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Ca' Foscari  
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30123 Venezia

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**Here is California!**  
Immigrant labor force in the intensive  
agriculture of Capitanata

**Laureanda**

Isabella Pierobon  
Matricola 824780

**Relatore**

Ch. Prof. Pietro Basso

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## Index

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Introduction   | 2   |
| I. Intensive agriculture in Capitanata as an implementation of the Californian model in Southern Italy | 11  |
| 1. The latifundary land structure inheritance  | 12  |
| 2. Implications of intensive agriculture introduction  | 21  |
| 3. The backup army of labor required by intensive agriculture  | 29  |
| 4. Cyclicity and auto-regeneration of the system   | 40  |
| II. The internationalization of the Californian model through ultra-neoliberal Agrarian Policies       | 51  |
| 5. The radicalization of land concentration and fragmentation  | 52  |
| 6. The deepening of agriculture's dependence upon public funding                                       | 62  |
| 7. The expansion of industrial and commercial agri-business corporations                               | 72  |
| Conclusions  | 84  |
| References   | 92  |
| Sitography   | 102 |

## Introduction

The paper aims at providing the causal determinants that explain poor living conditions, exploitative working position, precarious life possibilities, careless public treatment and racist social environment of immigrant working force in the vegetable and fruits' agricultural sector of Southern Italy. The reason for an in-depth investigation of immigrant workers' exploitation comes from a personal experience lived during an internship for Emergency NGO ONLUS<sup>1</sup> in the Capitanata region of Puglia,<sup>2</sup> where foreign workforce is mainly employed for the harvest season of tomato, but also for those of pepper, artichoke, asparagus and watermelon harvest season (Pugliese, 2012).

Although health is recognized as a fundamental right of the individual and a collective interest by the Italian Constitution (Article 32) and although the Turco-Napolitano law (Article 35 TU 286/98) prescribes that foreigners are to be efficiently informed on the existence of specific clinics for them, immigrants often do not have access to treatment. Their access to health care is limited because of several factors: scarce knowledge of their rights, linguistic barriers and lack of cultural mediation, lack of foreigners' clinics in the areas where they are concentrated and clinics' malfunctioning are some of them. For illegal immigrants, moreover, the fear of being reported to the police or authorities needs to be added to this list of reasons (Colloca, 2013). Legal immigrants with residence, on the other hand, have also the right to a general practitioner; however, most of them are either not aware of their right, or cannot reach the clinic because they are working away from the municipality they have residence in. Even when all these factors do not constitute a problem, there is always one last burden to overcome: as a matter of fact, many handworkers do not have the money to buy the medicines they are prescribed. In order to deal with all these constraints, Emergency's intervention in Capitanata takes place through mobile clinics

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<sup>1</sup> Emergency is a humanitarian association founded in 1994 by war surgeon Gino Strada. In 1998 it obtained the legal recognition of 'non-profit organization of social value' (ONLUS) and in 1999 that of non-governmental organization (NGO). Emergency's purpose is that of providing «free, high quality medical and surgical treatment to the victims of war, landmines and poverty» while promoting «a culture of peace, solidarity and respect for human rights». See: <http://www.emergency.it/who-we-are.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Capitanata is the pre-Italian unification name of the province of Foggia. It is nowadays used to indicate a geographically and culturally homogenous area. See: Granatiero F. (2012), *Dal Gargano all'Appennino, le voci in dialetto*, Foggia : Sentieri Meridiani Edizioni. For the purpose of this study, it is used to refer to the rural lands where immigrants are employed as hand workers in the vegetable and fruits' agricultural sector.

that allow the staff to reach the farthest rural areas. Prior to Emergency's presence in these territories - that dates back to April 2011 - Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) had intervened with a similar program from 2003 to 2008.<sup>3</sup> Despite the sudden disappearance of MSF, which is still a reason for patients' complains, the intervention has produced two reports very useful to describe the housing conditions of harvest workers.<sup>4</sup> The studies produced by MSF tells of a dramatic living situation that has worsened in the last years due to the 2008 financial crisis which has reduced the number of harvest jobs available while increasing the number of immigrants fighting for them (Colloca, 2013).

Being the housing issue is the most visible aspect of the agricultural laborers' question (Perrotta, 2013), it appears proper to provide a description of immigrants' living conditions, before entering the study of the structural determinants for their exploitation. In fact, in places of immigrants' concentration – in Capitanata as well as in other agricultural areas of Southern Italy – the prevailing living form is the ghetto, that can be defined as an informal settlement separated or far from the residential area and exclusively inhabited by foreigners of homogeneous origin. The reasons why agricultural laborers seek refuge here are the inability of accessing housing in urban areas because of costs, the proximity to places of recruitment and work, the possibility of leveraging ties with compatriots to facilitate social inclusion and also the availability of using internal organizational forms and informal economy (Colloca, Corrado, 2013). Literature identifies in Southern Italian ghettos two symbolic functions: firstly, it is the place of recognition of ethnic diversity, i.e. it plays a fundamental role on social organization and symbolic representation; secondly, the ghetto corresponds to a segregation according to the socio-economic status of its inhabitants and because of this, it is a way of «managing the territorialization of social inequality».<sup>5</sup>

The typical forms of settlement subject to Emergency's intervention are the improvised slum and occupied farm houses. The mobile clinics, indeed, reach both the 'Grand Ghetto' - as the inhabitants themselves named it - of Rignano Garganico (FG) and the rural areas of Stornarella (FG) and San Marco in Lamis (FG) where immigrants

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<sup>3</sup> See: [http://www.medicisenzafrotiere.it/cosafacciamo/progetti\\_missione\\_italia.asp](http://www.medicisenzafrotiere.it/cosafacciamo/progetti_missione_italia.asp).

<sup>4</sup> MSF Medici senza frontiere (2005), *I frutti dell'ipocrisia. Storia di chi la raccolta la fa. Di nascosto, Indagine sulle condizioni di vita e di salute dei lavoratori stranieri impiegati nei campi del Sud Italia*; MSF Medici senza frontiere (2008), *Una stagione all'inferno. Rapporto sulle condizioni degli immigrati in agricoltura nelle regioni del Sud Italia*.

<sup>5</sup> Colloca C., Corrado A. (2013), *Trasformazioni meridionali: migranti e aree rurali. Un'introduzione*, in Colloca C., Corrado A. (edited by), *La globalizzazione delle campagne. Migranti e società rurali del Sud d'Italia*, Milano : Franco Angeli, p. 18.

are hosted in abandoned, unfinished and unsafe buildings (Fanizza, 2013).<sup>6</sup> Living conditions are common to both types of housing solutions and they are characterized by the absence of sanitation facilities, running water, electricity, heating system and sewer connection (MSF, 2008). Another ordinary issue is overcrowding: it causes immigrants' forced sharing of mattresses - with the subsequent contagion of infectious diseases - and their improvised sleeping accommodation outside - which becomes even more problematic during summertime when, because of the increased population and the scarce number of mattresses available, they find themselves having to sleep on cardboards (Colloca, 2013). Indeed, as MSF (2008) report explains and as the experience with Emergency teaches, the awful hygienic conditions cause diseases - that have mainly an occupational origin - to become chronic. Due to physical strain in the fields and to exposure to chemicals, the most commonly observed pathologies are musculoskeletal and respiratory. Because of the lack of access to drinkable water and of the scarce cleanliness of mattresses, also dental and skin diseases are very frequent, particularly the cases of scabies. Moreover, limitations and little variability in the diet are the cause for many gastrointestinal pathologies.

Nevertheless, the 'Grand Ghetto' works as a centre of attraction for many workers because it appears as a place of great safety and sociality: for a young seasonal worker who has no contacts in the territory, the Ghetto is the safest place of Capitanata. In summertime it hosts as many as 800 people, that reduce to 150-200 permanent residents in winter (Pugliese, 2012). The origin of immigrants is mainly Sub-Saharan Africa, although many of them come from Maghreb. Among services offered by the existing informal economy, the most important are those provided by hairdressers, mechanics, merchants, cooks and prostitutes (Colloca, 2013; Pugliese, 2012). On the other hand, immigrants choose to go live in farm houses in rural suburbs for the peculiar invisibility of these locations, besides other factors such as national belonging, religious affiliation e the possibility of taking advantage of pre-established social relationships. Being invisible, the police rarely inspects or busts in these places: this is why they are

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<sup>6</sup> A third type of housing environment that interests immigrants' stay is the reception center. Since Regional laws established it, in Puglia it has taken the shape of the widespread hotel. The structure is managed by non-profit associations that offer a shelter to immigrants upon the payment of a social quota (between 3 and 5 Euros per night). Although scholars (Fanizza, 2013) classify the widespread hotel experience in Puglia as an example of good public practice, it is a limited solution: nowadays it offers a maximum of 200 beds. See: Fanizza F. (2013), *L'immigrazione nelle aree rurali della Puglia: il caso della Capitanata*, in Colloca C., Corrado A. (edited by), *La globalizzazione delle campagne. Migranti e società rurali del Sud d'Italia*, Milano : Franco Angeli, pp. 111-112.

the favorite destination of illegal immigrants. These *agro-towns*<sup>7</sup> were founded by explicit will of Mussolini in order to diminish the number of rural inhabitants in Foggia while repopulating the countryside. However, as testified by the abandoned farm houses where immigrants live, the fascist project failed. Gradually, rural suburbs of Capitanata have become dormitory-towns for the city of Foggia and, thanks to public administration's carelessness, they have been marginalized, treated as ghettos (Fanizza, 2013).

Thus, episodes of violence, intolerance and discrimination against immigrants registered in rural suburbs can be explained by considering the history of political indifference suffered by the countryside and the cultural backwardness of relations between Foggia and the suburbs. Indeed, rural area inhabitants and political class do not understand why it is on them to suffer the burden of immigration and they do not hesitate in showing their intolerance against new-comers (Fanizza, 2013). One of Emergency's patients, for example, told the staff that, while walking on the roadside with some companions, they were unexpectedly attacked by a car full of Italian people. The vehicle went on them, crashing the patient's leg. Other times, people's disagreement is shown in a less violent but still discriminatory way. This is the case for the many neighborhood committees that have been instituted in the last years (Fanizza, 2013). Although literature categorizes neighborhood committees as active citizenship's expression (Della Porta, 2004), some of them go far beyond the establishment of coexistence rules. As a proof, Emergency's opening of a new site of action in Borgo Mezzanone (FG), was delayed by a couple of months because of one of these committees: immigrants' getting provisions of water from the municipal well caused inhabitants to raise security demands. If concerned citizens are not properly answered by the municipal administration, it is very likely that the members themselves will take initiative in order to restore normality. This is what happened in 2007 in nearby Borgo Segezia (FG) where inhabitants decided to seal the public fountain and, depriving immigrants of their only chance of water supply, caused their runoff from the village (Fanizza, 2013).

This type of people's reaction to immigrants' presence is not a peculiarity of Capitanata nor it is the sign of agricultural underdevelopment in Southern Italy. Literature (Herman, 2003a) provides a handful of equivalent cases in a similar

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<sup>7</sup> Pugliese E. (2012) (edited by), *Diritti violati: Indagine sulle condizioni di vita dei lavoratori immigrati in aree rurali del Sud d'Italia*, Dedalus, maggio 2012, p. 48.

agricultural production system: the Bouches-du-Rhône region in Mediterranean France. Episodes of violence are common because they all originate from the same agricultural production standard: the Californian model described by Jean-Pierre Berlan, in which racism plays a structural role (Berlan, 2002).

Hence, the purpose of the first part of the paper: to prove that the agricultural productive system in Capitanata is an *application* of the Californian model. In order to achieve this objective, the archetype analyses some features that, for the purpose of this study, have been gathered in four variables: the inheritance of a latifundary land structure; the criteria that define intensive agriculture and the forces that make its implantation possible; the need for a backup army of working force and, lastly, the auto-regenerative strength of the system. These four aspects are investigated in order to find differences and similarities between the two diverse contextual fields. Findings prove that the Californian model works as a *paradigm*, because it perfectly fits the ‘just in time’ production system dictated by neoliberal policies. Indeed, in Berlan’s model the necessary workers must be available in the shortest possible time and in the amount appropriate to the needs of production: they must therefore be extremely flexible. As a matter of fact, the great flexibility with which immigrant workers are employed and discarded in agriculture is the core of the neo-liberal thinking, i.e. it is the feature that all workers of all economic sectors should present (Borretti, 2010).

Therefore, in the second part of the paper, the ways through which the Californian model has been supported by the neo-liberal doctrine are investigated. The analysis thus concerns the effects of public policies that have allowed its evolution in *international model*: in other words, the Californian model will be placed within the dynamics of the *global re-organization of the agri-business complex* (Borretti, 2010). The link between Californian model and agri-business, that is, between the first and second part of the paper, is most clearly visible in the pathologies found among immigrants: irritations of the gastric mucosa and skin diseases are the effect of workers drinking water directly from water pipes (Pugliese, 2012). The well-established use of fertilizing plants through the dissolution of nutrients in the water used for drip irrigation is possible only because the agribusiness industry has distributed fertilizers to farmers (Colombo, Onorati, 2009).<sup>8</sup> Indeed, since the neoliberal doctrine has been adopted by political European powers, the agribusiness has undergone a process of *global*

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<sup>8</sup> Since 2011 Emergency has made it a part of its preventive action in these lands to sensitize workers on the danger of drinking water from pipes, teaching them about bringing to work a bottle of drinkable water taken from the tanks installed by the Region.

*reorganization* (Borretti, 2010) which allows a small amount of multinational corporations to act as main-characters and to dictate on the fate of peasants and farmers worldwide (Patel, 2008; Corrado, 2013). However, in order to fully describe the peculiarities of the Italian context, the investigation concerns not only European policies, but also nationally issued ones, considered that Common Agricultural Policies (CAP) have easily taken root in Italy because the land had been prepared for welcoming them since the Italian unification (Sereni, 1968).

According to literature (Onorati, 2010) and to the purpose of this study, the analysis of neo-liberal public policies' consequences has been organized upon three guidelines: the radicalization of a concentrated and fragmented landownership regime; the deepening of agriculture dependence on public funding; and the enlargement of the power of the agro-industrial lobby. As for the first branch of study, neoliberal policies have caused an increasing process of land privatization that has determined an increasing predation of natural resources (water, fertility, biodiversity), a decreasing yields of crops and the destruction of rural economy testified by the exodus of people from the sector. In order to better explain the implantation of the Californian model, difficulties in maintaining control over the land are particularly studied from the point of view of the effects on employment in agriculture in Southern Italy. The second guideline, which relates to changes in the domestic economy, shows the discriminatory character of public subsidies, that translates into a cut of public investment for family farming, while opening the door to large-capitalistic farms' exports. This part proves that «the continued deepening of capitalism in agriculture»<sup>9</sup> advocated by supranational bodies, firstly the World Bank, has established a perpetual submission of the first sector to the second, leading to the extreme consequences a trend already historically verified for Italy (Daneo, 1989). Without protective measures, domestic market can be conquered by large-scale multinational distribution, bringing the discussion into the third outlined guideline. This chapter is the final proof of policies' carelessness towards the fulfillment of *food needs* of the population: agricultural policies are shaped to benefit only *bottleneck* multinational corporations (Dufour, 1999; Colombo, Onorati, 2009; Borretti, 2010). This way they are privileged in realizing vertical integration, upstream and downstream control of the production chain and economies of scale (Patel, 2008). Thanks to all these mechanisms, the agribusiness complex is able to

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<sup>9</sup> Akram-Lodhi A. H. (2013), "Agrarian Sovereignty and the Agrarian Question", *The Bullet*, September 23 (no. 884).

concentrate in its hands a considerable share of the market, which *chokes* vegetable and fruits' producers. Therefore, farmers act on the only variable they can adjust, i.e. the cost of labor, immensely exploiting it (Herman, 2003b; Bell, 2003).

For this reason, scholars of the *Forum Civique Européen*<sup>10</sup> suggested the use of the label 'ultra-neoliberalism' to indicate the policy of the European Union which «is building a sub-class of temporary workers, who replace each other in a continuous rotation».<sup>11</sup> Through the exploitation of immigrant agricultural workers, the EU is carrying out the agricultural models designed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). These supranational bodies have started the dance in siding for structural adjustment in agriculture to ensure that «the signals sent by the market influence the production»<sup>12</sup> and in transforming the agricultural work into an 'input' to the production, equal to fertilizers or seeds (Garbarino, 2011). Europe aims at pitting laborers against each other according to their origin, thus segmenting the labor market: «Last comers, more malleable, are privileged».<sup>13</sup> In ultra-neoliberal politicians' point of view, hiring preference should go to undocumented immigrants because they do not carry those social loads that weigh on the cost of labor, since they cannot, for example, make demands for guaranteed minimum wage (Terray, 2002). If this rhetoric is not taken under consideration, it would not be possible to explain why European directives have regulated the work of long-term residents, reunited family members, foreign students and researchers, but a directive on the rights of seasonal workers has not yet been produced (Garbarino, 2011). Actually, in July 2010 an attempt to address this legislative gap was made by the European Parliament and Council with the proposal for a directive

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<sup>10</sup> The European Civic Forum (ECF) is an international network of solidarity, founded in 1989 in order to establish connections among people from both sides of the Berlin Wall, instead of leaving the field open to governments, international institutions and economic interests. Through the coordination of on-site direct interventions with involved citizens, organizers (mainly journalists, professors and researchers) highlight some of the social unreported dysfunctions. The ECF aims at initiating long-term changes, while providing solidarity in emergency situations and being the promoter of sustainable projects. Its missions are: to send delegations of international observers in the regions of political and social crisis and to make contact with the victims of injustice; to defend immigrants without rights and promote their self-organization, to open reception and consulting areas and to offer training and socio-legal support; to support socially sustainable agriculture refusing unlimited exploitation of human beings and nature; to create international partnerships and initiatives; to encourage intercultural activities and to promote mutual understanding and conflict prevention. See: <http://www.forumcivique.org>.

<sup>11</sup> Bell N. (2003), "L'Europe organise la clandestinité", *Le Monde Diplomatique*, April.

<sup>12</sup> Berthelot J. (1998), "Per imporre il diritto ai popoli all'autosufficienza alimentare: Come (non) riformare l'agricoltura europea. Errori e falsità dell'Agenda 2000", *Le Monde Diplomatique/Il Manifesto*, November.

<sup>13</sup> Herman P. (2013), "Travailleurs saisonniers, la ronde infernale", *Le Monde Diplomatique*, February.

on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of seasonal employment (Commissione europea, 2010). However, the proposition has drawn opposition from some European countries, including Italy, which have blocked the approval process.<sup>14</sup> As a consequence, to this day the only directive on seasonal work approved by the Parliament (the so-called ‘Single Permit Directive’, passed on 13 December 2011) concerns merely community workers.<sup>15</sup> More recently, the Parliament has adopted a resolution proposed by the European Commission that, again, only applies for European seasonal workers.<sup>16</sup> Although these developments may seem like steps forward, a closer look at the content of the directives proves that they are not. The 2010 directive, for example, aims at simplifying the procedure for the admission of seasonal workers from third-countries in possession of an employment contract (Garbarino, 2011). The proposal sets a maximum period of stay, provides facilities for stays following the first, and gives member states the right to determine the volume of admission of seasonal workers.<sup>17</sup> The content is nothing new, it reminds of previous efforts of legalizing exploitation made by different European countries: the IOM contracts in France, the Seasonal Agricultural Workers scheme (SAWS) in Great Britain, the Statute of Erntehelfer in Austria (Brodal, 2002; Henry, 2002).<sup>18</sup> They all have in common the entitlement of a legal status constrained by an expiration date: social protection is limited to the duration of the job (Garçon, Zurayk, 2010).

Given this theoretical justification, the second part of the paper will describe the effects of public intervention in Italian agriculture in order to show the process through which, even considered the peculiarities of the context, ultra-neoliberal thinking has

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<sup>14</sup> See: [http://www.stranieriinitalia.it/adn\\_kronos-ue\\_cofferati\\_pd\\_governo\\_italiano\\_non\\_blocchi\\_direttiva\\_stagionali\\_17383.html](http://www.stranieriinitalia.it/adn_kronos-ue_cofferati_pd_governo_italiano_non_blocchi_direttiva_stagionali_17383.html).

<sup>15</sup> Governo Italiano (2013), “Parlamento europeo: approvata la direttiva sul ‘permesso unico’”, 10 April. This has instigated many NGOs’ to adopt a joint statement in which they expressed concern about the exclusion of workers from outside the EU who are at risk of undergoing a differential working treatment. See: PICUM Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (2011), “Proposta di direttiva europea sui lavoratori stagionali. Call for Action”, July.

<sup>16</sup> Europarlamento (2013), “Lavoratori Ue: più tutele per la libertà di movimento”, 6 November.

<sup>17</sup> European Commission (2010a), “La Commissione europea propone condizioni comuni di ingresso e soggiorno per i lavoratori stagionali provenienti da paesi terzi”, *Europa.eu Press Releases Database*, 13 July.

<sup>18</sup> For a complete description of the contents of these legal ways of recruiting farm workers with half rights, see: Henry M. (2002), *Les contrats de l’O.M.I. en France*, in Forum Civique Européen, Association pour un Nouveau Développement (edited by), *Le gout amer de nos fruits et légumes: L’exploitation des migrants dans l’agriculture intensive en Europe*, Chateau Arnoux (Fr) : Informations et commentaires, 2° trimestre, pp. 47-52; Brodal S. (2002) (edited by), *Un tour de l’Europe du Nord: Suisse, Autriche, Pays-Bas, Grande Bretagne, Allemagne*, in Forum Civique Européen, Association pour un Nouveau Développement (2002) (edited by), *Le gout amer de nos fruits et légumes: L’exploitation des migrants dans l’agriculture intensive en Europe*, Chateau Arnoux (Fr) : Informations et commentaires, 2° trimestre, pp. 63-78.

allowed the *mondialization* of Berlan's paradigm. Lastly, the Californian model is used as a *tool of study* in order to read and interpret the actions of protest against this system of exploitation carried out by different actors. This allows to highlight the successes and limits of what has been done so far, to criticize some new simplistic proposals and to identify what currently appears to be the real crux of the system that needs to be addressed. That is, to break the bottleneck power of large retail chains to reclaim our right to food sovereignty.

I. Intensive agriculture in Capitanata as an implementation  
of the Californian model in Southern Italy

## 1. The latifundary land structure inheritance

The Californian model of agricultural production develops on an extremely latifundary landownership structure: previously monopolized by Spanish/Mexican owners, land passes on to American ones at the time of California's annexation to the United States (1848) while remaining concentrated in the hands of a few landlords (Berlan, 2002). This process has been identified by literature as early as three quarters of a century ago (McWilliams, 1939) as a feature of the system of landownership in California, and it has been defined as *transfer of monopolization*. A similar pattern can be detected in the system of land ownership in Southern Italy at the time of the unification, when the nascent Italian bourgeoisie and historical large-estates' owners took possession of newly confiscated land. Then, since the lands of the South were extremely uncultivated and abandoned, a certain political propaganda has socialized the expression 'Southern question' with an inversion of the role played by 'latifundium' and 'feudalism' - despite the terms have different meanings - to indicate the backwardness of this part of the country (Bordiga, 1950). Therefore, in order to describe the three transfers of monopolization occurred to the lands of Southern Italy, it is necessary to debunk this mainstream legend. In doing so, the true task of the Southern countryside emerges and it is explained as a function of the industrialized North (Gramsci, 1951).

Indeed, the existence of large proportions of land condensed in a few hands represents the first common feature between Italian and Californian agriculture. Actually, literature (McWilliams, 1939; Berlan, 2002) describes three sources of land monopolization in newly annexed California: Mexican land grants, Southern Pacific railroad grants and swamp land speculation. The first way of perpetuating land monopolization originates from the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: «By the terms of the cession of California to the United States it was provided that previously issued Mexican land grants would be respected».<sup>1</sup> Due to these grants, in 1846 there were 550 landowners, either Mexican or Spanish-Mexican, that held 30% of the agricultural land of the State. The problem was that many of these grants had never been surveyed, so, once California became American, it was easy for Yankee speculators to come up with

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<sup>1</sup> McWilliams C. (1939), *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*, Boston : Little, Brown and Company, p. 13.

fake propriety documents. Because Mexican grantees «didn't quite know how to calculate»,<sup>2</sup> they sold their grants for little prices - as little as one U.S. dollar for eighty-five hectares of land. Thus, grants were not broken up: they changed ownership but the amount of land still remained the same. A form of profiting was also the one new owners practiced against settlers, i.e. Eastern and Middle Western farmers who had gone to California during the gold rush and found themselves looking for land as soon as the gold fever was over: typically, the new owner of the grant would wait to validate it until settlers had come in and made improvements. An even more dishonest procedure was that followed by the Southern Pacific railroad:

«Settlers would occupy and improve land only to discover that it was located on one of the unsurveyed alternate sections belonging to the railroad. In fact, the railroad actually encouraged such mistaken settlements, for the purpose of appropriating the improvements. [...] In 1871 a group of settlers, at the direct invitation of the Southern Pacific railroad, settled in the San Joaquin Valley. Their occupancy was known to the railroad. Once the land was sufficiently improved, however, the Southern Pacific stepped in and claimed the land and ordered a wholesale eviction of the settlers».<sup>3</sup>

Tempting them with a deal of «\$2.50 an acre»,<sup>4</sup> settlers were then asked to pay a hundred this amount. Considering that the Railroad was given approximately 16% of the land owned by the Government of California, these fraudulent transactions fully represent another way of establishing land monopolization and perpetuating it through time. As for the third source, it refers to the weakness, wastefulness and corruption of State policies and officials: swamp land was sold for «a dollar an acre and less»,<sup>5</sup> allowing speculators to concentrate in their hands thousands of acres of land which turned out to be, after land reclaim, the most valuable in California. These three sources of land monopolization brought to a situation in which, in 1870, approximately half of the agricultural land of the State was owned by 1/500 of the population (McWilliams, 1939).

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<sup>2</sup> Berlan J.-P. (2002), *La longue histoire du modèle californien*, in Forum Civique Européen, Association pour un Nouveau Développement (edited by), *Le gout amer de nos fruits et légumes: L'exploitation des migrants dans l'agriculture intensive en Europe*, Chateau Arnoux (Fr) : Informations et commentaires, 2° trimestre, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> McWilliams C. (1939), *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*, Boston : Little, Brown and Company, p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> McWilliams C. (1939), *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*, Boston : Little, Brown and Company, p. 17.

<sup>5</sup> McWilliams C. (1939), *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*, Boston : Little, Brown and Company, p. 18.

