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By Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Dario De Bortoli

Mariarosa Dalla Costa, a central figure in the Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) and Wages For Housework campaigns in the 1970s, considers here, with Dario De Bortoli, the recent movement for alternative agriculture and food policy in Italy

[IMAGE] > Critical Wine conference, Leoncavallo, December 2003

Italian agriculture has recently witnessed a transition from classical unionism, which fixed working conditions but remained indifferent to what was produced and how, to the movement for another agriculture, centred on the question of the ends and the sense of peasant labour, a fundamental rethinking of the farmer's activity. This development may seem belated compared to other experiences in advanced capitalist countries. In France in particular, as early as the 1980s, Paysans Travailleurs then Confédération Paysanne, with J. Bové and F. Dufour (2001), opened questions which in most advanced capitalist countries have only assumed importance in recent years, with the debate on agriculture developing within discussion of neoliberal globalization.

For the moment the Italian transition has nothing to do with agricultural unions, Coldiretti, CIA [translator's note: Confederazione Italiana Agricoltori, not Central Intelligence Agency] and Confagricoltura (of which Coldiretti, traditionally linked to the Christian Democrats, is dominant among peasants farming on a small and medium scale). Historically these organizations have not adopted strategies involving their members in discussion of agricultural policy. Rather, the change reflects the collective will of farmers, stockbreeders and citizens (not only as consumers), who have organized to refuse an agriculture and a stockbreeding system that increasingly spreads illness and danger of death. They have set up new groupings (including unions), new movements of denunciation, struggle, construction of alternatives and indication of other possibilities. Some were formed very recently, within the movement of movements, taking shape during the 2001 Genoa demonstrations against neoliberal globalization. These include Foro Contadino – Altagricoltura and AltrAgricoltura NordEst, while Co.Sp.A (Comitato Spontaneo Produttori Agricoli), made up of dairy farmers, was formed in 1996 around the question of milk quotas and surcharges (commonly known as fines). Others, oriented less towards a new unionism than towards spreading another culture of agriculture, building and promoting alternative practices and criteria, have existed for longer. However they remained somewhat separate, deaf to a debate in the Italian movement, polarized by other questions. Of these, we mention here Centro Internazionale Crocevia, Associazione Rurale Italiana (ARI), Civiltà Contadina (which includes Seed Savers) Associazione Italiana Agricoltura Biologica (AIAB), Associazione Italiana Agricoltura Integrata and Mondo Biologico Italiano, Associazione Agricoltura Biodinamica, plus of course the galaxy of groups specifically dedicated to the defence of plant and animal biodiversity and therefore of the raw material of a diversified agriculture, who often set up islands of cultivation and breeding of rare species.

Over the last 35 years political movements in Italy have paid little attention to experiments in alternative agriculture, seeing them as escapist, (especially in the case of the agricultural communes of the 1970s). Consequently there has been a lack of effort to address the issues raised by these experiments. French agriculture, once again in contrast with Italy's, has been characterized by the predominance of medium-sized farms (10 to 20 hectares), with everything that implies in quantitative and qualitative terms: a more consolidated productive structure, with farmers heavily involved in their associations in a country that generally holds them in high regard, supporting their demands economically and socially. In Italy the situation has been noticeably different, with scant attention paid to farmers, little interest in their demands for a dignified life, serious impoverishment of the

countryside and a strong tendency to use agricultural areas as a source of an emigrant labour force, [directed] first towards other countries and then for the large industrial poles in the North of the nation.

Among the groups cited above, the stockbreeders of Cospa (or Co.Sp.A) have been the largest and most combative outside the unions. Between 1996 and 2002 they blocked motorways, occupied Milan's Malpensa airport and demonstrated outside big TV stations, always with tractors and Ercolina the cow. They have won some 6,000 court rulings in their favour against surcharges. Since 2002 Cospa has been sub-divided into three parts: Cospa Cobas, LIAG (established as a union) and Cospa Nazionale. Italian law 119 of 2003, requiring payment of surcharges (drafted by agriculture minister Gianni Alemanno) and the due date for payment of March 31 2004 opened a particularly dramatic moment.

