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The fight against agribusiness crime and the regeneration of agricultural land confiscated from organised crime groups in Italy

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Giuseppe Muti

Introduction

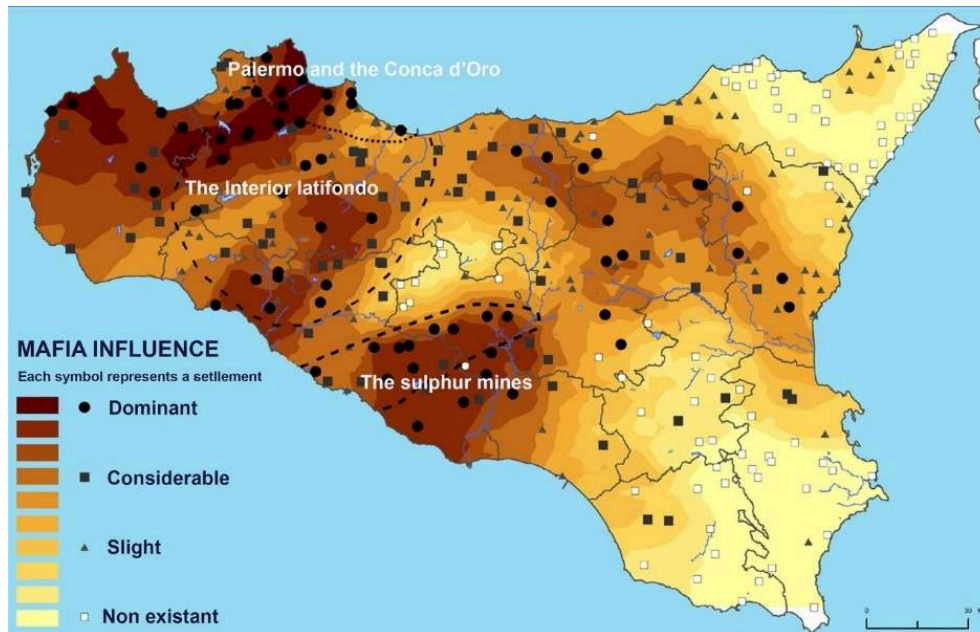
- 1 The presence and operation of organized crime syndicates in the agribusiness sector is a real and urgent problem that holds back sustainable development in rural areas.
- 2 In this regard, Italy offers a valuable laboratory for studying both the interests of organized crime groups in the primary sector and agri-food chain, and virtuous institutional and civic practices for countering them. Among the Italian repertoire of good practices, the redeployment of assets that have been confiscated from criminal organizations is a topic of great interest for geographical research, given its power to foster forms of civic re-territorialization and to reappropriate for the common good spaces that have been freed from the oppression of criminal relations (Libera, 2021a, 2021b).
- 3 This paper examines organized crime in the Italian agricultural sector and food supply chain and methods of fighting the phenomenon that contribute to the economic and social rebirth of previously oppressed rural spaces, with a particular focus on the redeployment of confiscated land. In the first section, I outline the characteristics and activities of organized crime groups in the agrifood sector. In the second, I describe both institutional and civic strategies for fighting organized crime. In the third, I define the process of confiscating assets from crime syndicates. In the fourth, I explore the

confiscation of agricultural land. In the fifth and final section, I examine an exemplary case study in the social redeployment of confiscated land and farms to benefit rural spaces and landscapes in both ethical and productive terms.

Organized crime in the agrifood sector

- 4 Organized crime groups have historically been present in the Italian agribusiness sector. In Sicily, they have been involved in agriculture since the founding of the Kingdom of Italy, both on remote estates devoted to extensive farming, where the “latifundia mafias” traditionally exploited their geographical remove from institutional oversight to wedge their way in as brokers, and in key specialized agricultural spaces such as the citrus groves, where the “market garden mafias” have exploited the combination of delicate crops and high profit margins to gain control of the sector (Fig. 1) (King, 1975; Lupo, 1993; Dickie, 2009; Santino, 2017).