The pattern established in the 1860s survived through times and the concentrated landownership regime passed on from a generation to another: the recent research conducted by Parini (2002) among California strawberry producers highlights how interviewees are keen on specifying that they are the heirs of families engaged in this activity since several generations. Indeed, today's Californian landownership regime counts 3% of farms holding 65% of agricultural land of the State. These farms spread for over 800 hectares, whereas small farms with less than twenty hectares, that include 60% of the total number, own only a little more than 2% of the land.<sup>6</sup> Considering that California gathers 3.8% of U.S. farms and 3% of U.S. land, it can be agreed that: «California agricultural development differs from the ideal of small-land family farming which can be observed throughout the United States».<sup>7</sup>

Differently from the California case, in which the transfers of monopolization happened before settlement (McWilliams, 1939), before engaging in the study of the Italian context, a premise on the political, economic and social dynamics at the time of the Kingdom unification is necessary. The areas of Southern Italy that will later apply the Californian agricultural model were, when the Country was united, covered in latifundia, half uncultivated and decayed (Quaderni Internazionalisti, 1994). Differently from latifundary areas in other parts of Europe, Italian large estates were also uninhabited. This is how a commentator describes, again in 1949, the latifundia in Puglia:

«Here one does not meet farm houses or villages because the population has been herded into large centers of tens of thousands of inhabitants. The population abounds, but the land cannot be occupied due to lack of organization and of work's and technique's investment. There is no home, no water, no road; the mountains have been stripped, malaria dominates the plains».<sup>8</sup>

When Italy's unification took place, a change in the relations of production was happening in the North (Sereni, 1968). This half of the country was gradually becoming industrialized and the new Northern ruling class - the new industrial and commercial

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<sup>6</sup> Statistics refer to the year 1999 and are taken from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Statistics Service. Parini E. G. (2002), *I posti delle fragole: innovazioni e lavoro nella fragolicoltura della California e della Calabria*, Catanzaro : Rubbettino, pp. 52-53.

<sup>7</sup> Parini E. G. (2002), *I posti delle fragole: innovazioni e lavoro nella fragolicoltura della California e della Calabria*, Catanzaro : Rubbettino, pp. 52-53.

<sup>8</sup> Quaderni Internazionalisti (1994), *Testi della Sinistra. La questione meridionale*, Torino : Editing, p. 37. The extract is taken from an accompanying commentary contained in the magazine of the International Communist Party "Prometeo" (n.12, January 1949) .

enriched middle class – was politically predominant at the national level.<sup>9</sup> They saw in Southern backwardness a chance to maintain, in alliance with landowners, their political and economic privileges:

«Italian capitalism, structurally weak at the beginning, but appeared on the historical scene in the golden phase of rise of international capitalism, has not only been able to develop quickly thanks to [...] the intervention of baggy financial contributions, [...] but has magnificently used the “organic weaknesses” of the national economic structure to implant on a relatively virgin land [...] the most refined system of capitalist exploitation. Italian capitalism [...] has played on the interest of the large landowners of South [...] to impose a system of protectionism harmful to the interests of small peasants’ property».<sup>10</sup>

The way through which new ruling classes had been able to reach their goal was that of «raising the feudal specter»<sup>11</sup> through the promotion and socialization of the expression ‘Southern question’. Basically, the message was: “we must liberate a part of the nation from a social form of economic exploitation - that would be the large estates - to allow also this half of the country to live the industrial transformation which occurred in the North” (Quaderni Internazionalisti, 1994). In common political propaganda, the famous feudal lords would be the ones to have represented an obstacle to the development of the Italian economy in capitalistic sense (Maffi, 1946): «The deprecated existence and survival of feudalism in the South of Italy, especially with regard to the abused issue of agrarian latifundia, is a true workhorse of Italian political pandering».<sup>12</sup> Actually, the origin of Southern countryside decay needs to be researched further away, probably somewhere in between the prosperity of Ancient Greece and Rome period and the destruction caused by the invasion of Northern and Southern populations. It needs to be taken under consideration also the recession of Mediterranean economy due to oceanic geographical expansion and the breaking out of modern capitalist regime

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<sup>9</sup> The power of the new ruling class is clearly visible at electoral level: the electoral law of 1860 granted suffrage on the basis of wealth, but less than 2% of the population was able to elect the members of the new Kingdom of Italy. Not only the rural masses and the common people of the city, but also most of the petty bourgeoisie were excluded from voters. The right to vote remained a privilege of landowners, industrialists and big traders. The Senate, on the other hand, remained the «impregnable fortress» of the old ruling classes (army, bureaucracy and high clergy). Sereni E. (1968), *Il capitalismo nelle champagne (1860-1900)*, Torino : Einaudi, p. 45.

<sup>10</sup> Maffi B. (1946), “La ‘mancata rivoluzione borghese’ in Italia alla luce dei rapporti tra industria e agricoltura”, *Prometeo*, 1 July, in Quaderni Internazionalisti (1994), *Testi della Sinistra. La questione meridionale*, Torino : Editing, p. 27.

<sup>11</sup> Bordiga A. (1950), “Il rancido problema del sud italiano”, *Prometeo*, II(1), November, in Quaderni Internazionalisti (1994), *Testi della Sinistra. La questione meridionale*, Torino : Editing, p. 47.

<sup>12</sup> Quaderni Internazionalisti (1994), *Testi della Sinistra. La questione meridionale*, Torino : Editing, p. 36. The extract is taken from an accompanying commentary contained in the journal “Prometeo” (n.12, January 1949).

(Quaderni Internazionalisti, 1994). As a matter of fact, during the decade of French rule, the feud had already been abolished in most of Southern Italy: on August 2, 1806 Joseph Bonaparte, King of Naples from 1806 to 1808, promulgated the so-called 'feudalism's subversive laws' (Glejeses, 1978). In Sicily, however, where in the meantime there was an Anglo-Bourbon regime, the abolition of the feud started in 1812 with the entry into force of the Constitution and it was completed only in 1838 (Spagnoletti, 2008; Sereni, 1968). Nevertheless, the feudal system remained abrogated after the return of the Bourbons with the restoration of 1915: King Ferdinand I of the Two Sicilies, in fact, did not alter the French anti-feudal law, which was then applied to whole Southern Italy (Glejeses, 1978). The uprooting of the feudal system caused peasants' living conditions to worsen: «When feuds still existed, farmers had their existence ensured, except in bad years, but, after feuds had been abolished, they became wage earners and their conditions started getting worse and worse».<sup>13</sup>

Provided this historical revision, it is therefore not possible to refer to the land configuration of the unified South characterizing it as feudal: the feud is, in fact, a closed economic unit in which goods do not circulate, whose land is not subject to monetary exchange and in which men do not sell their workforce (Quaderni Internazionalisti, 1994). Instead, the correct way to address the problem of the Southern agrarian production system is by investigating the *remnants* of the feudal regime. In the South there were: «Economic islands with exterior feudal appearance, in which forms of pulverized small landownership are accompanied by the most extreme forms of large industrial capitalism».<sup>14</sup>

In fact, the capital is immediately inserted in the countryside in the aftermath of Italian unification: rising capitalism found its first way to make profits through the exploitation of agricultural workforce, which, as above mentioned, saw its wages lowering by far. Also the State, an expression of great agrarian and industrial interests, soon found a way to take advantage of lower classes, both as producers and consumers, as well as taxpayers (Maffi, 1946). The worsening of peasants' condition is proved also by the immediately subsequent process of ecclesiastical estates' alienation: although small landowners were able to take possession of about 25% of confiscated land, soon

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<sup>13</sup> Bordiga A. (1950), "Il rancido problema del sud italiano", *Prometeo*, II(1), November, in Quaderni Internazionalisti (1994), *Testi della Sinistra. La questione meridionale*, Torino : Editing, p. 55.

<sup>14</sup> Maffi B. (1946), "La 'mancata rivoluzione borghese' in Italia alla luce dei rapporti tra industria e agricoltura", *Prometeo*, 1 July, in Quaderni Internazionalisti (1994), *Testi della Sinistra. La questione meridionale*, Torino : Editing, p. 26.

they were forced to get rid of it due to the excessive taxation operated by the State (Sereni, 1968). Thus, when political propaganda speaks of the survival of a feudal economy opposed to a capitalistic one: «It forgets that agrarian and industrial interests lived in a perfect symbiosis at the expense of lower classes, traditionally and chronically exploited by the agro-industrial State».<sup>15</sup> This way the process of farmlands' capitalization was initiated in the last quarter of the nineteenth Century; later, the amount of capitalized agricultural land will only increase: it is estimated that, between the two World Wars, as much as 75% of Southern farmland can be considered to be invested by capitalist production processes (Quaderni Internazionalisti, 1994).

Once the legend of feudalism survival in the South is debunked, the real meaning of the 'Southern question' can be taken under consideration. In fact, at the time of Unification there was a Southern issue, although not as political interests meant it. The mainstream discourse operated a reversal of cause and effect when it waded the problem of the South: the matter afflicting half of the nation was a consequence - and not a cause - of the *Agrarian question* (Quaderni Internazionalisti, 1994). The latter issue concerns the fact that Italian unification was not driven by Southern peasants but by new ascending classes, which then attributed a minor role to Southern Italy. By conceiving the South as the natural market for the consumption of goods produced in the North, their purpose was to reproduce the typical relationship between town and country in the opposition North/South of Italy (Bordiga, 1912; Quaderni Internazionalisti, 1994): «Economically and politically the whole Southern area (including islands) works like a huge countryside for Northern Italy, which works like a huge city».<sup>16</sup>

The real reason of insufficient capitalist development in the South is therefore not the *failed* development, but the development *stopped* by national unification, which made available to the already industrialized North an area of expansion of its market (Quaderni Internazionalisti, 1994). This is also the meaning adopted by A. Gramsci in his well-known definition of 'Southern question':

«The South can be defined as a social disintegration. [...] Southern society is a great *agrarian bloc* composed of three layers: the great amorphous and disintegrated peasant mass, the intellectuals of the small and medium rural bourgeoisie and the big landowners and the big

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<sup>15</sup> Maffi B. (1946), "La 'mancata rivoluzione borghese' in Italia alla luce dei rapporti tra industria e agricoltura", *Prometeo*, 1 July, in Quaderni Internazionalisti (1994), *Testi della Sinistra. La questione meridionale*, Torino : Editing, p. 28.

<sup>16</sup> Bordiga A. (1925), "Una lettera di Bordiga sull'iniziativa del Comitato d'Intesa", *L'Unità*, 2 July, p. 3.

intellectuals. [...] This type of organization [...] creates a monstrous *agrarian bloc* that as a whole acts as an intermediary and overseer of Northern capitalism and the big banks. Its unique purpose is to preserve the *status quo*». <sup>17</sup>

The characterization of the South as an agrarian bloc is proved also by the historical forms of landownership that makers of *Risorgimento* nationally integrated without altering the amount of land each of them possessed (Sereni, 1968). Large estates were those belonging to the clergy (40% of the total Southern agricultural land) and to the nobility (25%). The same amount held by the aristocracy, was in the hands of municipalities and other public bodies, making collective property possessing another 25% of the land, whereas the pulverized peasant property only counted for 10% of the total. <sup>18</sup>

Soon, however, three legislative measures were implemented to break the regime of ecclesiastical, collective and noble property: in order to do so in the last quarter of the nineteenth Century, the new propertied bourgeois class and historical large estates owners took possession of the assets of the mortmain. <sup>19</sup> The ruling classes perfectly knew that ecclesiastical heritage was contrary to the dictates of capitalism and that it would eventually slow down Italian capitalist development (Sereni, 1968).

The first measure concerned the alienations that took place between 1886 and 1880 of clergy-owned lands obtained thanks to the abolition of religious bodies: almost half of confiscated land (47.9%) came from the South (Sereni, 1968). In this regard, the first common pattern with the Californian case can be observed and it can be as well defined *transfer of monopolization*. This is because more than half of total ecclesiastical alienations fell into the hands of large landowners, while the remaining half was divided between medium and small owners (Sereni, 1968). Soon, another source of monopolization is added to the previous one: the confiscation of collective property, which, located mainly in the South, was then sold «at ridiculously low prices». <sup>20</sup> Here is another similarity with Californian sale of swamp land: State's and municipalities'

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<sup>17</sup> Gramsci A. (1951), *La questione meridionale*, Roma : Rinascita, pp. 29-34, in Daneo C. (1989), *Agricoltura e sviluppo capitalistico in Italia*, 2<sup>a</sup> edizione, Torino : Einaudi, pp. 101-102 (italics added).

<sup>18</sup> Percentages are taken from the volume by Ressa G. (2012), *Il Sud e l'Unità d'Italia*, Napoli, Palermo : Centro Culturale e di Studi Storici "Brigantino - Il Portale del Sud", p. 177.

<sup>19</sup> Literature includes under the label 'mortmain's goods': land properties of the State and of municipalities, of the Sardinian body "Cassa ecclesiastica", of secular clergy, of religious corporations and of charities. Sereni E. (1968), *Il capitalismo nelle champagne (1860-1900)*, Torino : Einaudi, p. 136.

<sup>20</sup> Sereni E. (1968), *Il capitalismo nelle champagne (1860-1900)*, Torino : Einaudi, p. 139.

owned land was sold to a small number of speculators that were, once again, big landowners and the new acquirer bourgeoisie.<sup>21</sup>

Considering both sources of monopolization, it can be said that, despite after the unification of Italy there was a change in the regime of land ownership, about 75% of the land affected by it was involved in a *transfer of monopolization* process, favored by speculation on selling prices:

«It is therefore a matter of over two million and a half hectares of land, mostly located in Southern Italy, [...] that, during the first decades of the new Kingdom, go to swell the land holdings of the bourgeoisie. [...] The costs of this process of land ownership's gentrification were paid [...] by the masses of peasants, who saw the lands they cultivated under generally not too demanding conditions, on behalf of religious bodies' owners, to be taken over by new masters, much more demanding and avid than the ancients».<sup>22</sup>

As for the third source of land monopolization, it concerns the erosion of noble property which started in the same years but took longer to be accomplished.<sup>23</sup> In 1885, the problem of the tendency to monopolize land was brought to the attention of the Senate, that, being the body representative of nobility, was the right context for aristocratic politicians to demonstrate their concerns.<sup>24</sup> Buyers of more or less extended parts of the latifundium were both the small and medium bourgeoisie - professionals, employees, medium traders, etc. - but also Northern large industrial capitalists. Sometimes it even already occurred that the old feudal owner was not replaced by a mere individual capitalist, but by an industrial society (Sereni, 1968).

As it happened in newly annexed California, in recently unified Italy there was a change in the regime of land ownership but, despite it, the monopolistic concentration was not broken up. The absence of an agrarian revolution which would have allowed a destruction of semi-feudal relations in the countryside plays a major role in causing «leftovers of the feudal regime»<sup>25</sup> to be maintained operative. Feudal remnants affected

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<sup>21</sup> The Italian word for State land property, "demanio", indicates lands collectively owned by the State and by municipalities that are taxfree. As Bordiga (1950) recalls «they were the forests where the whole population could go for making the wood, they were pastures where everyone could lead their flock». Bordiga A. (1950), "Il rancido problema del sud italiano", *Prometeo*, II(1), November, in *Quaderni Internazionalisti* (1994), *Testi della Sinistra. La questione meridionale*, Torino : Editing, p. 50.

<sup>22</sup> Sereni E. (1968), *Il capitalismo nelle champagne (1860-1900)*, Torino : Einaudi, pp. 139, 143.

<sup>23</sup> «Even at the end of the century, the old noble property occupies a very important part of the lands of the South». Sereni E. (1968), *Il capitalismo nelle champagne (1860-1900)*, Torino : Einaudi, p. 262.

<sup>24</sup> In 1889 Count Arrivabene, a Right-wing political man, for example, complained that: «Property is concentrating in a few hands». Sereni E. (1968), *Il capitalismo nelle champagne (1860-1900)*, Torino : Einaudi, p. 243.

<sup>25</sup> Bordiga A. (1912), "Il socialismo meridionale e le "questioni morali", *Avanti!*, 1 November, in *Quaderni Internazionalisti* (1994), *Testi della Sinistra. La questione meridionale*, Torino : Editing, p. 21.

the nature of rural properties (with the coexistence of extremely parceled and monopolized land), the living conditions of the agricultural proletariat and also the agricultural technique, which was poorly developed (Bordiga, 1912; Sereni, 1968). In fact, national unification was reached through compromise with the old ruling class of semi-feudal landowners, of which the Southern bourgeoisie took on the appearances and the semi-feudal forms of exploitation. The new owners did not question the feudal privilege of the nesters because, otherwise, they risked agitating the great peasant masses, endangering also their bourgeois privilege (Sereni, 1968). Thus, new capitalist production relations were grafted on a semi-feudal structure, causing the birth of a hybrid agriculture:

«The land and agrarian regime will eventually evolve in the capitalist sense but this process will be particularly intricate and laborious, and the new bourgeois relations will remain - up until now - exacerbated by their graft on the old feudal trunk».<sup>26</sup>

The «up to date» used by the author refers to 1947,<sup>27</sup> a significant date because it marks the beginning of a further boost to the capitalization of the countryside that will take place in Italian agriculture, with the Agrarian Reform of 1950. The Post-Second World War period constitutes the testing ground for the purpose of applying the Californian model of agriculture in the South of Italy - but this will be discussed in the next chapter. Before entering the study of the development of intensive agriculture, this chapter provided the common ground that justifies the comparison between the two agricultural production systems. The analysis of the regime of land ownership in California and in the South of Italy, at a time when both are inserted in circuits of capitalist production, demonstrates the existence of similar processes: the maintenance of land monopolization and the speculation on new lands provide a common basis for the following application of the model theorized by Jean-Pierre Berlan.

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<sup>26</sup> Sereni E. (1968), *Il capitalismo nelle champagne (1860-1900)*, Torino : Einaudi, p. 134.

<sup>27</sup> It is the year of first publication of the book (Sereni, 1968) from which the above quote is taken.

## 2. Implications of intensive agriculture introduction<sup>1</sup>

After describing the preliminary system of landownership, the comparison of the agricultural production system in South of Italy to the case of California needs to take into account the type of crops that are grown on these fields. In accordance with the model described by Jean-Pierre Berlan (2002), in fact, once the graft on the legacy of the latifundary structure and on the monopolistic landownership configuration are proved, it is necessary to investigate the type of cultivation practiced. While recalling that the dissertation fits into the perspective of providing the structural determinants for the exploitation of migrant labor in agriculture, the definition of intensive agriculture given by the scholar (Berlan, 2002) is an useful tool because it qualifies intensive agriculture as a function of the variable 'labor'. Two criteria relating to labor (its amount and its availability) are thus taken under consideration: «This agriculture needs a lot of labor, which must be necessary for short periods of time, generally for harvesting».<sup>2</sup>

Berlan's definition of intensive agriculture differs from that provided by agrarian theory, which distinguishes between intensive and extensive agriculture merely upon the intensity of land and of agricultural inputs' use - so that extensive farming is matched with traditional poorly exploited latifundary estates and intensive agriculture with small pieces of land keenly cultivated (Ciccarese, 2012). The scholar (Berlan,

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<sup>1</sup> Despite the expressions 'intensive agriculture' and 'intensive farming' are equally used in common parlance as synonyms, in the following discussion it was decided to limit the use to the first one. The choice was made based on two reasons: first of all, for limiting the field of study to agriculture, since 'intensive farming' includes breeding; on the other hand, because the title itself (*Factories in the Field*) of the volume (McWilliams, 1939) quoted by Jean-Pierre Berlan (2002) and used as a reference for this paper, emphasizes the process through which «California farms became factories». Actually, McWilliams also provides the reasons why the first syntagm is to be preferred to the second when he writes: «Today, "farming" in its accepted sense can hardly be said to exist in the State. The land is operated by processes which are essentially industrial in character; the importance of finance, in all 180 or more crops produced in California, has steadily increased as more and more emphasis has been placed on financial control; the "farm hand", celebrated in our American folklore, has been supplanted by an agricultural proletariat indistinguishable from our industrial proletariat; ownership is represented not by physical possession of the land, but by ownership of corporate stock; farm labor, no longer pastoral in character, punches a time clock, works at piece or hourly wage rates, and lives in a shanck or company barracks, and lacks all contact with the real owners of the farm factory on which it is employed». McWilliams C. (1939), *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*, Boston : Little, Brown and Company, p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> Berlan J.-P. (2002), *La longue histoire du modèle californien*, in Forum Civique Européen, Association pour un Nouveau Développement (edited by), *Le gout amer de nos fruits et légumes: L'exploitation des migrants dans l'agriculture intensive en Europe*, Chateau Arnoux (Fr) : Informations et commentaires, 2° trimestre, p. 18.

2002) is instead interested in underlining the social consequences of intensive agriculture introduction: he identifies ‘four points’ that characterize the Californian model and that make: «The recourse to immigrant workforce an absolutely structural necessity of this type of agriculture».<sup>3</sup> The first point detected concerns the fact that nowadays harvest is more and more mechanized, making the definition of intensive agriculture: «An historical concept, tied to the evolution of social forces and of technology».<sup>4</sup> The other points identified by the author (Berlan, 2002) are: the uncertainty of the amount of harvest; the proportionality between the amount of labor needed and the volume of the harvest; and the necessity for the harvest to pay off the investment. This chapter starts by analyzing the process that allowed the transition from extensive to intensive agriculture for both Italian and Californian contexts. For both cases, then, the consequences of the introduction of intensive agriculture are compared to the present day to describe today's peculiarities and points of excellence of the agricultural sector. Afterwards, the study concentrates on the specificity of the Italian case, in which the characterization of intensive agriculture as an historical concept allows the individualization of certain crops that nowadays continue to require a high amount of hand labor for harvesting, the so-called *great gatherings* (Pugliese, 2012). Lastly, the effects of this type of intensive agriculture both on workers and on producers are taken under consideration jointly between California and Puglia in order to prove that the California agricultural production system is: «The specific version of an international model».<sup>5</sup>

In California, the transition from extensive to intensive agriculture is accomplished by the end of the Nineteenth Century. At first, huge ranches were planted to wheat, a type of cultivation which involves a minimum of labor: being labor force scarce at the time,<sup>6</sup> wheat acreage found the perfect conditions to rapidly expand. In the 1860s California farming underwent its first industrialization process, that allowed it to

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<sup>3</sup> Berlan J.-P. (2002), *La longue histoire du modèle californien*, in Forum Civique Européen, Association pour un Nouveau Développement (edited by), *Le gout amer de nos fruits et légumes: L'exploitation des migrants dans l'agriculture intensive en Europe*, Chateau Arnoux (Fr) : Informations et commentaires, 2° trimestre, p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> Berlan J.-P. (2002), *La longue histoire du modèle californien*, in Forum Civique Européen, Association pour un Nouveau Développement (edited by), *Le gout amer de nos fruits et légumes: L'exploitation des migrants dans l'agriculture intensive en Europe*, Chateau Arnoux (Fr) : Informations et commentaires, 2° trimestre, p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Berlan J.-P. (2002), *La longue histoire du modèle californien*, in Forum Civique Européen, Association pour un Nouveau Développement (edited by), *Le gout amer de nos fruits et légumes: L'exploitation des migrants dans l'agriculture intensive en Europe*, Chateau Arnoux (Fr) : Informations et commentaires, 2° trimestre, p. 18.

<sup>6</sup> The only cheap labor available at the time was Indian labor. See chapter 4.

become a large-scale industry.<sup>7</sup> In less than twenty years, however, the character of California agriculture changed completely: the transition from wheat to fruit growing started, marking the dawn of intensive agriculture. The causes of this sudden change are both of macroeconomic and of technological origins. On one side, the 1870s were years of great recession for California wheat producers, who were unable to compete with reduced prices of new grain areas (Argentina, India, Russia, Canada and Australia) that made farmers neither able to keep up with production costs nor able to pay back bank loans they received (Parini, 2002). The overcoming of the recession of the 'terrible' Seventies was helped by a series of technological facilitations that eased the process of transition to fruits' growing: the two restraints that needed to be addressed were the problem of the transport of more perishable products in a moment of «prohibitive freight rates»<sup>8</sup> and that of abundant water supply. In order to expand the market for fruits' products, it was necessary to solve the issue of transportation: at first, the entry into operation of the various railroads lines<sup>9</sup> and the development of the refrigerator car in 1886, allowed orchards' products to be shipped to Eastern markets; but only with the advancement of the dried-fruit process long-distance shipments were made possible. The other question, water supply, was solved only once the expansion of markets had given, monetary speaking, the first positive outputs, because the introduction of irrigation in California meant heavy capitalization and high maintenance costs (McWilliams, 1939). Thus, it can be stated that California intensive agriculture is born once farmers - that in the decades of dominance of cereals had already learned to produce on a large scale - are subject to the combination of micro and macro economic

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<sup>7</sup> Among the suitable conditions that permitted the transformation, besides the availability of large ranches and the scarcity of labor, the following should be mentioned: «the inflated prices which occurred after the discovery of gold; a rapidly growing population within the State; a remarkably favorable climate; a great availability of machinery; and advantageous financial conditions for obtaining loans to expand production». McWilliams C. (1939), *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*, Boston : Little, Brown and Company, p. 50.

<sup>8</sup> McWilliams C. (1939), *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*, Boston : Little, Brown and Company, p. 61.

<sup>9</sup> The transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869. «Later, in 1881, the Southern Pacific opened a new line by way of El Paso to New Orleans; and, in 1885, the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe line was completed to Los Angeles». McWilliams C. (1939), *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*, Boston : Little, Brown and Company, pp. 60-61. The date of completion of the transcontinental railroad is particularly significant: scholar Berlan symbolically fixes at this date the beginning of the realization of industrial agriculture in California. Berlan J.-P. (2002), *La longue histoire du modèle californien*, in Forum Civique Européen, Association pour un Nouveau Développement (edited by), *Le gout amer de nos fruits et légumes: L'exploitation des migrants dans l'agriculture intensive en Europe*, Chateau Arnoux (Fr) : Informations et commentaires, 2<sup>e</sup> trimestre, p. 17.

factors, which determined a more intense cultivation of smaller amounts of land, a consequent specialization in production and a deriving diversification of crops.<sup>10</sup>

Thanks to the efforts made by farmers to shape and reproduce over time a highly technological and productive context (Parini, 2002), intensive agriculture of California has attained a leadership role at the national and international level, both in terms of competitiveness and of specialization: «Less than one-thirtieth of the agricultural area of the United States produces more than one-eighth of the value added».<sup>11</sup> Ranking first among the United States for total value of agricultural products sold,<sup>12</sup> California is responsible for little less than a tenth of the total exports of the United States (Patel, 2008).<sup>13</sup> Regarding specialization, 50% of U.S. agricultural area devoted to orchards (in particular, those of apricots, kiwi, figs and olives) and 30% of that dedicated to the production of vegetables (especially, broccoli, carrots and onions) are located in California. Also, some particular crops as those of avocados or strawberries are concentrated in the State for almost the totality (Parini, 2002). In the course of the last fifty years, the areas dedicated to the production of vegetable and fruits have continued to enlarge significantly, also thanks to the improvement of the irrigation system:<sup>14</sup> between 1964 and 1997 the total hectares of land cultivated with fruits and those planted with vegetable have increased, respectively, by 69.9% and 93.3% (Parini, 2002).