Leaving this significant battle, which remains open after years of struggle, let us turn again to the emergence in Italy of a movement for another agriculture. Despite various experiments in alternative agriculture in the country over decades, only in the last few years, starting from the Genoa demonstrations and therefore from the encounter with agricultural movements from other countries, has the Italian movement acquired [strength] and visibility, becoming part of the international Via Campesina peasant movement and joining in its call for food sovereignty with all that implies, starting with different relations between agricultural producers and between agricultural producers and citizens. Looking in particular to the neighbouring experience of Confédération Paysanne in France, a model of local, socially, economically and environmentally sustainable peasant agriculture is counterposed to that of industrial production.

However Italy is a country in which the *price of land* is exceptionally high, compared to other European countries. The first obstacle, therefore, is this price, which in more and more parts of the country cannot be absorbed within the agricultural process. Moreover, due to neoliberal policies favouring production by big corporations, some 50 small and medium sized agricultural companies close each day, [1] one every half an hour or so. Consequently much land remains uncultivated, while financial speculation and privatization deny the right to work the land to those who wish to do so. Not surprisingly, therefore, one of the first forms of struggle that must be mentioned is the *occupation of land* in order to work it and the *defence* of these occupations in various ways when, after peasants have worked the land for some time, others seek to take it back from them. This was the experience of the Eughenia co-operative in the province of Grosseto, who for five years have been working on the improvement of a farm and of the nearby village, which at the time was on the brink of depopulation. They managed to revitalize both through a local agriculture project based on a short, diversified cycle, sustainable in every respect, which even found sources of financing. This thousand hectare project could have represented the possibility of employment and adequate income for many people, and therefore of the village's revitalization. The co-operative wanted to buy the land, but the owners raised the price, and in the resulting dispute won the right to evict the occupiers, although this has not been exercised. The situation remains open, and the peasants have put a herd of sheep at the gate of the land, to guard it. [2]

In a very similar position is the co-operative Le Terre della Grola – Ottomarzo of San Ambrogio, Valpolicella, [3] in the hills near Verona, which for more than 20 years has cultivated 13 hectares of vineyards using organic methods, returning to traditional techniques for the cultivation of marginal land and at the same time operating the farm as a teaching project, running an agritourism service and a small cheese factory, making the outdoor space and the land available to the public for recreation and cultural and charitable initiatives, and providing work for people in difficulty. The provincial government, which owns the land, now wants to sell it to generate cash, but the co-operative wants to buy it and has promoted a collection of funds. The positive response to the collection shows that the public is very well aware of how much value is added by an alternative way of managing the land,

value held in common, which the city can draw on in its new relationship with the countryside. Certainly the money collected could not compete with other offers if the province puts the land up for auction. Here again, the situation is open.

These are only two examples, but many others in the same direction could be given. In order to support experiences like these, and, more broadly, to generalize the demand for the right of access to land to improve it through agriculture, as a fundamental right of peasants, the Foro Contadino – AltrAgricoltura association has promoted across Italy the 'Campaign for the right to land'. Notwithstanding the difference of context from those countries where Via Campesina has a longer history, this campaign intends to claim the right to access to land – the fundamental demand of the Via Campesina network – in Italy. The association also calls for a locally diversified model of peasant agriculture, capable of spreading across the country and creating widespread employment, cultivating the species typical of the various areas and thereby protecting the biodiversity that characterizes the various contexts. These associations also demand a reformulation of credit and tax policy in order to allow this kind of agriculture to become established in an ongoing way, so as to guarantee a durable revitalization of the land. The existing forms of economic support fail to take account of the price of land in areas where there is pressure from industry and the hotel business, as Guglielmo Donadello of AltrAgricoltura points out. This combination of factors leads to a problem of management as well as one of access to land.

In the document *Il cibo non e una merce* ('Food is not a commodity'), Foro Contadino – AltrAgricoltura states: 'In the interest of all citizens, of their health, of their territories, of social justice ... we want a peasant agriculture with a social dimension based on labour, on solidarity between producers and consumers, but also between regions and peasants worldwide. Otherwise the richest regions and the strongest farmers would encroach on others' right to life, and this logic has no future ... everyday in Europe 600 farms close; by the end of this year 750,000 agricultural jobs in Italy could be lost.' Regarding this increasingly serious problem of land, the association has issued 'The call for the right to land' (L'appello per il diritto alla terra), in which it states: 'One problem once again stands out among all others, a problem that Italy seemed to have put behind it with the victory of the last century's peasant struggles, but which is ever more dramatically urgent: access to land for those who wish to work it, denied by the extremely high cost of productive land, tied more and more to financial speculation and less and less to real agricultural value... Thus, ever more often, peasant tenant farms are evicted because the owners prefer to speculate financially rather than guaranteeing the agricultural use of the land; companies managing public property privatize the property at prices peasant operations cannot afford; young people who want to work the land asked unaffordable prices per hectare; old people abandoning farming without their land being put to social use ... The death of peasant farms through the abandoning of the land can and must be resisted.'

