Visiting Partners from Italy, Sicily: my experience in Cooperativa Valdibella

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My first approach with Sicily was an amazing view of the blue of the sea from my train as soon as I woke up. After a one-hour car ride from Palermo, I arrived in Camporeale, where Valdibella Cooperative awaited me at the top of a hill.

To be honest, my car had a minor issue just as I reached the entrance, so their first impression of me was likely that of a flustered, disappointed girl who isn't used to driving at all! But those worries vanished as soon as I stepped into Casa Gialla—the place where I would sleep and enjoy Anna's incredible cooking. Everyone welcomed me as if I were an old friend (and, luckily, the car turned out to be fine).

Stereotypes argue that Sicilians are welcoming and very open, I surely can confirm. I felt part of the group since the very first day, everyone seemed to know me for decades. The many smiles, multiple hugs, dogs, cats, and the delicious, genuine food contributed to make my two weeks field trip an extraordinarily enriching experience.







I divided my time between working in the manufacturing field, and visiting and interviewing producers and farmers. Collecting several perspectives, listening to unique stories and backgrounds, and getting to know agricultural techniques embedded in the biological production of healthy and sustainable food.







Valdibella is an amazing and inspiring network of producers who are closely linked by shared values and passion for their products, for good and healthy food. They believe in positive change and actively care for society. Their network expands all the way though Switzerland, where Crowd Container facilitates the exchange of these products with buyers who share the same values and understandings of nourishing and sustainable food.

I could sense their respect for land and traditions, and their commitment to make an impact and leave a prosperous future for the next generations in agriculture, or, I should say, agroecology.
One farmer told me, *"Food shouldn't be for 'consumers,' because 'consuming' means destroying. We are not destroying; we want to keep giving back to the land."* Another added, *"It's only natural that some of my lettuce gets eaten by snails. They live in the soil every day, all the time. We cultivate their land for just six hours a day. We are the visitors here, we should respect their home and share the product."*



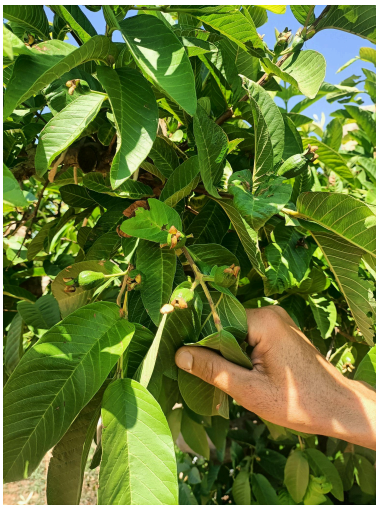






It was incredible to get to know and collaborate closely with such an innovative and different agricultural reality, where individual participation and producer recognition is the basis of the entire supply chain. As one worker shared: "*Before Valdibella, I didn't realize that the producer can actually sell their products themselves*". And another producer recounted, "*Families who bought my oranges and the products made from them were so happy, that Crowd Container decided to send me more money! Yes, more money for the same oranges they already bought and sold, claiming that the initial price was set too low*".





I was particularly inspired by the stories of young producers and farmers who chose to study abroad, far from home, with the goal of returning to their land to bring fresh, innovative perspectives to agriculture. Many are now implementing biological techniques, drawing from permaculture and agroecology. As one woman explained, *“I don’t see any alternative to growing organically. I wanted to work in my field while pregnant, and I want to do the same with my child. That’s simply not possible when using fertilizers and pesticides.”*

I want to warmly thank Valdibella and everyone who took care of me and supported my research! I returned with both my mind and heart full, having gained a deeper understanding of the processes behind the network and the challenges of such an incredible initiative. I truly loved my time there. Thank you to the TLFC team for making this experience possible!