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Master Thesis

The role of community-supported agriculture in transforming the third food regime in the Czech Republic

submitted by

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Affidavit

I hereby declare that I have authored this master thesis independently, and that I have not used any assistance other than that which is permitted. The work contained herein is my own except where explicitly stated otherwise. All ideas taken in wording or in basic content from unpublished sources or from published literature are duly identified and cited, and the precise references included.

I further declare that this master thesis has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in the same or a similar form, to any other educational institution as part of the requirements for an academic degree.

I hereby confirm that I am familiar with the standards of Scientific Integrity and with the guidelines of Good Scientific Practice, and that this work fully complies with these standards and guidelines.

Vienna, 9.1. 2024

Veronika NOVÁČKOVÁ (manu propria)

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Abstract

This thesis addresses the pressing global need for sustainable food systems by analysing the harmful effects of the third food regime on both the environment and society. Specifically, it investigates the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) initiatives within Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) to challenge the existing food regime in the Czech Republic. Qualitative methods, including literature research and twelve semi-structured interviews with diverse CSA participants were employed. Utilizing an interdisciplinary framework of values-based modes of production and consumption (VBMPC), the CSA initiatives were analysed through the lens of three analytical dimensions: values, materiality, and institutions. The values that underlie CSA initiatives include environmental awareness and protection, community and solidarity, local and ethical consumption, and health and quality of food. Social challenges encompass economic and financial obstacles, issues related to community building and participation, communication, coordination, and time challenges, as well as prevailing social attitudes and perceptions. Material challenges involve coping with seasonality and crop diversity, addressing climate-related and environmental concerns, and managing technical and resource limitations. CSA initiatives operate independently within the institutional landscape, although not entirely free from institutional influence. Potential institutional support, including financial assistance and non-financial support at regional and local levels, offers opportunities for their development but also poses challenges. CSA initiatives in the Czech Republic play a transformative role by challenging the dominance of industrialized food systems, prioritizing localized, sustainable agriculture, and promoting transparent relationships between consumers and farmers. The thesis highlights the importance of CSA initiatives in reshaping the third food regime toward greater sustainability.

Key words: sustainable food systems, third/corporate food regime, social-ecological transformation, community supported agriculture, alternative food networks, values-based modes of production and consumption, social and material challenges, values, institutional support and barriers

1. Introduction

Creating sustainable food and agricultural systems is an important aspect of societal transformation, which is needed to promote a socially just and environmentally conscious way of societal functioning (Willett et al., 2019). Food systems emerge from complex interactions between natural and human realms, forming intricate socio-ecological systems (Allen and Prosperi, 2016). The current global food system is undermining the environmental foundations upon which it is based (Garnet, 2013). This is manifested through the loss of biodiversity, degradation of soil quality, depletion of ecosystems, water scarcity, and pollution (Wheeler and Braun, 2013). Moreover, the global food system significantly contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, a primary driver of climate change. All parts of the food system have substantial environmental impacts, starting from agricultural production to food processing, retailing, distribution, and food waste management (Garnet, 2013).

The global food system is, to a significant degree, shaped by the capitalist mode of production and consumption (Plank et al., 2020), which is grounded in an anthropocentric worldview, giving priority to human interests over ecological concerns (Figueroa-Helland et al., 2018). McMichael (2005) introduces the concept of the corporate food regime, also known as the third food regime, characterized by unequal economic structures, dependency, unfair trade practices, and dominance by multinational corporations. Consequently, in this regime, countries in the global North often exploit those in the global South. Brand and Wissen (2018) term this phenomenon as the imperial mode of living, which exacerbates social disparities and disrupts traditional production and consumption models.

Agricultural practices have become increasingly disconnected from local contexts, and food production is becoming more distant from the final consumers (Selfa and Qazi, 2005). While the corporate food regime has resulted in increased food production and lower prices, it has also brought significant problems and dysfunctions. These issues include resource and mineral depletion, financial instability, displacement of populations, and food insecurity. Addressing the challenges posed by the corporate food regime requires seeking solutions

and alternative models that promote a more sustainable and equitable functioning of the global food system (Figueroa-Helland et al., 2018).

