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# Collaborative Enterprise and Sustainability: The Case of Slow Food

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**Abstract** The current and prevailing paradigm of intensive agricultural production is a straightforward example of the mainstream way of doing business. Mainstream enterprises are based on a negativistic view of human nature that leads to counter-productive and unsustainable behaviours producing negative impact for society and the natural environment. If we want to change the course, then different players are needed, which can flourish thanks to their capacity to serve others and creating values for all the participants in the network in which they are embedded. In the article, through the analysis of the Slow Food movement and the use of recent theoretical and empirical contributions in behavioural sciences and psychology, we support the collaborative enterprise model as an alternative to the still prevailing, mainstream business models. Evidence shows that caring and responsible efforts of economic agents are acknowledged and reciprocated even in highly competitive markets.

**Keywords** Collaborative enterprise · Local community · Mainstream enterprise · Multiple bottom line · Slow Food · Sustainable agriculture

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## Introduction

Worldwide, the number of people experiencing hunger is around 1 billion. In 2010 the undernourished people were 925 million, but in 2011, because of rising and volatile prices, further 44 million persons, mainly in Africa and Asia, have been forced into extreme poverty (FAO 2011a, p. 65, 2011c; World Bank Institute 2011).

Thanks to the Green Revolution and the related intensive crop production between 1961 and 2000 farmers in developing countries increased food production from 800 million tonnes to over 2.2 billion tonnes (FAO 2011b). However, these achievements '… have been associated with degradation of land and water resources, and the deterioration of related ecosystem goods and services. These, include biomass, carbon storage, soil health, water storage and supply, biodiversity, and social and cultural services' (FAO 2011d, p. 9).

Over the last 50 years, around 60% (15 out of 24) of the ecosystem services have been degraded or used unsustainably, including fresh water, capture fisheries, air and water purification, soil erosion regulation, and the regulation of regional and local climate. These services are fundamental for the well-being of current and future human generations, and other living species. In many cases, ecosystem services have been depleted because of policies aimed at increasing the supply of other services, such as food (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment 2005, p. 1). Agriculture uses 11% of the world land surface for crop production and 70% of all water withdrawn from aquifers, streams, and lakes (FAO 2011d, p. 9). It is also responsible for 90% of the total water footprint of production, which measures the volume of green (rain) and blue (withdrawn) water consumed in the production of agricultural goods from crops and livestock, and grey (polluted) water

generated by agriculture and household and industrial water uses (WWF International 2010, p. 46). Finally, agriculture and deforestation are amongst the major contributors to global greenhouse gas emissions with agriculture accounting for around 14% of the emissions and deforestation for 17% (FAO 2011e).

Therefore, if we define sustainable development as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987, p. 43), then we integrate the previous definition by adding that economic activities can be considered as sustainable from the ecological standpoint if their impact on the natural environment is non-negative (Zsolnai 2011), '[i]nsofar as modern agriculture is greatly dependent on non-renewable resources and contributes in degrading ecological systems at local, regional and global levels, it can hardly be considered as sustainable in providing human needs in the long run' (Saifi and Drake 2008, p. 26).

The current and prevailing paradigm of intensive agricultural production is a straightforward example of the mainstream way of doing business. Mainstream enterprises propagate a *negativistic view of human nature*. In this view, agents are always self-interested and want to maximize their own profit or utility without regard for the others, i.e. persons, ecosystems, and future generations. Their interactions are based on competition only and their criterion of success is growth measured in money terms. Mainstream business organizations generate vicious circles in which agents expect the worst from others and act accordingly (Ghoshal 2005).

If we want to get closer to a more sustainable and liveable world (Baumgärtner and Quaas 2010; Ingebrigtsen and Jakobsen 2009), then we need to generate virtuous circles where good dispositions, good behaviour and good expectations reinforce each other. Collaborative enterprises (Tencati and Zsolnai 2009, 2010) display genuine care about others and themselves and aim to create values for all the participants in their ecosystems. Their criterion of success is mutually satisfying relationships with the stakeholders.

In Table 1, we summarize the contrasting characteristics of the mainstream and collaborative enterprises.

