

CHAPTER 7

Practising Solidarity and Developing Food Citizenship in Croatia: The Example of Croatian Community- Supported Agriculture

Olga Orlić

Institute for Anthropological Research, Zagreb,
Anita Čeh Časni and Kosjenka Dumančić
Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Zagreb

Abstract

Even though community-supported agriculture (CSA) has long been present at the margins of consumerist society all over the world, it has gained more transdisciplinary attention in the past 20–30 years. It has to do with raising awareness among various stakeholders about the need to change food politics, regarding not only securing enough amounts of food to feed the growing world population (food security) but also the most ethical means of achieving this goal (food sovereignty). This awareness resulted in small but growing changes of consumption practices of individuals and their growing interest in being

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actively engaged in co-creation of food politics, in processes of becoming food citizens. Policy makers, at least in the EU, appropriated some of these, once alternative, efforts into their programmes. In Croatia pioneers of a struggle for achieving food citizenship in the past decade have been initiators and other actors of CSA groups. This chapter provides a brief overview of CSA development in Croatia, especially within the wider context of food citizenship and solidarity economy concepts, aiming at changing dominant food politics or even the dominant economic mode.

Introduction: food security, food sovereignty and food citizenship

Food is a nexus for industry, rural urban relations, global trade relations, domestic and social life, biological health, social belonging, celebration of community, paid and unpaid work, expressions of care, abuse of power, hunger strikes, fasts and prayer. (Welsh & MacRae 1998: 242)

In past few decades, there has been a significant effort of various NGOs and grassroots movements advocating for reshaping power relations and rights in the food production–consumption chain (Patel 2009). This resulted in proliferation of various practices, such as community-supported agriculture, that are trying to reshape dominant food market system and impact food related policies on different levels. This struggle is accompanied by a rather new vocabulary, appropriated almost simultaneously by practitioners, scientists and policy makers.

Some terms, such as food security¹, were used even 50 years ago but the meaning has changed over the years, mostly by the influence and activities of NGOs like Via Campesina and various other advocates (Patel 2009: 665;

¹ The global agenda aiming at resolving hunger and poverty in the 20th century appeared within the framework of the League of Nations in the 1930s (Simon 2012: 10; Windfuhr & Jonsén 2005). This global agenda was named ‘food security’ at the 1974 United Nations World Food Conference held in Rome. Evolution of the definition over time reflects changes in perspectives towards resolving the problem (from original 1974 supply-oriented definition towards a more complex one that is more in line with the human security and human rights perspective of development (<http://www.fao.org/3/y4671e/y4671e06.htm#fnB21>). Scholars have identified over 200 definitions (Smith et al., 1993), but the most commonly accepted definition was approved by the 1996 World Food Summit (WFS). It states that ‘Food security’ exists when all people, at all times, have physical, [social] and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their

Gómez-Benito & Lozano, 2014: 145). Via Campesina introduced the term 'food sovereignty' at the World Food Summit in 1996, as a term opposing the food security concept (used primarily in the debate about the need to end world hunger and malnutrition). Windfuhr & Jonsén (2005) elaborated on the evolution of the food sovereignty concept and its potential, simultaneously pointing to the core problem of any serious hunger problem-solving effort – i.e., the unequal treatment of developing and industrialized countries. The first ones are forced by various treaties to open up their markets and to cut subsidies to their farmers; the same is not required from the industrialized countries. However, even in the industrialized countries subsidies rarely reach the small farmers and are intended for big agri-businesses (Windfuhr & Jonsén 2005:6–7). Precisely because of this, these authors argue that 'food sovereignty' is often used by developing countries and small farmers all over the world (Windfuhr & Jonsén 2005: 38). Together with the struggle of consumers for the right not only to know what they eat (labelling problem) but to choose what they eat, the most suitable definition of food sovereignty was offered by Patel – 'a call for peoples' rights to shape and craft food policy' (Patel 2009: 663).

However, despite the fact that food sovereignty was intended to represent a kind of opposition to food security, its creator, Via Campesina, recognized that the main aim of food sovereignty to achieve food security, only by using quite different approach and methods:

Long-term food security depends on those who produce food and care for the natural environment. As the stewards of food producing resources we hold the following principles as the necessary foundation for achieving food security ... Food is a basic human right. This right can only be realized in a system where food sovereignty is guaranteed. Food sovereignty is the right of each nation to maintain and develop its own capacity to produce its basic foods respecting cultural and productive diversity. We have the right to produce our own food in our own territory. Food sovereignty is a precondition to genuine food security (Via Campesina 1996: 1–2).