The concept of Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) represents a distinct approach to production and consumption that stands in opposition to the prevailing values of the corporate food regime in multiple ways (Corsi et al., 2018). The rise of AFNs reflects a shift in consumer perspectives, driven by increased public concern about health, ecology, and animal welfare (Goodman et al., 2012). These networks are driven by the ambition to challenge and transform the dominant food system (Gottlieb and Joshi, 2010). In essence, AFNs can be viewed as an explicit critique of the global corporate food regime and a means of practicing democracy (Wekerle, 2004).

There are farmers, local producers, and social movements, that share a common objective of sustainable production and consumption, guided by principles like trust and solidarity. These endeavours can be viewed as values-based modes of production and consumption (VBMPC) (Plank et al., 2020). Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is one manifestation of this approach, it entails a collaborative relationship between farmers and consumers, where the benefits, risks, and responsibilities of farming are shared. This model presents an alternative way of approaching food production, distribution, and consumption (Lang, 2010). In most academic studies, the main focus is on countries in Western Europe and the USA. In my thesis, I want to concentrate on the Czech Republic as an example of a country that was formerly socialist.

The Czech Republic is currently undergoing a significant transformation in its food production and consumption practices (Zagata, 2012). The AFNs in the Czech Republic encompass a diverse range of alternative practices and initiatives related to food distribution, consumption, and production. This includes community gardens, farmer markets, farm shops, CSA, and fair trade initiatives (Fendrychová et al., 2019). Among these alternative practices, CSA stands out as a relatively new phenomenon within the AFNs in the Czech Republic. It has gained momentum only in recent decades and for that reason, there is a research gap when it comes to understanding how CSA initiatives operate, their

contributions to regional development, and the potential opportunities and barriers that might influence their further development (Asfourouva et al., 2015).

In this thesis, I aim to explore the dynamics of CSA initiatives, embedded in the third food regime in the Czech Republic. I investigate the values on which they are based, their operational aspects, and the social and material challenges they encounter. Through addressing this research gap, I seek to contribute insights to the academic field of AFNs and their role in shaping sustainable food systems.

1.1. Research Objective and Research Questions

The objective of my master thesis is to explore the characteristics of CSA initiatives and their role in the transformation of the third food regime in the Czech Republic.

The main research question of this thesis is:

- How can values based modes of production and consumption, represented by CSA initiatives, be characterized within the third food regime in the Czech Republic, and how might they contribute to its transformation?

To answer the main research question, I aim to address the following sub-questions:

- What are the defining characteristics of the third food regime in the Czech Republic?
- What is the role of CSA initiatives in the third food regime in the Czech Republic?
- What are the key values and motivations that drive individuals to participate in CSA initiatives?
- What are the social and material challenges that CSA initiatives encounter?
- How do institutional factors, both barriers and support, influence the development and functioning of CSA initiatives?

Initially, I conducted a thorough desk research to understand the characteristics of the third food regime in the Czech Republic. Subsequently, I carried out empirical qualitative research to investigate the values and motivations that drive individuals engaged in CSA initiatives in the Czech Republic. Moreover, I explored the social and material challenges these initiatives

face, as well as institutional barriers and support that influence them. Through this research, I hope to shed light on the significance of CSA initiatives in shaping the current food system and paving the way towards a more sustainable food regime in the Czech Republic.

1.2. Structure of the Thesis

Following the introduction, the second chapter presents the theoretical framework of this thesis. Here, I delve into the concept of social-ecological transformation, explore the food regime theory, discuss AFNs and CSA, and present the interdisciplinary conceptual framework of VBMPC. In the third chapter of this thesis, a comprehensive explanation of the research methodology is provided. This encompasses the approach to data collection, the rationale behind the sample selection, the methods used for data analysis, and the discussion of challenges encountered during the empirical research process.

