in Turin in Piemonte, northern Italy*” (IP3 pos. 12). Besides clients in Italy and Belgium, the distributor in Switzerland holds an important position for Terra Viva. Not only do they mark the third country in terms of sale volumes, but they also bring forth a unique model of producer-customer relationship (IP3 pos. 80). IP3 (pos. 76) highlights

“Fairshare was founded thanks to us too, because I remember that one of the creators of Fairshare came to Sicily to explain us their plan about this new project, so we immediately gave them good feedback because Fairshare is one of the ways to create a very strict connection between the world of the agriculture and the world of the final client. It is a way without intermediates to arrive maybe the best way we can have. It is similar to the French group chats, the food coop and the coops of clients we have in Italy or in the rest of the Europe. So, the partnership is very, very close” IP3 (pos. 76).

IP3 (pos. 80) sums up the importance of Fairshare: “*So for us it’s like a Flagship to be an important part of the Fairshare sales*”. Despite Fairshare being a crucial buyer, they are just one player out of a few for Terra Viva. However, as explained in the quote, Fairshare’s

unique producer-consumer model strongly aligns with Terra Viva's vision and the goals of revolutionising the food system. An important aspect of these customer relationships is the product price and appreciation of the product for a certain price. IP11 (pos. 67) explains:

"Our idea is to create a relationship with distributors or customers who are sensitive to and believe in authentic, sustainable agriculture, which is respectful of the environment, which is respectful above all of the producer's work, of the producer's dignity, which recognises the value of the producer's sacrifice and therefore also recognises a price that is fair and not below cost, which allows the producer to have a good income, but also to have a certain pride" IP11 (pos. 67).

According to these values, customer and distributor relationships and partnerships are chosen and formed. An important aspect mentioned in the quote is the fair price which is defined by the cooperative and not as in the conventional food system by the distributor. Farmer IP6 (pos. 99, 121), who is not associated with Terra Viva, confirms that in her situation, it was the distributor, who set a price per kilogram and the quantity they would buy from the farmer, who could then either accept or decline the offer. The farmer was able to request a team to do the picking, which was then subtracted from the price per kilogram. This farmer also expressed her dissatisfaction with the dominance of the distributor. Currently she is seeking opportunities to sell her products in alternative food systems where she has more power to decide on the price and process. Besides the customer relationship in the conversion away from commercial business, a crucial aspect is as follows:

"It is non-profit Terra Viva, so we don't make margin. Most companies, in general, even in the agricultural world are for-profit companies, so in the end they tend to have a larger profit so that the shareholders can receive a dividend of that profit. Already this approach that Terra Viva is not a commercial structure, is a service structure, already is a first modality, which allows the farmer who approaches it to enter a different climate" (IP7, pos. 355).

Apart from 26 people employed at the cooperative, there are around 40 associated member farmers (Oral Source, IP3, 20.06.2024). IP7 (pos. 35) explains that the cooperative does a service to its members. Members can cut their costs by sharing the cooperative means, such as tractors (IP11 pos. 97). Additionally, associated farmers also have access to the fieldworker group in case they need extra labour during the harvest peaks (IP7 pos. 759). Most importantly, members name access to an internationally like-minded network and a network among Terra Viva producers as an important reason to be

associated with the cooperative: *“So Terra Viva is not only a co-operative where we deliver the products and then pay us for them, of course, but it is also a ..., as in this case, you would never have come here if it were not for our link with Terra Viva, for our belonging to Terra Viva. So already your presence is an example of how to network”* (IP9 pos. 237). IP9 (pos. 245) adds, *“Terra Viva has another concept; it is not just the buyer of the products; it tries to create a network between the various producers.”* Through the exchange of expertise, skills and education via the Terra Viva network, associated farmers can improve their own production.

6.2. Production Process and Involved Actors

6.2.1. New Members and Production

The first step to become an associated producer for Terra Viva is for the cooperative's president or an employee from the management to *“visit them a few times [...] to feel the intentions and their ideas about agriculture. So, if I receive good feelings from this first step, we can go on and ask more particular things about workers' conditions, the organic paper they have, the productions they have, and the way to manage the workers they have”* (IP3 pos. 24). Furthermore, as mentioned before, IP3 (pos. 16) explains that the first step for new producers is to be organic. If the first visits go well and the farmer is in line with the cooperative values regarding small-scale and organic production and is interested in agroecological practices, contracts with fieldworkers are checked. Both IP1(pos. 92) and IP3 (pos. 32, 50) highlight and IP3 (pos. 32) explains

“... we start to ask them about regular contracts of the workers. We ask about the size of the farm they have in terms of workers because they can tell you ‘this is my cousin and this is my son. This is my I don't know, my brother’ and maybe they are people that come from, I don't know, Africa, Romania without a regular contract, so we ask in advance the number of the employees who work there. And then before we are very close to asking them to be a part of the Coop, we ask for the contracts” IP3 (pos. 32).

IP3 (pos. 36, 50) further emphasizes the importance of speaking with the fieldworkers without the farmer's presence to receive some information on payment, hours and contracts.

Once the producer is verified and enters a relationship with the cooperative, the cooperative will ask the producer what his expectations are regarding the price (IP7 pos. 383). Each year, the cooperative makes a production plan, calculating how many

hectares are required for each product. At that point, they start dividing these hectares among their associated farmers, based on the farmers they had last year, and the cooperative will ask the farmer to grow a certain amount of crop or vegetables (IP7 pos. 677). Through product diversification among multiple producers, the cooperative, and also the farmer, reduces their risk in case of harvest loss of a particular product (IP7 pos. 503; IP4 pos.13). For example, *Figure 7* shows how the spaces in between almond trees are used to plant thyme.



Figure 7 Product diversification on a visited small-scale farm (Blasko 2024)

IP7 (pos. 295) highlights that the decision on what and how to grow for what price is made together, which makes the cooperative and the farmers more independent and autonomous compared to producing in the conventional system. Farmer IP14 (pos. 60) agrees on the mutual decision-making: *“We decide how many onions they need, and I produce the quantity they ask for.”* It is important to note that associated Terra Viva farmers do not have any contracts but a verbal agreement on what quantity and type of product they produce for Terra Viva (IP7 pos. 427). Farmer IP14 (pos. 64) agrees: *“We don't do contracts. It's like we trust each other. So, we don't need to add papers and papers”*. This excerpt shows that IP14 seems to be fine and even appreciates not having contracts with the cooperative as this reduces his bureaucratic workload.

Additionally, IP8 (pos. 85), who is not closely involved with the producers, explains that other cooperative employees with deeper knowledge advise and accompany farmers in their cultivation. Organising the farmer's land for certain products only concerns farmers who grow crops and vegetables and work in crop rotation. Farmers, for example,

producing almonds for the pesto, have their set almond trees and produce about the same amount each year (Oral Source, Terra Viva farmer, 01.07.2024).

Once the products are harvested, farmers in close distance take their products to the processing facility (IP8 pos. 73). Other farmers, such as IP14, who are further away, explain, *“They come, they come. So comfortable for us. You know, because they provide us the baskets [green boxes where they collect all kinds of fresh products] and they come here to pick up the production. The production so easy for us and that's something we appreciate very, very much”* (IP14 pos. 80). Once the products arrive at the facility, IP8 (pos. 73) counts and weighs and unloads the products. After that, the quality is checked in terms of chemical residues, which must not exceed the threshold provided by food laws and organic certification (IP8 pos. 131). While part of the quality control is done by the cooperative directly, they also send the products to an external laboratory, which does analyses that require special technology to measure the remaining parameters required (IP8 pos. 127,131).

Regarding the tomatoes and the basil, most of the quantity stems from the cooperative's own fields within walking distance to the facility where the products are processed, visualized in *Figure 8* (IP3 pos. 120).



Figure 8 Pesto Production (Blasko, 2024)

IP3 (pos. 124) explains that, as soon as the tomatoes arrive, employees

“... start to clean, process the tomato sauce. And they are making their work in the same facility if it is a tomato sauce, a cream spread, whatever you want. So, they have a timing for sure. When there is a processing that they must start and in the same day they must finish. But when the tomato season starts, you must consider that every day here around 1000 kg of tomatoes from different fields arrive. And they are able in one day to process 1000 kg” (IP3 pos. 124).

The excerpt also shows that the employers' work depends on the product. They do not have the ability to postpone the passata production processes or to interrupt them.

Additionally, the quotes highlight the spatial proximity between fields and processing. Even the farmers who do not live in Colledoro, where cooperative's headquarters are, live just a few driving hours away and close compared to global agricultural food chains.

6.2.2. Price Setting

As with the cultivation plan, prices are also annually agreed upon (IP3 pos. 110). Farmer IP14 (pos. 60) confirms that they decide on a price together with the cooperative at the beginning of the season. It is important to note that Terra Viva pays the same prices to the producer independent of the duration of their relationship with the cooperative (IP7 pos. 622). Nevertheless, the product price is differentiated based on its quality or use, for example table olives are classified differently from olives for olive oil (IP3 pos. 116). However, quality is not differentiated for passata and pesto production as all product ingredients are processed. To the prices of the raw product are added the costs of processing, packaging, storage and transportation, as well as expenses of the cooperative, which usually amount to a surplus of 10-12% to the fresh product (IP7 pos. 383, 507). The cooperative's margin is used to cover commercial, administrative and organisational work (IP7 pos. 507). Ultimately, the money intake is divided into three areas: products and salaries as well as thirdly expenditure for company reinvestments, such as new machines (IP7 pos. 507). IP7 (pos. 455) explains that Terra Viva tries to set the final price, meeting both the producer's needs and considering the customer's feasibility and the amount the customer can pay.

IP3 (pos. 190) highlights

"... the reason why we don't work with the big distribution is because we decide the price that Passata can have, not the big distribution. Because we know, how is the work there, how the producer worked into the fields, how the man and the woman, the women in in the lab working who created the passata, then there is the minimum margin we put to sustain the work of the co-op. With the big distribution is not possible because if you arrive to Migros they say "oh, nice that passata, the taste is very nice, but we can pay the passata, I don't know, 80 cents per bottle", for us this is completely crazy, it is not possible" (IP3 pos. 190).

The quote shows the cooperative's agency and independence from the conventional market, including the role of supermarkets. IP7 (pos. 503) also confirms that Terra Viva aims to keep these prices stable and independent of market fluctuation and speculation. However, IP7 (pos. 503) also admits that as they *"don't have mechanisms, sophisticated, elaborate, we don't have algorithms. It [price setting] is simply by feeling, so we have not*

increased the other prices “. IP7 (pos. 475, 534) explains that the prices stay more or less stable, taking the previous year as a guidance price, so the producer will already know approximately what price Terra Viva pays them per kilogram. Despite the advantage of price stability, one could expect a price increase based on the rising living costs, which is currently not the case. However, IP7 (pos. 483, 395) states that he is aware of the increased living costs and aims to increase the prices Terra Viva pays the farmers gradually over the year. The increase in price comes with communication with customers, explaining the reason, and optimising production processes (IP7 pos. 534). The difficulty in price increase shows the dilemma of Terra Viva: on one hand they would like to pay the farmers more, while on the other hand they are bound to the product price consumers are able and willing to pay. Despite the apparent independence in price setting, Terra Viva is dependent on the product end price and the customers willingness to pay a certain amount, and eventually the market they operate in.

IP16 (pos. 203) exemplifies

“... even the small bottle of organic product you can easily find the same at 1.20 - 1.50 euros. Well, we sell this one for €1.70. For Terra Viva it's fine, for other customers, even in northern Italy or abroad, it's fine, because the cost of living is different. Here anyone who must pay you in the shop 2.50 euros has problems. In Brussels I have seen that this one, that I sell for 1.70 euros, they sell it for 3.50 even 4 euros” (IP16 pos. 203).

This quote shows that even Terra Viva, who does not participate in the conventional market and relationships with distributors, competes in the niche market, be it among organic producers or other alternative production forms (Dansero and Puttilli 2014). This claim is also supported by the statement made by IP7 (pos. 534): *“I also listen to the commercial side and say, maybe this year it is better not to increase these prices because organic sales in the last two years have not been very prosperous, because the organic system at European level has dropped a bit, 2022, 2023.”* Despite Terra Viva arguing about defining the price themselves, they are still limited in their freedom as their product must remain attractive and reasonable for consumers.

Furthermore, IP3 (pos. 110-112) explains that the price is also linked to the product quantity, which is connected to the year's weather:

“... last year we lost the 60% of the tomato production because the warmth because the heat. So, when it happens, we try to help the producer and give them more money. So, we will pay the tomatoes more than the last in the previous season to try to compensate, to create a balance

with the missing products. And for sure we will ask more money when selling our passata “(IP3 pos. 110-112).

This quote shows that despite the goal to provide stable prices to both producers and clients, Terra Viva is heavily dependent on the climate and product quantity. However, as visible in the quote above, IP3 (pos. 110-112) explains that while certain products may be lacking in some years, others might be higher in quantity and thus compensate for each other. So, through product diversification and the inclusion of multiple producers, the cooperative has the possibility to balance their products. IP7 (pos. 503) exemplifies, *“It's the advantage of having so many products; there are so many advantages, one is this one: a difficulty on one product can be absorbed because there are so many other products, and each product does not represent a large share in our business”*. At the same time, one farmer explained that when he once experienced a great amount of harvest loss, Terra Viva was also financially limited to help: *“One year it was a bad situation, because we lost half of the production and then literally, we didn't get anything for this year. Terra Viva tried to help us. But you know, it's like they try. They do what they can, but it's like me I have my own farm, and they are related to me”* (IP14 pos. 84). This shows that despite the supporting network Terra Viva might be, the farmers still carry the large part of the risks by themselves. IP7 (pos. 389) as well as farmer IP9 (pos. 426) both confirm that it has happened in cases of overproduction that Terra Viva suggested selling the product for a lower price, so that the entire production can get sold and not wasted.

Lastly, as mentioned above, Terra Viva setting the prices only works when the customer, buyer and distributor agree on this model. Regarding the relationship with Fairshare, IP1 (pos. 65) explains that they have *“a system called **“bottom-up pricing”**, which means that our partners say what they need for a price in order to be able to practise regenerative agriculture, to practise organic farming, to pay appropriate wages and to be able to make a profit from this”*. So, as stated by the cooperative above, the cooperative is the one calculating a price and then proposing it to Fairshare instead of, as done in conventional top-down relationships, the distributor defining for what price the farmer must produce his product. However, *“often it is I who propose the prices”* shows that not farmers individually but the cooperative, and in this case mostly the president, acts as intermediary in the price discussion between buyers, such as Fairshare, and producing farmers (IP7 pos. 479). Unique in Terra Viva's buyer relationship is Fairshare's model,

where customers preorder and prepay for products. This allows more flexibility for the cooperative to invest during the season, as they already have some money while growing and processing products and do not have to wait until the products are sold (IP7 pos. 570). This model not only enables producers and the cooperative to share the risk of harvest loss with consumers but also allows the cooperative to be independent of banks, where they would have to take a loan to pay for the harvest before selling their products.

7. Working Conditions

In order to answer the research question, working conditions in general are the most crucial topic. This was also visible in the analysis, where the category of working conditions was composed of several subcategories as well as one of the most coded categories. The subcategory payment/income was the most frequently assigned category. As already mentioned in the State of Literature, as stated in the legal framework *Section 3.2.* and visible in the code intersection (*Figure 9*), payment mostly intersects with the duration for a specific payment, in this case, hours and months. Therefore, the first section focuses on income and hours/months, including the various employees: cooperative employees, farmers, and fieldworkers. A second important aspect regarding working conditions is agency and the worker's own perception. Situated in the field of labour geography, agency is crucial to this field and has emerged to be a frequently coded aspect in the analysis.

Code Co-occurrence Model (Code Intersection)

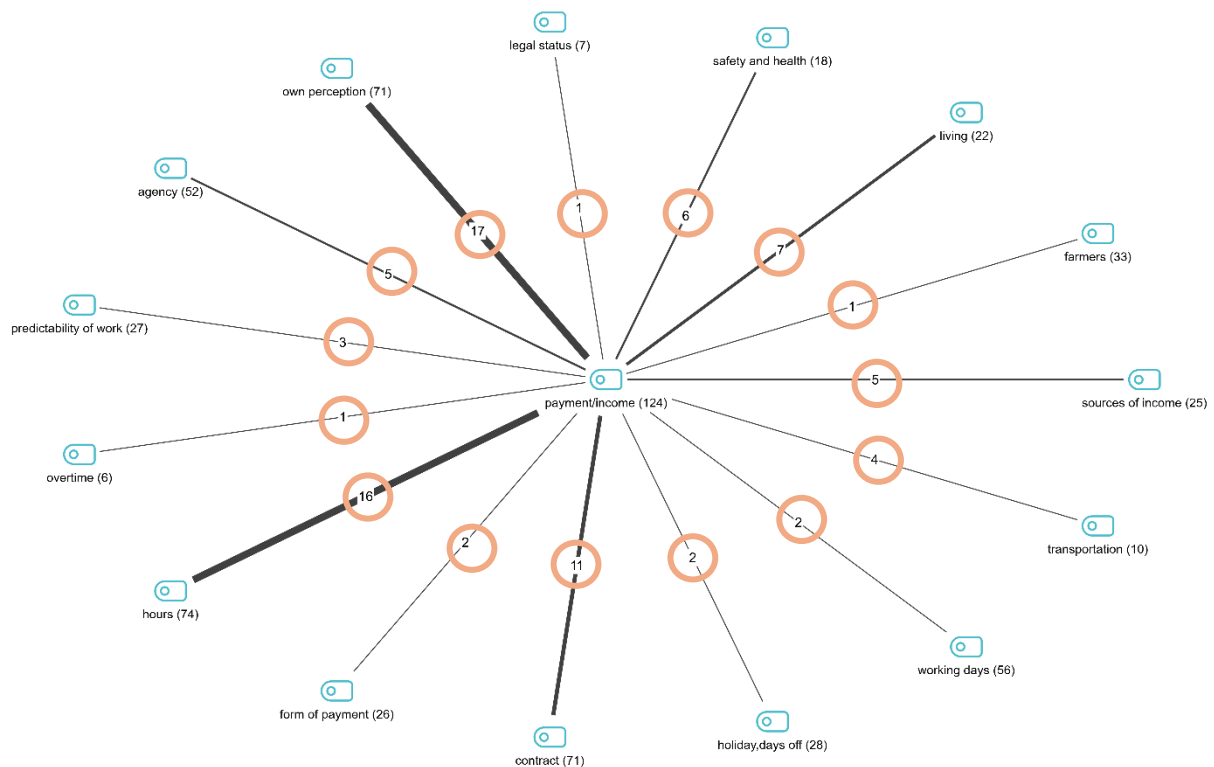


Figure 9 Code Co-Occurrence Model describing the intersection of codes whereas the orange circled numbers represent the frequency of the co-occurrence and the bold lines represent the most frequent co-occurred codes (MAXQDA 2024)

7.1. Payment/Income and Hours/Months

Not only was payment the most coded category in the analysis, but also on a legal level, such as in the collective bargaining agreements, a certain level of payment is defined for certain hours (FLAI CGIL 2023; 2021). Besides hours, as visible in *Figure 9*, the sections coded with payment intersect with other codes such as contract, living and transportation. It is important to note that the relationship between payment differs among Terra Viva employees, farmers, and fieldworkers.

7.1.1. Terra Viva Employees

Terra Viva employees, including workers in management, sales or processing, are all paid a monthly salary for 7.8 hours per day and 39 hours per week, set by the Italian government (IP4 pos. 109). The daily hours are checked with a badge system, with which all the workers log in and out (IP4 pos. 141). The cooperatives' in-house farmer is an exception as he receives a monthly payment, but his work on the fields makes it difficult to check him wearing a badge, and he does not track his hours (IP5 pos. 294). The cooperative's president mentions the small range between the highest and the lowest earning employee and where he is located: *"The ratio between the highest and the lowest you can consider 1 to 1.5 maximum, the difference. And that maximum is not me, for example. Well, I'll tell you the exact figures: the highest category comes to about €1,600 per month"* (IP7 pos. 704-712). IP3 (pos. 148), who works in management and for international sales, explains that he earns 1700 per month. However, he also explains, *"the tariffs we are paid, are linked to the work and the responsibility we have for sure. Workers in the field do not have the same wage as me. But they are similar. There is not a big range"* (IP3 pos. 144). Additionally, IP3 receives transportation compensation with his income as he lives further away. Nevertheless, the president (IP7 pos. 734) himself says, *"I'm in the €1300 bracket."*, which shows the implementation of their equality principle in payment.

As these salaries might seem low from a Swiss point of view, it is important to set them in context. The opinions on the salaries vary, as visible in the quotes below: IP4 (pos. 113) states, *"according to the salary I get from Terra Viva or here it is. It is high according to the part of Sicily."* Also *"the living costs are lower here, but still the salary is higher at Terra Viva"* (IP4 pos. 125). This statement is also supported by IP8 (pos. 263): *"It's a good*

salary, I think it's somewhere in between the salaries in Terra Viva, and I'm happy with the salary, yes. For the life I make, let's say, the money is enough". The responses from IP5 and IP3 contrast IP8 and IP4 and state

"So, with the salary I cannot say I am happy, but not because it is little" (IP5 pos. 325). With my salary, I have to live off my son at university in Palermo and my wife, who does not work. To this, you add all the expenses of utilities, electricity, water, and gas. The unforeseen events that occur every month. And what do you eat in the end? And unfortunately, this is the condition" (IP5 pos. 391-409).

Whereas IP4 and IP8 have their salary for themselves, IP5 shows the struggles if you need to care for others with your salary, so the perception of the salary depends on who else lives depend on this income. IP3 sums up that:

"In terms of responsibility, it is not enough because I have a lot of responsibility. In terms of the place where you live, if you live in a family and your wife or your husband works too, and you have a house that is yours is not, you are not paying monthly rent to be there, it's okay. If you have a wife or a husband that doesn't work. If you have 2-3 babies, it's quite difficult, yeah" (IP3 pos. 152).

Further, IP3 (pos. 268) adds that for Italy in general, *"wages are not increasing like the life costs are increasing in Italy"*, which explains the difficulties that IP3 and IP5 mention.

7.1.2. Farmers

Except for the cooperative's in-house farmer, all other farmers associated with Terra Viva receive payment according to the kilogram of sold product. More historic members receive compensation for their product per month instead of getting paid for everything at once. One farmer explains: *"they will pay me like monthly something until they pay for all the production. It's like this, so easy."* (IP14 pos. 68). *"It's something good, It's better than the normal system. When I worked for other people, I waited years for payment"* (IP14 pos. 76).