To this end, the association established *Soccorso contadino* ('Peasant aid') and *Coordinamento nazionale contadino per il diritto alla terra* ('National peasant co-ordination for the right to land'), aiming to 'bring single struggles out of isolation and indifference, coordinating initiatives of legal and technical defence, building mobilization, opening negotiating tables for the right to land and demanding that institutions respond in the interests of the citizens they are supposed to represent.' In very concrete terms, the association proposes launching a national struggle for the right to land, articulated in four demands: for an urgent halt to evictions and other action leading to expulsion from land; for the use of public land to ensure the priority of peasant production; for a plan to restructure land ownership that guarantees access to land; for the establishment of a land bank that guarantees the use of abandoned land. [4]

Another set of problems, over which groups and networks have mobilized, has to do with the *offshoring* of production by big food companies and the related *increasing unsafety of food* and *declining employment*. *Milk production* is a particularly problematic area: today, after the Parmalat crash, it faces a range of very different solutions. [translator's note: Parmalat, Italy's largest food and agriculture group, collapsed financially at the end of 2003, amid evidence of fraud on a massive scale.] As AltrAgricoltura NordEst – Co.Sp.A. Nazionale points out in its document *Oggi di cibo si può morire* (Because of Food 'We could die today') of February 2003, the first absurdity relating to the question of milk was the forced slaughter of many animals in the name of milk quotas, after which it was found that 46 per cent of our fresh milk is imported. On the basis of milk industry association Assolatte's figures, [5] the picture is even worse. The document cited shows that the consumer is unaware of the source of imported milk, which sometimes comes from areas with lower sanitary standards in Eastern Europe. For citizens this means the erosion of the right to know the origin and the type of milk they are consuming, the right to choose, and, moreover, contrary to the promises of neoliberalism, an economic disadvantage. Four years ago, as Luciano Mioni of AltrAgricoltura Nord-Est shows, a litre of milk cost L980 from the farm and L1,600 to the consumer: approximately 50 per cent to the producer and the rest to the marketer. Today a litre of fresh milk costs the equivalent of 2,200 or 2,300 old lire in Italy, the highest price in Europe, while the farm price is L620. Thus milk costs the consumer an average of L400 more today than four years ago, while the price paid at the farm has fallen by 30 per cent. Within this very negative scenario there is also the particular case of Fresco Blù microfiltered milk, produced and distributed by Parmalat, which despite its name is not fresh, inasmuch as it is treated in order to expire in ten days rather than four (now raised to six) for fresh milk. Stangely this milk is often sold in supermarkets as fresh milk. Consequently there have been frequent protests at supermarket chains for a correct classification of this milk on the shelves.

