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Social Farms as Social Enterprises in the Czech Republic

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Abstract: **Background:** Social entrepreneurship has grown in popularity in the Czech Republic over the last few decades as a solution to the demand for long-term, socially responsible drivers of economic growth. As part of social entrepreneurship, social farming combines social services and the opportunity for work integration in a farm setting. This article employs EMES methodology to the study of social farming in the Czech Republic.

Research objectives: Drawing on the findings of 15 case studies, the author analyses social farming in the context of the EMES model with a focus on the organisation and principal goals of Czech social farms.

Research design and methods: The theoretical part is based on a review of the literature on social economy, social entrepreneurship, and social farming. The case study report that follows employs mixed data sets such as interviews, field notes, information gathered from publicly available sources, brochures, organisation laws, annual reports, newspaper articles and other media reports, as well as data from a variety of registers.

Results: From a normative standpoint, social farming and social farms in the Czech Republic are comparable to those in Europe, but they are fewer in number and are subject to distinct regulation. Institutionally speaking, only social farms registered as institutes (zapsaný ústav) meet the EMES social enterprise criteria. Czech social farms are known for their emphasis on craftsmanship, tradition, volunteerism, strong bonds with a particular location, ecology, links with direct suppliers, solidarity, and non-monetary trade.

Keywords: social enterprise, social farm, EMES criteria, environment, solidarity, craft

JEL Codes: D 64, I 30, I 38, J 14, J 15, J 24, Q 10

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1. Introduction

The long history of associative activity in what is now the Czech Republic started in the late 19th century. The liberal associative statute (the Law on the Right of Association) was passed in 1867. Following this, hundreds more associations developed, as evidenced by the review of current associations completed by a group of historians led by Marek Lašťovka (1998) in their book *Pražské spolky: Soupis pražských spolků na základě úředních evidencí z let 1895–1990* (*Prague associations: List of Prague associations based on official evidence from 1895–1990*). Many other societies, voluntary groups, charities, and mutual insurance firms achieved prominence in public life decades before this. Together with the cooperative movement that gained in importance at the end of the 19th century, they established the basis for the Czech social economy movement that started its modern era in this century.

Forty years of totalitarian regime interrupted the promising development of civil society and alternative approaches to the economy. Still, in the last thirty years, Czech culture has been able to successfully build on what was already well-established in the past. Many important motivations came into play when the Czech Republic joined the European Union and had the opportunity to strengthen the development of its social economy. Social economy or the third sector can be described as an economy that prioritises people over profit, or as Jacques Defourny says, it presents a "new entrepreneurial spirit focused on social aims" (2001, p. 2). According to the European tradition, the social economy sector consists of foundations, co-operatives, associations and mutual societies. These organisations have the mission to benefit "either their members or a larger collectivity rather than to generate profits for investors" (Nyssens, 2008, p. 2). The social economy sector nowadays consists of 2.8 million entities across Europe, employs 13.6 million people, and accounts for a sizeable proportion of European GDP (Social Economy Action Plan, 2021, p. 3).

In the Czech Republic, social economy entities or social enterprises entered the public sphere after 2000. An important stimulus for developing social economy is the sustained support of European funds administered by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Social enterprises vary according to their legal status. In general, they employ persons with health, mental, or intellectual disabilities (so-called work integration social enterprises – WISE), apart from providing other vital public benefits, such as improved environmental and community resilience.

This study looks in more depth at social farming viewed as part of the social economy sector. Social farming may be defined as any activity that focuses on delivering social and health services to individuals in need at farm level in rural communities. The organisations that provide these activities – social farms – are part of the social entrepreneurship sector since they sell their products and services on the market. Nonetheless, they have a number of significant social and environmental effects as well as provide direct social benefits.

The primary aim of this study is to discuss the fundamental characteristics of Czech social farms and the secondary one to determine whether and to what extent the EMES criteria for social enterprises are applicable to the social farms under consideration. For this reason, the paper begins with a theoretical background on social economy and social entrepreneurship as defined by the EMES research network and goes on to provide a short overview of the social farming concept. Based on a mixed methodological approach and fifteen individual cases, the findings give data analysis about Czech social farms.

The rationale for the selected methodology was adapted from my doctoral thesis, which was written from 2016 to 2019 and defended in 2020, and from which I have selected only those parts that match the profile of the journal. The paper does not include sections related to social work on farms, comparisons of social farming across European countries, or the history of the concept. The EMES methodology is then compared with the actual characteristics of social farms as social enterprises. Finally, the study offers a broader view of social farms as social enterprises and their new activities when contrasted with the traditional social farming perspective.