As payment is connected to production, farmers also mention harvest loss and its influence on their payment: *"Sometimes it's very hard, you know when something wrong happens. You lose a really significant part of your income. And so, it's so difficult. Sometimes it's like I get nothing from my work. And my worker for sure he will be paid. But sometimes his income is much more than mine"* (IP14 pos. 137). Furthermore, this quote also highlights the farmer's vulnerability and dependency on their harvest (IP6 pos. 173). This farmer would still pay his fieldworker, even if this severely reduces his own

income. Despite paying his fieldworker, this farmer's vulnerability not only affects himself but also his fieldworker's pay. Farmer IP14 (pos. 100) admits that: *"It's like the minimum you have to pay for one hour is 9 Euro. I pay 7 Euro/hour [netto]"* and expresses his personal goal to reach the amount stated in the collective bargaining agreement (IP14 pos. 133). Different from IP14, farmer IP9 seems more economically stable: *"I must say that fortunately, let's say also the economic revenues for each of us are satisfactory. Yes, yes, yes, absolutely. We are quite simple people; I mean I don't go and buy the Porsche"* (IP9 pos. 219). However, IP9 also has a restaurant and hotel apart from the agricultural production, so their income is less dependent on the agricultural pillar. Furthermore, IP9 (pos. 304) explains, *"We put in [planted] more than we actually needed. This was to try to make up for any shortfall in production."*, which shows a coping mechanism for potential harvest loss.

The hours farmers work per day vary. Whereas IP14 (pos. 23) works 6 hours daily and 6.5 maximum, IP16 (pos. 379) explains that on days when a shipment to Terra Viva is made, he works up to 12 hours. Differently, IP9 explains that being self-employed also means that work never really stops. The working hours are bound to the harvest season (IP9 pos. 207-209). What becomes clear is that compared to cooperative employees, farmers' working hours are much more fluid and dependent on the seasons and the amount of production. Thus, in comparison with Terra Viva employees, farmers must deal with a less steady income which means taking higher risks and having more fluctuating working hours.

7.1.3. Fieldworkers

As stated by law and the collective bargaining agreement, there are both fixed-term and permanent fieldworkers. In this research, all the interviewed fieldworkers had a fixed-term contract. According to the collective bargaining agreement (FLAI CGIL 2021, 22), compensation is either calculated per daily hours or by a fixed monthly salary (Caridi 2024; FLAI CGIL 2021; 2024). The interviewed fieldworkers had a contract where the days or hours were summed up, and they received their income on a monthly basis. Overall, other than commonly stated in the literature by Perrotta and Sacchetto (2014), D'Onofrio (2020) and Howard and Forin (2019), no fee for transportation, food, water or housing was

subtracted from their daily payment, nor did they live in so-called “ghettos”, but mentioned living in “normal” apartments (IP10, IP13 and IP17).

As stated in the state of literature, IP15, who works for FLAI CGIL in the region of Palermo, explains that the common agricultural worker is at **level F and earns 62 euros net for 6.5 hours per day** (IP15 pos. 53, 83-89). Also stated in *Table 1*, IP15 explains “*there is a lower level, but that is the one that is most difficult to apply. For example, if I work in agriculture for less than 51 days a year, I only harvest in the vineyard, then there I think it's around €56, €58, but a common worker, a common labourer, that would be the minimum wage*” (IP15 pos. 83-89).

Whereas the amount of hours per day is more similar among the fieldworkers, their **payment** shows a great variety and therefore also how their income is embedded and perceived: The two fieldworkers IP10 (pos. 233) and IP13 explain that “*They pay us 50, because they pay tax for us. So, in outside where you go outside, they pay 55 now. Because they don't put you regular in contract, so they give you normal 55. But with Terra Viva I have my contract, they pay us 50 euros, for 8 hours*” (IP13 pos. 286, 96). In these 8 hours, IP13 (pos. 107) explains “*we can take maybe 10 minutes, then we continue to complete the hour*”. Important to note that especially, migrant fieldworkers, in this case study from West and Central Africa aim to make as much money as possible to send it home, which again influences their perception of what amount is enough, shown in: “*When I get €100, I can use it to buy food for house one month or two months*” (IP13 pos. 187) and in “*Maybe when I have €100 today, now in this month, I will show, OK, this is for my family, this €25 for my family, this one for my cousin. They are the ones who are going to school; they need it*” (IP13 pos. 151).

One fieldworker from a member farmer states the “*Contractual pay is about 62, 62.50 euros daily*” (IP12 pos. 137) for an average of “*about seven hours, six hours and three quarters of daily work*” including “*an hour and a quarter lunch break*” (IP12 pos. 72). Different is IP17, who works for a different associated Terra Viva farmer stating that he earns “*Five euros per hour ... this one now just for rent, house, car insurance, petrol, eating, paying bills, you can't save anything for your future because with this little money*” (IP17 pos. 162).

Although out of all four fieldworkers, IP12 earns the most for the least amount of hours, according to the table in collective bargaining agreement, his activities such as “*pruning*

the vineyard, trimming the vines, tying, pruning the olive grove, ploughing various crops” (IP12 pos. 72) and *“I also work as a tractor driver”* (IP12 pos. 259) would according to *Table 1* be categorised in level C and therefore mean a daily income of 74,63 euros.

A further point worth mentioning is the discrepancy between what fieldworkers report as their income and the amount stated by their employers. Additionally, the amount reported by employers exceeds the one noted in the collective bargaining agreement (*Table 1*), whereas the income stated by the fieldworkers falls below it. The difference in statements about fieldworkers' income appeared around all fieldworkers and is shown in the excerpts below.

1. IP9 (farmer) and IP12 (fieldworker)

Whereas IP9 (pos. 81) explains that *“obviously the workers are paid according to the contract, that is, the national contract provides for 80 euros a day and that is what they are paid, at least that is how we do it”*, IP12 (pos. 137) confirms *“Contractual pay is about 62, 62.50 euros daily.”*

2. IP16 (farmer) and IP17 (fieldworker)

IP16 (pos. 272-273) *“Gross will be around 9 euros Gross”*, whereas IP17 (pos. 92) *“Five euros per hour”*.

3. IP7 (farmer, cooperatives president) and IP10 and IP13

IP7 (pos. 743) *“The boys get a certain amount of pay, which would be about 60, almost 70 euros gross per day”*, whereas both IP10 (pos. 226-228, 233) and IP13 (pos. 286) affirm receive 50 euros after tax reduction.

There are multiple reasons for this discrepancy, varying from farmers simply not knowing the exact fieldworkers' income to being ashamed or scared that they pay lower than what the collective bargaining agreement says. A further possibility is that fieldworkers said a lower income to raise awareness and express their dissatisfaction with the income. Unfortunately, determining the exact income of fieldworkers was not possible. Based on the excerpts, it can be said that either individuals lack knowledge of the true wage or are unwilling to disclose it.

Besides the average daily wage, fieldworkers' income heavily depends on the season and the weather, especially the heat. Especially in summer, when temperatures *“get hotter than 40° they only do three hours, from 7 to 10 at the most. It has happened in the past, on days of record heat, even though we had the harvest, in agreement with them we decided to stop at 10, maximum 10:30 because then it became too heavy”* (IP9 pos. 149,

153). Also, IP14 (pos. 108) agrees *“it's almost impossible to work eight hours, you know. Because you start at 6 o'clock and eight hours means you will finish on 11/12, 13. It's too much. It's like 2 o'clock, 2:30 o'clock, 2:30. So it's really impossible to work”*. IP3 (pos. 252) explains that *“The limit of hours is very, very linked to the work in the fields. Because during the harvest, the tomato harvest, we are in the middle of the summertime and there is a lot of work.”*

Apart from heat, the season generally defines working hours, *“there are times when production, especially the winter period, is less fast. So, you need to wait for the fennel to arrive, for the cauliflower to arrive, and then there is little you can do and from seven, eight you reduce to four.”* (IP16 pos. 291-293). This shows how strongly dependent the fieldworker's work and income are on the season and extreme weather events. As a result of the unpredictable weather, fieldworkers mostly only know 1-2 days before if they actually have any work or not (IP13 pos. 111-112). For example, one day, I arranged to go basil picking with the Terra Viva fieldworkers and in-house farmer early in the morning. Unexpectedly, there had been heavy rain all night and therefore the farmer called at 5 a.m., half an hour before he would have collected us for work, and he cancelled the picking for the entire day (Field Notes, Palermo, June 2024).

Despite the unpredictability of working hours, one farmer also mentioned that in case the fieldworkers finish one hour earlier due to extreme heat, they would still receive the payment for the entire day (IP5 pos. 144). However, if they clearly are to work half the day, they also receive the payment for half the day (IP5 pos. 152-156). As all interviewed fieldworkers are paid by day or hour and have fixed-termed contracts, there is neither overtime nor a fixed set of holidays. IP13 (pos. 123) sums up: *“Where you have work, they pay. If you don't work, no pay [...] The contract is the day I work, every day they will pay”*.

Apart from workers' daily or monthly income, the annual **unemployment benefit** for fieldworkers is a crucial part of their income. The more days you work the higher the unemployment benefit as long as it is in the stated range (IP10 pos. 376). IP16 (pos. 281) and IP9 (pos. 67) explain that only with fixed-term contracts fieldworkers receive the unemployment benefit. Fixed-term contracts include seasonal and temporal contracts which are limited to a certain time period. As a result, all interviewed fieldworkers have fixed-termed contracts, which are renewed yearly (IP9 pos. 67; IP16 pos. 281). However, as officially stated in Caridi (2024, 4–5), with both contract types, fixed-term (40%, with

9% daily solidarity deduction) and permanent (30%, without solidarity contribution deduction), fieldworkers receive unemployment benefits, as long as they are in the state-mandated range.

IP9 (pos. 65) explains the significance of the unemployment benefit for fieldworkers: *“The unemployment benefits make up for the other days they don't work and for them, it's a considerable advantage, i.e. we're talking about thousands of euros that they manage to put aside.”* Fieldworkers IP10 and IP12 state how much this unemployment benefit is in their own case: IP10 (pos. 335) explains that *“It depends roughly on the days you declare, let's say if you declare say 130 days or 135 days, it's 2,000, 2,700 euros”*. Besides the number of days you work, the unemployment benefit also depends on one's household. Fieldworker IP12 (pos. 151) explained that in the previous year, the number of days was lower than in usual years based on an accident that prohibited him from working: *“I could only work 153 days at Giorgio's, with only one dependent child, unemployment, gross unemployment benefit was about 4500, net about 3600”*. As this amount is a significant part of the fieldworkers' income, many farmers try to offer the fieldworkers the minimum number of days they need to receive unemployment benefits (IP16 pos. 307-308). For example, farmer IP14 (pos. 118) explains: *“I provide him with all the days he needs to get this money from the government”*. One fieldworker admits that he receives unemployment benefits despite working every day, except on Sundays, all year round (IP17 pos. 123-133). IP15 (pos. 162), who works for FLAI CGIL, explains that overall, *“in many companies it happens that I get 50 euros a day, the company sets itself up because it puts the number of days, 150 days, but I actually work the whole year. [...] There is a reciprocal blackmail mechanism whereby the worker makes himself declare that he does not do more than 175 days, 151 days so that he has unemployment and then works off the books the whole year”*. From the fieldworkers' statements, some, such as IP12, receive unemployment days according to the actual days worked, whereas others, such as IP17, stated that they worked more days than the maximum of days allowed to receive the unemployment benefit.

7.2. Agency in the Work Environment and Own Perception

In both the labour literature and the interview analysis, the agency appeared to be crucial when talking about working conditions (Carswell and De Neve 2013; Coe and Jordhus-Lier 2010). As more focused on in the early stages of labour geography, agency was viewed collectively, whereas more recent literature focuses more on individual agency (Carswell and De Neve 2013). Thus, *Section 7.2.* is divided into a collective agency of the system *Section 7.2.1.* and an individual agency from the workers' point of view *Section 7.2.2.* The collective agency focuses on the cooperative in the entire food system of the Italian state. *Section 7.2.2.* includes various individuals' agencies within their workplace. Therefore, the scope of agency varies from fieldworker to president. Additionally, individuals might experience constrained agency in one and unconstrained agency in another area.

7.2.1. Terra Viva's Position in the Agricultural and Legal System

The first three paragraphs show the cooperative's constrained agency on a legal level regarding collective bargaining agreements, migration law, and organic certification. The last paragraph highlights the cooperative's agency in price-making within its relationship with Fairshare.

Organic small-scale farmers, in this case, the collective of the cooperative, experience constrained agency due to their limited representation in front of the government. IP9 and IP7 (pos. 199) explain that their interests are not represented on a legal level, as large farmer unions do not support organic small-scale farming, but *"They are defending a general industrial type of agriculture that is very useful to other systems, to the processing industry and to large-scale distribution"*. IP9 (pos. 356) highlights the lack of representation on a governmental level:

"they [speaking of Coldiretti, Confagricoltura and CIA] do not represent the values of farmers, or rather of us farmers who are concerned about the impact of agriculture on the environment. When there were farmers' strikes in Brussels, they were politicised [...] So unfortunately those like me who really believe in organic farming, in reducing the impact of farming on the environment, do not have a trade union acronym, a trade association in which they can see themselves" (IP9 pos. 356).

The limited representation already begins with who is involved in making the contracts. As stated above, *"the national unions Cgil, Cisl and Uil, Fai, Flai and Uila, together with the employers, i.e. those representing the companies Coldiretti, Confagricoltura and Cia,*

make contracts which is an agreement between the parties, so for us it is the number one, i.e. it is our point of reference” (IP15 pos. 35). The limited representation in front of the law could also be a reason for being less eager to follow what is decided by the parties and to focus more on the cooperatives' own principles.

An additional form of constrained agency connected to the government and state is Italy's immigration law. The tightening of Italy's immigration policy has affected farmers who are dependent on fieldworkers. *“They closed the application system very strictly, and they closed many places around here where people stayed for this. And so literally they miss people for work, for fieldworkers”* (IP14 pos. 19). The same farmer explains that he used to have several migrant workers. As a result of the tightened immigration policy, *“I changed the system here in my farm. I started to use myself as a worker right now for 100%. In the past I tried to not work so much in the field to let the work to the people, to the guys, but if they miss/lack, I have to work”* (IP14 pos. 9). Besides, the workforce, which in this case is limited based on governmental decisions, especially migrant agencies, are embedded in the arena of the state (Coe and Jordhus-Lier 2010). The state defines who receives a permit or does not and who is legal or is illegal. As viewed in case studies in the State of Literature *Chapter 3*, scholars including (Perrotta and Raeymakers 2023, Salvia 2019 and D’Onofrio 2020) show how the lack of legal permits not only leads to severe working conditions but also how workers' agencies are constrained in improving their working conditions. In *“They don't pay well, because of no document”*, fieldworker IP13 (pos. 41) explains how lacking a legal permit affected him in his previous job. As soon as he had a legal permit, he was able to move away and find a better job (IP13 pos. 44-50).

A third example of the system-imposed constrained agency is organic certification. Despite the interviewee's positive connotation and belief in organic farming, one farmer highlights the apparent absurdity of the certification system:

“For sure we have a lot of bureaucratic, to do also for the organic certification, that's a lot of stuff, a lot of papers and I pay or do this. I have to do the certification, because our principal customer is Terra Viva, and I have to do this, because they have customers who sell product to Belgium and so we need organic certification. We know it's like on the paper stuff. That we need, but this is something you have to pay for the organic certification” (IP14 pos. 27).

“[...] I get controlled by them and they will control me only on paper. They never come here to check your farm, and I tell them, like, please bring some things and do some analysis. Never. But we know the system is like this” (IP14 pos. 31).

In his last phrase, the farmer expresses his lack of agency to change the system. Even though he does not like the way the system is implemented, he plays along in order to sell his products in a certain market (IP1 pos. 258). The apparent absurdity of the certification system aligns with Getz and Shreck’s (2006) and Naylor’s (2013) critique towards the Fairtrade system, where certification is imposed on farmers without improving or, in the case of the interview excerpts, controlling the farmer's organic production. Further, it becomes clear that the reason for certification is the ability to sell in a certain market. This is also connected to Reynolds (2018), Jaffee and Howard (2010) and Cheyns (2014) critique against certification, which tries to improve and combat conventional farming by using a market-based strategy.

Despite constrained agency, the ability not to sell to big distributors shown in quote IP3 pos. 190 in *Section 6.2.2.* highlights Terra Viva’s collective agency in price-making. Not only does the quote resemble the cooperative's ability to define a price which is suitable for them and in line with their values but also their agency to tackle and overcome the price pressure in the conventional agricultural system. As stated in the literature (Perrotta and Raeymakers 2023; Salvia 2019; D’Onofrio 2020), precarious working conditions are mostly connected to the price pressure by the food system. In contrast, by deciding on the price, the cooperative has the agency to form its own working conditions. Even though this is not mentioned in the quote, the cooperative’s agency is graded regarding the price, as eventually, the price still has to be appropriate for customers and clients.

7.2.2. Workers between flexibility and dependency

This section analyses agency on a more individual level and in the arena of the workplace (Coe and Jordhus-Lier 2010, 14). The first two sections focus on agency and constrained agency of employees followed by two sections on how fieldworkers experience agency and where they feel constrained. The last section includes a more general view and perception of the cooperative employees and farmers regarding their agency.

When interviewing the employees about their working conditions, **agency** can be seen in the recurring topic of **flexibility** of working hours. IP3 (pos. 210), IP8 (pos. 221, 257, 317 and 326) and IP4 (pos. 137, 141) all mentioned that their *“work is very flexible, because I have to do almost eight hours. But I choose when I do them”* (IP8 pos. 221). The employees explained that they were allowed to work during the hours when they wanted to as they had a badge system, and it would not matter if they did a little more or less per day, as long as they clicked in and out with their badge, which tracks the exact time. This flexibility was particularly highlighted as something positive when combining their private with their work life. IP3 (pos. 210) expresses *“For example, today I have to leave before because I have a family situation I have to leave, but it can happen”*. What I can confirm is that while the employees working in offices were particularly flexible as the interviews were mostly arranged only a day prior to meeting them, and they were able to decide for themselves to do this in between working hours, interviews with fieldworkers and employees in the production were arranged outside of their working hours. Despite the benefits of flexibility in working hours, employees are responsible for working a certain monthly amount. The hours taken for breaks must therefore be compensated through a longer working day. In contrast, employees in the production sector are more tied to the product and, therefore, less flexible but experience more regular working hours. While flexibility comes with freedom, it requires responsibility to fulfil the employee's tasks and working hours defined by the contract.

Additionally, employees with more responsibilities have more agency over their work field. IP4 (pos. 61) explains with regard to the product development that *“It is not a group decision. But I would say it is now my responsibility for that particular task to either come back again for that product or not”*. This also resembles the reaction by IP8 (pos. 77), who is in charge of quality control, and who says, *“I also make a suggestion to them to improve the quality in the future or on the product itself”*. These two excerpts show that, while agency comes with more responsibility, agency can also be constrained in another area and therefore graded.

Despite the flexibility, as known from my participation in food processing, **constrained agency** can be seen in the dependency on the product and food processing. Especially, IP4 (pos. 141), whose working hours need to be coordinated with many other employees

working in the same processing, decides on what to process on a certain day. Thus, he will arrive at work at an hour when this product can be produced. IP3 (pos. 62) explains that especially spreads as well as passata need to be done in one single day. This can also lead to overtime work on certain days, which is then compensated on other days. Farmer IP5 (pos. 726) confirms the dependency on the product in: *“So I can't back down and say no, I can't pick basil tomorrow. Because otherwise, I would block other workers.”* Furthermore, farmers such as IP16 (pos. 191) and IP14 (pos. 60) admit that while IP16 may suggest a certain price, and IP14 and IP16 then agree on the final price, it is the cooperative who asks the farmers to produce a certain quantity, which they finally are obliged to produce and deliver on time. This shows that despite the collective price setting, farmers' agency is constrained. Regarding the delivery of goods causing long working days, IP16 (pos. 355) reacts, *“The one who suffers the most is me, or whoever is with me”*. There is no option to delay the delivery, so the farmer and his helper, are constrained in the ability to decide on their working hours. This shows that even though the farmer might have agency over his general working conditions, he is bound to produce a certain quantity which will again affect his working conditions such as hours, involvement of workers or costs. Lastly, the excerpt from IP3, who works in cooperative management, shows how the member farmers' agency can be limited: *“Maybe you need that particular product, that they are growing, but the producer is not line with you, so you start a kind of period to try to change their minds”* (IP3 pos. 24). The excerpt shows that associated farmers do not have full agency in doing whatever they want to do as the cooperative would try and influence their behaviour. The interviewed farmers did not specifically address this as an issue. However, it is challenging to determine whether farmers generally agree with the cooperative, chose not to mention their disagreements during the interview, or refrain from raising such concerns with Terra Viva due to the close social proximity of their relationships.

A further aspect worth mentioning is how the employees' and farmers' agency are **constrained by customers**, as by the relationship between Terra Viva and Fairshare. Even though IP8, in charge of the quality of the product, has agency over this work field, he mentions several times how the quality must be improved because of consumers' requests (IP8 pos. 334). IP8 (pos. 67). adds, *“Fairshare also asks for like some documents, regarding the temperature of the production, so they also started doing this*

based on their feedback". These two comments exemplify how despite Terra Viva being in charge of price and products, some of their decisions are formed based on the buyer's interests. Even though IP8 has the agency to decline certain consumer requests, its agency is constrained in the sense that the quality of the cooperative's products must meet the buyer's standards; if not, buyers could decide not to purchase the products, while Terra Viva is dependent on this market/buyer.

As already briefly mentioned in *Section 6.2.1.* employees in the food processing are not only constrained by the quality standards of customers and buyers, but required to follow the standards noted in the general food law 178 (*Section 3.2.4.*) and organic certification including the law for labels. These are mandatory regulations in order to sell and export the products, which shows the state's agency (IP8 pos. 95, 99, 131).

In addition to the actors mentioned above, it is interesting to have a closer look at the **agency of fieldworkers**, as this group is frequently portrayed as the most vulnerable. The fieldworkers interviewed show agency in being able to choose their jobs or when to take a day off or even negotiating prices with farmers outside the cooperative. Fieldworker IP17 (pos. 225), for example, explains that he prefers working in the organic fields for a wage of 5 euros per hour, which is lower compared to his friend's pay, who works in a plastic factory for 5.50 or 5.60 per hour. His health is more important to him than the wages, and in this case, he can decide on this on his own. Another fieldworker (IP13 pos. 358) agrees and shows his agency in: *"If I'm not happy, I will not do that. Yeah, I decided to say yes, I will do this work. That's why I do it. If I don't want to do it, I will not come inside. I already did plus and minus, look at everything. Yes, this is OK for me"*. A third fieldworker who is employed by the cooperative and sometimes works for other people during the low season explains, *"I say look, I'll take 60 euro a day, I'll make you instead of 8 o'clock to say half an hour more."* (IP10 pos. 290). Compared to what the cooperative pays him, he receives more money per hour when he works elsewhere. Additionally, the fieldworkers employed by Terra Viva directly state their permission to choose to take a day off *"If I want to take a day, I will take a day"* (IP10 pos. 398). *"But I always have to communicate this to Irene or Piero"* (IP10 pos. 402). Despite the ability to choose to have a day off, the worker must always communicate this fact to his supervisors, which again shows that his agency is not limitless. When asking one

fieldworker, what his perception is of his work he responds with *“not too stressful because I’m already understand the system, so I know how to program myself with the little one I have. I make plus or minus with that and without it”* (IP13 pos. 147). Additionally, IP13 (pos. 119) adds that in cases there is no work at Terra Viva he has a network of farmers he can go to work for individual days, in order to get by. Regardless of the working conditions or challenges the fieldworkers face, they expressed the ability to choose their job, which shows their agency.