The transit from extensive to intensive agriculture happened in California very rapidly after the annexation to the United States. However, the same shift took longer to be accomplished in Southern Italian agriculture because of the exploitation of the 'Southern question' discussed in the previous chapter. Here, all the suitable conditions that facilitated the transit from cereal growing to specialized agriculture in California

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<sup>10</sup> Moreover, «as a result of this same transition, the average size of California ranches decreased from 462 acres in 1880 to 397 acres in 1900 and the number of ranches more than doubled. But this decrease in the size of the unit did not involve any essential change in the character of ownership. To a substantial degree, the large holdings were maintained and the predominance of the large growers was at all times apparent». McWilliams C. (1939), *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*, Boston : Little, Brown and Company, p. 64.

<sup>11</sup> Parini E. G. (2002), *I posti delle fragole: innovazioni e lavoro nella fragolicoltura della California e della Calabria*, Catanzaro : Rubbettino, p. 51.

<sup>12</sup> More than \$33,885 million in 2007. NASS National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA United States Department of Agriculture (2007), *Census of Agriculture, State Profile, California*, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> «After information technology, transports and machinery the most conspicuous item of export of California is agriculture, accounting for less than a tenth of the \$117 billion of exports in 2005. [...] California provides a third of the food on the tables of Americans». Patel R. (2008), *I padroni del cibo*, Italian translation by G. Carlotti, Milano : Feltrinelli, p. 56.

<sup>14</sup> It is calculated that nowadays 80% of California agricultural land is irrigated. Patel R. (2008), *I padroni del cibo*, Italian translation by G. Carlotti, Milano : Feltrinelli, p. 56.

were not present. In fact, Southern Italian economy at the time of unification can be described as «semi-natural» (Sereni, 1968), meaning that the agricultural production activity of both small peasants and big landowners had only a weak connection with the national market:

«Especially in the South, but also in other parts of Italy, the lack of roads, the strong feudal remnants in the countryside, the same policy of the old ruling classes and the old governments, have often kept a large part of agricultural producers in a state of almost total isolation, and left them to withdraw into forms of semi-natural economy, in which production for the market plays only a minor part, while production mainly addresses the satisfaction of producers' and their families' needs. [...] Hence the extreme variety and fragmentation of crops on the same farm, which is the agronomic characteristic of much Italy [...] because every farmer has to produce *his* grain, *his* vegetables, *his* hemp, *his* fruit».<sup>15</sup>

Thus, although the major changes in Italian agriculture began with the unification, only after World War II they underwent a real acceleration, i.e. once the process of commercialization of Italian economy was completed: this meant both the creation of an internal market and the development of transportation (Fanfani, 2004; Sereni, 1968). The study of the Californian case proved the importance of transportations in determining the evolution to intensive agriculture: in the Italian context, although the railroad system started developing even before the unification, it did not by itself play such a crucial role: the completion of transportation only brought together different and distant regions, of which Southern ones kept being subordinated to Northern ones (Sereni, 1968). Thus, in this context, another factor needs to be isolated in order for intensive agriculture to rise: a second round of heavy capitalization of countryside that allowed even the agricultural production of the South to reach national markets (Daneo, 1989). The first attempt in this sense was made in the aftermath of the birth of Italian republic, i.e. with the agrarian reform of 1950, whose first «productive developments»<sup>16</sup> were visible since the 1960s. They concerned an

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<sup>15</sup> On the other side, agrarian capitalists and big landowners, although they brought an important portion of the production to the market, reinvested an as much big part in the fund (in the form of seeds, fertilizers, building materials, fuels and agricultural tools) or used it in its natural form as remuneration for agricultural workers, either if they were sharecroppers or employees who received the majority of their salary in nature. Sereni E. (1968), *Il capitalismo nelle campagne (1860-1900)*, Torino : Einaudi, p. 14.

<sup>16</sup> The author (Daneo, 1989) himself states that: «Although it is preliminarily necessary to consider the most important productive developments of the last decade, these developments are the same that, more frequently, apologists of the present type of capitalist expansion love to illustrate. Their size, however, assumes its real and contradictory meaning only when it is inserted into a *structural* context (in the Marxist sense) that highlights the contradictions that this expansion entails». To explain the consequences and contradictions of the second wave of capitalism in the countryside is the purpose of

increase in gross saleable production, in the amount of land cultivated with intensive crops and in unitary yields of agricultural products. At the national level, in fact, between 1949 and 1960 the gross saleable production increased in total by 33.3%. By applying the same index to the particular case of each crop, the tendency of privileging intensive agriculture is proved: in fact, whereas cereals production registered only a +11.1% variation, the same index applied to potato and vegetables is +78.9% and that of fruit is +49.8%.<sup>17</sup> Another proof of the shift towards intensive agriculture taking place at the national level emerges with regard to the variation between 1950 and 1960 of the amount of land dedicated to each crop: extensive productions such as wheat and sweet corn registered a decrease (respectively, by -3.5% and -4.1%), while the land devoted to vegetable crops increased in the same decade by 83.8% (Daneo, 1989). Despite this initial increase of intensive agriculture at the national level, to see the same process occur in the specific case of the South, other public interventions must take place.

In fact, if the agrarian reform was an important political response, it was also extremely limited and insufficient (Fanfani, 2004). Moreover, if it is true that, generally speaking for Southern Italy, the transformation from cereal crops to fruit and vegetable industry was allowed by the persisting public funding of the Sixties (Daneo, 1989), in some portions of this half of the Country, including the area of Capitanata in Puglia, the actual jump into intensive agriculture came only with the reclamation and irrigation interventions of the Seventies (Pugliese, 2012). Since then, Capitanata could develop its agriculture at full speed: today, Foggia classifies not only as the most agricultural province in the region of Puglia (37.14% of total Apulian production) (Cicerchia, Pallara, 2009) but also, with its 750,000 hectares of crops, as the most agricultural province of Italy (Fanizza, 2013). Anyway, the «kingdom of the tree and of vegetable and fruits' crops»<sup>18</sup> has, thanks to the second wave of capitalization of the countryside, extended to all regions of Southern Italy, that, in fact, have even higher shares of workers employed in agriculture than the rest of Italy.<sup>19</sup> The South thus confirmed its

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the II part of the paper. Daneo C. (1989), *Agricoltura e sviluppo capitalistico in Italia*, 2<sup>a</sup> edizione, Torino : Einaudi, p. 37.

<sup>17</sup> INEA (1961), *Annuario dell'agricoltura italiana*, Roma : Ed. Italiana, in Daneo C. (1989), *Agricoltura e sviluppo capitalistico in Italia*, 2<sup>a</sup> edizione, Torino : Einaudi, p. 37.

<sup>18</sup> Marselli G. A. (1990), *Mezzogiorno e ricerca sociale : dalla teoria alla pratica*, Torino : Giappichelli, quoted in Colloca C. (2013), *Campagne meridionali, immigrati e lotte sociali. Il caso Rosarno*, in Colloca C., Corrado A. (edited by), *La globalizzazione delle campagne. Migranti e società rurali del Sud d'Italia*, Milano : Franco Angeli, p. 33.

<sup>19</sup> The national average percentage of the total number of people employed in agriculture, in 2011, amounts to 3.7%: «The percentage rises to 4% in Campania, while in Puglia and in Calabria it jumps

agricultural vocation, with employment shares nearly double than the national average (Cicerchia, Pallara, 2009).

During the *productive developments* of the Fifties and Sixties a particular crop, tomato, was subject to an exponential increase at the national level, both in terms of dedicated land (+73.8%) and of unitary yields for hectare (+29.2%) (Daneo, 1989). Despite tomato crop national increase, however, its cultivation particularly disseminated over Puglia and Basilicata only between the 1970s and 1980s, spreading here from Campania, where it was already cultivated in the early Twentieth Century (Perrotta, 2013). Since then, tomato crop has always played an important role in the economy of the province of Foggia, where the first sector of the economy is indeed agriculture (Pugliese, 2012). In fact, the industrial tomato district that stretches between Puglia and Basilicata, from Foggia (FG) to the locality of Vulture-Alto Bradano (PZ), is responsible for a third of Italian production (Perrotta, 2013), ranking the province of Capitanata, together with the region Emilia Romagna, among the European leaders in the production of this vegetables (Fanizza, 2013). In 2008, 25,350 hectares of Apulian land planted with tomato produced 1,616,750 tons of 'red gold', mostly in Capitanata. Its harvesting is still nowadays little mechanized and it must occur in a range of four/five days of maturation (Perrotta, 2013). Thus, in accordance with the research purpose of the scholar Berlan, tomato crop is a good example of intensive agriculture requiring a lot of farm labor.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, the same can be said for the other *great collections* of Capitanata: those of pepper, watermelon, asparagus, artichoke, olives and grapes (Pugliese, 2012).

Turning now the attention to the consequences of the transition from extensive to intensive agriculture, the development of the latter, both in California and in Southern Italy, also meant the rise of the problem of labor force provision. In the Apulian region, since the transit to specialized agriculture, there has been a gap between population and resources, due to the fact that: «Precisely the areas that became richer and requested more labor force were those less populous. As an effect of this imbalance there has always been a recourse to labor coming from the outside (i.e. from more or less close

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respectively 8.7% and 11.1%». Pugliese E. (2012) (edited by), *Diritti violati: Indagine sulle condizioni di vita dei lavoratori immigrati in aree rurali del Sud d'Italia*, Dedalus, May, p. 48.

<sup>20</sup> The author asks himself: «What has remained as really intensive crop that needs a lot of handwork nowadays? Essentially crops of fruits and vegetables, less and less the vineyard, since the harvest is mechanized». Berlan J.-P. (2002), *La longue histoire du modèle californien*, in Forum Civique Européen, Association pour un Nouveau Développement (edited by), *Le gout amer de nos fruits et légumes: L'exploitation des migrants dans l'agriculture intensive en Europe*, Chateau Arnoux (Fr) : Informations et commentaries, 2° trimestre, p. 19.

municipalities)».<sup>21</sup> Indeed, Puglia, in spite of its territorial extension (19,345 Km<sup>2</sup>) has only little more than four million inhabitants (Pugliese, 2012). Similarly, the need for cheap labor force in California, arose as soon as specialized agriculture developed in the State<sup>22</sup> because, if wheat growing could count on the use of machinery to reduce the cost of production, fruit and vegetables' growing could rely only on cheapening the cost of labor required on the field (McWilliams, 1939):

Growers, instead of adjusting the size of orchards with the small number of available family and local workers, started off with the idea of ensuring enough arms to produce fruits to whatever extent they considered profitable. Whether they owned 20 or 2,000 acres, farmers refused to consider work as a reason to limit production».<sup>23</sup>

Because entrepreneurs' purpose was that of making profits out of cultivation - «They wanted to make fortunes overnight»<sup>24</sup> -, they refused to be called 'farmers', preferring the title of 'cultivators', which better signified their being «fruit capitalists».<sup>25</sup> From growers' point of view, the only issue that needed to be addressed in order to allow this expansion was that of the recruitment and maintenance of a supply of labor. However, the so-called «farm labor problem»<sup>26</sup> both in California as well as in Southern Italy means much more: this is why the discussion now turns to the analysis of the consequences and characteristics of the type and amount of labor force requested by intensive agriculture.

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<sup>21</sup> Pugliese E. (2012) (edited by), *Diritti violati: Indagine sulle condizioni di vita dei lavoratori immigrati in aree rurali del Sud d'Italia*, Dedalus, May, p. 38.

<sup>22</sup> John D. MacKenzie, of the California State Department of Labor, in 1909, in a report said: «The transition from the cereal growing period to the development of specialized agriculture increased the ration of temporary help required by the farming districts beyond the natural supply available within the state during periods of largely increasing population». McWilliams C. (1939), *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*, Boston : Little, Brown and Company, p. 65.

<sup>23</sup> Stoll S. (1998), *The fruits of Natural Advantage. Making the Industrial Countryside in California*, Berkeley - Los Angeles : University of California Press, p. 124, in Parini E. G. (2002), *I posti delle fragole: innovazioni e lavoro nella fragolicoltura della California e della Calabria*, Catanzaro : Rubbettino, p. 57.

<sup>24</sup> McWilliams C. (1939), *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*, Boston : Little, Brown and Company, p. 50.

<sup>25</sup> Stoll S. (1998), *The fruits of Natural Advantage. Making the Industrial Countryside in California*, Berkeley - Los Angeles : University of California Press, p. 32, in Parini E. G. (2002), *I posti delle fragole: innovazioni e lavoro nella fragolicoltura della California e della Calabria*, Catanzaro : Rubbettino, p. 54.

<sup>26</sup> McWilliams C. (1939), *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*, Boston : Little, Brown and Company, p. 65.

### 3. The backup army of labor required by intensive agriculture

Because of the characteristics of intensive agriculture outlined in the previous chapter, the type of hand labor required needs to be an anonym, floating and heterogeneous *army* of workers that is available whenever it is needed and in the amount needed (Berlan, 2002). Since the economic and climatic context of harvest is never certain, workers constitute a kind of risk insurance coverage for agricultures: they are a *backup* army of laborers who work as machines for picking fruits and vegetables (Berlan, 2002). The chapter analyzes the features and the working conditions of this backup army of working force: it does so by applying the theoretical elaboration observed in California to the Southern Italian case. The first characteristic of the backup army concerns the fact that it is composed of immigrant workers (Berlan, 2002). While underlining the peculiarities of immigrant farm workers in the Italian context, the attention is focused on their condition of double irregularity (Colloca, 2013): that in the labor market, which allows a description of their typical working situation, as well as the irregularity of their legal status, which permits the definition of a peculiar migratory path. Another migratory route is then traced based on immigrants' length of stay in Italy. The double irregularity of field workers also proves the complementariness of legal and illegal labor, second feature of the intensive agriculture production model. Moreover, it allows to assess the effectiveness of regional legislative action in tackling producers' need of black labor. Then, the discussion turns on the third characteristics of the backup army, that is, the functional payment method in intensive agriculture. In accordance with the Californian case, the piece rate is proved to be the most common payment method also among farm workers in Italy. The same correspondence between the model and the particular case can be traced in the role played by the labor mediator, called 'foreman' in California and 'caporale' in Italy. This fourth feature of the backup army's working relationship in intensive agriculture is presented for both cases through an investigation of mediators' tasks, of the advantages for producers and of the type of relation mediators establish with employers and employees.

The first aspect that needs attention is the fact that the type of workforce that constitutes the backup army is provided by immigrant labor. It was already almost thirty years ago when the scholar Jean-Pierre Berlan (1986) defined the habitual recourse to the employment of foreign seasonal workers in South of France as «the hard drug of

Mediterranean producers».<sup>1</sup> In fact, immigrant workers are preferred in intensive agriculture because they represent a kind of workforce that well adjusts to the fluctuation of market demand that characterizes vegetable and fruits' commercialization: they can be paid at smaller rates than those applied for autochthonous workers thanks to racism, which «creates artificial, administrative and legal barriers that divide the labor market».<sup>2</sup> These features of the demand in intensive agriculture undergo an amplification in South of Italy, where the seasonality and irregularity of work must be added to an agricultural labor market that presents features that are disadvantageous also and *in primis* for the local labor force (Cicerchia, Pallara, 2009; Colloca, 2013; Pugliese, 2012). Thus, the labor market in Capitanata is characterized by large brackets of under-employment, under-wage and grey labor (Pugliese, 2012):

«Next to the black labor itself, different forms of contractual and wages' irregularities proliferate, often linked to corruption mechanisms in the contributions' payment procedures on the basis of the number of worked days in order to gain access to social security payment and farming unemployment benefits».<sup>3</sup>

From the data provided by the National Social Security Institute (INPS) for the province of Foggia, relating to workers who accrue the entry requirements for social safety nets (especially the 102 days in order to access agricultural unemployment benefits), it emerges that 82% of workers who matured the right are Italian, while only 17% is composed of foreign laborers.<sup>4</sup> The data from the agro-industry professional trade union of the Italian General Confederation of Labor (FLAI-CGIL) confirm the same trend: out of 16,030 immigrants listed in the provincial registry in 2009 (i.e. those who worked at least one day in agriculture), only 24% (4,619) exceeded 51 working days, which constitute the minimum requirement for access to the benefits of income support.<sup>5</sup> Thus, immigrant workers' condition of irregularity concerns both the working

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<sup>1</sup> Herman P. (2013), "Travailleurs saisonniers, la ronde infernale", *Le Monde Diplomatique*, February.

<sup>2</sup> Berlan J.-P. (2002), *La longue histoire du modèle californien*, in Forum Civique Européen, Association pour un Nouveau Développement (edited by), *Le gout amer de nos fruits et légumes: L'exploitation des migrants dans l'agriculture intensive en Europe*, Chateau Arnoux (Fr) : Informations et commentaires, 2° trimestre, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Pugliese E. (2012) (edited by), *Diritti violati: Indagine sulle condizioni di vita dei lavoratori immigrati in aree rurali del Sud d'Italia*, Dedalus, May, p. 55.

<sup>4</sup> Pugliese E. (2012) (edited by), *Diritti violati: Indagine sulle condizioni di vita dei lavoratori immigrati in aree rurali del Sud d'Italia*, Dedalus, May, p. 55.

<sup>5</sup> Fanizza F. (2013), *L'immigrazione nelle aree rurali della Puglia: il caso della Capitanata*, in Colloca C., Corrado A. (edited by), *La globalizzazione delle campagne. Migranti e società rurali del Sud d'Italia*, Milano : Franco Angeli, p. 97.

relationship and their legal status (Colloca, 2013). In accordance with the so-called ‘Mediterranean model of migration’,<sup>6</sup> black labor plays a major role because it fits the market demand (Yonnet, 2000): «An illegal immigrant has a considerable certainty of being able to find an employer who is not too hard in terms of documents».<sup>7</sup> As a matter of fact, MSF (2008) report on immigrants’ living conditions in Italian areas of intensive agriculture testifies this *double irregularity*: 88% of interviewees in Foggia has no employment contract and 55% has no legal residence permit.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the Southern Italy agriculture district takes on the characteristics of a ‘safety net’ (Colloca, Corrado, 2013) for many undocumented immigrants who find ‘shelter jobs’ (Perrotta, 2013) here. Although official statistics do not capture the actual situation for these irregular workers (Cicerchia, Pallara, 2009; Pugliese, 2012), the province of Foggia, with its 11,000 non-EU nationals employed in agriculture (Perrotta, 2013), holds the Italian record for the number of foreign workers employed in the sector (Pugliese, 2009). Another record of Capitanata, this time at the regional level, regards the employment of non-EU citizens in each agricultural branch: among all the other provinces of Puglia, 98.5% of the labor required for industrial crops, 54.8% of that needed for vegetables and 34.4% of that dedicated to arboreal crops, is employed in Foggia. Here, as the 2006 survey of the National Institute of Agrarian Economics (INEA) testifies, out of 95.9% of non-EU workers that are seasonally hired, 81% is employed for the harvest activity, 74% holds an informal job contract and 91.9% receives remunerations to a non-union rate. The phenomenon of undeclared work interests, not only sub-Saharan African immigrants, that in the province of Foggia count for the majority,<sup>9</sup> but also the new EU citizens

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<sup>6</sup> The ‘Mediterranean model of migration’ is characterized by: (1) a polycentric composition of migration; (2) ethnic specialization and segmentation of the labor market; (3) seasonality of economic leading sectors; (4) importance of informal economy. Corrado A. (2013), *Territori circolanti. Migrazioni e agricoltura nella Piana di Sibari*, in Colloca C., Corrado A. (edited by), *La globalizzazione delle campagne. Migranti e società rurali del Sud d’Italia*, Milano : Franco Angeli, p. 49.

<sup>7</sup> Sciortino G. (2006), “Vent’anni di immigrazioni irregolari”, in *Il Mulino*, (LV) n.6, p. 1041, in Cicerchia M., Pallara P. (2009) (edited by), *Gli immigrati nell’agricoltura italiana*, Istituto Nazionale di Economia Agraria (INEA), p. 34.

<sup>8</sup> General percentages for the interviewed areas reach 90% of immigrants without employment contract and 72% of those without a residence permit. The survey was carried out in all areas of intensive agriculture from the province of Latina (Lazio) southward (Piana del Sele in Campania, Metaponto (MT) and Palazzo San Gervasio (PZ) in Basilicata, the Belice Valley in Sicily, the Plain of Gioia Tauro in Calabria, and, of course, the province of Foggia in Puglia) for a total of 600 completed questionnaires. MSF Medici senza frontiere (2008), *Una stagione all’inferno. Rapporto sulle condizioni degli immigrati in agricoltura nelle regioni del Sud Italia*, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> The results of MSF (2008) investigation in the Capitanata region prove, although on a smaller scale, the same tendency: 77% of respondents were sub-Saharan Africans while 15% Romanians and Bulgarians, out of a total of 185 successful interviews. MSF Medici senza frontiere (2008), *Una stagione all’inferno. Rapporto sulle condizioni degli immigrati in agricoltura nelle regioni del Sud Italia*, p. 19. Moreover,

because they represent a lower risk for the employer, who is thus not afraid of a complaint for aiding and abetting illegal immigration (Cicerchia, Pallara, 2009).

Moreover, the condition of double irregularity also causes an interplay of length of stay and of legal status in defining workers' migratory paths. Regarding the first variable, the length of stay, in Southern Italy there are both seasonal as well as stable immigrants employed in agriculture. Workers who live here in a stable way are especially the new EU citizens, particularly Romanians, who have permanent farming jobs or who work as harvester in the months of high demand and find other types of employment in the off-season (for example, as construction workers or barmen). On the other hand, among immigrants who are present seasonally, two more migratory paths can be separated: one, the *seasonal circuits* (Perrotta, 2013), engages immigrants all year long throughout Southern Italian intensive agriculture districts on the basis of the harvest season of crops;<sup>10</sup> the other, the *commuter circuits* (Colloca, Corrado, 2013), interests immigrants who seek fallback jobs. The latter category gathers many typologies of immigrants: new EU citizens who live in different rural areas of various European countries for short periods of time; laborers who used to work in Northern Italian factories and have been fired after the 2008 crisis; and their children, typically students in the summer vacation period, who move South for the peak of manpower demand to make some (extra) money (Perrotta, 2013). Despite the recent increase of this last categorization of workers, Italian agriculture has played an important role as buffer sector in the 1990s, when it represented the first sector of employment for many illegal immigrants: they stopped in Southern Italy and worked in agriculture as a first stage in reaching legalization through the attainment of a job in Northern Italy (Ferrero, Perocco, 2011). Nowadays, agriculture does not anymore function as a shelter job that is abandoned as soon as the chance of a better-paid and more stable job is foreseen. Hence, the second fundamental variable in tracing workers' migratory paths needs to be their legal status. In fact, many immigrants are *trapped* in seasonal circuits (Perrotta, 2013) either because they are undocumented who never had a residence permit, or because they used to have a permit of stay but it has expired or it is not renewable - reasons can be that, being now unemployed, they do not have the requirements for renewal, or that the residence permit was non-renewable, such as the permit granted for

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INEA's researchers are keen on underlining that Polish workers' presence has progressively increased since Poland joined the European Union in 2004. Cicerchia M., Pallara P. (2009) (edited by), *Gli immigrati nell'agricoltura italiana*, Istituto Nazionale di Economia Agraria (INEA), p. 164.

<sup>10</sup> The seasonal circuits of harvesting in Southern Italy are exemplified in the next chapter.

seasonal work only - or again because they are asylum seekers waiting to hear back from the local commission on the acceptance of their request (Colloca, Corrado, 2013; Corrado, 2013).

The presence of immigrants with the most diverse legal status is not a particularity of Italy: already at the beginning of the Twenty-first century, scholars of the Forum Civique noticed how, in the French department of Bouches-du-Rhône, a decrease of undeclared work in agriculture did not reflect a decrease in the amount of labor required for the collections (Henry, 2002). The way through which producers assured themselves the right amount of working force was that of making foreigners (especially Moroccan) enter the Country in a legal way thanks to the so-called IOM contracts. These agreements represent a way of legally exploiting laborers thanks to a temporary job contract that is the result of a bilateral treaty between two countries, and they bond together employee and employer, leaving to the latter the decision on whether to renew the job relation (Henry, 2002). This way, the IOM contracts provided agriculturalists of the predictable need of workforce that was necessary under normal circumstances. However, being intensive agriculture dependent upon changes in climate and in prices, the calculated amount of working force available could be insufficient, forcing growers to consider also this unpredictability: if, for example, there is an unexpected hot weather or a hailstorm that cause a need for harvest to be faster, the farmer is willing to use more labor in order to have the harvest in a safer place, instead of it being on the field suffering from bad weather. This type of labor, as the author (Berlan, 2002) notices, is provided by undocumented migrants - that are the most flexible ones and respond to openings of the market demand even without notice. Hence, the second consequence of intensive agriculture afflicting the type of backup army needed is the complementariness between legal and illegal immigration (Berlan, 2002). As previously stated, the condition of double irregularity - which acts as a guarantor of the complementariness between both sources of labor - applies for a large proportion of immigrants employed in Southern Italian large collections. A first affront to the system was conducted by Puglia Region with the promulgation of the law "Rules on contrast to non-regular labor" (Regional Law n. 28 of 26/10/2006). The law contemplates: the block of funding and incentives for farms not in compliance with the contracts; the introduction of the index of congruity between turnover and employees;<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Implemented by resolution 2506 of 15 November 2011 regulating a comparison between the expected number of workers and that actually declared, in order to verify alleged cases of non-regular

the reporting requirement of the employment relationship twenty-four hours before it begins at the National Social Security Institute (INPS) and at the National Institute for Insurance against Accidents at Work and Occupational Diseases (INAIL); the strengthening of inspection activities within regional territories; and the provision of incentives to employers who regularize the employment relationship (Cicerchia, Pallara, 2009). Nevertheless, a verification of the progress of the interventions proposed by the law demonstrates the inability of legislative action to stimulate the cooperation of farmers and the organizational and bureaucratic difficulties in promoting the fight against undeclared work. In fact, in the province of Foggia no request for funds provided by the regional law for the restructuring of rural properties to be used as shelter homes for migrants has yet been submitted. Similarly, despite the implementing resolution n. 2017 of 13 September 2011 has established an economic award (of a minimum of 500 Euros to a maximum of 7,500 Euros) for businesses that cater to regional centers for employment to recruit the necessary labor force, as of June 2012 the personnel resources to be used in this activity in the province of Foggia had not yet been identified (Fanizza, 2013).

In addition to the interlink of legal and illegal immigration, another way through which growers achieve the goal of extending the harvest season as short as possible is the *piecework payment method*, because it allows a complete disconnection between harvest costs and the number of employees (Berlan, 2002). Theory (Borretti, 2010) recognizes in the payment at piece rate the important function of *disciplining* the worker, who is indirectly forced to raise productivity levels and the quality of work:

«[It is] a disciplinary device that “regulates” the activity of the worker, who: the more he works, the better he works, the more intensely he works... the more he earns. In addition, any form of insubordination against the employer immediately translates into a lesion of workers’ interests, into wage cuts».<sup>12</sup>

It should also be mentioned that the interviews conducted by Perrotta (2013) to laborers in the agricultural district of tomato prove the piece rate payment to be preferred even by foreign workers themselves, because it would allow a greater gain: «It

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labor. Fanizza F. (2013), *L’immigrazione nelle aree rurali della Puglia: il caso della Capitanata*, in Colloca C., Corrado A. (edited by), *La globalizzazione delle campagne. Migranti e società rurali del Sud d’Italia*, Milano : Franco Angeli, p. 107.

