

Agricultural Cooperatives in the County of Trento (Italy): Economic, Organizational and Legal Perspectives

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Abstract

At present, agricultural cooperatives, like all cooperatives, are faced with many challenges. They are questioned about their organizational and management framework, their relations with local communities and with the market. In Italy, there is an ongoing debate relating to how cooperatives at large should or are supposed to evolve in a context in which the market pressure seems to overcome the traditional characteristics of the cooperative movement (mutuality, solidarity, the "one head one vote" principle, and so on). How to adequately balance the innovation thrust and the cooperative principles? How can agricultural cooperatives develop in the face of the ever overwhelming market forces? Is the legal framework provided for cooperatives still competitive? By taking into account the long-rooted experience of agricultural cooperatives in the County of Trento, the authors intend to analyze the main economic, organizational and legal problems affecting these cooperatives. On examining these problems, the article also intends to bring about some proposals and recommendations for the future developments of agricultural cooperatives.