2. Theoretical background

Social farming is a new socio-economic phenomenon at the crossroads of different conceptual frameworks. Its remit usually includes multifunctional agriculture, as evidenced by the works of Di Iacovo and O'Connor (2009), Randall (2002), Ploeg and Roep (2003), and Mölders

(2012), who emphasise not only food and fibre provision as the sole function of agricultural systems but also landscape and water management, cultural heritage protection in rural areas, biodiversity, environmental and social issues, and many others. Then the social economy and social enterprise that will be developed below are often noted. Murray et al (2019) focus on the theoretical frameworks of social integration and social work listed in their overview of farm activities enhancing participants' quality of life. Sometimes public health (Briers et al, 2021) is mentioned in connection with social farming, but this context has not yet gained prominence in the Czech Republic.

2.1. Social economy, social enterprise, and the EMES methodology

The concept of social economy has its roots in the 19th century; however, its beginnings can be traced back to free movements in the first Christian communities, monastic orders, guilds, or Freemasons dating back to the medieval era (Hoffmann, 2006). Social economy re-emerged in the mid-1970s, strongly linked to the new environmental movement, feminism, and the welfare state crisis. Several theories have been proposed to explain the rise of social economy in a modern sense. In two sectoral perspectives – as public and purely market-oriented institutions – Weisbrod (1977) proposes the public good theory as an economic theory explaining why these two sectors cannot meet the heterogeneous demand for the general-interest services provided to the average voter. In his overview of the civil society, Skovajsa (2010) puts forward another explanation, stating that voluntarily founded and formalised groups of people aim to fill in the gap by supplying goods neglected by public or for-profit private bodies, and to satisfy their own needs.

Other approaches to social economy include trust-related theories linked to the information problems inherent in the goods or services provided by them (Laville, Young, & Eynaud, 2015) and the entrepreneurial approach on the 'supply side,' which is often cited in the context of social farms. Social entrepreneurs are considered to be active creators motivated by social or other beneficial purposes and assume the risk of organising and managing new business ventures. Unlike businesspeople, social entrepreneurs create social values rather than monetary ones (Defourny, 2001). They introduce new ways of seeing and doing things and present ongoing competition between alternatives (Young, 1981). Social enterprises are, in this perspective, as Pestoff (2012) puts it, organisations or firms belonging to the sphere of the social economy that successfully address the practical and actual demands of present society (e.g. long-term unemployment, social exclusion, advocacy, ecological problems, child or elderly care). They, at the same time, comply with entrepreneurial means and a particular type of governance. While the U.S, approach to social enterprise mostly follows Young's views on the social entrepreneur as an agent of social change (Young 1983), the cooperative and solidarity movement is central to the European social economy sector. According to Borzaga and Galera (2012), social entrepreneurship actors are characterised by using market mechanisms to produce goods or services of general interest. They do not rely solely on the conversion of revenue from diverse resources into free services (like traditional non-profit organisations), but pursue business activity to sustain their operation ensure further development.

To determine to what extent Czech social farms constitute social enterprises as specific bodies pursuing the activities represented by social economy, the paper adopts the conceptual approach proposed by the EMES European Research Network, which builds on a combination of a legal-institutional and normative factors that apply to a wide range of social enterprises across Europe. It defines a social enterprise as one that applies economic, social, and

democratic dimensions in equal measure in its operation. The methodology's emphasis on the participatory aspect of organisational governance, which leans significantly on the cooperative movement, is a key distinguishing element. Participants in a social enterprise are thus expected to bear greater responsibility for its performance. More specifically, the identifying criteria of the economic and entrepreneurial dimensions of its activities are as follows:

- continuous activity producing goods and/or selling services,
- high degree of autonomy,
- significant level of economic risk,
- minimum amount of paid work.

The criteria that focus on the social dimension of a social enterprise include:

- an explicit aim to benefit the community,
- an initiative launched by a group of citizens or civil society organisations,
- limited profit distribution.

The last group of criteria involves participatory governance, which means:

- a high degree of autonomy,
- decision-making power not based on capital ownership,
- participatory nature involving various parties affected by the activity (Defourny, & Nyssens, 2014, pp. 26–27).

Apart from the above-mentioned criteria, an emphasis is often put on developing a particular locality and institutional cooperation in a specific place. This paper is thus concerned with a type of enterprise that applies a mix of democratic, social, economic, ecological, and governance patterns. The validity of these criteria shall be explored in more detail in its analytical part.

2.2. Defining social farming

The most recent review of literature on the social farming concept and its definitions was provided by Jarábková, Chreneková, and Varecha (2022) in their article, which includes a systematic quantitative literature review. They provide an overview of social farming definitions (p. 542), from which I have selected that by Haubenhofer et al (2010), who define social farming as "the use of commercial farms and agricultural land as a basis for the promotion of mental and physical health through normal agricultural activity." According to De Bruin et al (2010), social farming "in addition to its primary function of food production, involves the provision of secondary services from which the community may benefit, such as social services or job placement for disadvantaged people." Guirado et al (2017) view social farming as an "activity which gives agricultural practices a new meaning which goes beyond the productive aspect and provides a social function primarily intended for groups at risk of exclusion. (…) The creation of health and social services and the processing and marketing of quality value-added good products, achieved with social justice and environmental sustainability." Murray et al characterise care farming as "the use of commercial farms and agricultural landscapes as a base for promoting mental and physical health through normal farming activities. Specifically, providing a structured, supervised programme of health, vocational, social and/or farm-related activities for vulnerable people" (Murray et al, 2019, p. 14).