As the stockbreeders of Cospa emphasise, however, the Parmalat affair could be the occasion for a major turning point. Instead of corporate earnings based on financial mechanisms, earnings based on a return to a model of food production that recognizes that food is not a commodity like any other, and in particular acknowledges milk as a basic food for everyone and especially for vulnerable people, assuring its genuineness and real freshness, and consequently privileging the short cycle. In their statement 'Open a new phase in Italian zootechnics after the culpable disasters of parliament and the Alemanno law', the stockbreeders write that the collapse of this company has 'buried for ever in our country the episode of milk quotas, and has put an end to the chimera of instalments so dear to European Union policy'. After 25 years of failed milk and cheese policy, the document continues, the state and political forces should accept the policy of food sovereignty, the short cycle and production aimed at valorizing Italian DOP products worldwide: therefore they must change the agricultural model. This, the text continues, means a return to a real economy rather than a fictitious one; protecting of a zootechnics whose methods respect animals and the environment; confirming the importance of the multifunctional role in the is sector, above all in hill and mountain areas that are particularly severely damaged by neoliberal policies; adopting the short cycle and consequently the link between production and territory; the traceability of the entire chain to offer guarantees to the consuming citizen, who is increasingly alarmed by food scandals, and oriented, when possible, towards more local, transparent and guaranteed production. It also means, we add here, restoring pride to a producer who wishes to be proud of his or her work, and opening new relations between producers and consumers. The document reiterates citizens' right to healthy milk, resulting from a short production chain, free from GMOs, and coming from animals not fed on industrial by-products. It concludes by calling for the rescinding of the Alemanno law, for real correspondence between the assigned quotas and the number of dairy cows actually possessed and their productive capacity, for the strengthening of the short cycle, and for a radical change in milk and cheese policy in Italy and in Europe. In another press statement, [6] the same organization claims 'the right to exist as farms, to be certain of being able to continue working and keeping the farms open even after the application of the Alemanno law, to be assigned production on the basis of production, [7] to a real national and regional

agriculture policy giving precise indications on traceability of the product from the beginning to the end of the production chain'. It is evident that a new vision of food and labour comes from this complex of requests, a different conception of agriculture, the will to build a responsible peasant class and the demand that politicians assume their responsibilities in order that peasants and stockbreeders can assume theirs. As Bové writes (Bové and Dufour 2001, pag.179), 'To go in this direction action is needed on two levels ... by the state ... and by the peasant'. Perhaps precisely because they are bearers of a different agricultural project, these union organizations were not invited to Rome on the 6th of February for the discussions of the Parmalat case to which the agriculture minister had summoned organizations historically involved in the sector and regional government members responsible for agriculture. This happened despite the fact that the same minister had recognized these groups as interlocutors for the question of aviculture. Yet the Parmalat case undoubtedly represents the greatest opportunity to pose the fundamental question of a turning point in what is produced and how, questions that take priority over those of investment and employment. Whether this opportunity is taken or evaded opens or closes the way to the future of food, development and a different life in Italy and Europe.

Similar problems arise with the offshoring and importing of meat production. Once again, the document *Because of food we could die today*, which calls on citizens to oppose these policies, making contact with organized groups and protest movements, informs us, a great deal of the meat consumed in Italy comes from Brazil, Thailand, China and Argentina, in particular chicken treated with chloramphenicol and nitrofurazone, substances banned in Europe since 1966. Moreover bacitracin, spiramicin, virginiamycin and tilosin, dangerous substances, recognized as potentially carcinogenic and strictly forbidden in Europe, are commonly used in these countries not only in poultry farming, but also in the raising of pigs and cattle that end up in the Italian diet. According to the document, multinational meat-producing companies take advantage of the loose international regulation imposed by the WTO to avoid controls and import duties, ensuring an enormous low-priced supply of unsafe meat, of very low quality, in the purchasing centres of national retail chains, generating significant earnings given that the price for the consumer remains high. This allows these companies almost monopoly control of the European market. Moreover, although in September 2002 all consignments of bird meat and derivatives sent from Brazil to the European Union were checked for residual presence of nitrofurazone, because the substance was found in products imported from that country, the permanent Committee on the food chain and health agreed to a European Commission proposal to reduce the frequency of checks to 20 per cent of consignments. The proposal will now be adopted by the Commission and will come into force in the coming weeks. The places where the various kinds of unsafe meat we import are produced are marked by savage exploitation of workers, impoverishment of land, environmental pollution resulting from intensive stock farming with heavy use of pharmaceuticals and chemicals, and similarly widespread monocultures using chemical fertilizer and pesticides on a massive scale. As we said before, sanitary regulations are either absent, or weak, or not observed. The primary destination of this meat (cutlets, hamburgers, cordon-bleu, chicken breasts and thighs) is catering, institutional meals and food services for the elderly, hospital, school and corporate meals, workers' clubs, bars, motorway services and so on: in general those eating in such places are vulnerable or at least are short of time. For consumers, an extremely high health risk. Many cases of telarchia or premature puberty have been reported: Turin magistrates are investigating 80 in that city and another 60 in Milan. Aside from hormonal disorders, which already appear in children in the form of premature puberty, and in adults in that of excess of oestrogens, recognized as a cause of male infertility, an increase in the human resistance to antibiotics, due to the excess of these products that we ingest through the food has been noted, as has an increase in the incidence of allergies, especially among children, as well as continuing alarm over the danger that epidemics breaking out in intensive stock farms – especially those with little or no regulation – could spread and cause human deaths. Farms in Italy and elsewhere in Europe observing quality control and consumer health regulations face unfair competition, increasingly often forcing them to close. Despite the fact that the European

