



MINISTERO DELLE POLITICHE AGRICOLE
ALIMENTARI E FORESTALI



**PROMOTING SOCIAL
RESPONSIBILITY
OF FARMS AND
AGRI-FOOD ENTERPRISES**

guidelines

INEA

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

GUIDELINES

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RESPONSIBILITY
OF FARMS AND
AGRI-FOOD ENTERPRISES**



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their contribution:

ENTERPRISES: Azienda Bea; Agribosco; Amadori; Biscottificio Scapigliati; Caseificio Vannulo; Consorzio pesca Ancona; Coop-Adriatica and Coop Italia; Gal Cosvel; Granarolo; Il Melograno; Palm; Palmera; Servizi industriali sas; Terre di Sicilia; Veroni.

ETHICAL/CONSUMER ASSOCIATIONS: BVQI Italia spa; Certiquality; Cittadinanza Attiva; Codacons; Finanza Etica; Sodalitas; Unione Nazionale Consumatori e Utenti.

TRADE ASSOCIATIONS: Anicav; APA; Cia; Coldiretti; Confagricoltura; Confartigianato; Confesercenti; Fedagri; Legambiente; Rete Fattorie Sociali; Unioncamere.

TRADE UNIONS: CGIL; CISL; UIL; UGL.

ENTITIES AND INSTITUTIONS: Agenzia di sviluppo empoese valdelsa; Inail; Ipi; Ministero delle Politiche agricole alimentari e forestali; Ministero del Welfare; Ministero dello Sviluppo Economico; Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano; Regione Campania - Assessorato all'Agricoltura e alle Attività Produttive; Regione Toscana - Assessorato alle Attività Produttive; RespET - Centro per l'impresa Etica e Responsabile del Comune di Roma; Agenzia di sviluppo integrato di Caltagirone; Sedicibanca S.p.A. (credito agricolo).

UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS: Prof. Gian Paolo Cesaretti (University of Naples); Prof. Francesco Di Iacovo (University of Pisa); Prof. Massimo Sabbatini (University of Cassino); Prof. Primo Mario Salani (University La Sapienza - Roma); Prof. Saverio Senni (University della Tuscia); Prof. Francesco Parisi (University of Bologna).

This document was drawn up as part of the project titled "Responsabilità sociale: implicazioni ed applicazioni alle imprese del settore agroalimentare" (Social responsibility: implications and applications to enterprises of the agri-food sector) realized by INEA and funded by MIPAF (now MIPAAF) with Ministerial Decree D.M. 488/7303/2004.

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This document serves to support and foster the adoption of socially responsible behaviour and to promote and spread the culture of social responsibility in the agricultural and agri-food sector. This was achieved through a *participative* process involving the major institutions and operators in the field.

FOREWORD

In the past few years socio-environmental issues have become an integral part of the objectives of agricultural policy. The ever-growing request for quality, wholesome genuine food products, climate and energy shocks, as well as social and environmental problems related to sustainable development have accelerated this process.

A new development model demands that part of farms' competitiveness include a commitment to ensure a sufficient degree of economic, social and environmental sustainability in the territorial context in which they operate. It follows that the success of agriculture with respect to the new expectations of society lies in the capability of farms to produce healthy genuine food while protecting natural resources maintaining a balance in the development of the region, creating jobs and dedicating more attention to the quality of the work itself.

Today, consumers are increasingly attentive when they buy food products. More than ever, they incorporate the presence of environmental and social sustainability of production into their purchasing decisions. Therefore, the agricultural industry pays considerable attention to topics such as food safety, traceability of productions, product quality, respect for the environment and human resources. These aspects have helped to define the concept of production in a broader dimension; that is, production includes supply chain and territory, promotion, traceability of agri-food production and institutional communication. These elements are widely covered in the current guidelines on social responsibility for the agri-food system written by INEA.

Recently, the Institute has participated in the debate on corporate social responsibility (CSR). In the past few years, CSR has been a growing theme for enterprises, associations, institutions, consumers and society in general. In the quest to further integrate CSR with the agri-food system, we submit these guidelines as a first step toward their effective application.

In fact, we intend these guidelines as an instrument for farms to begin building an organized process of social responsibility in their own business. Some farms and agri-food enterprises are showing more willingness to consider good practices of social responsibility as part of their business strategy. A structural and strategic vision of social responsibility emerges with respect to specific corporate behaviour. Businesses may increase their focus on these behaviours and instruments to promote respect for workers' rights and safety, environment, public health and a safe product. Thus, the adoption of socially responsible behaviour may stimulate the modernization of the production and contribute to the implementation of sustainable development.

This paper has the merit of using a process for assessing social responsibility that takes into account the size of the business with particular reference to small and medium enterprises. To this extent, a modular perspective was chosen allowing enterprises to approach the theme of CSR on a degree-based logic, using the self-evaluation matrix of the social responsibility process which is broken down into two aspects: degree of CSR orientation and degree of network orientation. In order to facilitate the launch of the social responsibility process by enterprises in this sector, we have given examples of socially responsible practices and processes taken from the world of farms and agri-food enterprises. In so doing, we have offered an empirical approach that can be transferred effectively to the various individual production situations.

Social responsibility requires an ongoing commitment by all the stakeholders for the purpose of contributing to the economic development of the sector and it cannot merely translate into a quality certification standard. In this sense, the hope of INEA is to contribute with its activities to promote a new mindset and a new way of carrying out business according to an integrated approach (triple bottom line) that takes into account economic, environmental and social factors.

Lino Carlo Rava
*(Member of the Italian Parliament
and President of INEA)*

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1 Introduction

1.1 Presentation of the project

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a topic which has attracted growing attention in recent years from consumers, enterprises¹, associations, institutions and society in general. In the agri-food system the growing sensitivity towards food health and safety, environment and territory puts a strong accent on CSR issues, with particular reference to the value and quality of productions, their connection to the territory, the production processes on which they are based, the governance structures, the definition of corporate strategies and, last but not least, the capability of enterprises to convey an image that is compatible with their own values and principles. All of this is seen from a perspective that tends to increasingly promote a network logic - between enterprises, sectors and regions - for the purpose of adding value to production while reinforcing local and national economies and assuring that enterprise drives development. In this context, we hope that enterprises will pay more attention to the behaviours and instruments that promote the respect and safety of labour resources, the environment, the health and safety of the production, as well as cooperation with local communities.

These guidelines constitute the popular support for operators in the agri-food sector. We define the agri-food sector as the whole of enterprises that carry out their business individually or in an integrated manner for the production, transformation, and sale of farm, fish and forestry products.

The development of these guidelines has taken into account the complexity and specificity of the agri-food system. In particular we have taken into account protected areas, urban areas and peri-urban areas, rural areas and areas having strong specializations, production districts, productive typology, size classifications (micro, small, medium and large enterprises) and the different degrees of concentration (cooperatives, consortia, associations, etc.).

Therefore, we have adopted a tier-based model that allows each enterprise to use the concepts and instruments proposed on the basis of their own needs to promote an individual path consistent with the proposed CSR orientation model.

The actors of the agri-food system can find in the guidelines a common reference framework for:

- interpreting the concept of social responsibility;
- assimilating the necessary strategic orientation;

1. In the present guidelines the terms 'enterprise' and 'business' are synonyms.

- adopting the possible CSR instruments;
- promoting the development of integrated processes at the local level.

The intended recipients of these guidelines are farmers and agri-food entrepreneurs. Articulated more broadly, these guidelines are intended for any “producer of goods” or “provider of services” of recreational, cultural, social nature, which characterize him as the major “keeper” of local traditions, identity and specificities.

In order for their application to be effective, the present guidelines can be spread through public and/or private “intermediary” actors, who have relationships with farms, forestry, fishing and agri-food enterprises: producers’ organizations, trade organizations and/or associations (for agriculture, handicraft, industry, commerce or tourism), chambers of commerce for industry and handicraft, operators of distribution, insurance and banking in the sector, professional associations, trade unions, regional innovation and development agencies, local authorities and universities.

1.2 Work Methodology

The guidelines are an instrument designed to make concrete and flexible operative proposals that leave each enterprise the autonomy to choose the CSR mode of operation it considers most suitable to its own business situation within a framework that can perceive the peculiarities of the agri-food system.

Table 1 - Phases of guidelines drawing up

Aims	Activities	Results
Explanation	1. Preliminary study of the guidelines produced by national and international Institutions regarding the issue of social responsibility	Definition of the work methodology, the elements of continuity and originality with respect to existing experiences
	2. Preliminary analysis of the characteristics of the agricultural and agri-food sector	Definition of the CSR requirements in the agri-food system
	3. Interviews with selected witnesses	Recognition of the various meanings of the concept of CSR in the agri-food system and various experiences going in that direction
	4. Processing the interview results	Connotation of CSR characteristics in the agri-food system
Experimenting and sharing	5. Defining the goals and structure of the guidelines	Elaboration of a framework for the guidelines
	6. Focus group with enterprises and institutions	Sharing the layout of the guidelines, identification of needs and listening to suggestions
	7. Writing the first draft of the guidelines	Draft
	8. Defining support instruments connected to the guidelines	Definition of the work methodology, the elements of continuity and originality with respect to existing experiences
Validation	9. Testing the guidelines	Validation of the document created
	10. Revising the guidelines	Final version of the document
	11. Divulging the guidelines	Event for divulging the guidelines, spreading information on the Internet, conducting surveys on the state of progress of implementation

From the methodological point of view, we would like to underline some particularly significant elements:

1. **Interdisciplinary workgroup:** All the activities were carried out through the contributions of the members of the workgroup activated by INEA. The workgroup was made up of subjects with specific skills and experiences in the agri-food system and around the issue of corporate social responsibility; it comprised a mix of competencies that was particularly fruitful and stimulating.
2. **Participative approach:** The intermediate and final results were subject of discussions with these major actors in the agri-food system that made essential contributions toward adapting the content of the guidelines to better fit the needs of operators and institutions.
3. **Selection criteria and the role of outside witnesses:** Outside witnesses were identified to reflect the heterogeneous nature of the various components of the agri-food system. The input given by the external witnesses made clear the need to give a strong connotation of “graduality” to the indications provided in the guidelines. In other words, every enterprise, in the light of its own internal and external peculiarities, must have the possibility to create an original and personalized mode of operation to approach social responsibility yet should adhere to a certain methodological consistency with the other situations characterizing the agri-food system.
4. **Methods for setting up a focus group:** The choice of the focus group as survey instrument was dictated by the need to integrate the information already available to the workgroup with the viewpoints of enterprises and institutions while involving these actors in a process of analyzing the possible interactions and synergies. Therefore, two different focus groups were set up: one for the enterprises and one for the institutions. The former was composed of farms and agri-food enterprises, with particular attention on the various types of business, production sectors, size and geographical origin, in order to get an overview of the Italian scenario. The latter involved some representatives of central administrations of the State, Regions, Municipalities, chamber system, farming banks, agencies for agricultural development, associations dealing with enterprises and social farms.
5. **Research and analysis of concrete businesses:** In the guidelines we reported business experiences and cases to identify common processes in the adoption of social responsibility practices and evaluate its impact on corporate performance. Along with the case studies we analyzed the motives of the enterprises, their processes, the instruments they adopt as well as the impact of their behaviours on the organization or on their corporate results.



1.3 How to read the guidelines

The present guidelines represent an instrument that is easy to consult, written according to a modular approach that allows each business to build its own original CSR mode of operation by using the instructions contained in this volume in relation to its own specificities. Although it represents one stage of a unitary process, each chapter constitutes a “module” that can be consulted individually in relation to the level of interest and knowledge about that particular subject matter. Therefore, certain operative instructions have been identified as necessary for understanding the numerous processes and instruments used and/or usable in the CSR of the agri-food system. *The very concept of CSR does not lend itself to a rigid classification of standard instruments and processes*; this implies that, starting from such instructions, each “actor” can undertake its own CSR mode of operation, thereby becoming the promoter of a virtuous model of conduct in relation to its own stakeholders.

The CSR mode of operation of each enterprise requires an understanding of what CSR is. To this end, the guidelines include a chapter in which CSR concepts and principles are explained concisely to offer a preliminary idea to those approaching this subject for the first time. The authors set out to create a balance between expository simplicity and theoretical rigor to examine the major themes of CSR in the agricultural and agri-food sector.