Despite **fieldworkers’** agency regarding job choice, days off and wage negotiations, their **agency is constrained** in the work tasks and timing of work. IP10 (pos. 137-139) explains that *“there is also him telling us that the work we have to do.”*, when speaking of his supervisor. *“He always follows us every day. He’s at work, he’s the boss in the end. What he says you must do”* (IP10 pos. 159). This shows that despite the cooperative values of equality, this particular fieldworker experiences the hierarchy from boss to employee as being fairly steep. Further, another Terra Viva fieldworker explained: *“They must inform me or that there is work or no work so that I will know what to do”* (IP13 pos. 111). This expresses the fieldworker’s dependency on the Terra Viva farmer as to on what day and at what time to work. This goes in line with a statement of one farmer (IP16 pos. 342), who says that *“during peaks workers must at least work 5 days”* which questions how freely his fieldworkers could ask for a day off. Lastly, one (migrant) fieldworker (IP17 pos. 156) says he does not care about working conditions, as he is here for the money. In a wider picture, this shows that he is constrained in his agency from caring about his working conditions or trying to improve them. This last quote exemplifies what Coe and Jordhus-Lier (2010, 6) define as resilience strategy, the act of getting by in everyday life, but without changing social relations.

To conclude the section on agency, while worker’s constrained agency was brought forward, most workers and employees did not **perceive** or express it as an issue. The interviewees rather express the importance of having a job at all, and the appreciation of their work. IP14 (pos. 145) states, *“We have something to do here in Sicily, you know, in a place where the unemployment level is incredible”*. Additionally, IP5 (pos. 411)

explains that *“In fact, I am one of the lucky ones”*, referring to the ability to have employment. IP14 (pos. 145) summarizes his perception of work: *“When we finish, we are very happy. And for sure, we are physically tired. But mentally, so open, so happy, you know, so happy to get satisfied”* and IP10 (pos. 721) adds in *“I always continue as a job, I always continue because I like it”*.

Additionally, IP10 (pos. 494) and IP13 (pos. 413) highlight their close relationship with their farmer as ‘brotherly’ and add *“[his skin] color is your [skin] color [talking to Interviewer]. That his blood is my blood [laughing]. It's a nice man. Very nice and calm person”* (IP13 pos. 413). Despite these just being two interviewed people, it shows their satisfaction and the appreciation they experience in their work. In contrast one migrant fieldworker, who was interviewed on the field, did not seem as happy compared to the other interviewed fieldworkers. He was also more nervous because of what to say during the interview. From an outsider’s perspective the relationship of this migrant worker to the farmer he worked for also seemed significantly more distant and more top-down than the relationship in Terra Viva’s own farming team (Field Notes 17.07.2024; IP17). Both situations, either feeling socially close or distant, can be reasons for not personally engaging in any resistance or reworking strategies. Even though IP16 (pos. 351) explains that *“there are many things that could be improved: sometimes it is a problem of resources, both human and material. Sometimes I could use another person, or an extra machine to help you work, which we cannot afford at the moment. Or something that breaks down, and then you have to comply in another way”*, he does not act beyond the strategy of resistance. One reason could be that the gravity of his condition is not severe enough for him to change his situation, or his agency is too constrained to improve what would have to be changed.

Despite workers not participating in more resistance strategies, when viewing Terra Viva and Fairshare from a systematic perspective by setting the price and bypassing conventional distribution, reworking and resistance strategies can be identified. The Discussion *Chapter 9* elaborates up to what degree Terra Viva, Fairshare, and individual workers engage in resistance, resilience, and reworking strategies.

8. How Terra Viva Addresses Their Challenges

After looking at the working conditions in production and reviewing the research question, *Chapter 8* contains the challenges related to working conditions. *Section 8.1.* mentions general challenges in the food system, whereas *Section 8.2.* includes goals and processes for how these challenges are addressed or where there is room for improvement.

8.1. The Presence and Absence of the State, Market Dependency and Climate Risks

After pointing out working conditions such as income, hours or agency, the challenges are described that are related to these working conditions. The mentioned challenges are collected on a system-based level which includes the involvement of the state *Section 8.1.1.* and embeddedness in the global food system *Section 8.1.2.*

8.1.1. State

A **first** challenge, which is generally mentioned in these interviews and in the literature, is the **lack of inspections** and culture of not following the rules (Palumbo 2016; IP12 pos. 415). IP2 (pos. 95) explains that in Italian agriculture, in general, there are little to no inspections by the government. A reason for this is explained by the FLAI CGIL employee in *“In Palermo there are only three labour inspectors, only three people. Now they have made competitions, so I don't know if any other unit has increased. So, there are no inspectors either. No one goes around the companies, no one goes to check whether everyone in that company is up to standard”* (IP15 pos. 265). As a result of this lack of the state's resources for inspections, authors note that the mafia often steps in and controls agriculture production and determines working conditions (Grasseni 2022; Perrotta and Raeymakers 2023). However, based on my field visits and interviews, there was neither any noticeable presence of the mafia nor inspections in and around Terra Viva. While all interviewees agreed to the absence of inspections, one fieldworker argued to have experienced inspections (IP10 pos. 200). Unfortunately, it was not possible to gain more information on these inspections. Most likely, these inspections took place outside Terra Viva, or he was referring to the cooperative's president visiting the fields.

Besides the lack of inspections, which shows the state's lack of control over working conditions, one fieldworker (IP12 pos. 415) states that, especially in Sicily, *“there is a culture of dishonesty”*. This lack of honesty is partially connected to how people view paying taxes or following the collective bargaining agreements (IP9 pos. 183). At the same time, not paying the amount the collective bargaining agreement resolved is not viewed as “drastic” as it might be in other European countries. Additionally, if there are no consequences and these rules are collectively “overstepped”, people continue to do so. Eventually, the lack of inspections and the state’s absence leads to more autonomous behaviour of individual farmers and cooperatives, who may or may not follow the rules.

A **second** challenge mentioned by the two farmers is the **lack of workforce**. As mentioned in *Section 7.2.1.*, one farmer explains that the lack of fieldworkers is connected to the increased migrant policy (IP14 pos. 19, 9). A second farmer (IP9 pos. 47) explains the lack of workforce with the more general movement that *“many young people now move from the villages to the city and therefore no longer dedicate themselves to the activity in the countryside”*. As a result of this challenge, IP14 has started working as a fieldworker himself. Among the interviewed farmers and fieldworkers, it was surprising to hear that all of them have work relationships from 3-20 years (IP9 pos. 31, 35). Thus, the lack of workforce also makes the farmers try to keep the fieldworkers they have employed. From a fieldworker’s perspective, the high unemployment rate most likely influences the motivation to remain employed by a farmer and shows the lack of alternative job opportunities.

A **third** challenge connected to the state is the **lack of representation**. IP9 (pos. 362) explains that he does not see himself represented by farmer unions in front of the state.

“There was all the talk of eliminating glyphosate. Confagricoltura was the first trade union list to oppose the elimination of glyphosate. So, I, who am an organic farmer, can never see, understand, recognise myself in a trade association like that, because they move the interests, they do the interests of the big producers especially in northern Italy, where, of course, there is still excessively intensive farming” (IP9 pos. 362).

However, on a legal level, such as the collective bargaining agreements, the farmer unions such as Coldiretti or Confagricoltura represent all farmers, despite their interests and views. Especially, organic small-scale farmers or farmers embedded in an alternative market are not legally represented or included in deciding on their own laws and regulations (IP7 pos. 225). Additionally, farmer IP6 (pos.17) explains that due to their

small scale “[...] even for the state, we are not actually farmers [...]”. As a result, this farmer does not pay any taxes and therefore cannot apply for financial support. The lack of representation could also lead to regulations in the collective bargaining agreement that are not realistic, and as a consequence impossible to enable economic support for organic small-scale farmers. Furthermore, the lack of representation may also be a reason to take the collective bargaining agreement less seriously.

8.1.2. The Economic and Agricultural System

Apart from challenges directly connected to the state, the interviewed people mentioned the increasing living costs, payment, market competition, lack of appreciation, and climate and weather influences as further challenges connected to the economic and agricultural system.

First, when asking about people's salaries, interviewees such as IP3 or IP5 explained that the amount they received from Terra Viva was good, *“But in Italy, we have a problem that is in general that the wages are not increasing like the life cost in the same line, because the **life costs are increasing** more”* (IP3 pos. 144). IP3 (pos. 268) further argues that the rising costs of living are not connected to agriculture or the cooperative but to inflation in general. IP15 (pos. 208) from the labour union adds that even if applying the wages stated in the collective bargaining agreement *“these are not wages that now respond to the rising rate of inflation and the cost of truth”*. This excerpt shows the general precarity of the salaries and costs of living and that the wages agreed upon in the collective bargaining agreement still seem too low to live a decent life. Further, it also raises questions on how fieldworkers earning below these wages are able to live a decent life.

The **second** challenge is connected to the previous aspect and represents one of the most often mentioned challenges: *“The first thing that needs to be improved is the pay”* (IP12 pos. 609). However, the issue of **payment** is complex and connected to the agricultural and global food system. IP2 (pos. 123) explains that, in general, *“If the producer does not have a fair price for his products, it is clear that he will not have the ability to pay. And this is solved at the European level, at the international level for a fair price for products”*. IP2 (pos. 99) explains that in the conventional system, the prices producers receive for their products are *“so low that the producer has no value margin, he is forced to exploit. So, an exploitative system where the supermarkets crush the*

producers, the producers, in turn, crush the workers". Additionally, this excerpt points out the dominance of supermarkets, which IP2 (pos. 99) further refers to, in:

"The real origin that produces the exploitation is the fact that supermarkets all over the world, all over Europe, all over Italy, have a tendency to want to buy products at a lower and lower price from the producer. So, the farmer who finds himself having to sell, being forced to sell the product at a price that is not sustainable, in turn in order to be able to sell and stay at those prices he has to save money somewhere, and unfortunately where he goes to save money is labour costs" IP2 (pos. 99).

IP7 (pos. 463) agrees by explaining that in conventional systems the price is *"determined by external systems that are in turn influenced by big interest groups that control all this, and the farmers are subjected to the trading system that tells you the price is this and he has to adjust to that price and there is nothing he can do about it"*. However, as Terra Viva determines the prices themselves and does not sell to conventional supermarkets they can partially escape from the price pressure of the conventional system. Despite Terra Viva's independency in price setting, IP4 (pos. 197) admits, *"also Terra Viva has their challenges, especially when sometimes economy is going down, you cannot just say tomorrow now the salary of the people is going down because of the economy"*. This shows that although being in an alternative market, Terra Viva is still connected to the capitalist economy, and therefore they are partially dependent on the fluctuations of the global economy. Furthermore, IP16 (pos. 203) explains *"So this is a price that we make, which is out of the market here. So here we sell almost none, just a few small, specialized shops because we cannot, we are not competitive with the large-scale retail trade"*. This excerpt shows that freedom in price setting comes with limitations on who and where the buyers and customers are. IP11 (pos. 21) adds that consumers *"do not pay attention to quality, but to the price"*, which makes it difficult to solely increase the price. Furthermore, IP7 (pos. 295) argues that besides the supermarkets' power on producers, they also trick the consumer through greenwashing:

"On the packaging they show the Guatemalan farmer holding a banana, then you go and see what really happens and... so it's just information management. It's a mockery, in my opinion, of the end consumer who goes to a supermarket shelf and picks up something thinking that that thing is different from what it really is, because that company is good at communication" (IP7 pos. 295).

IP11 (pos. 83) sees Terra Viva is in the same situation and says that *"producers complained that they would like a higher price but then, of course, in the chain that*

means that the final product is going to be more expensive, and the consumers are going to have to pay the higher price. So, it's always a matter of finding, a balance between the interests of the producer and the interests of the consumer." This shows that also, apart from the conventional system, the product price remains crucial, and while opening opportunities and freedom in one sense, it remains constrained by the consumer's ability to pay.

The difficulty in payment is connected to **market competition**, a **third** challenge. IP12 (pos. 625) explains that compared to other countries, labour costs in Italy are high. So, what happens is that production gets outsourced to areas with even cheaper production, such as Africa, Spain, or Turkey (IP12 pos. 643). However, regarding Italy, IP3 (pos. 312) adds that it is difficult for Terra Viva to compete with conventional producers, who *"decrease the price of the product. They harvest everything by machines. So, the price is very low. Maybe they give water to the plants, so they have huge amounts of plants of tomatoes then also"*. Connected to conventional producers, Zollet et al. (2021, 4–5) and Della Puppa and Piovesan (2023, 887) mention decrease of farm numbers and increase in farm sizes, which then allows farmers to increase the production, which again increases their chances against competition. Contrary to conventional farmers, Terra Viva increases the product price. However, this development leads to the large export of Terra Viva products to wealthier regions such as the North of Italy or Switzerland. This is confirmed by IP11 (pos. 27) in: *"only 5% is sold in south Italy"* because products are too expensive where higher wages are paid than in conventional companies. The fact that Terra Viva products are mainly exported to financially strong regions and, even within those regions are accessible to economically wealthy customers, aligns with Goodman's (2004, 13) critique, referenced in *Section 4.2.3.*, that describes AFNs as a "class diet" for high income groups. Eventually, the accessibility of high-quality and fair food resembles both a further challenge and an opportunity for improvement for Terra Viva and Fairshare, as well as AFNs in general.

Across all the interviews, the **lack of appreciation** for agricultural work was mentioned as **fourth**, general challenge in agriculture (IP15, IP7, IP12, IP2, and IP4). IP15 (pos. 247) explains that *"work in agriculture is not considered to be paid for what it is due. That is, it is not qualified well, i.e. picking grapes is viewed badly"*. The lack of appreciation is

explained through a cultural problem dating back to ancient times but is now often viewed as being a result of the producer-consumer disconnection (IP12 pos. 605; IP7 pos. 150). IP7 (pos. 153) sums up the producer-consumer disconnection in:

“The whole current system, starting from the EU agricultural policy, to the trade system, to the university system, is all set up so that the farmer does not dialogue with civil society, but acts as a primary production system, not necessarily able to understand the processes, but only producing those things that are indicated to him by other systems that make the choice and give all that production to a large, organised trade system” (IP7 pos. 153).

IP7 (pos. 257) further comments on the agricultural system: *“in the end it is an agricultural world that works, as if it were, blindfolded. It works without satisfaction, it never receives gratification because this world tends not to gratify so much, because otherwise it would have to raise the price to give you gratification.”* Additionally, IP7 (pos. 153), who is a farmer himself, admits, *“We farmers are first of all responsible for this disconnect because we have never paid attention to civil society, we have never been able to give importance to this collaboration, we have always looked for commercial systems that stand between the world of production and the world of consumption”*. Thirdly, IP7 (pos. 264) explains that the agricultural system *“cannot be attentive to the needs of its workers as well, so it cannot even respect workers because it is not respected, that is, it is not integrated, treated well. So, agriculture is a system that is very frustrated. The attitude I see of farmers is a negative one “*. Based on this quote the importance of Terra Viva's direct producer-consumer relationship becomes clearer, which is mentioned as one of their core values, further explained in Section 8.2.

As the **fifth** and last challenge, **climate and weather** have been mentioned. IP5 (pos. 69) explains that *“farming is a very risky practice as it is tied to the weather”* and adds *“in agriculture you cannot say: tomorrow I do not want to work, or tomorrow I have something else to do because you always run after what the weather decides to do “*(IP5 pos. 94). As the production is heavily dependent on the weather and there is an increasing risk for harvest loss due to the changing climate and unforeseen weather events, predictions on sales are also challenging (IP1 pos. 114; IP14 pos. 84; IP12 pos. 609; IP5 168). Besides the dependency on the weather, IP7 (pos. 799) also mentions the seasonality as a challenge: *“I normally see a great difficulty in putting these two needs together, for the worker to work permanently at a fair wage and for the producer to have availability of*

labour when he needs it". This also shows the dependency on seasonality, particularly as during the harvest time of most products it is also the peak of temperatures explained in *"It's extremely challenging when you're harvesting tomatoes in the field at over 40 degrees. That's not without its challenges. The climate is certainly a huge challenge there"* (IP1 pos. 208). As also mentioned in Section 6.1.3 on fieldworkers' working conditions, extreme heat is a significant factor in working on the fields and determines their daily working hours (IP9 pos. 149, 153; IP14 pos. 108).

In addition to the challenges mentioned above, it is important to note that after asking people about their challenges, I also specifically asked about the influence of COVID-19. All interviewees except for IP12, who had to change his job because of COVID-19, did not express being negatively affected by the pandemic. IP14 (pos. 13) explained that people in agriculture were even blessed as the government gave them more freedom. IP1 (pos. 127) adds that the sales, in their case, flourished during the pandemic.

8.2. Addressing Challenges and Goals

This section describes how Terra Viva addresses the challenges, regarding the state such as lack of inspections (1) and lack of representation (3) and regarding the economic and agricultural system, including payment (1/2), lack of appreciation (4), climate and seasonality (5), mentioned above. The remaining challenges, lack of workforce (2) and market competition (3), have either been addressed above on an individual level or are too broad for the scope of this thesis.

In order to address the **lack of inspections**, Terra Viva states that they check the contracts and working conditions of new farmer associates and fieldworkers (IP3 pos.32). Despite the general lack of inspections being mentioned, interviewed people did not express a wish for more governmental inspections. However, it is also understandable that, even though the cooperative pays far beyond what is stated in the literature, the income mentioned by the fieldworkers is not in line with the collective bargaining agreement, which would be discovered through inspections. Connected to the state's lack of involvement is the involvement of the mafia. This topic was not further explored during the fieldwork interviews. However, one employee (IP5) mentioned: *"Terra Viva is against all systems of oppression, like mafia"* (pos. 473), which is the reason for Terra Vivas participation in the Addiopizzo Association, an organization with a label

signalizing that these products were produced without paying the pizzo to the mafia (pos. 477).

As mentioned above the **lack of representation** is partially addressed through Terra Viva's own network. Despite not being able to legally represent their interests on a governmental level, interviewees IP9 mentioned that he feels represented by Terra Viva and thus has a connection to the consumer world through this network. Furthermore, Terra Viva offers the exchange of agricultural knowledge through their agroecology school.

Regarding the **payment and income**, the living costs are difficult to change for the cooperative as they are mostly connected to the economic system. However, the product price and price division are different from the conventional system determined by farmers together with Terra Viva. Additionally, Fairshare accepts bottom-up pricing, where the producing cooperative, such as Terra Viva, recommends a certain price that is necessary to cover all expenses, including fair labour wages (IP1 pos. 257). IP11 (pos. 81) adds that Terra Viva tries to set a price that covers the right amount for the producer without burdening the consumers too much. Additionally, through monthly payments to associated farmers, they do not rely on credits from banks and are independent in that aspect (IP14 pos. 68). Furthermore, one employee mentioned that instead of increasing payment and salaries, Terra Viva rather employed more people to offer job opportunities, as this was a possibility to combat the high unemployment rate in Sicily (IP4 pos. 185).

Regarding the **lack of appreciation**, IP2 (pos. 123) explains that *"there are 60 million Italians who eat every day and often do not know what they eat. So, citizen consumer awareness can make a big difference"*. This quote points out the **disconnection between producers and consumers** and resembles one of the most prominent goals for Terra Viva. By strengthening the producer-consumer relationship they aim to increase the consumer's appreciation, value, and price of the product (IP7 pos. 295). Fairshare is one example where consumers are directly linked to producers and participate in the supply chain through pre-purchasing the products (IP3 pos. 80; IP7 pos. 853). IP7 (295) explains that the goal of close contacts with civil society is *"that the end consumer can in some way participate in agricultural projects, get to know them, so also see who the people are, who do it and create these connections"*. IP7 (pos. 146) mentions dialogue and communication as key elements to increase and exchange knowledge between

producers and consumers. IP11 (pos. 41) further adds that by organizing events and inviting customers, they aim to raise awareness. The more awareness and understanding the customers have, the more they will respect *“producer's work, the producer's dignity, which recognizes the value of the producer's sacrifice and therefore also recognizes a price that is fair and not below cost, which allows the producer to have a good income, but also to have a certain pride”* (IP11 pos. 67). Further, IP7 (pos. 865) mentions the vision of Terra Viva to increase the connection between producers and consumers on a European level:

“A little tool to facilitate this meeting, this dialogue, to facilitate the various mechanisms. So, I really wanted to give an association made up of all Terra Viva friends and Terra Viva customers. And there to make a lot of information, initiatives or suggestions travel, so favouring this mechanism with technological tools perhaps that allow us to do this type of collaboration. Maybe once a year we have an assembly, whoever wants to come comes and we share thoughts. And then during the year a whole series of exchanges of information simply” (IP7 pos. 865).

Regarding **Challenge 5**, IP3 (pos. 308) states that *“the best way will be in the future to be resilient from the climate change from the way to the big companies are trying to destroy us because they're trying to push a lot of bad things to us because the price”*. How exactly this resilience of Terra Viva will look, is yet to be defined. However, as harvest peaks are nothing new and agriculture is already experiencing the effects of climate change, Terra Viva has already developed and envisioned certain strategies to cope with this challenge. The most obvious adaption is the adaption of working hours when the temperatures rise above a certain level, which this summer was ordered by the provincial authorities (IP12 pos. 88; Schifani 2024). The adaption of working hours to temperature requires the flexibility of the workers to start at 5 a.m. and end at noon or even earlier, or sometimes not to work at all. Additionally, harvest and correlating labour peaks are mentioned in the interviews as well as in the literature. IP3 (pos. 316) mentions that one goal of Terra Viva is to *“have a very short timing period of the external work for the workers is a big challenge for the future”*. One method currently implemented is product diversification. Having a range of different products spreads the harvest peaks over a longer period. This again reduces the need for short-term flexible labour (Salvia 2020; Perrotti and Raeymakers 2023). The interviewed fieldworkers and farmers all highlighted their long-term employments (IP9 pos. 31, 35). Additionally, product diversification also partially reduces the gravity of harvest loss. IP4 (pos. 13) explains that

“in any way one product maybe this year it might be hot, so maybe Pomodoro doesn't do well, but grapes and pomegranate and lentils do well”. The cooperative themselves but also the farmers who grow a variety of plants do not rely on one single product and can, in case of harvest loss, compensate more easily with earnings from other products, respectively from several farmers, than if they had a monoculture production from single farmers (IP7 pos. 503; IP4 pos. 13). Additionally, IP3 (pos. 272) also explains that the cooperative tries to save money in case of harvest loss:

“... when we have credits, for example, more credits. We prefer to create stocks of money to help producers if some producer has problems. Maybe with a piece of crops, maybe with the weather, with the weather conditions, or we will pay more for the raw material we receive from the producer. So, we are in a kind of balance between the world of the producer, the world of the rest of Terra Viva” (IP3 pos. 272).