The main difference between the concepts was found in power relations among various actors in the area of food politics – mentioned by Windfuhr & Jonsén (2005). However, Patel (2009: 666) revealed certain contradictions in a definition of food sovereignty, one of them being the fact that 'food producers' was quite a loose term, and that it could refer to transnational companies producing

dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life' (<http://www.fao.org/3/w3613e/w3613e00.htm>).

food as well. The same author recognized that power relations within the food sovereignty concept were not quite clearly recognized. This referred e.g., to the relationship between farm owners and farm workers and to the fact that it would be difficult to reconcile the struggle for women's rights, simultaneously emphasizing the need to preserve family farms and neglecting the fact that family was, most often, the prime place for practising patriarchy.

Via Campesina has struggled for so-called natural (and not legal) food producers in the food production/consumption chain and their efforts have resulted by the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas² by the UN in 2018. All these efforts have forged a new concept – food citizenship – suitable to encompass all the various efforts aiming to alter dominant food politics.

Recognizing the proliferation and unsystematic use of the term in literature and in some food movements' websites, Gómez-Benito and Lozano proposed a definition of food citizen 'as the individual who has access to enough healthy, quality food or who mobilizes himself to achieve it' (Gómez-Benito and Lozano 2014: 152).

However, this citizen/consumer who would 'use their preferences as an expression of social agency' (De Tavernier 2012) would require not only food labelling information but information about the food production practices and the life cycle assessment of food products, as well (De Tavernier 2012: 905).

Lozano-Cabedo and Gómez-Benito considered the concept of food citizenship as closely related to appearance and development of civic food networks (see also Wilkins, 2005; Renting et al. 2012). They also thought this is the direction food movement practitioners should orient their objectives and activities. They propose a working theoretical model for food citizenship, structured into eight propositions:

These propositions have as core ideas an extended concept of the right to food, the assumption of obligations, the combination of public and private behaviour, the individual and collective participation, the empowerment of all actors of the agri-food system, the promotion of justice, fairness and sustainability in food systems, and a cosmopolitan character of food Citizenship (Lozano-Cabedo and Gómez-Benito 2017: 2–3).

According to them, food citizenship could be perceived as an extension of the concept of ecological citizenship. The main difference between these two types of citizenship is that in food citizenship the rights come before obligations and duties (Lozano-Cabedo and Gómez-Benito 2017: 13).

² <https://www.geneva-academy.ch/joomlatools-files/docman-files/UN%20Declaration%20on%20the%20rights%20of%20peasants.pdf>

Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) as a Cradle for Food Citizenship and Solidarity Economy

Recently various types of civic food networks have emerged and developed. The consumers/citizens play an active role in the initiation and operation of new forms of consumer–producer relations (Renting et al. 2012).

Community-supported agriculture is one of these civic food networks, and, one might add, not so new.³ The movement was initiated in the 1960s in Japan (Kondoh 2014: 144; Parker 2005: 15) and a little later in Switzerland (Sahakian 2015: 145), independently. It was transferred, independently by two farmers, into the USA, where it developed under the name of CSA. The Italian groups, important for the introduction of the CSA movement into Croatia and named *Gruppi d'acquisto solidale*, were founded in 1994 in Ferrara (Randelli 2015: 19). Today the CSA are present in numerous countries all over the world under different names (for Europe, see for example Volz et al. 2016).

The CSA started as a bottom-up, grassroots movement based on mutual collaboration, partnership and solidarity between consumers and (in most cases organic⁴ food producers). It could be perceived as an early attempt to practice food citizenship, even at the time the term did not exist. The incentive of a buyer from CSA groups was often the driving force of the groups.