Figure 1 - Rational map of the guidelines

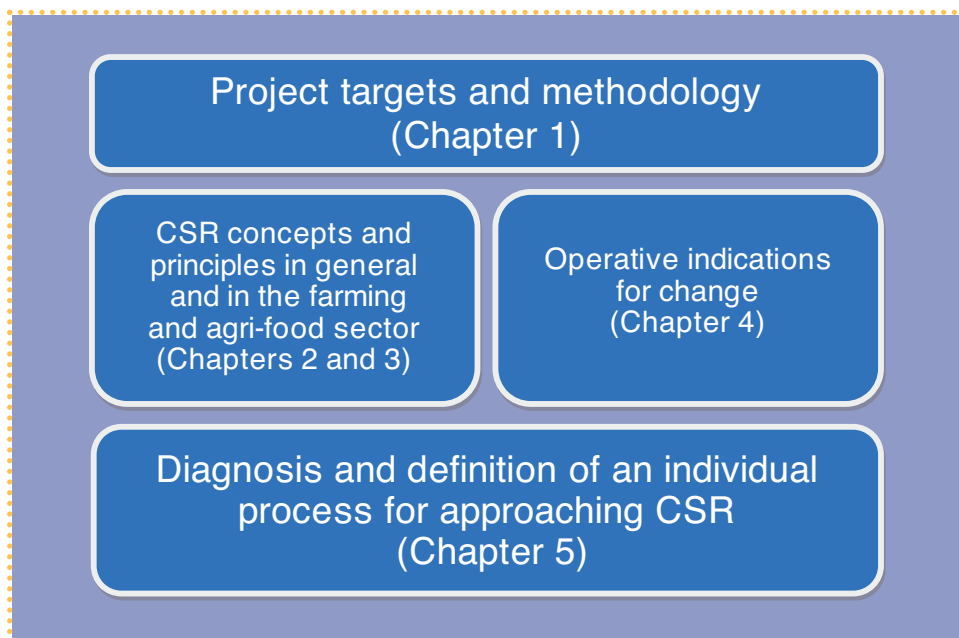


Figure 1 summarizes the structure of the guidelines, which are broken down into four modules:

- methodology used and pursued goals (Chapter 1);
- CSR concepts and principles in the agri-food system (Chapter 2) and the main areas of application in the system (Chapter 3);
- operative indications for each subject of interest to the sector (Chapter 4);
- the self-diagnosis matrix to determine and adopt a personalized CSR process (Chapter 5).





2 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): key concepts

2.1 General concepts and implications for farms and agri-food enterprises

Being socially responsible means not only fully meeting the legal obligations of one's corporate activity, but also going the extra mile and investing more in human capital, environment and relations with the company's own interested parties (stakeholders)².

Corporate social responsibility can therefore be classified as a form of volunteerism. A socially responsible enterprise moves in the direction of adopting strategies that make it easier to meet the needs of stakeholders by going beyond the standards required by the law. In this sense a socially responsible enterprise is able to interpret the various requests of its stakeholders by harmonizing the entrepreneur's expectations for remuneration with the economic, social and environmental expectations of the other subjects involved; that is, the enterprise must take into consideration human resources, consumers, banking and financial system, suppliers, local communities, etc.

BOX 1 - WHO ARE STAKEHOLDERS?

Stakeholders are the "interested parties" who are directly or indirectly involved in the business and success of an enterprise. We are referring to all the internal and external "carriers" of legitimate interest in the enterprise:

- *owners;*
- *employees/contractors/family helpers;*
- *clients upstream and downstream* (suppliers of technical equipment/transformation and distribution industry/end-users);
- *territory/local community/environment* (investors, public and private institutions, local entrepreneurial world, residents).

The concept of social responsibility is therefore closely related to the characteristics of the stakeholders. Since every enterprise has unique stakeholders, CSR cannot be an univocal or absolute concept; on the contrary, it is an admittedly

2. European Commission, Green Paper, Promoting a European framework for corporate social responsibility, 2001 - COM (2001) 366, BRUSSELS 18/07/2001.

modular concept that assumes different configurations from one business, sector or period to another. As shown in Chapter 5, there are no predefined or optimal processes; there are only examples that can be used to shape the entire corporate business according to the principles of CSR and gradual improvement in the attention given to its stakeholders.

First, corporate social responsibility is characterized in various different ways depending on the size of the enterprise (micro, small, medium and large). For large enterprises that can put huge resources and advanced competencies directly on the field, CSR can naturally be considered as a part of a fundamental strategic orientation and be interpreted as an “investment” that allows the enterprise to safeguard and improve its economic performance through better interaction with the interested parties. In the case of small and medium enterprises, the smaller availability of financial and human resources is accompanied by a more immediate contact with the stakeholders. Thus, for these enterprises, CSR cannot train these businesses to engage in an integrated process with other similar enterprises or with those who are upstream and downstream of the “value chain”. Likewise, it is necessary to be connected to the promotional actions of institutions and gain the support of the local community. Therefore, corporate dimension is clearly not a limiting factor for the development of CSR; on the contrary, it could become an advantageous position if the enterprise builds a trusting relationship with its own stakeholders and engages in the logic of the system.

Moreover, social responsibility is defined differently depending on the peculiarities of the sector. The agri-food system plays a central role for the community because it responds to the primary needs of the individual and therefore plays a decisive role for the socio-economic development of the region. On the one hand the liberalization of international markets and the widespread knowledge of information technologies has made it possible to have a greater circulation of goods and information by exponentially expanding the choices of consumers, on the other hand the growth of the interdependency of markets that are difficult to control has sometimes determined negative effects on food quality and safety.

The health problems associated with food have determined a change in the relationship between consumers and the agri-food system. Economic downturns due to the Bovine Spongiform Encephalitis (BSE), avian and swine flu have created significant crises over the years in consumers’ trust which has led to an increase in the attention of public opinion on food and consequently on agricultural policies. In particular, consumers have become more sensitive to issues such as food safety, environment, animals’ well-being and biodiversity, but also to ethical values of consumption.

In addition to serving an economic and productive function, farms also fulfil - more or less consciously and in a way that is increasingly influential - the functions of protecting the environment, enhancing rural spaces and local traditions

(such as pluriactivity and multifunctionality through which farmers summarize their role as actors in the economic and social development of the territory).

Food enterprises have also become a major element for sustainable development policies through production processes that are environmentally sustainable, the production of safe and “quality” foods, as well as through the assigning value to local products, traditions and specific food-making skills.

For the agri-food system CSR constitutes a fundamental strategic orientation, in light of which we have to rethink the processes and behaviours of enterprises in a unitary framework of “sharing” a socially responsible process among all the stakeholders. Therefore, CSR does not constitute a single area of action for enterprises but rather a different way of thinking and carrying out business that takes into account the historical moment for the suitability of individual enterprises and the specificities of their stakeholders.

2.2 Rationale

As pointed out in the above paragraph, the relationship to one’s stakeholders constitutes a crucial element of corporate social responsibility. A proper relationship with them can determine:

- *advantages within the enterprise* in terms of improving the work climate increasing the capacity of finding information, working in groups, etc.;
- *advantages outside of the enterprise* by reinforcing the loyalty of customers, greater and more profitable collaboration with public authorities, the *realization of partnerships with suppliers* and distribution channels, etc.;
- *short-term advantages*: a socially responsible enterprise can obtain business advantages, especially in those market segments where the social sensitivity of consumers is more accentuated (e.g. child labour, protection of savings);
- *long-term advantages*: a socially responsible enterprise develops a greater capability to determine the risks associated with business activities and to assess/appreciate new opportunities.

CSR can provide remarkable leverage to make enterprises adopt a more structured and balanced corporate organization and formulate strategies based on an analysis of its own stakeholders, the value created in the medium-long term, the sustainability³ and effects of their decisions.

In the agri-food system the adoption of the CSR approach can bring the benefits indicated for the purpose of exemplification on the following table.

3. Sustainability refers to the ability to devise a strategy for “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs” (WCED, 1987).



Table 2 - Advantages of CSR for farms and agri-food enterprises

ADVANTAGES	Short-term	Medium/long-term
Internal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement of social climate and integration • Better productivity • Greater spreading of knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better protection of workers • Going beyond the limits of one's small size to create networks • Better protection of the value of land holdings through environmental protection and product quality policies
External	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More competitiveness for quality products and/or a strong connection to the territory • Increase in safety • Improvement in relations with the local community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A structured approach to management • Improvement in consumer trust • Improvement of company image and reputation • Greater capacity to respond to sectorial crises

2.3 CSR strategies

An enterprise choosing to adopt the CSR mode of operation must “rethink itself,” through its strategies and actions. This should be with its stakeholders adopting CSR as a strategic orientation. As CSR is a dynamic concept that changes throughout time and space depending on the reference sector, historical moment, consumer sensitivity to ethical-social aspects, likewise the specific strategies of social responsibility depend on the historical moment and the context surrounding the enterprise.

In principle, there are two types of CSR strategies: inside and outside the enterprise.

The *inside dimension* of CSR involves the internal corporate environment and in particular:

- *the management of human resources*, consisting of all the actions associated with the valorisation of human capital, such as the ongoing training of personnel; establishing a flexible work time-schedule or agreeing upon certain hours with workers; promoting equal opportunity and non-discriminatory practices; promoting social integration of immigrant labour force;
- *the protection of work health and safety*, which translates to the adoption of voluntary measures to increase, beyond legal obligations, the health and

safety of the workplace with the aim of effectively promoting preventive behaviours and habits;

- *adaptation to corporate transformations and reorganization*, traceable to actions aimed at fostering a greater involvement of the stakeholders; promoting the adoption of professional reconversion policies; supporting local employment and/or the social integration of its own workers.

The *external dimension* affects the various relationships between the enterprise and the outside world, in particular with:

- *local communities*: the creation of partnerships with local companies and/or institutions in order to carry out projects that help the community, community activities, and initiatives involving issues of social, environmental and cultural value;
- *suppliers, customers and end-users*: this refers to actions that promote food quality and safety, respect for ethics and environmental protection to meet the needs of consumers who are becoming more sensitive to social issues. Moreover, try to build business partnerships that promote the adoption of a socially responsible production chain;
- *the environment*: strategies for reducing the consumption of resources, emissions and waste; actions to improve environmental performance along the entire production chain; attention to the environmental footprints of products throughout their entire lifecycle; adopt sustainable systems of environmental management (and the certification of such systems).



3 Key issues for farms and agri-food enterprises

The liberalization of markets refers to the needs/expectations of consumers for “added value” in food products such as safety, wholesomeness, environmental sustainability, animal well-being, typicality, ethical productions, information regarding food origin and transparency of prices. This liberalization confronts not only the enterprise but the entire agri-food system with the need to reinforce its competitiveness and image on national and international markets. To this end it is important to promote the “quality” of productions as well as the quality of the relationships between the individual enterprises and the single components of the system itself; that is, quality is promoted through the creation and integration of enterprise networks.

A farm or agri-food enterprise is not an isolated production unit but a cog in the greater machine characterized by vertical (between production, transformation, distribution and services) and horizontal (between enterprises of the same sector) interrelations.

The efficacy of a CSR action launched by a farm or an agri-food enterprise therefore depends, and it is strongly influenced by, the degree of sharing and involvement in socially responsible behaviour of the enterprises operating in the same production chain (from production to the distribution-related services) or in different production chains. In engaging in the system and establishing a network of relationships, enterprises contribute to the growth and socio-economic development of the territory in which they work. The success of CSR policies over time depends on the extent to which the vision of the each individual enterprise finds resonance and shared values in the overall context in which it works.

The reinforcement of relationships between enterprises is an indispensable premise for growth of the enterprises themselves. The growth of the single enterprise must harmonize with the corporate dimension and reach of a critical mass. This is an indispensable condition for survival in the global market. The reinforcement of the relationships between components of the system, the chain, if understood properly, can be considered as a system only if there are no conflicts between the goals of the various phases. On the other hand, there must be a sharing of goals or at least goals that are not in opposition to each other. In recent years the process of creating value has shifted notably downstream on the chain; distribution has become the most influential factor of the entire chain for achieving a competitive position, though it is only the last link of the chain. The organized large-scale trade is playing an increasingly crucial role in the agri-food system. To this end, the creation of CSR networks that help small and medium

enterprises establish proactive relations with large distribution are becoming competitors' vital importance.