Figure 1 The geographical distribution of the Mafia’s influence in Sicily at the turn of the 20th century according to Russell King (1975).



Source: KING R. (1975), “Geographical perspectives on the evolution of the Sicilian mafia”, *Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie – TESG*, 66, 1, p. 28

- 5 The Sicilian “agrarian mafias” have deployed violence and intimidation¹ to guarantee the “protection” of land, produce and equipment/machinery, to control the distribution of water, to ensure a supply of underpaid agricultural labour, to oversee the trading of agricultural produce, and generally to attempt to monopolize entire productive chains. This has allowed them to accumulate massive resources over time, in terms of economic and social capital and the control of a large number of agricultural holdings and activities (Lupo, 1984; Santino, 2001). Similar patterns of organized crime may be observed in the agricultural areas of Campania around Naples and in the specialised agricultural areas of Calabria (Sales, 2017).

- 6 Since the 1960s, the profits of the agrarian mafias have paled in significance compared to the vast accumulation of illegal income from criminal enterprises such as drug trafficking, and from sectors where illegal activities may be mixed in with legal ones, such as construction and infrastructure, earthworks, and waste disposal. The last-mentioned industries all wield a strong environmental impact, and thus illegal proceeds from them can multiply as a function of the growing number of safety and environmental protection regulations (that may be violated). Rural spaces have thus become the object of intense speculation and consumption and have been subjected to frequently irreversible forms of environmental and social harm².
- 7 Huge financial investments tied up with money-laundering operations have been poured into multiple sectors, including: 1) the property market, where land assets are increasingly concentrated in criminal hands (indeed, the true proportions of the phenomenon have only recently been begun to be uncovered, as we shall see in the fourth section); 2) the agri-food chain, from agricultural land to the catering industry, generating a schizophrenic pattern of businesses opening and closing (Fantò, 1999). Like most forms of criminal spending (Ruggiero, 1996), these investments are parasitic and non-productive, being based on malfeasance (in terms of violating rules, cheating the competition, abusing workers, and harming the environment) and on an unlimited availability of funds that, similarly to the use of violence, can profoundly distort social and economic relations.
- 8 However, organized crime in agribusiness is by no means limited to the activity of mafia groupings. Rather the sector also sees its share of “financial crime” and “white-collar crime” (Ruggiero, 1996, 2015), which the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (signed in Palermo in 2000) also includes under its definition of “organized crime”. Many “criminal enterprises” (Ruggiero, 1996) operate in the agri-food sector, having been set up to break the law, or to conduct their business activities in what the sociological literature refers to as a “grey area” at the interface of legality and illegality (Ruggiero, 1996; Sciarrone, 2011), where rights and the normal rules of exchange and civil coexistence are not upheld.
- 9 Between 2019 and 2020, the agri-food sector – with its over 1.4 million workers and 1.2 million businesses – generated € 200bn in turnover (70% from the food and beverage industries), € 45bn in exports, and € 60bn in added value (Crera, 2021; Istat, 2020). The Italian agricultural supply chain boasts some 300 EU quality certifications and over 80,000 certified operators (Perrone, 2018). These statistics help to explain why the sector attracts such intense criminal interest, although the complexity of the agri-food system makes it difficult to fully define all the myriad illegal practices.
- 10 In the reports of the Observatory on Crime in Agriculture (OCA), the most frequently cited offence, and one that is often in the media spotlight, is agri-food fraud, which includes: a) the adulteration of produce by adding other substances or removing ingredients; b) the sophistication of produce in terms of enhancing its appearance and camouflaging defects; c) falsification, i.e. the substitution of one foodstuff with another; d) the counterfeiting of names or trademarks with a view to misleading the consumer; e) the deterioration of produce due to incorrect storage³ (OCA, 2011).
- 11 Compared to fraud, the other leading criminal interests in the agri-food sector receive less media attention and generate corresponding less alarm among the public, but nevertheless have a strong negative impact on rural businesses and communities. These include: 1) the exploitation of workers (in terms of illegal and underpaid

