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Urban agriculture: a review focused on the key elements and on the organizational models

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Abstract

Urban agriculture (UA) complexity requires new analytic tools to identify both key elements and organizational models that are more complex than those of conventional agriculture address to the global market (Heimlich and Barnard, 1992; van der Schans, 2010; McClintock, 2010; Torquati et al., 2011; Liu, 2015; van Der Schans et al., 2015; Pölling et al., 2017). This complexity comes from both the greater diversity of spaces and of actors involved. The new UA farms differ from the traditional in terms of production factors. Concerning land, other spaces such as roofs, parking lots, are included in the UA project and initiatives. Human labour is based on volunteering and the capital stock is usually minimum and low-tech. Actors involvement arise from urban environment to answer people needs enhancing local resources and the active management of the territory.

The involvement regards both agricultural entrepreneurs, who adapted business activities to citizens' demand (city-adjusted farm activities), and civil society engaged in carrying out urban activities through agriculture (agricultural-adjusted city activities). In the first case, the urban agriculture approach joins the multifunctional and inter-sectoral diversification. It focuses on the farm choices, or its ability to integrate conventional farming with the production of public, cultural and environmental goods (hydro-geological equilibrium,

biodiversity, landscape preservation, eno- gastronomic heritage). Also, it provides extra-agricultural private goods and services as the marketing of typical products, catering, hospitality, recreational, therapeutic and social integration services) (Zasada, 2011). In the second case, civil society's approach to agriculture is enhanced by new lifestyles and social welfare. It directly focuses on the consumers-citizens choices and public institutions or consumer desire to reconnect with farmers fostering greater product, process and place of production awareness (Torquati et al., 2016). Besides, public institutions play their role in contributing to the improvement of common value and meaning, affecting the environmental and socio-economic sustainability of local development (Cavallo et al., 2017; Marino and Cavallo, 2014; Laboratorio Sismondi, 2012).

The paper aims to provide a literature overview to identify the UA key elements and organizational models. Key elements highlighted by published works have been organized according to four dimensions: economic, social, spatial and cultural. The study of organizational models means to highlight how agricultural and non-agricultural enterprises have adapted to the urban conditions to be competitive and make a profit, accordingly. In this respect, Business Canvas Model is used to analyse farms and non-farms organisation both economically and socially.

Based on the literature explored an analytic framework is proposed to better understand the diversity of UA models from the traditional agriculture.

Keywords : urban agriculture theory, multidisciplinary approach, business model.

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