CSR strategies can be the ideal instrument for pursuing the goals of both production quality and relationship quality precisely because they are based on the principle of "satisfying" the requests and expectations of all the stakeholders, inside and outside the enterprise, the sector and the agri-food system.

From this perspective the strategic orientation of CSR for farms and agri-food enterprises, delineated briefly in the previous paragraphs can be divided into **four macro strategic areas** of CSR. These areas of CSR intervention are **key factors for the agri-food system**, closely interrelated and pertaining to the internal dimension of the enterprise (product and human resources) and the world outside the enterprise (territory and environment). These are horizontal themes for any production sector or stage of the chain in which the enterprise is operating.

3.1 Human resources

The issue of human resources in the agri-food system is important for two reasons. First the reduced size of the enterprises in this sector tends to put these considerations on the back burner. Second, because the characteristics of the production organization create working conditions in relation to which the adoption of entrepreneurial behaviours based on CSR principles are vital; that is, there are many critical factors in the labour quality profile that could become apparent in the sector (e.g. low safety level, high seasonality, widespread use of immigrant labour force, lack of steady work).

Therefore, for the enterprises of the agri-food system that already comply with labour laws, CSR with regard to human resources means:

- *improving workers' skills*, with refresher courses and employee training. These courses would address not only matters of safety in the sense that it is a worker's right to be safe, but also on issues that are specifically of interest to the enterprises such as the production systems and update courses. Furthermore these enterprises could implement an articulated system of personnel management that encourages professional growth;
- *implementing a resource management policy* that facilitates processes for making personnel more responsible and motivated with respect to the enterprise's goals. When size allows it, by introducing models and systems for assessment, work groups etc., incentives associated with results, participative models in the enterprise, transparency and frequent occasions for exchanging information;
- *promoting a policy of equal opportunity (not only genderwise)*, by implement-

ing actions that ensure equal opportunity for access to work and professional growth for women (e.g. part-time or other concepts of flexible time), disabled persons (active introduction into the working world), or other socially disadvantaged persons such as convicted criminals, former drug addicts, etc. (specific training and integration interventions);

- *smoothing the integration of immigrant workers*, representing for this sector a factor of particular strategic importance, through a very broad range of interventions (lodging, language courses);
- *promoting a sense of well-being at work (well-being in addition to quality)*, by organizing specific activities such as sports/recreation events during or after work and reward trips.

3.2 Product

“Product strategy” in the agri-food sector means conceiving an integrated approach to the product and to its characterizing dimensions. This includes not only intrinsic characteristics such as genuineness, safety, typicality but also added value from extrinsic characteristics such as traceability, innovation, sustainability. These components are considered central on a market that requires more competitiveness where there are consumers who are increasingly attentive and aware.

A product strategy that draws inspiration from social responsibility must take into account at least one or more of the following factors:

- *quality*, in the sense of safety, wholesomeness, conformity to certain nutritional and organoleptic characteristics of the raw materials and production processes. “Making quality” means not stopping at putting on the market a product that ensures food safety but going beyond that and offering product genuineness, naturalness and typicality. It means founding the growth and corporate philosophy around the central concept of “quality”: it is not enough to produce a food of superior quality - the enterprise must “be” a quality enterprise by introducing practices, methodologies and procedures that aim at excellence and continuous improvement. It also means making the organization able to identify each individual production phase and the raw materials used;
- *territoriality*, the capability of the product to symbolize the value of its territory of origin, expressing the typicality of that land, in other words the whole of its traditions, culture, know-how that make it a “one of a kind”. This factor is attuned to *the growing distribution of products with certification of origin: protected designation of origin (POD), protected geographical indication (PGI), traditional specialty guaranteed, brand protection consortia*. Product territori-



ality policies are expressed in the consolidation of production practices such as the use of raw materials that come from the local territory, respect for the production methods associated with the local traditions or recovery of products and recipes from the past. All of these elements prove to be guarantee factors for preserving the agri-food and food/wine heritage of many local contexts in Italy for the valorisation of the enterprise's reference agriculture and farming segment;

- *transparency of information* relative to the lifecycle and organoleptic composition of the food product. Such information constitutes an indispensable added value that affects the specific qualities of the product (composition, origin, etc.), as well as the production process itself. In particular the indication of origin, the time when a fish is caught or the place and date of slaughtering for butchered products are increasingly important factors in the choice of consumers to whom the enterprises are progressively addressing their production strategies. Providing transparent information about food products means going beyond legal obligations regarding traceability. It means implementing policies to protect the right of consumers to have information, and providing all the additional information that allows consumers to monitor the production process, the origin of raw materials, etc.

Product quality is therefore associated with that of the corporate organization and the quality of the production process. Thus, an enterprise that designs its corporate strategies based on quality production is implementing virtuous behaviours facilitating its decision to move in a socially responsible direction.

3.3 Territory

The close relationship between the agri-food system and the territory can generate a value chain that goes beyond the actual enterprise to affect the whole social and economic context.

Developing a positive relationship with the territory allows enterprises in the agri-food system to better enhance tourism and handicraft resources, to fulfil a social-environmental function through the safeguard of the naturalistic and cultural heritage, stewardship over the traditions and know-how acquired in rural places. Moreover it deepens the roots of the enterprise into the territory and creates a preferential relationship with the local market, by means of:

- *conserving, transforming and transmitting cultural values*, the memory of local traditions, conservation of “the culture of knowing how to make things” which one finds in handcrafted products or in the application of particular farming techniques that determine the typicality of productions and represent the value of the heritage of a given territory;

- *protecting the landscape*: enterprises that practice a correct land management and use, that protect cultural heritage and landscape, limiting the use of pesticides, avoiding polluting and/or erosive substances, that refrain from uncontrolled deforestation, that upgrade and preserve open spaces, that protect and valorise the landscape and rural space and take care of the local territory;
- *enhancing life quality and social cohesion*: farms are an indispensable element of the territory where they work. Their social function is expressed in the contribution that they can offer to improve the quality of life of the local community by providing services to the population while maintaining or increasing local employment levels.

There are many *advantages* to adopting a CSR strategy within the territory. Firstly, the farm or agri-food enterprise enhances tangible resources (raw materials) and intangible resources (knowledge, skills and traditions) present in that territory. Secondly, the territory becomes a strategic variable of competitiveness and assumes a positive value in symbolic terms for public opinion, a sort of “designation of origin” that adds value to products. The choice of a strategic CSR orientation allows the farm to develop its multifunctional nature in the long-term by developing synergetic and reciprocal relationships with the territory. Investing in the relationship with the territory allows enterprises to build a direct and open relationship with the local actors; orienting the competitiveness of farms toward a model that enhances local and regional specificities.

3.4 Environment

When agronomic practices are implemented, it can constitute a factor of strong environmental pressure on all of the components of natural systems, causing impoverishment of natural resources. For this reason sustainable use of natural resources such as land, air, water and energy represents a strategic factor in entrepreneurial conduct. On the other hand, abandoning agricultural and mountainous areas also leads to environmental deterioration resulting in a loss of vegetation, erosion and impoverishment of the biodiversity. Thus, it is indispensable to take stewardship of rural territories by assuring the continuity of eco-sustainable farming and foresting practices.

In the light of all this, and considering the limited availability of natural resources, there are numerous and diverse socially responsible environmental strategies to choose from:

- *biodiversity protection*. In the agri-forest ecosystem we are witnessing the coexistence of wild fauna and flora, genetic resources of animals and plants, soil microorganisms, elements of biodiversity. A socially responsible entrepreneur adopts conservative policies, diversified according to the territorial set-



ting, that protect the characteristics and emergences associated with biodiversity;

- *environmental upgrading.* Lifestyles and consumption styles along with technical progress have a considerable effect on the environment because on the one hand technical innovations tend to optimize production processes while on the other hand the positive effects of modernization do not always make it possible to regenerate natural resources or eliminate waste. A socially responsible entrepreneur adopts production techniques that are less “invasive” with respect to the naturalness of the territory by choosing actions, where necessary, of environmental recovery and upgrading to protect natural resources;
- *bio-energies development.* The high fossil fuels price, the dependency of our economic system on foreign energy sources and the fragility of the supply system make it increasingly urgent to find a solution to the energy question. Bio energies represent a valid alternative to traditional sources of energy. Biomass of plant origin for energy purposes originates from forest and farm productions, from energy crops or deriving from harvesting the residues of agrarian cultivation, in addition to using and processing forest resources. Enterprises can contribute to the development of bio-energies by appropriately transforming biomass, both solid and liquid, deriving from arboreal and herbaceous plantations, sewage and effluent from animal farms. The socially responsible entrepreneur who participates in the energy chain contributes to protecting the environment in which he/she works and finds alternative sources of income and energy that are particularly useful to the national production system.

The advantages for socially responsible farms and agri-food enterprises are associated with improvement of the quality of productions, respect for the environment and the positive effects that arise from the soil and climate conditions of the territory on which the enterprise operates, whether it has chosen intensive or extensive farming and the production techniques it adopts.



4 Operative instructions

This chapter explains the major operative instructions and useful references for developing social responsibility in farms and agri-food enterprises as it is defined in the previous chapters. Considering the heterogeneous nature of the starting conditions characterizing the various scenarios in the agricultural and agri-food sector, the proposed approach is modular so that each enterprise can choose its own original approach to social responsibility according to the degree of maturity it has reached in terms of knowledge about social responsibility within the organization, initiatives already taken, and systemic orientation.

The approach being proposed to the actors of the agri-food system who intend to include social responsibility in their business plan can be outlined with the following:

1. *socially responsible behaviours*, i.e. the whole set of motivations, actions and instruments that substantiate the commitment of the enterprise to become socially responsible;
2. *the system*, i.e. the capacity to build up a “network” with the various actors comprising or having a consolidated relationship with the agri-food system.

We illustrate below in more detail the elements that make up these two methods. These elements will be used, in the next paragraph, to make a “self diagnosis grid” allowing each individual enterprise to build its own strategy of orientation toward social responsibility⁴.

To facilitate the reading of the various scenarios characterizing the agri-food system, we use examples of subjects who have achieved or started working on a pathway towards CSR. The cases described in this work should be considered purely for the sake of exemplification and not comprehensive or exhaustive of the coverage of the plurality of scenarios found on our national territory.

4.1 CSR Behavior approaches

To comport with the purposes and methodology of these guidelines, reasoning about social responsibility is developed by taking into consideration the motivations for and modalities with which CSR actions and instruments are adopted. Five important specifications are needed.

4. See figure 2 “Self-diagnosis grid” par. 5.1.

1. The proposed approach concentrates mainly on motivations and behaviours rather than on instruments: the assumption underlying the work is that one can identify a gradual scale of modalities with which to adopt the various actions. In particular, we have identified an incremental process consisting of:

- a starting point in which there is no orientation or specific motivation to adopt CSR;
- a first level where we find that the principal, though not exclusive, motivation underlying the adoption of CSR instruments is the economic/fiscal incentive rather than an actual undertaking of responsibility by the entrepreneur; at this level the modalities for implementation are inspired by an instrumental and opportunistic reasoning that in many cases empties the actions and instruments of all their meaning;
- a second level where, unlike level I, there is no incentive or awareness. It is a rather frequent case in the agri-food system because, since small sized enterprises are frequently found in this setting, micro-enterprises unwittingly adopt socially responsible behaviours (bond with the territory, relationship with their employees, etc.). The lack of awareness can constitute a severe limit to the development of a more mature pathway to social responsibility;
- a third and fourth level where CSR motivation is conscious but the modalities for implementing the actions or instruments are not to the point where they affect corporate governance; that is, they are not used to define corporate policies and make strategic decisions. In other words, on these two levels CSR behaviours are voluntary and authentic but do not shape strategic decisions or substantially reduce the enterprise's self reference level. The third and fourth level differ from each other only in the greater or lesser scope and influence of the CSR behaviours (on the third level we find behaviours that affect only one dimension of CSR whereas on the fourth level several behaviours simultaneously affect several dimensions);
- a fifth level where we find that the motivation towards CSR is aware and the modalities of implementation of the actions or instruments directly affect corporate governance. In this case, social responsibility is interpreted as a far-sighted business strategy and as an opportunity to re-establish a proper relationship between persons, the enterprise, the environment and society. The maximum effect is obtained by the CSR instruments and the enterprise's self-reference is reduced.