At the same time there are also limits to combat the effects of climate change and harvest loss. However, regarding working conditions IP3 (pos. 304) envisions *“to use different plants or varieties of tomatoes that make it easier for the worker to harvest the tomatoes. Imagine tomatoes not very small, but maybe a bit bigger, which would mean less time for a worker to cut/pick”*. On the sales side, a strategy connected to harvest loss but also in case of overproduction is Fairshare raising the consumer's awareness regarding delays or a reduced amount of the products (IP1 pos. 60-61). On a financial level, Fairshare consumers share the risk of harvest loss through pre-purchasing products before their harvest (Company Website 2024).

An additional strategy against climate change and for strengthening farmers' resilience is through agroecological practices (IP11 pos. 75). IP11 (pos. 117) explains that Terra Viva's agroecology school aims to improve the producer's work. *“The main reason why we set up a practical school of agroecology is precisely to improve their knowledge, cope with climate change and thus also be able to have better quality standards, and this can also lead to an improvement in their own condition.”*

All in all, IP7 (pos. 123) states *“We must do something to change this system. But little by little, we were beginning to realize that the transformation was very big, it was not enough to go from conventional to organic, but we had to totally revolutionize an entire supply chain”*. This summarizes the complexity of the challenges, such as the increase of the product price or wages. However, product and producer diversification, as well as

strengthening acceptance on the consumer's side are some approaches to address the challenges mentioned above.

9. Discussion

First, *Chapter 9* contextualizes and discusses reasons for diverging statements that were briefly presented in *Chapters 6, 7 and 8*. Additionally, the topics of labour, alternative food systems, and certification are discussed according to their theoretical embedding from *Chapter 4*. Lastly, the research questions are revisited and answered.

9.1. Contradicting Statements About Income

As demonstrated in *Chapter 7* on working conditions, there is a difference between the **payment of fieldworkers** as declared by the fieldworkers themselves and the amount mentioned by their employers. Surprisingly, this discrepancy occurred in all the interviews with fieldworker-farmers/employers. It is recognisable that the wages the employers reported are around 20 euros higher than those stated by the fieldworkers. Even if the employers are unaware of the precise amounts or are potentially subtracting taxes, the wage discrepancy is significant. Furthermore, the amounts stated by the employers – 80, 72 and 70 euros – are noticeably higher than the amount defined by the collective bargaining agreement and the amount the fieldworkers argued to receive, which is below the collective bargaining amount. The employer's statement seems intended to convey that they are paying fair wages according to the collective bargaining agreement. This narrative aligns with Terra Viva and particularly Fairshare standing for and advertising to pay fair wages. A further possible reason, as stated in *Chapter 8*, is the general “culture of dishonesty”.

A further reason for the gap between the amount the **collective bargaining agreement** states and what the fieldworkers earn could be the lack of resources to access the documents or information the local authority provides on the current collective bargaining agreement (FLAI CGIL 2021). At this point, it is also important to mention that IP15, who works for FLAI CGIL, showed the collective bargaining agreement from 2021-2023, and explained that at the time, they were revising the next collective bargaining agreement for 2024-2028, even though it was already mid-2024 when she was interviewed. As a result, the current collective bargaining agreement is not published nor accessible on FLAI-CGIL's homepage (FLAI CGIL 2024 last accessed 24.11.2024).

As in this case study, no one earns significantly more than the other employees; the income through the products may not allow employers to pay their workers more. The

inability to pay the fieldworkers according to the collective bargaining agreement highlights the employer's dilemma. Ultimately, farmers and Terra Viva are financially in charge of their production and employees requiring them to balance multiple needs. As stated in *Section 7.1.2.* one farmer admitted that he could not afford to pay his fieldworkers the wages noted in the collective bargaining agreement. At times he himself earned less and worked more than his fieldworkers. Alongside the wages, the **unemployment benefit**, as stated in *Section 7.1.3.*, is a significant part of the fieldworker's income. While most fieldworkers report their working days as being within the necessary range for unemployment compensation, one fieldworker exceeds the limit but continues to receive the governmental payment, as his employer reports a number of days which is within the range. Another farmer admits to providing his fieldworker with the required days. These cases illustrate the financial struggles faced by farmers, particularly the inability to pay salaries according to the collective bargaining agreement, which they "compensate" through state-provided unemployment benefits. This creates a paradox: while bypassing the state regulations regarding collective bargaining and unemployment benefits, both farmers and fieldworkers continue to profit from the state. A further contradicting statement is that fieldworkers are employed on fixed-term contracts, as farmers argue fieldworkers only receive their unemployment benefit with these instead of permanent contracts. However, as stated in Caridi (2024, 4–5), *Section 3.2.1.*, both permanent and fixed-term contracts allow unemployment benefits. According to Caridi (2024, 4–5) the unemployment benefit seems to be slightly higher with a fixed-term contract than with a permanent one, which could be a reason for the employer's choice to employ fieldworkers on fixed-term contracts, in this case study. However, the exact unemployment benefit for both contract types, including the effects of the daily solidarity deduction requires further clarification and research. Despite the interviewed fieldworkers receiving annually renewed contracts over many years, limits the fieldworker's guarantee for stable employment and income. As a result, I highly recommend further investigating the influence of longer-term, permanent contracts on unemployment benefits.

Ultimately, fieldworkers not receiving the correct amount and employers' attempt to compensate the inability to pay the correct wages by reporting more working days, underscores Terra Viva's structural vulnerability. The diverging statements regarding

payment and reported working days reveal a limitation of this thesis. It is not possible to verify the exact wages of fieldworkers nor working days reported, which I therefore suggest should be further investigated by Terra Viva and Fairshare.

9.2. Theoretical Embedding

9.2.1. Labour and Agency

Regarding the theoretical embedding of labour, agency is a crucial aspect. Apart from the relation between the state and agency, the different forms of agency, resilience, reworking and resistance strategies are compared with the case study (Coe and Jordhus-Lier 2010, 6).

First, the state has the power to define who is recognised as a farmer, worker and, even more fundamentally, a “legal” person in Italy (Perrotta and Sacchetto 2014; Carswell and De Neve 2013; IP6). As demonstrated in *Section 7.2.1.*, one fieldworker suddenly experienced better job opportunities as soon as he had a legal permit. The classification as a legal or illegal person influences workers regarding their rights and agency to ask for more money. Eventually, it affects a worker’s vulnerability. Despite the fieldworkers constrained agency, it is possible to change the powerful state, as visible in the Anti-Caporalato Law, which originated from a fieldworker’s protest (Perrotta and Sacchetto 2014; Normattiva 2016; D’Onofrio 2020). Additionally, the ability to live in an apartment and keep the money they earn, highlights fieldworkers’ agency in comparison to the caporalato system mentioned in the literature (D’Onofrio 2020; Perrotta and Sacchetto 2014).

Secondly, disregarding the cooperatives' or workers' values or goals, employers must obey the general law. Through the collective bargaining agreement, the state has agency to set a certain amount which must be paid by employers of fieldworkers. However, according to the fieldworker's statements, this is not the case. This shows that despite the state’s apparent agency, its absence and lack of sanctions transfers agency to the employer, in this case, Terra Viva or associated farmers. The received agency eventually allows Terra Viva and associated farmers to disobey the legal system and pay fieldworkers below the amount noted in the collective bargaining agreement. Additionally, by declaring the number of workdays required to receive the unemployment benefit, that do not align with the reality in some interviewed cases, the state effectively

transfers its agency to the employer. This enables the farmer to bypass regulations while benefiting from state provisions.

On the contrary, as elaborated in *Section 7.2.2.* employers in production must strictly follow the food laws in order to sell their products. The same goes for the organic certification which requires bureaucratic work and leaves farmers with little agency, as they must strictly follow the regulations. Terra Viva's products are regularly checked by the cooperative and authorities especially when being exported. If the raw or processed products show any residuals or contain parameters which do not correspond to the laws and regulations, they are not sold. This shows agency of the state through laws and regulations while the cooperative and farmers are constrained in this aspect. The effects of the state's agency on Terra Viva are twofold: Whereas Terra Viva is constrained to follow the law ordered by the state, they check their products regularly and have agency compared to the farmers who deliver the products. These two examples, payment below collective bargaining agreement and the effects of the food laws highlight the difference of the state's agency. Despite both examples being laid down in laws, inspections and sanctions, enabling the state's agency in the second example, their absence transfers agency to individuals and leaves more room to overstep regulations.

As elaborated in *Chapter 4*, **resilience strategies are acts of getting by** but do not change the existing social relations (Coe and Jordhus-Lier 2010, 6). Based on the results, several resilience acts can be identified: firstly, the adjustment of working hours to heat. This goes along with the workers' flexible working hours due to the badge system. Both of these innovations improve the worker's daily "getting by" but do not challenge any larger hegemonic relations. A further act demonstrated in *Section 7.2.2.* is a fieldworker's personal network, which allows him to receive multiple offers to work on other farms when there is insufficient work at Terra Viva. From the fieldworker's perspective, this reflects a resilience strategy to manage the seasonality of agriculture, which demands less labour during certain periods. As demonstrated in *Section 6.2.2.*, a further resilience strategy for Terra Viva is paying farmers monthly instead of all at once. This strategy increases the cooperative's independence to take loans from the bank, as they are more financially liquid throughout the year. Eventually, this increases Terra Viva's agency. The

independence from the bank could already be partially classified as a reworking strategy as it indirectly challenges the power of the bank.

Some **reworking** strategies outlay the basis for resistance actions to flourish. Generally, reworking strategies challenge the hegemonic social relations and redistribute power within the capitalist system (Coe and Jordhus-Lier 2010, 6). One reworking strategy is Terra Viva's fight against mafia intermediaries through the Addiopizzo Association, strengthening the production without mafia involvement. Even though they cannot directly overcome the actions of the mafia, they challenge conventional intermediaries who are mostly connected to the mafia (Grasseni 2013, 46). A last reworking strategy is the cooperative's agroecological school. By spreading knowledge on how to produce more environmentally friendly, producers not only avoid the pesticide market but also strengthen their strategies and make their products more resistant towards climate change. In contrast, most conventional farmers, who rely on pesticides, may seem to have more promising results in the short run, but face greater long-term challenges.

Lastly, the strongest form of agency is **resistance**, which directly challenges capitalist relations and aims to regain control (Coe and Jordhus-Lier 2010, 6). By not selling to conventional supermarkets, Terra Viva resists the power relationships in conventional producer-distributor relationships and is involved in price-setting. The neglect of selling to conventional supermarkets and selling instead to Fairshare enables the cooperative to be an agent in proposing the price to clients.

Despite the resilience, reworking, and resistance strategies discussed in *Section 7.2*, the graded agency of Terra Viva, Fairshare, and their employees reflects the presence of collective and individual agency in some aspects, but also how it is constrained in others. However, as pointed out above, Fairshare's direct Buyer-Client relationship (B2C) shows efforts to challenge conventional power relations.

9.2.2. Supermarketization in the Third Food Regime

Another important aspect to be discussed is the presence of supermarkets in our current food regime or, as in this case study, the absence of supermarkets. In *Chapter 4*, authors such as Lawrence and Dixon (2015), Clapp (2012) and D'Onofrio (2020) highlight the dominance of supermarkets in price-making and effects on worker's income. Therefore,

it is even more interesting to look at the relationship between Terra Viva and Fairshare, where supermarkets are absent. The absence of supermarkets located at the bottleneck, as Clapp (2012) defines, allows the cooperative to decide on the product price, which is higher than the products sold in the supermarket. The defined product price covers Terra Viva's production costs and allows "fair" payment for all involved workers. Despite the cooperative paying below the collective bargaining agreement, the fieldworkers at the cooperative receive payment far above the amount mentioned in the literature *Chapter 3* (Palumbo 2016; Perrotta and Raeymaekers 2023; D'Onofrio 2020). However, regarding price setting, the cooperative, in cooperation with the farmers, decides on the price and not the producer alone. One could argue that in the Terra Viva - Fairshare relationship, Terra Viva, as cooperative, partially functions as a bottleneck as they propose the price. On the contrary, Terra Viva setting the price can also function as a safety net, as all producers receive the same price. Assuming that individual producers, rather than the cooperative, were to define the prices for Terra Viva and Fairshare, there would be a risk that producers might compete against each other by lowering prices aiming to increase their chances of selling their products. Besides this risk, it could present an opportunity. By opening the space for price discussions among the associated farmers, it could lead to a more nuanced understanding of the prices needed to cover the production costs and ensure fair payment for fieldworkers. One possible implementation could involve meetings with the president and all associated farmers to collectively negotiate prices, during which farmers would demonstrate the amounts required to adequately cover their costs and pay their fieldworkers and themselves.

Additionally, in her hourglass model, Clapp (2012) explains how producers are located on one end and consumers on the other end of the bottle neck, which disconnects the supply chain's beginning and end. As explained above by IP11 and IP7 one of Terra Viva's main goals is to connect producers and consumers, thus enabling an understanding of each other's needs for a certain product.

9.2.3. Alternative Food Systems

As demonstrated in *Chapter 4*, alternative food systems challenge the issues in the conventional system (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy 2013; Kneafsey et al. 2016). This core idea is visible in the cooperative Terra Viva and its relationship to Fairshare. It is

interesting to highlight at this point that Fonte and Cucco (2017) argue for the collaboration between cooperatives and AFNs. While Terra Viva emerged during the Italian cooperative movement with an agricultural core as well as social characteristics from the beginning, it is unique compared to the cooperative development as mentioned in the literature. While Terra Viva does not function as a typical AFN directly, such as CSA or box scheme, they do sell to alternative food networks such as Fairshare, engage in farmers' markets and have several associated farmers who themselves practise direct sales with zero distance (Fonte and Cucco 2017). Terra Viva mentions that they are non-profit and do not aim to increase their sales or margin, but to increase the relationship between consumers and producers, producing and selling environmentally and socially friendly products independently of conventional distributors and price speculations (Goodman 2002; Dansero and Puttilli 2014).

As elaborated in *Chapter 4*, there are four key characteristics of alternative food systems, which are discussed in relation to Terra Viva (Maye 2016; Dansero and Puttilli 2014).

The **first** concerns the social and spatial proximity, especially the former one, which is visible within Terra Viva and between Terra Viva and Fairshare. Actors within the cooperative all know each other very well and, if not already biologically related, refer to each other as “brothers” or “fathers”. While this social proximity can be beneficial in some ways, it can also be challenging in others. Such close relationships likely make work more enjoyable but may bear potential downsides: individuals might feel less inclined to address conflicts, criticism can be taken less seriously, and unfavourable conditions tolerated more. Additionally, individuals may work more or take on additional tasks out of kindness based on the close relationships. This willingness to go the extra mile results from the desire to maintain the goodwill inherent in the close-knit dynamic. On a larger scale, Fairshare aims for a close relationship through regular updates and visits. However, based on the size of the cooperative and geographical distance, Fairshare is not as socially close as, for example, other AFNs located close by. Despite the spatial distance between Terra Viva and Fairshare, the production of the cooperative is characterised by spatial proximity. Most producers have their field within half an hour's driving distance from the core of the cooperative where the cooperative fields and processing facility are located. However, according to Marsden (2000 IN Dansero and Puttilli 2014, 629) the relationship between Terra Viva and Fairshare would be considered

spatially extended. Spatial proximity also increases transparency in the entire supply chain. As explained in *Section 6.2.2.* and *9.2.2.*, the president deciding on the prices acts as an intermediary in the price discussion between buyers such as Fairshare and producing farmers. Whereas this highlights Fairshare's trust in the president and the cooperative, their function as intermediary decreases the directness and social proximity between Fairshare, the end consumers and the producers.

The **second** characteristic of organic and holistic small-scale farming applies to Terra Viva (Tudisca et al. 2014). All Terra Viva producers are obliged to produce organically. Furthermore, most farms are small-scale farms, with an average size of ten hectares, which only plant a small amount per product instead of a large amount of a singular product (Whatsapp Exchange IP8 20.11.2024). As stated in *Chapter 6*, Terra Viva associates are encouraged to attend the agroecological school and deepen their knowledge in agroecological production.

Thirdly, Maye (2016) mentions alternative purchasing venues. Generally, Terra Viva also aligns with this AFN characteristic, as they regularly visit farmers' markets and do not sell to conventional supermarkets (IP3 pos. 190). In this aspect, Fairshare is most significant, as it is an alternative distributor and a venue that directly sends food items to consumers. Nevertheless, Terra Viva also sells to conventional restaurants and organic shops, which could be seen as a weaker alternative purchasing venue. Through organic production and alternative purchasing venues Terra Viva counts as what Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy (2013) define as an Alternative Market.

Fourth and last, the focus on the social, economic, and environmental dimensions is visible in Terra Viva and Fairshare. Several actors, such as IP4 and IP3, mention the social component by highlighting the producer-consumer relationship and the importance of workers' appreciation in the supply chain. The focus on social and environmental aspects instead of on growth and profit of Terra Viva goes along with what Goodman, DuPuis and Goodman (2012) and Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy (2013) state as necessary to solve issues of the capitalist growth focused economy.

According to the aforementioned AFN characteristics, Terra Viva and, specifically, Fairshare are in line with most AFN characteristics. However, compared to certain forms of community-supported agriculture, both Terra Viva and Fairshare remain partially dependent on the capitalist economy through the product price, production costs and

wages. Additionally, as mentioned in *Section 4.2.3.* and *8.1.2.* by Goodman (2004), the higher product price promotes higher income customers from richer countries. As Terra Viva's products are among the more expensive ones this could lead to exclusion of lower-income customers. By informing the consumers about the reasons for the increased price, Fairshare increases consumers' acceptance and understanding. Nevertheless, to avoid further class and income inequality, the pricing model and consumer involvement should be improved, for example, by paying product prices according to your income (Goodman 2004, 13).

Lastly, despite its alternative nature, Terra Viva remains legally dependent on the laws and is represented by conventional associations defining collective bargaining agreements. Both the lack of representation by the law and the fact that supermarkets were classified as essential during the pandemic while farmers' markets had to close question how alternative food networks can settle and emerge if they do not receive the state's support (Zollet et al. 2021, 19).

In sum, Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy (2013) mention that the core of the conventional economy "machine" must change by including more environmental and social aspects from within. Viewing Terra Viva, I argue that based on their sense of social inclusion, equality, producer-consumer relationships, and their focus on producing environmentally sustainable food, the core of the cooperative is an alternative to the conventional machine. However, through personal exchange with the cooperative, I learnt that some of the initial founders, who are now no longer employed at the cooperative, would rather change the cooperative values to for-profit ones and replace employees with difficulties by more skilled staff (Oral Source Milano 16.11.2024). This shows that despite the social and environmental core, challenges remain in protecting it and not turning towards the capitalist machine.

9.2.4. Labels and Certification

As outlined in the theory *Chapter 4*, labels and certifications were among the first alternative strategies to solve issues of the conventional food system (Jaffee and Howard 2010; Maye 2016). As stated in the core values of Terra Viva, producing organically is a prerequisite for farmers to sell to Terra Viva. Further, the products are strictly checked for

chemical residuals, and if these overstep a certain threshold, they are not sold (IP8 pos. 13; Oral Source Milano 16.11.2024).

Interestingly, the interviewed farmers perceived organic production as an obvious choice as they were committed to protecting the environment and informed about pesticide risks. This is also validated by the fact that the large majority of associated Terra Viva farmers already produced organically before selling to Terra Viva. However, one farmer criticizes the additional bureaucratic work related to organic certification, which was also mentioned by Sgroi and Testa (2014). Two other farmers (Field Notes 2024; IP14 and IP9) complain why they need to certify for being organic and not using pesticides; instead, conventional farms using pesticides should be the ones declaring their use of pesticides. Additionally, organic certification is already embedded in the conventional market. Thus, a consumer who only sees the organic label will not know the difference. This criticism goes in a similar direction as critical literature on certification and labels, which argues that certification tries to overcome market-based issues with a market-based method (Maye 2016). As a result, it is even more important for Terra Viva to connect to the consumer and find alternative purchasing venues. As a buyer, Fairshare does not request the organic label per se. They argue that the transparency and knowledge of not using pesticides as well as close relationships to customers are more important than the organic label itself (IP1 pos. 258). However, other buyers, such as restaurants and organic shops, request the organic label, which shows a certain dependency on organic certification and the organic market, also mentioned by Sgroi and Testa (2014).

9.3. Research Questions

Section 9.3. summarises the results presented in *Chapters 6, 7 and 8* according to the three sub questions below that answer the overarching research question “**What are the working conditions within an alternative production system in Sicily, illustrated by the case study of an agricultural cooperative?**”.

Overall, working conditions, including agency, income, and appreciation, but also housing, are significantly better and higher in this case study on an alternative production system compared to the literature on working conditions in conventional production systems in *Chapter 3*. The choice of alternative distributors, such as Fairshare, allows the cooperative to have power in price setting, eventually leading to better working

conditions. Nevertheless, there are also difficulties in alternative production systems, such as providing fair wages, dependency on climate and the economic market.

9.3.1. Key Processes and Relationships

The first sub question, “**What are key processes and relationships in the cooperative's passata and pesto production in relation to working conditions?**” can be answered with the results stated in *Chapter 6*. Identified key processes are price setting and member acquisition. In contrast to conventional production systems, the products' prices, including what the producer receives per kilogram and what the buyer pays for the product, are determined by Terra Viva in consultation with the producers. However, it is mostly Terra Viva's president who proposes a price. Additionally, in the process of price setting, all producers receive the same price per product, regardless of their connection or duration at the cooperative, which shows Terra Vivas' egalitarian characteristic.

A second important aspect is the process of becoming associated with the cooperative. There are certain requirements such as producing organically and informing about the involved workers as well as their contracts. Before starting a relationship, a cooperative representative will visit the producer at least once in order to establish a close relationship and learn who is involved in the production and under what conditions. In this process Clapp's (2012) mentioned bottleneck is minimised on the producer's side while transparency of the supply chain is maximized.

9.3.2. Relations of Workers –Employers in the Agricultural Cooperative

The second sub question is “**What do the working conditions look like, above all income per time and agency of actors of the cooperative?**”.

Generally, there is a difference in working conditions between employees in the production facility or management and workers and farmers on the fields. The interviewed farmers are all self-employed and, therefore, do not have strict hours and incomes. While the cooperative employees have a fixed monthly salary, fieldworkers either receive an hourly or daily payment. Overall, the range between the employee's salary is small, and the president, who is most responsible, does not have the highest income. Employees have a daily average of 7.8 working hours and receive about what

they expect for their type of job. While the interviewees providing for a single household are happy with their income, the ones with dependent families state that their wages are too low. Employees working in offices have agency in terms of flexibility and responsibility in comparison to workers in processing who are tied to the production schedule.

Regarding the fieldworker's income, as discussed in *Section 9.1.*, there is a significant wage discrepancy between the statements on fieldworkers' income by their employers and themselves. The amount stated by employers is much higher than the required one noted in the collective bargaining agreement, while fieldworkers admit to earning less than the agreed-upon amount. While Terra Viva is constrained by the state through laws and regulations, such as in food quality, the absence of the state and lack of sanctions allow Terra Viva to pay fieldworkers below the collective bargaining agreement.