The basic feature of the CSA's usual routine can be described as follows: a group of individuals interested in healthy food, environmental issues and support for small family farms and for the local economy, deciding to organize jointly their food provision by regular ordering a 'basket' of seasonally available products from farmer(s) living in proximity. The delivery is organized on a weekly basis and without middlemen. There are differences across CSA movements in

³ The names for CSA or similar networks are different but similar: Alternative Food Network (AFN) (e.g. Grasseni 2013) or short food supply chains (SFSCs) and local food systems (LFS/SYAL). (Renting et al 2012:292). Although it can be perceived by some disciplines as a type of 'direct marketing' (Roque et al. 2008), Renting et al (2012) rightfully point to the fact that this is mainly not the case, since in AFNs usually it is the consumer who is the initiator (Renting et al 2012:290). The same authors consider that AFNs have not been useful any more, since today these networks no more emerge counter-hegemonic food networks like they used to do since the 1990s (ibid:292)

⁴ By organic, we mean food that is produced by methods of organic farming that, according to Znaor et al., are 'sometimes also referred [to] as ecological, biological or alternative farming, [which] is an agricultural system that excludes agri-chemical inputs and genetic engineering and resorts to external inputs only where the system cannot be sustained by internal processes' (Znaor et al., 2014: 33).

different countries and even from one group to another, but the abovementioned routine can be identified as the basic feature of these groups, perceived as a kind of community of practice⁵ (Orlić 2019: 12). Their mutual collaboration is manifested (in different variations across the globe) in continuous ‘collective provisioning on the basis of solidarity principle’ (Grasseni 2013: 5).

CSA has been recognized as one of the most prominent examples of global justice activism (Grasseni 2013: 3) oriented toward an alter-globalisation⁶

⁵ Communities of practice is a concept stemming from the area of theory of learning. The concept was proposed by anthropologist Jean Lave and theories of practice scholar Etienne Wenger, first in relation to situated learning that takes place in groups with a master–apprentice relationship, i.e. in groups where the newcomers become the old-timers (Lave and Wenger, 1991). The members can be at the margins of the group as well as at the core. Elements of this concept can be found, according to Orlić (2019), in groups of CSAs because it is crucial their ‘participation in the system of activities in which participants share understanding about what they are doing and what it means for their lives and their community’ (Lave and Wenger 1991: 98).

⁶ The movement was initiated in the mid-1990s by various protests against the negative consequences of globalisation. Therefore, at its initial phase the movement was labelled as an anti-globalisation movement, but this was soon proved to be inadequate (Pleyers, 2010: 6) and was replaced by the neologism ‘alter-globalisation’. It was used for the first time in an interview with Arnauld Zacharie, one of the prominent actors of the movement in Belgium, published on 27 December 2001 in *La Libre Belgique*. The idea of ‘another globalization’ and the importance of constructing alternatives became widespread in francophone circles under this neologism, while in the English-speaking world the movement was first qualified as ‘antiglobalization’, then ‘anti-corporate globalization’ and eventually ‘the global justice movement’ (Pleyers, 2010: 6). It can be perceived as an umbrella movement (with World Social Forum as a core event providing a joint platform) that includes ‘diverse and relatively autonomous actors and events’ (Pleyers, 2010: 11) such as advocacy networks, citizens’ networks like ATTAC or Global Trade Watch, Social Forums, trade unions, youth activists, indigenous peoples, human rights networks, green activists, third world solidarity networks, etc. (Pleyers, 2010). However, despite a quite diversified focus, the alter-globalisation or global justice movement can be perceived as a ‘mature coherent ideological structure (“justice globalism”) that provides conceptual and practical alternatives to the dominant paradigm of market globalism’, as a qualitative morphological discourse analysis and quantitative content analysis of selected documents that World Social