To support the call for a different business paradigm, the rest of the article is organized as follows. First, thanks to recent advancements in psychology and behavioural and social sciences, it is possible to introduce the notion of *Homo reciprocans* that should replace the conventional *Homo oeconomicus* perspective. Human beings are more than egotic machines: their intrinsic disposition is relational and collaborative—and emerging trends and initiatives confirm this view (Albareda et al. 2008; Glasbergen 2010; Waddell 2011; Zadek 2006).

In this perspective, Slow Food represents a clear example of the feasibility of the collaborative enterprise framework. In particular, the Slow Food movement challenges the current agri-food model, based on bulk production and aimed at maximizing economic efficiency and productivity. We need to recognize that food is more than simply a commodity, and its production and consumption are strongly related to natural, social, cultural, historical, political, institutional, and personal issues. The documented analysis of the Slow Food experience, carried out in the third section, shows that alternative, caring, respectful, and deeply ethical ways of doing business are possible and successful.

There is a dramatic need and room for a radical change in the prevailing functioning mechanisms of economy and society to advance the common good.

## Positive Psychology and the *Homo Reciprocans* Model

The sceptics may believe that the premises of the collaborative model are naive. Recent discoveries in behavioural and social sciences suggest that this is not the case.

A new branch of psychology called *positive psychology*, initiated by Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, studies the strengths and virtues that allow individuals, communities, and societies to thrive (Positive Psychology Center 2007; Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000).

Positive psychology focuses on three different routes to happiness (Seligman 2002; Seligman et al. 2005):

1. *Positive emotion and pleasure (the pleasant life).* This is a hedonic approach, which deals with increasing positive emotions as part of normal and healthy life.

   Within limits, we can increase our positive emotion about the past (e.g. by cultivating gratitude and forgiveness), our positive emotion about the present

**Table 1** Mainstream enterprises versus collaborative enterprises

| | Mainstream enterprises | Collaborative enterprises |
|---|---|---|
| Basic motive | Self-interest | Care about others and themselves |
| Main goal | Maximizing profit or shareholder value | Creating values for all the participants in the network |
| Criterion of success | Growth in money terms | Mutually beneficial relationships with the stakeholders |

(e.g. by savouring and mindfulness) and our positive emotion about the future (e.g. by building hope and optimism) (Seligman et al. 2004, p. 1380).

2. *Engagement (the engaged life).* This constituent of happiness is not merely hedonic but regards the pursuit of gratification (Seligman et al. 2004). In order to achieve this goal, a person should involve himself/herself fully by drawing upon '… character strengths such as creativity, social intelligence, sense of humour, perseverance, and an appreciation of beauty and excellence' (Seligman et al. 2004, p. 1380). This leads to beneficial experiences of immersion, absorption and flow (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000; Seligman et al. 2004).
3. *Meaning (the meaningful life).* This calls for a deeper involvement of an individual, using the character strengths to belong to and serve something larger and more permanent than the self: 'something such as knowledge, goodness, family, community, politics, justice or a higher spiritual power' (Seligman et al. 2004, p. 1380).

What we need in business and economics is a commitment to helping individuals and organizations flourish by serving the common good thanks to the use of their strengths to increase and sustain the well-being of others and themselves.

From this point of view, one of the most important recent developments in the behavioural and social sciences is the emergence of the *Homo reciprocans* model which presents a major alternative to the *Homo oeconomicus* model. The *Homo oeconomicus* model suggests that agents are exclusively self-interested and always maximize their utility functions. Overwhelming empirical evidence shows that this is a rather unrealistic description of human behaviour (Frank 2004, 2011; Kahneman 2011). The model has also been criticized on various normative grounds (Zsolnai 2002).

Samuel Bowles, Robert Boyd, Ernst Fehr, and Herbert Gintis summarize the emerging model of *Homo reciprocans* as follows:

> [A] majority of individuals approach strategic interactions involving coordination problems with a propensity to cooperate, they respond to the cooperation of others by maintaining or increasing their level of cooperation, and they respond to defection on the part of others by retaliating against the offenders, even at a cost to themselves, and even when they cannot reasonably expect future personal gains from such retaliation (Bowles et al. 1997, p. 4).

This approach is coherent with many empirical observations: 'people do produce public goods, they do observe normative restraints on the pursuit of self-interest (even when there is nobody watching), and they will put themselves to a lot of trouble to hurt rulebreakers' (Shalizi 1999).