<sup>12</sup> Borretti B. (2010), *Da Castel Volturno a Rosarno. Il lavoro vivo degli immigrati tra stragi, pogrom, rivolte e razzismo di stato*, in Basso P. (edited by), *Razzismo di stato*, Milano : Franco Angeli, p. 507.

is not uncommon to hear stories of African laborers able to achieve incredible gains collecting up to 50 large cases a day».<sup>13</sup>

Although the payment form at piece rate is historically verified in California (McWilliams, 1939), today it is able to further increase the pace of the collection thanks to technological evolution. For this purpose, beginning in the early Twenty-first century, farmers producing strawberries in the county of San Diego (CA) started pinning to the chest of laborers a card with a microchip that electronically records the number of trays of strawberries harvested and brought to the truck. Since the payment is established according to the number of trays delivered, the system exerts a strong psychological pressure on the laborer, who therefore works at maximum rate and allows himself the smallest possible number of errors (Parini, 2002).<sup>14</sup> Being the Californian model an international paradigm, a similar high-tech instrument that allows flowers' and vegetables' producers to control the amount and the quality of work is found, since the new Century, also in the Netherlands, although here it is not the case of a microchip but of a barcode (Brodal, 2002). Therefore it does not surprise that also in large collections of Southern Italy, the preferred mode of payment is at piece rate, which, in the case of tomato collection, takes the 'large case' (that contains 300 kilogram of tomato) as a unit of measure. In Capitanata, each 'large case' of tomatoes harvested is paid between 2.5 and 3 Euros: considered that it takes laborers almost an hour to collect one of them and that a full work day consists of 12 hours, each immigrant is able to harvest about 15 'large cases' a day, which makes for, in an ideal situation, between 30 and 35 Euros per day (Gatti, 2006a; Fanizza, 2013; Perrotta, 2013). Given also that a working week counts on the average less than four days (MSF, 2005), the unavailability of finding a living solution that requires the payment of a rent contributes explaining immigrants' typical residential clusters in Capitanata.

The daily wage estimated, however, is a gross figure: it must be in fact reduced of the percentage to be paid to the 'caporale' as a bribe. It corresponds to about 30% of the payment that a laborer perceives daily and most of the times it includes a contribution for transport to/from the field (MSF, 2005). In fact, one more common

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<sup>13</sup> Perrotta D. (2013), *Traiettorie migratorie nei territori del pomodoro. Rumeni e burkinabé in Puglia e Basilicata*, in Colloca C., Corrado A. (edited by), *La globalizzazione delle campagne. Migranti e società rurali del Sud d'Italia*, Milano : Franco Angeli, p. 132.

<sup>14</sup> During the period of maximum harvest of strawberries in California (April and May) the payment is made at weight, unlike for the rest of the season, which lasts from January to July, when it is done on an hourly basis. Parini E. G. (2002), *I posti delle fragole: innovazioni e lavoro nella fragolicoltura della California e della Calabria*, Catanzaro : Rubbettino, p. 131.

feature between the backup army of laborers in Capitanata and that in California regards the role played by *mediators* in working relations in intensive agriculture. Indeed, in addition to the piecework payment, also the recruitment of laborers functions as a way for qualifying them as mere 'harvesting machines': especially in big California farms, the hiring of handworkers is delegated to the 'labor boss', who allows the relationship between employer and employees to be very detached or none at all. It is on the intermediary to negotiate tariffs, to get the total amount of payment and to distribute it among all workers he recruited (Berlan, 2002). The same mediating role is played in the South of Italy by the 'caporale', an intermediary of agricultural work appeared in Southern rural areas in the early Sixties, when Apulian land is subject to the first reclamation and irrigation interventions and intensive agriculture is initiated. Given the high levels of unemployment in those years - a condition which had forced many heads of agricultural household to emigrate to Germany or Northern Italy to find work in factories - the first hand laborers interested by the intermediation of the 'caporale' were female workers, especially young girls who could not find employment after completing compulsory school, willing to accept the worst paid working conditions (Leo, 1997). With the arrival of immigrants, the system of 'caporalato' found a new source of provision in the exploitation of foreign laborers, because they represent a working force that:

«Elevates to the -nth power all female labor "advantages": maximum subordination; sub-wage to the minimum of psychophysical reproduction; almost absolute cancellation of all forms of resistance and collective bargaining; annihilation of union organizational forms».<sup>15</sup>

The Italian version of the labor boss, in addition to the features already specified for the California case, in some cases can also take care of the provision of residence permits to immigrants (upon payment of an amount between 5,000 and 7,000 Euros), as well as of some payment services, among which the most frequent are, besides the above mentioned transportation to/from work, the provision of charge cards for mobile phones and the distribution of food and drinking water on the field (Fanizza, 2013). The externalization of labor (Yonnet, 2000) procures several advantages to the vegetable and fruits' producer: first, it limits his responsibility in employing all kinds of labor, without having to worry about professional qualifications; in addition, it dismisses him from the

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<sup>15</sup> Borretti B. (2010), *Da Castel Volturno a Rosarno. Il lavoro vivo degli immigrati tra stragi, pogrom, rivolte e razzismo di stato*, in Basso P. (edited by), *Razzismo di stato*, Milano : Franco Angeli, p. 504.

task of managing and disciplining the labor force, delegating its organization and control to the intermediary, who acts as the guarantor of his team; thirdly, it allows for greater ease and flexibility in sourcing labor, with the possibility of a subsequent instantaneous adjustment of the labor demand to the market supply; lastly, it lowers the cost of labor because the pressure that the labor boss exerts on laborers causes them to work according to the needs of the farmer (Berlan, 2002; Perrotta, 2013). In California as well as in Capitanata the labor boss removes many burdens to the entrepreneur, reason why, when analyzing the phenomenon of 'caporalato' in southern Italy, researchers (Fanizza, 2013; Perrotta, 2013) have questioned whether it is reasonable to assume that producers tolerate or even encourage the system. Therefore, researchers' investigation aimed at verifying the suspicion that the 'caporale' also implements the task of finding an accommodation for immigrant workers: interviews prove that if it can only be presumed so in the case of sub-Saharan workers - despite being reinforced by the previously observed absence of applications for rural properties' restructuring funding provided by regional law 28/2006 -, it is instead verified for the Romanian component of laborers. The suspicion gains even more validity if the type of relationship that exists between farmer and mediator is taken into account, a relationship based on mutual trust and in-depth knowledge, both in California and in Capitanata: they have usually know each other quite a few years, although at the beginning the worker who will become the labor boss is employed as farm hand. Over time, the candidate usually distinguishes himself for his loyalty and his hard working ability, being indeed promoted to foreman (Parini, 2002).

On the other hand, the relationship between intermediary and laborers undergoes different interpretations depending on workers' personal opinion on the 'caporale': for tomato harvesters in Capitanata three types of relationship can be detected in Perrotta's interviews. One common way of seeing the mediator is that of insisting on the fact that he is a profiteer; this is the case of relationships based on fear: «Fear of not being paid and fear of being left at home».<sup>16</sup> The importance of fear in the relation should not, however, suggest that the 'caporale' is such a violent exploiter like some journalistic investigations - such as the report book of 2008 by A. Leogrande<sup>17</sup> - would suggest, otherwise the risk of interpreting him as the expression of a backward agricultural

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<sup>16</sup> Borretti B. (2010), *Da Castel Volturno a Rosarno. Il lavoro vivo degli immigrati tra stragi, pogrom, rivolte e razzismo di stato*, in Basso P. (edited by), *Razzismo di stato*, Milano : Franco Angeli, p. 504.

<sup>17</sup> Leogrande A. (2008), *Uomini e caporali. Viaggio tra i nuovi schiavi nelle campagne del Sud*, Milano : Mondadori.

system arises (Borretti, 2010). The ‘caporale’ is instead a mediator in all respects between a demand and supply of labor that would otherwise never meet. Exactly for the type of settlements of immigrants in Foggia (disseminated or agglomerates, in any case distant from places of production) the figure of the intermediary is here indispensable. Immigrant workers are aware of the necessary role played by the mediator: in fact, a significant proportion of Perrotta’s respondents, in establishing a relationship with the ‘caporale’, takes first of all into account his indispensability.<sup>18</sup> Finally, Perrotta also reveals that the assessment of the ‘caporale’ on the basis of the consistency and respect of the employment relationship is equally widespread: «A ‘caporale’ who keeps commitments is respected and well regarded by the laborers, one who pays less than promised does not enjoy a good reputation».<sup>19</sup> Indeed, most of the time the Italian version of the ‘labor boss’ is of the same nationality as the laborers who make up his team, who are selected on the basis of personal relationships of trust, friendship or kinship (Borretti, 2010; Perrotta, 2013). The same tendency of evaluating the intermediary on the basis of merits is proved true for the Californian case, both nowadays and historically. In Parini’s recent study of strawberry cultivation in the San Diego County (CA) the mediator is usually of Mexican origins, so that he can take advantage from speaking the same language and being of the same culture as Mexican labor force; he is also connected via radio with entrepreneurs in order to keep control of what happens on the field. The organization of work in coordinated teams can be historically traced back to the end of the Nineteenth Century when Japanese constituted the major labor force to be recruited on Californian fields. Indeed, Japanese workers used to organize in ‘clubs’ and ‘associations’ that designated a ‘secretary’ who located work for them, directed their work on the fields and facilitated the quick movement of harvesters from crop to crop (McWilliams, 1939). Although Japanese laborers are the first national group to form work team, they are not the first stock of immigrant racial groups to be put under exploitation in California agriculture. As a matter of fact, in the process of transformation of agriculture from extensive to highly specialized, agricultural labor was provided by a series of immigrants with different national origins

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<sup>18</sup> This second possible interpretation is also highlighted by Yonnet, who emphasizes the fact that the recruitment of labor in European agricultural labor market is more often informal (either direct or mediated) than formal, because it is more suitable to the demand in agriculture. Yonnet J.-P. (2000), *Le travail au noir dans l'agriculture*. Bruxelles : ORSEU, pp. 23-28.

<sup>19</sup> Perrotta D. (2013), *Traiettorie migratorie nei territori del pomodoro. Rumeni e burkinabé in Puglia e Basilicata*, in Colloca C., Corrado A. (edited by), *La globalizzazione delle campagne. Migranti e società rurali del Sud d'Italia*, Milano : Franco Angeli, p. 137.

that have replaced one another over time. In all contexts where intensive agriculture has developed, a cyclical pattern of immigrant labor force exploitation can be observed. Thus, next chapter focuses the analysis on the implications of this high and regenerative availability of labor for the intensive agriculture system of exploitation.

#### 4. Cyclicity and auto-regeneration of the system

The needed cheap labor force in California intensive agriculture has always been provided by immigrant workers, placing «the availability of workforce at the bottom of farmers' worries».<sup>1</sup> Their nationalities have changed in a consecutive pattern in order to put under exploitation the new comers racial groups. Indeed, a *pattern of exploitation*, which consists in «to bring in successive minority groups, exploiting them until the advantages of exploitation have been exhausted; and then, expelling them in favour of more readily exploitable material»,<sup>2</sup> can be observed.

The chapter analyzes the positive consequences for producers of this pattern of exploitation of immigrant harvesters: in relating the California case to the Southern Italy one, similarities concerning the socio-demographic characteristics of the typical immigrant laborer and the process of labor force replacement emerge. Thanks to this mechanism, since 1860s, the development of California agriculture could rely on Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Hindu, Mexican and Filipino labor force (Berlan, 2002; McWilliams, 1939; Patel, 2008). In the present study the peculiarities of each group's exploitation are presented for the purpose of identifying the social conditions that jammed the system and caused the *replacement process* to be activated: racial minorities' contribution in agriculture is limited to a purpose only and, when other development intervene, they are rapidly discarded (McWilliams, 1939). Furthermore, in exposing the characteristics of each group, some similarities with the case of immigrant labor force in Italy become visible: thus, the alternation of Japanese workers between sugar-beet and berry fields, allows a comparison with the movement of immigrants in Italy in the orbit of the *seasonal circuits* of harvesting; and the preference for certain ethnic groups to carry out a precise agricultural work, both in California and in Southern Italy, illustrates the pattern of *ethnic specialization*. Afterwards, the California case exemplifies how, when a cycle of exploitation ends, agricultural interests find a way to make a new one start: this latest study is carried out for the Mexican labor force which, having represented the best quality of agricultural laborers

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<sup>1</sup> Martin P. L., Taylor E. (1999), *California farm workers*, (unpublished research project), quoted in Parini E. G. (2002), *I posti delle fragole: innovazioni e lavoro nella fragolicoltura della California e della Calabria*, Catanzaro : Rubbettino, p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> McWilliams C. (1939), *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*, Boston : Little, Brown and Company, p. 305.

in the first cycle of exploitation (1860-1937) - that is, one that did not cause any hindrance to the system - is preferred in the second cycle (1942-1964). More recently, new immigrants' sourcing mechanisms have allowed the recruitment of a new type of workforce, «a series B labor deprived of legal rights»:<sup>3</sup> they seem to be the most advantageous one for intensive agriculture in recent years.

The establishment of the *pattern of exploitation* contemplates the employment of workers that are at the beginning of their migratory process and that can be put in competition against each other when a new immigrant racial group appears. This is allowed by the fact that the California model of intensive agriculture picks the set of laborers that is more willing to accept the worst paid working conditions (Borretti, 2010). The pattern of exploitation has two positive effects for industrial cultivators: first, immigrants do not bring in families, i.e. they do not arise questions for social integration; secondly, farmers can take advantage from the creation of competition between racial groups to assure that the labor demand is always high, allowing producers to pick the set of workers who accepts the lowest wages (Berlan, 2002). Immigrants can thus be exploited as mere «temporary objects»:<sup>4</sup> they are 'ghosts' that appear on the farm when they are needed to disappear for hibernation in abandoned places of big cities when they are not wanted (McWilliams, 1939). The backup army of working force thus needs to be composed of workers that are easily substitutable, because in California agriculture: «Three workers contend for one position available and laborers die on the job at a rate five times greater than any other comparable employment».<sup>5</sup>

Cultivators in South Italy took as well advantage from the establishment of a pattern of exploitation: the socio-demographic characteristics of the typical immigrant farm laborer produced by the National Institute of Agricultural Economics (INEA) prove that workers at the first stage of their migratory path are in a condition of 'being without family' also in Italian intensive agriculture areas. Moreover, the common profile of immigrant workers include: a young male, generally between 20 and 40 years

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<sup>3</sup> Chacón J. A. (2010), *La persecuzione degli undocumented e la lotta per i diritti degli immigrati negli Stati Uniti*, in Basso P. (edited by), *Razzismo di stato*, Milano : Franco Angeli, pp. 69-70.

<sup>4</sup> As pointed out by Marcelo Campos, director of the anti-slavery campaigns of the Brazilian Ministry of Work: «Legal slaves were a property and therefore, being a resource, they were taken care of. They had food and a shelter because their owner wanted to make sure they stayed alive. The today's slave is not a concern (for the landowner). He is exploited as if he was a totally transitional object, such as a disposable razor». Hall K. G. (2004), "Slavery Exists Out of Sight in Brazil", *Knight Ridder Tribune Business News*, 5 September, quoted in Patel R. (2008), *I padroni del cibo*, Italian translation by G. Carlotti, Milano : Feltrinelli, p. 147.

<sup>5</sup> Patel R. (2008), *I padroni del cibo*, Italian translation by G. Carlotti, Milano : Feltrinelli, p. 57.

old, without professional specializations and with an educational qualification that generally reaches compulsory school (Cicerchia, Pallara, 2009; IRES, 2011). Another similarity with the Californian pattern of exploitation is the existence of «cycles of ethnic replacement» (Corrado, 2013) in the composition and alternation of racial groups that are put under competition to lower wages: this way, Albanians have been replaced by Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africans, who later have been substituted by Eastern Europeans. Since 1991, the first comers Albanians began to land on the shores of Brindisi (BR) and were used for the harvesting of tomatoes, replacing the local women in the labor supply for the system of ‘caporalato’ (Leo, 1997). Subsequently, the number of immigrant workers increased with the arrival of north Africans, especially Moroccans and Tunisians (IRES, 2011), and of sub-Saharan African (Sudan, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Niger and Nigeria are the most common nationalities).<sup>6</sup> With the 2007 fifth enlargement of the EU's borders, especially Romanians but also Bulgarians started replacing African immigrants, although with a different impact of presence depending on the type of crop, of job and of agricultural sector (Perrotta, 2013). With regard to tomato crop, the tendency that can be observed is that of preferring Eastern European workers to African ones as far as mechanized operations are concerned.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, African workers are generally considered to be the best choice - but it is a very subjective opinion of cultivators - in the manual harvesting, preferring Maghreb-born laborers to sub-Saharan ones, who tend to be relegated to high-peaks demand of working force (Perrotta, 2013). The same presumed *ethnic specialization* of laborers is found in California at the beginning of the Twentieth Century when particular nationalities of immigrant farm help were recruited for their peculiar working ability in a specific crop:

«It was soon discovered that the Hindus were well adapted to laboring conditions in the areas of intense heat, notably the Imperial Valley, and in harvesting crops that require a monotonous and arduous variety of labor, such as asparagus cutting. [...] By and large, the Armenians [...] have concentrated upon one industry, raisin growing. Amazingly successful in this field, [...] they brought with them, as one farmer observed, “a familiarity with the wine”».<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Perrotta D. (2013), *Traiettorie migratorie nei territori del pomodoro. Rumeni e burkinabé in Puglia e Basilicata*, in Colloca C., Corrado A. (edited by), *La globalizzazione delle campagne. Migranti e società rurali del Sud d'Italia*, Milano : Franco Angeli, p. 100.

<sup>7</sup> In addition to the already mentioned employment preference for new EU citizens in the case of stable farming jobs. See previous chapter.

<sup>8</sup> McWilliams C. (1939), *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*, Boston : Little, Brown and Company, pp. 117, 120.

The system of exploitation of agricultural workers inaugurated in California allows an *ad infinitum* creation and reproduction of the labor pool (Parini, 2002). However, a critical analysis of historical alternation of the national groups that have provided arms to agriculture in California since 1860 to 1937, reveals how three social conditions that obstruct the system can be identified: whenever one of these conditions is reached, racism is activated, the migratory group is dismissed and replaced. The first case concerns Chinese labor and it exemplifies how an economic reason, that is, Chinese representing a disadvantageous competition for local workers, can be dressed with racism in order to cause an expulsion of the national group from the labor pool; the second issue concerns the transition to the landowner class of Japanese laborers who were subject to racism as a result of this social ascent; lastly, the third type of jamming affects those workers who, like Mexicans and Filipinos, have seen their labor demand decrease as a result of labor union organization (McWilliams, 1939).

Being Indians an insufficient number for intensive agriculture's high demand of workforce,<sup>9</sup> fruits' growers found in Chinese immigrants the additional labor supply needed. Since 1870 they became available in agricultural districts after being excluded both from mines and from regular employment in big cities,<sup>10</sup> because of local workers' intolerance against their disadvantageous competition in the labor market, caused by the willingness of the Chinese to accept lower remunerations. In fact, the macroeconomic situation of previous decades registered an abundance of both work offer and demand, but an inability to make them meet due to the fact that while autochthonous labor offer demanded high wages, fruit producers needed wages to be low in order to expand

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<sup>9</sup> Indian labor has always been available in California: they were exploited since the Spanish-Mexican rule of the State and, after the American conquest of 1848, they continued to be employed on the large ranches of wheat crops. They were paid at «ridiculously low wages, or no wages at all (a bottle of whisky was one method of payment on the ranches). [...] The practice of using Indian labor continued throughout the early period of American occupation; in fact, as late as 1910 references can be found to the fact that they were still being used, to some slight extent, in the fields». McWilliams C. (1939), *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*, Boston : Little, Brown and Company, pp. 53-55.

<sup>10</sup> Chinese workers in California were previously employed as miners or as railroad constructors for the Southern Pacific. However, «as early as 1850, a statute was passed the effect of which was to force Chinese miners to take out a special license before they could work in the diggings. [...] Throughout the mining districts of the State, similar resolutions were adopted in the period from 1859 to 1867». McWilliams C. (1939), *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*, Boston : Little, Brown and Company, p. 69. In 1869, with the end of the Transcontinental railroad construction, 10-15,000 Chinese coolies are added to the already important labor supply of the miners. Berlan J.-P. (2002), *La longue histoire du modèle californien*, in Forum Civique Européen, Association pour un Nouveau Développement (edited by), *Le gout amer de nos fruits et légumes: L'exploitation des migrants dans l'agriculture intensive en Europe*, Chateau Arnoux (Fr) : Informations et commentaires, 2<sup>e</sup> trimestre, p. 17.

(McWilliams, 1939). In addition, Chinese labor had been put in a discriminatory position since 1850 thanks to institutions that took advantage of inhabitants' feeling to organize anti-Chinese riots and boycotts and pressure the passing of racist legislative acts.<sup>11</sup> As a result of this situation, Chinese laborers were increasingly being used in California farms, presenting all positive (for producers) characteristics of the backup army of workforce:

«The Chinese [...] could be employed at sub-subsistence wages. Moreover, they were ideal farm laborers. They had no families and, consequently, were satisfied with “the cheapest, meanest quarters.” They boarded themselves in some mysterious manner. When the season was over, they vanished into San Francisco and obligingly re-appeared when required. Lastly, they were extremely efficient workers».<sup>12</sup>

For these reasons, Chinese employment continued even after the passing by Federal Government of the first exclusion act in 1882 (McWilliams, 1939). Eventually, a few years later anti-Chinese racism became more and more aggressive<sup>13</sup> until riots spread to the farming districts, and until in 1892 the Geary Act was passed: it prescribed the deportation of all Chinese illegally within the United States, instigating vandalism among the population. With the 1893-94 riots and the consequent exodus of Chinese from the fields, it can be said that racism was able to reach its goal: «The Chinese closed out their various Chinatowns in the small towns throughout the State and either left the country or moved into the cities for protection».<sup>14</sup> For cultivators, the problem of the provision of the backup army arose again: closed the Chinese chapter of the pattern of exploitation, a new cycle began welcoming Japanese to enter California.

The case of Japanese immigration in California between 1890 and 1924 exemplifies the second type of obstacle to the proper functioning of labor supply in intensive agriculture. At first, the employment of Japanese workers was even more convenient than that of Chinese: they were as well experienced farmers who

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<sup>11</sup> The ethnological argument being that «a Chinaman was, in California, a variety of Indian», in 1854 the Supreme Court of California, with its decision of excluding from testimony the Chinese, Negroes, mulattos and Indians «in cases to which white men were parties», initiated a terrorist campaign that instigated the murder and robbery of the Chinese. McWilliams C. (1939), *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*, Boston : Little, Brown and Company, p. 68.

<sup>12</sup> McWilliams C. (1939), *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*, Boston : Little, Brown and Company, pp. 70-71.

<sup>13</sup> In these years, large anti-Chinese conventions are held throughout the State, causing both San Francisco municipality and smaller cities and towns to expel the Chinese. McWilliams C. (1939), *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*, Boston : Little, Brown and Company, p. 73.

<sup>14</sup> McWilliams C. (1939), *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*, Boston : Little, Brown and Company, p. 77.

collaborated in making important improvements to fields - particularly those cultivated at sugar-beet in Northern California - but they worked for even less than Chinese and provided their own transportation on the field (McWilliams, 1939).<sup>15</sup> Prejudices against Japanese, however, started as soon as they began to be small landowners and, worrying that they could represent a disloyal competition for autochthonous entrepreneurs, they were first deprived of the possibility of owning land (with the Alien Land act of 1913, re-enacted in 1919) and then excluded from entering the State with the 1924 Immigration Act (Berlan, 2002; Higgs, 1978; McWilliams, 1939). The reasons for the activation of racism against the Japanese lie in the fact that they held a monopoly of the workforce both as landowners, as they favored the use of members of their own race to the exclusion of all other groups, and as suppliers of labor, which enabled them to demand higher wages (McWilliams, 1939). Thus, the second chapter of the pattern of exploitation's history illustrates how, once the Japanese tried to get out of their role, they did no longer meet the requirements of intensive agriculture. Thereby, legislative action was activated in order to deprive the Japanese of their right to own land, as the title 'Landless by law' of the article by historian Robert Higgs (1978) testifies.<sup>16</sup>

Actually, even if discarded as suppliers of labor, some Japanese farmers were able to escape the provisions of the Alien Land Law and to remain in Southern California, particularly in the San Diego County, where berries' producing Japanese-run gardens are nowadays the biggest of the State (Parini, 2002). These agriculturalists have continued to swell the debt of Californian agriculture towards their contribution to the reclamation of waste land and the development of orchards, vineyards and gardens (McWilliams, 1939). The land enhancement provided by the Japanese continued even after they were subject to another expropriation of land, the one following the Pearl Harbor attack and their imprisonment in concentration camps. Nowadays, Japanese strawberry farms still rank as the most productive of California: once World War II was over and they were able to regain possession of the land or to buy it back, Japanese farmers undertook a significant process of innovation and reorganization of their businesses (Parini, 2002).

Moreover, Japanese labor exploitation exemplifies what in the Italian context of intensive agriculture has been defined as *seasonal circuits of harvesting* (Colloca,

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<sup>15</sup> As already mentioned Japanese field workers are the first to organize through a mediator. See previous chapter.

<sup>16</sup> Higgs R. (1978), "Landless by Law: Japanese Immigrants in California Agriculture to 1941", *The Journal of Economic History*, vol. 38, n.1, pp. 205-225.

2013), meaning the transfer of a number of workers on different fields in accordance with the harvest season of crops. Japanese are in fact the first racial group to provide handwork for two different types of crops - in berry fields between April and July and in sugar-beet ones in August and September (McWilliams, 1939) - although still in the same county. Instead, today's evolution of this pattern of exploitation contemplates that pickers move around different Southern Italian regions all year round, allowing the tracing of a calendar of immigrant workforce employment in intensive agriculture (Colloca, 2013). The tomato harvesting season employs immigrant workers throughout the summer in the tomato district that stretches from Capitanata (FG) to Vulture-Alto Bradano (PZ); some of them, however, do not find work in this activity, so they move more South, in the same timeframe, to collect watermelons in Nardò (LE) or melons in Matera (MT). In the tomato off-season, immigrants in Puglia find employment as olives' and grapes' harvesters for the months of October and early November, again in Capitanata and in Andria (BT). The main part of immigrant workers, however, since the beginning of November, starts moving to districts of citrus fruits; the most important ones are Rosarno (RC), Gioia Tauro (RC) and the Sibari Plain (CS), where they can easily find exploitation for oranges picking throughout winter season until March. A smaller amount of workers then reaches the Campania district: here, they are hired as workforce in greenhouses' vegetables growing of Caserta (CE) during spring months (April and May). Some of them remain in this region until the end of summer: first they work as tomatoes' and peaches' collectors in the Salerno-Napoli district, later, a smaller amount of immigrants is employed as fennel harvesters (in September and October). Finally, other laborers move more south and reach Sicily for the grape harvest in Trapani (TP); in the spring, Sicily sees also the inflow of potatoes' collectors: they are the immigrants that, after the big orange season, decided to go south instead of joining the others in the direction of Castel Volturno (CE) (Colloca, 2013; Perrotta, 2013; MSF, 2005).

