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. Instead, 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"1, promoted by the "Libera"2 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 Placido Rizzotto performs an activity of agriculture, but at the same time, encourages the employment of disadvantaged people and creates new employment opportunities3.

Within the Company Cooperativa Placido Rizzotto it has arisen "Cantina Centopassi"4, 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 opinion5 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 constraints, 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 range), it was considered that they were also interested in the adoption of coordination 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.

Methodology

For the purpose of the investigation, it was decided to conduct a poll on a sample of n = 180 respondents, obtained through a Systematic sampling with stratification of the sample size.

Preliminary, there have been identified the characteristics that, for the purposes of the survey, had to have the sample of wine consumers to interview, such as: age between 21 and 50 years old, students, workers and unemployed, as well as various income ranges. The sample was subsequently stratified into three sub-samples, corresponding to each of the following age ranges (21 - 30), (31 - 40), (41 - 50) and each consisting of 60 units. There were extracted and interviewed, in total, 180 consumers identified as n₁ = 60 for the age group 21 - 30 (1st stratum), n₂ = 60 for the age group 31 - 40 (2nd stratum), and n₃ = 60 for the 41-50 (3rd stratum), accepting an error E = 9.6%, p = 95%.

As it was impossible to know the numerosity of the Population (it was a so-called dynamic Population), it wasn't possible to establish, first, a list of individuals to be interviewed, from which to

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1 Companies confiscated from organized crime are spread over the whole Italian territory, but with a strong concentration in Sicily. The 8% of the confiscated goods are farm and the 6% of 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 Europes (Private Institute for Policy Studies, which operates in the economic and social policy research, economic, social and training) between the italian excellence.
4 The Cooperative adheres to "Libera, Associations, names and numbers against mafias".
5 Can. Cantina Centopassi: Centopassi Winery.
6 Opinion poll.
extract, then, a random sample, so it was chosen the Systematic sampling method, because its applicability is not bound to the knowledge, “a priori”, of the elements that form the Population. The units have been extracted on the basis of the passing order of people in front of the detection point, after having pulled, randomly, the value of the first element, to be interviewed. The other units, extracted according to the systematic sampling used, are those marked by the symbols \((t + k)\), \((t + 2k)\), \((t + 3k)\) and so on, until the \(n\)th unit. Even \(k\) was pulled randomly and it resulted \(t = 6\) and \(k = 4\). The detection point was allocated near the Cantina Centopassi’s exhibition shop in Piazza Castelnuovo, at a time that goes from 11:00 to 20:00.

To carry out the interviews it has been prepared a questionnaire divided into two parts: the first with questions to know about these wine consumers’ purchasing behavior and the second aimed to know their level of information regarding the topic “wine and legality” and to investigate their level of awareness when purchasing the wines produced by the Cantina Centopassi (about the qualitative characteristics of wines and, above all, about the social value of this business). Other questions were also designed to elicit the respondents opinions with regard to the need of a bigger promotion campaign and of more information on these products. All respondents, before the beginning of the interview, had to assert to be consumers of wine and to buy it personally for their own consumption or to make a gift.

Results

The sample of respondents resulted as follows: those who belong to the age from 21 to 30 years are, for most part, College graduates or University students (80%) and a small part of them are University graduates (20%), of whom, the 47% are males, while the remaining 53% are females; the 82% of the total sample are looking for a permanent job and have a nil or very low income, while the remaining 18% are free-professional and perform as staff in firms of other professionals or do other type of self-employment; the age group ranging from 31 to 40 years are University graduates (15%) or College graduates (83%), to 56% are males, of whom, the 86% are professionals or employed at public institutions and the remaining 14% held their own business; while the 44% are women, of whom, the 68% are permanent employed at private companies or public institutions and the 32% are professionals or do other type of self-employment. Finally, with regard to the age group ranging from 41 to 50 years, it resulted that the 62% of respondents were University graduates and the remaining 38% are high school graduates. Regarding the jobs, the 71% of the sample declared to be employed at public institutions of various kinds. In the sample we can also observe that: 47% are women and 53% men and 60% of the women are employed with a permanent contract, 20% are housewives and the remaining 10% are professionals, while the men are 35% professionals, 33% employed at public institutions, 25% employees or managers in private companies and 7% is employed on their own, particularly they have craft or manual jobs.

From the poll, with regard to general questions on the subject “wine and legality”, 88% of respondents says they were aware of the existence of food products from companies confiscated from the Mafia, while 12% says not be informed. Among those aware of their existence, 77% know about the production of wine by the Cantina Centopass, while 23% of them don’t know at all the existence, but want to get more information on this topic. The poll also shows how almost the whole sample, 96%, has a great sensitivity to these issues and considers that the development of these types of companies and the purchase of their products is an attitude of openness and social ethics of our Country. In particular, respondents appear to believe that, in doing so, these companies offers the opportunity to young or disadvantaged people to enter the world of work and, at the same time, gives the opportunity to the rural areas, or abandoned, to be exploited positively and re-launched with a new image, which is to support the fight against the Mafia.

In confirmation of this, 94% of people says they have no problem to buy these wines and expresses its readiness, too, to pay a higher price for a wine of this type, which supports the intrinsic quality of a strong social value and allows consumer to make a purchase associated with the possibility of promoting a

good cause or to contribute to the emergence and dissemination of anti-mafia and legality principles. In addition, the respondents claim to believe these wines qualitatively superior to others in the same price range and, in particular, 93% of the sample declared that, for the same price and quality with other wines, they prefer to buy one of the Cantina Centopass.