In the fourth chapter, I delve into the characteristics of the third food regime in the Czech Republic, examining its historical development and key characteristics. Chapter five explores the role of CSA initiatives within the context of the third food regime in the Czech Republic, while chapter six is dedicated to examining the core values and motivations that drive individuals to participate in CSA initiatives. In chapter seven, I address the social and material challenges encountered within CSA initiatives, and chapter eight explores institutional support and barriers associated with these initiatives. Chapter nine is dedicated to discussing the CSA initiatives within the framework of the third food regime in the Czech Republic and the potential for its transformation. Finally, chapter ten presents the thesis conclusion.

2. Theoretical framework

In this chapter, I delve deeper into the concept of social-ecological transformation, which encompasses the necessary changes and adaptations needed to address the current socioecological crises. Consequently, I explore the food regime theory, introduced by Friedman and McMichael (1989), which outlines the first, second, and third (or corporate) food regimes. Following that, I examine AFNs, which offer an alternative approach within the third food regime by operating on different principles. Within AFNs, I specifically focus on the CSA model, as an alternative mode of production and consumption. Moreover, I will present the interdisciplinary conceptual framework of VBMPC, providing a lens to analyse CSA initiatives in depth.

2.1. Social-ecological Transformation

The ongoing debates about the relationship between humans and the natural environment are central to contemporary political and social discussions (Lockie et al., 2013). These reflections focus on how humans interact with landscapes, plants, animals, and natural resources. At the same time, pressing societal issues such as unemployment, climate change, demographic challenges, economic crises, and biodiversity loss act as catalysts to stimulate reflection on the transformation of our current societal system. Addressing these critical challenges necessitates a social-ecological transformation, implying a fundamental shift in how we interact with nature and organize our societies to create a more just and sustainable future (Dimitrova et al., 2013).

In my thesis, I use the term "social-ecological transformation," although some authors use different terms. The term "transformation" suggests a more extensive and fundamental change in societal structures, orders, and processes, resulting in a new social order (Kapoor, 2007). Unlike the concept of a revolution, which implies abrupt change, transformation is viewed as a dynamic process involving both intentional and unintentional consequences (Brunner, 2022). While related to the term "transition," transformation is often considered a more profound and holistic change challenging existing paradigms and power structures, emphasizing cultural, political, and socio-economic aspects. However, consensus is lacking on the specific features that distinguish transformational changes from non-transformational

shifts (Feola, 2015). Transformation processes necessitate a re-imagination of societal functioning and involve interactions between the human and biophysical spheres. The discourse on social-ecological transformation encompasses diverse perspectives and stimulates debates regarding the optimal approach to addressing the pressing environmental and socio-economic challenges (Görg et al., 2017).

Bruckmeier (2016) interprets social-ecological transformation as a profound change in how societies interact with the natural environment, seeking to create a more just and sustainable future. This process involves transforming economic, social, and political structures to address critical issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and resource depletion. Fischer-Kowalski et al. (2012) present a different approach to this concept, defining socio-ecological transitions as shifts between two distinct societal energy regimes. These transitions, identified in their study, mark historical shifts from agrarian regimes, relying on solar energy and land-use, to industrial regimes, utilizing fossil fuels and diverse conversion technologies. According to the authors, the ongoing transition is a shift away from fossil fuels towards solar and other low-carbon energy sources, primarily driven by the need to avoid climate change.

Brand and Wissen (2017) contribute to the discussion on social-ecological transformation by emphasizing the ineffectiveness of top-down approaches to environmental management and governance at regional and global levels, evident in multiple crises in the economy, food and energy provision, financial systems, and nature. Overcoming these challenges, they argue, requires a profound societal transformation. Early strategies and reports on social-ecological transformation, viewing economic growth as essential and desirable, often overlooked prevailing power dynamics. Concepts such as the green economy, great green transformation, or sustainable growth fail to address underlying power relations. Additionally, regulatory frameworks in these strategies tend to favor certain regions and countries to secure resource access, envisioning the transformation within the framework of a capitalist market economy, with little consideration for topics such as gender inequalities and social reproduction discussions.