2. CSR instruments should be considered as simple means and not the final aim of the whole process: we should avoid making the mistake - unfortunately common - of thinking that we are socially responsible by the mere fact of having adopted a CSR instrument. It is as if some people thought that they are a "good farmer" merely because they have purchased a "good tractor". Likewise it is not sufficient to obtain environmental certification to be consciously respectful

of the environment. It is not sufficient to have an **ethical code** to be respectful of human values. It is not sufficient to have a geographical brand to promote a territory. The instruments of social responsibility are therefore simply a “support” that facilitates the achievement of an end - social responsibility - that must be internalized and pursued as a strategic horizon.

3. The motivations and modalities of implementation determine whether the instruments are properly used or not: merely accessing the instruments says little or nothing about the level of orientation of an enterprise towards social responsibility. As pointed out earlier, what counts are the motivations and modalities for implementing such an instrument. Any given CSR instrument can be adopted for any of the following reasons: a) merely because of the economic incentive for adopting it; b) in addition to economic incentives, the intention to improve the management of human resources; c) as one tile in a greater mosaic of rewriting ethical values, strategic decisions, transparency and openness to the outside. Likewise a sustainability statement can be adopted only as an instrument of communication or to engage in and encourage the participation of stakeholders in enterprise decisions. It is clear that according to the various interpretations, the degree of CSR orientation changes markedly. It is also clear that we cannot say in absolute terms that one instrument is better than another. The various instruments have different characteristics and potentialities.

4. CSR instruments are not necessarily all novelties: many enterprises having the various facets characterising the agri-food system have already launched activities, initiatives and experiments. Although these are not expressly labelled as CSR instruments, in reality they reflect some of the typical characteristics of CSR. We could cite numerous examples: from the adoption of techniques and systems for the responsible use of resources (energy, water, soil) to techniques that enhance the territory, voluntary restraint from using controversial substances (OGM, growth supplements, etc.) and improving the well-being of animals, etc.

5. The number of instruments never ends: whatever “list” of instruments we use, it can never be comprehensive but only an exemplification. Since social responsibility is a relative concept (depending on the geographic, social and industrial position of the enterprises), the instruments must be diverse and numerous. Moreover, new ones are proposed continuously. It is impossible and also erroneous to “bridle” such dynamic scenarios.

In these guidelines we are therefore proposing “incremental steps” toward a socially responsible orientation of enterprises on the basis of a scale with progressive levels of responsibility. The scale ranges from the total absence of socially responsible behaviours to the adoption of incentive-based behaviours (i.e. receiving some form of public contribution), and from the adoption of non-structured practices all the way to the voluntary adoption of CSR behaviours (successive levels). At this stage socially responsible orientation is a function of the greater or lesser scope and influence of the CSR behaviours. On the third

level we find behaviours that affect only one dimension of CSR (human resources, product, territory, and environment); on the fourth level we find behaviours that simultaneously affect several dimensions of CSR. On the last level we find enterprises whose behaviours influence governance and thereby improve the overall quality of the strategic design and dialogue with social counterparties.

Below we have summarized the various behaviours defined according to the strength of the CSR orientation. To better understand the characteristics and potentialities of application to the various scenarios of the agri-food system, we will now propose a series of specific examples.

4.1.1 Lack of orientation

The starting point, which has been defined as “the lack of socially responsible orientation”, is summarized by the statement of the famous economist Milton Friedman who identified the only social responsibility of business as “respect of the law and paying taxes”. The Italian agri-food system has a diversity of scenarios within it and it is entirely clear that for certain enterprises it should not be taken for granted that they can respect all the various standards that regulate almost all the aspects of entrepreneurial activity and nor can they all afford large tax contributions. Nonetheless, we should point out that the instruments of social responsibility, if properly used, are a useful investment for both enterprises and society. Naturally, the different starting points must be taken into consideration and this is why the guidelines have been laid out according to a logic of “gradualness” and hereinafter (part 4.2) there will be more insistence on systemic orientation.

4.1.2 Incentive-based CSR behaviours

“Incentive-based” socially responsible behaviours are those adopted solely or predominantly because enterprises wish to benefit from economic and/or tax incentives on local, national or EU level. It should be pointed out that, within the proposed outline, “incentive-based” behaviour is such not so much for the economic benefit in and of itself but for the capacity that it has to “influence” the decision of the company to adopt the behaviour. For the purpose of exemplification only, below we have given a list of instruments, the choice of which may be influenced by economic and/or tax incentives on various institutional levels:

- organic farming;
- certification of quality and environmental protection⁵;

5. On a national level the Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies gives grants for initiatives aimed at defining instruments, studies and operative models pertaining to traceability pursuant to Ministerial Decree, D.M. of 3 May 2004. Moreover several Regions and Chambers of Commerce give contributions to activate quality and environmental systems.

- other CSR instruments (indicated in the following paragraphs) incentivized by legislation or promoted by local or sector-based initiatives⁶.

The list is not exhaustive, nor is it appropriate for everyone because each enterprise relates differently to the choice of any given instrument.

BOX 2 - ORGANIC FARMING

The organic farming method is a system of managing farm production, both plant and animal, that makes it possible to implement farming practices that respect the fertility of the soil and meet the new needs expressed by consumers. Organic farming uses the environment itself to fight parasites and diseases of animals and plants, thereby contributing to the sustainability of the ecosystem and avoiding the use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers, weed killers, phyto-regulators, genetically modified organisms, and antibiotics and hormones on livestock.

There are at least 1.4 million farms, including small ones that have adopted the organic farming method in 141 countries on all continents. More than one third of more than 35,000,000 hectares of organic used agricultural area (UAA) and land being converted to organic farming is found in Australia, followed by Europe (23.4%) and the United States (23%). In the EU 27, according to the statistics published by the FIBL, the organic surface area increased in 2008 (+13.9%), reaching a total of 8.2 million hectares with Italy leading Europe in the number of organic production farms (42,037) and taking second place for the surface area occupied which amounts to 1,002, 414 hectares.

The organic production of animals, plants, aquiculture and foodstuff as well as the production of transformed organic foods is governed by Regulation (EC) No. 834/2007 and completed by Regulation (EC) No. 889/2008 laying down detailed rules on the implementation methods. Later it was amended by Regulation (EC) No. 710/2009 on organic aquaculture animal and seedweed production and by Regulation (EC) No. 1235/2008 regarding the arrangement for imports of organic products from third countries. Organic production is subject to the control of accredited agencies according to the UNI EN ISO 45011 standard.

Starting on 1 July 2010, in accordance with Regulations (EC) No. 967/2008 and (EC) No. 271/2010, the packages of pre-packaged foods must indicate the organic production logo of the EU along with the origin of the raw materials on the label with the following wording: 1) "EU Agriculture", when the raw material has been grown in Europe; 2) "non-EU agriculture", when the agricultural raw material was grown in third countries; 3) "EU/non-EU agriculture" when a part of the raw materials was cultivated in the EU and another part in a third country.

Since the 1990s, the EU guidelines on organic farming and the strong incentive programs as part of the agri-environmental measures for accompanying CAP, then proposed again in the regulations for rural development, translate to support programs established on the regional level, initially specific ones and since the year 2000 introduced into the Rural Development Plans.

The European plan of action for organic farming and organic foods of 2004 delineates a strategic global vision of the contribution that organic farming can make to the CAP and it has strong elements of the European agri-food system along with typical (local) specialties and quality products.



Optional logo until 30 June 2010



Mandatory logo since 1 July 2010

6. Such residual category was created to take into account the specificities of local scenarios. In fact, certain instruments are voluntary in a given region and incentivized in another. For example in Tuscany Region the SA8000 is incentivized, while in the other regions it is not.



4.1.3 Non-structured good practices

Non-structured good practices encompass all the actions implemented by the enterprise, often unwittingly, which nonetheless generate positive effects in terms of sustainability (economic, social and environmental). These indicate a social responsibility that is still in the “embryonic” phase and that can evolve and either become a strategic orientation of the enterprise or disappear into thin air. As in the other cases, in this case it is not possible to give a “peremptory” list of instruments due to the huge diversity of experiences that reflect the heterogeneous nature of the agricultural and agri-food sector. For the sake of exemplification, we will mention the initiatives regarding:

- environmental protection;
- food safety;
- respect for human resources⁷;
- animals' health and well-being;
- quality of the products;
- territory upgrade;
- multifunctionality/plurality of businesses⁸;
- energy optimization;
- conservative farming;
- use of low-environmental-impact techniques;
- use of non-harmful substances;
- responsible use of water and soil resources;
- raising awareness about the above mentioned issues and social responsibility in general;

7. Bear in mind the actions being taken to improve the quality of the environment where the work is carried out; to promote training and informational initiatives for employees on various issues (from safety at the workplace to professional updates); the use of contractual formulas that can help meet the need for conciliation expressed by many workers, especially by women.

8. Some examples of specific actions: production of safe and wholesome foods; the production of local specialties (typical); promotion and protection of the farm environment; social agriculture; contributing to the sustainable development of rural areas; protection and promotion of biodiversity (safeguarding habitats with a high natural value and the corresponding biodiversity); farm extensification that respects the environment; the management of non-intensive grazing systems; the integrated management of companies; safeguarding the landscape and the characteristic features forged throughout time such as hedges, ditches and woods; planting woods on farmland; reducing GHG emissions (emissions of nitrogen oxide from the soil attributed to the use of nitrogenized fertilizers, emissions of methane due to enteric fermentation, emissions of nitrogen oxide and methane due to manure management); reduction of anti-parasite products; integrated techniques for managing harmful organisms and reconversion to organic farming methods; responsible use of water and integrated management of water resources; production/use of renewable sources of energy, etc.

- specific initiatives to support the integration of immigrant and disadvantaged workers⁹.

4.1.4 Voluntary CSR behaviours: one-level actions

These are characterized by a conscious and convinced decision (i.e. not conditioned by incentives). These behaviours showed that the enterprise has taken the step of interpreting social responsibility as a conscious orientation. Among these the basic level comprises all the behaviours and actions that affect only one dimension of CSR (product, territory, environment, human resources).

To this end the most frequently used instruments are:

- product certification (PDO, PGI, TSG, etc.);
- all certification instruments that are not incentivized¹⁰;
- participation in collective trademarks;
- participation in local development programs;
- all the good practices mentioned above, adopted consciously by the enterprises.

Once again the list of instruments should not be considered exhaustive or as an absolute truth because every instrument can be adopted for purposes that are radically different for each company.

BOX 3 - CERTIFICATIONS OF REGULATED PRODUCTS (PDO AND PGI)

In order to protect the typicality of certain food products, the European Union has launched a specific standard that establishes two levels of recognition: *PDO* and *PGI*.



The acronym PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) designates a product that originates from a region and country whose qualities and characteristics are essentially or exclusively due to the geographic environment (a term that includes natural and human factors). All of the production, transformation and processing of the product must occur in that specific delimited area.



PGI stands for Protected Geographical Indication and its mark introduces a new level of quality protection that takes into account the industrial development of the sector, giving more significance to the production techniques than to the territory. Consequently these initials identify a product that originates from a region and country whose qualities, reputation and

9. Let's think of language courses, support in solving housing problems, the adoption of practices that meet the needs of the conservation of religious and cultural identity, especially for foreign workers.

10. Think of certifications such as: agri-food product, controlled production chain, intercompany traceability, Eurepgap, hygienic design, farm organic. Moreover, there are the BRC and IFS protocols.



characteristics can be traced to a certain geographic origin in which at least one phase of production, transformation and processing occurs within the specific delimited area. Both these EC recognitions constitute a valid guarantee for consumers because it lets them know that they are purchasing quality foods that must meet certain requirements and are produced in compliance with specific regulatory restraints. Moreover they constitute protection for the producers themselves in cases of imitations and disloyal competition.

4.1.5 Voluntary CSR behaviours: multi-level actions

A more involved level of socially responsible orientation is found in enterprises adopting behaviours that affect several dimensions of CSR. Once again a peremptory list of the instruments cannot be provided because much depends on the methods by which they are adopted and the capacity to understand all their potentialities. For the sake of exemplification it is useful to distinguish between the following instruments:

1. Instruments that intrinsically incorporate several dimensions:
 - social balance sheet;
 - environmental balance sheet;
 - sustainability balance sheet;
 - ethical-social certifications (SA 8000).
2. The adoption of an integrated set of instruments that affects only one dimension (as in the examples given in the previous paragraph).