## The Case of Slow Food

As the evidence presented in the Introduction clearly shows, food is at the core of the sustainability challenge. The modern agribusiness is unsustainable: to feed a growing world population, mainly located in Africa and Asia, '… agriculture must learn to *save*' and '… literally, return to its roots by rediscovering the importance of healthy soil, drawing on natural sources of plant nutrition…' (FAO 2011b).

By recognizing food as a crucial and strategic issue (Petrini 2011a), Slow Food was established (and has continued to flourish) to foster alternative patterns of production and consumption (BioCycle 2010; Slow Europe 2011). In this perspective, the Slow Food movement is a fascinating example of the importance and success of collaborative practices.

### The Main Features of the Slow Food Movement

All the efforts of the Slow Food movement are intended to design, develop and implement progressive practices that are able to do the following (on this topic see also Clark 2008; Manzini and Meroni 2007; Mojoli 2007):

- Value typical traditions and specific sets of knowledge, resources and competences that were headed for destruction under the pressure of a global, standardized mass market.
- Protect and support local communities, which play an essential role in the quest for sustainability: 'People are trying to find ways to shorten the distance between producers and consumers, to make the connections between the two more direct, and to make this local economic activity a benefit to the local community' (Berry 2001).
  Solidal buying groups (Mercati della Terra 2011; Petrini 2009, pp. 25–26), community-supported agriculture (Petrini 2009, p. 26; Zsolnai and Podmaniczky 2010), farmers' markets and the locavore movement (Locavores 2011; Roehrig 2011) are all initiatives to foster a local, effective and sustainable economy starting from food. Furthermore, the local production allows consumers to better understand and control the shortened supply chain and the material processing.
- Shape new connections and social networks amongst producers and co-producers, i.e. aware consumers.

- Bypass brokers and foster direct relationships between farmers and responsible consumers.
- Reduce transports to minimize the food miles (AEA Technology 2005; Pollan 2006).
- Safeguard the environment. Ensuring the survival of local species, developing models of production which follow the natural rhythms and the seasons, preventing and controlling pollution, closing the production and consumption loops by recovering and recycling material and avoiding waste (BioCycle 2010; Kelly 1994; McDonough and Braungart 2002), protecting the biodiversity, minimizing food transport, preserving the local identity and culture, adopting more careful behaviours: all these efforts contribute to protecting the natural capital.
- Promote virtuous globalization through a network of neo-gastronomes, i.e. of aware citizens, producers, co-producers, cooks and academics (Andrews 2008; Petrini 2005, 2009). The different communities are not isolated but are all members of a grassroots movement, such as Slow Food, which promotes sustainable practices at the local level to achieve a real global sustainability. In particular, especially thanks to the Terra Madre project (Petrini 2009), Slow Food has become a 'global action network', i.e. a 'global, multi-stakeholder, inter-organizational change network' (Waddell 2011, p. xiv), or, more specifically, a 'civil society initiated multi-stakeholder arrangement that aims to fulfil a leadership role in the protection of the global commons or the production of global public goods' (Glasbergen 2010, p. 130).
- Ensure the universal right to pleasure and good living: in brief, *buen vivir*, as defined in Latin America (De Marzo 2009).
- Overcome the currently prevailing agri-food business model and also the conventional approaches to sustainability to embrace a more robust and consistent idea of sustainable development, which is rooted in a multiple bottom line perspective, taking into account the needs of the different stakeholder groups (Tencati and Zsolnai 2009).

In Table 2, the main features of the Slow Food movement are summarized showing the collaborative characters of its organization.

## Origins and Present of Slow Food

The Arci Gola (later Arcigola, which in Italian also means arch-gluttony) association was established by Carlo Petrini in 1986 in the Langhe-Roero District of Piedmont Region in Italy to promote a gastronomic culture able to combine the pleasure of food (and wine) with a deep knowledge of the local traditions, capabilities and resources needed to realize quality products (Petrini and Padovani 2005, pp. 64–68; Slow Food International 2011). Arcigola was a national movement focused on the defence and promotion of the multifaceted Italian cuisine. In order to counter and advance a concrete alternative to the worldwide threat represented by the prevailing, homogenizing 'competitive model' (Tencati and Zsolnai 2009) based on bulk production, economic efficiency and productivity via standardization, a fast and work-centred life, and fast food (Andrews 2008), Petrini and his group of friends decided to extend and further develop the Arcigola experience. Thus, on 10 December 1989, the Slow Food international association was launched in Paris by 400 members from 18 countries (Petrini and Padovani 2005, pp. 97–101).