In the Czech Republic, the generally accepted definition comes from the Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee from 2012 (NAT/539 Social Farming), which was later adapted into the first Czech methodology concerning social farming. Social farming is thus defined as a "set of activities using agricultural resources, both plant and animal, to create an

adequate environment for differently disabled or socially disadvantaged people and the public to provide them with employment opportunities, to assist their integration into society. (…) In this sense, the aim is to create conditions within the farm or farming activities that enable people with special needs to participate in normal farming activities to ensure their development and support and to improve their well-being" (Chovanec, Hudcová, & Moudrý, 2015, p. 5).

These and other definitions strive to combine agricultural activities (multifunctional agriculture frame), social integration and social work (social inclusion frame), health and community network assistance (public health frame), and social economy. Depending on local traditions and experiences, other definitions emphasise health, social and work integration, economic, educational, or environmental factors, as detailed in a recent paper by Briers et al (2021). But the crucial aspect of social farming is the enhancement of the well-being of people living in challenging circumstances due to their health or social problems. Social farming also embodies the idea of ecological justice (Besthorn 2012, p. 35). Social farms thus offer even the most vulnerable people a dignified living environment. As cultural islands, they can provide security, healthy food, water and landscape access, social life, and variable services. Partnerships and interdependence, rather than paternalism and anthropocentrism, have a chance to flourish there.

3. Research design

As the main aim of my doctoral thesis was to explore the phenomenon of Czech social farming, I chose the case study as my research framework. In this paper, I use only a part of the collected data. According to Yin (2009), a case study is an empirical research method exploring a particular phenomenon in its actual context, and the boundaries between it and its context are only partially obvious. George and Benett (2005) point out that a case study serves to study a well-defined phenomenon of scientific interest, aiming to test a theory, develop, or convey a general understanding of the phenomenon due to the causes of similarity or difference between a case and class of issues. In their view, a case study includes methods that permit an internal and external analysis of a case from quantitative, qualitative, and interpretive perspectives (George, & Bennett, 2004, pp. 17–18). The case study has its strengths in terms of conceptual validity, the elicitation of new hypotheses, and the rich explanatory value of a single case. On the other hand, it does not prescribe iterative research procedures, which may reduce the validity of findings (Yin, 2009). The social farms analysed in the thesis were not chosen at random, but were preceded by an introductory analysis. In this context, Silverman warns against 'anecdotalism,' stating that the validity of explanations is occasionally called into question since the researcher fails to deal with situations that differ in some way from the generalisation (Silverman, 2005, p. 23), thus lowering her credibility. This is prevented by abstracting from the topic and removing oneself from the emic perspective, selecting instances from a larger pool, devising an honest study design, and rigorous data triangulation.

The sample and characteristics of the data collected

The methodology for selecting social farms for my study was based on several criteria adopted in advance. In making the selections, I took advantage of my familiarity with the overall context of social farming in the Czech Republic and of my prior understanding of the social reality under investigation, thanks to which I was able to anticipate where the processes of interest were most likely to occur.

The primary sample selection criteria were as follows:

– Social farms located on the Map of Social Farms (Google Maps, n.d.). The Map of social farms is available on the website managed by the Association of social farming, which is a private, non-profit umbrella organisation for social farming in the Czech Republic.
– Social farms, regardless of their legal form, registered as agricultural enterprises under Act No. 252/1997 Coll. on Agriculture, but do not have to report 50% of their income from agricultural production.
– Social farms located in rural areas characterised according to the OECD typology by population density, i.e. at most 150 inhabitants per km^2 in a given location (OECD 2011).

The information in this research was gleaned from numerous informal and unstructured interviews, as well as in-depth semi-structured interviews with fifteen heads of social farms using a pretested questionnaire. The interviews took place between 2015 and 2017. Some respondents were interviewed more than once at subsequent follow-up interviews. Other data were obtained from publicly available sources, the internet, leaflets, organisations' constitutions, annual reports, newspaper articles and other media reports, and (promotional) videos prepared by individual organisations. I also relied on participant observation through involvement in work activities on social farms and non-participant observation during visits, excursions, workshops, and other projects. Since 2014, I have kept field notes during these journeys, which proved to be a valuable source of observations and information. In the triangulation process, I compared my field notes with publicly available data, then revised and polished them through email discussion with the actors in the regions studied.