BOX 4 - SUSTAINABILITY BALANCE SHEET

The sustainability balance sheet is an instrument of strategic control and external audits to analyze the company management and verify its capacity to produce value in a sustainable way and represent the effects it has on the environment and all the stakeholders. In particular management should be assessed according to the (triple bottom line) approach consisting of economic efficiency, environmental protection and social sustainability. The sustainability balance sheet helps to:

- clarify strategies;
- integrate sustainability in the company's actions;
- promote the participation of stakeholders because it offers a transparent mode of communication aiming at sustainable performance and opportunities for improvement;
- improve operative efficiency thanks to the collection of data, stimulate a systematic analysis of performance which often leads to significant changes in internal processes;
- increase environmental and social awareness of employees and actors upstream and downstream on the chain;
- identify common ground where public authorities and companies can interact;
- improve company image and reputation.

4.1.6 Voluntary CSR behaviours: governance

These behaviours are those affecting the method for composing the interests and decision-making mechanisms. They indicate a higher stage of maturation with respect to the concept of social responsibility taken as the basis for these guidelines. Adopting these behaviours means “venturing out”, opening up, reducing self-reference, respecting the ethical values of the relevant community as well as accepting positive suggestions and criticisms that stakeholders may pose. The possible instruments are the same as the ones in the previous paragraph but further qualified by:

- manifesting, sharing and implementing ethical values;
- engaging in dialogue with and actively involving stakeholders;
- audit mechanisms by third-party and independent entities/persons.

Imagine writing an ethical code (perhaps in collaboration with one’s employees) or creating ways to involve the stakeholders that integrate and/or qualify the other initiatives already adopted.

Moreover, a social or sustainability balance sheet can be used in addition to an intensive effort to involve stakeholders.

4.2 Various approaches to systemic orientation

An enterprise, especially if it is small or micro, can start moving in the direction of social responsibility even by “creating a network” with other enterprises or subjects who operate on the same territory or who participate in the production process of the enterprise as producers, suppliers, end-users, inspectors or who - for other reasons - are interested and/or involved in these processes.

“Being in a network” with other enterprises and subjects undoubtedly represents for the agri-food system a factor of strength that allows them to overcome the obstacles that may otherwise prevent them from adopting socially responsible behaviours. For example, their small size, the frequent problem of under-capitalization, a weak entrepreneurial skill set, may be overcome thereby producing positive effects on the entire agri-food and economic system.

There are several subjects through which the enterprise can enter into a network. More obviously, they can partner with other enterprises by constituting cooperatives or consortia, producer associations - More extensively, though, the enterprises can work with trade associations and social parties, institutional bodies, universities, research centres, environmental and consumer associations.

Equally diverse is the behaviour that entrepreneurs can establish with these actors to start the processes for taking social responsibility. A hypothetical scale for measuring the orientation of an enterprise toward entering a network involves



at least three levels of networking depending on the behaviour modalities of the entrepreneur.

4.2.1 Incentive-based relationships

The first level of “incentive-based relationships” refers to relationships with enterprises and actors that the enterprises put in place who are influenced by the existence of incentives. That is, “incentive based relationships” are not signed for the value of added cooperation but the effect of the incentives on the business.

This type of behaviour includes the signing by the enterprises of *territorial pacts, area contracts, program agreements, and rural partnerships*: negotiated programming instruments that the enterprises adhere to with the aim of increasing the development capacity of the territory on which they operate and, consequently, their own business.

BOX 5 - RURAL PARTNERSHIPS

Rural partnerships are based on the principle of integration among sectors, resources and programming instruments as well as the principle of territorial concentration and associating themes to the interventions to be carried out on the field. The action of rural partnerships aims at developing synergies in the territory, towards the goals of integrated local development.

The first example of this was the launch of the community initiative called **LEADER**, which proposed a vision of programming development by means of partnerships to creating and accumulate new forms of cooperation to perform actions designed to achieve shared goals.

With Regulation (EC) n. 1783/03 the European Union introduced partnerships in the programming of structural funds, in particular in the rural development policy, as a way of organizing public funds to manage integrated rural development strategies.

The purpose of rural partnerships is to assist interventions for socio-economic development of rural areas that arise from the needs of the territorial actors to put institutional and economic operators on the network. The distinctive elements of the rural partnerships are: representation of the territory by the participation of institutional and private actors; consistency with pre-chosen strategies; participation by means of an effective and active role of those involved; and opportunities to build a local governance body.

BOX 6 - CERTIFICATION OF TRACEABILITY ALONG THE CHAIN

Product traceability in a specific chain is an essential supposition for the efficient management of production and potential food safety problems.

Traceability is a key aspect not only of the legislation on the agri-food sector, such as Regulation (EC) n. 178/2002, but also of the voluntary standards for agri-food safety adopted by companies such as the ISO standards.

According to Regulation (EC) n. 178/2002, companies of the agri-food sector must make their production chains visible and make each step of production and distribution transparent by providing precise information on the origins of the raw materials, the place and techniques of production.

The ISO (International Standardization Organisation) and the Italian version UNI (Ente Nazionale Italiano di Unificazione) have published standards on traceability systems:

- ISO 22005: traceability in the agri-food chain and the feed production chain. General principles and basic requirements for planning and implementing control systems;
- UNI 10939: traceability system in the agri-food chains. General principles for planning and implementation;
- UNI 11020: traceability system in agri-food companies. Principles and requirements for implementation.

UNI 10939:2001 standard defines the principles for creating a traceability system for the entire chain. Using this standard makes it possible to:

- Document the history of the product;
- Document the responsibilities involved;
- Identify and record the flow of materials and organizations making up the chain.

The agri-food chain must identify all the activities and flows (including the organization) that have critical importance for the characteristics of the product. Certification of the chain therefore requires:

- Identifying the field of application of the chain;
- Identifying the registration system for traceability;
- Establishing the organization of the chain.

Certification for traceability within the chain constitutes an important instrument for upgrading the activities carried out in synergy with other organizations and also constitutes an essential support for the credibility of product certification, especially when the characteristics to be promoted are strongly correlated to an effective management of the chain (e.g. non-GMO products).

Moreover, joining *producer associations* is an indicator of entrepreneurs' intent to belong to a network and enter a professional community that shares their values and goals, even if those goals manifest through different modalities and in different forms.

When we look at certain specific instruments of the sector, it becomes clear that entering a network with other actors, accepting the idea of sharing projects, commitments, and behaviours - including the ones conditioned by the existence of specific economic incentives - represents a central element in the development of orientation toward social responsibility. From this point of view, consider *contract farming* or *certification traceability* of the chain that documents and manages the traceability of the product along the phases from production to distribution. Here, the enterprise that benefits from an economic advantage is connected to other participants in the chain by contractual constraints that make them share common goals and decide a protocol that indicates reciprocal responsibilities, agreements between the parties and modalities for managing and controlling the

traceability system. In terms of social responsibility, this instrument exercises a significant impact because it contributes to raising the levels of quality and safety of our food products, thereby increasing the cooperation mechanisms between enterprises, raising the activity of the enterprise to a logic of trust and transparency, improving the relationships between suppliers and intermediaries and, lastly, raising the level of responsibility of the individual producers.

4.2.2 Voluntary non-formalized relationships

On the second level, the systemic orientation of enterprises is expressed in all the relationship modalities with actors of the territory which the enterprises establish at an informal level, voluntarily and in the absence of economic incentives. It is difficult to identify case histories of behaviours found in this dimension because they are usually habits that have not been codified and are not traceable to the adoption of specific instruments (codes, certifications, trademarks, etc.).

These relationships are based fundamentally on the implementation of trusting relationships that may comprise - in the case of enterprises that work in the same sector or area - the stabilization of purchase and subcontracting relations and the exchange of information to reach agreements on product improvement strategies; taking shared actions that produce positive effects on the territory and the community, as in the case of farmers applying for DOCG recognition, agreeing informally on actions to safeguard the environment or to sponsor the territory by shared business initiatives (participation in trade fairs, festivals, etc.).

The same logic governs informal relationships based on a volunteer impulse that arrives on the territory with other players different from the enterprises. In this case the types of behaviour can be quite diverse: the enterprises rely on researchers to conduct experiments for studies on products to reconstruct the "history" of the production processes (winemaking methods, the ways of making local specialties, etc.). These become promoters at local institutions of territorial marketing initiatives that aim to recover lost traditions (exhibitions, shows, festivals, etc.) that adhere to or sponsor environmental actions on the territory or participate in local projects for helping immigrants and disadvantaged workers get jobs and improve their living conditions.

4.2.3 Voluntary formalized relationships

The highest level of manifesting the orientation of enterprises to create a network on the territory is found in relationships that are voluntary and formalized, codified relationships that require that the enterprise adhere to protocols and memorandums of understanding or the adoption of specific instruments (contracts, trademarks, etc.) that define and govern the interaction between the parties.

From this perspective the most important instrument for the sector is the cooperative: cooperatives and consortia represent the main form of aggregation in the

agri-food system allowing members to plan their own growth process for social responsibility with a greater degree of concreteness and overcome the constraints that penalize small enterprises of the sector. Consortia for the promotion of local production, the protection of traditional productions, the protection of trademarks that are, after all, instruments which are acquiring more weight and central importance in the organization of a system of widespread social responsibility whose centre of gravity is the territory. This allows even small enterprises to play a strategic role in promoting the traditions and values of their own community, protecting the food/wine heritage on local scenarios throughout Italy, and protecting the quality of our productions.

The creation of consortia is often followed by the establishment of area trademarks that serve to certify the specific characteristics of the products from a given geographical area and apply constraints to the producers who intend to adhere to the trademark and comply with the regulations governing that type of production.

BOX 7 - CONSORTIUM VINO CHIANTI CLASSICO



The Consorzio Vino Chianti Classico is a good example of how the aggregation of companies on a local level can make it possible to bring out and make operative the intrinsic and often unconscious

social responsibility characterizing the various agri-food scenarios. Consortiums allow wine-growing companies to find the “optimal dimension” to implement specific actions alongside their daily activity aimed at consolidating their relationships with the community (citizens, local authorities, the State, associations), to respect the environment and the artistic and landscape heritage (also through the work of the Fondazione per la Tutela del Territorio del Chianti Classico ONLUS) and promote the “quality” of life in all of its dimensions.

The Consorzio Vino Chianti Classico is characterized by the strong bond it has with the reference territory understood in the broad meaning of community: territory, environment, society. This strong social and cultural bond with its own community informs the promotion actions carried out worldwide by “Gallo Nero”, emblem of the Chianti territory throughout the world.

The attention given to the community, the value of exchanging the authenticity (of a territory, its products and culture) and the production of a quality of life, moreover, are extremely important to the Consortium as demonstrated by its constant presence on the territory and its direct effort and commitment to social cultural initiatives for protecting the environment (e.g. investment in culture with events and festivals, sponsorships of a cultural nature, research, the protection of health by implementing attentive controls of the quality of the wine and oil, initiatives of solidarity).

Source: data from Chianti Classico Magazine 27/2006 processed by INEA

If consortia and trademarks are typical instruments of the sector, in other cases the enterprise can decide to formalize certain collaboration behaviours (see



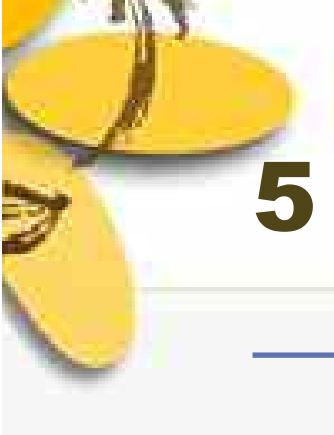
description in previous chapter) by providing *agreements, programs, memorandums of understanding* with various actors - enterprises, universities, schools, research centres, Municipalities, Provinces, Chambers of Commerce, trade fair authorities, APT, environmentalist associations, volunteer, cultural associations, trade unions, etc. - to program and enact operative behaviours that are inclined to have effects, in terms of social responsibility, on the quality of the environment, the well-being of animals, food product safety, appreciation of the resources of the territory, the quality of the work conditions of its employees, the protection of and guarantees for consumers.