Today, Slow Food is a nonprofit, member-supported organization, which has over 100,000 members and is spread throughout 153 countries. Furthermore, eight national associations have been established in Italy, Germany, Switzerland, USA, France, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands. Slow Food headquarters is still located in Bra, in the original Langhe-Roero District, close to Turin, Italy, but the network of members is organized into autonomous local groups called Condotte in Italy and Convivia in the rest of the world. The active local points are more than 1,300 including 285 Condotte in Italy (Slow Food International 2011; Slow Food Italia 2011).

## People, Planet and Plate: The New 3Ps for a Different Definition of Sustainability

The basis of Slow Food organization is a new, interdisciplinary vision of gastronomy called *neo-gastronomy*. Starting from the original attention given to the pleasure connected with the eating and drinking experience, which is not only related to the taste but is also multisensorial and complex, this innovative approach to gastronomy calls for a stronger and broader awareness of the cultural, historical, natural, social, ecological, institutional, and productive conditions and mechanisms behind quality food (Petrini 2005, 2009, pp. 70–73, 143–144; Slow Food International 2011).

Therefore, the real gastronomic pleasure has to be combined with responsibility and care, i.e. knowledge of and respect for the local traditions, the land (and the sea), its intertwined territory and communities, and cultural and biological diversity. Hence, the new gastronomy recognizes the strategic linkages amongst *people, planet and plate* and goes beyond the usual vision of the sustainability concept framed around the conventional triple bottom line (i.e. people, planet and profits: Elkington 2004). Local and sustainable food is the only way to feed people and, at the same time, respect the carrying capacity of the Earth, and

**Table 2** Slow Food main features: an overview according to the collaborative enterprise framework

| Collaborative enterprise main features | Slow Food main features |
|---|---|
| More balanced, democratic and broader governance systems | Slow Food is a network of networks, i.e. a hyper-network, which, thanks to engines of innovation at local and global levels, fosters alternative ways of production and consumption [on this topic, see also the concept of global action network in Glasbergen (2010), and Waddell (2011)]. These are, at the same time, innovative and traditional: innovative because they represent a real, feasible alternative to the prevailing socioeconomic paradigm; traditional in that they are based on the cultural heritage of local communities all over the world. The hyper-network and the related initiatives are open, call for partnerships and broad participation and have developed a distributed, horizontal approach (see, for example, Terra Madre and Terra Madre Day) |
| Multiple bottom line approach | Neo-gastronomy and the related strategic vision based on the new 3Ps—*People, Planet and Plate*—and the innovative concept of quality framed around the 'good, clean, fair' criteria (Slow Food Italia 2006) call for a comprehensive, holistic perspective that takes into account not only the consumption and production processes but also a compatible way of living. Real and sustainable quality requires care for the environment, for the people, and for the community in which producers and co-producers are embedded. Furthermore, it requires education, passion and time [see, for example, the University of Gastronomic Sciences, the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity, the *School Garden* project launched in 2004 (Slow Food Italia 2005; Tagliacarne 2011), the *A Thousand Gardens in Africa* project launched during Terra Madre 2010 (Petrini 2011b; Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity 2011b; Terra Madre 2010), the partnership between Terra Madre and Lingua Madre] |
| Cohesive stakeholder engagement | The slow approach redesigns the strategic connections amongst the local players. Producers, co-producers, cooks, local authorities, teachers, students, and so on are all involved in a new economic pattern capable of creating values for the different stakeholders: a higher remuneration for the producers, lower prices and better quality for the consumers, better raw materials for the cooks, a stronger community and a cleaner environment for the local authorities, and so on. From below, Slow Food advances an innovative and alternative paradigm, which builds and improves the connections, based on mutual trust and commitment, amongst the people at local and global levels—making single, isolated actors (small producers, food communities, consumers, and so on) stronger and more aware. Through its projects [see, for example, Ark of Taste, Presidia, and Cittaslow—the International Network of Cities where Living is Easy (Cittaslow International 2009, 2011)], the movement strengthens the human, social and cultural capital in the local/global community(ies) (Pietrykowski 2004) |
| Long-term perspective | Rethinking the agri-food sector starting from a local orientation, opening new market opportunities to preserve and sustain traditional experiences at risk of extinction (see, for example, Salone del Gusto and the partnership with Coop Italia), building a system innovation (Tukker et al. 2008) to change the patterns of development and make them more equitable for the present and future generations: all these collaborative efforts need a long-term perspective and durable relationships. The last two items are also the basis of the conviviality concept, i.e. the crucial value to understand Slow Food, its proposal, and its organization (i.e. the Convivia) |
| Fitting into the environment | The short supply chain, located in a specific *terroir*—the core of a local food economy (Berry 2001; Feenstra 1997)—is perfectly embedded in the social, natural, cultural, and institutional environment (see, for example, the Earth Markets). The same Presidia should not be considered as initiatives to promote luxury food (Petrini and Padovani 2005, pp. 140–148) but drivers to support local communities in delivering seasonal, fresh, tasty, fragrant, healthy, and environment-friendly daily food to gain their food sovereignty (Petrini 2009) and security |