Despite being below the collective bargaining agreement, the fieldworker's income in this case study is significantly higher than the examples from *Chapter 3*. An additional difference is that the fieldworkers get to keep all the money earned, and do not have to return a certain percentage for housing, food or transportation, such as in the caporalato system (Perrotta and Sacchetto 2014; D'Onofrio 2020).

Fieldworkers constrained agency is visible in the dependency on the product and weather conditions, as well as the farmers decisions. On the other hand, fieldworker's agency is visible in the ability to choose this particular job.

While the cooperative has agency in price-making and managing the majority of the supply chain, it remains constrained by consumer requests. In situations, where the state does not exercise their agency, such as the lack of inspections, another party, such as Terra Viva or individual farmers step in to assume it.

9.3.3. Challenges and Solutions

The third sub question **“What challenges do actors face in maintaining decent working conditions and how are they addressed?”** can be answered as follows: one of the most frequent challenges is payment, which is connected to the rising living costs. With the rather small range of Terra Viva's in-house salaries and their power in price setting, the cooperative tries to address the payment issue. However, as demonstrated in *Section 7.1.and 9.1.*, fieldworkers still do not receive what the collective bargaining agreement states. It shows that “even” a cooperative, where products are more

expensive, and employees' salary lie within a small range, fieldworkers do not receive the income defined by the state. This raises further structural questions that should be reconsidered, such as the increase in the product price, the government's financial support, or consumers' involvement financially or through their own cooperative labour. Despite the challenges connected to the climate and weather, workers and farmers have been partially able to adjust their working hours for everyday tasks according to the heat. Moreover, through **product diversification** and distribution of products among different farmers, both individual farmers and the cooperative can reduce and share the risk of harvest loss and minimise labour peaks of single products.

Additionally, some interviewees mention the lack of appreciation for their work as a general challenge because customers often do not see the actual value behind the product. To address the challenge, Terra Viva and Fairshare aim to strengthen the producer-consumer dialogue and relationship by providing their customers with knowledge and the latest news from the producers, including in-person events.

Lastly, the lack of inspections and sanctions enables employers, including Terra Viva, to pay below the bargaining agreement. As for now, Terra Viva profits from the absence of inspections and sanctions, which shows why they do not address this issue.

9.4. Limitations

As already elaborated in *Chapter 5*, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this research. Since interviews provide only a snapshot in time, it is important to consider that interviewees might have responded differently if conducted on a different day or during another season. Additionally, the choice of interviewees is subjective, and another researcher could have chosen other interviewees and received different insights (Longhurst 2010). The chosen interview partners provided the information on which the codes in MAXQDA were formed (Kuckartz and Rädiker 2022). Despite considering the theory and literature when forming the codes and analysing the answers, the information eventually brought forth is based on personal perception of what is relevant. It is also important to note that apart from the Italian laws, the literature and theory taken into account are limited to anglophone publications.

Additionally, as discussed in *Section 9.1*, there were inconsistencies that have led to some interviewees not knowing or presenting partial truth, particularly regarding sensitive topics such as wages and contracts. As the claims were not triangulated, such as reviewing employment contracts, the results are based on the perspectives shared during the interviews. Despite income being a significant factor in working conditions, the supply chain was not traced or calculated depending on the price. Further, as the interview with FLAICGIL was one of the last ones which provided detailed information on fieldworkers' bargaining agreements, it was not possible to bring up this information in previous interviews (IP15).

The data collection is influenced by the translators' and the author's personal bias. Depending on the translators' positionality towards certain topics, they might have translated differently or left out certain passages. Especially one translator asked many questions of his own interest, which led the conversation in a specific direction. As I spent almost five weeks living on site and in close contact with employees of the cooperative, it is important to acknowledge my personal bias.

As this thesis is based on a single case example of Terra Viva and Fairshare, the results of the thesis do not serve to represent the entire field of AFNs or agricultural cooperatives in Sicily. While the information found can be compared to conventional agriculture through literature, there was no case-to-case comparison where differences and similarities could have been systematically detected and the same counts for comparable cooperatives or AFNs.

The mentioned limitations highlight the need for caution when interpreting the findings and suggest areas for further research.

10. Conclusion

This thesis addresses the main research question of how working conditions are shaped within this alternative production system in Sicily to fill the research gap. To answer the research questions, the processes and challenges in Terra Viva's passata and pesto production were included.

While focusing on working conditions, the “alternativeness” of the Terra Viva case was analysed using the theoretical framework of alternative food systems (Maye 2016; Kneafsey et al. 2021). According to AFN characteristics of social and spatial proximity, organic and holistic small-scale alternative purchasing venues and their focus on the social, economic, and environmental dimensions, the case of Terra Viva and Fairshare represents most characteristics (Maye 2016; Dansero and Puttilli 2014). The social proximity of Terra Viva employees fosters appreciation and makes work more enjoyable but can complicate addressing conflicts or criticism. Spatial proximity is evident in the short distance between farms and the production facility. Despite Fairshare's efforts to bridge their spatial distance through regular exchanges and visits, they mostly rely on information provided by Terra Viva and have limited opportunities for independent investigation compared to a CSA, which allows for daily exchange. Through Fairshare, which fosters a direct supply to consumers and bypasses conventional supermarkets, Terra Viva sells to alternative purchasing venues. Lastly, through their social inclusion and environmentally sustainable production, such as agroecological methods, Terra Viva includes the environmental, social and economic dimensions of AFNs.

Regarding the **working conditions**, collective price setting enables a fairer income for farmers and fieldworkers and gives Terra Viva and farmers power and appreciation for their work. While fieldworkers' **income** at Terra Viva is significantly higher than in the literature, fieldworkers earn below the amount stated in the collective bargaining agreement. Employers, including Terra Viva, have difficulties paying the mandated amount, and farmers often find themselves in a dilemma of navigating labour and production costs while being profitable. This shows a first challenge and structural vulnerability among several actors, even though Terra Viva has a small pay range among its employees. Additionally, fieldworkers are paid by the hour, while the rest of Terra Viva's employees receive a fixed monthly salary. To further improve the social core and working

conditions, rethinking fieldworkers' employment structure is strongly suggested. In this process fieldworkers should be included and given agency to decide what structure suits them best, be it hourly wages or a fixed amount per month. Despite fieldworkers not explicitly complaining nor expressing desires to address their working conditions, it is strongly suggested that both Terra Viva and Fairshare investigate the wages of all farmers and fieldworkers. They could initiate systematic check-ins of fieldworkers' contracts, as these are only verified at the beginning when farmers become associates.

Besides income, **(constrained) agency within Terra Viva is evident on an individual and collective level.** On an individual level, workers exhibit resilience by adjusting working hours to the climate or building networks for job security. Reworking strategies, such as monthly payments to farmers challenge existing power dynamics and enhance economic independence and ecological sustainability (Grasseni 2022). Collective resistance, like rejecting conventional supermarket relationships and participating in anti-mafia initiatives, directly opposes hegemonic structures, enabling Terra Viva to negotiate pricing and strengthen its autonomy. Despite these strategies, the cooperative faces limits in its agency imposed by broader structural conditions, including food laws and capitalist market forces (Coe and Jordhus-Lier 2010, 6). It is important to note that the absence of the state, which comes with a lack of inspections and sanctions, gives Terra Viva agency to disrespect the collective bargaining agreement. This is contrary to the general food law, where the state has agency through regulations, which are checked internally and externally. At this point, it is suggested that the state acts upon this shortcoming and includes farmers and fieldworkers in the discussion to find a solution for accurate payment.

Besides the main **challenge** of fair and sufficient payment, climate dependency, and a lack of appreciation for agricultural work are further difficulties. Product and producer diversification distributes the risk of harvest loss and minimizes labour peaks. Through transparent and close producer-consumer relationships, both Terra Viva and Fairshare increase the consumers' appreciation of the worker's labour and the understanding of a higher price to provide fairer conditions. Despite these challenges, Terra Viva actively addresses systemic issues, such as exploitation and market dependency, through its social and environmental commitment and alternative customer relationships.

Working conditions in this case study, situated within an alternative production system, are significantly better than in conventional systems, with higher income, agency, and appreciation rooted in the cooperative's core values and relationships with alternative distributors like Fairshare. Nonetheless, challenges remain, including unmet state-mandated wage standards for fieldworkers, dependency on income and market, and climate-related risks which require structural rethinking of price along the supply chain, government involvement and support, and consumer involvement.

Regarding **future research**, more in-depth research on the working conditions of the remaining fieldworkers and farmers related to Terra Viva is suggested to verify the interviewees' contracts. To improve the fieldworkers' wages, I suggest further identifying the reasons and struggles for not paying the amount stated by the collective bargaining agreement. Additionally, a comparative study with similar AFNs or conventional cases could further embed and validate the findings of this thesis.

If the scope of the research topic were to be expanded, it would be interesting to validate the scalability of the Terra Viva-Fairshare relationship. Therefore, further research is suggested with the main consumer regions to identify the applicability in different geographical and cultural contexts. A further topic which has only briefly been touched but offers further research is how Terra Viva, through the Addiopizzo association, can resist agro-mafia. Another topic this thesis does not further investigate is women's roles in agriculture and the reason for their underrepresentation. Notably, a majority of interviewees and associated farmers in this research are male. Apart from gender, the influence of fieldworker's origin on their working conditions could be explored.

Furthermore, as climate change increasingly impacts agricultural production, future studies could examine how certain agricultural methods can positively affect working conditions or what strategies could be adapted to improve resilience.

Although Terra Viva and Fairshare already focus on transparency, another idea could be to develop a model of community-supported agriculture on an international scale. As for now, Terra Viva already has many visitors; these visitors or other customers could not only learn through presentations or degustation but also offer work on the farm to engage in production and processing, from picking to making their own individual product. On a societal level, one could imagine a form of mandatory civil service, i.e. a certain amount

of days, every citizen has to work on a farm. Thus, consumers' knowledge and acceptance of the product value would increase, and the relationship between consumers and workers on farms would be strengthened, while supporting farmers with workforce during harvest peaks. Additionally, through a shared platform, producers and consumers could more directly exchange ideas and opinions, strengthening their understanding and appreciation for each other.

As for now, Fairshare and Terra Viva are, in a sense, intermediaries, and feedback from Fairshare customers is channelled through Fairshare. As discussed in *Chapter 9* based on Goodman's (2004) critique on AFNs, the product prices at Fairshare and Terra Viva are geared towards a higher income class, which risks excluding low-income individuals and regions. To address this, a pricing model could be implemented, where customers could pay according to their income. For example, there could be three pricing tiers: a standard price, a reduced price for economically disadvantaged groups (students, senior citizens e.g.), and a higher price for customers with higher incomes.

Regarding income, one idea could be to consequently standardize fieldworkers hourly or daily wages. A further option is to integrate more regular contract checks, especially for newly employed fieldworkers. However, as the results of this case study show, both fieldworkers and farmers express their struggles. If many farmers continue to face financial difficulties, one solution could be to establish a support centre or advisor at Terra Viva to provide individualized financial guidance, with a focus on prioritizing fair wages for both fieldworkers and farmers.

Nevertheless, this thesis is a starting point to fill the research gap in analysing working conditions in an alternative food network within an international producer-buyer relationship. Additionally, this topic and related areas present significant opportunities for further research.

Personally, the research was insightful and showed that there are examples apart from the conventional system where working conditions overall are better but still face certain difficulties. A personal journalistic project next summer will further explore these issues.

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Appendix A: Interview guidelines

Interview Guideline – Terra Viva famers

General Information at beginning	
• Hello and Thank you • Explain reason for Interview as part of master thesis (brief goal) • Anonymity (encryption of names)+ possibility to pull out at any time, duration • Consent for recording Interview • <i>Salve e grazie</i> • <i>Spiegare il motivo dell'intervista come parte della tesi di laurea (breve obiettivo)</i> • <i>Anonimato (crittografia dei nomi) + possibilità di ritirarsi in qualsiasi momento, durata</i> • <i>Consenso alla registrazione dell'intervista</i>	
Introductory questions	
1. Tell me about your work and farm? <i>role, tasks, responsibilities, size, product type, production step</i> 1.1. Where/How do you generate income? Who is involved in your work direct or indirect? What is there role/power? Relationship? <i>Product buyers, Terra Viva, family members, farm workers? Migrant workers? Supervisors? Quality check? , decide on wage?</i> 1.2. How does this change over the year, season? <i>Migrant workers, more or less involvement from Faireshare</i> 1.3. What are limitations and challenges in your work? 1. <i>Mi parleresti del suo lavoro e della sua azienda? Ruolo, compiti, responsabilità, dimensioni, tipo di prodotto, fase di produzione.</i> 1.1. <i>Dove/come genera il reddito? Chi è coinvolto nel vostro lavoro direttamente o indirettamente? Qual è il suo ruolo/potere? Relazioni? Acquirenti di prodotti, Terra Viva, familiari, lavoratori agricoli? Lavoratori migranti? Supervisori? Controllo della qualità? decidere il salario?</i> 1.2. <i>Come cambia nel corso dell'anno, della stagione? Lavoratori migranti, maggiore o minore coinvolgimento da parte del Faireshare</i> 1.3. <i>Quali sono i limiti e le sfide del vostro lavoro?</i>	
Topic A : relationship Terra Viva and Fairshare	
2. Tell me about your connection and role at the cooperative Terra Viva? Stakeholder, shareholder, employee, decision-making, ownership? 2.1. How did you end up working for Terra Viva? <i>When? Requirements? Reason? Recruitment process and Access, Hiring process, intermediaries (Caporali), labour unions, requirements, who chosed farmers/workers, requirements, access to positions/ production?</i> 2.2. What form of agreement or contract do you have with buyers? <i>Terra Viva specific and others? annual contract with monthly income, based on production amount, hourly, employment form direct or through labour contractor? Agreements/contracts, ownership, benefits such as free food, shareholders, union members</i>	

2. Mi parleresti del suo legame e del suo ruolo nella cooperativa Terra Viva? Socio, azionista, dipendente, decisionista, proprietario? 2.1. Come è arrivato a lavorare per Terra Viva? <i>Quando? Requisiti? Motivo? Processo di reclutamento e accesso, processo di assunzione, intermediari (Caporali), sindacati, requisiti, chi sceglie gli agricoltori/lavoratori, requisiti, accesso alle posizioni/alla produzione?</i> 2.2. Quale forma di accordo o contratto avete con gli acquirenti? <i>Contratto annuale con reddito mensile, basato sulla quantità di produzione, orario, forma di impiego diretta o tramite appaltatore? Accordi/contratti, proprietà, benefici come cibo gratuito, azionisti, membri del sindacato</i> 3. Describe your relationship with Fairshare? <i>Visitation & contact frequency, role remote and onsite in the passata production? Contact person remote/onsite? Responsibilities? Power/decision-making? Changes throughout season/year, ownership, different goals with Fairshare?</i> 3.1. What requirements does Fairshare place on Terra Viva/on you? <i>Product amount/price, agreements? Size of product, Amount, Quality standards, Delivery dates</i> 3. Descrivete il vostro rapporto con Fairshare? <i>Frequenza delle visite e dei contatti, ruolo in remoto e in loco nella produzione della passata? Persona di contatto a distanza/ in loco? Responsabilità? Potere/decisione? Cambiamenti nel corso della stagione/anno, proprietà, obiettivi diversi con Fairshare?</i> 3.1. Quali requisiti pone Fairshare a Terra Viva/ a voi? <i>Quantità/prezzo del prodotto, accordi? Dimensioni del prodotto, quantità, standard di qualità, date di consegna.</i> 4. What is Terra Vivas and Fairshares role in the passata production and your work? 4.1. How are product prices set? Who decides on product price, export amount? <i>What factor is it dependent on, effect on income</i> 4.2. What happens in case of harvest loss? Effects on income? 4.3. How did your work change since/with Fairshares involvement? <i>Decision-making on price and product, Price setting, standards, regulations, conditions, wages, product price, comparison to other buyers) Attractiveness? Improvements?</i> 4. Qual è il ruolo di Terra Vivas e Fairshares nella produzione di passata e nel vostro lavoro? 4.1. Come vengono fissati i prezzi dei prodotti? Chi decide il prezzo del prodotto, la quantità di esportazione? Da quali fattori dipendono, quali sono gli effetti sul reddito? 4.2. Cosa succede in caso di perdita del raccolto? Effetti sul reddito? 4.3. Come è cambiato il vostro lavoro dopo/con il coinvolgimento di Fairshares? <i>Decisioni sul prezzo e sul prodotto, definizione dei prezzi, standard, regolamenti, condizioni, salari, prezzo del prodotto, confronto con altri acquirenti) Attrattività? Miglioramenti?</i> 5. How did Covid influence working in the passata/pesto production? <i>struggles shipping over borders, production/export pause, payment and work, effects now?</i> 5. In che modo Covid ha influenzato il lavoro nella produzione di passata/pesto? <i>Lotta alla spedizione oltre i confini, pausa nella produzione/esportazione, pagamento e lavoro, effetti attuali?</i>	
Topic B: working conditions	

6. Can you tell me about your working conditions? Hours, agreement, protection, employee benefits, living situation, <i>Wage, employment type, working hours, power, living situation, contracts, agreements (Fixed salary, seasonal/yearly, per hour/amount, direct or employment through intermediaries(Caporali)</i> 6.1. What factors influence your working conditions (such as wage, hours)? <i>product amount/price, market price, worker's experience, age, qualification, ethnicity, collective bargaining agreement, labour union, buyer →Faireshare/Terra Viva or others, Law, intermediaries,seasonality</i> 6.2. Who makes sure that these working conditions are met? Labour Unions, Intermediaries, <i>Faireshare</i> or Terra Viva or other organizations? Tell me about the cooperative Terra Viva? <i>organizational structure, type of cooperative, employees, shareholders, role in supply chain</i> 6.3. Where and how can you address your needs, <i>labour unions ,protest, government ?</i> 6. Può parlarmi delle sue condizioni di lavoro? Orario, accordo, protezione, benefici per i dipendenti, situazione di vita, Salario, tipo di impiego, orario di lavoro, potere, situazione di vita, contratti, accordi (Salario fisso, stagionale/annuale, per ora/importo, lavoro diretto o tramite intermediari(Caporali) 6.1. Quali sono i fattori che influenzano le sue condizioni di lavoro (come salario, orario)? Quantità/prezzo del prodotto, prezzo di mercato, esperienza del lavoratore, età, qualifica, etnia, contratto collettivo, sindacato, acquirente→<i>Faireshare/Terra Viva</i> o altri, legge, intermediari, stagionalità. 6.2. Chi si assicura che queste condizioni di lavoro siano rispettate? Sindacati, intermediari, <i>Faireshare</i> o Terra Viva o altre organizzazioni? Mi parleresti della cooperativa Terra Viva? Struttura organizzativa, tipo di cooperativa, dipendenti, azionisti, ruolo nella filiera. 6.3. Dove e come può rivolgersi alle sue esigenze, ai sindacati, alle proteste, al governo? 7. What are good working conditions to you? <i>criteria's? What do you consider as fair wage? What is fair labour in Terra Viva? Living wage?</i> 7.1. What is your current perception/opinion on working conditions in Terra Viva? (<i>good-needs improvement?, enough wage?, freedom, hours, agreements/contracts, comparison to conventional producers in Sicily</i>) 7.2. <i>How do you get along with your income? Influence on family?</i> 7.3. What would you like to change? How could this be achieved? 7. Quali sono per lei le buone condizioni di lavoro? I criteri? Cosa considera un salario equo? Che cos'è il lavoro equo in Terra Viva? Salario di sussistenza? 7.1. Qual è la sua attuale percezione/opinione sulle condizioni di lavoro a Terra Viva? (buone-necessarie di miglioramento?, salario sufficiente?, libertà, orari, accordi/contratti, confronto con i produttori convenzionali in Sicilia) 7.2. Come si trova con il suo reddito? Influenza sulla famiglia? 7.3. Cosa vorresti cambiare? Come si potrebbe ottenere? 8. What are Terra Vivas (Fairshares) aims regarding working conditions? Aspects which should be improved? <i>changes/developments, improvements</i> 8.1. What specific aspects should be improved? Why?	
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8.2. What is necessary to improve those working conditions? How? <i>Labels, unions, legal framework, market regulation?</i> 8.3. Where do you perceive challenges/limitations in achieving/improving good working conditions? <i>(Limiting factors, Price, Limited market, Climate, Consumers are a small specific group, Dependency on farmers, Law, Collective bargaining, labour unions, relationship between workers and Terra Viva? cultural differences, language differences, geographical distance, product price, competition)</i> 8. Quali sono gli obiettivi di Terra Vivas (Fairshares) per quanto riguarda le condizioni di lavoro? Aspetti che dovrebbero essere migliorati? cambiamenti/sviluppi, miglioramenti 8.1. Quali aspetti specifici dovrebbero essere migliorati? Perché? 8.2. Cosa è necessario fare per migliorare queste condizioni di lavoro? <i>Come? Etichette, sindacati, quadro giuridico, regolamentazione del mercato?</i> 8.3. Dove percepisce le sfide/limitazioni nel raggiungimento/miglioramento di buone condizioni di lavoro? <i>(Fattori limitanti, Prezzo, Mercato limitato, Clima, I consumatori sono un piccolo gruppo specifico, Dipendenza dagli agricoltori, Legge, Contrattazione collettiva, sindacati, rapporto tra i lavoratori e Terra Viva? differenze culturali, differenze linguistiche, distanza geografica, prezzo del prodotto, concorrenza)</i> 9. What impact do the Italian or Swiss state such as the <i>National Institute of Agricultural Economics (Inea)</i> or <i>ILO</i> have on the working conditions in Terra Viva? <i>product price, amount, standards for products, labour laws</i> 9. Quale impatto hanno lo Stato italiano o svizzero, come l'Istituto Nazionale di Economia Agraria (Inea) o l'OIL, sulle condizioni di lavoro in Terra Viva? <i>Prezzo dei prodotti, quantità, standard per i prodotti, leggi sul lavoro.</i> 10. What impact do Labour unions such as <i>FEDERAZIONE LAVORATORI AGRO INDUSTRIA</i> (<i>Verband der Arbeitnehmer der Agrarindustrie FLAICGIL</i>) have on the working conditions in Terra Viva? 10. <i>Che impatto hanno i sindacati come la FEDERAZIONE LAVORATORI AGRO INDUSTRIA (Verband der Arbeitnehmer der Agrarindustrie FLAICGIL) sulle condizioni di lavoro in Terra Viva?</i>	
Final question	
11. What development do you hope for in the future regarding working conditions in the passata and pesto production? <i>(expansions, scalability, improvement of wage)</i> 11. Quali sviluppi auspica per il futuro per quanto riguarda le condizioni di lavoro nella produzione di passata e pesto? <i>(espansioni, scalabilità, miglioramento dei salari)</i>	
Outlook and End of Interview	
- Do you have anything else to add? Or say which is important in your opinion? - In case you change your mind you can add/ delete any information you said at all time! - THANK YOU! - Avete qualcos'altro da aggiungere? O dire qualcosa di importante secondo te? - Nel caso in cui cambiaste idea, potete aggiungere/cancellare qualsiasi informazione che avete detto in qualsiasi momento! - GRAZIE!	