In my doctoral thesis, these aggregated data are presented as individual cases on a specially designed matrix. Several new content codes appeared regularly across multiple narrators and could also be discerned in the content analysis of the accompanying documents but were not included in the matrix. These gaps gave rise to additional content codes that constitute amendments and additions to the existing conceptual framework. The paper summarises the main findings in more general terms. References to specific data sources (e.g. date of creation) can be found in my PhD thesis (Hudcová, 2020).

4. Results

4.1. Characteristics of Czech social farms

Although Moudrý et al (2017, p. 1209) mention that in the Czech Republic it is possible to identify 100 organisations that can be classified as social farms, and approximately 40 have actively embraced the concept, the map of social farms available on the portal www.socialni-zemedelstvi.cz contains 35 of them (30 September 2019). As the organisations' names reveal, not all of them consider themselves to be farms. On the other hand, the selected 15 farms and their leaders are aware of the concept of social farming and provide services or jobs in a farm setting; however, marketable production is not always central to their activity. Sometimes the primary source of income is the sale of services, with agricultural production serving as a supplement.

Activities pursued

Most social farms studied provide mixed services that combine work integration and social services according to the Social Services Act of 14 March 2006 (No. 108/2006) together with other therapeutic activities and education, as shown in Figure 1.

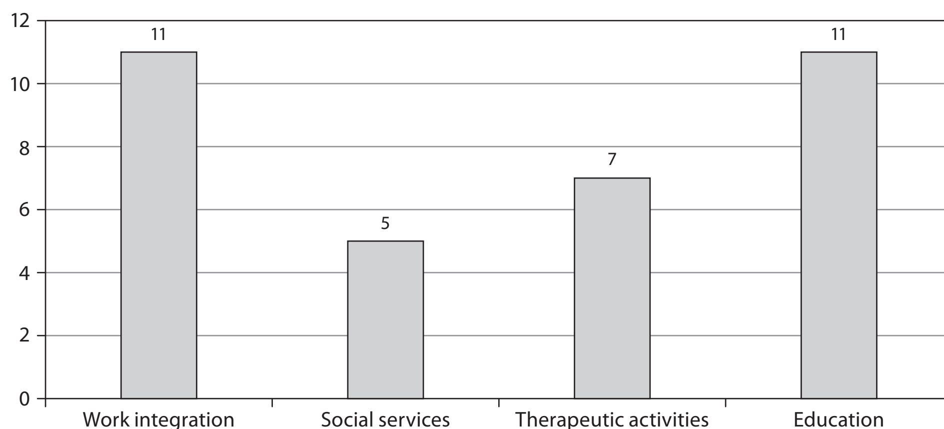

Figure 1. Types of social farming activities as part of multifunctional agriculture (*n* = 15)

Source: own study findings.

The key methodological publication on social farming in the Czech Republic (Chovanec, Hudcová, & Moudrý, 2015, p. 9) divides social farming activities into three categories: work integration, therapeutic activities, and education. The logic of formalised and non-formalised social and welfare services is used to divide therapeutic activities into two groups (social services and therapeutic activities) in Figure 1.

However, in my data, I also found other activities not included in the above-cited list. They were mentioned several times in interviews and documents, are perceived as necessary on farms, and can be distinguished from other, more typical ones within the social farming framework. They are shown in Figure 2.

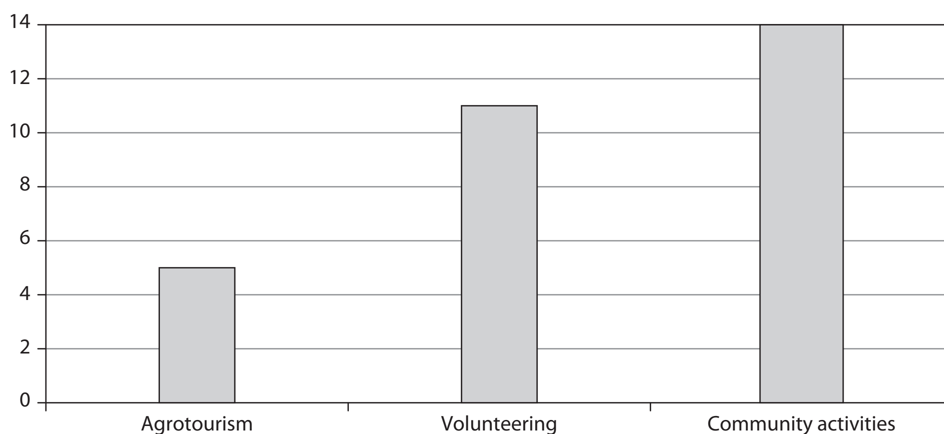

Figure 2. Additional social farming activities as part of multifunctional agriculture (*n* = 15)

Source: own study findings.