movement (Šimleša, 2006) and relocalization towards boosting local autonomy in order to create resistance to the dominant system (Starr and Adams 2003). This boosting of local autonomy is extremely important within food sovereignty and the CSA seems to be a showcase for achieving it (Starr and Adams 2003). CSA is also an important building block of the solidarity economy, which refers to a set of very disparate initiatives and movements focused on creating and practising 'alternative ways of living, producing and consuming' (Bauhard 2014). These initiatives include practices such as communal living (e.g. Sargisson 2011; Hilder et al. 2018), community kitchens (e.g. Lenten 1993; Engler-Stringer and Berenbaum 2007; Gennari & Tornaghi 2020), Open Source initiatives (DiBona, Ockman & Stone 1999; Angelo 2010), workers' cooperatives (e.g. Vargas-Cetina 2005; Lima 2007; Breyer 2010; Pfeilstetter 2013), urban gardening (e.g. Biti and Blagaić Bergman 2014; Poljak Istenič 2016; Gulin Zrnić & Rubić 2015, 2018; Calvet-Mir & March 2019; Smith 2020), community-supported agriculture (Ostrom 2007; Schnell 2007; Feagan & Henderson 2009; Janssen 2010; Grasseni 2013, 2014; Sarjanović 2014; Orlić 2014, 2019; Slavuj Borčić 2020), ecovillages (Sargisson & Tower Sargent 2004; Sargisson 2007; Bokan 2012, 2014; Sherry & Ormsby 2016; Losardo 2016), ethical financing (Maurer 2005; Pitluck 2008), alternative currencies (Maurer 2005), LETS (Local Exchange Trading Systems) (Pacione 1997; Caldwell 2000; Cooper 2013), fair trade initiatives (Mober 2005; Besky 2008; Nichols 2010; Robbins 2013) and numerous others (see for example Simonič 2019). The basic goal of such economies and the initiatives they encompass is the attainment of the common good and their advocating for 'a set of practices that emphasizes environmental sustainability, cooperation, equity, and community well-being over profit' (van der Beck-Clark & Pyles 2012: 6). A key feature of such practices is that they have a socially innovative character, striving to redefine the existing economic space shaped by the negative consequences of the dominant capitalist system, such as growing economic and social inequalities and destruction of the environment and of natural resources.

The turning point for the proliferation of solidarity economy practices occurred after the start of the economic crisis in 2008, when a majority of people felt the cold insensitivity of the dominant economic system intensively (Ferguson & Gupta 2002; Kawano et al. 2009; Laville 2010; Simonič 2019). There are frequent deliberations over models that could lead to the creation of an alternative, or at least a corrective to capitalism. In this way, Wright (2015a) suggests a combination of the two approaches as the best strategy. On the

Forum-affiliated movements (45 movements) rely on has shown (Steger and Wilson, 2012: 440). These two authors have extracted seven common features of the ideological agenda of these movements and it is important to note that the food sovereignty is one of them.

one hand, he commits to ‘taming capitalism’ via political campaigns directed at actions of the institutional authorities (‘from above’). On the other hand, he suggests ‘corroding of capitalism’, i.e., developing emancipatory, participative and egalitarian forms of economic activity (‘from below’), which stimulate the development of social solidarity and collaboration (Wright 2005a). Hahnel and Wright also elaborated efforts to achieve transformations of the existing system as a combination of interstitial and symbiotic strategies (Hahnel and Wright 2014: 87–88). The 2008 crisis enabled a somewhat more intensive encounter between theoretical reflections and practices concerned with the necessity of change.

Development of CSA in Croatia

This chapter is a result of the joint analysis of the ethnographic research having been performed from 2013 until today in Zagreb and Istria by one of the authors (Orlić 2014, 2019). Methodologies used were qualitative ones, including participant observation, ethnographic observation and semi-structured in-depth interviews (n: 20) together with data received by informal conversation, i.e., with individuals who preferred not to be engaged in the interviewing process. (n: 6). The analysis of the macroeconomic situation that facilitated the appearance of CSA in Croatia is included as well, together with the analysis of a legal framework related to the process of organic products certification and the new Public Procurement Act that is, in a case of agricultural products, favourable towards short supply chains, such as CSA. The author first learned about the CSA movement in Zagreb in 2009 from a friend who decided to grow organic vegetables for her family usage, but also with the aim to sell the surpluses via this new and quite alternative network.

The aim of the author was not only directly support the small organic farmers but to study the emerging grassroots movement as well. She was able to supplement the information gathered from the growing body of scholarly and activist work and literature with the data gathered through semi-structured interviews carried out with various actors of the CSA movement. These included the so-called ‘organizers’, administrators, members and farmers. The initial contact with one of the initiators was made on the site of the weekly delivery of the basket to which the researcher subscribed. After that the snowball method enabled the researcher to trace and contact other actors/interlocutors. Since the CSA in 2012 started to function on a practical level, it was still quite fresh in the minds of the organizers and initiators (practical and ideological) and they were able to recall how CSA was brought to Croatia. In 2013 and 2014 this qualitative research was carried out in Zagreb and the surrounding area (Orlić 2014), and in 2017 with actors of CSA movement in Istria (for more detail see Orlić 2019). Participation in weekly deliveries of the products enabled the author to do ethnographic observation, even participant observation to some extent. Visits to farms were carried out as well, and deliveries for other group members.