Interview Guideline – farmworkers

General Information at beginning	
• Hello and Thank you • Explain reason for Interview as part of master thesis (brief goal) • Anonymity (encryption of names)+ possibility to pull out at any time, duration • Consent for recording Interview • Salve e grazie • Spiegare il motivo dell'intervista come parte della tesi di laurea (breve obiettivo) • Anonimato (crittografia dei nomi) + possibilità di ritirarsi in qualsiasi momento, durata • Consenso alla registrazione dell'intervista	
Introductory questions	
12. Tell me about your work? How does your everyday work look like? <i>role, tasks, responsibilities, size, product type, production step, seasonality, transportation</i> 12.1. How do you make a living? Source of income? 12.2. Who do you work for? 12.3. Who else is involved in your work direct or indirect? What is their role/power? How is your Relationship? <i>Product buyers, Terra Viva, Intermediaries, farmers, Vadlibella employees, Quality check? , decide on wage?</i> 12.4. What are limitations and challenges in your work? <i>Payment, intermediaries, access, housing, permit?</i> 1. Mi parleresti del suo lavoro. Come si svolge il suo lavoro quotidiano? ruolo, compiti, responsabilità, dimensioni, tipo di prodotto, fase di produzione, stagionalità, trasporto. 1.1. Come si guadagna da vivere? Fonte di reddito? 1.2. Per chi lavora? 1.3. Chi altro è coinvolto direttamente o indirettamente nel suo lavoro? Qual è il loro ruolo/potere? Come sono i vostri rapporti? Acquirenti dei prodotti, Terra Viva, Intermediari, agricoltori, dipendenti di Vadlibella, Controllo qualità? Decidono il salario? 1.4. Quali sono i limiti e le sfide del vostro lavoro? Pagamento, intermediari, accesso, alloggio, permessi?	
Topic A : Relationship Terra Viva and Fairshare	
13. How did you end up working for Validbella, this farmer? <i>When? Requirements? Reason? Recruitment process and Access, Hiring process, intermediaries (Caporali), labour unions, requirements, who choses farmers/workers, requirements, access to positions/ production?</i> 13.1. What form of agreement or contract do you have and with whom? <i>Connection to Terra Viva, Farmer or Terra Viva? annual contract with monthly income, based on production amount, hourly, employment form direct or through labour contractor? Agreements/contracts, ownership, benefits such as free food, shareholders, union members</i> 2. Come è finito a lavorare per Validbella, questo agricoltore? <i>Quando? Requisiti? Motivo? Processo di reclutamento e accesso, processo di assunzione, intermediari (Caporali), sindacati, requisiti, chi sceglie gli agricoltori/lavoratori, requisiti, accesso alle posizioni/produzione?</i>	

2.1. <i>Quale forma di accordo o contratto avete e con chi? Contratto annuale con reddito mensile, basato sulla quantità di produzione, orario, impiego diretto o tramite appaltatore? Accordi/contratti, proprietà, benefici come cibo gratuito, azionisti, membri del sindacato</i> 14. What role does Fairshare play in your work? <i>Contact with Faireshare, role in the passata production? Responsibilities? Power/decision-making? Changes throughout season/year, ownership, different goals with Faireshare?</i> 14.1. What are requirements in your work, production? (from Fairshare or Terra Viva)? <i>Who sets requirements? Product amount/price, agreements? Size of product, Amount, Quality standards, Delivery dates</i> 3. <i>Che ruolo ha Fairshare nel vostro lavoro? Contatti con Faireshare, ruolo nella produzione della passata? Responsabilità? Potere/decisione? Cambiamenti nel corso della stagione/anno, proprietà, obiettivi diversi con Faireshare?</i> 3.1. <i>Quali sono i requisiti del vostro lavoro, della produzione? (da Fairshare o Terra Viva)? Chi stabilisce i requisiti? Quantità/prezzo del prodotto, accordi? Dimensioni del prodotto, quantità, standard di qualità, date di consegna.</i>	
Topic B: working conditions	
15. Can you tell me about your working conditions? <i>Hours, agreement, protection, employee benefits, living situation, Wage, employment type, working hours, power, living situation, contracts, agreements (Fixed salary, seasonal/yearly, per hour/amount, direct or employment through intermediaries(Caporali), language, time and form of payment, transportation to work?</i> 15.1. What factors influence your working conditions (such as wage, hours)? <i>product amount/price, market price, worker's experience, age, qualification, ethnicity, collective bargaining agreement, labour union, buyer →Faireshare/Terra Viva or others, Law, intermediaries, seasonality</i> 15.2. What happens in case of harvest loss? Effects on income? 4. <i>Può parlarmi delle sue condizioni di lavoro? Orario, contratto, protezione, benefici per i dipendenti, situazione di vita, Salario, tipo di impiego, orario di lavoro, potere, situazione di vita, contratti, accordi (salario fisso, stagionale/annuale, per ora/importo, impiego diretto o tramite intermediari (Caporali), lingua, orario e forma di pagamento, trasporto al lavoro?</i> 4.1. <i>Quali fattori influenzano le sue condizioni di lavoro (come il salario, l'orario)? importo/prezzo del prodotto, prezzo di mercato, esperienza del lavoratore, età, qualifica, etnia, contratto collettivo di lavoro, sindacato, acquirente →Faireshare/Terra Viva o altri, legge, intermediari, stagionalità.</i> 4.2. <i>Cosa succede in caso di perdita del raccolto? Effetti sul reddito?</i> 16. How did Covid influence your work in the passata/pesto production? <i>struggles shipping over borders, production/export pause, payment and work, effects now?</i> 5. <i>In che modo Covid ha influenzato il suo lavoro nella produzione di passata/pesto? Lotta alla spedizione oltre i confini, pausa nella produzione/esportazione, pagamento e lavoro, effetti attuali?</i> 17. What are good working conditions to you? <i>criteria's? What do you consider as fair wage? What is fair labour in Terra Viva? Living wage?</i>	

17.1.	How do you get along with your income? <i>Influence on family? How much?</i>
6.	Quali sono per lei le buone condizioni di lavoro? I criteri? Cosa considera un salario equo? Che cos'è il lavoro equo in Terra Viva? Salario di sussistenza?
6.1.	Come si comporta con il suo reddito? Influenza sulla famiglia? Quanto?
18.	How does Terra Viva differ from other employees in terms of working conditions? What are their aim? fair labour? <i>(good-needs improvement?, enough wage?, freedom, hours, agreements/contracts, comparison to conventional producers in Sicily)</i>
18.1.	What would you like to change/improve? Why?
18.2.	What is necessary to improve those working conditions? How? <i>Labels, unions, legal framework, market regulation?</i>
18.3.	Where do you perceive challenges/limitations in achieving/improving good working conditions? <i>(Limiting factors, Price, Limited market, Climate, Consumers are a small specific group, Dependency on farmers, Law, Collective bargaining, labour unions, relationship between workers and Terra Viva? cultural differences, language differences, geographical distance, product price, competition)</i>
7.	In che modo Terra Viva si differenzia dagli altri dipendenti in termini di condizioni di lavoro? Quali sono i loro obiettivi? lavoro equo? <i>(buono-da migliorare?, salario sufficiente?, libertà, orari, accordi/contratti, confronto con i produttori convenzionali in Sicilia)</i>
7.1.	Cosa vorreste cambiare/migliorare? Perché?
7.2.	Cosa è necessario per migliorare queste condizioni di lavoro? Come? <i>Etichette, sindacati, quadro giuridico, regolamentazione del mercato?</i>
7.3.	Dove percepisce le sfide/limitazioni nel raggiungimento/miglioramento di buone condizioni di lavoro? <i>(Fattori limitanti, Prezzo, Mercato limitato, Clima, I consumatori sono un piccolo gruppo specifico, Dipendenza dagli agricoltori, Legge, Contrattazione collettiva, sindacati, rapporto tra i lavoratori e Terra Viva? differenze culturali, differenze linguistiche, distanza geografica, prezzo del prodotto, concorrenza)</i>
19.	What impact do the Italian or Swiss state such as the <i>National Institute of Agricultural Economics (Inea)</i> have on your working conditions? <i>Laws, product price, amount, standards for products, labour laws</i>
8.	Che impatto hanno lo Stato italiano o svizzero, come l'Istituto Nazionale di Economia Agraria (Inea), sulle vostre condizioni di lavoro? <i>Leggi, prezzo dei prodotti, quantità, standard per i prodotti, leggi sul lavoro.</i>
20.	What impact do Labour unions such as <i>FEDERAZIONE LAVORATORI AGRO INDUSTRIA (Verband der Arbeitnehmer der Agrarindustrie FLAICGIL)</i> have on the working conditions in Terra Viva?
20.1.	Who makes sure that these working conditions are met? Labour Unions, Intermediaries, <i>Faireshare</i> or <i>Vladibella</i> or other organizations?
20.2.	Where and how can you address your needs, <i>labour unions ,protest, government</i> ?
9.	Che impatto hanno i sindacati come la <i>FEDERAZIONE LAVORATORI AGRO INDUSTRIA (Verband der Arbeitnehmer der Agrarindustrie FLAICGIL)</i> sulle condizioni di lavoro in Terra Viva?
9.1.	Chi si assicura che queste condizioni di lavoro siano rispettate? Sindacati, intermediari, <i>Faireshare</i> o <i>Vladibella</i> o altre organizzazioni?

9.2. Dove e come potete rivolgere le vostre richieste, ai sindacati, alle proteste, al governo?	
Final question	
21. What development do you hope for in the future regarding working conditions in the passata and pesto production? (<i>expansions, scalability, improvement of wage</i>)	
10. Quali sviluppi auspica per il futuro per quanto riguarda le condizioni di lavoro nella produzione di passata e pesto? (<i>espansioni, scalabilità, miglioramento dei salari</i>)	
Outlook and End of Interview	
• Do you have anything else to add? Or say which is important in your opinion? • In case you change your mind you can add/ delete any information you said at all time! • THANK YOU! • Avete qualcos'altro da aggiungere? O dire qualcosa di importante secondo te? • Nel caso in cui cambiaste idea, potete aggiungere/cancellare qualsiasi informazione che avete detto in qualsiasi momento! • GRAZIE!	

Interview Guideline – Processing employees Terra Viva

General Information at beginning	
• Hello and Thank you • Explain reason for Interview as part of master thesis (brief goal) • Anonymity (encryption of names)+ possibility to pull out at any time, duration • Consent for recording Interview • <i>Salve e grazie</i> • <i>Spiegare il motivo dell'intervista come parte della tesi di laurea (breve obiettivo)</i> • <i>Anonimato (crittografia dei nomi) + possibilità di ritirarsi in qualsiasi momento, durata</i> • <i>Consenso alla registrazione dell'intervista</i>	
Introductory questions	
22. Tell me about your work? <i>role, tasks, responsibilities, size, product type, production step, sources of income</i> 22.1. Who is involved in your work direct or indirect? What is there role/power? <i>Relationship? Structure of production, Product buyers, Terra Viva, family members, farm workers? Migrant workers? Supervisors? Quality check? , decide on wage?</i> 22.2. How does this change over the year, season? <i>Migrant workers, more or less involvement from Faireshare</i> 22.3. What are limitations and challenges in your work? 1. <i>Mi parleresti del suo lavoro: ruolo, mansioni, responsabilità, dimensioni, tipo di prodotto, fase di produzione, fonti di reddito.</i> 1.1. <i>Chi è coinvolto nel suo lavoro direttamente o indirettamente? Qual è il suo ruolo/potere? Relazioni? Struttura di produzione, acquirenti del prodotto, Terra Viva, familiari, lavoratori agricoli? Lavoratori migranti? Supervisor? Controllo della qualità? decidere il salario?</i> 1.2. <i>Come cambia nel corso dell'anno, della stagione? Lavoratori migranti, maggiore o minore coinvolgimento da parte del Faireshare</i> 1.3. <i>Quali sono i limiti e le sfide del vostro lavoro?</i>	
Topic A : relationship Terra Viva and Fairshare	
23. Tell me about your connection and role at the cooperative Terra Viva? Stakeholder, shareholder, employee, decision-making, ownership? 23.1. How did you end up working for Terra Viva? <i>When? Requirements? Reason? Recruitment process and Access, Hiring process, intermediaries (Caporali), labour unions, requirements, who choses farmers/workers, requirements, access to positions/ production?</i> 23.2. What form of agreement or contract do you have with Terra Viva, Fairshare or others? <i>Terra Viva specific and others? annual contract with monthly income, based on production amount, hourly, employment form direct or through labour contractor? Agreements/contracts, ownership, benefits such as free food, shareholders, union members, decision-making</i> 2. <i>Mi parleresti del suo legame e del suo ruolo nella cooperativa Terra Viva? Socio, azionista, dipendente, decisionista, proprietario?</i>	

2.1. Come è arrivato a lavorare per Terra Viva? <i>Quando? Requisiti? Motivo? Processo di reclutamento e accesso, processo di assunzione, intermediari (Caporali), sindacati, requisiti, chi sceglie gli agricoltori/lavoratori, requisiti, accesso alle posizioni/alla produzione?</i> 2.2. Quale forma di accordo o contratto avete con Terra Viva, Fairshare o altri? <i>Contratto annuale con reddito mensile, basato sulla quantità di produzione, orario, impiego diretto o tramite appaltatore? Accordi/contratti, proprietà, benefici come cibo gratuito, azionisti, membri del sindacato, processo decisionale.</i> 24. Describe your relationship with Fairshare? <i>Visitation & contact frequency, role remote and onsite in the passata production? Contact person remote/onsite? Responsibilities? Power/decision-making? Changes throughout season/year, ownership, different goals with Fairshare?</i> 24.1. What requirements does Fairshare place on Terra Viva/on you? <i>Product amount/price, agreements? Labels, Amount, Quality standards, Delivery dates</i> 3. Descrivete il vostro rapporto con Fairshare? <i>Frequenza delle visite e dei contatti, ruolo in remoto e in loco nella produzione della passata? Persona di contatto a distanza/ in loco? Responsabilità? Potere/decisione? Cambiamenti nel corso della stagione/anno, proprietà, obiettivi diversi con Fairshare?</i> 3.1. Quali requisiti pone Fairshare a Terra Viva/ a voi? <i>Quantità/prezzo dei prodotti, accordi? Etichette, quantità, standard di qualità, date di consegna</i> 25. What is Terra Vivas and Fairshares role in the passata production and your work? 25.1. How are product prices set? Who decides on product price, export amount? <i>What factor is it dependent on, effect on income</i> 25.2. How does harvest loss effect the production and income? 25.3. How did your work change since/with Fairshares involvement? <i>Decision-making on price and product, Price setting, standards, regulations, conditions, wages, product price, comparison to other buyers) Attractiveness? Improvements?</i> 4. Qual è il ruolo di Terra Vivas e Fairshares nella produzione di passata e nel vostro lavoro? 4.1. Come vengono fissati i prezzi dei prodotti? <i>Chi decide il prezzo del prodotto, la quantità di esportazione? Da quali fattori dipendono, quali sono gli effetti sul reddito?</i> 4.2. In che modo la perdita del raccolto influisce sulla produzione e sul reddito? 4.3. Come è cambiato il vostro lavoro dopo/con il coinvolgimento di Fairshares? <i>Decisioni sul prezzo e sul prodotto, definizione dei prezzi, standard, regolamenti, condizioni, salari, prezzo del prodotto, confronto con altri acquirenti) Attrattività? Miglioramenti?</i> 26. How did Covid influence working in the passata/pesto production? <i>struggles shipping over borders, production/export pause, payment and work, effects now?</i> 5. In che modo Covid ha influenzato il lavoro nella produzione di passata/pesto? <i>Lotta alla spedizione oltre i confini, pausa nella produzione/esportazione, pagamento e lavoro, effetti attuali?</i>	
Topic B: working conditions	
27. Can you tell me about your working conditions? <i>Hours, agreement, protection, employee benefits, living situation, Wage, employment type, working hours, power, living situation,</i>	

contracts, agreements (Fixed salary, seasonal/yearly, per hour/amount, direct or employment through intermediaries(Caporali)

27.1. What factors influence your working conditions (such as wage, hours)? *product amount/price, market price, worker's experience, age, qualification, ethnicity, collective bargaining agreement, labour union, buyer →Faireshare/Terra Viva or others, Law, intermediaries,seasonality*

27.2. Who makes sure that these working conditions are met? Labour Unions, Intermediaries, *Faireshare* or Terra Viva or other organizations? Tell me about the cooperative Terra Viva? *organizational structure, type of cooperative, employees, shareholders, role in supply chain*

27.3. Where and how can you address your needs, *labour unions ,protest, government* ?

6. Può parlarmi delle sue condizioni di lavoro? *Orario, accordo, protezione, benefici per i dipendenti, situazione di vita, Salario, tipo di impiego, orario di lavoro, potere, situazione di vita, contratti, accordi (Salario fisso, stagionale/annuale, per ora/importo, lavoro diretto o tramite intermediari(Caporali)*

6.1. Quali sono i fattori che influenzano le sue condizioni di lavoro (come salario, orario)? *Quantità/prezzo del prodotto, prezzo di mercato, esperienza del lavoratore, età, qualifica, etnia, contratto collettivo, sindacato, acquirente →Faireshare/Terra Viva o altri, legge, intermediari, stagionalità.*

6.2. Chi si assicura che queste condizioni di lavoro siano rispettate? *Sindacati, intermediari, Faireshare o Terra Viva o altre organizzazioni? Mi parleresti della cooperativa Terra Viva? Struttura organizzativa, tipo di cooperativa, dipendenti, azionisti, ruolo nella filiera.*

6.3. Dove e come può rivolgersi alle sue esigenze, *ai sindacati, alle proteste, al governo?*

28. What are good working conditions to you? *criteria's? What do you consider as fair wage? What is fair labour in Terra Viva? Living wage?*

28.1. What is your current perception/opinion on working conditions in Terra Viva? *(good-needs improvement?, enough wage?, freedom, hours, agreements/contracts, comparison to conventional producers in Sicily)*

28.2. How do you get along with your income? *Influence on family?*

28.3. What would you like to change? How could this be achieved?

7. Quali sono per lei le buone condizioni di lavoro? *I criteri? Cosa considera un salario equo? Che cos'è il lavoro equo in Terra Viva? Salario di sussistenza?*

7.1. Qual è la sua attuale percezione/opinione sulle condizioni di lavoro a Terra Viva? *(buone-necessarie di miglioramento?, salario sufficiente?, libertà, orari, accordi/contratti, confronto con i produttori convenzionali in Sicilia)*

7.2. Come si trova con il suo reddito? *Influenza sulla famiglia?*

7.3. Cosa vorresti cambiare? Come si potrebbe ottenere?

29. What are Terra Vivas (Fairshares) aims regarding working conditions? Aspects which should be improved? *changes/developments, improvements*

29.1. What specific aspects should be improved? Why?

29.2. What is necessary to improve those working conditions? How? *Labels, unions, legal framework, market regulation?*

29.3. Where do you perceive challenges/limitations in achieving/improving good working conditions? (<i>Limiting factors, Price, Limited market, Climate, Consumers are a small specific group, Dependency on farmers, Law, Collective bargaining, labour unions, relationship between workers and Terra Viva? cultural differences, language differences, geographical distance, product price, competition</i>) 8. Quali sono gli obiettivi di Terra Vivas (Fairshares) per quanto riguarda le condizioni di lavoro? Aspetti che dovrebbero essere migliorati? cambiamenti/sviluppi, miglioramenti 8.1. Quali aspetti specifici dovrebbero essere migliorati? Perché? 8.2. Cosa è necessario fare per migliorare queste condizioni di lavoro? Come? Etichette, sindacati, quadro giuridico, regolamentazione del mercato? 8.3. Dove percepisce le sfide/limitazioni nel raggiungimento/miglioramento di buone condizioni di lavoro? (<i>Fattori limitanti, Prezzo, Mercato limitato, Clima, I consumatori sono un piccolo gruppo specifico, Dipendenza dagli agricoltori, Legge, Contrattazione collettiva, sindacati, rapporto tra i lavoratori e Terra Viva? differenze culturali, differenze linguistiche, distanza geografica, prezzo del prodotto, concorrenza</i>) 30. What impact do the Italian or Swiss state such as the <i>National Institute of Agricultural Economics (Inea)</i> or <i>ILO</i> have on the working conditions in Terra Viva? <i>product price, amount, standards for products, labour laws</i> 9. <i>Quale impatto hanno lo Stato italiano o svizzero, come l'Istituto Nazionale di Economia Agraria (Inea) o l'OIL, sulle condizioni di lavoro in Terra Viva? Prezzo dei prodotti, quantità, standard per i prodotti, leggi sul lavoro.</i> 31. What impact do Labour unions such as <i>FEDERAZIONE LAVORATORI AGRO INDUSTRIA (Verband der Arbeitnehmer der Agrarindustrie FLAICGIL)</i> have on the working conditions in Terra Viva? 10. <i>Che impatto hanno i sindacati come la FEDERAZIONE LAVORATORI AGRO INDUSTRIA (Verband der Arbeitnehmer der Agrarindustrie FLAICGIL) sulle condizioni di lavoro in Terra Viva?</i>	
Final question	
32. What development do you hope for in the future regarding working conditions in the passata and pesto production? (<i>expansions, scalability, improvement of wage</i>) 11. Quali sviluppi auspica per il futuro per quanto riguarda le condizioni di lavoro nella produzione di passata e pesto? (<i>espansioni, scalabilità, miglioramento dei salari</i>)	
Outlook and End of Interview	
• Do you have anything else to add? Or say which is important in your opinion? • In case you change your mind you can add/ delete any information you said at all time! • THANK YOU! • Avete qualcos'altro da aggiungere? O dire qualcosa di importante secondo te? • Nel caso in cui cambiaste idea, potete aggiungere/cancellare qualsiasi informazione che avete detto in qualsiasi momento! • GRAZIE!	

