Wine and Legality: A Survey to Know the Consumer Opinions on the Activities of Sicilian Wine Companies Operating on Lands Confiscated from the Mafia

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Introduction

In the European Union, since the mid-90s with the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) the term agriculture was joined to that of multifunctionality, as stated in the second pillar of the CAP, because the agricultural sector was placed in front of new challenges, attributing to the development policies of this sector a role of backbone for the economy of all rural areas with low capacity to achieve economic diversification.

Actually, with the multifunctionality, the agricultural sector is no longer considered, only, the one which produces food goods, but also it has new and different functions, including those of preserving the environment and the rural landscape and to support the socio-economic development of rural areas, also through the creation of employment opportunities.

In particular, among the different aspects provided by the multifunctional role of agriculture, the social function is the one that has spread and established itself more and more, especially in recent years in Sicily, where, as social, it means the ability of the farm to generate services to a population considered at risk of social exclusion.

In this regard, all the initiatives for agricultural purposes that are pursued, mainly in the south of Italy and especially in Sicily, in those lands confiscated from organized crime (the so-called Mafia) are believed to be very interesting. In fact, just thanks to the Italian Law n.109/1996 it is permitted to particular legal entities (cooperatives, associations, non-profit, etc.) the use, with social purposes, of all the assets and properties confiscated from organized crime, among which there are included also the agricultural lands that, otherwise, would remain inevitably abandoned. In addition, thanks to the application of this Law, these legal entities can exercise an agricultural activity aimed, in addition to food production regularly put on the market, also to offer employment in the agricultural sector.

In this context, in Sicily, is well-known the activity of the social company (cooperative) "Placido Rizzotto - Libera Terra". It was founded in 2001 within the project "Libera Terra", promoted by the "Libera" and the Prefect of Palermo and, through a contract of loan for use, it got into management and now it cultivates over 150 hectares of land confiscated from the Mafia that fall in some municipalities of the Province of Palermo. Inspired by the principles of solidarity and legality, the Company Cooperativa

1 Companies confiscated from organized crime are spread over the whole Italian territory, but with a strong concentration in Sicily. The 18% of the confiscated goods are farmland and the 6% of confiscated companies work in the agricultural sector and in particular in the production of wine (Source: National Agency of seized and confiscated).

2 Libera Terra: Free Land

3 "Libera: Associations, names and numbers against mafias" is an association of social promotion, recognized by the Ministry of the Interior, devoted to solicit and coordinate the civil society against all mafias and to foster the creation and the development of a community alternative to the mafia itself. It is a coordination, born in 1995, in order to urge the civil society in the fight against the mafia and currently consists of about 1,500 associations, groups, schools, grassroots groups, territorially committed to build synergies political-cultural and organizational able to promote a culture of legality. The law on the social use of property confiscated from the mafia (L. n.109/96), education for democratic legality, commitment against corruption, mafia training camps, projects at work and development, business wear, etc., are some of the concrete commitments of this coordination. "Libera" is also recognized as a social promotion by the Ministry of Social Solidarity. In 2008 has been inserted Eurispes (Private Institute for Policy Studies, which operates in the economic and social policy research, economic, social and training) between the Italian excellence.
Placido Rizzotto performs an activity of agriculture, but at the same time, encourages the employment of disadvantaged people and creates new employment opportunities4.

Within the Company Cooperativa Placido Rizzotto it has arisen “Cantina Centopassi”5, whose wine production is also carried out according to the criteria of respect for environment and quality, that the wine industry today requires. The Winery (Cantina Centopassi), from the early harvests has won prizes and awards from the major magazines, trade shows and wine guides.

In this work, which is part of a much broader study on wine and legality, it aims to know, through a survey, the opinion6 of Sicilian wine consumer on this topic.

In particular, through interviews to a sample of consumers, aged between 21 and 50 years, we wanted to know their current information and their opinions with respect to the particular business activities of the Association “Libera”, with particular reference to the Cantina Centopassi and to the quality of the wines produced by it. In fact, the choices of purchase and consumption behavior can be a valuable tool to observe and interpret the changes of a society that, now more than ever, is constantly evolving.

With regard to the group of the youngest consumers (21-30 years old range), the main objective was to learn about their behavior and attitude towards business decisions avowedly anti-Mafia, to assess whether the possible purchase of these special wines was a conscious choice or just a phenomenon linked to a current market trend. In addition, the opportunity to observe young people’s purposeful and free from Mafia-type constrains, would be an important factor for themselves and a possible driver to entrepreneurial activities in this field, thus creating jobs in a legal context. While, as far as the adult consumers (41-50 years old class), it was considered that it was also interesting to know their opinion and attitudes, because, being probably involved in a stable work context, they could play roles of coordination, leadership, autonomy, etc., such as to be able to also affect, positively or negatively, individual behavior of colleagues or employees and more generally the context where they operate.

Keywords: Social Agriculture, Multifunctionality, Consumer behavior

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4 The Cooperative adheres to "Libera, Associations, names and numbers against mafias".
5 Cantina Cantopassi: Centopassi Winery.
6 Opinion poll.