Brand et al. (2020) further enrich the debate by presenting three arguments concerning social-ecological transformation. They emphasize that converting natural elements into commodities contributes to the current environmental and socio-economic crises, advocating for a change in how we perceive and discuss nature. Additionally, they point out that the state often reinforces dominant forms of destructive nature appropriation aligned with capitalist economic interests. Consequently, they argue for a critical examination of the role of state and its connections to the capitalist economy in the context of daily practices and existing power structures. Lastly, they highlight that conflicts arising from the complex relationship between nature and society, and the subsequent social-ecological transformation, unfold at the local level and within specific circumstances. These conflicts, they argue, are often multifaceted, contradictory, and context-dependent, demanding careful analysis and consideration of the underlying political struggles.

Social-ecological transformation, as outlined by Shah et al. (2018), involves shifting away from an economic model prioritizing growth and profit at the expense of social and environmental well-being. Key elements of social-ecological transformation, as they propose, include promoting democratic and participatory governance structures, reducing inequality, protecting ecosystems and biodiversity, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and fostering sustainable production and consumption patterns. Understanding social-ecological transformation involves recognizing the complex interplay of politics, strategic decisions, and societal dynamics. According to Görg et al. (2017), these factors significantly influence the direction of transformation, necessitating a thorough understanding of their effects. This comprehension is essential as society strives to overcome obstacles posed by dominant dynamics and forge a path that is both meaningful and sustainable for future generations. The nature of this transformative journey, as emphasized by Haberl et al. (2011), is not linear due to complex, dynamic systems, introducing unpredictability and possible tipping points. Successfully managing the complexity requires a deep understanding of these multifaceted systems and their governing dynamics.

The debates about social-ecological transformation illuminate the environmental and social crises in a broader context (Brand et al., 2020). The concept serves as a unifying framework for different perspectives and ways of thinking, fostering debates on the necessary actions

against business-as-usual scenarios. It also creates space for generating positive visions about future development (Asara et al., 2015). Considering the reshaping of the current dynamics within the global food system is an important component of the broader social-ecological transformation.

2.2. Food Regime Theory

The prevailing food system significantly contributes to ecological degradation, social inequality, and the unsustainable use of natural resources (Pereira et al., 2020). Effectively addressing the environmental and social challenges associated with food production and consumption patterns necessitates transformative changes within food systems. To explore the transformation and stabilization of the food system, I further draw on the food regime theory. It builds on the Marxist tradition of analyzing the relationship between food production, agriculture, and capitalist development (McMichael, 2009). The food regime can be perceived as a historical concept that demarcates stable periods in the production, circulation, and consumption of food on a global scale. Food regimes are usually associated with different structures of hegemony in the global economy. Moreover, food regimes determine, to a significant degree, other critical economic, political, and social relations within the framework of global capitalism. The food regime concept is useful to better understand the history of capitalism, the relationships that define food production, and the processes that produce and reproduce capitalism (Burch and Lawrence, 2009). Food regime theory enriches the discourse regarding social-ecological transformation by offering insights into the power dynamics and structural elements that shape decision-making within the global food system. A comprehensive understanding of these dynamics is crucial for challenging existing power structures and actively supporting social-ecological transformation.

Friedman and McMichael (1989) distinguish two food regimes. The first food regime was determined by the colonial trade in commodities such as sugar, wheat, coffee, and rubber from Global South to the Global North. This regime emerged in the late 19th century and was characterized by the exploitation of peasant labor as by unequal exchange. The second food regime, which emerged after the Second World War was based on manufactured foods,

industrial agriculture, the expansion of multinational corporations and state-led development. The second food regime was also influenced by the increasing commodification of food, the rise of agribusiness and by the Green Revolution. The first regime is rooted in British hegemony and the second food regime in the US hegemony.

In the first food regime (1870-1914), European meat and wheat imports from the settler states played an important role. The settler states, in return, focused on the import of labor, capital as well as manufactured goods from Europe. These multilateral and international trade relationships differed from the trade monopolies created by the European colonial system. The first food regime was essential for the formation of national economies, which were controlled by independent states. Another trend typical for the first food regime is the culmination of colonialism. This can be understood as a contradictory tendency to the rise of the national states. New national states such as Germany and the US challenged the British empire as a world power. Therefore, Britain started to move its trade and investments into tropical colonies as well as into settler nations, such as Australia or Canada. The settler nations, however, awaited an alternative form of the global economy in both, economic as well as political terms. The settler nations started to be regulated by representative governments, which were responsible for the functioning of the national economies and the implementation of jurisdiction (Friedman and McMichael, 1989).