Interview Guideline – Terra Viva employees

General Information at beginning	
• Hello and Thank you • Explain reason for Interview as part of master thesis (brief goal) • Anonymity (encryption of names)+ possibility to pull out at any time, duration • Consent for recording Interview - Salve e grazie - Spiegare il motivo dell'intervista come parte della tesi di laurea (breve obiettivo) - Anonimato (crittografia dei nomi) + possibilità di ritirarsi in qualsiasi momento, durata - Consenso alla registrazione dell'intervista	
Introductory questions	
33. Tell me about your work at Terra Viva? <i>role, tasks, responsibilities, controlling on workers, full-time job, people involved in position, contract, connection to Terra Viva</i> 33.1. What does your everyday work look like? <i>relationship to other workers, Faireshare, farm visits, office</i> 1. Mi parleresti del suo lavoro in Terra Viva: ruolo, compiti, responsabilità, controllo sui lavoratori, lavoro a tempo pieno, persone coinvolte nella posizione, contratto, legame con Terra Viva. 1.1. Come si svolge il suo lavoro quotidiano? rapporto con gli altri lavoratori, <i>Faireshare, visite in azienda, ufficio</i>	
Topic A : Terra Viva and its relationship to Fairshare	
34. Tell me about the cooperative Terra Viva? <i>organizational structure, type of cooperative, employees, shareholders, role in supply chain</i> 34.1. What does Terra Viva do? Where and to whom do they sell their products? 34.2. What does Terra Viva stand for? <i>main goal</i> 34.3. What are challenges in pursuing those? (seasonality, dependency, market) 2. Mi parleresti della cooperativa Terra Viva? <i>Struttura organizzativa, tipo di cooperativa, dipendenti, soci, ruolo nella filiera.</i> 2.1. Di cosa si occupa Terra Viva? Dove e a chi vende i suoi prodotti? 2.2. Che cosa rappresenta Terra Viva? Obiettivo principale 2.3. Quali sono le sfide per perseguirli? <i>(stagionalità, dipendenza, mercato)</i> 35. Describe your relationship with Fairshare? <i>Visitation & contact frequency, role remote and onsite in the passata production? Contact person remote/onsite? Responsibilities? Power/decision-making? Changes throughout season/year, ownership, different goals with Faireshare?</i> 35.1. What are challenges between you and Fairshare? And how do you deal with them <i>cultural differences language differences, different goals?</i> 35.2. How did Covid influence working in the passata/pesto production? <i>struggles shipping over borders, production/export pause, payment and work, effects now?</i> 3. Descrivete il vostro rapporto con Fairshare? <i>Frequenza delle visite e dei contatti, ruolo in remoto e in loco nella produzione della passata? Persona di contatto a distanza/ in loco?</i>	

<i>Responsabilità? Potere/decisione? Cambiamenti nel corso della stagione/anno, proprietà, obiettivi diversi con Fairshare?</i> 3.1. Quali sono le sfide tra voi e Fairshare? <i>E come le affrontate differenze culturali, differenze linguistiche, obiettivi diversi?</i> 3.2. In che modo Covid ha influenzato il lavoro nella produzione di passata/pesto? <i>Lotte per la spedizione oltre i confini, pausa nella produzione/esportazione, pagamenti e lavoro, effetti attuali?</i> 36. How did the cooperation between Terra Viva and Fairshare start? Why? <i>Factors and requirements for relationships, such as expansion/growth</i> 4. Come è nata la collaborazione tra Terra Viva e Fairshare? <i>Perché? Fattori e requisiti per le relazioni, quali espansione/crescita</i> 37. What requirements does Fairshare place on Terra Viva? <i>Product amount/price, labour conditions, agreements?</i> 37.1. How did your work change since/with Fairshares involvement? <i>Controlling, Decision-making on price and product, Price setting, standards, regulations, conditions, wages, product price, comparison to other buyers)</i> 5. Quali requisiti pone Fairshare a Terra Viva? <i>Quantità/prezzo del prodotto, condizioni di lavoro, accordi?</i> 5.1. Come è cambiato il suo lavoro dopo/con il coinvolgimento di Fairshare? <i>Controllo, decisioni sul prezzo e sul prodotto, definizione dei prezzi, standard, regolamenti, condizioni, salari, prezzo del prodotto, confronto con altri acquirenti).</i>	
Topic B: Workers in Terra Viva's and their conditions	
38. Who are the people involved in the tomato production at Terra Viva? <i>Type of workers, origin/ethnicity, skilled/unskilled, residential status/permits?</i> 38.1. What kind of relationship/agreement do workers have with Terra Viva? <i>Agreements/contracts, ownership, benefits such as free food, shareholders, union members</i> 38.2. How do people start working producing for Terra Viva? <i>Hiring process, intermediaries (Caporali), labour unions, requirements, who choses farmers/workers, requirements, access to positions/ production?</i> 6. Chi sono le persone coinvolte nella produzione di pomodoro a Terra Viva? <i>Tipo di lavoratori, origine/etnia, qualificati/non qualificati, status abitativo/permessi?</i> 6.1. Che tipo di rapporto/accordo hanno i lavoratori con Terra Viva? <i>Accordi/contratti, proprietà, benefici come cibo gratuito, azionisti, membri del sindacato.</i> 6.2. Come si inizia a lavorare per Terra Viva? <i>Processo di assunzione, intermediari (Caporali), sindacati, requisiti, chi sceglie gli agricoltori/lavoratori, requisiti, accesso alle posizioni/alla produzione?</i> 39. What are working conditions of these groups? <i>Wage, employment type, working hours, power, living situation, contracts, agreements (Fixed salary, seasonal/yearly, per hour/amount, direct or employment through intermediaries(Caporali)</i>	

39.1. What factors influence their working conditions (such as wage, hours)? *product amount/price, market price, worker's experience, age, qualification, ethnicity, collective bargaining agreement, labour union, buyer* → *Faireshare/Terra Viva or others*

7. Quali sono le condizioni di lavoro di questi gruppi? *Salario, tipo di impiego, orario di lavoro, potere, situazione di vita, contratti, accordi (Salario fisso, stagionale/annuale, per ora/importo, impiego diretto o tramite intermediari (Caporali))*

7.1. Quali fattori influenzano le loro condizioni di lavoro (come il salario, l'orario)? *Quantità/prezzo del prodotto, prezzo di mercato, esperienza del lavoratore, età, qualifica, etnia, contratto collettivo di lavoro, sindacato, acquirente* → *Faireshare/Terra Viva o altro.*

40. What is your current perception/opinion on working conditions in Terra Viva? (*good-needs improvement?, enough wage?, freedom, hours, agreements/contracts, comparison to conventional producers in Sicily*)

8. Qual è la sua attuale percezione/opinione sulle condizioni di lavoro a Terra Viva? (*buone-necessarie di miglioramento?, salario sufficiente?, libertà, orari, accordi/contratti, confronto con i produttori convenzionali in Sicilia*)

41. What are good working conditions to you? *criteria's? What do you consider as fair wage? What is fair labour in Terra Viva? Living wage?*

41.1. How do you make sure decent labour conditions are enforced and workers are protected from exploitation? (*Labels, Standards, Controlling, Unions*)

9. Quali sono per lei le buone condizioni di lavoro? I criteri? *Cosa considera un salario equo? Che cos'è il lavoro equo in Terra Viva? Salario di sussistenza?*

9.1. Come vi assicurate che vengano applicate condizioni di lavoro dignitose e che i lavoratori siano protetti dallo sfruttamento? (*Etichette, norme, controlli, sindacati*)

42. What are Terra Vivas (Fairshares) aims regarding working conditions? Aspects which should be improved? *changes/developments, improvements*

42.1. What specific aspects should be improved? Why?

42.2. What is necessary to improve those working conditions? How? *Labels, unions, legal framework, market regulation?*

42.3. Where do you perceive challenges/limitations in achieving/improving good working conditions? (*Limiting factors, Price, Limited market, Climate, Consumers are a small specific group, Dependency on farmers, Law, Collective bargaining, labour unions, relationship between workers and Terra Viva? cultural differences, language differences, geographical distance, product price, competition*)

42.4. How did Covid influence working in the passata/pesto production? *struggles shipping over borders, production/export pause, payment and work, effects now?*

10. Quali sono gli obiettivi di Terra Vivas (Fairshares) per quanto riguarda le condizioni di lavoro? Aspetti che dovrebbero essere migliorati? *cambiamenti/sviluppi, miglioramenti*

10.1. Quali aspetti specifici dovrebbero essere migliorati? *Perché?*

10.2. Cosa è necessario fare per migliorare queste condizioni di lavoro? Come? *Etichette, sindacati, quadro giuridico, regolamentazione del mercato?*

10.3. Dove percepisce le sfide/limitazioni nel raggiungimento/miglioramento di buone condizioni di lavoro? (*Fattori limitanti, prezzo, mercato limitato, clima, i consumatori sono un piccolo gruppo specifico, dipendenza dagli agricoltori, legge, contrattazione collettiva,*

<i>sindacati, rapporto tra i lavoratori e Terra Viva? differenze culturali, differenze linguistiche, distanza geografica, prezzo del prodotto, concorrenza</i> 10.4. In che modo Covid ha influenzato il lavoro nella produzione di passata/pesto? <i>Lotte per la spedizione oltre i confini, pausa nella produzione/esportazione, pagamento e lavoro, effetti attuali?</i> 43. What impact do the Italian or Swiss state such as the <i>National Institute of Agricultural Economics (Inea)</i> have on the working conditions in Terra Viva? <i>product price, amount, standards for products, labour laws</i> 11. <i>Quale impatto hanno lo Stato italiano o svizzero, come l'Istituto Nazionale di Economia Agraria (Inea), sulle condizioni di lavoro in Terra Viva? Prezzo dei prodotti, quantità, standard per i prodotti, leggi sul lavoro.</i> 44. What impact do Labour unions such as <i>FEDERAZIONE LAVORATORI AGRO INDUSTRIA (Verband der Arbeitnehmer der Agrarindustrie FLAICGIL) /Nocap</i> have on the working conditions in Terra Viva? 12. <i>Che impatto hanno i sindacati come la FEDERAZIONE LAVORATORI AGRO INDUSTRIA (Verband der Arbeitnehmer der Agrarindustrie FLAICGIL)/nocap sulle condizioni di lavoro a Terra Viva?</i>	
45. Tell me about your own working conditions? 45.1. How do you get along with your current wage? 45.2. What would you like to change? How could this be achieved? 13. <i>Mi parleresti delle sue condizioni di lavoro?</i> 13.1. <i>Come si trova con il suo attuale stipendio?</i> 13.2. <i>Cosa vorrebbe cambiare? Come si potrebbe ottenere?</i>	
Final question	
46. What development do you hope for in the future regarding working conditions in the passata and pesto production? <i>(expansions, scalability, improvement of wage)</i> 14. <i>Quali sviluppi auspica per il futuro per quanto riguarda le condizioni di lavoro nella produzione di passata e pesto? (espansioni, scalabilità, miglioramento dei salari)</i>	
Outlook and End of Interview	
• Do you have anything else to add? Or say which is important in your opinion? • In case you change your mind you can add/ delete any information you said at all time! • THANK YOU! - <i>Avete qualcos'altro da aggiungere? O dire qualcosa di importante secondo te?</i> - <i>Nel caso in cui cambiaste idea, potete aggiungere/cancellare qualsiasi informazione che avete detto in qualsiasi momento!</i> - GRAZIE!	

Interview Guideline – Labour Union/organizations – FLAICGIL, Nocap

General Information at beginning	
- Hello and Thank you - Explain reason for Interview as part of master thesis (brief goal) - Anonymity (encryption of names)+ possibility to pull out at any time, duration - Consent for recording Interview - Salve e grazie - Spiegare il motivo dell'intervista come parte della tesi di laurea (breve obiettivo) - Anonimato (crittografia dei nomi) + possibilità di ritirarsi in qualsiasi momento, durata - Consenso alla registrazione dell'intervista	
Introductory questions	
1. Tell me about your position, role at work?	
1. Mi parleresti della sua posizione, del suo ruolo sul lavoro?	
About FEDERAZIONE LAVORATORI AGROINDUSTRIA	
2. Tell me about your organization? What does the Union FLAICGIL do? <i>Role in the supply chain? (visitation, guidance for farmers, control, relationship to state)</i> 2.1. What is your goal? 2.2. What are your options, possibilities? 2.3. What are your limitations <i>(state, contact to farmers, market, export, competition)</i> 2. Mi parleresti della sua organizzazione? Di cosa si occupa il sindacato FLAICGIL? <i>Ruolo nella filiera? (visite, orientamento per gli agricoltori, controllo, rapporto con lo Stato)</i> 2.1. Qual è il vostro obiettivo? 2.2. Quali sono le opzioni, le possibilità? 2.3. Quali sono i vostri limiti <i>(stato, contatti con gli agricoltori, mercato, esportazione, concorrenza)?</i> 3. Who do you work with, who do you support? Tell me about your relationship and contact with various actors in the supply chain? <i>(state, farmers, ...)</i> 3.1. Who are the people involved in the tomato production? <i>Type of workers, origin/ethnicity, skilled/unskilled, residential status/permits?</i> 3. Con chi lavorate, chi sostenete? Mi parleresti delle sue relazioni e dei suoi contatti con i vari attori della filiera? <i>(Stato, agricoltori, ...)</i> 3.1. Chi sono le persone coinvolte nella produzione di pomodoro? <i>Tipo di lavoratori, origine/etnia, qualificati/non qualificati, status abitativo/permessi?</i>	
Labour landscape in agriculture	
4. What are the labour conditions like for farmers and farmworkers? <i>Wage, employment type, working hours, power, living situation, contracts, agreements (Fixed salary, seasonal/yearly, per hour/amount, direct or indirect employment through intermediary)</i> 4.1. What are developments, changes? <i>Improvements? (more temporary employment)</i>	

4.2. What factors influence their labour conditions (such as wage, hours)? <i>(product amount/price, market price, worker's experience, age, qualification, ethnicity, collective bargaining agreement, labour union)</i> 4.3. How and where can they address their needs? 4. Quali sono le condizioni di lavoro degli agricoltori e dei braccianti? Salario, tipo di impiego, orario di lavoro, potere, situazione di vita, contratti, accordi <i>(Salario fisso, stagionale/annuale, per ora/importo, impiego diretto o indiretto tramite intermediario)</i> 4.1. Quali sono gli sviluppi, i cambiamenti? Miglioramenti? <i>(più lavoro temporaneo)</i> 4.2. Quali fattori influenzano le loro condizioni di lavoro (come salario, orario)? <i>(quantità/prezzo del prodotto, prezzo di mercato, esperienza del lavoratore, età, qualifica, etnia, contratto collettivo di lavoro, sindacato).</i> 4.3. Come e dove possono soddisfare le loro esigenze? 5. What are major challenges and struggles regarding their working conditions? 5.1. Who is affected? How? 5. Quali sono le principali sfide e lotte riguardanti le loro condizioni di lavoro? 5.1. Chi è colpito? Come? 6. What are good working conditions to you? <i>criteria's? What do you consider as fair wage? What is fair labour in Terra Viva? Living wage? Opinion on working conditions validbella</i> <i>(good-needs improvement?, enough wage? comparison to conventional producers in Sicily)</i> 6.1. How do you make sure decent labour conditions are enforced and workers are protected from exploitation? <i>(Labels, Standards, Controlling, Unions)</i> 6. Quali sono per lei le buone condizioni di lavoro? I criteri? <i>Cosa considera un salario equo? Che cos'è il lavoro equo in Terra Viva? Un salario adeguato? Opinione sulle condizioni di lavoro a Terra Viva (buone-da migliorare?, salario sufficiente? confronto con i produttori convenzionali in Sicilia)</i> 6.1. Come vi assicurate che vengano applicate condizioni di lavoro dignitose e che i lavoratori siano protetti dallo sfruttamento? <i>(Etichette, standard, controlli, sindacati)</i> 7. What are specific aspects which should be improved regarding working conditions? Why? How? <i>changes/developments, improvements</i> 7.1. What is necessary to improve those working conditions? How? <i>Labels, unions, legal framework, market regulation?</i> 7.2. Where do you perceive challenges/limitations in achieving/improving good working conditions? <i>(Limiting factors, Price, Limited market, Climate, Consumers are a small specific group, Dependency on farmers, Law, Collective bargaining, labour unions, relationship between workers and Terra Viva?</i> 7. Quali sono gli aspetti specifici che dovrebbero essere migliorati per quanto riguarda le condizioni di lavoro? <i>Perché? Come? cambiamenti/sviluppi, miglioramenti</i> 7.1. Cosa è necessario per migliorare le condizioni di lavoro? <i>Come? Etichette, sindacati, quadro giuridico, regolamentazione del mercato?</i>	
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7.2. Dove percepisce le sfide/limitazioni nel raggiungimento/miglioramento di buone condizioni di lavoro? <i>(Fattori limitanti, prezzo, mercato limitato, clima, i consumatori sono un piccolo gruppo specifico, dipendenza dagli agricoltori, legge, contrattazione collettiva, sindacati, rapporto tra lavoratori e Terra Viva?)</i> 8. What influence does the state have? <i>Support, limitations, laws</i> 8.1. What relationship do you have with state, local authorities? 8. Che influenza ha lo Stato? <i>Sostegno, limitazioni, leggi</i> 8.1. Che rapporto avete con le autorità statali e locali?	
Terra Viva	
9. What are differences among producers/companies here in Sicily but also compared to other parts of Italy? 9.1. What are examples where working conditions are better? What is different? 9. Quali sono le differenze tra i produttori/aziende qui in Sicilia ma anche rispetto ad altre parti d'Italia? 9.1. Quali sono gli esempi in cui le condizioni di lavoro sono migliori? Cosa c'è di diverso? 10. Tell me about the cooperative Terra Viva? 10.1. Where do you position Terra Viva/Fairshare? 10.2. Where is Terra Viva different than other producers? 10.3. What aspects could others copy? 10.4. Where could they still improve? What are their struggles in your opinion? 10. Mi parleresti della cooperativa Terra Viva? 10.1. Dove si posiziona Terra Viva/contenitore di folla? 10.2. In cosa Terra Viva si differenzia dagli altri produttori? 10.3. Quali aspetti potrebbero essere copiati da altri? 10.4. Dove potrebbero ancora migliorare? Quali sono le loro difficoltà secondo lei?	
Final question	
11. What development do you hope for in the future regarding working conditions (in the passata and pesto production)? <i>(higher wages, more security)</i> 11. Quali sviluppi auspica per il futuro per quanto riguarda le condizioni di lavoro (nella produzione di passata e pesto)? <i>(salari più alti, maggiore sicurezza)</i>	
Outlook and End of Interview	
- Do you have anything else to add? Or say which is important in your opinion? - In case you change your mind you can add/ delete any information you said at all time! THANK YOU! - Avete qualcos'altro da aggiungere? O dire qualcosa di importante secondo te? - Nel caso in cui cambiaste idea, potete aggiungere/cancellare qualsiasi informazione che avete detto in qualsiasi momento! GRAZIE!	

Interview Guideline – General (former employees non Terra Viva farmers ...)

General Information at beginning	
• Hello and Thank you • Explain reason for Interview as part of master thesis (brief goal) • Anonymity (encryption of names)+ possibility to pull out at any time, duration • Consent for recording Interview • <i>Salve e grazie</i> • <i>Spiegare il motivo dell'intervista come parte della tesi di laurea (breve obiettivo)</i> • <i>Anonimato (crittografia dei nomi) + possibilità di ritirarsi in qualsiasi momento, durata</i> • <i>Consenso alla registrazione dell'intervista</i>	
Introductory questions	
1. Tell me about your position, role at work, farm? <i>role, tasks, responsibilities, size, product type, production step</i> 1.1. Where/How do you generate income? Who is involved in your work direct or indirect? What is there role/power? Relationship? <i>Product buyers, family members, farm workers? Migrant workers? Supervisors? Quality check? , decide on wage?</i> 1.2. How does this change over the year, season? <i>Migrant workers, peaks?</i> 1.3. What are limitations and challenges in your work? 1. <i>Mi parleresti della sua posizione, del suo ruolo sul lavoro, dell'azienda agricola? ruolo, compiti, responsabilità, dimensioni, tipo di prodotto, fase di produzione</i> 1.1. <i>Dove/come genera il reddito? Chi è coinvolto nel suo lavoro direttamente o indirettamente? Qual è il suo ruolo/potere? Relazioni? Acquirenti di prodotti, membri della famiglia, lavoratori agricoli? Lavoratori migranti? Supervisori? Controllo della qualità? decidere il salario?</i> 1.2. <i>Come cambia nel corso dell'anno, della stagione? Lavoratori migranti, picchi?</i> 1.3. <i>Quali sono i limiti e le sfide del suo lavoro?</i>	
Farmers Context (only ask if IP is farmer)	
2. Who do you work with, who do you support, who supports you? Tell me about your relationship and contact with various actors in the supply chain? <i>(state, farmers, ...</i> 2.1. Who are the people involved in our production? <i>Type of workers, origin/ethnicity, skilled/unskilled, residential status/permits?</i> 2. <i>Con chi lavorate, chi sostenete, chi vi sostiene? Mi parleresti dei suoi rapporti e contatti con i vari attori della filiera? (Stato, agricoltori, ...)</i> 2.1. <i>Chi sono le persone coinvolte nella nostra produzione? Tipo di lavoratori, origine/etnia, qualificati/non qualificati, status abitativo/permessi?</i> 3. Can you tell me about your working conditions/or farmers and fieldworkers? Hours, agreement, protection, employee benefits, living situation, <i>Wage, employment type, working</i>	

<i>hours, power, living situation, contracts, agreements (Fixed salary, seasonal/yearly, per hour/amount, direct or employment through intermediaries(Caporali)</i> 3.1. What factors influence your/their working conditions (such as wage, hours)? <i>product amount/price, market price, worker's experience, age, qualification, ethnicity, collective bargaining agreement, labour union, buyer→Faireshare/Terra Viva or others, Law, intermediaries,seasonality</i> 3.2. Who makes sure that these working conditions are met? Labour Unions, Intermediaries, <i>Faireshare</i> or Terra Viva or other organizations? Tell me about the cooperative Terra Viva? <i>organizational structure, type of cooperative, employees, shareholders, role in supply chain</i> 3. Può parlarmi delle sue condizioni di lavoro/ degli agricoltori e dei lavoratori sul campo? <i>Orario, accordo, protezione, benefici per i dipendenti, situazione di vita, Salario, tipo di impiego, orario di lavoro, potere, situazione di vita, contratti, accordi (Salario fisso, stagionale/annuale, per ora/importo, impiego diretto o tramite intermediari(Caporali)</i> 3.1. Quali sono i fattori che influenzano le sue condizioni di lavoro (come salario, orario)? <i>Quantità/prezzo del prodotto, prezzo di mercato, esperienza del lavoratore, età, qualifica, etnia, contratto collettivo, sindacato, acquirente → Faireshare/Terra Viva o altri, legge, intermediari, stagionalità.</i> 3.2. Chi si assicura che queste condizioni di lavoro siano rispettate? Sindacati, intermediari, <i>Faireshare</i> o Terra Viva o altre organizzazioni? Mi parleresti della cooperativa Terra Viva? <i>Struttura organizzativa, tipo di cooperativa, dipendenti, azionisti, ruolo nella filiera.</i>	
Labour landscape in agriculture	
4. What are specific aspects which should be improved regarding working conditions? Why? How? <i>changes/developments, improvements</i> 4.1. What is necessary to improve those working conditions? How? <i>Labels, unions, legal framework, market regulation?</i> 4.2. Where do you perceive challenges/limitations in achieving/improving good working conditions? <i>(Limiting factors, Price, Limited market, Climate, Consumers are a small specific group, Dependency on farmers, Law, Collective bargaining, labour unions, relationship between workers and Terra Viva?</i> 4. Quali sono gli aspetti specifici che dovrebbero essere migliorati per quanto riguarda le condizioni di lavoro? <i>Perché? Come? cambiamenti/sviluppi, miglioramenti</i> 4.1. Cosa è necessario per migliorare le condizioni di lavoro? <i>Come? Etichette, sindacati, quadro giuridico, regolamentazione del mercato?</i> 4.2. Dove percepisce le sfide/limitazioni nel raggiungimento/miglioramento di buone condizioni di lavoro? <i>(Fattori limitanti, prezzo, mercato limitato, clima, i consumatori sono un piccolo gruppo specifico, dipendenza dagli agricoltori, legge, contrattazione collettiva, sindacati, rapporto tra lavoratori e Terra Viva?</i> 5. What impact do the Italian or Swiss state such as the <i>National Institute of Agricultural Economics (Inea)</i> or <i>ILO</i> have on your work? <i>product price, amount, standards for products, labour laws, Support, limitations, laws</i>	