employment), which can affect every link in the supply chain from farm to table, and which can border on enslavement, especially in the case of migratory labourers (Osservatorio Placido Rizzotto, 2012, 2020; Omizzolo, 2019); 2) racketeering and extortion and the use of violence to exert control over production dynamics, not only in the provinces with the most widespread mafia presence, but also in specific areas of the agri-food chain, such as the fruit and vegetable markets (SOS Impresa, 2009, 2011; OCA, 2022); 3) money laundering and the reinvestment of criminal proceeds, which undermine competition and market dynamics (OCA, 2011, 2017); 4) and last but not least, scams involving both national and EU funds and financing schemes (OCA, 2012, 2022; Calandra, 2022).

Fighting agrifood crime: the institutional and civic perspective

- 12 In Italy, decisive and effective measures have been taken to weaken the power of criminal groups. Dedicated anti-mafia legislation has been in place since the early 1980s. In 2011, these laws were updated and drawn together into a single organic code. Special investigation and law enforcement agencies and dedicated tools of inquiry and monitoring have been in operation since the early 1990s. Following the success of the major anti-mafia and anti-corruption tribunals of the 1990s, the operational principles of the Italian system for fighting the mafia were adopted internationally via the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo, 2000), which today has 190 signatories, including the European Union⁴.
- 13 Since the 1990s, a network of thousands of associations has actively sustained institutional anti-mafia campaigns by delivering training, disseminating information, commemorating victims, and offering various forms of support. Indeed, the fight against organized crime, to be effective and of lasting effect, must necessarily involve civil society actors in order to undermine the system of political and cultural protection afforded by the grey areas.
- 14 Similarly, the fight against organized crime in the agrifood sector may also be usefully categorized as either institutional or civic.
- 15 From the institutional perspective, the apparatus for combating agri-food crime draws on 1) a general system for combating the mafia, and 2) a specific system targeting the agribusiness sector. The general system directly tackles local organized crime networks, money laundering operations, the reinvestment of illicit profits, and racketeering. This branch of activity is overseen by the Ministry of the Interior via the National Anti-Mafia and Counter-Terrorism Directorates and their 26 district offices, and by the Anti-Mafia Investigative Directorate which coordinates the efforts of all the different law enforcement agencies⁵.
- 16 The specific system deals primarily with fraud and scams⁶ and illegal employment. The Ministry of Agricultural Policies operates through the ICQRF Central Inspectorate⁷ which investigates and follows up on fraud in the agri-food sector via 29 territorial offices with different areas of expertise, which liaise with the relevant branches of the Carabinieri and the Guardia di Finanza. The Ministry of Health operates to defend food safety through the Directorate General for Hygiene and Food Safety in conjunction with the Carabinieri and their anti-fraud squads. Finally, the Ministry of Labour operates via

a technical commission, which was set up in 2018 to combat illegal employment and exploitation in the agricultural sector, and which has launched a “three-year plan for tackling the exploitation of workers in the agricultural sector” (2020-2022) with a corresponding spending budget.

- 17 From the civic point of view, crime in the agri-food chain is monitored by numerous associations that work in close collaboration with the authorities and the research community and conduct awareness-raising campaigns and events targeting the general public.
- 18 At least three NGOs are key national actors: 1) Legambiente is a historic environmental association that has been publishing its high-profile “Ecomafie” reports since the 1990s⁸. Legambiente’s leadership of civic campaigns against waste trafficking led in 2001 to the approval of the first Italian law against environmental crime and crime groups. 2) The Observatory on Crime in Agriculture and the Agri-food System⁹ (OCA) was set up in 2013 by Coldiretti, the leading Italian farmer’s association. The Observatory monitors illegal practices and has contributed to the drawing up of a new law on crimes in the agri-food sector that was approved in December 2022. 3) The Placido Rizzotto Observatory was founded in 2012 within the Federation of Agricultural Workers (Flai - CGIL) to study forms of illegal employment and the interference of organized crime networks in the agricultural labour market¹⁰. It produces twice-yearly reports and participates in the earlier mentioned three-year operational plan of the Labour Ministry.
- 19 The information collected by these NGOs enables us to put together an overview of organized crime in the agrifood sector. According to Legambiente¹¹, in 2019, law enforcement agencies carried out 614,840 inspections. Identified crimes and regulatory violations numbered 69,369; prosecutions, fines, and injunctions: 31,332; arrests: 193; confiscations based on criminal or procedural violations: 11,975; criminal and administrative sanctions: 59,036. According to Coldiretti’s Observatory, the “agromafie” had a 2019 turnover of € 24.5 bn (OCA, 2019). Finally, over the two-year period spanning 2018-2020, the Osservatorio Placido Rizzotto recorded and monitored 163 criminal cases (over half located in Northern Italy) involving violations of Law 199/2016 on the exploitation of agricultural labourers, estimating that there were at least 200,000 “severely vulnerable” workers at risk of illegal underpaid employment and enslavement in the Italian agrifood sector (Osservatorio Placido Rizzotto, 2020).