Community banned the use of hormones in stock breeding in 1988, these are used in Italy and in the rest of Europe, as are massive dosages of antibiotics, in order both to prevent disease and to stimulate growth. Consequently many animals found on our farms are [fattened] with banned drugs and are highly dangerous to human health. [8] In particular, boldenone is a growth hormone of the anabolic steroid group, whose traces disappear in 24 hours: this substance, dangerous to humans, is used illegally in the raising of calves. In 2000 Italian health minister Girolamo Sirchia ordered the seizure of a consignment of calves from the Netherlands, in which traces of the anabolic substance were found. However it has also been found on Italian farms, particularly in Lombardia, the Veneto and Piemonte. Pressure from pharmaceuticals companies for the use of large numbers of drugs probably had a role in the use of the vaccine against blue tongue in cows, which led to numerous abortions and many other problems, driving the stockbreeders to fight this absurd requirement. [9] In Italy there was no real cause for alarm as this disease, which affects sheep, struck only a very small number of cattle. Despite alarmist media coverage, not even bird flu, which in recent years has been particularly common in the Veneto region, was so highly pathogenic as to call for the slaughter of animals. Here, however, the substantial compensation available for this kind of epidemic could have been a reason for declaring them “highly pathogenic” even if they were not.

A third order of problems, which the Italian movement for another agriculture has confronted and which is now well known worldwide, is that of GMOs, which unfortunately are extremely common both in food for humans and that for animals, often without the knowledge of producers, who are unaware of having bought genetically modified seeds or other substances. Even here in the Veneto, farmers have been interviewed on television who say they have been ruined by companies that sold them GM seeds without their knowledge, in order to make them cultivate GMOs against their will. On the basis of the examination of samples by AltrAgricoltura Nord-Est, this association revealed that the DNA of plants analysed in the Veneto showed that two samples in three were genetically modified. The association complained formally to the regional government, with no result. On the contrary, this summer a 'Piemonte case' broke out because, following the discovery of 381 hectares of genetically modified corn, and the consequent order from the regional authorities that the farmers destroy the crops, the dispute over who should pay for the damages reached the Regional Administrative Court. The farmers accused Pioneer Italia and Monsanto of selling them the seeds in bad faith, and consequently claimed the cost of the losses from the company. From this it can be deduced that this kind of cultivation is already widespread in Italy, and many fear that the European parliament's decision on summer 2003 [10] to require that packaging be labelled only when 0.9 per cent or more of its contents is genetically modified could constitute a threshold that is easy to raise in the future, and which immediately violates citizens' rights to distinguish and choose between genetically modified and other food. On this matter popular opposition is widespread, and there is no lack of initiatives for verification from various groups, but the usual response from the relevant political institutions, with a few exceptions, has been inertia. The presence of GMOs in many Italian companies' products especially Discount stores, has also been noted by Greenpeace Italia, which in 1993 published a 'red list' of 35 companies and foods chains, with a total of 250 products presumed to contain GMOs. [11]

Another disturbing point, of which citizens are not sufficiently aware and, consequently, regarding which the necessary initiatives have not begun, is Italy's *heavy dependence on foreign countries* in the food sector. 45 per cent of our milk comes from France and Germany, as does 50 per cent of beef, while 40 per cent of pork comes from Bavaria and the Netherlands, while Germany and the USA monopolize the grain market, supplying 60 per cent of the raw material used for bread and biscuits. This situation has been denounced by Coldiretti. The trojan horse for the invasion seems to have been foreign supermarket chains, which silently and stealthily colonized the territory, turning Italy into a country that depends on big foreign chains for 65 per cent of its food. For Italian producers this represents a serious risk of closure, and for their workers the risk of unemployment. It is significant that, faced with this collapse of defences, which is in danger of worsening following the Parmalat

crash, the president of Coldiretti declared the only possible defence to be support for the 'made in Italy' brand, adding that 'the chain of agricultural production must be attached to that of distribution, and the obligation to show the source of all goods should be extended beyond DOC and DOP products'. [12] A welcome comment! As we shall see shortly, the question of complete traceability of all stages in the food chain and of the transparency of the production process is more urgent than ever for those seeking another agriculture.