The third type of jamming mechanism that can be observed in the process of immigrant labor replacement in California is that implemented by Mexican and Filipino laborers through political organization. The events that affected both these minorities show that, as soon as the labor union of each national group was created, the deadly weapon of racism was inflicted on them. The first great flux of Mexican *braceros* in California took place in conjunction with the spreading of World War I in Europe, which caused an increase of U.S. agricultural production that could be satisfied only by

letting more immigrants reach the State.<sup>17</sup> However, when in 1927 they organized in Los Angeles (CA) a Confederation of Mexican Labor Unions, the demand for their help in the fields started decreasing more and more throughout the first half of 1930s (McWilliams, 1939). The same pattern can be described for Filipino workers employment: in the eleven years of their presence in American fields, Filipinos went from being welcomed<sup>18</sup> to being the subject of a strong anti-Filipino sentiment,<sup>19</sup> which was instigated as soon as the Filipino labor union was founded to give voice to their request of higher wages:

«In August, 1934, about 3000 Filipino workers went on strike in the lettuce fields near Salinas, California. An army of special deputies descended on the Filipino picket line and herded a group of about 700 Filipinos together and drove them from the community. As part of this campaign, a Filipino labor camp was raided and burned to the ground. Many Filipinos were corralled and held incommunicado; and, of course, the strike was broken. Once the Filipino attempted to organize, he ceased to be a desirable worker».<sup>20</sup>

With the disengagement of the Filipinos, California agriculture found itself again at a shortage of labor: in the second half of the Thirties, this lack caused so many worries for cultivators that they even started using labor force made up by white Americans. Author and journalist Carey McWilliams (1939) sees in 1937 the end of the first cycle of the pattern of exploitation: half of agricultural workers in California was composed of white Americans, that were either ex-soldiers unemployed after the end of World War I or dust-bowl refugees,<sup>21</sup> while the other half comprehended the leftovers

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<sup>17</sup> Chronicles of that time tell about a number of at least 150,000 Mexicans working in agriculture in the 1920-1930 decade. McWilliams C. (1939), *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*, Boston : Little, Brown and Company, p. 125.

<sup>18</sup> The first remarkably important Filipino immigration took place in 1923, because of farmers' fear of the passing of the Immigration Act that would have contained restrictions on Mexican immigration, which would have resulted in a shortage of labor. Luckily for them, that year 2,426 Filipinos entered the State and their number kept on increasing until 1934, year of the Philippine Island Independence Act. McWilliams C. (1939), *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*, Boston : Little, Brown and Company, pp. 130-132.

<sup>19</sup> In 1935 a bill that legislated Filipinos' deportation and exclusion from continental United States was passed by the Congress: it was the second time it was proposed, the first time being 1927. Then, the bill was defeated because Filipinos were to all effects nationals; the second time, being the Philippine already independent, Congress found also a way «to provide "free transportation" to the Islands for those Filipinos in California who cared to take advantage of the offer». McWilliams C. (1939), *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*, Boston : Little, Brown and Company, p. 132.

<sup>20</sup> McWilliams C. (1939), *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*, Boston : Little, Brown and Company, p. 133.

<sup>21</sup> Because of the sandstorms that struck the central United States between 1931 and 1939, many workers, particularly from Oklahoma, Texas and Arkansas, reached California and became an important source of labor. McWilliams C. (1939), *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*, Boston : Little, Brown and Company, p. 306.

of immigrant racial groups previously exploited (33% of Mexicans, 11% of Filipinos and 3% each of Japanese and Chinese). While agreeing with the author on the time subdivision chosen, the analysis of the pattern of exploitation in California intensive agriculture cannot be restricted to this point. As a matter of fact, the first cycle of immigrant labor replacement served as a touchstone for improving the choice of labor to be employed after World War II. In launching a new round of sourcing of foreign labor power, agricultural interests paid attention in choosing the type of farm worker that caused the less problem, offered the best working qualities and that could be more easily replaced. The choice fell on Mexican *braceros*, and new methods of recruitment were excogitated to provide for «“guest” workers without rights».<sup>22</sup>

Before they started organizing politically, Mexican workers were well regarded in the eyes of California farmers because, in addition to presenting all the advantages of other immigrant groups in terms of production capacity and in addition to hibernating at the end of the harvest season, they could also easily be deported because of their illegal status, to be re-imported the following year.<sup>23</sup> When in 1924 the Congress proposed to fix a quota basis on Mexican immigrants, California growers sent their lobbyists to Washington to advocate against the measure. They described the *bracero* as a worker who:

«Has no political ambitions; [...] gives less trouble with collections than the whites; [...] is a ‘homer’. Like the pigeon he goes back to roost. [...] The Mexican is not aggressive. He is amenable to suggestion and does his work. He does not take the Chinese or the Japanese attitudes».<sup>24</sup>

The tactic of organized agriculturalists to pressure policy makers in order to ensure a continuous supply of cheap labor force proved to be a suitable strategy not only in 1924, when the first cycle of the patter of exploitation was coming to an end, but also when the second cycle was to be launched, i.e. with the establishment of the *Bracero*

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<sup>22</sup> Chacón J. A. (2010), *La persecuzione degli undocumented e la lotta per i diritti degli immigrati negli Stati Uniti*, in Basso P. (edited by), *Razzismo di stato*, Milano : Franco Angeli, p. 69.

<sup>23</sup> McWilliams reports that during the 1920-1930 decade, «80 per cent of the Mexicans in California have entered illegally, [...] and are subject to deportation». McWilliams C. (1939), *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*, Boston : Little, Brown and Company, p. 125.

<sup>24</sup> The fact that a quota basis for legal entries from Mexico was established in 1930 along with a new deportation law for illegal entries, is not a consequence of the failure of farmers pressure on the Congress but that of an intimidating propaganda against Mexican workers hibernating in the cities instigated by cities themselves, in an environment of fear as it was that of the years of the Great Depression. McWilliams C. (1939), *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*, Boston : Little, Brown and Company, pp. 126-127.

*Program* in 1942. Although the project was born as a contingency plan to make up for the shortage of labor in the U.S. during the Second World War, it is only between 1950 and 1960 that the highest number of Mexican workers' entries is registered, concomitantly with an additional invigoration of intensive agriculture, with new plans to increase the amount of irrigated land and the consolidation of the sale market in the U.S. East coast (Parini, 2002). In fact, if between 40,000 and 50,000 *braceros* entered the U.S. each year from 1942 to 1945 (with a peak of 60,000 in 1944), during the 1950s Mexican presences exceed 200,000 per year. On average, in the twenty years of operation of the program, more than half of seasonal workers concentrated in California (Parini, 2002). The *Bracero Program*, until its dismantling in 1964 - because of the action of civil rights' groups, the Chicano movement and the United Farm Workers union -, led in the Country 4.6 million pairs of arms, to the complete benefit of farmers.<sup>25</sup> Resulting in an inability for trade unions to organize such a seasonal and fluid labor - furthermore, victim of landowners' manipulation in order to boycott strikes -,<sup>26</sup> the *Bracero Program* has allowed the system to overcome the third type of jamming to the mechanism of immigrant labor exploitation in intensive agriculture. In addition, the new cycle of employment of Mexican labor force also shows that producers' need to have simultaneously legal and illegal immigrants has remained unaltered:

The program did not reduce but rather favored the entry of illegal immigrants willing to work in agriculture. Martin (1996) reports that between 1942 and 1964 against 4.6 million workers entered with the *Bracero Program*, 4.9 million Mexicans were detained as illegal immigrants.<sup>27</sup>

Favored by the disclosing effect from legal to illegal immigration, California farmers improved their strategy of sourcing for immigrant labor force even after the dismantling of the *Bracero program*. Thus, it can be said that from the earliest Seventies, the approach adopted is that of 'legalizing a few undocumented seasonal workers - particularly those that are known for having good contacts - so that many illegal immigrants will be brought in'. California growers found a way to maintain this

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<sup>25</sup> Martin P. L. (1996), *Promise to Keep. Collective bargaining in California Agriculture*, Ames (IO) : Iowa State University Press, in Parini E. G. (2002), *I posti delle fragole: innovazioni e lavoro nella fragolicoltura della California e della Calabria*, Catanzaro : Rubbettino, p. 59.

<sup>26</sup> Gonzales J. L. JR. (1985), *Mexican and Mexican American Farmworkers: the California Agricultural Industry*, New York : Praeger, in Parini E. G. (2002), *I posti delle fragole: innovazioni e lavoro nella fragolicoltura della California e della Calabria*, Catanzaro : Rubbettino, p. 60.

<sup>27</sup> Parini E. G. (2002), *I posti delle fragole: innovazioni e lavoro nella fragolicoltura della California e della Calabria*, Catanzaro : Rubbettino, p. 59.

strategy even after 1986, when the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) was passed:

«By imposing sanctions on employers who take on 'in good conscience' clandestine immigrant labor, IRCA has spread the use of illegal documents, often procured by employers themselves. [...] The measure was undermined from its outset. A clause of "affirmative defense" protects who hires from being prosecuted if he requires the documentation to the employee, regardless of the validity of the documents submitted».<sup>28</sup>

The latest evolution of the process of workforce's continuous supply regards those subprograms of undocumented immigrants' legalization<sup>29</sup> that, from the perspective of the guest worker programs, finally allow the creation of a new type of farm laborer: one in possession of enough documents to be employed but who is illegally present and therefore does not have rights, i.e. an «*illegal immigrant with documents*».<sup>30</sup>

In conclusion, the analysis of successive cycles of immigrant labor exploitation in California proves that current immigration policies are a refined version of older ones, with a shift in the group of immigrants subject to the provisions. Nevertheless, all political actions work starting from the postulate that new immigrant groups are weaker than previously entered ones and thus they can be more easily exploited: consumed the availability of new national groups of immigrants, the same mistreatment is now being inflicted on the undocumented (Chacón, 2010). Lastly, the cyclicity of the pattern proves that the creation and recreation of the labor pool is a necessity for intensive agriculture; the features of the pattern of exploitation have been proven also for the Southern Italian context which, although invested by this production system for less time than California, appears to be accordingly exporting the model.

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<sup>28</sup> Calavita K. (1992) *Inside the State. The Bracero Program, Immigration, and the I.N.S.*, New York - London : Routledge, p. 169, quoted in Parini E. G. (2002), *I posti delle fragole: innovazioni e lavoro nella fragolicoltura della California e della Calabria*, Catanzaro : Rubbettino, p. 61.

<sup>29</sup> The group includes the Special Agricultural Worker (SAW) program, that in 1987-1988 granted legalization to farm laborers who were able to demonstrate to have worked at least 90 days in agriculture, the Replenishment Agricultural Worker (RAW) and the H-2A programs. These last two actions allow agriculturalists that need labor force but cannot find any within the National territories, to bring in immigrant workers to be legalized. Parini E. G. (2002), *I posti delle fragole: innovazioni e lavoro nella fragolicoltura della California e della Calabria*, Catanzaro : Rubbettino, p. 62.

<sup>30</sup> Martin P. L. (1996), *Promise to Keep. Collective bargaining in California Agriculture*, Ames (IO) : Iowa State University Press, p. 299, quoted in Parini E. G. (2002), *I posti delle fragole: innovazioni e lavoro nella fragolicoltura della California e della Calabria*, Catanzaro : Rubbettino, p. 62 (italics added).

## II. The internationalization of the Californian model through ultra-neoliberal Agrarian Policies

## 5. The radicalization of land concentration and fragmentation

The chapter aims at explaining the changes induced on the landownership regime by the strong capitalization of the countryside implemented through national and EU's policies. Thus, the discussion covers a time span of over sixty years that stretches from the end of World War II to the present day. After describing the three transfers of land monopolization processes occurred with the Italian unification,<sup>1</sup> it is in the aftermath of the second world conflict that the configuration of the landownership undergoes a profound transformation, starting with the so-called Italian agrarian reform, passed in 1950 (Onorati, Pierfederici, 2013). It is only at this time that the final disintegration of the oldest forms of tenure is recorded, particularly the overcoming of the residues of the latifundium in the South. Moreover, if it is true that the importance of Italian agriculture has steadily diminished since the unification, it is also true that it has gradually diminished at a slow pace until the Second World War, while the decrease has been rearing since the agrarian reform (Fanfani, 2004). The importance of agriculture is measurable according to several indicators such as the size of farms in relation to the amount of land controlled, the type of management of the farms, the total number of persons employed in agriculture and the total amount of cultivable land. Through these measurements, the chapter is aimed at explaining how Italian agriculture has gone from a situation that in 1947 saw 99.8% of small farms controlling 74% of the total agricultural area (TAA) and 0.2% of big farms spreading for 74% of TAA (Daneo, 1989), to one that in 2010 sees small farms (constituting 94.7% of the total number) detaining only 46.6% of TAA, while big farms, which represent 0.9%, control 26.6% of it (Onorati, Pierfederici, 2013). That is, why agricultural employment fell from 8.6 million in 1950 to just over 1 million in 2003 (Fanfani, 2004), or why the hectares of arable land in Italy have been reduced by one third since 1970 (Guidi, 2013).

In response to the widespread peasant struggles that affected the countryside after the war, the Italian government passed the first national agricultural policy measures. The most significant actions concerned the implementation of the Agrarian Reform (Law no. 841 of October 21, 1950 'Rules for the expropriation, reclamation, processing and allocation of land to the peasants'), the restart of the reclamation works

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 1.

with the institution of ‘Consortiums for integral reclamation’, the intervention of the ‘Cassa del Mezzogiorno’ as an extraordinary measure for the management of public funding for local infrastructure, and the launch of the ‘Fund for the formation of small peasant property’, consisting in financial facilities for the purchase of land (Daneo, 1989). The intervention of the Agrarian Reform first started in Calabria and it was successively extended with an abridged version of the law to other districts, including the Capitanata in Puglia, the Maremma in Tuscany and the area of the Po river delta. Acting as a stimulus for the breakup of large landholdings, the 1950 reform affected overall more than 700,000 hectares of land and more than 100,000 Italian families, that became assignee of small farms and small amounts of land. The ‘Fund for the formation of small peasant property’ had even a greater impact: between 1948 and 1960 the change of ownership interested more than 1 million hectares of land and affected 620,000 owners (Fanfani, 2004). Overall, these measures have led to a significant *land mobility*, particularly in the South of Italy, where a total of 13.3% of the agricultural area was assigned to semi-proletarians and poor peasants (Daneo, 1989). An important result, but an end to itself:

«The scarcity of assigned lands, often of poor quality and poor productivity, as well as their fragmentation, made it clear from the outset the poor possibility of survival of new farms. Furthermore, the rapid industrial development led to a gradual abandonment of farms created by the agrarian reform».<sup>2</sup>

In addition, the ‘Fund for the formation of small peasant property’ rather than encouraging the creation of new farms, ended up financing the expansion of existing ones (Fanfani, 2004). By 1960, then, the management of agricultural enterprises sets up more and more frequently as using the contribution of wage earners, at the expense of farms directly run by the farmer and his family. In fact, if capitalistic-run farms get a positive variation in the amount of cultivated land between 1949 and 1961 (+9%), family-run businesses in the same timeframe show a negative differential (-2.8%) (Daneo, 1989). Moreover, agricultural employment went from 8.61 million workers in 1950 to 6.118 million in 1960 (Russo, 2008): it means that nearly 2.5 million people employed in agriculture found themselves having to change sector of employment as a result of the new wave capitalization of the countryside induced by the agrarian reform. The situation is particularly difficult for the peasants in the South:

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<sup>2</sup> Fanfani R. (2004), *L’Agricoltura in Italia. Dalla riforma agraria alla crisi della Parmalat*, Bologna : Il Mulino, p . 40.

«In the decade the economic situation of the South has worsened compared to the rest of Italy. [...] To bear the expenses of such deterioration is agriculture, but not intended as a sector of the economy - indeed, the Southern capitalist farms realized profit rates higher than in the North, due to the exploitation of pre-capitalist employment forms and low wages - but as the social stratification of the countryside. [...] In other words, to pay the construction process of the southern agrarian capitalism are the masses of poor peasants, besides settlers and laborers directly exploited».<sup>3</sup>

Thus, the second round of capitalization of agriculture also meant the launching of a second phase of worsening of agricultural workers' conditions. The process has been defined (Daneo, 1989) as *proletarianization of peasant families* and it actually a double direction. Intended as an external process, the *proletarianization* meant the liberation of labor attracted by cities and industries, in other words, the so-called *agricultural exodus* which took the form of emigration, both abroad and domestic - the latter affecting simultaneously South-North and rural-urban movements.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, understood as internal process, the *proletarianization of rural households* resulted in an involution of the small specialized agricultural production and it is proven by several phenomena (Daneo, 1989). First of all, more and more families of direct farmers started gathering around the cities, indicating the passage of the components to non-agricultural activities; secondly, the spread of non-cultivated farms symbolized the massive decline of sharecropping work units. In addition, rural villages, such as those in Capitanata, began the process of emptying that is the historical root of their marginalization and de-contextualization with respect to the provincial town (Fanizza, 2013). The consequence of these phenomena of *social descent* was an impoverishment of the countryside's labor force, which, if at the beginning of the process concerned only semi-proletarians and poor peasants, in the late Fifties began to affect even middle class peasants. Thus, farms were found increasingly conducted by old and young farmers and, for the first time, there was a compulsion to employ hired labor.

As above noted with regard to the criticism to the first legislative measures relating to land mobility, despite the overall increased land accessibility, the acreage was insufficiently distributed for the survival of peasant families. The process, known as *fragmentation of landownership* (Daneo, 1989), contributed both to the agricultural

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<sup>3</sup> Daneo C. (1989), *Agricoltura e sviluppo capitalistico in Italia*, 2<sup>a</sup> edizione, Torino : Einaudi, pp. 110, 111.

<sup>4</sup> If in the first half of 1950s the most visible form of emigration was the one abroad (of which, at least 60% from agriculture). The flow gradually stabilized since the end of the decade, due to the increasing domestic migration.

exodus and to the worsening of agricultural enterprises.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, the changes affecting agricultural workers did not only concern phenomena of *social descent*, but also of *social ascent*: though less frequently and only for certain sectors, of which the specialized fruit growing is a good example, also the first movement from the category of middle peasants to that of farmer-capitalists can be traced back to these years. They are the representatives of an opposite process, albeit complementary, to that of the *fragmentation* of agricultural properties: that of *land concentration*. So, if on one side the number of large companies and the amount of land controlled by them increased, on the other hand and at the same time, the number of small and very small businesses rose as well, but their access to land has been increasingly shrinking (Onorati, Pierfederici, 2013).

As a consequence of the coexistence of these two dynamics, the Italian agricultural production structure following the agrarian reform can be described as a «scattered oligopoly»,<sup>6</sup> which sees the polarization between a small group of large and medium capitalist farms and a myriad of 'patches of land' of poor farmers (Daneo, 1989). At the turn of the '50s and '60s three typologies of farms are, therefore, identifiable in Italy: they differ in size, in rate of profit, in type of labor used and in intended use of the products cultivated. The first category, the few real capitalist farms, have large areas under cultivation, achieve a high rate of profit, mainly use hired labor and alone suffice in providing goods, of which they decide the price, to be sold on the market. In addition, the big capitalists often have commercialization facilities so that the commercial profit is added to the agrarian one. The second type of farms includes a considerable number of mid-sized companies either capitalist, or peasant or sharecrop run. These farms enjoy a lower profitability compared to the first group, but are nonetheless able to obtain a certain level of profit; in addition, they make occasional use of farm laborers with permanent or sporadic participation of the entrepreneur and his family on manual activities. The vast majority of small businesses, finally, only record subsistence earnings, suffer the imposition of prices and under-reward the work performed, which is family sourced. Unlike capitalist, the other two types of farms mostly supply for individual and familiar consumption of the farmer's (Maffi, 1946).

However, the positive but limited «productive developments» (Daneo, 1989) of the Fifties, suffered a slowdown as soon as Italy entered the European Economic

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<sup>5</sup> It is estimated that from 1947 to 1955 the amount of properties of less than 2 hectares increased by 8%. Daneo C. (1989), *Agricoltura e sviluppo capitalistico in Italia*, 2<sup>a</sup> edizione, Torino : Einaudi, p. 91.

<sup>6</sup> Daneo C. (1989), *Agricoltura e sviluppo capitalistico in Italia*, 2<sup>a</sup> edizione, Torino : Einaudi, p. 14.

Community and was forced, with the signing of the Treaties of Rome, to give up part of its agricultural policy.<sup>7</sup> The multiannual public interventions of the 1960s, the so-called 'Green plans', thus represent the latest attempt to perform a developmentalist agricultural policy at national level (Fanfani, 2004). Both 'Green plans', that of 1961 as well as that of 1966, provided for «showery interventions»<sup>8</sup> that aimed at stimulating investment in agriculture, but on the basis of old laws, such as the reclamation of 1933. The simplistic view of the Italian rural reality present in the analysis of that period, was justified by the protective nature of the Common Agricultural Policy: the CAP was to serve as a «protective umbrella»<sup>9</sup> for all agricultural realities of member countries. In reality, Italy entered the EEC with an agriculture renewed only in its highest rates (Daneo, 1989), i.e. only those few large farms that already had characteristics of competitiveness, namely those who had been touched by the second round of capitalization:

The process of capitalist development touches only a few layers of farms from the point of view of production, while involving all of them at the market level, so that the discrepancy of the relationship between costs and revenues is worsening more and more to the disadvantage of small businesses.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The signing of the Treaties of Rome in 1957 was the institutional response to the problems of food security in Europe after the war.

Article 39(paragraph 1) sets out the general objectives of the Common Agricultural Policy :

(a) to increase agricultural productivity by developing technical progress and by ensuring the rational development of agricultural production and the optimum utilization of the factors of production, labor particularly;

(b) thereby to ensure a fair standard of living for the agricultural population, particularly by the increasing of the individual earnings of persons engaged in agriculture;

(c) to stabilize markets;

(d) to guarantee regular supplies; and

(e) to ensure reasonable prices in supplies to consumers.

In the second paragraph of Art. 39 is also pointed out that, in working out the Common Agricultural Policy and the special methods which it may involve due account shall be taken of:

(a) the particular character of agricultural activities, arising from the social structure of agriculture and from structural and natural disparities between the various agricultural regions;

(b) the need to make the appropriate adjustments gradually, and

(c) the fact that in the Member States agriculture constitutes a sector which is closely linked with the economy as a whole.

Fanfani R. (2004), *L'Agricoltura in Italia. Dalla riforma agraria alla crisi della Parmalat*, Bologna : Il Mulino, p. 55. SRM Associazione studi e ricerche per il Mezzogiorno (2013), *Un sud che innova e produce. La filiera agroalimentare*, Napoli : Giannini Editore, p. 64.

<sup>8</sup> Fanfani R. (2004), *L'Agricoltura in Italia. Dalla riforma agraria alla crisi della Parmalat*, Bologna : Il Mulino, p. 43.

<sup>9</sup> Fanfani R. (2004), *L'Agricoltura in Italia. Dalla riforma agraria alla crisi della Parmalat*, Bologna : Il Mulino, p. 43.

<sup>10</sup> Daneo C. (1989), *Agricoltura e sviluppo capitalistico in Italia*, 2<sup>a</sup> edizione, Torino : Einaudi, p. 19. The amplification of the gap between large and small farms can be exemplified, in relation to wheat, for Apulian companies. In 1967, in fact, there were in Puglia numerous farms (210,000) with less than 50 ha of land, of which each sold an average of 16.3 quintals of wheat. The farms with more than 50 ha of UAA

Thanks to the strong intervention of direct subsidization of the state,<sup>11</sup> the 1960s registered a further expansion of agricultural land held by farms dependent on wage labor.<sup>12</sup> Among these, a sharp strengthening was imposed on the so-called family farms, which, starting from the Sixties until the Eighties, increased their utilized agricultural area (UAA), becoming «the backbone of Italian agriculture».<sup>13</sup> A different fate interested, in the same period of time, the millions of small farms not making use of wage earners and that were unable to qualify for government grants. They became the protagonists of two other processes, the first being the *aging of the owners* (Colloca, 2013). The phenomenon, which started in the 1960s, is clearly shown by the Census of Agriculture conducted by the National Institute of Statistics in 1990. The Census reports that the companies run by a person with more than 55 years were 60% of the total and that they occupied about 60% of the national agricultural area.<sup>14</sup> The other process, called «*self-exploitation by family members*»,<sup>15</sup> which is also observable since the 1960s, concerns small farms' attempt of survival (Daneo, 1989). The number of operative workers in these farms has been declining at a rate greater than the decrease in the number of working days - the latter supported by the development of agricultural mechanization (Fanfani, 2004). This means that those who continued to work in the family farm were forced to work harder (Onorati, Pierfederici, 2013), while reducing their income up to subsistence limits, or trying to contain costs - a reduction particularly difficult to obtain given the small size of their arable land (Daneo, 1989). The self-exploitation by family members is still nowadays a typical feature of agricultural labor in small farms: it is estimated that between 2000 and 2010, compared to a reduction of 31.6% of active farmers, the working days decreased by only 24.8%.<sup>16</sup> Finally, the

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were a minority (2,100), yet each sold an average of 1,800 quintals of wheat. This means that 0.98% of the farms in Puglia produced nearly half (45.6%) of wheat sold on the market. Daneo C. (1989), *Agricoltura e sviluppo capitalistico in Italia*, 2<sup>a</sup> edizione, Torino : Einaudi, p. 215.

<sup>11</sup> The amount and consequences of which will be discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>12</sup> A +7.7% increase of UAA between 1961 and 1967. Daneo C. (1989), *Agricoltura e sviluppo capitalistico in Italia*, 2<sup>a</sup> edizione, Torino : Einaudi, p. 209.

<sup>13</sup> Fanfani R. (2004), *L'Agricoltura in Italia. Dalla riforma agraria alla crisi della Parmalat*, Bologna : Il Mulino, p. 27

<sup>14</sup> Fanfani R. (2004), *L'Agricoltura in Italia. Dalla riforma agraria alla crisi della Parmalat*, Bologna : Il Mulino, p. 33.

<sup>15</sup> Onorati A., Pierfederici C. (2013), *Land concentration and green grabs in Italy: The case of Furtovoltaico in Sardinia*, in Franco J., Borrás S. M. (edited by), *Land concentration, land grabbing and people's struggles in Europe*, Transnational Institute (TNI) for European Coordination Via Campesina, Hands off the land, June, p. 76.

<sup>16</sup> Onorati A., Pierfederici C. (2013), *Land concentration and green grabs in Italy: The case of Furtovoltaico in Sardinia*, in Franco J., Borrás S. M. (edited by), *Land concentration, land grabbing and*

strengthening of family businesses has not only played at the expense of the smallest farms, but also, in the course of the 1970s, to the disadvantage of large capitalist one, which decreased both in number and in amount of UAA (Fanfani, 2004).

