

Farm Cooperatives and the Social Economy: The Case of Spain

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Abstract

The term “Social Economy” is used to mean a set of organizations that share specific operational features, such as solidarity, mutual assistance, open membership, democratic management and people-based decision-making and distribution of surpluses, which depend on the activity carried out by each person irrespective of the capital invested. Farm cooperatives undoubtedly belong to this group. In recent years, Spanish farm cooperatives have been experiencing substantial business development. This process is a consequence of the latest changes in the regulations governing Spanish cooperatives. Major cooperative groups with high turnovers have developed in this positive environment. Although there are differences between countries, the European cooperative movement is a good example of the prominence that cooperatives have achieved in many sectors. Their traditional goals are changing and one of their current priorities is to meet the requirements of the CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) as regards agricultural multi-functionality. Nevertheless, the principles of this concept were already present in their own tenets. This paper aims to show the role of the cooperatives in the new social requirements, taking into account their functioning principles and the new conceptual frame they are involved in.