5. <i>Quale impatto hanno sul suo lavoro lo Stato italiano o svizzero, come l'Istituto Nazionale di Economia Agraria (Inea) o l'ILO? prezzo dei prodotti, quantità, standard per i prodotti, leggi sul lavoro, supporto, limitazioni, leggi</i> 6. What impact do Labour unions such as <i>FEDERAZIONE LAVORATORI AGRO INDUSTRIA</i> (<i>Verband der Arbeitnehmer der Agrarindustrie FLAICGIL</i>) have on the working conditions? 6.1. Where and how can you/farmers and fieldworkers address your/their needs, <i>labour unions ,protest, government</i> ? 6. <i>Che impatto hanno sulle condizioni di lavoro i sindacati come la FEDERAZIONE LAVORATORI AGRO INDUSTRIA (Verband der Arbeitnehmer der Agrarindustrie FLAICGIL)?</i> 6.1. <i>Dove e come potete rivolgervi alle vostre esigenze, ai sindacati, alle proteste, al governo?</i> 7. What are good working conditions to you? <i>criteria's? What do you consider as fair wage? What is fair labour in Terra Viva? Living wage?</i> 7.1. What is your current perception/opinion on working conditions in Terra Viva? (<i>good-needs improvement?, enough wage?, freedom, hours, agreements/contracts, comparison to conventional producers in Sicily</i>) 7.2. <i>How do you get along with your income? Influence on family?</i> 7.3. What would you like to change? How could this be achieved? 7. <i>Quali sono per lei le buone condizioni di lavoro? I criteri? Cosa considera un salario equo? Che cos'è il lavoro equo in Terra Viva? Salario di sussistenza?</i> 7.1. <i>Qual è la sua attuale percezione/opinione sulle condizioni di lavoro a Terra Viva? (buone-necessarie di miglioramento?, salario sufficiente?, libertà, orari, accordi/contratti, confronto con i produttori convenzionali in Sicilia)</i> 7.2. <i>Come si trova con il suo reddito? Influenza sulla famiglia?</i> 7.3. <i>Cosa vorresti cambiare? Come si potrebbe ottenere?</i>	
Terra Viva in context	
8. What are differences among producers/companies here in Sicilly but also compared to other parts of Italy? 8.1. What are examples where working conditions are better? What is different? 8.2. If farmer, where would you situate yourself? 8. <i>Quali sono le differenze tra i produttori/aziende qui in Sicilia ma anche rispetto ad altre parti d'Italia?</i> 8.1. <i>Quali sono gli esempi in cui le condizioni di lavoro sono migliori? Cosa c'è di diverso?</i> 8.2. <i>Se agricoltore, dove si collocherebbe</i> 9. Tell me about your connection to Terra Viva? Stakeholder, shareholder, employee, decision-making, ownership? 9.1. What is your former or future connection? Reason for changes? 9. <i>Mi parlaresti del suo legame con Terra Viva? Socio, azionista, dipendente, decisionale, proprietario?</i> 9.1. <i>Qual è il suo legame precedente o futuro? Motivo del cambiamento?</i> 10. Tell me about the cooperative Terra Viva?	

10.1. Where do you position Terra Viva/Fairshare? 10.2. Where is Terra Viva different than other producers? 10.3. What aspects could others copy? 10.4. Where do you see improvements? What are their struggles in your opinion? 10. Mi parleresti della cooperativa Terra Viva? 10.1. Dove si posiziona Terra Viva/contenitore di folla? 10.2. In cosa Terra Viva si differenzia dagli altri produttori? 10.3. Quali aspetti potrebbero essere copiati da altri? 10.4. Dove vede dei miglioramenti? Quali sono le loro difficoltà secondo lei?	
Final Question	
11. What development do you hope for in the future regarding working conditions (in the passata and pesto production)? (<i>higher wages, more security</i>) 11. Quali sviluppi auspica per il futuro per quanto riguarda le condizioni di lavoro (nella produzione di passata e pesto)? (<i>salari più alti, maggiore sicurezza</i>)	
Outlook and End of Interview	
- Do you have anything else to add? Or say which is important in your opinion? - In case you change your mind you can add/ delete any information you said at all time! THANK YOU! - Avete qualcos'altro da aggiungere? O dire qualcosa di importante secondo te? - Nel caso in cui cambiaste idea, potete aggiungere/cancellare qualsiasi informazione che avete detto in qualsiasi momento! GRAZIE!	

Appendix B: Interview Reports

IP1	
Interview Access and Willingness	Contact via Email was very willing as he also did a Master thesis just a few years ago. Recording was also no problem. As it was during his working hours, he asked to keep it around 1 hour.
Language and involved people	Swiss German, no other people
Duration and Time	1:16:27 at 13.10 p.m.
Place	In Switzerland at office of distributor in a meeting room.
Interruption	Only short interruption when we had to close the window due to rain. Wanted to see transcription.
Special features	
Comments/After Interview	Wanted to receive transcription and interested in final thesis and presentation

IP2	
Interview Access and Willingness	Contact via organizations info mail, was very willing to talk about labour exploitation and his own situation
Duration and Time	1h at 16.03 p.m.
Language and involved people	Italian / English, Translator 2
Place	Online via Zoom
Interruption	Due to Zoom recording the Interview was interrupted twice as a new call had to be set up.
Special features	Was difficult to understand due to the audio quality Spoke a lot at once, so I was only able to ask the most relevant questions
Comments/After Interview	Very interesting information to have before field visit Debriefing with translator how it went and how to organize the next interviews

IP3	
Interview Access and Willingness	Was my contact to organize field visit so I felt very comfortable.
Duration and Time	First day after my arrival 01:47:45 at 11.05 a.m.
Language and involved people	English
Place	In an office at the production facility
Interruption	Received phone calls and one person entered the room, and he asked me to pause the audio.
Special features	Showed me around the cooperative facilities before Realized during the interview that I must use a more basic vocabulary as his English is lower than initially thought.
Comments/After Interview	Spoke about what interview partners might be interesting for me and that we could have a short discussion at the end of my stay. Had daily contact during my field visit and helped me organize and recommended other Interview partners.

IP4	
Interview Access and Willingness	Contacted each other through Whatsapp through the cooperatives groupchat and seemed willing to do the interview.
Language and involved people	English, no other people
Duration and Time	01:18:33 at 17.46 p.m. IP came when it was best for him.
Place	Interview was on the weekend at the cooperative house where I was staying in the living room.
Interruption	We got interrupted twice by a person working in the house. Once she just brought water and snacks and the other time, she said something to the IP 4. We were the only ones, and I told Natalina not to disturb us but she did it anyway twice, other then that it was comfortable and quite.
Special features	Before the Interview the IP asked me some questions and was very curious to know more about my research and opinion around food.
Comments/After Interview	After the interview we had dinner together for several hours and we again mentioned the equality thought and that he really admires the president. Also, the Lady working at the house was talking about an Issue

	and the IP4 really wanted to solve it and said in this cooperative we have to be equal and that he would speak to Massimiliano about it. With this IP I also had dinner on some other nights and spoke together on some cooperative events.
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IP5	
Interview Access and Willingness	Access through my main contact at Terra Viva (IP3), who also drove us by car to the field IP5 was working on.
Language and involved people	Italian/English with T1
Duration and Time	00:56:16 at 10.20
Place	Farm and fields were around 10min from the town. Interview was held in the garage of the farm house. The farmhouse and fields belonged to IP7, the president of the cooperative.
Interruption	Generally, a lot of background noises. There were people walking through in the background. Once we were asked if we wanted water and some biscuits.
Special features during Interview	Was very honest about the wage and said it was too low. Also does not take notes of hours but just does all the work which is required. At the same time IP5 also says that farming is not work but a passion, so he loves doing it. One of the few person who spoke about Addiopizzo and Mafia, but when I asked how the cooperative can avoid being involved he did not really answer. As it is not the main focus of my research I decided to leave the topic aside in this moment.
Comments/After Interview	After the interview I also asked about helping on the fields and we arranged the basil picking. IP 5 also gave me the contacts to his two fieldworkers IP13 and IP10. Before the interview IP5 showed us around on the farm and explained things about farming. He also mentioned that the drought is a big problem, and you could see many dried-out plants. Further he said that many conventional farmers burned the fields for fertilization and that sometimes the fire also catches their fields, which they do not like.

IP6	
Interview Access and Willingness	Contact through a Whatsapp Group regarding agriculture and agroecology in Italy. Posted a message that I am looking for a farmer and IP6 replied, as she is interested in meeting the cooperative and building a relationship. Combined her trip for the interview with a separate meeting with the president. Goal here was to speak to someone outside of the cooperative but located in Sicily.
Language and involved people	English, none
Duration and Time	01:15:52 at 18.06
Place	Met in a room in the house of the facility.
Interruption	none
Special features	- Farmer wants to get involved with the cooperative - Challenges in farming and involvement of state
Comments/After Interview	- More interesting information than expected in the Interview e.g. involvement of other companies and external fieldworkers - Also talked about her ideas and wishes regarding the the cooperative and stayed in contact after the interview after how my research and her research were going

IP7	
Interview Access and Willingness	Asked directly as I saw him almost every day. Very willing
Language and involved people	Italian/English with T1 This Italian was rather difficult for me to understand.
Duration and Time	03:24:39 at 9.26
Place	At the house I was staying.
Interruption	As the interview was very long we took some bio-breaks in between. Also the phone rang a few times.
Special features	- Open talking about exact wages

	- He as president does not receive the highest wage - Involved in a lot of different projects (agricultural school, grassroots etc.) - Did not bring up mafia topic - 4 founders - Previous president
Comments/After Interview	- My concentration and understanding of Italian decreased during the interview. - Very long interview, but also important to understand IP7s background. With some questions I would have wished for more detailed explanation (for example how they organize themselves, and how regularly they hold meetings etc.) - Saw IP7 a lot as he also had his office in the house I was staying. - During all the interviews people always referred to IP7 doing xyz or ip7 being in charge. - During the interview I was a little annoyed as I felt like T1 was partially not taking me seriously and kind of laughing at my questions.

IP8 (Son of IP 7)	
Interview Access and Willingness	Met on the first day and talked about Fairshare, so I said an Interview would be interesting. IP then contacted me via the cooperative group chat.
Language and involved people	Italian/English even though English of IP was better than expected. Translator 1
Duration and Time	0:47:14 at 14.58 p.m.
Place	In the meeting room in one of the facilities, warehouses
Interruption	none
Special features	- Mentions law without asking (law regarding safety and quality of food seems very important) - Interesting about overtime work - Badge system - Relationship with Fairshare.

Comments/After Interview	During free time I also got to see how and for what he spends his money. IP 8 also helped us file the police report when we were robbed. As I understood the most part of Italian and the IP my English the translator was not super necessary in this Interview. Anyway, I could not have known before hand and the translator was on site anyway. After the Interview the translator and IP 8 talked about a topic (sugar in products) where they had a disagreement, and both wanted to make their point. This made me feel slightly uncomfortable because I hoped for support for my remaining fieldwork and did not want to upset IP8. However, IP 8 forgot about the discussion with the translator, and we also spent some free time together as we were at a similar age.
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IP9	
Interview Access and Willingness	As one of the tomato providers I asked IP3 for the contact and IP3 arranged a field visit and interview with IP9.
Language and involved people	IT/EN, T2 understood some english and I understood most of his italian
Duration and Time	01:07:32 at 16.08
Place	Interview was done in the hotel/restaurant at a table in the back where no one could hear us.
Interruption	At the end IP9's sister came to say hello.
Special features	Income through 3 main pillars: agriculture, hospitality, restaurant, agrotourism Biodiversity on fields Had a lot of other products (not Terra Viva) they were selling in the Hotel lobby
Comments/After Interview	Spoke a lot at the same time, which also made it difficult to transcribe correctly. Were able to see his fields and he showed us and explained a lot. Surprising that tomato is rather a small field and was also not ripe yet. Due to the lack of rain.

IP10	
Interview Access and Willingness	Contact through IP5, some people told me the interview was difficult because IP10 has a hearing problem. And yet I still wanted to do the interview

	because the person is a fieldworker of the cooperative and of Italian citizenship. Seemed willing but also his boss/IP5 brought him.
Language and involved people	Italian/English, T2
Duration and Time	00:51:18 at 10.04
Place	Outside the house I was staying. I chose the place outside as I wanted to avoid interruptions as in previous interviews. But the wind was loud in between and also a loud vehicle past.
Interruption	No interruption but it was very windy which affected the audio quality.
Special features	T2 and I both realized in the interview that the person had troubles understanding more indepth questions but also describing opinions, relationships etc. As a result, the interview questions were adapted during the interview and posed more simple.
Comments/After Interview	Was tough in the sense that we had to pose and rephrase certain questions several times. But in general IP10 was a very friendly person and we went basil picking some days later.

IP11	
Interview Access and Willingness	Person from the cooperative I already met the first day I was there.
Duration and Time	00:37:35 at 11.41 a.m.
Language and involved people	Italian and English, Translator 2
Place	Was at her office.
Interruption	None
Special features	- Was invited some days previously to attend a degustation and tasting led by IP11 - One of the few women I interviewed. Because farmers and fieldworkers are mostly men and also higher positions in the cooperative are men. I chose her because I was interested in how the connection to the producers and distributors looks like on site and include a feminine perspective from Terra Viva. - I already knew from the degustation that she spoke a lot so I was a little nervous the

	interview would take too long but I told her in the beginning that I want to do a short interview and her answers were shorter than expected.
Comments/After Interview	She also lives in the same town as I was staying so we also saw each other a couple of times on the street.

IP12	
Interview Access and Willingness	Asked IP 9 if I could speak to one of his fieldworkers and he chose this one. IP12 seemed very excited to give an interview.
Duration and Time	00:56:31 at 17.32
Language and involved people	Italian /Englisch with T2 IP12 came together with IP 9. T2 and I were given a ride by IP8. However I explained that for the Interview T2, IP12 and I have to be alone and it was no problem. They were far away during the interview, so they could also not see us.
Place	Café in a nearby town
Interruption	Were interrupted through the waitress especially in the beginning.
Special features	Made a lot of jokes and seemed very happy - Point about changing the system and globalization. Comparison between Italy, Greece and Spain - Payment and wage which has to be improved - Farmer pays so much for a worker and barely has enough for himself, so the solution is not to increase fieldworkers wages or final product prices - Due to covid he had to close his shop. One of the few IP's who mentioned Covid and were affected by it.
Comments/After Interview	In the beginning I was bit annoyed by the place because it was loud and I had thought we'd go to the farm we were the other day. But as I let the interviewed person choose and I only realized the meeting point when we were there I tried to find the most quite spot in the café.

	After the Interview we also had a gelato together. IP 9 (boss of IP12) insisted to pay , eventhough I wanted to invite them. In his answers such as (globalization, system thinking) I realized that he was brighter in comparison to the other fieldworkers, he also gave more and deeper responses.
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IP13	
Interview Access and Willingness	Asked him for an Interview when we went Basil picking.
Duration and Time	in the morning a day after we went Basil picking with this fieldworker. 00:44:56, 08.20 a.m.
Language and involved people	English, none
Place	Interview was at cooperative house, I was staying at, in the living room
Interruption	Unfortunately, we were interrupted a few times and I had to pause the audio twice. I then told the other people in the house please not to come in the room. Nevertheless, we could also hear the other lady of the house screaming to her dog. Due to the interruptions, I was a bit annoyed and also distracted in the beginning of the interview.
Special features	The interview was more difficult then expected. Even though it was in English the IP did not understand many things I asked, and I had to rephrase a lot. Also, I did not understand his accent well and had to ask about some words several times. Nevertheless, the interview was very interesting. In retrospective I could have prepared easier questions. I ended up formulating the questions rather like in a questionnaire than in my original guideline to make it easier to understand. (the person was more fluent in English than in Italian) Piero drove the Interviewperson to Casa Gialla and waited outside in the meantime as IP13 does not have their own car.
Comments/After Interview	IP was very thankful and appreciated the Interview.

IP14	
Interview Access and Willingness	Interview with Alessandro. As we spoke at the film food festival two days, I asked if it was possible to interview him.
Duration and Time	00:50:07 at 11.32
Language and involved people	English, other intern friend joined who drove me but was not asking any questions just listening.
Place	Was outside on the field, one other person was working on building a wall for the Duna Verde Project.
Interruption	In between it was loud due to the other worker.
Special features	It was already quite warm at around 11.30-12.30. At the same time it was very windy. Interesting things: - We met his roofer which showed us his current task of peeling and cleaning garlic. - Ale works 3 days as a teacher in a highschool, also because the salary is very good. The other days he works on the farm together with his wife.
Comments/After Interview	- We had lunch together (with a couple friend, the roofer and us) later and spent quite some time preparing and eating. After the food he also took a nap, because it was too hot to do anything. - They actually did drink a lot of beer as mentioned in the interviews and rested after lunch - We also met their roofer which showed us the farms and what is tasks were.

IP15	
Interview Access and Willingness	Wrote several Emails without reply and then called the office telephone number together with T2 and was able to arrange an Interview.
Duration and Time	01:20:18 at 15.35
Language and involved people	Italian/English with T3
Place	At labour unions office, also headquarters in Sicily
Interruption	No external interruptions but during translations P15 often continued talking.
Special features	- List of salaries in provincial contract - At least 62 Euro, which is different to what I have heard in previous interviews - Unemployment rate
Comments/After Interview	- IP15 spoke very fast and a lot. It was difficult to get time for translations from T3. - First Interview with T3. I had to ask T3 to translate a lot as T3 did not translate per se, which annoyed me during the Interview as I felt like I was not catching everything. - Generally very interesting interview and received clearer information on the national and provincial contracts

IP16	
Interview Access and Willingness	Access through IP3
Duration and Time	
Language and involved people	Italian/ English with T3
Place	Southwest coast of Sicily, Ragusa Region in a storage room next to the field
Interruption	Several interruptions through phone call
Special features	- Was open to what they pay fieldworkers but unsure, because he just said it's according to the law, and 9 euros was not - IP16 has longer working hours, less structured than fieldworkers (13h), but is also categorized as fieldworker on a slightly higher level (tractor license)

	- Talked about spontaneous orders from Terra Viva - They cannot always pay workers on time. - Unemployment rate is again very important.
Comments/After Interview	Relatively loud environment Towards the end of the interview, I felt some tension or discomfort of asking more details about the wages, T3 also recommended to ask some questions more openly, because I asked about the comfort of IP16

IP17	
Interview Access and Willingness	Access through IP16, seemed willing to do the interview, but maybe also had no choice to say No.
Duration and Time	00:19 at 12:05
Language and involved people	Italian/Englisch T3, workers were in the background but couldn't hear us
Place	On the tomato field near Comiso
Interruption	None, but due to the location outside the wind was very loud and I was not able to catch some words in the audio.
Special features	- Felt like he was okay taking a break and still received the money for the hour at the same time I did not want to take too much of his time because I was unsure if he would be paid less.
Comments/After Interview	- Seemed a little uncomfortable with to go more into detail - Supervisor/boss who is IP16 left after short introduction - During the interview the other fieldworkers were also watching us do the interview which was a bit strange and

Appendix C: Field Notes and Participant Observation

In order to preserve the interviewees anonymity, field notes are not published.

Appendix D: Transcripts

Appendix D was handed in to the supervisor and will not be published.

Appendix E: Code Framing MAXQDA

Code System	Frequency
Code System	2663
1) Actors	0
consumers	30
farmer unions	22
buyer	67
Terra Viva employees	24
fieldworker Terra Viva	31
fieldworker	40
farmers	95
Cooperatives	22
NGO, association	7
Labour Union	14
law and state	0
italy (geographically)	12
EU	15
Sicily,province palermo	22
italian government	39
severance pay	1
unemployment rate	33
collective bargaining agreement	27
safety and security law	7
Switzerland	7
2) Organization	0
price setting	39
Structure	4
founders	3
employees	14
members	26
president	23
Management	13
Profit (distribution)	13
product process (Cultivation, ..)	44
Legal form	2

New Product	10
New Member (+)	18
independency of conv.system	26
history	21
3) Terra Viva principles and goals	0
ethical consumption	4
producer-consumer relationship (+)	63
alternative venues, buyers	5
environment (+)	12
agroecological methods	12
organic production	31
biodiversity	13
resilienz	4
social component	10
social inclusion (+)	17
working conditions (+)	35
payment	11
appreciation (+)	17
equality (+)	36
In/dependency (+)	42
transparency	16
standards	25
product quality (+)	15
diversification of production (+)	13
Product value	3
education	11
scale	1
partnerships	12
geographical expansion	4
4) Relationship Terra Viva Fairshare	2
independency	3
Fairshare principles	21
quantity of contact	7
form of contact	28
agency	11

traceability	6
spatial proximity	3
Social proximity	15
5) Working Conditions	2
sources of income	25
transportation	10
working days	56
employment duration	25
holiday,days off	28
contract	71
payment/income	124
form of payment	26
form of employment	14
hours	74
breaks	10
overtime	6
method of time recording	13
predictability of work	27
agency	52
own perception	71
legal status	7
safety and health	18
living	22
relationships	2
fieldworkers	29
Terra Viva	64
Fairshare	7
president	14
employees	10
farmers	33
Decent work	7
transportation	1
collaboration	5
regular contract	13
hours	6

housing	5
equality	9
appreciation	16
financial security	5
payment	28
6) Challenges	4
communication	4
representation	4
Inspections	5
law	4
Migration policy	5
workers	12
exploitation (+)	26
appreciation	6
agency	22
contract	21
workforce	13
culture (dishonesty)	19
covid	4
complexity	7
waste	8
environment/climate	32
seasonality (incl. heat)	51
health and safety	2
harvest loss	18
standards	5
production	11
certification	9
economic (food) system	49
consumer requests	12
living costs	15
payment (+)	69

Declaration of AI-based tools

DeepL was used to translate the interview guidelines from English to Italian and transcriptions from Italian to English.

ChatGPT was partially used to reformulate sentences and improve the language and style, especially in the introduction and conclusion chapters. Additionally, ChatGPT was used to receive an overview of Italian laws and sources.

Grammarly pro was used to correct the language.

Personal Declaration

I hereby declare that the submitted thesis is the result of my own, independent work. All external sources are explicitly acknowledged in the thesis.

 , 29.01.2025

Signature and Date