Assets confiscated from organized crime networks and their redeployment

- 20 The institutional and civic dimensions are inextricably intertwined with the practice of confiscating illegal assets and redeploying them to benefit communities. A practice which, as we will see, takes on a peculiar meaning of its own in the agri-food sector.
- 21 Measures targeting property (Pellegrini, 2015, 2017) have been in force in Italy since the first anti-mafia law, which in 1982 outlawed all types of “mafia-style racketeering” and defined mafias as profit-seeking criminal syndicates. With a view to significantly weakening the activity of these organizations, the law imposed the confiscation of their assets in the absence of proof of legal ownership. Over time, the confiscation legislation encountered obstacles and underwent changes. The most significant change was made

thanks to the efforts of the NGO, Libera¹², a network of associations, which in 1995 launched a petition signed by one million citizens. Law 109/96 established that confiscated assets must be used for the common good: as such they must remain the property of the central state and be deployed for public purposes, or otherwise be transferred to local authorities (town/city/metropolitan city councils or provincial governments) and used for official or social purposes or to serve the needs of local communities.

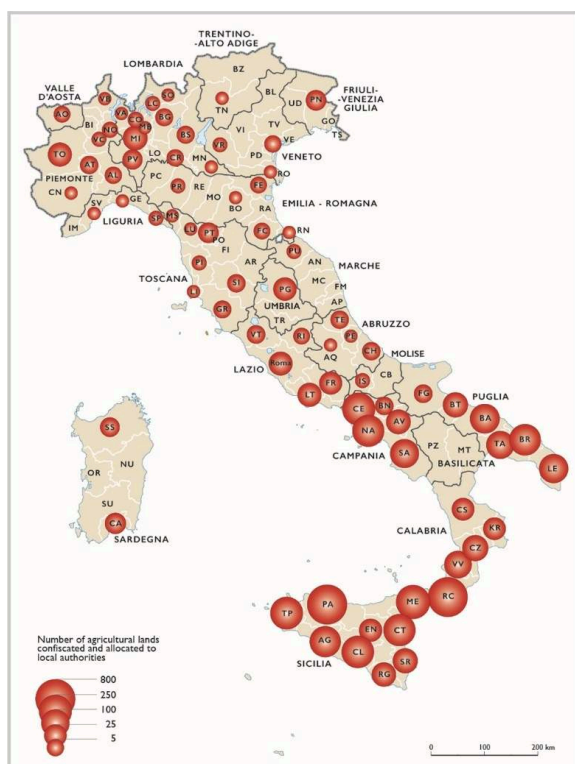
- 22 The management of confiscated assets is a highly complex operation. It consists of a judicial phase (seizure, first degree and definitive confiscation) and an administrative phase (management and allocation), during which the assets must be safeguarded and valued. An extraordinary government commissioner held responsibility for the process from 1999 to 2010. Then a body with special responsibility for managing confiscation was set up: the National Agency for Seized and Confiscated Assets¹³ (ANBSC).
- 23 Confiscated assets are divided into three types: movable, immovable, and corporate. Movable assets may be used by public institutions as needed. Real estate and companies are the responsibility of ANBSC, which classifies them into two categories: 1) assets that remain under the management of the agency itself, while waiting to be transferred to local authorities; 2) allocated assets that have been through the full process and now belong to local authorities, who can administer them directly or license them out, but only to community organizations such as associations, cooperatives, and so on.
- 24 Some quantitative background is required to understand the size and influence of this system. As of June 2022, confiscated real estate assets numbered 44,571, of which 25,278 were being managed by ANBSC and 19,195 had been allocated to local authorities for redeployment in social projects. Companies that had been seized numbered 5,470, of which 1,726 had already been allocated and 3,744 continued to be managed by the agency. Of all the real estate allocated between 1982 and 2022, 70% was allocated over the last decade and almost 50% over the last five years¹⁴. Although the practice of confiscation has been extended to various other types of crime, most of the confiscated assets available for redeployment have been seized from criminal organizations, especially mafia-style groups (Martone, Giannone, 2022).
- 25 Clearly, such a large number of assets creates significant management issues for ANBSC as well as for local authorities that are not well resourced. In addition, while the social redeployment of confiscated assets restores the citizens' trust in public institutions and bears a significant symbolic value in the fight against organized crime, the opposite effect can be obtained if the authorities in charge prove unable to manage these assets effectively.
- 26 Thus, in 2018 ANBSC was restructured, and its staff increased from 30 to 200 units. But most importantly, Law 132/2018 has made it possible (albeit with numerous caveats) to auction off real estate that cannot be allocated to local authorities, an outcome that is feared by the anti-mafia associations given the real risk that the assets might thus fall back into the hands of criminal organizations. Finally, in 2022, a permanent observatory was set up for the collection of data on confiscated assets, which in many cases remain fragmented or inaccessible and of little use.