Both figures show that no farm is solely focused on a single activity. Volunteerism, agrotourism, and community activities represent fairly new types of activities encountered on social

farms. Volunteerism refers to farms cooperating with a selected official volunteer platform in Czechia for a long time (i.e. WWOOF, INEX-SDA, Tamjdem, o.p.s.). Other volunteering activities include internships or the form of corporate volunteering. Community activities demonstrate that social farms are not closed units, but rather actively reach out to their environment and generate participatory hubs for people living in and visiting the area. In this way, they strive for community development and are active in the village and regional communities.

Supported target groups

Individual programmes and activities pursued on social farms depend on the individuals in need of support. I divided them into six main target groups based on how often they can be found on selected social farms. Nonetheless, it is typical for one person to represent more than one group (e.g. a social service user as a disabled person and an integrated employee, or a social service user as a disadvantaged young person and a volunteer in another. Just as farms rarely focus on only one social farming activity, they usually prepare their programmes for several target groups, as shown in Figure 3.

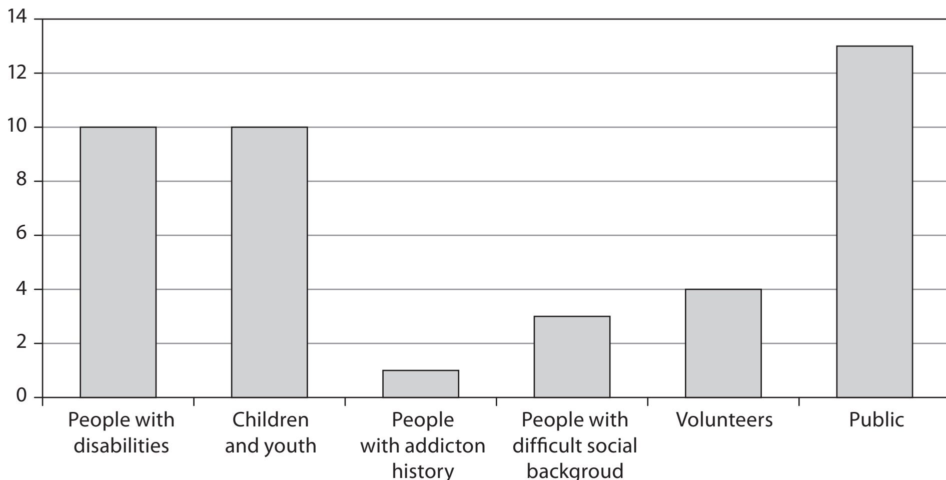

Figure 3. Supported target groups on social farms (*n* = 15)

Source: own study findings.

People with special needs supported on social farms form heterogeneous groups that vary according to the farmers' decisions, past experience, and expertise. Supported participants can be family members or people who live in the vicinity, or a neighbouring organisation that provides services (e.g. social services) for people living in difficult circumstances and participating in farming activities. The group designated as 'public' can be defined as older individuals who do not represent any specific target group in the Czech Republic compared with the Netherlands, Ireland, or Italy (Elings, 2012).

Number of employees

Among the 15 social farms under consideration, micro-enterprises predominate in terms of the number of employees (up to 10 employees and an annual turnover of up to EUR 2 million), according to the annual reports, the Register of Economic Entities, and information provided

on the organisations' websites. Three social farms are classified as small enterprises (up to 50 employees and an annual turnover of up to EUR 10 million). In terms of the number of employees (up to 250 people and annual sales of up to EUR 50 million), three farms can be classified as medium-sized enterprises. The functional model of Czech social farms involves two closely cooperating entities – one pursuing a more entrepreneurial model and the other a more typical non-profit. Thus, medium-sized organisations include the employees of both cooperating organisations. Seven entities report employing from 1 to 5 persons.

Size

The farm area referred to in this paper refers to agricultural land, permanent crops (vineyards and orchards), grasslands, and arable land managed by a single entity. The area, in turn, affects its activities and economics, including livestock size and the amount of subsidies. In Czechia, limited access to land is frequently cited as a reason for limited farm growth opportunities. According to the land registry, the average size of the analysed farms is 26.6 ha. Three of them are much smaller (2 ha each); on the other hand, the largest one has an area of 130 ha. The share of farms with an area of over 100 ha is significantly lower on average in the European Union compared with Czechia (about 3% in the EU vs. 20% in the Czech Republic). The average size of the agricultural entity in the Czech Republic is approximately 150 ha, almost ten times the EU average (Moudrý et al., 2022, pp. 13–14).

Length of operation

According to available records, the social farms studied have been in operation for an average of 13 years. However, not all of them were originally founded to engage in social farming operations. Some were formed as associations to teach people about rural living, while others were simply agricultural units. One business has been in operation since 1993, although social farming activities did not begin until 2006. Often, social services came first, and the agricultural component was added afterwards. Almost a fifth have only been in agriculture for five years. Initially, NGOs predominated among the farms and entities in the Czech Republic, later adding registered agricultural activities entered to social farming.