However, there is also a small part of the sample, corresponding to 6%, which expresses freely to have some doubts regarding the purchase of these wines because they don’t believe in the real utility of social and ethical application of the Law n. 109/1996 or that the promotion of such activities and products is a means of spreading the culture of legality, believing on the contrary, that any form of propaganda is exploited for private purposes, and that these particular businesses do not have anything better than the other.

Looking at the consumption behavior, the 92% of respondents would like to learn more about the meaning of social commitment of companies operating in the agro-food sector, as it is believed that this element is very important to lead consumer purchase choices. In particular, the consumers surveyed suggest to highlight this aspect in the labels of wines (and in all products of this type in general), in order to give proper emphasis both to the territory of production and to the right cause that they pursuing and enhance the purchase.

The additional information requested has allowed us to know how the sampled consumers believe that these wines should be supported by more information and promotion in the market. Actually, 96% of respondents said that they would like to know more about the history of the Cantina Centopassi (and about all business activities of this type) and the types of wines produced by it. Indeed, a stronger advertisement campaign, through, for example, the mass media (television, newspapers, magazines or special promotional campaigns), would give, according to respondents, the right support to make the market aware of the existence of these high-quality products, with business assumptions of great value. This aspect indicates how the consumer is very concerned about it and, in particular, the youth, in fact, especially those who likes to undertake an entrepreneurial activity in agriculture says they are very interested in the social aspects of these companies and in the positive impact generated in the economy.

For several years the Large-scale distribution (LSD) has been proposed in trying to promote products closely linked to ideologies of legality and consumer solidarity. In this context, the COOP (Italian network of supermarkets and hypermarkets)\(^8\) is committed to spread this culture, selling in their supermarkets also products branded “Libera Terra” and a line of wines created to COOP by the Cantina Centopassi\(^9\). However, only 35% of surveyed consumers are aware of this initiative and this highlights, once again, that a stronger promotion would be required, even made by the COOP itself.

Conclusion

Today, because of the multifunctional role that agriculture plays for the recovery and development of rural areas, all those activities of social farming, exercised in the lands confiscated from the Mafia, become more important and especially in Sicily, also helped by the Application of the Law n. 109/96. Through this link between agriculture and social aspects, the activities that are carried out are able to create income and employment and developing pathways for growth and development of the legality, both in terms of social need and in terms of production, in particular for many young people and for that population at risk of social exclusion.

So, companies that, in accordance with Law n. 109/96, undertake on these lands a productive activity in the food industry become a development opportunity for the populations of special rural areas, who

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8 The COOP, which stands for “Cooperative Consumers”, is a brand that characterizes a system of Italian cooperatives which manages a network of supermarkets, hypermarkets and discount stores.

9 It 'should be emphasized that the cooperative Libera Terra (and thus the Cellar of Centopassi) has signed a trade agreement in recent years with the COOP and in that regard, the of Centopassi annually provides about 220,000 bottles (corresponding to 80% of the total number of bottles produced annually) of a product line designed specifically for this market segment and the in the wine label is clearly highlight the brand "Libera Terra."
want to get rid of prejudices and heavy negative stereotypes and seek to build an image of legality around themselves and the territory in which they live, presenting virtuous business models, alternative to the logics of the Mafia own by their predecessors.

The results of this work show that, today, consumer has got a strong sense of responsibility, which is reflected, as a result, in his purchase behavior. The majority of consumers, in fact, knows and, above all, shows interest in the wines produced by companies that operate on lands confiscated from the Mafia. They think these wines are of a superior quality than the norm and this happens, many times, also without actually having tasted them, perhaps because they imagine that behind a good cause, there should be only a product of excellent quality. In addition, as mentioned above, they are willing to prefer them to other wines with same price and quality and this shows the curiosity and the interest they arouse in the eyes of consumers. The data that emerged from our interviews are also perfectly in line with those published by other official sources (from surveys carried out at national level). In fact, more than half of the respondents claim to have bought, at least once in three months, this type of products.

A further consideration, that deserves to be highlighted, concerns, of course, the need of more attention to consumer’s information about these wines and all the initiatives and projects of ethic entrepreneurship, as well as the need of a more detailed and incisive market promotion by both the entrepreneurs themselves than by the Institutions. This, not only because, from a social and ethical point of view, its diffusion is of paramount importance, but also because, through appropriate dissemination and promotional campaigns, companies can more and more address, directly or indirectly, the purchase choices of consumers. In fact, the great interest shown by consumers for this type of social companies and their products, could be an aspect not to be underestimated by the Cantine Centopassì in order to enhance this very important corporate strength they have.

Undoubtedly the recovery of firms confiscated from the Mafia and given to be managed for social purposes, affirmed, in recent years, an approach to employment that involved a large part of the local population, transforming, therefore, the confiscated property in a resource for the socio-economic development of a region plagued by serious problems, but, luckily for itself, geographically suited to grape growing and wine production.

In this context, the relationship between legality and wine was very strong among consumers surveyed and this fact allows us to say that, in Sicily, these initiatives can be surely additional resources for socio-economic development and contribute to the support of the agriculture sector and of the people living in rural areas at risk of social exclusion.

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