Since the 1980s the regime of agricultural landownership is subject to further major changes induced by the alignment of the CAP to the will of liberalization of agricultural trade pursued by the new U.S. partner at the Uruguay Round (1986-1994) and translated into the Blair House Agreement of 1992 (Patel, 2008).<sup>17</sup> Indeed, the various reforms of the CAP that are starting to be proposed in the 1980s<sup>18</sup> are inspired by models of *neo-liberal unrestrained developmentalism* inaugurated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (Garbarino, 2011). With the new policy of rural modernization, not only the processes of *land fragmentation* and *concentration* are taken to the extreme consequences, but also other significant phenomena are registered. In addition to being worthy of note the definitive disappearance of sharecropping from Italian countryside, an inexorable process of reduction of total agricultural area began in the Eighties. Over the past 50 years Italian TAA has decreased by almost 7 million hectares because of increasingly frequent hydro-geological instability, accompanied by the abandonment of agricultural activity, the urban expansion and the recycling of land for non-agricultural uses (Colloca, 2013). This latter aspect has particularly aggravated in recent times, so much that the international literature (Borras *et al.*, 2012)<sup>19</sup> has coined the term *land grab* to symbolize:

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*people's struggles in Europe*, Transnational Institute (TNI) for European Coordination Via Campesina, Hands off the land, June, pp. 76, 77. Garbarino F. (2011) (edited by), *L'agricoltura contadina nel mondo e le migrazioni*, Associazione Rurale Italiana (ARI), Creating Coherence on Trade and Development Project, pp. 18, 19.

<sup>17</sup> The Uruguay Round was the 8th round of multilateral trade negotiations (MTN) conducted within the framework of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), embracing 123 countries as "contracting parties". The Round led to the creation of the World Trade Organization, with GATT remaining as an integral part of the WTO agreements. The real purpose of the negotiating table was to devise a way through which the EU and the U.S. could keep down their prices and ensure global supplies of cheap food. When the negotiations seemed to fail in November 1992, the U.S. and the EU drew up the bilateral agreement 'Blair House'. It provided a «system of agricultural subsidies that allowed them to continue subsidizing their farmers, remodeling a little support policies, while the countries of the global South renounced exactly to this same right. In the first countries the state and the private sector would work in tandem to maintain balance in the domestic agriculture. In the rest of the world, these companies of the private sector could operate unhindered by other governments». Berthelot J. (2001) *L'agriculture, talon d'Achille de la mondialisation: clés pour un accord agricole solidaire à l'OMC*, in Patel R. (2008), *I padroni del cibo*, Italian translation by G. Carlotti, Milano : Feltrinelli, pp. 77, 78.

<sup>18</sup> Although the first CAP's reform came only in the following decade. See next chapter.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Onorati A., Pierfederici C. (2013), *Land concentration and green grabs in Italy: The case of Furtovoltaico in Sardinia*, in Franco J., Borras S. M. (edited by), *Land concentration, land grabbing and*

«An ongoing and accelerating change in the meaning and use of the land and its associated resources (like water) from small-scale, labor-intensive uses like subsistence agriculture, toward large-scale, capital-intensive, resource-depleting uses such as industrial monocultures, raw material extraction, and large-scale hydropower generation».<sup>20</sup>

In addition to decreasing in amount and changing its intended use, European agricultural land is also worsening in quality due to environmental pollution caused by the intensification of production, also responsible for the progressive standardization of the agricultural landscape (Fanfani, 2004). The intensive cultivation has crippled those lands which, like those in Capitanata, suffer because of more than thirty years of cultivation at industrial tomato. Deteriorated in quality, land not only gives a lower yield, but is also more easily contaminated by parasites like *orobanche* which, combined with the occasional bad weather, has led local journalists to speak of a 50% reduction in land productivity compared to the end of the last century (Levantaci, 2013b).

The intensification of the processes of *land concentration* and *fragmentation* in recent decades can be tested for the case of the province of Foggia. With regard to the first aspect, the Capitanata hosts only 17% of all Apulian farms, but its TAA is the highest of all provinces of Puglia (Cicerchia, Pallara, 2009).<sup>21</sup> As for land fragmentation, the ongoing of the phenomenon is proven by considering that between 1982 and 2000 the number of farms in Capitanata increased of over 1,600 units, while the TAA of the Province has reduced of over 800 square kilometers.<sup>22</sup> If the high number of farms operating in Foggia is in agreement with the more general tendency of the South to host markedly fragmented enterprises,<sup>23</sup> the same cannot be said with

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*people's struggles in Europe*, Transnational Institute (TNI) for European Coordination Via Campesina, Hands off the land, June, p. 73.

<sup>20</sup> Onorati A., Pierfederici C. (2013), *Land concentration and green grabs in Italy: The case of Furtovoltaico in Sardinia*, in Franco J., Borrás S. M. (edited by), *Land concentration, land grabbing and people's struggles in Europe*, Transnational Institute (TNI) for European Coordination Via Campesina, Hands off the land, June, p. 73.

<sup>21</sup> The percentages of the number of farms are distributed as follows among the various provinces of Puglia: Foggia (FG) 40.62%; Bari (BA) 33.68%; Lecce (LE) 22.32%; Brindisi (BR) 14.4%; Taranto (TA) 12.29%. Cicerchia M., Pallara P. (2009) (edited by), *Gli immigrati nell'agricoltura italiana*, Istituto Nazionale di Economia Agraria (INEA), p. 151.

<sup>22</sup> The number of farms went from 59,423 in 1982 to 60,024 in 1990 to 61,027 in 2000. The TAA expressed in kilometers reduced from 6,405 in 1982 to 5,925 in 1990 to 5,602 in 2000. Cicerchia M., Pallara P. (2009) (edited by), *Gli immigrati nell'agricoltura italiana*, Istituto Nazionale di Economia Agraria (INEA), p. 151.

<sup>23</sup> Indeed, 95% of the farms in the South is composed of companies that do not invoice more than 5 million Euros. SRM Associazione studi e ricerche per il Mezzogiorno (2013), *Un sud che innova e produce. La filiera agroalimentare*, Napoli : Giannini Editore, p. 36.

regard to their increase in number over the last 30 years. In fact, between 1982 and 2000 the number of farms located in the South, has overall reduced by slightly less than 200,000 units.<sup>24</sup> To explain the peculiarities of the province of Foggia it is therefore necessary to consider other local features, such as the modest tendency to associationism between farmers and the presence of so-called «deconstructed enterprises».<sup>25</sup> Farms in Capitanata are therefore characterized for belonging to an absentee owner who cedes the management to an administrator, the so-called ‘agronomist factotum’, that takes care of the entire production cycle (Colloca, 2013).

Finally, family businesses in recent years have been evolving in the opposite direction than the reinforcement previously experienced. They are no longer the main focus of European agricultural policies, which - as denounced by Onorati and Pierfederici (2013) - tend more and more to favor large-size capital-intensive farms<sup>26</sup> rather than the much more numerous small-sized family farms,<sup>27</sup> which nationwide accounted for 95% of the farms in 2000. Beginning in the 1980s, a new wave of *land fragmentation* has indeed started, causing a decrease of UAA for family farms. In the last decade, in fact, the authors (Onorati, Pierfederici, 2013) recognize a tendency to sharpen the concurrent trends of *land concentration and fragmentation*, which is not limited to the Italian scenario, but it is indeed proven at European level, both for the EU-15 and the EU-27. With regard to the national context, between 2000 and 2010, the big-scale farms (those with more than 100 ha of UAA) have increased in number by 23% and in area by 8.9% (land concentration).<sup>28</sup> In contrast, European agricultural policies have, over the last decade, wiped out 32.4% of small and medium-sized agricultural enterprises (those with less than 30 ha of land). In particular, the survived

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<sup>24</sup> They went from 1,671,245 in 1989 to 1,474,689 in 2000. Cicerchia M., Pallara P. (2009) (edited by), *Gli immigrati nell'agricoltura italiana*, Istituto Nazionale di Economia Agraria (INEA), p. 151.

<sup>25</sup> Colloca C. (2013), *Campagne meridionali, immigrati e lotte sociali. Il caso Rosarno*, in Colloca C., Corrado A. (edited by), *La globalizzazione delle campagne. Migranti e società rurali del Sud d'Italia*, Milano : Franco Angeli, p. 31.

<sup>26</sup> With an average UAA of 42 ha per farm in 2000. Fanfani R. (2004), *L'Agricoltura in Italia. Dalla riforma agraria alla crisi della Parmalat*, Bologna : Il Mulino, p. 30.

<sup>27</sup> With an average UAA of 5 ha per farm in 2000. Fanfani R. (2004), *L'Agricoltura in Italia. Dalla riforma agraria alla crisi della Parmalat*, Bologna : Il Mulino, p. 28.

<sup>28</sup> Onorati A., Pierfederici C. (2013), *Land concentration and green grabs in Italy: The case of Furtovoltaico in Sardinia*, in Franco J., Borrás S. M. (edited by), *Land concentration, land grabbing and people's struggles in Europe*, Transnational Institute (TNI) for European Coordination Via Campesina, Hands off the land, June, p. 77.

‘patches of land’ (farms with less than 2 ha of UAA) fell by 44.1% and, while still representing 50.6% of the total, account for only 5.7% of the national UAA.<sup>29</sup>

The chapter described the changes that occurred in the landownership configuration since the end of World War II. Because of the contradictory effects of the agrarian reform, because of the proletarianization processes, the reinforcement of land fragmentation and the intervention of neo-liberal policies, the current landownership structure in Capitanata contemplates the opposition between a few large agricultural entrepreneurs and a large number of small and medium farmers. As it will be shown in the following chapters, only the first are able to maintain a position in the market. Wiped out the smallest farmers, medium-sized agricultural entrepreneurs have recently tried to assert their existence in the market, experimenting cooperative experiences. Their placement on the market, however, is delayed by a structural weakness that relates to the fact that these farmers were artificially shaped by neo-liberal policies that, with their constant aid to agriculture, have molded agricultural entrepreneurs lacking a business model for inspiration. This absence has resulted in the lack of a corporate culture which could ensure as ultimate goal the number of the profits made by the whole sector; instead, it only coincides with the gain of the individual entrepreneur (Fanizza, 2013). The «failed farm modernization»<sup>30</sup> - that is the cause of entrepreneurial resilience in Capitanata - is a direct consequence of the type of public intervention in agriculture, which, since the post-war period in Italy, has been a constant source for increasing first sector’s dependence on public funding (Fanizza, 2013). For this reason, next chapter focuses on the contradictory effects of the constant public subsidy in agriculture.

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<sup>29</sup> SRM Associazione studi e ricerche per il Mezzogiorno (2013), *Un sud che innova e produce. La filiera agroalimentare*, Napoli : Giannini Editore, p. 29.

<sup>30</sup> Fanfani R. (2004), *L’Agricoltura in Italia. Dalla riforma agraria alla crisi della Parmalat*, Bologna : Il Mulino, p. 25.

## 6. The deepening of agriculture's dependence upon public funding

The chapter has the objective of demonstrating how agricultural policies implemented over the last sixty years have managed to increase agriculture's dependence on public funding. This has shifted from the national to the communitarian level, and from the state to the regional stage without changing its own predilection for more competitive farms (Fanfani, 2004). By analyzing the results of agrarian capitalism policies, from the agrarian reform to the latest version of the Common Agricultural Policy, through its various reforms, it will be shown how the neo-liberal diktat has come to remove the protective barriers of the internal market, while opening it to exports, sweeping away all those realities for which there is no place in a 'modern' European agriculture (Daneo, 1989).

Well before the Agrarian Question was brought into discussion by Mansholt at the European level, the Italian agricultural policy had developed along lines which entailed the progressive marginalization of small farmers. In fact, government intervention in agriculture in the aftermath of the agrarian reform of 1950 set up as a «restructuring of agriculture on the model of the manufacturing industry».<sup>1</sup> Public action indeed took place through the same means (opening credit, tax breaks, low interest loans, straight grants) of industry, but with a wider range and greater continuity (Daneo, 1989). Furthermore, the participation of public spending during the Fifties showed a rising trend: if it accounted for only 19.5% of the total investment in agriculture in 1951, it touched 55.8% in 1955, to remain at a high level for the rest of the decade (in 1960, the same index stood at 45.6%).<sup>2</sup> Constant during the first ten years after the implementation of the agrarian reform remained also the geographical destination of government subsidies, of which more than half were assigned to the South, particularly in the first half of the decade, for public works of land reclamation and irrigation.<sup>3</sup> Farms receiving agricultural state investment in the South were concentrated mainly in the areas of coastal plains (the valley of the Sile river, the plain of St. Euphemia, the plain of Catania, the area of Trapani and that of Foggia) facilitating

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<sup>1</sup> Daneo C. (1989), *Agricoltura e sviluppo capitalistico in Italia*, 2<sup>a</sup> edizione, Torino : Einaudi, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Daneo C. (1989), *Agricoltura e sviluppo capitalistico in Italia*, 2<sup>a</sup> edizione, Torino : Einaudi, p. 75.

<sup>3</sup> In the Fifties, the South received an average of 63.8% of public investment in agriculture, with a peak of 82.8% in 1954. Of this, the largest share (70.4% in the first half of the decade, 57.7% in the second) went to the 'Cassa del Mezzogiorno' and the land reclamation consortia. Daneo C. (1989), *Agricoltura e sviluppo capitalistico in Italia*, 2<sup>a</sup> edizione, Torino : Einaudi, pp. 104, 105.

the transition from extensive cereal cultivation to intensive fruit and vegetables' growing.<sup>4</sup> However, the preponderance of public investment in agriculture - which is not observable in any other European economy of the time - immediately showed its discriminatory nature. Thus, State intervention, only apparently non-selective, resulted in the sustenance of farms that were either already efficient (i.e. already capitalistically-run) or potentially capable of becoming competitive. On the other hand, it excluded all small peasant farms that were not able to move on the «predetermined rails of agrarian capitalism» (Daneo, 1989).

This way, with an half-renewed agriculture (Daneo, 1989), Italy entered the EEC. The CAP came into force in 1962 and it stated that each Member State would intervene individually in its own country with a policy of price and market support. Soon, however, proposals for revision prospered and discussions on common price fixing began. The countries where agriculture had a limited importance for the general economy were in favor of the application of common fixed prices lower than national ones. Instead, the States most dependent on agriculture, strongly supported by professional agricultural organizations, insisted and managed to approve price fixing at a higher level than in the domestic markets (Fanfani, 2004). From the point of view of the proponents, price support would have entailed the stabilization of markets, the increase of agricultural incomes and the reduction of retail prices, with a ultimate benefit for consumers (Fanfani, Montresor, Pecci, 2001). The first matter to be regulated was the export of wheat, with the establishment in 1962 of the Common Organization of Markets (COM) for cereals.<sup>5</sup> By setting a target price, an intervention price, a threshold price, import levies and export refunds, a highly protectionist agricultural policy was inaugurated.<sup>6</sup> The regulation, then spread to other agricultural products (milk, meat, sugar, olive oil, wine) and, in 1966, at the initiative of Italy, also the fruit and vegetable

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<sup>4</sup> For the description of the transition from extensive to intensive agriculture in Southern Italy, see Chapter 2.

<sup>5</sup> The 21 COM that existed until 2007, which regulated the production and trade of goods or groups of goods (cereals, vegetables, pork, eggs, wine, etc.), were replaced, as part of the process of simplification of the CAP, by the establishment of the common organization of the *single* market. See: [http://europa.eu/legislation\\_summaries/glossary/common\\_agricultural\\_markets\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/glossary/common_agricultural_markets_en.htm).

<sup>6</sup> «Price fixing provided for a *target price*, considered suitable for regulating European markets and keeping them in balance. According to this reference price, the *intervention price* was then determined: it consisted in a guaranteed minimum price for the producer, whose product was withdrawn from the market at the expense of the Community. In addition, to regulate imports, a *threshold price* was defined, representing imports' price for entering Europe. To maintain domestic prices above the threshold price, variable *levies on agricultural imports* were introduced. At the same time *export refunds* were settled: they were equal to the difference between the world price (generally lower) and the threshold price for entering the EEC». Fanfani R. (2004), *L'Agricoltura in Italia. Dalla riforma agraria alla crisi della Parmalat*, Bologna : Il Mulino, p. 56.

sector was disciplined (Fanfani, 2004). The limitation of this type of policy soon became clear: price fixing higher than world prices implied the restriction of production to the domestic demand and soon translated into the creation of production surpluses (Fanfani, Montresor, Pecci, 2001). Indeed, after the initial increase of European agricultural production, the food consumption of the European population began to stabilize (Fanfani, 2004).

In conjunction with the formation of an increasing amount of excess production, the first (failed) attempt to reform the CAP was proposed by the then European Commissioner for Agriculture, Sicco Mansholt, in 1969. The clairvoyance of his reform plan lies in having predicted the imbalance that would have occurred unless the Community undertook some measures. Thus, in order to avoid *overproduction*, Mansholt proposal contemplated the need for three actions to be implemented: a decrease in work units that was to be achieved through welfare tools such as early retirement and ‘checks out’, a decrease of utilized agricultural area and a reduction of protections on agricultural products. Coming from a family of Dutch farmers, Mansholt was also the first to bring to the attention of the Commission the problems of those countries, such as Italy, which founded their agriculture on family farms. The Commissioner had already then reflected on the need to encourage family farming in order to avoid, as he had expected, its disappearance from European agricultural realities (Daneo, 1989). Nevertheless, the Mansholt Plan was never put into force, discouraging also possible reformers of the 1970s (Fanfani, 2004). Meanwhile, the energy crisis of 1973 and the dismantling of the Bretton Woods’ system, demonstrated the *financial unsustainability* of a CAP based on price support (Fanfani, Montresor, Pecci, 2001).

The problem of production surplus started being addressed by the CAP only in the Eighties, when a binding regime of production quotas was developed, budget stabilizers were introduced as well as maximum levels of annual production, which automatically reduced support prices of the following years. These changes in the CAP represent the «warning signs» (Fanfani, 2004) of the reform that took place only in 1992, in fulfillment of the commitments undertaken within the GATT to liberalize agricultural trade (Velázquez, 2001).<sup>7</sup> With the entry into force of the MacSharry reform, the system of Community prices underwent its much acclaimed reduction: European prices were re-aligned to world ones, while, to compensate for European

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<sup>7</sup> See previous chapter.

farmers' loss of income, it was planned to 'reimburse' them directly.<sup>8</sup> The passage of the CAP from price support to direct aid was intended to remedy market distortions, primarily the unequal distribution of the benefits of the CAP. As a matter of fact, before the 1992 reform, the Commission itself estimated that almost 80% of all contributions of the agricultural policy had gone to only 20% of European farms, the largest and most efficient ones. For this reason, the direct support of the reformed CAP required large producers to *set aside* 15% of their agricultural area if they wanted access to compensation. In reality, providing a separated compensation for cultivatable land set-aside, the reform of the CAP did nothing but sharpen the redistributive effects in favor of larger farms (Fanfani, 2004). In addition, the preference for some crops - first of all, arable crops - than others, and therefore more funding the first rather than the second, changed the intended use of the land (Velázquez, 2001). In other words, the 1992 reform established a *policy of support of farm productivity*, favoring large corporate units rather than small-scale producers, the spreading of an extractive agricultural model instead of an agro-ecological one and encouraging the industrialization of agricultural production. (Onorati, Pierfederici, 2013).

The same effect of preferring large producers, especially those in northern Europe, was pursued by the programmatic document for the development of the CAP titled 'Agenda 2000'. Presented by the European Commission in 1997 and endorsed by the EU-15 at the European Council of Berlin in 1999, the new Agenda stood in continuity with the interventions implemented by the MacSharry reform. Thus, a further price reduction in the Union and an increase of direct aid in accordance to both the type of crop and the size of the farm were provided (Berthelot, 1998; Fanfani, 2004). The reasons that led Brussels to formulate the reform were essentially the need to reduce the CAP's weight in the EU's budget (then equal to 50%), the imminent opening of a new round of multilateral negotiations on international trade within the WTO, the 'Millennium Round',<sup>9</sup> and the forthcoming eastward enlargement of the European

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<sup>8</sup> In reality, direct aid to farmers was only partially a novelty: a system of direct income support of farmers had already been established in the late 1960s, but only for producers of durum wheat and olive oil. Fanfani R. (2004), *L'Agricoltura in Italia. Dalla riforma agraria alla crisi della Parmalat*, Bologna : Il Mulino, p. 57.

<sup>9</sup> The 'Millennium Round' began in Seattle in February 2000 and it is still ongoing. The last Round of negotiations broke down in 2008 because of the inability to reach agreement of import tariffs. The WTO Ministerial conference of December 1999, which initiated the negotiations, was countered by strong anti-globalization demonstrations that saw thousands of activists clash with the police. Fanfani R. (2004), *L'Agricoltura in Italia. Dalla riforma agraria alla crisi della Parmalat*, Bologna : Il Mulino, p. 81. The protest is central in the plot of the movie 'Battle in Seattle - the whole world is watching' (2007) by Stuart Townsend.

Union, which allowed access to countries with a per capita income of just over 45% of the average EU-15.<sup>10</sup> With regard to the measures provided for by the new Agenda, they can be connected to three lines of action. First of all, that *reduction of refunds* imposed by the GATT in 1993 was finally realized, thanks to the further decline of European guaranteed minimum prices to bring them closer to world ones. Therefore, refunds were no longer necessary because European products no longer had a price difference that needed to be compensated.<sup>11</sup> In return for the decline in prices, 'Agenda 2000' provided for an increase in *direct aid* to maintain high EU farmers' income. The desired effect of the reform was, in essence, a greater ease in exporting and importing, the latter favored the abolition of import protection.

According to the economist Jacques Berthelot (1998), the courses of intervention of 'Agenda 2000' constituted a series of «errors and falsehoods» of which only the limitation of *export refunds* is considered a positive development, since most of the production of the Fifteen was absorbed by the EU internal market. Considered that the supply of the domestic market accounted for 80% of European agricultural goods produced,<sup>12</sup> to take world prices as a term for comparison was an «untrustworthy» criterion, given their extreme volatility. In addition, according to the scholar, the openness to imports had devastating effects on the labor market - which added up to an already heavy decrease in the number of employees in European agriculture - and on the environment, because:

«An out of control penetration of imported products contributed raising specialization and intensification of production, thus aggravating the greenhouse effect due to inflation of the means of transport, caused by an increase in external purchases and by the distribution of products further away from the place of production».<sup>13</sup>

In the matter of direct aids, they were justified in view of a more equitable distribution of income, despite the Commission itself had already admitted that the

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<sup>10</sup> The EU accession of the eight Central Eastern European countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Slovenia) was planned for 2002, but was in fact completed on 1 January 2004. Fanfani R. (2004), *L'Agricoltura in Italia. Dalla riforma agraria alla crisi della Parmalat*, Bologna : Il Mulino, pp. 69, 70.

<sup>11</sup> The reduction in intervention prices interested cereals (-20%), beef (-30%) and milk (-15%).

<sup>12</sup> Percentage that, according to the scholar, was likely to increase with the introduction of the Euro and the 2004 enlargement of the EU. Berthelot J. (1998), "Per imporre il diritto ai popoli all'autosufficienza alimentare: Come (non) riformare l'agricoltura europea. Errori e falsità dell'Agenda 2000", *Le Monde Diplomatique/Il Manifesto*, November.

<sup>13</sup> Berthelot J. (1998), "Per imporre il diritto ai popoli all'autosufficienza alimentare: Come (non) riformare l'agricoltura europea. Errori e falsità dell'Agenda 2000", *Le Monde Diplomatique/Il Manifesto*, November.

compensation effect would not be worth 100% of prices' fall (Berthelot, 1998). In reality, the obtained effect was that of exacerbating the gap between large and small farms. Indeed, in 2001 Italian farmers submitted a little more than 770,000 applications for Community aid for arable land, of which the majority (over 90%) made by small producers. However, they received only 58% of direct aid, with an average of just over 1,500 Euros per farm. In contrast, the remaining few large producers obtained 42% of the contributions, with an average of almost 12,000 Euros per company (Fanfani, 2004). As clearly explained by Berthelot (1998), the problem with direct aids was that they were not distributed according to the severity of the problems of developmental delay in the various regions, as it instead happened for Structural Funds:<sup>14</sup>

«Direct aids should be aids per hectare [of cultivated land], with a maximum amount for each job position, and not be dependent upon the type of crop, as provided for by 'Agenda 2000'. Their rates should vary in inverse proportion to the size of the farm, according to the region, the importance of employment and the degree to which the environment is preserved».<sup>15</sup>

Instead, direct aids continued to be tied to the level of production achieved or to the use of inputs, such as land (Severini, 2001), so that EU predilection for certain types of crops continued. In 2001 Italian arable crops received 40% of the total contributions, while other crops, such as fruit and vegetables, only 7.8%. On the other hand, the 'Funds for rural development'<sup>16</sup> recorded, between 2000 and 2002, a downward trend: in the three years, they went from receiving 1,502 to 1,044 million Euro (Fanfani, 2004). Then, the Common Agricultural Policy entered the new millennium with three deficiencies: an increasing tendency to diverge large/small businesses, a preference for some crops, firstly arable ones because more easily exportable, and a lack of interest in regional issues. If with the CAP mid-term review in 2003, the EU has started paying

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<sup>14</sup> The Structural Funds policy, begun in 1972 and resulting from the Mansholt Plan, was reformed in 1988. The reform of the structural policy established as targets of intervention the regions lagging behind in development, those affected by industrial decline and those in need of rural development. Nevertheless, in both programming periods (1988-1993 and 1993-1999), Italy revealed significant shortcomings in the use of these Funds. Fanfani R. (2004), *L'Agricoltura in Italia. Dalla riforma agraria alla crisi della Parmalat*, Bologna : Il Mulino, pp. 62, 63.

<sup>15</sup> Berthelot J. (1998), "Per imporre il diritto ai popoli all'autosufficienza alimentare: Come (non) riformare l'agricoltura europea. Errori e falsità dell'Agenda 2000", *Le Monde Diplomatique/Il Manifesto*, November.

<sup>16</sup> The objective of the 'Fund for Rural Development' was defined in a special conference in 1996, in fulfillment of Objective 5b (rural development) of the Structural Funds' reform in 1993. As a result, the areas interested by rural development have been broadened to include not only the areas with low level of economic development, but also those with a high rate of agricultural employment and a low population density. Fanfani R. (2004), *L'Agricoltura in Italia. Dalla riforma agraria alla crisi della Parmalat*, Bologna : Il Mulino, p. 65.

attention to the issues of rural development and the need to dissociate EU funding from the type of crop, the problem of aggravation of small farms' disadvantage remains an unresolved node, despite European Commissioner Dacian Cioloş recent interest in the topic.