BOX 8 - MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE CONFEDERATION OF ITALIAN AGRICULTURE AND NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ELECTRICITY ENTERPRISES: VALUING BIOMASS

The Confederation of Italian Agriculture and the National Association of Electrical Companies for the promotion of biomass signed a Memorandum of Understanding at the Assoelettrica Meeting on 14 June 2006 at the Auditorium della Tecnica in Rome. The purpose of the understanding is to develop synergies between the electricity sector and the farming sector to create a system to supply national agroforestry biomass to our power plants".

In compliance with the Kyoto Protocol, this understanding sets out to favor the rapid and widespread development of renewable sources in order to balance the composition of primary sources used to produce electricity while reducing emissions, greenhouse gases and of fossil fuels. Biomass is therefore conceived as a crucial element for a strategy to develop renewable sources that makes it possible to build integrated systems that join environmental respect with the appreciation of the potentialities of the Italian territory. The memorandum of understanding entails the definition of a national program to start farming biomass crops on a large scale in order to use it as fuel in thermoelectric plants, and for the regulatory reform needed to fully deploy the energy potential of farming production in Italy as in other places.

These instruments include adhesion to inter-professional agreements regarding agri-food issues which are draft agreements stipulated on an inter-professional level by the representatives of farm producers and enterprises that transform and sell farm products in order to create a real vertical integration of production chains (production - industry - distribution) by establishing strategies to improve production and defining the criteria and conditions for production and the sale of services, the quantities and prices of farm products.



5 How to use the guidelines to promote social responsibility in agriculture: a self-diagnosis grid

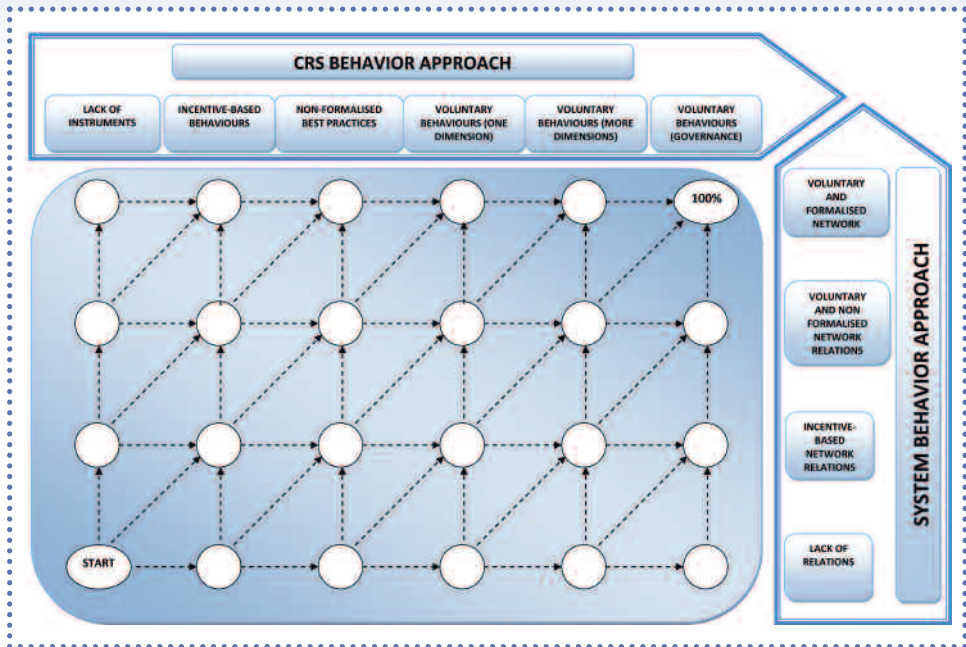
5.1 A modular approach to CSR

Although many farms and agri-food enterprises have already grappled with the logics and tools of social responsibility, there is in many cases still no strategic approach to social responsibility but, rather, only isolated actions disconnected from the larger process of policy formulation. As has already been repeatedly pointed out in these guidelines, a CSR mode of operation should instead lead to the enterprise fully identifying its own policies with those of social responsibility, which must become the basic strategic orientation of the enterprise. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a “conceptual grid” in order to help farms and food producers with this undertaking.

Each enterprise’s diversity and wealth of experience must naturally be taken into consideration and even enhanced: for this purpose a **“modular approach” tracing the gradual development of CSR actions in a single enterprise is proposed**. The goal is to let the “culture of social responsibility” increasingly grow into the system by first touching upon and then permeating the whole of company governance. Viewed like this, CSR promotes the occurrence of an “expanded” governance able to meet the needs of corporate stakeholders and direct the entire enterprise - not just individual initiatives - according to the principles of CSR.

The self-diagnosis grid shown in figure 2 was conceived for the purpose of identifying the operational steps that each enterprise can take to improve its approach to social responsibility “gradually”, with due consideration given to its starting position. Furthermore, the self-diagnosis grid offers both a dynamic interpretation of the corporate social responsibility orientation programs used by enterprises that were the subject of case studies and focuses attention on those sections of the guidelines and support materials which are directly related to it.

Figure 2 - The “self-diagnosis” grid



The proposed¹¹ scheme offers at least two advantages:

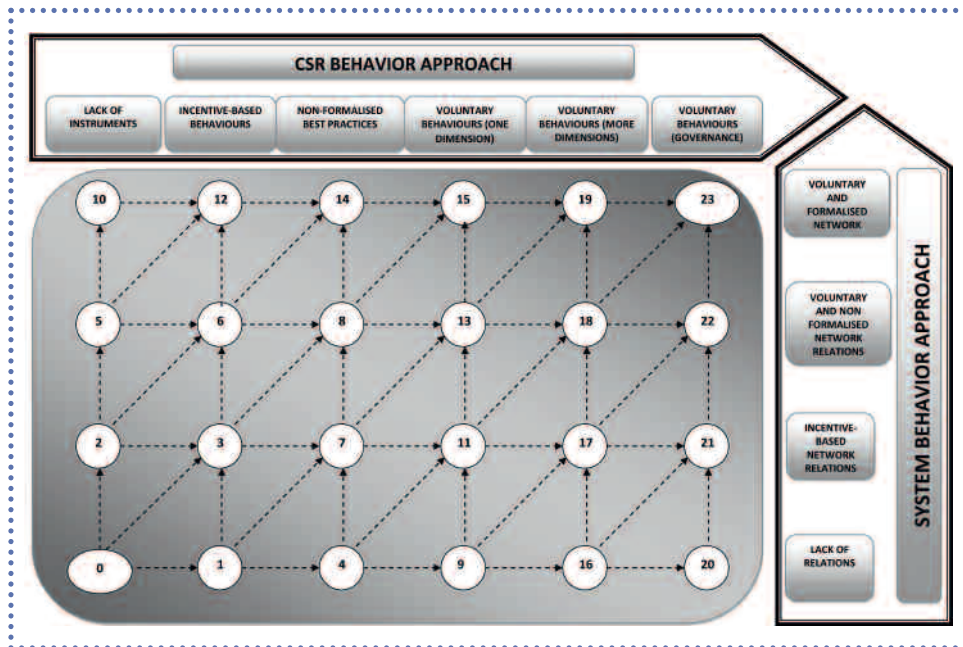
- it allows businesses to identify criteria which are not too stringent, but rather “loosely” identified, responding more effectively to the characteristics of a very divided and diversified system; perhaps this is the main reason why an increasing number of objective criteria - enterprise size, business sector, etc. - are actually ineffective for these purposes;
- it renders a picture of the hidden component of social responsibility - non formalised good practices - which is a highly distinctive element of the agri-food system.

11. The use of a single “loosely knit” self-diagnosis grid was considered preferable, so as to be adaptable to the individual experiences of both farms and agri-food producers. This scheme represents an initial self-assessment tool for individual farms utilizing common aspects of the CSR mode of operation.

5.2 The self-diagnosis process

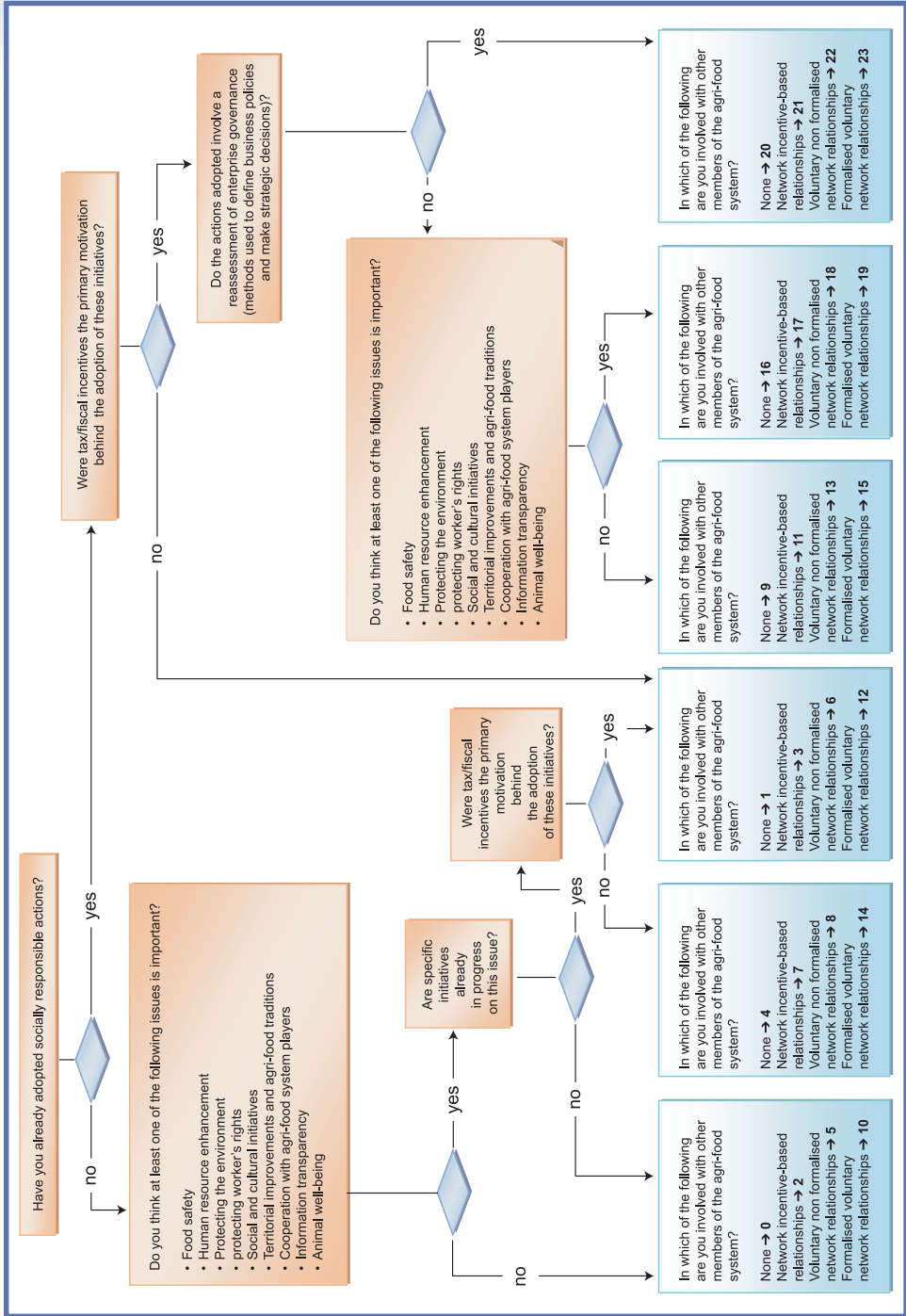
Before outlining the modes of operation available for an enterprise to follow and the tools which it can adopt to enhance its approach to social responsibility, it is necessary to identify its position. Therefore, an enterprise that wants to engage in social responsibility or a broker who wants to make some enterprises of the territory or sector in which he works more socially responsible can only start by asking a simple question: in which spot of the scheme does my firm fit better? In other words, a real *self-diagnosis* is necessary.

Figure 3 - The self-diagnosis



What follows is therefore a brief self-assessment in the form of a flowchart that allows users of these guidelines to identify the position of their company.





5.3 Possible approaches

After identifying its starting position, the development approaches for an enterprise opting for social responsibility may be outlined. An approach to social responsibility is given in each direction and illustrated with practical experience of enterprises in the agri-food sector. This choice is motivated by the belief that practical examples provide useful support for the self-diagnosis process of each company enterprise the issue of CSR.