ensure better living conditions for farmers and consumers and a real freedom of choice.

In this holistic and systemic perspective, the quality of food is deeply rooted in the quality of the surrounding ecosystem; the material and nonmaterial identity of the local community involved in the cultivation, breeding and production processes; and the overall quality of life, of which a structural element is conviviality. Conviviality, which derives from the Latin *cum vivere* (i.e. living together), is based on the concepts of sharing and reciprocity (Andrews 2008; Petrini and Padovani 2005). In fact, the pleasure of food should be shared, and dining is mainly an expression of sociality. Thus, Slow Food promotes food and wine culture by defending and safeguarding the cultural heritage of the local communities, their *savoir-faire*, their social relationships, and the interrelated biodiversity.

## Good, Clean and Fair: The Quality According to Slow Food

The idea of quality fostered by Slow Food encompasses three principles (Petrini 2005; Slow Food International 2011):

- The food must be good. This means that the food every person eats should taste good and give pleasure according to authenticity and naturalness criteria applied in a certain moment, in a certain place, and within a certain culture (Pollan 2008).
- The food must be clean. Food should be produced in a sustainable way that does not harm the environment, animal welfare or human health (Maloni and Brown 2006; Zuzworsky 2001). With regard to this point, the traditional patterns of production aim at not only avoiding negative ecological and social impacts, but also helping to restore and protect ecosystems and ecosystems services (Hawken et al. 1999; Tencati and Pogutz 2011; Ulgiati et al. 2011).
- The food must be fair. Food producers should receive a fair compensation for the work they do, under humane conditions, while having their dignity, knowledge and capabilities valued and respected.

This original approach to quality requires alternative and innovative ways of production and consumption to overcome the current mainstream of large-scale agri-food business. It is based on three pillars (Tasch 2008):

- The small, to adopt the appropriate scale in social, environmental and also economic terms;
- The local, to respect and be embedded in the natural environment and the community;
- The slow, because quality needs time and passion, and a *slow approach* is crucial for promoting a more responsible, just and caring way of living, in line with natural and human rhythms (Manzini and Meroni 2007; Mojoli 2007).

To foster this agenda Slow Food aims to

- Educate consumers (Slow Food Educa 2011). If the target is to change the way food is produced and consumed and, all in all, the way people live, education is critical. Eating is a political act that requires making informed choices. Therefore, passive consumers must become active and aware co-producers, who appreciate and select real quality food and support more sustainable agricultural patterns.
- Connect producers and co-producers to build exchange opportunities and foster virtuous circles to promote excellent products and overcome the constraints of the currently dominant mass production.
- Protect biodiversity in terms not only of fruits, vegetables and animal species but also of local customs and traditions that make food and life pleasant and fitting.

## Main Engines of Innovation

To pursue these goals, Slow Food has been gradually developing projects that are real *engines of innovation* to spread best and more advanced practices. Some of the most important are the following.