Agricultural land confiscated from organized crime groups and its social redeployment

- 27 To focus now on land, as of June 2022, some 39% of confiscated real estate assets (17,183) fell under the “land” category and 31% (13,676) under the “agricultural land”¹⁵ heading. Thus, crucially, one in three confiscated assets belongs to the primary sector and the agri-food chain. While we lack more structured data on these land assets, their number alone is staggering and offers some insight into the considerable extent to which agricultural land, and therefore also rural spaces and landscapes, has been taken over by criminal organizations, both historically and in our contemporary era.
- 28 Some 65% of confiscated agricultural land (8,918 properties) continues to be managed by the ANBSC, with all the uncertainty that accompanies this state of affairs. The remaining 35% (4,758 properties) has been allocated to local authorities, but they have not necessarily been yet deployed for social purposes. Indeed, the lands confiscated from organized crime groups represent a large portion of all confiscated assets, but they are the most problematic to manage. For this reason, allocated assets represent 43% of all confiscated assets, but allocated land represents 38% of all confiscated land while allocated agricultural land represents “only” 35% of all confiscated agricultural land.
- 29 Plans for the deployment of confiscated lands are mainly beset by technical-administrative and practical problems. The technical problems concern: 1) the mismatch between the ANBSC’s data and those of the land registry, meaning that the area of the confiscated properties¹⁶ and other key functional characteristics cannot be ascertained, while a data standardization project in collaboration with the Ministry of Agricultural Policies has been at a standstill for years; 2) the absence of official data on the effective social redeployment of the assets allocated to local authorities, a gap that the NGOs are attempting to fill (Martone, Giannone, 2022); 3) the long-drawn-out nature of the legal and administrative process which takes 10 years on average.
- 30 The practical problems are of three different kinds: 1) the unknowns associated with specific characteristics of the confiscated assets, such as their deterioration over time in the case of vulnerable lands or crops, or the fact that it might not be economically viable to deploy them for other than criminal purposes¹⁷; 2) the over-supply of confiscated assets in certain areas, which indirectly bears witness to the massive degree of speculation and accumulation of land by criminal organizations in the recent past; 3) a lack of expertise or poor planning capacity on the part of some local authorities and a lack of awareness on the part of others (dalla Chiesa, 2016). This issue is relevant for example to the councils of small communities in inland areas that are required to manage highly complex procedures. Or the political and legal complications that arise in the case of local authorities that have been placed under a special administrator due to charges of involvement with organized crime, often in the areas with the greatest supply of confiscated assets.
- 31 Limitations of the existing data aside, the distribution by province of land assets that have been confiscated and reallocated to local authorities (see the map in Fig. 2) enables us to propose a set of interpretations. First, the geographical distribution of the allocated lands reflects three factors: the distribution of organized crime systems across the territory; the relative effectiveness of countermeasures by the judiciary and