The second food (1950-1970) regime is characterized by complex and in many ways contradictory relations which influence modes of production and consumption of food. The second food regime was deeply influenced by the US hegemony and its control over the global economy, as well as strong state protectionism. Two divergent trends played an important role in the second food regime. The first trend was the expansion of states to prior colonies. The process of decolonization of Asia, Africa, and Latin America broke up the political foundations for specialization in the trading blocks. Wheat started to be imported from former settler states, many times at the expense of domestic production of food. Markets for tropical food exports started to decline. The second trend was the restructuring of different sectors of agriculture by capitalists. The global agricultural system went through a process of intensification, mostly in capitalist countries. The agricultural system

increasingly became an industrial sector with transnational linkages and capitalist economies started to be more integrated (Friedman and McMichael, 1989).

Since the 1980s, the third (or corporate) food regime started to emerge (Burch and Lawrence, 2009). It is characterized by the liberalization of trade, neoliberal globalization, and the increasing concentration of market power. The third food regime is dominated by global corporations which are, to a considerable degree, benefiting from the reorganization of the agricultural and food systems. McMichael (2009) names the third food regime as the corporate food regime. Financial capital increasingly influences the food and agricultural chains, this process is called financialization (Burch and Lawrence, 2009). Financialization plays an important role in the third food regime, as it ensures new profit-making opportunities. The corporate food regime denotes the ecological as well as social contradictions of global capitalism (McMichael, 2005). In this food regime, the deployment of price, as well as credit relations, can be understood as key mechanisms of the so-called accumulation through dispossession. Other characteristics of the corporate food regime are the displacement of peasant cultures, the conversion of land for agricultural exports as well as the supermarket revolution.

In the corporate food regime, the prevailing trend is that countries of the global North exploit countries of the global South (Giménez and Shattuck, 2011). Brand and Wissen (2018) refer in that regard to the imperial mode of living, in which social inequality increases and the traditional models of production and consumption are being destroyed. Furthermore, agricultural practices are often disconnected from the local context, and the production of food is becoming more distanced from the final consumption (Selfa and Qazi, 2005). The dysfunctionality of the corporate food regime manifests itself through resource and mineral depletion, financial instability, displaced populations, and food insecurity (Figueroa-Helland et al., 2018).

Food regime theory suggests that the historical periods are not linear and that there is a potential for resistance and political struggle to challenge the dominant modes of production and consumption (Burch and Lawrence, 2009). The theory emphasizes the importance of global solidarity and collaboration among social movements, like the food

sovereignty movement, to promote alternative food systems that are more sustainable, equitable, and democratic.

2.3. Towards more Equitable and Sustainable Food Systems

To address the challenges of the current food regime, I further explore the ongoing discussions surrounding transformation through the lens of food sovereignty and food justice literature. The concepts of food justice and food sovereignty strive for a fairer global food system, addressing inequalities and promoting access to nourishing sustainably produced food (Cadieux and Slocum, 2015; Grace, 2022). These concepts hold significance as they highlight the dynamics of power, the shifts in power, and the influence of social movements. However, it is worth noting that these debates tend to neglect the involvement of consumers and producers in the Global North and their interconnectedness. To address this aspect, I will turn to the literature on AFNs, which offers a more comprehensive perspective on these topics and will be the focus of my subsequent examination. AFNs offer sustainable alternatives to the dominant corporate food system, connecting consumers and producers and promoting shared benefits and risks of farming (Whatmore et al., 2003). CSA initiatives, as a form of AFNs, embody VBMPC, fostering community, trust, and solidarity while contributing to food justice and sovereignty principles.

2.3.1. Food Sovereignty and Food Justice

The concepts of food justice and food sovereignty encompass diverse perspectives and definitions, contributing to their broad and multi-faceted nature (Patel, 2009). While both concepts share a common goal of transforming the prevailing food system to be more equitable and just, they each emphasize distinct aspects.