### *The University of Gastronomic Sciences*

The University of Gastronomic Sciences (UNISG), located in Pollenzo, near Bra, started its activities in 2004. The University, promoted by Slow Food International and Piedmont and Emilia–Romagna Regions, is a private institution. It gives academic credibility to the field of food studies by providing an education and training project based on the new definition of gastronomy. Currently, 900 students from over 40 countries have attended or are attending the courses provided by UNISG (Slow Food International 2011; University of Gastronomic Sciences 2011).

### *Terra Madre and Salone del Gusto*

Terra Madre ('Mother Earth') is a new player on the world scene (Petrini 2009). It was born in 2004 as an international event in Turin. It was organized in conjunction with Salone Internazionale del Gusto ('International Fair of Taste') and involved around 5,000 persons, representing different food communities. Food communities are associated with specific geographical areas and may represent clusters, i.e. groups of producers operating in the same place, alliances between local farmers and transformers, or entire food chains operating locally (Petrini 2009, p. 22).

Terra Madre became a permanent world network of food communities, or local networks, which meets on a biennial basis in Turin.

Another important initiative is the Salone del Gusto: since 1996, it has been organized by Slow Food, the Piedmont Region and the local municipality every other year in Turin. These 5 days focused on food and values combine shopping and taste education. Now, worldwide, this fair is considered a reference market for good, clean and fair food from local economies.

The 2010 edition of Terra Madre and Salone del Gusto, held from 21 to 25 October 2010, in Turin, was an extraordinary success: more than 200,000 people and, in particular, over 5,000 representatives of the global network, from 160 countries, attended the event. The number of exhibitors was 910 (Salone Internazionale del Gusto 2011).

The 2010 edition of Terra Madre and Salone del Gusto celebrated the crucial role played by local communities in fostering sustainable ways of food production and consumption (Terra Madre 2011). One of the most important projects is the collaboration between Terra Madre and Lingua Madre ('Mother Language'), an initiative carried on by the Piedmont Region's Cultural Department, which

aims at promoting and protecting the cultural and linguistic diversity of indigenous communities and the related historical and social memories and identities, mainly orally passed through generations (Slow Food International 2010).

Currently the Terra Madre network comprises 2,377 food communities, around 1,000 cooks, 500 academics and more than 300 universities, and 1,000 young activists (Slow Food International 2011; Terra Madre 2011). Also through the celebration of the Terra Madre Day, every year on 10 December, all these people are committed to promoting the 'eating locally' concept, aimed at ensuring, especially in developing countries, a real access to good, clean and fair food, and food security/sovereignty (FAO 2011b; Petrini 2009; Slow Food International 2009).

*The Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity*

The Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity is part of the Slow Food movement and was founded in Florence in 2003 in partnership with the Tuscany Region. The Slow Food Foundation's projects, which cover more than 50 countries, are mainly focused on developing countries and foster a sustainable agriculture that respects the environment and the cultural identity of farmers and improves the living conditions and the quality of life in the local communities (Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity 2009, 2010, 2011a, b; Slow Food International 2011). Over time, thanks to fundraising and philanthropic donations, the Foundation has been carrying on several projects including Ark of Taste, Presidia, and Earth Markets.

The *Ark of Taste* project, launched in 1996 during the first edition of Salone del Gusto, aims to identify and catalogue quality food products at risk of extinction throughout the world. Now, 19 national commissions, an international commission and the Slow Food Convivia are committed to discovering unique products threatened by a standardized globalization process. The Ark has already recorded 1,063 items encompassing products, animal breeds and vegetable species from almost 70 countries (see Table 3). The products included in the Ark are of outstanding quality in terms of taste; linked to a specific geographical area; made by small-scale artisan producers; produced using sustainable farming methods, and in danger of extinction. They also have real economic viability and market potential (Ark of Taste 2011; Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity 2009, 2010, 2011a; Slow Food International 2008, 2011).