The idea to introduce CSA in Croatia appeared in 2009 when one of the initiators of the movement in Croatia, Hrvoje,⁷ met, during a permaculture course, Leo, a member of Italian GAS,⁸ a man from Croatia (Pula) living in Italy. Leo organized a benefit dinner with members of ‘his’ GAS group and they collected money and invited people from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina to visit their GAS in order to get introduced with the concept. After that, Hrvoje decided to support spreading of the movement in Croatia with help of ZMAG (Zelena mreža aktivističkih grupa – Green network of activist groups). Croatian CSA groups, as well as many other worldwide groups, relied on ten principles of *teikei*, formulated in 1971 by JOAA (Minamida 1995). However, the Croatian CSA emphasized three more general values to be followed as well: Transparency, Trust and Solidarity (Medić et al. 2013). In 2012, almost simultaneously, the groups in Zagreb and Istria started to function. In Istria the CSA developed under the influence of Neven, the founder and the president of the NGO Istrian Eco Product, which gathers certified organic producers in Istria. This fact strongly influenced the development of the Istrian CSA and caused the divergence of the movement in Croatia, related specifically to attitudes about the certification process.⁹

Unlike in Istria, CSA groups in Zagreb and surroundings actually did not trust the organic product certification process at all. Since most organizers had little or no trust in the state institutions, they assumed the process of certification would be somehow corrupted. Also, they mentioned that personal ties between consumers and producers can boost trust and solidarity, if the relationship was transparent. Therefore, most of them did not want “their” farmer to get “eco-certificate” at all. Visits to farms from organizers and consumers were considered to be enough. Then, in Zagreb numerous CSA groups by city districts were organized and they have been operating to the present day. However, the initial group, GSRijeda, was soon dismantled due to internal conflicts, but the farmer still supplies the individual supporters (their number grew from 10 to 40 families over the past decade). This support became important for

⁷ Pseudonymous first names are used for all interlocutors in the text.

⁸ GAS stands for the Italian *Gruppo d'acquisto Solidale*, meaning group for solidary purchase. GAS was organized in Italy in 1994 and its purchasing activity was not based solely on agricultural products.

⁹ The certification of the organic agricultural products in Croatia is regulated by numerous acts. Act on the Implementation of Council Regulation (EC) 834/2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products (OJ 80/13, 14/2014), Ordinance on organic production (Official Gazette 86/2013), Ordinance on organic production of plants and animals (Official Gazette, 1/2013), Ordinance on organic agricultural production (Official Gazette, 19/2016). According to the law a farmer has to be registered as a trader to be allowed apply for the certification or to apply with any formal request.

them to survive after they became unemployed. However, the supporters also participated in actions like lending the money to the farmer for certain acquisitions. This kind of solidarity and collaboration is not an exception, since members of other CSA groups claim that they also pre-finance, e.g., the sowing for their farmer(s), so that s/he does not have to take loans from credit banks. This type of activity is considered almost as a conspiracy by some of the actors of the CSA, since it is aimed 'against' the banks and capitalist systems in general.

This conceptualization of the activity as a conspiracy leads us to the question of motivation of various actors. While this activist and advocacy element is quite visible among the initiators and organizers, a majority of them are quite aware that among most buyers it is not like that. In Istria, on the other hand, since their main organizer was already an eco-certified producer who strongly believed that this was the only valid way to protect both consumers and producers, this was the way groups were organized. In 2015, they even changed the name to *Solidarne ekološke grupe* (Solidary ecological group(s) or SEG) in order to distinguish themselves from non-certified groups. The Istrian groups did now include a lot of local fruit producing farmers, so they involved fruit producers from other parts of the country and became the tangible incentive for them to transfer to organic production.