Another front for mobilization that has witnessed important events in the last year is that of *quality of products without excessive price*. The *wine production* sector, represented by circles of good and insufficiently known viticulturalists, has led the way with new initiatives in this area. The co-ordinates for the emergence of the right to quality and accessibility of a product so important for the pleasure of the table and in other respects were clearly defined in the documents illustrating the two 'Land and Freedom/Critical Wine' conferences. These were simultaneously meeting points for agricultural producers, citizens, not only as consumers, poets, administrators and scholars: 'organize the refusal of the neoliberal development model, which wants an industrial, monocultural agriculture of the multinationals and the European Union, and at the same time the refusal of an elitist production of so-called 'typical' products: these are two sides of the same coin. Conceive a new model of engagement with the earth/Earth, which leaves space for simpler, happier production, consumption and pleasures. Draw the virtuous circle between quality of production, quality of the product and quality of social relations.' The two conferences and demonstrations took place at the La Chimica social centre in Verona from April 11 to 13 2003, and at the Leoncavallo social centre in Milan from December 5 to 6 of the same year. The most important innovation of these initiatives was their capacity to attempt a new moment of community, uniting an in-depth analysis of politics, the role of multinationals, the strategic nature of their control of agriculture and the production and sale of food for ends of global domination, with the problems of those who produce and have to earn, those who consume and have to match their spending capacity to a good glass of wine, those who came to meet others, to learn, to read a poem. [13]

In the same territory of recognition and appropriate monitoring of quality production is this year's mobilization for *olive oil*, a fundamental product for Italian and Mediterranean food and the object of many frauds. [14] *Report*, a well-known television programme, dedicated an important show to this question on March 10, 2002. A major demonstration against these systematic frauds was held in the large square in front of the port at Monopoli on February 2 2004. Along with Luigi Veronelli, an archaenologist and theorist of responsible peasant agriculture and the organizer and promoter of the initiative, the Assud association and Project Land and Freedom/Critical Wine, plus another 40 organizations, took part in the sit-in and disobedient protest action against the traffic in olive oil, which exemplifies the malign power of multinationals. The participants created an action and a debate with a strong media impact in a space where nothing had happened for decades. Olive oil was discussed as an emblematic instance of the multinationals' planetary domination through control of food production, and of their dubious production in contrast to the healthy production of a responsible agriculture. The reasons for the demonstration were set out in the statements calling it, which we summarize here. [15] 80 per cent of the Italian olive oil market is in the hands of multinationals. In a legalized fraud, allowed to proceed in tranquillity, the tanker ships transporting the oil 'transform' their cargo from seed oil to extra virgin olive oil. This is no miracle. It is enough to falsify the documents, protected by international rogatory laws that hide crimes committed outside the country. Thus consumers are defrauded and olive growers forced to suffer unfair competition and consequently to lower the cost of their labour, or even to abandon the harvesting of olives. Well known Italian companies sell extra virgin olive oil in supermarkets at around €3 a litre. Considering that the European Union subsidy for producers is around €1.25 a litre and that harvesting the olives costs producers €5 a litre in an area such as Salento where costs are low, while on the terracing of Liguria or Lake Garda it costs twice as much, it is clear that the oil sold for €3 a litre either is not olive oil, or it

comes from countries where the cost of labour is much lower. In fact Bertolli is part of Unilever and buys only 20 to 30 per cent of its oil in Italy, while Sasso, owned by Nestlé, buys 40 per cent of its oil from Italy but none from Liguria. The remaining larger percentage of olive oil comes from Tunisia, Turkey, Israel and Spain, but – and this is a great problem – the consumer is unaware of this because the place of origin is not stated on the label, as the producer is not required to do so. Another aspect is the great extent to which this oil is exposed to adulteration, through increasingly sophisticated techniques that escape even the checks of the anti-adulteration unit of the Carabinieri. The port of Monopoli was chosen for the demonstration in order to denounce the case of a ship, since disappeared, that used to leave Turkey or Israel with a cargo of hazelnut oil and, after stopping off at a few ports, unloaded olive oil at Monopoli or Barletta. On other occasions oils are even mixed with inedible oils or with heavily coloured seed oils or even with GMO seeds. The demonstration at Monopoli aimed to spread awareness of what goes on around olive oil, to open new opportunities for contact between producers of real olive oil and consumers interested in buying it, and to call for political change to restore space and economic recognition to high quality production of something so fundamental to our diet and our culture.