Generally speaking the approach to CSR that an agri-food enterprise may choose to follow is divided into four alternatives:

1. **consolidation:** the enterprise “takes advantage of” the full potential of the CSR instruments and actions already in use;
2. **horizontal progression:** the enterprise increases social responsibility by progressively adopting more articulated and formal actions, methods and behaviours;
3. **vertical progression:** the enterprise increases social responsibility by “networking” with other companies in the area;
4. **diagonal or mixed progression:** the enterprise increases social responsibility through a combination of “networking” and socially responsible behaviour.



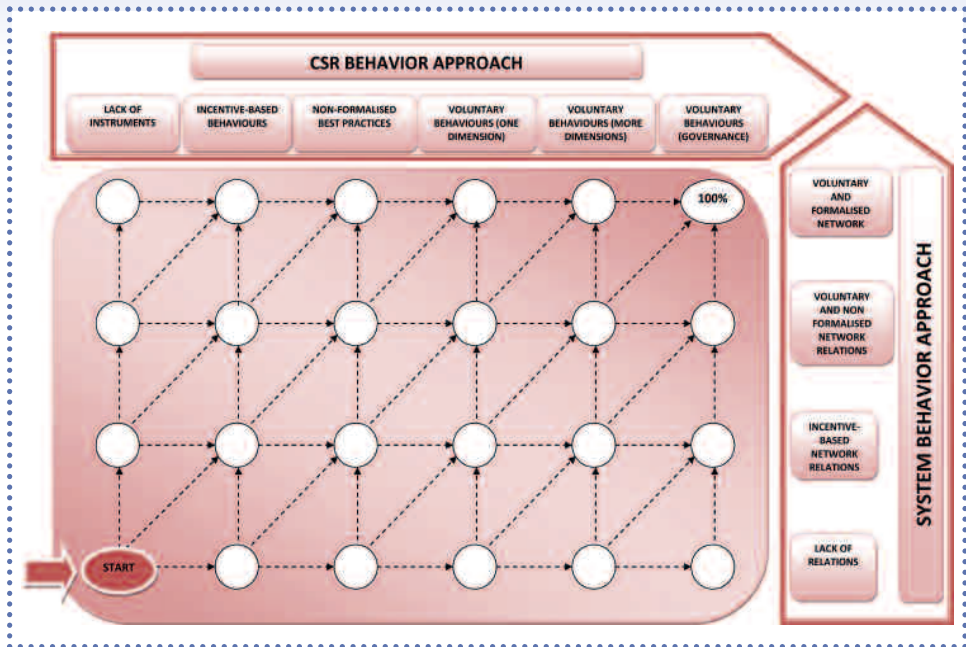
The approaches to CSR outlined below assumes that enterprises are in very different starting positions after the process of self-evaluation described in the previous section.

5.3.1 First steps towards social responsibility

The farm or agri-food enterprise may be at a “zero point”, i.e. completely lacking direction: it does not assume any CSR behaviour (horizontal axis), nor is it networking with other enterprises or institutions (vertical axis). The enterprise is thus located in the box at the bottom left of the self-diagnosis scheme (figure 4).



Figure 4 - First steps towards social responsibility



The enterprise is thus free to choose to take action in every direction. First it will have to assess the requests of its stakeholders¹² and begin by choosing the direction of its first steps. For example, stakeholders' requests focus on improving product quality, the farm may opt for horizontal progress and choose to obtain a quality certification, especially if initial concerns about the costs involved in acquiring this instrument are mitigated by economic/tax incentives at regional, national or European Community level. Many Tuscan farms and agri-food enterprises have responded positively to the demands of stakeholders in terms of greater ethical and social commitment to their workers by taking advantage of the regional incentives to obtain SA 8000 certification.

The first progress in this case is horizontal, made through the adoption of new CSR tools, facilitated - in this initial phase - by incentives.

Further horizontal progress can be made by deciding to invest in social responsibility regardless of whether specific incentives are available or not. By recognizing the increasing sensitivity of consumers towards food safety and quality, for

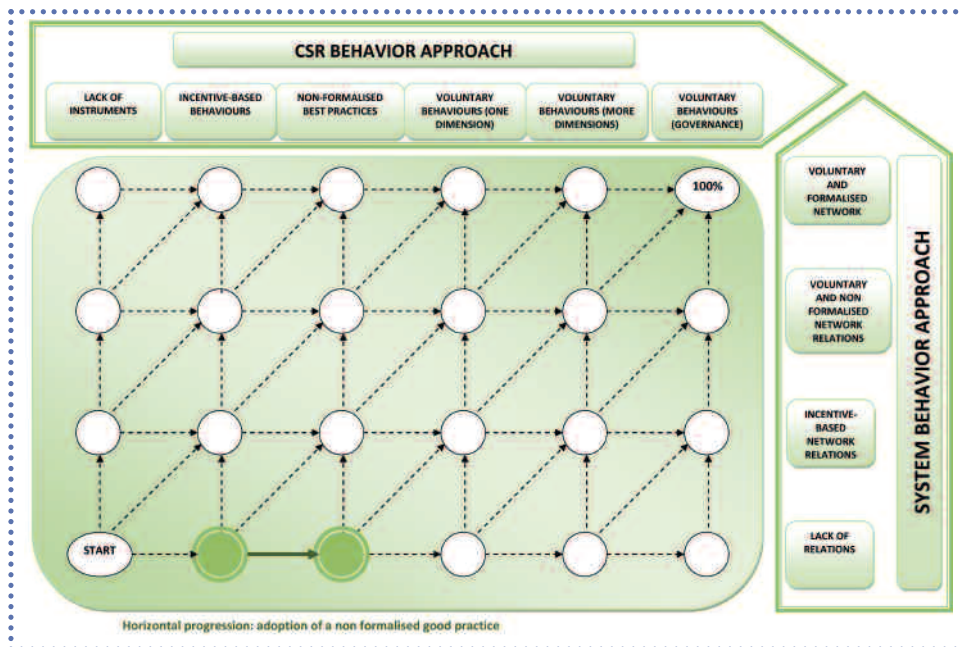
12. The end consumer of farm and agri-food produce is the most immediate example of a stakeholder. However, it must be noted that stakeholders cannot be reduced to the end consumer alone but include the enterprise's suppliers, its employees and the people of the community in which the enterprise operates. For a clarification of the concept of stakeholders see box 1.

example, the farm may choose to select high quality seed or adopt more advanced farming techniques, review their practices for the selection of raw materials or increase their required standards of sanitation or quality from suppliers. These are good practices that are not formalized yet, but, nonetheless, bear witness to a growing awareness on the topic of CSR (figure 5).

In view of the fact that the size of a farm precludes the possibility of achieving the level of investment necessary to acquire the appropriate CSR tools or that its place in the production chain would make every isolated attempt meaningless, it may use the “system” approach (vertical progression) by strengthening its ties with other firms upstream and/or downstream in the production chain, other farms operating in the same territory or with institutions. Again, the existence of specific incentives capable of breaking through the initial “psychological barrier” of the change in approach may facilitate its beginning (figure 6).

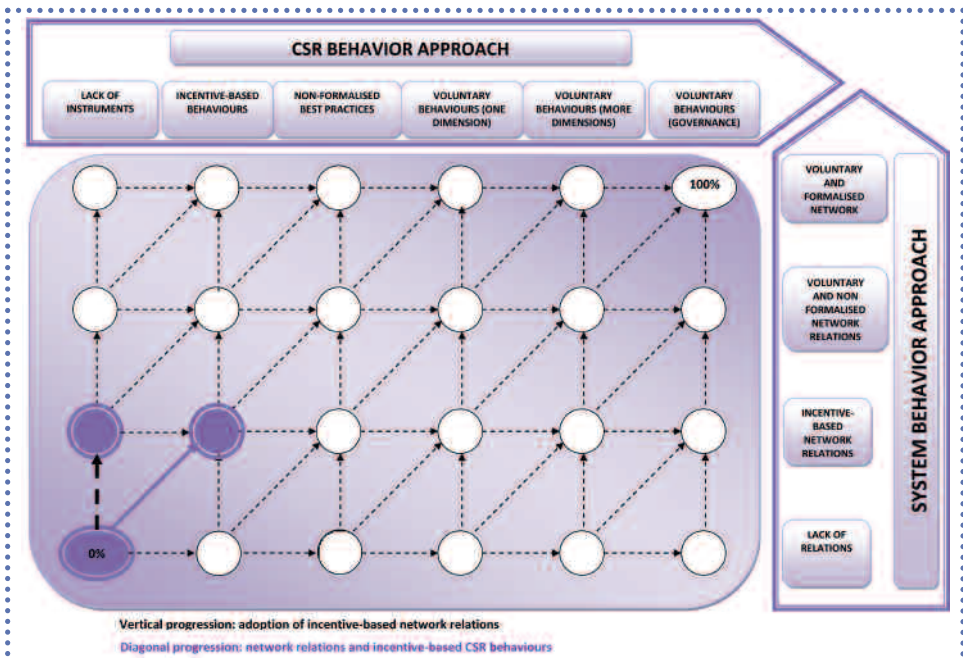
The farm or agri-food enterprise as a first step can join the agri-food chain contract. Since many of the incentive system tools are particularly popular among enterprises in the agri-food system, the enterprise can choose to get started by developing stable relationships of trust with other local businesses.

Figure 5 - Adoption of formal good practices



Naturally, diagonal or mixed approaches are possible in which, for example, membership in the agri-food chain contract at the same time brings about product certification (see figure 6).

Figure 6 - Membership in network incentive-based relationships



A case study: the agri-food chain traceability certification of the Fratelli Veroni salami factory

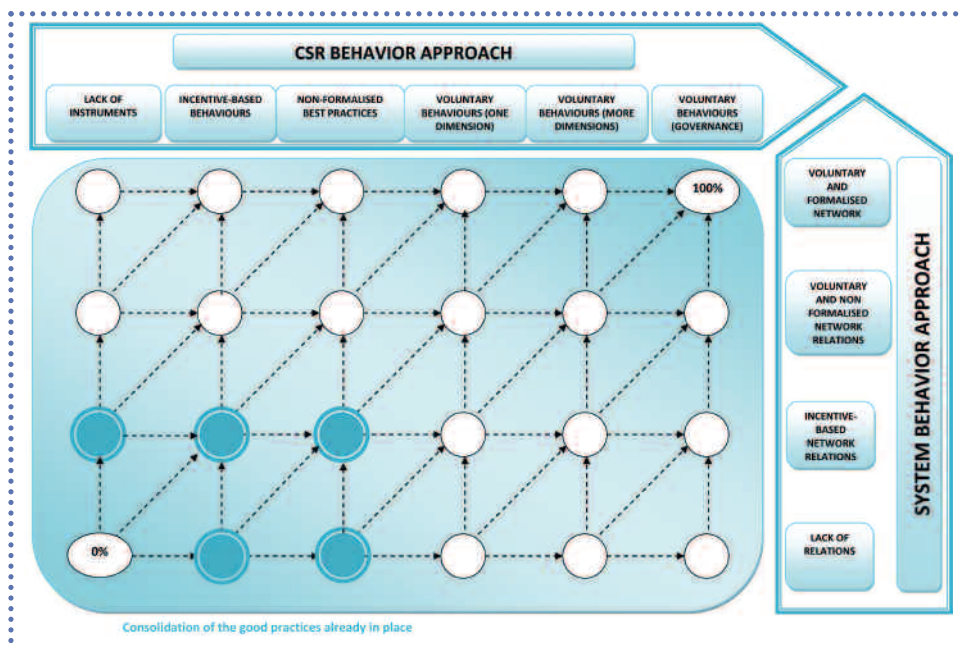
The Fratelli Veroni salami factory, founded in 1925, is a company in the pork processing production chain that produces high-quality salami and cold meats. The business comprises seven production units located in Emilia Romagna.

The quality policy adopted by Veroni affects all stages of the production process. It therefore chose to adopt several quality control programs, particularly including the agri-food chain traceability certification UNI 10939:2001, which covers some types of mortadella. This certification allows the history of a product to be reconstructed by identifying and documenting all stages of its production up until the time it is sold to the end consumer. The chain subject to certification begins with the raising of pigs and ends with the finished product, Veroni's mortadella. The traceability system is applicable to all companies involved in supplying pork commodities. To obtain this certification, Veroni applied the appropriate production rules (internal and external) that define the product characteristics, operational control methods and regulate the activities of suppliers through the use of two specific guidelines - the "Guidelines for Pig Raising" and the "Guidelines for Raw Meat Suppliers" - aimed at businesses operating in the supply chain.