Therefore, the Istrian CSA groups had a significant impact on transition to organic farming in general, especially since Neven persuaded the administrative bodies of the city of Pula and Istrian County to subsidize this 'transfer' (of local producers) by paying to producers in the transitional period (three years) part of expenses needed for a monitoring process. This is in line with the framework of the Rural Development Programme of the Republic of Croatia for the period 2014–2020, where there are some measures that ease the certification process. Besides, the members of the Istrian CSA groups also pay a yearly donation (instead of a membership fee) that can be used according to the needs and desires of groups. They can also donate it to some producers, as they did for Vera, a younger producer, who, after a burnout on the regular job, decided to go back to the family farm and to get an eco-certificate. Today she is a regular supplier of the Istrian CSA groups, and she claims that the importance of the CSA groups as regular consumers is huge.

According to the research and to the Croatian CSA actors, the structure of group members/buyers is represented mainly by younger families with (usually young) children. They tend to have a higher education and are environmentally aware at least to a certain level (Sarjanović 2014). For most of them, the trigger to join the CSA group was the care for the health of their new-born baby that later spread to the other family members. This is in accordance with previous research carried out among CSA groups, but one has to take into account also the fact that, according to some researchers, 'care' in this context may be perceived as quite self-oriented (or even selfish) (Brunori et al., 2010). The growing desire for organic healthy food is fuelled by mistrust of conventional agricultural practice (Yridoe et al. 2005). However, this is not the only motivation for this green consumption, since recently the market niche for organic products

has been growing globally and in Croatia (Petljak 2010), resulting in the growing numbers related to organic production (Willer et al. 2018). Therefore, it is not so difficult to find organic products in shops and markets. However, it seems that this motivation related to environmental and health concerns is not entirely suited for buyers supporting alternative food networks such as CSA (Feagan 2008; Randelli 2015: 17), i.e. individuals who perceive themselves as food citizens, and not consumers.

According to the CBA data, in the period between 2007 and 2016 there was an upward trend in agricultural farms with organic farming. In 2016, the number of these farms was 1392 (representing in comparison to 2007 a growth of 97%). Organic food is much more expensive than conventional food, and therefore this type of consumption is considered to be a kind of elite consumerism. Most research of the CSA showed that it is also a highly gendered activity (Hatano 2008), and connected it with the 'caring consumption' of so-called eco-mums caring for health of the family and environment (Cone and Kakaliouras 1995; Abel et al. 1999; Cairns et al. 2014). Other members, not only organizers, perceive the CSA as an important way of struggle to achieve food sovereignty and to create some kind of alternative to the dominant neoliberal capitalist system.

However, it is also true that the CSA made significant economic impact enabling farmers to continue their work after the last economic crisis in 2008. The Great Recession of 2008 had an adverse effect on the Croatian economy, which ended up in a six-year recession that broadened further the income gap with respect to old (OMS) and new Member States (NMS) of the European Union (Čeh Časni et al. 2019). The crisis significantly influenced the purchasing power of a major part of Croatian citizens. Agricultural production in Croatia is on the decline since the end of World War II, due to intensive industrialization that happened during socialism. However, after the 1990s and the War of Independence (after which the political and economic systems changed), the neoliberal approach to market caused further difficulties, especially for small or private family farmers. Croatia has 1.3 million hectares of agricultural land and about 2.2 million hectares of forests. The country is self-sufficient in the production of wheat, corn, poultry, eggs, and wine, while still developing in the production of many other agricultural products. However, imports of agricultural and food products continue to grow. Although agriculture only contributes approximately 4 per cent to GDP, the importance of agricultural production is higher than its GDP share indicates. As far as Gross Value Added (GVA) contributions per component in OMS, NMS and Croatia are concerned, the contribution of agriculture to GVA growth in Croatia is negative, while in NMS and OMS it is positive. In addition, the primary sector (agriculture, forestry and fishing) accounted for only 1.5 per cent of GVA in 2015. (Čeh Časni et al. 2019)¹⁰.

¹⁰ The divergence of the Croatian economy has a long history that existed before the downfall of socialism and transition to the free market system.