Agricultural management regime

The management regime refers to how the landscape and animals are handled and are generally divided into organic and conventional. Five entities in the sample were certified as organic. The rationale for the certification (protection of nature, sustainability of agriculture, and natural and closed farming cycles without the use of chemicals) is to provide transparent information for the customer about the kind of production and processing methods. Positive externalities are connected with this farming mode, which is also publicly rewarded via the agricultural payment system, including higher profit margins. In my interviews, a number of farmers and processors spoke about organic farming but have yet to obtain official certification despite their responsible agricultural practices. Others choose not to register their organic status due to the administrative and financial burdens involved.

Funding

The sources of funding for the operations of a social farm depend on its legal status and organisational structure. The latter is often based on the close collaboration of two parties, with the entrepreneurial organisation providing land, assets, and workplaces, while the NGO performs soft activities such as education, counselling, and social assistance. These businesses

are separate in accounting terms, yet they collaborate, and each has different options for requesting public or private funding.

The agricultural entrepreneur is frequently entitled to farming subsidies, and salary contributions from the Labour Office for disadvantaged employees, and makes a profit on entrepreneurial activities. The partnering NGO requests public monies for social services from the Regional Government and is typically a beneficiary of European Social Fund initiatives. It can compete for grants or receive donations from private companies and individuals (CSR, foundations and endowments, banks, and religious organisations).

Czech social farms are not supported by health insurance companies, nor does any health care facility qualify as a social farm, as is the case in the Netherlands (Elings, 2012). Additionally, volunteerism is an essential non-monetary component. In order to ensure the capacity to achieve beneficial goals, the funding is hybrid and multi-source, which ultimately reflects the characteristics of social enterprises, where at least part of the money originates from their economic activity (primary production, processing, sales, and services; cf. Defourny, & Nyssens, 2014).

Legal status

Dohnalová et al (2015) compiled a list of social enterprises in the Czech Republic classified as natural or legal persons. Not all of these legal forms are represented in the analysed sample shown in Figure 4.

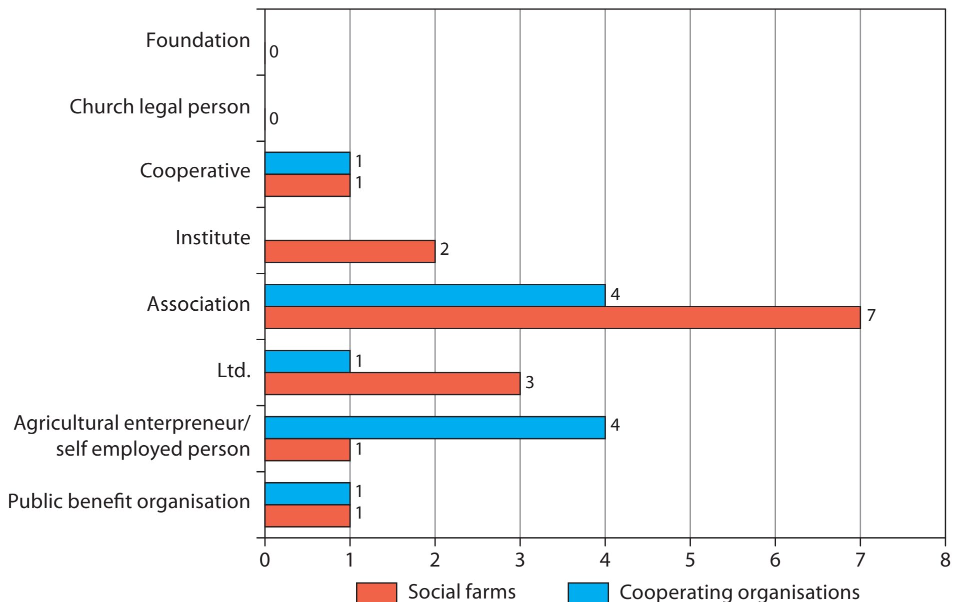

Figure 4. Types of social farms by legal status (*n* = 15)

Source: own study findings.

As previously stated, more than half of the social farms included in the study operate as two entities, but for the sake of clarity, I count each as a single 'organism.' Figure 3 shows a complete number of legal entities that make up the 15 social farms in the study. Apart from two organi-

sations that operate as institutes (*zapsaný ústav*) and two private limited companies, there is always a symbiotic relationship between two entities in the same geographical area.

4.2. International EMES methodology as applicable to Czech social farms

The criteria adapted from Defourny and Nyssens (2014) and cited in this section serve as a grid for the analysis that follows and is then applied to the social farms studied to determine how well the international methodology matches the phenomenon of social farms in the Czech Republic and their representation as social enterprises. This approach is based on the institutional model of social enterprises, which facilitates comparison since social enterprises are assumed to adhere to regulations in their operations.