According to La Via Campesina (2022), food sovereignty involves the right of people to access healthy, culturally fitting food produced through sustainable methods. This includes the autonomy to shape their own food and agriculture systems, centering on producers, distributors, and consumers instead of market and corporate forces. Food sovereignty presents a strategy to resist and gradually transform the prevailing global corporate food regime. It emphasizes local economies, supports peasants and family driven agriculture, and

promotes sustainable production and consumption practices. Within this framework, consumers have the right to control their nutritional choices, while producers hold the rights to manage essential resources like lands, seeds, waters, and biodiversity. The principle of food sovereignty extends to gender, racial, generational, and social equality.

The concept of food justice aims to fairly distribute the risks and benefits across the entire food production chain, addressing disparities among vulnerable groups (Gottlieb and Joshi, 2010). Food justice efforts manifest in diverse forms, such as supporting local farmers through food festivals or implementing school garden programs (Wekerle, 2004). This concept highlights the need to challenge the dominant food system and forge connections with broader social and environmental justice movements.

In essence, while food sovereignty centers on the rights of individuals and communities to control their food systems and resources, food justice focuses on achieving a more equitable distribution of benefits and risks throughout the food chain (Bradley and Herrera, 2016). Both concepts contribute to the broader goal of reshaping the food system towards greater fairness, accessibility, and sustainability (Heynen et al., 2012).

2.3.2. Alternative Food Networks

The dynamics between food producers and consumers experienced significant disruptions in the period after World War II, marked by agricultural sector industrialization and collectivization in socialist countries (Spilková, 2016). These changes led to shifts in how food was produced, delivered, and accessed. Health and safety regulations introduced new processing requirements, increasing the gap between producers and consumers. Raw materials were funnelled through processing companies and distribution centres before reaching consumers.

In recent years, consumers have grown more conscious of the disconnect between themselves and farmers, expressing dissatisfaction with impersonal supermarket environments (Michel-Villarreal et al., 2019). As a response, AFNs have emerged, aiming to establish more direct and sustainable relationship between producers and consumers. These

networks oppose the detachment of food production from consumption (Venn et al., 2006). AFNs represent a growing space in the food economy, characterized by trends like organic, Fair Trade, and locally sourced products (Goodman et al., 2012). AFNs offer strategic alliances across food production, processing, and distribution, benefiting both producers and consumers through shared control, trust-based relationships, and efficient problem-solving (Stevenson and Pirog, 2008). These networks propose an alternative approach, re-establishing more authentic connections between consumers and producers, thereby reshaping the spatial and social dimensions of food systems (Marsden et al., 2000).

Presently, there is a continuous academic debate about the potential of AFNs to bring about economic, environmental, and social transformations (Michel-Villarreal et al., 2019). Within this conversation, criticisms arise regarding the adequacy and significance of AFNs impacts, as well as their potential unintended consequences. Notably, a gap exists in the academic research when it comes to understanding how AFNs challenge the prevailing food system. While AFNs are often believed to facilitate sustainable production and equitable values distribution, little attention is dedicated to unravelling the mechanisms behind value creation within these networks.

2.3.3. Community Supported Agriculture

The origins of CSA initiatives can be traced back to the 1960 and 1970s, a period marked by industrialization of the agricultural sector (Spilková, 2016). During this time, consumers began expressing heightened concerns about the quality of conventionally produced food and the detrimental environmental effects of industrial farming practices. Notably, the first examples of CSA initiatives emerged in Japan, coinciding with the rise of organic farming movement. These initiatives have introduced new distribution systems, such as "teikei," aimed at supporting farmers and ensuring access to fresh, sustainably produced food. In essence, these early systems can be regarded as pioneering implementations of CSA principles in practical settings.