The most important project for the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity is represented by the *Presidia*, linked to the Ark of Taste: if the latter identifies possible targets for Slow Food intervention, then the Presidia offer concrete support. In fact, the Presidia initiatives help groups of artisan producers to preserve their traditional methods and products by offering technical assistance to improve production quality, while providing new market opportunities. For example, in 2001 Slow Food started a partnership with Coop Italia, the purchasing and marketing consortium of the largest Italian retail chain (i.e. Coop), to promote the goods safeguarded by the Italian Presidia (Tencati and Zsolnai 2009).

The Presidia project started in 1999 with two targeted initiatives in Piedmont and Tuscany. As of December 2011, there were 201 Presidia in Italy and 156 internationally (see Table 3). Overall, they involve more than 11,700 small-scale producers. For them, all over the world, the challenge is the same: surviving in a market where variety, diversity and real quality are squeezed out by the standardizing rules imposed by the dominant, transnational agri-food business (Friedmann and McNair 2008; Petrini 2009, p. 21; Presidi Slow Food 2011; Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity 2009, 2010, 2011a; Slow Food International 2008, 2011; Slow Food Presidia 2011).

One of the most recent projects is *Earth Markets* ('Mercati della Terra'), an international network of farmers' markets following specific Slow Food guidelines. The project begun in 2006 when the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity with other partners decided to start up an initiative aimed at promoting markets of local producers in Italy and all over the world. The project intends to build short supply chains of seasonal, territorial, and high-quality products (Pollan 2006) thanks to the joint efforts of small-scale farmers and artisans, local enterprises, local communities, and municipalities.

In more detail, Earth Markets are places where producers and co-producers can directly meet and exchange

**Table 3** Ark products and Presidia (2008–December 2011)

| | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | December 2011 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ark products | 807 | 903 | 947 | 1,063 |
| Presidia | Italian Presidia = 173 | Italian Presidia = 177 | Italian Presidia = 194 | Italian Presidia = 201 |
| | International Presidia = 121 | International Presidia = 137 | International Presidia = 148 | International Presidia = 156 |
| | Total = 294 | Total = 314 | Total = 342 | Total = 357 |

*Source*: Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity (2009, 2010, 2011a, b)

local goods, which are really genuine—according to the 'good, clean and fair' quality criteria—and thus, also genetically modified-organism free (GMO-free). The network is currently composed of 21 markets in Austria, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lebanon, Romania, and the USA. New openings are expected in the near future to replicate, enhance and scale up the impact of this alternative form of distribution at the local level, and broaden the network (Earth Markets 2011; Mercati della Terra 2011; Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity 2009, 2010, 2011a; Slow Food International 2008, 2011).

## Conclusion: Collaboration Works

Collaboration works if organizations pursue their multiple bottom line in an effective way and are able to sustain the supporting network on which their functioning is based.

Evolutionary models of moral behaviour suggest that the survival and flourishment of altruistic agents depends especially on the effect of their local groups on their fitness (Henrich 2004; Manner and Gowdy 2010).

The effects of the local groups on the fitness of collaborative organizations are usually positive. Robert Frank's research shows that social responsibility brings substantial benefits for firms. He identifies five distinct types of cases where socially responsible organizations are rewarded for the higher cost of caring: (1) opportunistic behaviour can be avoided between owners and managers, (2) moral satisfaction induces employees to work more for lower salaries, (3) high quality new employees can be recruited, (4) customers' loyalty can be gained, and (5) the trust of subcontractors can be established. In this way, caring organizations are rewarded for the higher costs of their socially responsible behaviour by their ability to form commitments and trust relationships amongst owners, managers, employees, customers, and subcontractors (Frank 2004; Tencati and Zsolnai 2009).

Thus, noble efforts of economic agents are acknowledged and reciprocated even in highly competitive markets. Hence, the conventional, self-centred *Homo oeconomicus* perspective should be replaced by the *Homo reciprocans* approach, i.e. by collaborative and progressive thinking and practices.

In his *Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith praises self-interest in the following way:

> It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages (Smith 1904, Book I, Chapter II, paragraph 2).

We think that contemporary results of behavioural science and psychology and the Slow Food experience point out that there is a place for care and compassion in doing business. We can say that it is not the self-love of the butchers, the brewers, and the bakers that will bring sustainable food for us but their *love of producing quality food* and their *respect for the land and communities* in which they are embedded. Passion for good (Shrivastava 2010) triumphs self-interest in the case of sustainable food.

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