The number of private family farms¹¹ in Croatia was largest in 2010, reaching 233 280, whereas by 2016 that number dropped by almost 58%, i.e., down to 134 459 private family farms. However, given the small average farm size and the fractured nature of the farms, restructuring policies in Croatia are of particular importance. At present, Croatian agriculture struggles with land ownership, the size of farms (which are small due to family inheritance laws) and outdated land registry books. The abovementioned economic reality, related to decline in the overall agricultural production and lower purchasing power of the citizens, in our opinion significantly fuelled the popularity of the CSA movement in Croatia. The movement enabled buyers from the disappearing stratum (at least in Croatia) of middle-income families to purchase organic food that would otherwise remain unaffordable to them. Therefore, researchers such as Grasseni (2013, 2014) and Rakopoulos (2016) are right to claim that these networks are not alternative anymore and that AFNs in Greece represent a material bridge for helping many citizens after the collapse of the state institutions that followed the crisis. Some interlocutors in Croatia also claim that it is a way of achieving autonomy, since the state institutions are no longer perceived as the ones that will take care of its citizens (regarding health etc.). The importance of collaboration, i.e. solidarity within the CSA, was considered to be more easily perceived from producers.

Yes, it was very important at the beginning. At the beginning it was GSR and it meant a lot – meaning, it was very important, before we put the milk vending machine we started to bring milk into GSR, where the market was, where this mountain society, we had a venue here and on Tuesdays we had exchange here, so, for me it meant a lot (milk and cheese producer from Istria).

Croatian GDP per capita had been converging in absolute terms from 1952 to the beginning of 1980s with OMS. In the early 1980s the divergence of Croatian GDP per capita from that of the OMS started, and by the end of the decade it had become obvious. After Croatia declared independence in 1990, the income divergence continued, encouraged by a deep transition recession. After a successful stabilization programme in late 1993, Croatian GDP per capita had started to grow again until the financial crisis of 2008.

¹¹ A private family farm, according to the definition of CBA, is an economic unit of a household that is engaged in agricultural production, irrespective of its purpose, i.e. irrespective of whether it produces for sale on the market or for its own consumption. The concept 'private family farm' was introduced into the statistical system of agricultural statistics in 1998. Until that year the concepts 'private farmstead' and 'private producer' were used.

One meat producer noticed the difference towards the farmers and their dignity between 'regular' and the CSA buyers:

You can see the difference between GSR buyers or buyers that are more aware about the food and buyers that consider a farmer to be some poor guy that works for them and has to be [grateful for doing so] (meat producer from Zagreb area).

Some of the buyers did raise the question about how exactly the producers are solidary with buyers (because usually the solidarity of buyers with farmers is more emphasized). Producers explain this at several levels. First and most important is the organic production itself – the producer has to produce organically and fairly and this is the most important feature, i.e., a prerequisite for solidarity of buyers with the producers. The prices also promote solidarity – they are lower than the same product would cost in the specialized store, and sometimes they are the same as or lower than on the farmers' markets.¹² This is not limited to small producers or organic producers exclusively – since the consumers are devoted to a particular producer he has to keep his prices affordable – after all, the middleman is cut in this chain and the producer receives enough money (more than via usual trading channels). Also, since he does not have to be concerned with (or at least devote a major part of the time to) marketing and distribution issues, he has more time to devote to production. Some Istrian SEG offer a possibility for buyers to earn their weekly basket by working at the farm and helping the farmer, in cases when the buyer has financial difficulties. In this way, both sides show solidarity and their collaboration continues.

Concluding remarks

The CSA in Croatia, as revealed by its leaflet, is based on three main principles that reflect its values and ethics: transparency, trust and solidarity (Medić et al. 2013). These principles have relied on 10 principles of *teikei* that were formulated in 1971 by JOAA¹³ (Minamida 1995). Transparency is the key to achieving trust, and this is best described by a sentence from one of the

¹² Farmers' markets in the open space in Croatia have a long history, and were even considered, in appropriate situations, to be nominated for the national list of intangible cultural heritage (Vukušić, 2018). They are quite popular, not only as a place for provisioning local goods (although it is not entirely true), but also as a place of communication and meeting (Šarić Žic and Kocković Zaborski, 2016).

¹³ Japan Organic Agriculture Association (<https://directory.ifoam.bio/affiliates/724-japan-organic-agriculture-association>).

ideological initiators of the movement: “I do not decide that I will have trust in you – You have to gain my trust and this is done by transparency”. Transparency relates to both, members and farmers. Members in a search for a producer have to be clear about their wishes, and a farmer has to be transparent about the way of production. Visits to the farm(s) are a regular part of the CSA routine, but only more engaged members take part in this. In the case of Istrian SEG, the organic farmers, as regular group members, are skilled enough to protect the group and themselves from potential frauds. This kind of mutual transparency and trust finally builds the solidarity between the actors. This solidarity can be expressed in various ways – not only in supporting the producer by regular buying his products (Medić et al. 2013:6). Pre-financing of sowing, pre-financing of certain acquisitions are the usual ways in which members are showing solidarity with the farmer. However, it also included actions such as buying damaged apples for juice producing (by members), enabling a farmer in question to continue with organic production. The farmers in Istria offer the possibility to unemployed members to ‘earn’ their weekly basket by helping in fields. This is how their values and ethics are imagined and practised.