law enforcement agencies; and the degree of cooperation between local authorities and organized civil societies (even if not all the land assets in question have already been redeployed in practice). Second, the concentration of reallocated land assets by province can correspond to both historic criminal involvement in the agricultural sector (in the provinces of Palermo and Trapani in Sicily, Naples in Campania, and Reggio Calabria in Calabria) and to illicit investments and post-war patterns of accumulation of land assets (in the provinces of Caserta and Salerno in Campania, and those of Bari, Taranto, Brindisi and Lecce in Puglia). Finally, the map clearly shows that the presence of organized crime in the agricultural sector (amongst others) is nationwide¹⁸ in character, affecting all the main agro-industrial districts and the leading specialized agricultural regions and fruit and vegetable markets, in the south as well as in the centre and north of the country.

Figure 2. Agricultural land confiscated and allocated to local authorities by province, June 2022.



Source: ANBSC Openregio, June 2022 – www.openregio.it

The ethical and productive regeneration of agricultural lands confiscated from organized crime

- 32 Following its successful campaign for the introduction of legislation on the redeployment of confiscated assets for social projects, the NGO Libera has continued to play a key pioneering role in the system for deploying confiscated land and real-estate assets. Since 2016, it has been in charge of updating a national web portal¹⁹ and producing a series of open access reports²⁰ on the location and current deployment status of assets that have been reallocated to local authorities.

- 33 In June 2022, Libera's database registered 950 allocated assets administered by 900 associations in almost 1000 municipalities. Of these assets, 88 relate to the agri-food chain, including some agricultural properties that have been converted into sports fields and vice versa. The size of these properties varies widely, ranging from community allotments to large tracts of land. Their management structures however typically take one of two forms: associations (27) or social cooperatives (48).
- 34 These cases make up only a small fraction of the overall system of reallocation and redeployment of assets and land, but as well as being the only cases that have been systematically and reliably monitored, they have come to bear a variety of meanings that go beyond the merely symbolic. In addition to proving the effectiveness of anti-mafia policies and of cooperation between public institutions and civil society actors, the redeployments monitored by Libera offer a concrete model for others to follow, thereby promoting social justice and the integration and reinforcement of community-based active citizenship networks.
- 35 The Libera Terra project²¹ is the most interesting case study available to us, given its track record in developing a potentially universal virtuous model that establishes inclusive production networks on the ground in local areas, leading to the generation of long-term benefits. Within its cooperative structure, confiscated assets are deployed using business practices that have been carefully reviewed in terms of their economic, social, and environmental impact, and this positively informs the debate on the ethical and political dimensions of alternative models of development. Libera Terra's social cooperatives are spearheading innovative forms of cooperation between public authorities, the social economy, and the private sector; alongside the repressive action of the state, these cooperatives strengthen the traditional anti-mafia movement within society more broadly, thanks to their civic engagement and opposition to symbols of economic power that are based on violence, illegal activities, and money laundering (Mignemi, Muti, 2020).
- 36 Today, Libera Terra is a consortium of nine social cooperatives²² based in Sicily (5), Calabria (2), Campania (1), and Apulia (1). The project was launched in 2001 by the Libera network of associations in collaboration with local actors. The Placido Rizzotto Cooperative was set up in San Giuseppe Jato (Palermo), the first to be specifically founded for the redeployment of confiscated properties for social projects. Its history is exemplary. Instead of relying on pre-existing associations, the cooperative designed a model that may be adapted to any setting: first, it draws up a plan for managing a confiscated property, and then selects partners via a local public competitive selection process that is based on the professional skills required to implement the plan (agronomists, office workers, managers, etc.).
- 37 Between 2001 and 2014, other cooperatives joined the core project, reinforcing its public image. The "Libera Terra" (Free Land - Free Earth) logo has been highly successful, generating positive awareness surrounding the social redeployment of confiscated assets. Access to the brand, which is owned by Libera, is subject to an independent adjudication process, which binds participating cooperatives to conform to a set of standards: these are related to organic farming, but also to the economic and social features of a sustainable business model.
- 38 Thanks to the support and resources provided by the traditional cooperative movement, which saw in the project a sort of return to its original mission, the Libera Terra cooperatives are today a recognized laboratory for the management of