The proposals raised in the debate accompanying the demonstration, and also already discussed at other meetings, such as those on wine production mentioned above, point to another order of problems around which activism and inventiveness are increasing. These regard the need for *new procedures, more agile, local, and differently identified*, to certify agricultural processes that aim to assure certainty of the product's origin, and offer transparency, traceability and quality, privileging locality. The most innovative proposal is certainly that of the *Denominazioni Comunali (De.co.)* devised by Veronelli, [16] which is already widely applied. This very simple procedure, which certifies directly a product's origin in a particular area, is administered by local authorities, based on the new powers they acquired through constitutional law 3 of October 18, 2001. Under this law the power is open to any local government, and it is well worth the trouble of requesting it. This is so despite the position of agriculture minister Alemanno, who, before this certification was inaugurated with the adoption of the first De.co. by the municipal council of Lecce on February 3, 2003, sent all concerned an intimidatory circular on December 19 of the previous year. This document stated that '...by definition, any discrimination between local and imported products, based on the products' origin creates an unjustified obstacle to the free circulation of goods'. Nonetheless, the municipality of Lecce approved 'regulation for the protection and promotion of local products and the introduction of the De.co. certificate for the defence and promotion of the area's cultivation and culture.' Other municipalities followed Lecce's example, including that of Cartoceto, which introduced the De.co. certificate for its extra virgin olive oil, providing financial help to companies choosing to produce De.co. products. The introduction of the De.co. register is hoped for by many. It would immediately make peasants better off, with the reopening of many farms previously reduced to closure and misery, requiring better paid workers and substantial advantage on every level for citizens as consumers. [17] Equally innovative is the proposal for a *completely voluntary and self-managed and self-certified catalogue of producers*, through which producers themselves certify the production process, giving information on various aspects of their work, including the culture it is based on. This communication between producer and consumer would be direct and voluntary rather than imposed, and would increase the producer's self-responsibility, which would be repaid by the opportunity to make better known the complexity of his or her engagement. There is also the proposal of a farm-gate price to give transparency to the process constituting the final price. The farm-gate price would indicate the price at which the producer sold his or her product, and, if included in the label, would allow to be recognized the unjustifiable increases attached to the product in the course of the distribution process, which is increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few powerful established interests. This proposal initially came from wine producers, but could be applied to any product, its spirit is to provide an instrument that allows the first steps to be taken towards establishing traceability of prices. It represents the emergence among producers of a will to stop accepting the law by which the price rockets after the

product has left their hands, and, among consumers, to refuse the impenetrable pretexts by which the price mysteriously multiplies.

The requirement that production identified and certified this way find adequate outlets on the market, above all locally, meets the demand of citizens who, increasingly, are organized in purchasing networks based on new rules allied to those of another agriculture. Among these networks there are *GAS (Gruppi di Acquisto Solidale)*, which involve around two million citizens and act on the basis of ethical criteria in every context: in relations with the other human beings, with nature and with the economy. They plan a major convention next April in Florence.