The concept of CSA refers to a collaborative arrangement where a community actively supports the functioning of a farm, fostering a reciprocal relationship between consumers

and farmers (Adam, 2006). Within this context, they collectively share the rewards and uncertainties associated with food production. This partnership between local farmers and consumers serves as a strategic approach to conserve agricultural land, revitalize regional agricultural economies, enhance food security, and offer community education about agricultural practices and environmental awareness (Ostrom, 2007). Cone and Myhre (2000) highlight that CSA initiatives possess the potential to reconnect individuals with plots of land, thereby increasing their sensitivity to changing seasons. Through CSA, members acquire knowledge about the origins of their food – when, where, and by whom it is cultivated – which in turn fosters a sense of community cohesion and deepens mutual trust among participants.

CSA initiatives, as characterized by Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007), can be understood as a form of ethical consumerism that involves unconventional market interactions and practices. These initiatives are driven by a blend of cultural and ideological factors that advocate for anti-globalization sentiments and a focus on local values. Within CSA initiatives, there is a strong emphasis on upholding ideals like intergenerational legacy and conservation. Moreover, these initiatives can be viewed as a counteracting reaction to the expansionist aims of corporations, organizations, and nations, offering an alternative perspective.

The relationship between the producer (farmer) and the consumer is based on a joint long-term and usually seasonal commitment to grow, process, and deliver food on the side of the producer and to buy it on the side of the consumer (Spilková, 2016). In many cases, the boundary between producers and consumers disappears and some members of the newly formed community actively participate in food production. The nature of a mutual relationship which is based on trust brings benefits to both sides. For farmers, it is above all the certainty of sales associated with the amount of money they receive from consumers before the season. The amount of money is equally distributed among the consumers and is determined in such a way as to ensure an adequate income for the farmer. This way of functioning helps farmers to compete with conventional large-scale producers. The purpose of the partnership is to distribute the risk that accompanies the difficult-to-predict profession of farmers. Sharing is an important principle in the CSA initiatives. It applies not

only to risks but also to the benefits of food production. For example, in the case of a surplus of food, it is usually evenly distributed among the members. Other important principles in the CSA movement are solidarity, social equity, and community building.

From an economic point of view, CSA initiatives operate on principles different from the prevailing market economy (Feagan and Henderson, 2009). The principle of short-term profit maximization, which is dominant in industrial agriculture and market capitalism, is at odds with the effort to realize socially and environmentally sustainable organization of the food system. Moreover, the market mentality tends to reduce mutual relationships within the food system.

According to Cone and Myrhe (2000), CSA initiatives can be seen as a way in which people reflect on the problems of modern society. From this point of view, the members of CSA initiatives can benefit from the connection to a specific territory and the awareness of seasonality. Personal relationships play a significant role in motivation of people to participate in CSA initiatives. The CSA initiative can help to integrate people from different social backgrounds and classes, moreover, they can provide food for people who would otherwise have difficult access to it (Schmidt et al., 2011). CSA initiatives also present a possibility of a bottom-up political mobilization, they can jointly promote their political positions informally, and they can play a significant role in finding solutions to the most important issues for the specific community (Spilková, 2016).

Although promotional references to CSA initiatives are easy to find, more balanced and critical analyses regarding the weaknesses and strengths of the CSA model are still quite rare (Ostrom, 2017). Most of the time, the CSA initiatives are researched as case studies of a specific farm, or they have the tendency to be rather anecdotal. CSA initiatives are often referred to as a core element of the emerging resistance to the dominant corporate food regime, however, there is only little systematic research regarding the issue. Currently, there is a new wave of academic articles, theses, and dissertations from different countries and regions which address this research gap. Many essential questions regarding CSA initiatives remain unanswered. These are, for example: "Can CSA become a significant and lasting force

in remaking the food system?” or “Which organizational forms and tactics are proving to be successful over the long-term?” (ibid., p. 4).