The approval of the mid-term review of the CAP in June 2003, also known as Fischler reform,<sup>17</sup> took place at the same time of a profound change in the international context. In 2002 the United States had in fact approved the new Farm Bill ('Farm Security and Rural Investment Act'), which, in addition to providing supplementary so-called 'anti-cyclical' payments,<sup>18</sup> increased direct and decoupled from production payments to farmers. Similarly, the CAP reform of 2003 introduced the *decoupling* of subsidies from particular crops, shifting the receipt of contributions to the farm level through the Single Payment Scheme (SPS), also known as the Single Farm Payment (SFP). Without the compulsory bond of production, the reform introduced in its place *rules of conditionality*: if a farmer does not comply with environmental, food safety and animal welfare standards, subsidies are reduced from 10% to 100%. In other words, the reform of 2003 has placed the emphasis on the Second Pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy, i.e. rural development (Fanfani, 2004).

The Fischler reform also provided for the establishment of a single funding instrument for agrarian advancement, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) regulated in 2005.<sup>19</sup> The tools for implementing the EAFRD are the Rural Development Programs (RDPs), that have a multi-annual programming. Thanks to the eight regional RDPs for the period 2007-2013, the South of Italy has received about 9.2 billion Euros, more than half of the total of the National Programs. In particular, the region of Sicily is the most beneficiary (about 2.2 billion Euros), followed by Campania and Puglia, which are, nevertheless, recipients of over 1.5 billion Euros in funding. In order to get subsidies, agricultural enterprises are bound to respect their commitments under the scheme of conditionality (SRM, 2013).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Named after the then Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Franz Fischler.

<sup>18</sup> This extra aid was provided when the prices of market products would fall below a target price, in order to protect farmers from the risks of the international market. Fanfani R. (2004), *L'Agricoltura in Italia. Dalla riforma agraria alla crisi della Parmalat*, Bologna : Il Mulino, p. 73.

<sup>19</sup> EC Regulation no. 1290/2005.

<sup>20</sup> The 'Rural Development Programs' focus on four axes: (1) improving the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry, (2) improving the environment and the countryside, (3) quality of life in rural areas and diversification of rural economy, and (4) fulfillment of the Leader approach. SRM Associazione studi e ricerche per il Mezzogiorno (2013), *Un sud che innova e produce. La filiera agroalimentare*, Napoli : Giannini Editore, p. 56. Leader programs are rural development interventions at the local level that provide for the establishment of horizontal partnerships between public (municipalities and

As already mentioned, the question of the disadvantage of small farms in receiving EU contribution has only recently been brought to the attention of the European Commission. In view of the 2014 reform of the CAP, in fact, Commissioner Ciolos launched on 12 April 2010 a public debate on the Common Agricultural Policy's future, objectives, principles and contribution to the 'Europe 2020' strategy. The Commissioner was asked about the survival of family farming in Europe and by replying that «small holdings represent an important share, not only in the new Member States but also in South Europe»,<sup>21</sup> he hinted that the problem of small farming would be addressed by the new CAP reform. Meanwhile, based on the outcome of the public debate, the Commission presented on 18 November 2010 a Communication on 'The CAP towards 2020' which outlined options for the future CAP and launched the debate with the other institutions and with stakeholders. After almost two years of negotiations between the Commission, the European Parliament and the Council, a political agreement on the reform of the CAP was reached in June 2013. The final step of the legislative process concerned the adoption on 16 December 2013 of the four 'Basic Regulations for the reformed CAP' and the Transition Rules for 2014 (European Commission, 2010b; European Commission, 2013b).

The new 2014-2020 CAP presents as one of its goals the creation of more financially flexible conditions for Member States, thanks to the new possibility of transferring funds from one sector of action to another. The intervention thus completes that process of transfer of powers to the local level, launched with the introduction of the Single Farm Payment. To allow for the greater transferability of contributions from one area of intervention to another, the Commission has highlighted the convergence of actions under the First and Second Pillar, shaping the new objectives of the CAP: environment, young farmers, areas with natural constraints, small farmers and producers' cooperation (European Commission, 2013a). To date, the major criticisms of the reformed CAP interest both the environmental aspect and the new methods for providing direct contributions. In short, the model provides a flat-rate system, accounting for 60% of the premium, linked to territorial extension, so that each hectare of land used for agriculture will receive a contribution of about 300 Euros, no matter

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institutions) and private entities and that use a bottom-up approach in the definition and implementation of local policies. Fanfani R. (2004), *L'Agricoltura in Italia. Dalla riforma agraria alla crisi della Parmalat*, Bologna : Il Mulino, p. 68.

<sup>21</sup> European Parliament (2010), "Summary of the hearing of Dacian Ciolos - Agriculture and rural development", *Press Release*, 15 January.

what will be produced and, especially, if anything will be produced at all (SRM, 2013). To this, is added another 30% of the premium that will be attributed on the basis of the environmental capability of land (so-called ‘greening’), that translates into a reduction of arable land:

«According to this logic, all cultivated land should be reduced in extension to leave a rather significant space uncultivated (7%); only in the Po Valley we would lose 700,000 hectares of production».<sup>22</sup>

As noted by Onorati and Pierfederici (2013), current European agricultural policies do not anymore support *farm productivity* as previous CAPs reforms did: today they can be classified as land policies that support the *size of the farm*, prioritizing the ‘right of possession’ over the rights of producing and cultivating, i.e. putting in first place *land ownership* over a *democratic access of land*.

After this presentation of the contents and effects of the reforms of the CAP, it is possible to conclude that EU action has succeeded in its intention to develop a *multi-functional, highly specialized* and *modernized* agriculture. The multifunctional nature of European agriculture emerges once more clearly in the latest reform of the CAP: agriculture is no longer just responsible for production, but must also make its own the objectives of occupational guarantee, environmental protection and landscape revaluation (Fanfani, 2004). To obtain this result, agricultural production in recent years has been highly specialized, so that the richest lands have been earmarked for grain monoculture, the port areas for livestock (due to the proximity to the place of animal feeds’ importation), the areas with the greatest chance of water supply for the intensive production of fruits and vegetables, and so on. Against this productive specialization is possible to state that «the *rational* development of agricultural production»<sup>23</sup> has been reached. Thus, as Daneo already argued in 1989, Italy's entry into the EEC has really meant the adherence to a program of agricultural forced modernization. In practice, this ideological direction has been based on the inequality of subsidization of large farms at the expense of small and very small ones. In 2009, in fact, 0.24% of Italian farms (those with a turnover of more than 100,000 Euros) received 17.7% of Community payments, while 87.57% of farms with a sales volume of less than 5,000 Euros gathered just

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<sup>22</sup> SRM Associazione studi e ricerche per il Mezzogiorno (2013), *Un sud che innova e produce. La filiera agroalimentare*, Napoli : Giannini Editore, p. 68.

<sup>23</sup> This is the first objective of the CAP as defined in the Treaties of Rome (Art. 39, paragraph 1, letter A) (italics added).

25.94% of CAP funding (Garbarino, 2011). Still in 2011, data confirm the trend: 12.29% of large agricultural companies took 18% of the subsidies, while the vast majority of farms (93.7%) only 39.5% of the aid. Particularly, 0.0001% of the total enterprises, or 150 farms, received by themselves 6% of funding (Onorati, Pierfederici, 2013). Thus, the *myth* of large-scale capital-intensive farms has created an Italian agriculture that is always less competitive because more and more dependent on external production costs on which the Community has no control. Furthermore, European agricultures are increasingly fragile because more and more dependent on public funding, which has become a necessary condition for maintaining standards of industrial production (Garbarino, 2011).

The Italian South perfectly exemplifies the failure of the agricultural model implemented in recent years by national and EU policies, so that its economic survival is and will increasingly be tied to the obtaining of public subsidies (Thomas, 2002). Notably in Capitanata, the economic-financial support of the EU has led to the creation of that class of small and medium farmers lacking farms' *ethical management*. Often these farmers converted back to agriculture after the failure of experiences in the service sector or in response to the decline of the industrialization process. Their presence is essential to explain the increase in the use of foreign farm labor occurred in the last two decades (Fanizza, 2013). However, before exhausting the study of the causal determinants that explain immigrants' exploitation in Capitanata, a further analysis is required: it covers, and it is addressed in the next chapter, the lack of sovereignty of agriculture in respect to the market, both upstream and downstream in the productive process (Garbarino, 2011).

## 7. The expansion of industrial and commercial agri-business corporations

The lack of farmers' market power results in the dominance of large-scale retail channels. Previously, it has already been observed that in the Fifties the only Italian farms to obtain a profit from selling their products in the markets were those run in a capitalist way, thanks to their owning also part of the commercial structures (Daneo, 1989).<sup>1</sup> Since the Sixties, food distribution has become an increasingly autonomous economic sector (Scarpellini, 2007) and by the end of the Eighties increasingly more powerful against agricultural producers, more interfering with the food processing industry, and more determining for consumer choices (Colloca, Corrado, 2013). Nevertheless, being agriculture the focus of the present study, the field of investigation has been organized in order to show the mechanisms through which large retailers as well as the processing industry *steal* the agricultural value of vegetable and fruits' production. The choice is aimed at isolating the three economic sectors of the agri-food system that are the protagonists of the tomato production chain in Capitanata. The submission of agriculture's productive phase to both the processing industry and large retailers proves what literature has defined as «the perpetual crisis of agriculture in Foggia» (Herman, 2003a; Fanizza, 2013). The objective is therefore to show how power mechanisms played at the agro-industrial lobby level end up performing a task as important as land concentration, land fragmentation and the failure of public intervention in agriculture in determining the exploitation of laborers in intensive agriculture areas. However, in order to accurately place the large-scale distribution within the framework of power struggle in the sector, some preliminary considerations are needed on the economic value of the Italian food chain.

To this end, an *agri-food system* is defined, as proposed by French agronomist Louis Malassis (1996), as «the set of activities that contribute to the fulfillment of the alimentary function in a society». So understood, it involves at least four economic sectors: agriculture, the industry supplier of technical equipment for agriculture, the food processing industry and food distribution/commercialization. The resulting *food chain* distinguishes between actors of the productive stage (agriculture and both supplying and processing industries) and those of the distribution stage (including both wholesale and traditional retail trade, large-scale retail groups, and catering services).

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 5.

Given the large number of economic sectors and stakeholders affected by food chains, the choice of limiting the field of study to agriculture, processing industry and retail channels gains support also by considering that they are the actors that create the most value added. In the European economy, in fact, a comparison between the number of companies and the value added at factor cost allows to highlight that the sectors which create the higher value added are industrial processing and commercialization. Agriculture, instead, while interesting a significant number of enterprises (82%) contributes for only 26% to the creation of added value (SRM, 2013).<sup>2</sup> The Italian estimates made by the National Institute of Agricultural Economics (INEA) and the National Confederation of Direct Cultivators (Coldiretti) worsen the situation further: the agricultural value added reaches only 16% of the total. Because of this:

«For every Euro spent by consumers for the purchase of food, more than half (60%) goes to commercial distribution, 23% to the processing industry and only 17% to remunerate the agricultural product».<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, each food chain can be characterized on the basis of its length - depending on the type of product, the chain's level of efficiency and the consumption patterns of the population - and according to the polarity between big brands and small producers. The latter analysis tool is particularly useful for describing the food chain of fruits and vegetable, because it categorizes this chain as one of the most polarized in Italy, meaning that growers have a low control on the arrival of products in the market (SRM, 2013).<sup>4</sup> The inability of vegetable and fruits' producers to control the downstream production phase of the agri-food chain allowed large-scale retail channels to realize gains, economies of scale and vertical integration (Colloca, Corrado, 2013).

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<sup>2</sup> As for other economic sectors involved in the food chain at the EU-27 level, trade and distribution (both retail and wholesale) produce 30% of value added, although representing only 7% of firms; at the same way, the food industry produces 26% of value added but only accounts for less than 2% of enterprises; and catering services represent 9% of the total number and produce 17% of the value added. SRM Associazione studi e ricerche per il Mezzogiorno (2013), *Un sud che innova e produce. La filiera agroalimentare*, Napoli : Giannini Editore, pp. 26, 27.

<sup>3</sup> Garbarino F. (2011) (edited by), *L'agricoltura contadina nel mondo e le migrazioni*, Associazione Rurale Italiana (ARI), Creating Coherence on Trade and Development Project, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> With reference to the polarity of the nine agri-food chains distinguishable in Italy, six are classified as non-polarized (the milk chain, sausages and canned pork, canned tomatoes, cereals, musts and wines and the oil chain), while the remaining are polarized (besides from the fresh and processed vegetable and fruits' chain also that of beef and confectionery). SRM Associazione studi e ricerche per il Mezzogiorno (2013), *Un sud che innova e produce. La filiera agroalimentare*, Napoli : Giannini Editore, p. 33.

Indeed, as noted by Patel (2008), compared with a decrease of choices of both farmers and consumers, the profits of «bottleneck»<sup>5</sup> multinational corporations increase. The *giants* of the alimentary system control in fact 40% of the global food trade:<sup>6</sup> a percentage that is likely to increase, since their power is essentially based on «the abuse of the wholesaler on the farmer».<sup>7</sup> This concentration of market share finds expression in the supermarket, the «temple» of the modern food system. Here, the dual market power of large-scale retail chains becomes manifest: it takes the form of both buying power against producers (upstream in the production system) and of selling power against consumers (i.e. downstream power) (Garbarino, 2011). As for the downstream power, it is not a coincidence that the supermarket took shape, both in the U.S. and in Italy, in a time of economic prosperity (the beginning of the Twentieth Century in the U.S., the years of economic ‘miracle’ in Italy). In fact, the existence of an elastic demand, guaranteed by the growth of income and consumption, as well as the possibility of a productive expansion (to be achieved through cost reduction, technological increase and commodities differentiation) allowed large retailers to put their downstream power into practice. Moreover, in the Italian case, another ‘positive’ input was given by the accentuation of the phenomenon of urbanization, which marked the end of auto-consumption (Patel, 2008).<sup>8</sup> From the outset, however, these retail stores realized that in order to attract consumers the challenge was to offer goods with lower prices than elsewhere. Therefore, retailers activated their purchasing power on suppliers to allow for a reduction of prices, resulting in the creation of *economies of scale*. To this end, an increasing number of supermarkets was opened, thus raising the competition between them in order to «pressure suppliers into lowering prices».<sup>9</sup> The second step for

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<sup>5</sup> So defined on the basis of their position in the *hourglass* chart linking power concentration to the actors of the food system (farmers, suppliers, processing industry, shopping centers, wholesalers, retailers and consumers). Patel R. (2008), *I padroni del cibo*, Italian translation by G. Carlotti, Milano : Feltrinelli, p. 16.

<sup>6</sup> «With twenty companies that control the global trade in coffee, six controlling 70% of the trade of wheat and one that controls 98% of that of packaged tea». Patel R. (2008), *I padroni del cibo*, Italian translation by G. Carlotti, Milano : Feltrinelli, p. 79.

<sup>7</sup> Patel R. (2008), *I padroni del cibo*, Italian translation by G. Carlotti, Milano : Feltrinelli, p. 162.

<sup>8</sup> Far from aiming at providing a comprehensive picture of how the agro-industrial complex took advantage of its growing power to the detriment of consumers, see in this regard, among others: Berlan J.-P., Lewontin R. C. (1998), “Le menace du complexe genetic-industriel”, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, December; Sinai A. (2001), “Inchiesta su una strategia di comunicazione: Come Monsanto vende gli Ogm”, *Le Monde Diplomatique/Il Manifesto*, July; Patel R. (2008), *I padroni del cibo*, Italian translation by G. Carlotti, Milano : Feltrinelli.

<sup>9</sup> As predicted by Nelson A. Rockefeller in 1956, a year before the opening of the first supermarket in Italy. Scarpellini, E. (2007), *La spesa è uguale per tutti, L'avventura dei supermercati in Italia*, Venezia : Marsilio Editori, p. 39.

the realization of mass distribution to the detriment of small producers was to implement *vertical integration*, achieved both through the initiation of an own-production and through the exclusive packaging under a particular label of a series of products. Obviously, both mechanisms were activated only once the supermarkets had been able to get the know-how of production and after being able to finance the creation of food processing plants. The advantages for large-scale retailers were vast; in particular, the creation of a trade mark, allowing lower selling prices than industrial brands, permitted them to save up to 50% of costs, particularly for the packaging of fruits and vegetable (Scarpellini, 2007).<sup>10</sup>

In other words, the agribusiness complex is able to reach high levels of vertical integration thanks to the *industrial appropriation* of the agricultural production process, which emancipates it from the natural forces and the rural labor: «The *productivity gains* of the agricultural sector are *confiscated* by the buyers of agriculture, namely the food processing industry and large-scale distribution».<sup>11</sup> A first process of industrial appropriation concerns the modification of plants' organic nature, with the implementation of techniques for the genetic manipulation of vegetable organisms, through the most traditional forms of hybridization and the newer genetic engineering. A second process has to do with the implementation of tools, energy sources and machinery that greatly increase the productivity of agricultural labor (Parini, 2002). As a result, the agricultural worker has become an increasingly more specialized technician at the center of a largely automated farm. Indeed, already in 1984 the scholar Ricardo Petrella spoke of «the end of peasant society»:

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<sup>10</sup> Scarpellini (2007) devotes considerable space in her volume to describe the problems faced by the first Italian supermarket chain, the 'Supermarkets Italiani SpA', inherent the unpreparedness of local groceries' producers in responding to the specific needs of large retailers (poor punctuality and imprecision of suppliers). Although in the end, the author recognizes that «mass retailers assumed a function of stimulus for large producers while it was detrimental to small ones», Borretti (2010) judges the book «an interesting story of supermarkets' advent in Italy, although essentially apologetic». On the same course is the opinion of Fanfani (2004) who provides a different interpretation of the role of small suppliers in slowing the spread of supermarkets: «The old traditional distribution structure has preserved and protected the Italian food system from the more and more massive penetration of foreign capital». Scarpellini, E. (2007), *La spesa è uguale per tutti, L'avventura dei supermercati in Italia*, Venezia : Marsilio Editori, pp. 105, 106; Borretti B. (2010), *Da Castel Volturno a Rosarno. Il lavoro vivo degli immigrati tra stragi, pogrom, rivolte e razzismo di stato*, in Basso P. (edited by), *Razzismo di stato*, Milano : Franco Angeli, p. 497; Fanfani R. (2004), *L'Agricoltura in Italia. Dalla riforma agraria alla crisi della Parmalat*, Bologna : Il Mulino, p. 88.

<sup>11</sup> Streckeisen W. (2002), *Le role determinant de la grande distribution*, in Forum Civique Européen, Association pour un Nouveau Développement (edited by), *Le gout amer de nos fruits et légumes: L'exploitation des migrants dans l'agriculture intensive en Europe*, Chateau Arnoux (Fr) : Informations et commentaries, 2° trimestre, p. 24 (italics added).

«It is reasonable to assume that peasants of the next twenty years will be more and more 'bio-managers' whose task will be to integrate different land uses for many purposes».<sup>12</sup>

The prevision made by Petrella (1984) has come true thanks to the political justification put forward by the neo-liberal doctrine of the European Union, which, as of the end of the Eighties, proceeded to the *reorganization of the global food system* (Brutsaert, 2002; Colloca, Corrado, 2013). As revealed by economist Jacques Berthelot (1998) in his criticism of the 'Agenda 2000', the CAP moved in the direction of favoring large retailers, while only pretending to protect consumers:

«These multinational companies have everything to gain from the fall in agricultural prices. It is, after all, one of the arguments used by the European Commissioner for Agriculture, Franz Fischler, with the aim of forcing the hand to the EU Council of Ministers: "If we do not make our products more competitive (...) the agribusiness firms will not only source elsewhere, but will also transfer their production facilities (...) outside the European Union and will export the finished products in the Community"».<sup>13</sup>

With the downgrading of agriculture in favor of large retailers, the scenery of the Italian agro-food system changed profoundly. This is evidenced by the decrease in traditional commercial businesses for food distribution that is recorded since the Eighties, definitively collapsed in the early Nineties.<sup>14</sup> As a result, today large retailers grab 73% of the total Italian food distribution market, while only the remaining share (27%) is still in the hands of small/medium stores (Garbarino, 2011). At the same time, the number of stores held by large retailers has nationally increased, first taking the form of supermarkets and then that of hypermarkets and hard discount stores (Fanfani, 2004). In addition, in the last decade the number of stores per 10,000 inhabitants has increased by 1.6% (Garbarino, 2011). The index increase is particularly relevant for the South of Italy where, since the advent of large-scale retails until the beginning of the new century, the number of supermarkets and hypermarkets was not particularly

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<sup>12</sup> Petrella R. (1984) "Europe at Work: Challenge and Prospect", in Marstrand P. (edited by), *New Technology and the Future of Work and Skills*, London : Pinter, quoted in Parini E. G. (2002), *I posti delle fragole: innovazioni e lavoro nella fragolicoltura della California e della Calabria*, Catanzaro : Rubbettino, p. 33.

<sup>13</sup> Berthelot J. (1998), "Per imporre il diritto ai popoli all'autosufficienza alimentare: Come (non) riformare l'agricoltura europea. Errori e falsità dell'Agenda 2000", *Le Monde Diplomatique/Il Manifesto*, November.

<sup>14</sup> Traditional food commercialization channels, including street trading, fell from over 413,000 in 1981 to just over 300,000 in 1990, to reach a low point in 2002, when they were about 192,000. Fanfani R. (2004), *L'Agricoltura in Italia. Dalla riforma agraria alla crisi della Parmalat*, Bologna : Il Mulino, p. 110.

significant, whereas it underwent a rapid acceleration since 2000.<sup>15</sup> This means that the reorganization of the global food system has achieved its purposes: both that of favoring large-scale distribution quantitative increase, and that of opening domestic markets to the entrance of foreign-capital corporate groups. This is demonstrated by the Italian ranking of the top six distribution groups. Although the first two classified are Italian groups ('Coop Italia' and 'Conad' - with a 26.6% market share in 2012),<sup>16</sup> all the following are foreign corporations. In fact, the third group in Italian food distribution ranking is 'Selex', that invoices 8.2% of the total turnover of retailers: its purchasing group 'Esd Italia' is owned by the multinational 'European Marketing Distribution'.<sup>17</sup> The same can be said for both the fourth major group, 'Esselunga', that, with a market share of 8.1%, has recently associated with the European purchasing group 'AMS Sourcing BV',<sup>18</sup> and for the two following French groups 'Auchan' (with a 7.6% market share) and 'Carrefour' (6.4%) (FederDistribuzione, 2012).

In addition to the theft of agriculture's productivity gains by the *greats* of distribution, part of the subtraction takes place by means of the food processing industry that, according to the current characteristics of this manufacturing sector in Italy, contributes in determining the *throttling* of farmers, in particular those of the South (Streckeisen, 2002). The relationship between agriculture and agri-food industry has increasingly weakened since the second postwar period due to the always less recourse of the processing industry to *local* agricultural production, while at the same time increasing integration and trade with other European and global economies, ensuring over time high levels of employment. The increase of food processing industry *relative* importance, however, nowadays collides with large retailers' predominance: the processing industry generates almost the same value added of agriculture in the Italian food system. However, it is made up by much fewer entities than agriculture; it is a characteristic that can be explained by investigating the features of the Italian processing industry: dispersion at the national level, concentration and specialization at zonal level. The first feature, the wide diffusion throughout the country, is made possible by the predominant presence of small industries with fewer than 10 employees.

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<sup>15</sup> Data from the National Institute of Agrarian Economy (INEA), various years, in Fanfani R. (2004), *L'Agricoltura in Italia. Dalla riforma agraria alla crisi della Parmalat*, Bologna : Il Mulino, p. 112.

<sup>16</sup> More specifically, 'Coop Italia' has a 15.3% market share, 'Conad' holds 11.3%. FederDistribuzione (2012), *Mappa del sistema distributivo italiano*.

<sup>17</sup> See: <http://www.esditalia.it/it/index.php>.

<sup>18</sup> 'Esselunga' is the heir of the first supermarket chain in Italy, 'Supermercati Italiani S.p.A.' See: <http://www.esselunga.it/default.aspx?idPage=1283&esseiaOtp=none>; Scarpellini, E. (2007), *La spesa è uguale per tutti, L'avventura dei supermercati in Italia*, Venezia : Marsilio Editori.

The few remaining large industries hold the record, however, both in terms of employment and value added. These latter have recently been hit by processes of takeover by giant agribusiness corporations (first of all, 'Nestlé Italia') that saw in the acquisition of companies with popular brands the opportunity to expand their market share by taking advantage of economies of scale. On the other hand, the myriad of micro, small and medium-sized food processing industries have recently undertaken cooperative experiences, but especially in the North-East of Italy. Usually, the corporate groups that head these agricultural cooperatives are distinguished by large multinational food companies for the existence of a very close relationship with a significant number of farmers for the delivery of products to be processed. However, also agricultural cooperatives have recently experienced internationalization processes. It is the case of the leading group 'Conserve Italia' that, while maintaining the legal form of an agricultural cooperative, has taken over time an international dimension and nowadays owns several companies in France, Great Britain, Spain and Germany. Founded in 1976 as a means of marketing the products of 15 cooperatives operating in the fruits and vegetable sector, 'Conserve Italia' gathers today 49 cooperatives that confer each year about 650,000 tons of raw materials, which include fruit, tomato and vegetables.<sup>19</sup> Through brands like 'Valfrutta', 'Yoga', 'Cirio' and 'Derby Blue', the group is engaged in the production and marketing of fruit juices and fruit nectars, tomato purée and tomato paste, fruit compote and jams, which are produced in 12 factories, including eight in Italy, three in France and one in Spain. Originally, 'Conserve Italia' was one of those cooperatives born after the productive specialization of *agri-food districts*: it is not by chance that seven of its Italian plants are concentrated in Emilia Romagna, the Italian region responsible for most of vegetable and fruits' national production. The *agri-food districts*, while presenting different territorial dimensions, are an example of enhancement of local agricultural production (specialization) made possible by the association of numerous (concentration) small and medium-sized enterprises. Because of the combined effect of productive concentration and specialization in the food processing industry, the Italian scene is rather varied, both at macro regions' and provincial level. Indeed, the most important region of Northern Italy in terms of turnover and number of employees is Lombardy (closely followed by Emilia Romagna), but it significantly distances from the most important regions of Southern Italy (Sicily and Campania). A good example of highly concentrated industrial sector is precisely

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<sup>19</sup> See: <http://www.conserveitalia.it/content/section/4/39/>.

that of fruits and vegetable, which reaches 70% of production through establishments in only nine provinces. Among these, the majority is once again located in Central-Northern Italy; Southern ones are only Salerno and Naples (Brasili, Fanfani, Ricci Maccarini, 2001; Fanfani, 2004; SRM, 2013).