confiscated assets and social farming practices. Libera Terra manages about 1,500 hectares of land across 42 different municipalities. It mainly cultivates wheat for the production of pasta, but also vines, olive trees, and citrus fruits. In 2020, it generated over €7m in revenue from the sale of its agri-food products.

Figure 3. A sample advertisement for Libera Terra's online store, which sells the cooperative network's produce.



<https://bottegaliberaterra.it/>

- 39 Finally, public funding and access to social financing channels have enabled Libera Terra to set up processing facilities (vineyards and dairy industries) and to convert buildings into rural tourism venues. Also, in areas marked by unemployment and illegal work, Libera Terra's cooperatives have had a significant impact in terms of employment and social inclusion (30% of their workers are disadvantaged or with disabilities). Libera Terra is a successful project that showcases both collaboration between the public and third sectors and the capacity of the third sector to compensate for the limitations of public measures in the fight against organized crime. Through the social redeployment of agricultural land, the Libera Terra project implements an alternative business model and stimulates the involvement of local communities in fighting the mechanisms of exploitation inflicted on local areas by criminal organizations.

Conclusions

- 40 Criminal speculation surrounding agricultural land and the agri-food sector has been on the rise in recent decades, in parallel with the increase in economic value of

agricultural systems and rural landscapes, in part due to their rediscovery as sources of excellent food produce and tourism offerings.

- 41 The prospects for social and economic rebirth in rural areas necessarily requires the full restoration of principles of lawfulness, as well as the joint efforts of public institutions at the various levels of government and organized civil society actors to fight widespread forms of economic crime and corruption.
- 42 In the primary sector and the agri-food chain, which are undermined by a diverse range of criminal actors and investments, the confiscation and social redeployment of illegally appropriated land assets has proven to be a practice of considerable value (in both practical and symbolic terms) that can contribute to the sustainable governance of the territory and the non-competitive management of local and environmental resources.
- 43 For all of these reasons, the current National Recovery and Resilience Plan (Pnrr) envisages – under the broader heading of territorial cohesion – specific intervention in terms of the “economic and social deployment of assets confiscated from mafias”, for which it has allocated a fund of €300m.
- 44 The Italian initiatives outlined here are relatively recent and are still evolving rapidly. Nevertheless, they offer insights that may be of international interest, concerning the fight against organized crime and – most importantly – concerning the potential for “grassroots” civic redeployment of criminal assets (Libera, 2021b).