5.3.2 An additional step: the formalization of good practices

In the agri-food system many enterprises have already taken some steps towards CSR, given the existence of a variety of incentives such as the adoption of tools and the adoption of a system approach. The next step is the consolidation of the good practices that have already been adopted. In other words, the enterprise can move towards the conscious incorporation of CSR into their business strategies (figure 7).

Figure 7 - Consolidation of the good practices already in place



5.3.3 Orientation towards CSR: progression on the road to socially responsible behaviours

Once it has decided to take corporate and social responsibility, the enterprise may choose to refine its CSR-oriented tools, or may choose to make further horizontal progress along the self-diagnosis scheme (figure 8).

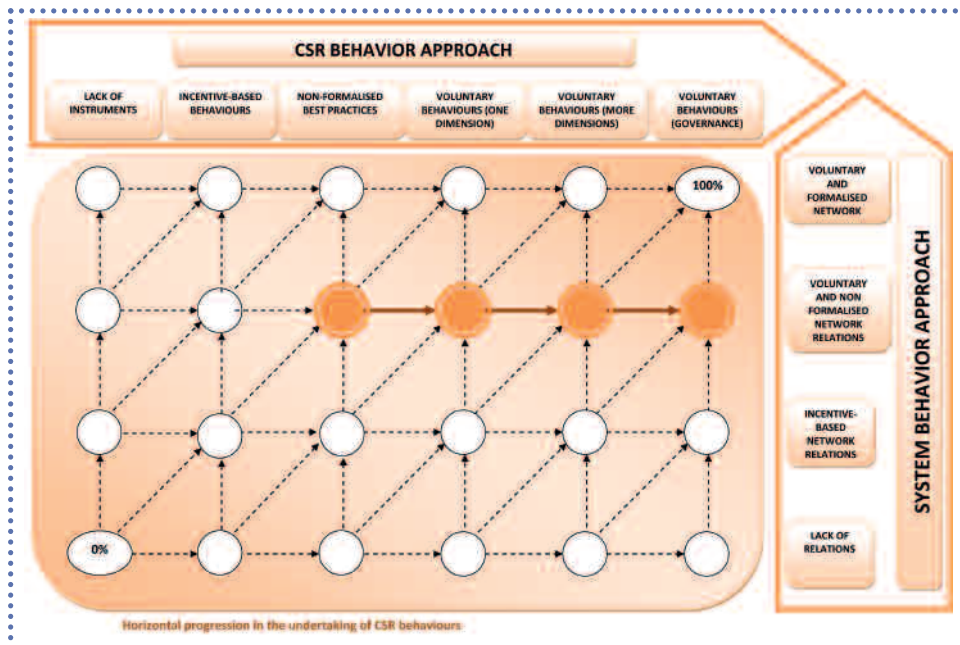
The farm and agri-food enterprise may first choose to adopt voluntary behaviours that are not stimulated by one or more areas of stakeholder interest: it can choose to develop actions related to the product, increasing the level of quality (voluntary product certification) or improve its environmental impact (voluntary environmental certifications). It may choose to work on multiple levels and obtain two or more certifications without incentives, participate with local brands or take



an instrument, such as the social budget, that allows it to take stock of the results of the CSR approach it has taken.

Finally, the enterprise may choose to adopt government sponsored CSR instruments as its basic strategies. In this case the farm can adopt a code of ethics or a charter of values, clearly explaining the set of values that it and its employees should be guided by. Or it may try to engage its stakeholders in an active and structured way, giving them the opportunity to express their needs and then later, proposing the implementation of joint projects (figure 8).

Figure 8 - Horizontal progression on the socially responsible behaviour front



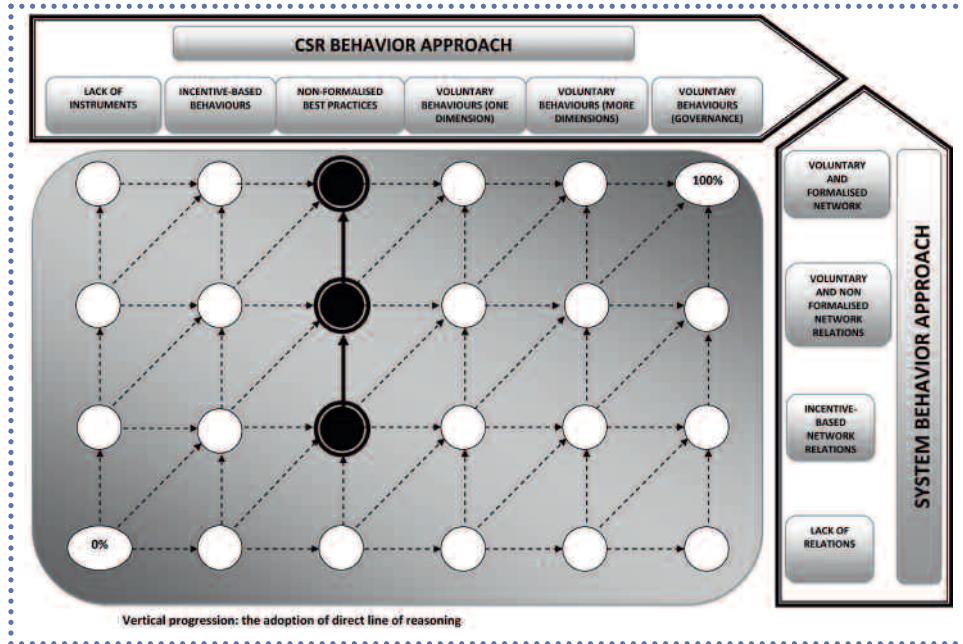
5.3.4 Orientation to the system: development in a vertical direction

In dealing with a CSR approach, each enterprise can choose to expand its reach through the adoption of so-called system tools, namely, those actions which enable it to overcome size limitations by networking with other enterprises in the agri-food system. In the self-diagnosis grid, the enterprise chooses to grow vertically.

The enterprise can begin to establish structured relationships with other businesses in the agri-food system through membership of consortia initiatives seeking to safeguard quality and local traditions or by adopting a local brand to place in the network with all other companies that have already joined. The enterprise

can make agreements with the Agriculture department or, at any rate with universities and research centres to develop research and experimentation projects that it would not otherwise be able to perform.

Figure 9 - Vertical progression in the system approach

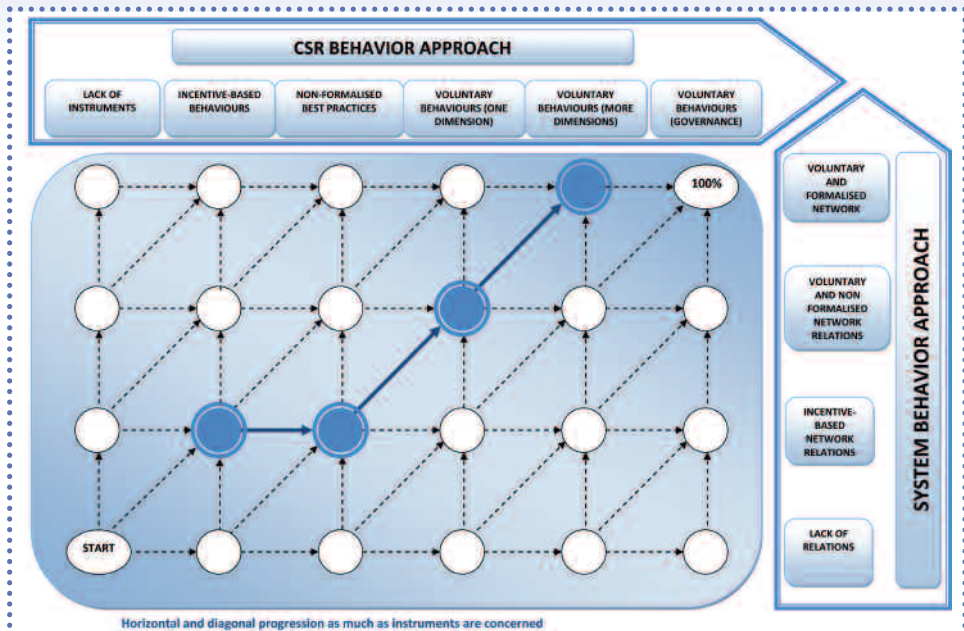


5.3.5 Mixed progression

In approaching CSR each enterprise may choose to grow in social responsibility, both horizontally and vertically, by jointly adopting the “network” system and CSR behaviour. In graphic terms, the enterprise is moving diagonally, or simultaneously moving horizontally and vertically.



Figure 10 - Mixed progression



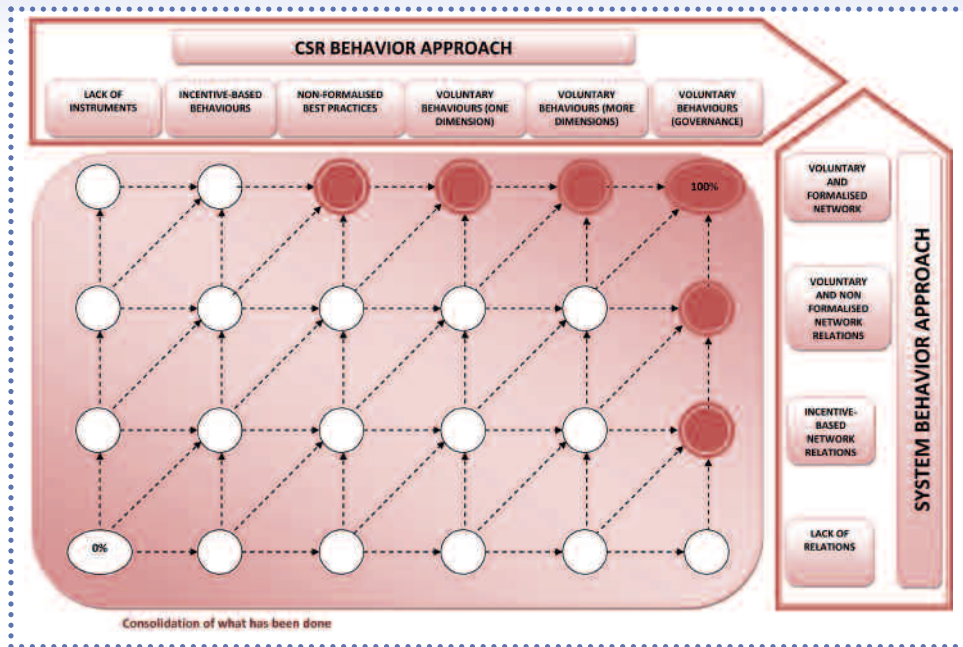
A case study: the mixed progression made by Palm SpA

Founded in 1980 and located in Viadana (MN), Palm SpA operates in the design, manufacture and sale of pallets and wooden transport packaging. Palm SpA undertook an approach to corporate social responsibility by creating the label “Transported on environmentally friendly pallets” and subsequently by creating the “Environmentally Friendly Enterprise” network. Here good practices are exchanged and strategies formulated to engage all stakeholders on the issue of environmental and social responsibility. The company is implementing the project “0 km pallets” produced with local timber, as close as possible to the place of use; they are delivered, reused and recycled locally to promote sustainable logistics with a view to cost savings and less pollution. In its approach to social responsibility, finally, Palm SpA has adopted the Code of Ethics and has encouraged the activities of the Palm Work & Project Coop. Soc. NGO, which places people with disabilities into environmental education programs for schools and local businesses.

5.3.6 Reinforcing each step

Each enterprise using a CSR approach can improve by consolidating the position it has reached, for example by trying to exploit the full potential of the tools already in use. In graphic terms, the enterprise grows within each cell of the self-diagnosis grid.

Figure 11 - Consolidation of what has been done



As can be seen, even reaching the upper right corner of the scheme does not complete the efforts towards CSR realization. It is certainly an excellent position but may still be improved upon, because the corporate stakeholders and their expectations are constantly changing. It is often necessary to reinforce, refine and rethink the path already taken.



Finito di stampare nel mese di giugno 2010
da Stilgrafica s.r.l. - Roma