Because of such a configuration in the food processing industry, tomato producers in Capitanata have at their disposal only five canning factories on site.<sup>20</sup> As a result, the majority of producers has always been forced to rely on the about 90 canning factories located in Campania (Perrotta, 2013). Transportation has therefore always been the main cost for producers in Foggia, that could nevertheless achieve a balanced budget when tomato was sufficiently paid by industrialists in Campania. However, in the last few years, not only the price of gasoline has increased, but the manufacturing *cartel* has also dictated the payment of lower prices. Thus, what local newspapers have called «the war of mid-August» between producers in Puglia and industrialists in Campania broke out (Levantaci, 2012e). From the point of view of the tomato growers, the problem of farms' weakness was a result of their excessive fragmentation and therefore decided to remedy the situation through the creation of cooperatives (Levantaci, 2011a).<sup>21</sup> These associations, however, have not yet yielded positive results in battling the industrial lobby, because, according to Apulian researcher Fiammetta Fanizza (2013), the existing cooperatives are still engaged in fighting preliminary conceptual and principled battles (such as that for the taxation of contributory charges) which, although important, do not have immediate positive effects on the performance of the agricultural sector. Differently, the lack of aggregation of agriculturalists in Foggia is believed to be the cause responsible for their low competitiveness by the national public bodies in charge of agricultural policies (the Ministry of Agriculture and Puglia Region). Indeed, the recent agreement on the framework of the new CAP has stressed the importance of the aggregation of the chain (along with internationalization and inter-generational replacement) in order to keep pace with other European agricultures. As above noted, the problem of fractionated chains closely relates to the vegetable and fruits' production in Foggia: in fact, only 23% of the total turnover of the

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<sup>20</sup> Pioneer in opening an establishment in Foggia in 2008 was 'Futuragri SpA', an agricultural cooperative that today combines 60 farms producing tomato purée. See: <http://www.futuragrispa.com>; Levantaci M. (2009), "Pomodoro: a Foggia la più grande fabbrica del mondo", *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno.it Puglia*, 19 July.

<sup>21</sup> Other corporate actions have regarded the creation of an 'Agribusiness Technological District' ('D.A.Re') in order to facilitate the transfer of new technologies from universities to the actors in the food system. Levantaci M. (2012b), "Frutta e verdura in busta: Foggia fa «scuola» a Berlino", *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno.it Puglia*, 10 February.

sector comes from aggregated productive realities (Levantaci, 2014b). The excessive fragmentation of structures of production in Capitanata, achieved by neo-liberal policies, is certainly an issue that urges intervention. However, implementing it by means of the same tools that originally gave birth to the problem does not ensure its success.

For their part, industrialists in Campania continued their imposition of rates, granting only a sop to farmers, i.e. the rise - after three years of incessant demands - by one Euro-cent of the price paid for the purchase of a kilogram of tomato, when Apulian cultivators had calculated that the increase would have had to be at least of three Euro-cent (Levantaci, 2013b): hence the «perpetual crisis of agriculture in Foggia».<sup>22</sup> As the local news provocatively report, «Capitanata is seething with ‘red gold’, yet producers prefer to let tomatoes rot in plants than to collect them, because it would cost more».<sup>23</sup> As a matter of fact, if in 2011 the production still allowed to make profits, the following year farmers produced at under-cost (Levantaci, 2011b; Levantaci, 2012d). The Italian General Confederation of Agriculture estimated that last year farmers’ gain on the sale in supermarkets of a can (400 grams) of processed tomato, which is sold for about 0.8 Euros, was only one-twentieth (0.04 Euros) of the total (Confagricoltura, 2013). In addition, tomato production collapsed, both because of climatic changes (heat and drought) and for the spread of infesting parasites (Santigliano, 2012). As a result, last harvesting season was a «hecatomb»<sup>24</sup> due to the underestimation of the parasite *orobanche* that gnawed the roots of the plants. The collection has thus reduced to historic low: between six and eight quintals less of tomato and a reduction of cultivated area of 6,000 hectares compared to the total acreage budgeted at the beginning of the season (Levantaci, 2013a).

A third way out of the *industrial choking* is represented by the adventure of entrepreneur Antonino Russo, a prominent figure of the canning industry in Campania and owner of establishments in Salerno. In 2009 he inaugurated the opening of the tomato processing factory ‘ARIA’ owned by the group ‘AR Food Industries’, of which Russo held the majority share. With a cost of 75 million Euros and a processing

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<sup>22</sup> Fanizza F. (2013), *L’immigrazione nelle aree rurali della Puglia: il caso della Capitanata*, in Colloca C., Corrado A. (edited by), *La globalizzazione delle campagne. Migranti e società rurali del Sud d’Italia*, Milano : Franco Angeli, p. 96.

<sup>23</sup> Levantaci M. (2010), “Foggia produzione record, ma la raccolta va a rilento”, *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno.it Puglia*, 16 August.

<sup>24</sup> Levantaci M. (2013a), “Ecatombe pomodoro: nella provincia di Foggia danni per 40 milioni di Euro”, *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno.it Puglia*, 10 September.

capacity of 20% of the total tomato produced in Capitanata, 'ARIA' is ranked as the largest factory in Europe for the storage, packaging, labeling and shipment of tomato derivatives (Levantaci, 2009; Perrotta, 2013). However, despite the promises of income improvement for the local farmers, 'ARIA' soon started working non-local raw materials, in particular those coming from other regions of the South such as Campania (Fanizza, 2013). Another controversial issue reported by local news concerns the fact that, although it could work the load of 250 trucks of tomato per day, the new canning factory never went over that of 160 trucks (Levantaci, 2010). Because of the inability to reach full production and the financial unsustainability of the processing plant, in January 2012 the entrepreneur was forced to sign an agreement with the group 'Princes Food and Drink' that made the Anglo-Japanese corporation, owned by Mitsubishi since 1989, holder of the majority stake (Mangano, 2013a; Levantaci, 2012c; Scarci, 2012).<sup>25</sup> In addition to processing tomatoes, 'Princes' has recently stated to the press its willingness to open also an on-site legumes' cannery factory that will increase the already significant sales record achieved thanks to the acquisition of Russo's plant, which already placed it tenth in the ranking of the major retail chains in the U.K. (Levantaci, 2014a).

In other words, the allocation of tomato processing industry, the delay and difficulties in associating farmers, and the presence of the multinational 'Princes' are all reasons that validate the label of «mere *subcontractors* of raw material»<sup>26</sup> for farmers in Capitanata. As a consequence, the only adjustment variable on which producers can intervene is the cost of labor (Colloca, Corrado, 2013). Then, the presence of immigrant workers in areas with intensive agriculture is explained as need for farmers, who produce at a fixed price, to minimize the cost item of harvesting. And the cheapest way to obtain a saving of costs, according to the Californian model, is immigrant harvesters' «super-exploitation».<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, the recognition of the limited possibilities of intervention of farmers should not operate as a justification for employers' choices, a tendency easily recognizable in the interpretation given by local news. Also, it should not operate as a means to relieve cultivators of all responsibilities, further than neo-liberal public intervention already has. Indeed, as proved in the two previous chapters,

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<sup>25</sup> Through the brand 'Napolina', 'Princes' aims at exports, to which it allocates 80% of production, of which 10% is directed towards African countries. Scarci E. (2012), "La pummarola passa a Mitsubishi", *Il Sole 24 ore*, 22 January.

<sup>26</sup> Yonnet J.-P. (2000), *Le travail au noir dans l'agriculture*. Bruxelles : ORSEU, p. 13 (italics added).

<sup>27</sup> Herman P. (2003b), "Voyage au pays des hommes invisibles, Discriminations légales", *Le Monde Diplomatique*, April.

the effects' of the omnipresent public hand on the productive structure of Capitanata allowed the creation of a class of unethical landowners, characterized by absenteeism in conducting large farms, inability to develop cooperative mechanisms that would increase the competitiveness of small businesses and absence of an entrepreneurial culture among the owners of medium-sized farms.

After having analyzed the theft of productivity due to the processing industry, it must be admitted that the chapter has not enough focused on Apulian farmers' struggles against large retail groups. Although remaining an unfolded link by producers, a confrontation with the *big* of the distributive system has recently been assessed by public opinion. Indeed, last winter the issue of laborers in South of Italy has *again* gained international visibility. On 18 September 2013, the television channel 'France 2' broadcasted an investigative report that retraced the supply chain of a pack of broccoli from the counter of a Parisian supermarket to the farm in Puglia. Meanwhile, the German press with 'Der Spiegel', the English one with 'The Ecologist' and the Norwegian one with the proposed boycott of tomatoes from Italy, have been made aware of the dramatic conditions of foreign workers employed in the collections (Mangano, 2013b; Cassano, 2013). In reality, it is already the second time this happens: in fact, after the *pogrom* against immigrants carried out by inhabitants of Rosarno at the beginning of January 2010 (Borretti, 2010) the news of the poor working conditions of immigrants employed in the collections had already traveled around the world, deeply shaking the public opinion and outlining the responsibilities of the Italian state.<sup>28</sup> If there are organizations which still complain that «four years after the rebellion, this system has changed very little»<sup>29</sup> it is because the protest actions carried out so far have regarded only *partial* solutions to a *systemic* problem, as it will be proved in the following conclusive chapter.

Nevertheless, the boycotting proposed by the 'CGIL' trade unionist Yvan Sagnet, former leader of the revolt of immigrant workers in the countryside of Nardò (LE), has clearly identified the problem with big channels of distribution:

«The only thing to do is to boycott against those supermarkets that sell products harvested by slaves in the countryside of Puglia. Let's name them: they are Auchan, Lidl,

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<sup>28</sup> As the article by Antonio Onorati, president of the International Center 'Crocevia', headlined a few days after the events in Rosarno «The State is there and you can see it». Onorati A. (2010), "Braccianti e lavoro schiavo. Lo Stato c'è e si vede", *Global Project*, 21 January.

<sup>29</sup> Redazione Terrelibere.org (2014), "Sostegno alla resistenza contadina e bracciantile, protesta alla Coop", 11 January.

Carrefour and also Coop, all large chains that have on their shelves these products, but there is a contradiction because their codes of ethics clearly state the respect of human rights and workers. These companies are fooling consumers».<sup>30</sup>

Among the addressees of the accusation only 'Coop Italia' responded to the attack, claiming to have already adopted since 2006 the Protocol of social responsibility 'SA8000', according to which supplier of 'Coop Italia' must be certified for compliance with the rights of workers and must make their sub-contractors apply the same standards (Gatti, 2006b). In the event of non-compliance with the commitments, farms may be suspended from the supply, as already happened for five farms during the last tomato harvesting season (Cassano, 2013). Meanwhile, last December a petition titled 'Enough exploitation in counters of supermarkets' was opened on the platform of online activism 'Change.org'. The petition is addressed to all the largest retail channels in Italy and asks them to ensure that every step of the food chain employs not compulsory nor exploited but adequately paid labor. Also, consumers should be able to get information from the label of each product present on the supermarket shelves, while agricultural enterprises should be responsible for worthy housing conditions of workers.<sup>31</sup> Although the content of the proposal shows a first expansion of the actors that should be involved in breaking the system, it appears as a simple passage of burden. Thus, also this last attempt can be classified as a mere *limited* effort to break down a *well-structured* productive paradigm such as the Californian model of intensive agriculture. To this and others previous attempts to reverse the course of the productive system, the final part of the paper focuses the attention.

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<sup>30</sup> Cassano A. (2013), "Basta chiavi, sì al boicottaggio dei big della distribuzione", *La Repubblica Bari.it*, 21 October.

<sup>31</sup> See: <http://www.change.org/it/petizioni/basta-sfruttamento-nei-banconi-dei-supermercati>.

## Conclusions

The paper had the objective of identifying the causal determinants that explain the poor working and living conditions of immigrants in Southern Italian intensive agriculture areas where they are employed in the harvesting of vegetable and fruits, particularly with regard to tomato collectors in Capitanata. After the discussion it can be established that the causes of their exploitation are identifiable in two complementary factors: a specific production model, the Californian model described by the scholar Jean-Pierre Berlan; and its reinforcement by agricultural policies with ultra-neoliberal premises that allowed the model to become an international paradigm, while achieving EU agricultural market liberalization and the forced modernization of agricultural enterprises.

The study of the exploitation of immigrant laborers in Capitanata by means of the Californian model allows the emergence of a number of critical points. They are now being recapitulated here in order to re-read the results of the second part of the study from the perspective of the Californian model with the aim of tracing the underlying line of continuity between the two parts of the paper. Furthermore, the usefulness of Berlan's paradigm does not end at this point. In fact, it can also be employed as an *assessment tool* of the effectiveness of proposals to break this mechanism of production. This final step allows to assess the effectiveness of the protest actions implemented so far, to emphasize the limits of certain options for solutions simplistically developed and to identify what today appears as the most urgent area of intervention.

Thus, in the first part of the paper the Californian model has been addressed as a paradigm of the 'just in time' production to identify similarities and differences with the agricultural production systems found in the South of Italy. The first chapter has therefore provided the common ground which justifies the comparison, since the Californian paradigm began its implementation starting from a specific connotation of the system of landownership. *Transfers of land monopolization* occurred in California at the time of annexation to the United States were also found in Italy at the time of unification. The passage also allowed to identify the origin of two contrasting yet contemporary processes of *land concentration and fragmentation* that were analyzed in the second part of the study. Thus, the fifth chapter started describing the agricultural

production structure taking off from where the first one was suspended, that is, since the productive developments and the land mobility obtained with the agrarian reform of the Second post-war period. The analysis revealed, however, a progressive distancing from the objective of encouraging medium-small farms, that are nevertheless the most numerous in Italy. Re-read from the point of view of the Californian model, land concentration and fragmentation appear as the way through which the monopolistic configuration of landownership has been assured over time. Thus, it can be said that in order to make the Californian model an international paradigm, neo-liberal policies granted access to land monopolization, preserving the model's deep roots.

After the detection of the common ground, the study of the Californian productive system has shifted the focus, in the second chapter, on the transition process from extensive to intensive agriculture. The definition of intensive agriculture as a *historical concept* provided by the author of reference gave support to the choice of tomato harvesting in Capitanata as a field of study. The *four points* of Berlan's definition have also made possible to center the analysis on the problem of labor force supply in areas, such as California and Puglia, where intensive agriculture requires a higher amount of manpower availability than normally assured. In this chapter not only similarities but also differences between the two contexts emerged. The most important difference is certainly the opposite attitude of vegetable and fruits' producers in facilitating the transition from one production to another. In fact, if in the U.S. agricultural entrepreneurs have played an active role in easing the passage, in Southern Italy the same shift was not made possible by a particular entrepreneurial strength, but rather thanks to the ever-present hand of the state which, with its second wave of capitalization in the countryside, created the logistical and environmental preconditions for the specialization. Thus, the complementary chapter in the second part of the paper, the sixth one, discussed the amount and purpose of public subsidy. EU agricultural policies, while changing their aim from price support to direct aid, and from support to farm productivity to supporting its size, are found to have worsened the disadvantage of farmers in elaborating profitable solutions. In Capitanata is particularly verified the effect of 'artificially shaping' farmers that lack entrepreneurial verve. The finding, reinforced in the seventh chapter by analyzing the abuse carried out by large retailers and the processing industry on agricultural producers, is supported by recent Apulian chronicles of tomato producers' disadvantage compared to tomato processing industrial cartel.

However, before taking into account the scholarly justification for fight against large retailers, let's now return to the analysis of the critical points raised during the discussion of the Californian model, since all action of protest against the system implemented so far involve issues emerged in the third and fourth chapter. The third one investigated the features of the *backup army of labor* required for this type of production: its being composed of immigrant, complementary legal and illegal, workers, that are paid at piece rate and recruited by mediators. The results of the application to the case of Capitanata showed the peculiarities of immigrant agricultural labor in this region: a labor market already characterized by *gray and black* working situations, the condition of *double irregularity* of many seasonal workers and their migratory paths. The payment at piece rate and the intermediation of the 'caporale', in particular, have provided lines of interpretation that help illustrating the residential solutions of immigrants in Capitanata: on the one hand, the inability to pay a rent provides an explanation of some agglomerated housing solutions; on the other hand, the mediation of the 'caporale' is also a means to bring together a work offer to a geographically not accessible work demand. Furthermore, the fight against the intermediation of the 'caporale' in the employment relationship has been the content of the first proposals to bring down the Californian system (Limoccia, 1997). Although they have reached the important goal of informing immigrant workers of their rights, the current situation has not changed much, also because the fight against 'caporale' has undergone a media instrumentalization. In fact, local chronicles, while illustrating the peculiar situation of the countryside in Foggia, tend to put all responsibilities on the 'caporale', without even mentioning employers' culpability.<sup>1</sup> Instead, trade unionist Angelo Leo, who has made the fight against 'caporalato' the goal of his trade union action for over ten years, provides a really negative description of Apulian landowners in relation to their conduct of favoring the spreading of 'caporalato':

«In the First post-War period [they] were financiers and organizers of the fascist gangs. [...] [They were] First monarchists and fascists, then Christian-Democrats and socialists and today neo-fascists and neo-liberals. [...] All the measures and proposals in the direction of flexibility, privatization of placement, introduction of wage cages, increase in working hours, are strongly supported by the *agro-political Apulian lobby*».<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see: Santigliano F. (2013), "Foggia, 50 mila braccianti lavorano nelle campagne senza alcun contratto", *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno.it Puglia*, 11 November.

<sup>2</sup> Leo A. (1997), *Il Caporalato dalle origini a oggi*, in Limoccia L., Leo A., Piacente N., *Vite bruciate di terra: donne e immigrati: storie, testimonianze, proposte contro il caporalato e l'illegalità*, Torino : Edizioni Gruppo Abele, pp. 25, 26 (italics added).

What has instead changed in the features of the mediator is the origin of the ‘caporale’, who has become one of the same nationality of the laborers, as highlighted in the third chapter. This evolution of the figure of the intermediary is certainly also a consequence of the introduction in Italian legislation of the crime of ‘illicit brokering and labor exploitation’ in 2011.<sup>3</sup> However, since workers’ condition has not improved in the last two harvesting seasons the ineffectiveness of a protest action that ends in a partial legislative intervention must be recognized. Still, numerous proposals continue to be made on the legislative front. A recurring theme is the need to modify the existing national law on immigration, the so-called ‘Bossi-Fini’ law.<sup>4</sup> Without wanting to diminish the importance of a desirable intervention in the field of migratory legislation, it must be pointed out that it would be once again a partial intervention, and as such, unfit to defeat a well-structured system such as agricultural production according to the Californian model. In fact, as evidenced by the discussion in the third chapter, the illegality of their juridical status is not the only component characterizing the irregularity of foreign workers. Since it has been said that this condition of *double* irregularity of immigrants serves as a *guarantor* for the complementarity of both legal and illegal immigration requested by the features of the backup army of labor force, an improvement in their legal status, by itself, does not permit an eradication of the problem. The complementary approach which must then be followed regards the regularization of labor relations, which is an arduous goal to reach, as proved by the analysis of the implementation progress of the law promulgated by Puglia Region (‘Rules on contrast to non-regular labor’ n. 28 of 26/10/2006).<sup>5</sup> Another proposal of action recently advanced, especially after the crisis broken out in 2008, is to “Italianize

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<sup>3</sup> Probably due to the two-weeks strike (August 2011) against the intermediation of the ‘caporale’ in labor relations implemented by collectors of tomato and watermelon in Nardò (LE), the Decree-Law n. 138 of 13 August 2011 (converted into law n. 148 of 14 September 2011) was enacted. Perrotta D. (2013), *Traiettorie migratorie nei territori del pomodoro. Rumeni e burkinabé in Puglia e Basilicata*, in Colloca C., Corrado A. (edited by), *La globalizzazione delle campagne. Migranti e società rurali del Sud d’Italia*, Milano : Franco Angeli, pp. 138-139.

<sup>4</sup> That «the Bossi-Fini is the mother of all problems» was also the first argument of defense delivered by the deputy director Riccardo Bagni of large distribution chain flying the Italian flag, ‘Coop Italia’, when, following the publication of the report by Fabrizio Gatti (L’Espresso n. 35/2006) on the conditions of exploitation of immigrants in the Apulian countryside, large-scale distribution has been put under attack for the first time. Gatti F. (2006b), “Lavoro nero con l’etichetta”, *L’Espresso*, 18 September.

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 3.

the work on the fields" in order to provide jobs for local citizens remained unemployed.<sup>6</sup> It is a suggestion that does not at all take into account the Californian production system which bases its profitability on cost savings induced by the use of immigrant laborers. Yet it is a common idea among local administrations, which act as if they did not know the power of racism. On the contrary: it is a solution that, interpreted with the tools offered by the Californian model, reveals the ultimate aim of institutional racism: to further increase competition among potential candidates in order to further lower the price of labor.

Finally, in the fourth chapter the Californian production model has been addressed in its constituting a system. The study of consecutive phases of *patterns of exploitation* proves that the system has a self-regenerative, not only spatially but also temporally, strength. In applying the model to the case of intensive agricultural areas in Italy, cycles of ethnic replacement, ethnic specialization and seasonal circuits of harvesting emerged as important processes. The analysis of the Californian model in its alternation of national groups to be used for the collections placed emphasis on the three *jamming conditions* historically occurred in California that led to the expulsion and the replacement of the minority thanks to racism. The hardest jamming condition which intensive agriculture had to face was the political self-organization of workers. Thus, in assessing the protest actions carried out by immigrants according to the scheme of interpretation provided by the Californian model, their increased unionization<sup>7</sup> is certainly a positive aspect, that will become extremely useful once other pre-conditions are met and the exploitative system will be ready to be demolished. Furthermore, the final chapter of the study of the Californian model confirms the hypothesis previously advanced regarding the pointlessness of a partial legislative action. As shown by the change in strategy for the supply of labor in California (the 'new' guest worker policy) it is presumable that the same strategy will be more and more adopted for immigrant workers in Southern Italy. Whether their juridical regularization was to happen more easily thanks to a change in Italian immigration laws, or whether the missing 'Seasonal Worker Directive' was to be made by the EU, the effect will probably be the implementation of the Californian strategy of 'legalizing a few so many illegal will be

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<sup>6</sup> This is also the solution of the Mayor of Canelli (AT) in front of the advance of immigrant laborers to perform the grape harvest. Mangano A. (2013b), "Piemonte: la vendemmia della vergogna", *L'Espresso*, 03 December.

<sup>7</sup> The areas interested by the intervention of Emergency in Capitanata also benefit from the aid of the CGIL trade unionists and experts that are part of the network 'Campagne in Lotta'.

brought in'. Here is why the need to simultaneously fight both type of irregularity of agricultural laborers in the only viable means.

However, before immigrants free themselves through political action there is the need to free agriculture from the exploitation of industrial economy (Maffi, 1946), as evidenced by the international re-emergence of the problem of the rights of workers in the countryside of southern Italy and the call to boycott large retail channels. As a matter of fact, already more than a decade ago, scholars of the *Forum Civique Européen* identified a number of «rules to put back in its place the large-scale distribution».<sup>8</sup> They include the reallocation of *productive mastery* to farmers, the marketing of quality products, the respect of the ethics of the means of production so that it oversees the entry on the market of food products and the restoration of the regulatory function of the state so that it restores the symmetry between production and distribution. In order to achieve these goals, literature (Streckeisen, 2002) has however identified the necessity for a substantial change in consumers' purchasing decision, that is to say that they must be empowered. In fact, as demonstrated by the hourglass chart developed by Patel (2008), also consumers are victims of the mercantile power of multinational corporations. Left on their own, however, the range of intervention of consumers is limited to the choice between a brand and another,<sup>9</sup> while, if they are organized in communities, consumers can act on the process of production of agro-food products. This is the case of the Cooperative for Social Promotion 'SOS Rosario' that brings together small farmers and immigrant laborers of the Plain of Gioia Tauro (RC) strangled by large retailers.<sup>10</sup>

It is therefore a matter of changing the rules of the food production through the creation of an alliance between groups of producers and consumers, which will make possible an *enlargement of the bottleneck* of the food system to give back to its actors the choices subtracted (Streckeisen, 2002). In fact, our current food system, even if it is controlled by some of the most powerful people in the world, is a system intrinsically

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<sup>8</sup> Streckeisen W. (2002), *Le role determinant de la grande distribution*, in Forum Civique Européen, Association pour un Nouveau Développement (edited by), *Le gout amer de nos fruits et légumes: L'exploitation des migrants dans l'agriculture intensive en Europe*, Chateau Arnoux (Fr) : Informations et commentaries, 2° trimestre, p. 28.

<sup>9</sup> As noted by Patel, «Coke or Pepsi?». Patel R. (2008), *I padroni del cibo*, Italian translation by G. Carlotti, Milano : Feltrinelli, p. 19.

<sup>10</sup> Its main activity is the organization of a citrus fruit and olive oil production according to criteria of organic farming and with the guarantee of regular employment of workers. See: <http://sosrosarno.org>; Redazione Terrelibere.org (2014), "Sostegno alla resistenza contadina e bracciantile, protesta alla Coop", 11 January.

weak. It is fragile due to the size of its ecological footprint, i.e. the resources needed to maintain it and the exploitation it implies. Furthermore, as any bottleneck shaped logistics network it has systemic and structural weaknesses (Patel, 2008). To the nodes uncovered of large retailers are pointing the hundreds of organizations worldwide, such as the Italian 'SOS Rosario', who see the only way out of the global capitalist food regime in *food sovereignty*.<sup>11</sup> As explained by the leaders of the largest social movement in the world, 'La via Campesina', who coined the term, food sovereignty is:

«The right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through sustainable methods and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. [...] It gives a country the right to protect its local producers from cheap imports and to control production. It ensures that the rights to use and manage lands, territories, water, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those who produce food and not of the corporate sector».<sup>12</sup>

Certainly, the achievement of food sovereignty is a wide ranging goal (Streckeisen, 2002), but if it is true that «the exploited have not given up the fight»,<sup>13</sup> it is not a utopia, as pointed out by the worldwide proliferation of organizations of farmers without land and as reminded at the international Food Sovereignty Conference hosted by Yale University in mid-September 2013 (Akram-Lodhi, 2013).

In conclusion, having the paper showed the mechanisms that permitted the implementation of the Californian model in Capitanata, those that still allow its functioning and those that elevated it to the role of international paradigm, it is possible to identify three complementary areas in intervention that will overcome the system and instigate its implosion:

- the readiness of immigrant farm workers in pursuing their political instances already provided for by the union action promoted since the mid-Nineties, considered that political self-organization is the hard bone of the Californian system (Limoccia, 1997; Borretti, 2010). However, this course of action will be feasible only once will also occur:
- the restoration of the choices available to consumers that, re-empowered, will be less inclined to fall into the trap of racism, which represents the underlying

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<sup>11</sup> The contemporary food system is responsible for «almost a billion people chronically malnourished, another billion people always unsure from where their next meal will come, 500 million that are clinically obese, and 1.5 billion people that are overweight». Akram-Lodhi A. H. (2013), "Agrarian Sovereignty and the Agrarian Question", *The Bulletin*, n. 884, September 23.

<sup>12</sup> See: <http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php/organisation-mainmenu-44>.

<sup>13</sup> De Brie C. (1998), "Il ritorno dei ribelli", *Le Monde Diplomatique/Il Manifesto*, May.

mechanism that ensures the proper functioning of the Californian production system (Berlan, 2002; Patel, 2008; Akram-Lodhi, 2013). To be added to:

- the long awaited change of direction of European Union policies from a rhetoric of continued deepening of capitalism in agriculture to a provision to each producer, consumer and laborer of their power over the living as a common, and not private, good of humanity (Berlan, Lewontin, 1998; Streckeisen, 2002; Onorati, Pierfederici, 2013).

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