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NOTES

1. In 2019, the Sicilian branch of CGIL commemorated over 70 agricultural trade unionists who were killed by mafia groups during the twentieth century, at least 35 of whom met their deaths in the ten-year period between 1945 and 1955 on the head of an agrarian reform law (1950) and the subsequent protracted failure to enforce it.
2. Examples include the “Sack of Palermo” in the 1960s, when a construction boom led to the destruction of the belt of luxuriant citrus groves surrounding the city. Or the burial of toxic waste in the fertile agricultural lands of Campania, a phenomenon that has been ongoing since the 1980s and has been brought to public awareness by the TV series *Gomorra*.
3. These are legal and regulatory definitions which a dedicated European network is working to standardize: https://food.ec.europa.eu/safety/eu-agri-food-fraud-network_en
4. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/organized-crime/intro/UNTOC.html>
5. The Police (Interior Ministry), Carabinieri (Defence Ministry) and Guardia di Finanza (Economy and Finance Ministry).
6. The terms “scam” and “fraud” are often used interchangeably; the distinction between is a complex legal issue.
7. Ispettorato centrale della tutela della qualità e repressione frodi dei prodotti agro-alimentari.
8. <https://www.legambiente.it/rapporti-e-osservatori/rapporto-ecomafia/>
9. https://www.osservatorioagromafie.it/?_waf=1
10. <https://www.flai.it/osservatoriopr/osservatorio-placido-rizzotto/>
11. <https://noecomafia.legambiente.it/agromafia/>
12. <https://www.libera.it>
13. <https://benisequestraticonfiscati.it/>
14. <https://openregio.anbsc.it/>
15. Agricultural land represents about 80% of all confiscated land assets. The remaining 20% are either residential zoned or “unspecified”.
16. These numbers refer to the lots that make up the confiscated properties according to the Land Registry. Any individual property can comprise multiple lots. Nevertheless, the total number remains considerable.
17. Furthermore, the assets are often deliberately vandalized prior to being confiscated.
18. Agricultural land confiscated from criminals is present in all the provinces of Italy. The map only represents the cases in which assets have been allocated to local authorities. In the remaining provinces (for example in Basilicata, the Marche and Northeastern Italy), the confiscated lands remain under the management of ASNBC.
19. <https://www.confiscatibene.it>
20. <https://www.libera.it/schede-1592-fattiperbene> ; https://www.libera.it/schede-39-libera_il_bene
21. <https://www.liberaterra.it/it/>
22. Cooperativa Beppe Montana, Lentini (SR). Cooperativa Le Terre di Don Peppe Diana, Castel Volturno (CE), Cooperativa Pio La Torre, San Giuseppe Jato (PA). Cooperativa Placido Rizzotto, San Giuseppe Jato (PA). Cooperativa Rita Atria, Castelvetrano (TP). Cooperativa Rosario Livatino, Naro (AG). Cooperativa Terre di Puglia, Mesagne (BR). Cooperativa Terre Joniche, Isola Capo Rizzuto (KR). Cooperativa Valle del Marro, Gioia Tauro (RC).

ABSTRACTS

The article examines organised crime in agriculture and in the agri-food chain and the Italian approach to combating the so-called “*agromafie*”, whose activities cause devastating environmental and social harms. Among the best practices for countering this phenomenon, the specific focus here is on the economic and social regeneration of agricultural land confiscated from organised crime syndicates. To date, over 13,000 agricultural land assets have been confiscated throughout Italy: an impressive number that generates considerable management challenges. Nevertheless, when these rural spaces are freed from the yoke of criminal organizations and taken in hand by civil society, they are literally “reborn” and trigger cascades of virtuous and sustainable benefits for the environment, the local economy, and local communities, as illustrated by the case of the Libera Terra agricultural cooperatives.

L'article examine la criminalité organisée dans l'agriculture et dans la chaîne agroalimentaire, ainsi que l'approche italienne de la lutte contre ce que l'on appelle « *agromafie* », dont les activités ont des effets catastrophiques sur l'environnement et la société. Parmi les meilleures pratiques de lutte contre ce phénomène, l'accent est mis sur la régénération économique et sociale des terres agricoles confisquées à la criminalité organisée. À ce jour, plus de 13 000 terres agricoles ont été confisquées dans toute l'Italie : un nombre impressionnant qui pose des problèmes de gestion considérables. Néanmoins, lorsque ces espaces ruraux sont libérés du joug des organisations criminelles et pris en charge par la société civile, ils « renaissent » littéralement et déclenchent des cascades de bénéfices vertueux et durables pour l'environnement, l'économie locale et les communautés locales, comme l'illustre le cas des coopératives agricoles Libera Terra.

INDEX

Keywords: organised crime, agribusiness, confiscated assets, civil society, sustainability, Italy

Mots-clés: crime organisé, agrobusiness, biens confisqués, société civile, durabilité, Italie

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