To speak more completely of the present movement for another agriculture would require covering the work of organic and biodynamic agriculture groups and others, active since longer ago. But we assume this work to be better known and documented among those concerned with agricultural problems, and we will address it in subsequent works. A complete account of the present movement would also require illustration of the many projects specifically dedicated to the protection of animal and vegetable biodiversity, which, as we said at the beginning are involved in preserving the raw material of another agriculture. However it is not possible to address this aspect in this text, which is intended to focus more on other aspects of the question. As for the experiences described here, I can conclude that, on one hand, they reflect the ongoing difficulty of finding forms capable of having an impact on the most serious problems of the dominant organization of agriculture, characterized by the industrial productivist approach, which is currently burdened by further negative factors in the Italian context. In fact there is a risk of a further concentration of capital in favour of foreign groups in food production, while in food retailing foreign groups are already present on a large scale and are suspected of having favoured products from their countries of origin, primarily France and Germany, in supermarkets. These companies could consolidate their position in Italy following the collapse of Italian companies. If Italian companies close, unemployment is likely to worsen. On the other hand, producers and consumers are demonstrating a will to establish in various ways another agricultural and dietary model. Around this demand and this new culture, struggles are generated and new networks of production, information, struggle and exchange flourish. This already appears as what it is: a very unequal confrontation. But David defeated the giant Goliath. Could this happen again? Among the reasons supporting an optimistic outlook is the new composition and determination of this agricultural movement, made up of rural and urban citizens who discuss, plan and construct, refusing the modes of production and consumption imposed by the neoliberal model, which lowers the quality of life not only in the precarisation of work and the curtailment of services, but first of all in its attack on the earth/Earth. This attack includes the adulteration and pollution of food, the destruction of the environment and the landscape, and the privation of relations and sensations, beginning with the tastes of the products of the earth and the perfumes of the wind. It is not only producers and consumers as such, but citizens, human beings, who, in search above all of life, are surrounding Goliath.

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Notes

- [1] Cooperative Eughenia: 'le ragioni di una battaglia del Foro Contadino – Altragricoltura' (The reasons for a battle of Peasant Forum – Another Agriculture), <http://www.altragricoltura.org/dirittoallaterra/eughenia-6feb04.htm>
- [2] From *La Nazione*, Grosseto edition: 'Sfratto respinto. Resistenza passiva con le pecore' (Eviction prevented: passive resistance with sheep) www.altragricoltura.org/dirittoallaterra/images/lanazione-.jpg
- [3] 'Le terre della Grola' (The lands of Grola), information pamphlet.
- [4] For complete documentation see www.altragricoltura.org
- [5] Based on these statistics Italy's produced more than 105 million square litres of cows' milk in 2003, while 31.1 million square litres was imported from other countries. Domestic transformation and consumption of cows' milk was 131.7 million square litres. Of this total, 100.7 million square litres (76.2 per cent) was destined for industrial production (DOP and other cheese, UHT milk), while 31.1 million (23,8%) square litres was consumed directly as fresh milk.
- [6] Both statements cited have been circulated without date by Cospa Nazionale.
- [7] For 'the right to be assigned production on the basis of production' see above regarding the correspondence between quota and real production capacity.
- [8] Guglielmo Donadello and Luciano Mioini addressed this question at a conference at the Political Sciences Faculty at the University of Padua on December 16, 2003. Among the most recent an alarming items of related news is the report in the *Mattino del Padova* of February 17, 2004 that an operation of the anti-adulteration unit of the Carabinieri in the provinces of Venice, Padua, Treviso, Verona and Vicenza in which large quantities of irregular pharmaceuticals were seized on animal farms. This operation led to the arrest of veterinarians, breeders, agricultural businesspeople, traders and heads of animal feed and pharmaceuticals companies.
- [9] 'Lingua blu, allevatori in rivolta' (Blue tongue: stockbreeders in revolt) in *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, July 10, 2003.
- [10] <http://lanuovaecologia.it/scienza/biotech/1906.php>
- [11] 'Come difendersi dagli OGM' (How to defend yourself against GMOs) dossier, Greenpeace Italia, May 15, 2003.
- [12] www.greenplanet.net: 11/01/04, 'La grande distribuzione parla straniero' (Supermarket chains speak foreign languages).
- [13] These conventions and initiatives received large-scale coverage in the mainstream press. See www.criticalwine.org
- [14] www.tigulliovinio.it/scrittodavoi/art12.htm; www.oliosecondoveronelli.it
- [15] For this documentation we recommend the sites www.veronelli.com and www.criticalwine.org
- [16] 'Denominazione comunale di origine' (identification of municipal origin), <http://www.veronelli.com/veronelli/news1.htm>; Denominazione comunale di origine – L'olio di oliva extravergine del Comune di Cartoceto. Regolamento Comunale per la valorizzazione delle Attività (Extra virgin olive oil from the municipality of Cartoceto. Municipal regulation for the valorization of assets), www.veronelli.com/veronelli/news2.htm