Economic criteria

- Continuous activity aimed at providing services and producing or selling goods
  Applies to all sample cases in terms of selling services or goods. Pure associations without a cooperating partner do not meet this requirement.
- Acceptance of economic risk
  Applies to private limited companies, self-employed agricultural entrepreneurs, and institutes. If a given social farm is an association in institutional terms, economic risk is minimal as there are no employees from supported target groups, and revenues originate from services rather than from agricultural production.
- Minimum level of paid work
  Does not apply in cases where the social farm is an association in institutional terms. Associations have no paid integrated employees. Only heads of associations get financial rewards for their work, but they are rarely treated as wages.

According to the economic criteria, entrepreneurship is manifested by ongoing business activity in which commodities and services are regularly exchanged for cash. Overall, they are consistent with Young's (1983) and Borzaga and Galera's (2012) assertions that people who use market strategies to carry out socially beneficial activities engage in entrepreneurial activity, which involves uncertainty, looking for opportunities, and having a 'pull on the goal.' Some of the 15 social farms studied are legally classified as non-profit organisations but do not adhere to the EMES standards for economic risk and paid labour; nevertheless, they meet the criteria set for social farms. Only private limited companies, institutes, and closely cooperating pairs where one of the entities is self-employed or a cooperative meet the economic criteria.

Social criteria

- Explicit efforts to benefit the community
  Again, a difficult situation arises due to the fact that each legal form is associated with specific expectations. From an institutional standpoint, self-employed individuals in the current sample do not prioritise efforts to benefit the community in which they live – the positive impact of their activities is only felt in collaboration with a non-profit organisation. This refers to the employment of individuals with disabilities, the provision of social services, education, and cultural and awareness-raising activities related to agriculture at the local level.
- Established as a result of group initiative
  For obvious reasons, it does not apply to the self-employed. But the opposite is true for non-profit forms, cooperatives, public benefit organisations, institutes or even private limited companies.

- Limited profit redistribution
  These conditions are met by associations, cooperatives, public benefit organisations, institutes, and non-profits that are constrained in their ability to share financial surpluses. Even entrepreneurial institutional arrangements reinvest their revenues in their business. Profiting from the community is challenging for small-scale farming, as interviews indicate.

Social criteria justify establishing a social farm with the explicit goal of benefiting the community. The exact conditions for limited profit redistribution are the same as the economic criterion. According to Anheier (2005, p. 4749), the condition of limited profit redistribution in the EMES methodology is similar to the structural-operational definition of a third-sector entity, which also mentions reinvesting any financial surpluses in the organisation to fulfil its mission. In a social economy, the redistribution of part of profits to members is allowed as it is often the case in cooperatives.

Management criteria

The EMES methodology lays a strong emphasis on enterprise management. The fundamental criteria of autonomy and independence correspond with the characteristics of third-sector and non-profit organisations. They are expected to be private, independent of public bodies, they are not supposed to be organisational units of local governments, and they should have their own control and management instruments (Anheier, 2005). The right to make decisions is not based on capital ownership or on the amount of capital invested. The opportunity to share in the operations of the group contributes to its participatory nature (Laville et al, 2015).

- High degree of autonomy
  Applies to all the cases in the sample. Neither the entities in my sample nor any other Czech social farm are associated with a state organisation or another public body. They have been founded by groups of people acting independently and in response to their own needs.
- Decision-making power not based on capital ownership
  Differences in decision-making reflect traditions, which may be tied to the legal status of individual organisations. In non-profit entities, decision-making power is dispersed among various individuals without regard for the capital contributed. Instead, the latter is determined by experiential, social, and historical factors; it is also affected by the organisational structure and the number of members. Major decisions are taken by vote under the statutes, for example, by the board of trustees of a public benefit organisation. Agricultural entrepreneurs as self-employed individuals and private limited companies make their own decisions, and the capital invested is cultural, social, financial, and material. In a cooperative, each member has one vote, regardless of his or her individual contribution or the number of shares owned.
- Participatory nature, which involves various parties affected by the activity
  The EMES methodology's final criterion for a social enterprise is its participatory nature, which comprises its numerous stakeholders, both formally organised partners and individuals interested in its operations. It must be viewed not only as participation in statutory activities, but also as the enterprise's openness to other organisations and people who have the opportunity to 'look under the hood' of the enterprise. Given their involvement in the locality, community, and cooperation development, the participatory nature of social farms is critical. In some villages, heads of social farms establish partnerships with municipalities, non-profit organisations, educational institutions, etc. Communication of immediate experience with authorities and other stakeholders is important. Exceptions include self-

employed entrepreneurs and private limited companies that do not operate in partnership with non-profit organisations. NGO statutes frequently include provisions for collaboration with other organisations. They deliberately, continuously, and methodically build networks across sectors of the national economy and in the communities where they operate, which is the foundation of their success and good reputation.