This ethics has become more popular worldwide especially after the 2008 economic crisis (Kawano et al. 2009). These collaborative practices between producers and consumers within the CSA for some producers mean a survival, and for families easier obtaining organic food at reasonable prices. Considering all factors mentioned above, we could conclude that in Croatia, the CSA is far from being the mode of elitist consumption or consumerism. This form of economy for producers, and especially small ones, is often the only way to survive in the hostile global economy. It is no surprise that the idea has been more widely accepted after the 2008 crisis, when a significant number of producers and consumers lost their jobs (or had to close production, in the case of farmers). The consumers pay less than for the same product in specialized stores, and producers are paid immediately upon delivery. They get far more for the same product than they would by using other distribution channels, i.e. both sides get a fair price. The producer can predict income and improve cash flow and has a regular and steady distribution channel. Within the CSA group producer does not have to deal with marketing and food distribution issues since the CSA group is a very reliable customer. Initially, a farmer or any other producer assists in the establishment of CSA, but in time, when they get to know each other, CSA group becomes organized in such a way to minimally disturb the agricultural work. Lack of a formal organization leads to different legal problems regarding the certification of products and potential activities of selling products to institutions like hospitals or kindergartens. However, this is also to be improved since the new Public Procurement Act (Official Gazette No. 120/2016, in effect since 1 July 2017) in Article 284 offers a possibility to favour short supply chains in the domain of agricultural production (i.e., if the product is more nutritious, locally produced). This relates to agricultural production in general, not to organic production exclusively. Therefore, it is

unofficially called Green Public Procurement. It represents a significant step forward in national legislation, but it is not yet implemented fully. A recent study conducted by quantitative methods among farmers in Istria in order to analyse potential for institutional support for small family farmers and CSA farmers (Orlić 2021) showed that this is the case among Istrian CSA (SEG farmers). Not a single Istrian CSA farmer that participated in the study had tried to participate with his/her offer in the Green Public Procurement by the time the study was conducted (Orlić 2021:122). The reasons were different: most respondents never heard of it or did not know how to apply it (61.5%); 25% of them considered it too complicated even to try. Only a minority think that they do not have enough products quantities (5.8%). The same percentage thinks that the administration is too demanding, and 3.8% of them think that the prices they would have to offer are too low (Orlić 2021: 123).

This research directly supports the thesis that main problems relate to small size of family farms and small quantities they can produce, regarding Public Procurement of organic products. Croatian farmers individually do not have the strength to compete on Public Procurement. They have to act jointly if they want to profit from this legal change. The Rural Development Programme of the Ministry for Agriculture offered to finance the creation of farmers' cooperatives¹⁴. However, the majority of the respondents did not apply (91.2%). No Istrian SEG farmers applied. Most of them did not notice the call or did not have enough information. Others were aware of the impossibility to pre-finance the call or to find an adequate partner. They also think that they are not eligible (Orlić 2021: 125).

It remains to be seen whether CSA farmers will consider this as opportunity for them, or will they remain exclusively in the existing short supply chains.

The CSA in Croatia has been developing only for about 10 years. It really was an alternative food network at the beginning, but now it has been included in policy making at regional and local levels (e.g., the AGRISHORT short supply chain in the Medimurje region represents the first top-down initiative of the kind in Croatia (Bagarić 2021)). In Istria, bottom-up initiatives as SEG gained significant support from the local and regional administration. It seems that the food citizenship concept that was brought to Croatia with CSA groups has slowly taken root and become mainstream.

¹⁴ The call was intended for funding of the 'production organizations'. This odd term replaced the term *zadruga* (for various types of cooperatives), because of the negative connotations the term *zadruga* has from the socialist period when the forced collectivization in agricultural sector took place (Babić and Račić 2011)

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