5. Conclusions

Defourny (2001), who originally developed the EMES evaluation criteria for social enterprises and, together with Nyssens, revised and restructured the methodology to better reflect the social reality thirteen years later (Defourny, & Nyssens, 2014), says that no organisation can meet all the criteria of the ideal type in the Weberian sense. Moreover, it is not even possible to find a purely social enterprise. The grid of criteria used to evaluate the social farms under study reveals that it is possible to institutionally approach this ideal type quite closely in some circumstances due to the organisational structure being split into two entities. However, the sample only includes two organisations that are 'pure' social farms in the sense that they combine their agricultural and social/educational components in a single legal entity. These two businesses make money off agricultural output, hire individuals with mental disability, and offer licensed social services. In the context of socially or economically beneficial activity, they also incorporate their economic activities. It seems, therefore, that from a legal point of view, the institute (*zapsaný ústav*) can best exploit the potential for linking the concept of social farm and social enterprise according to the EMES methodology in the Czech Republic. However, from a normative perspective, even outside of my sample, many more social farms conforming to the ideal type could be found.

In conclusion, only two of the farms studied fully meet the EMES methodology's economic, social, and management criteria for social enterprises. Other social farms could be defined more broadly as social economy companies that meet at least 50% of the criteria for social businesses. Private entrepreneurs' do not always comply with these criteria since in some situations they act independently of an NGO. Furthermore, the findings of my research suggest, both from the perspective of organisational pairs and distinct entities, that certain features which appear to be essential in the context of agriculture are missing from the EMES methodology.

Based on my research, I have identified the following additional criteria for social farms in a normative perspective beyond those specified by EMES:

- relationship with the local economy,
- local horizon and partnerships,
- direct (personal) distributional links between producers and consumers of goods and services,
- environmental awareness,
- emphasis on craftsmanship/manual labour (the physical aspect of social farming),
- emphasis on a healthy rural landscape/image,

A healthy rural landscape/image is intrinsically linked to agriculture. It is not only about health in terms of natural cycles but also about aesthetics, beauty and respect, including the commodification of the landscape in the form of agrotourism, which attracts rural honesty, a truly rural experience in a healthy environment. In this respect, Green Care (Murray et al, 2019) is also becoming more prominent as a specific approach to social integration in the countryside and creating healthy, inclusive communities. In this sense, there is great potential for eco-

logical social work, as Besthorn (2013) refers to it in the sense of radical equalitarian ecological justice and the shedding of anthropocentrism.

Craft and craftsmanship appear as skills linked to tradition and art, which can be found more frequently in the Czech countryside compared with cities. It is often recalled as something lost that has been replaced by artificial and mass production. However, it is seen as necessary in economic terms and bringing value to people. Craft and craftsmanship support their skills, competencies and creativity. "These skills need to be restored to people," as social farmers often say. Craft is also often mentioned in contrast to the rapid pace of social change and expectations of work. Manual labour, working in the fields, and interacting with animals are examples of human physicality and holistic engagement.

The short distribution paths, response to demand, buying and selling, are included in the Czech principles, but not sufficiently, given the currently existing alternative and informal distribution chains and relationships outside the mainstream economy models found in my research. In some cases, community-supported agriculture is seen as the democratising principle of exchange and as a result of the respondent's commitment to solidarity, transparency and sharing. Reciprocal solidarity is mentioned as a dimension of the solidarity economy by Laville (2014, pp. 109–110) that defies the classical market economy and predominates especially in third-sector organisations, NGOs, cooperatives and mutuals. Reciprocal solidarity and direct exchange also manifest themselves in voluntary activities that social farms in my sample use to achieve labour and economic sustainability. At this point, the participatory element of the EMES methodology is also highlighted and, above all, the public benefit of activities that social services and other activities of general economic interest can deliver. Social farm activities include employment for the underprivileged and other forms of rehabilitation that benefit both the individual and society, as well as other cooperative and social activities such as volunteering, organising cultural and educational events, and reviving rural crafts and traditions.

The discussion of the fifteen case studies presented above reveals similarities between Czech social farms and those in other countries with developed social farming, although there are fewer of them in the former compared with Western Europe (Briers et al, 2021). In many instances, the social dimension of their activities is prominent, involving not only providing gainful employment to marginalised socioeconomic groups but also solidarity, participation, and volunteerism. Czech social farms, however, stand out in their emphasis on craft and physical labour as well as on the integration of people with disabilities compared with social farms in Western Europe (Elings, 2012).

The EMES criteria for social enterprises were applied to the social farms reviewed in this paper to see if the latter could be categorised as such, and it was discovered that they were not met in some cases. In the future, it will be necessary to either adopt a new approach to identifying social farms as social enterprises or reformulate their definition, including the quality standards. The Czech Republic will need to address this issue soon.

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