Analyzing CSA usually involves the assessment of several key factors such as the economic viability of the CSA, the overall impacts of the CSA on the local food system as well as the benefits to the community (Paul, 2015). The financial stability of the CSA can be assessed by examining factors such as the price and quality of the produced food, the number of CSA members, and the ability to cover the operation costs. The benefits to the community may be assessed by researching factors such as support for local farmers, access to fresh and locally produced food, or reduced transportation costs (Chen et al., 2019). In order to analyze the impact of CSA it is necessary to consider how the CSA initiatives contribute to the overall health and sustainability of the local food system. It is important to evaluate the impact of the CSA model on land use, crop diversity as well as soil health. Another important aspect to consider is the role of the CSA in creating a more resilient food system that can withstand shocks such as economic disruption or climate change. CSA initiatives can be analyzed based on the effectiveness of the operation of the CSA business model or marketing strategy. Another approach to analyzing CSA initiatives is engagement with stakeholders. By interviewing the members of the CSA is possible to gain a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the model, to identify areas for improvement, and develop recommendations for improving the operations.

In the Czech context, the rise of AFNs can be seen as a direct response to shifting consumer preferences and concerns (Jehlička and Daněk, 2017). While the influx of international food chains in the early 1990s was initially embraced, over time, Czech consumers sought fresher, healthier, and locally sourced alternatives. The consumer demands for higher food quality and sustainability could no longer be met by traditional means (Frélichová, 2013). This shift in consumer attitudes paved the way for the emergence of AFNs, encompassing community gardens, farmer markets, farm shops, and CSA initiatives (Hruška et al., 2020).

The Czech Republic is witnessing a growing interest in CSA initiatives, which reflects a broader shift towards sustainable agricultural practices (European CSA Research Group, 2016). These initiatives, though currently playing a marginal role in the food regime in the

Czech Republic, have gained momentum in recent years (Spilková, 2016). In essence, CSA initiatives are pivotal for fostering local food systems by establishing direct connections between consumers and local farmers, ensuring a stable market for small-scale, family-owned farms (Nosko, 2019). By doing so, they contribute significantly to maintaining a sustainable income for farmers and promoting environmentally conscious farming practices.

Beyond their economic impact, CSA initiatives hold transformative potential for the food regime in the Czech Republic (Wezel, 2018). They actively support local economic development, advocate for sustainable agriculture, and offer a compelling alternative to conventional food production methods. Through fostering collaboration between consumers and farmers, these initiatives also cultivate a sense of community, simultaneously reducing the environmental footprint associated with food transportation (Spilková, 2016).

Participation in CSA not only empowers consumers to support regenerative farming practices but also facilitates the preservation of biodiversity and local agricultural traditions (Krčílková et al., 2015). In this way, CSA initiatives contribute to the development of more resilient and equitable food systems, shaping a sustainable model of food production and consumption in the Czech Republic (Žižková, 2017). They embody an alternative to the industrialized food system and, through direct communication with farmers, foster accountability and transparency, enhancing consumers' understanding of the food production process.

Research on CSA initiatives in the Czech Republic provides valuable insights into their evolution and challenges. Qualitative analysis of six CSA initiatives by Frélichová (2013) underscores the importance of long-term commitments, advance payments, and personal relationships in ensuring the sustainability of these initiatives. The study also reveals the influential role of environmental non-profit organizations in advancing the cause of CSA in the country. Asfourouva et al. (2015) explore global CSA models and raise critical questions about their adaptation and impact within the Czech Republic, emphasizing the need for a nuanced understanding of local factors.

The existing research on CSA initiatives reveals notable gaps. Firstly, there is a lack of comprehensive exploration regarding the socio-cultural aspects of these initiatives, overlooking the crucial understanding of social dynamics and community engagement (Samoggia et al., 2019). Secondly, limited attention has been given to the economic viability of CSA programs, leaving unexplored areas related to the financial sustainability for farmers and economic benefits for consumers (Egli et al., 2023). Additionally, there seems to be a gap in evaluating the long-term sustainability and resilience of CSA initiatives, an essential factor considering changing market dynamics (Cakal and Miele, 2021). Furthermore, there is a need for more specific studies focusing on the environmental impact of CSA initiatives, including their contributions to biodiversity conservation and soil health (Samoggia et al., 2019). Understanding consumer behavior and preferences related to CSA participation is another overlooked area, and finally, comparative analyses between CSA models and conventional agriculture could provide valuable insights. Addressing these research gaps is vital for the development and sustained success of CSA initiatives in the Czech Republic (Egli et al., 2023).

2.3.4. Values-based Modes of Production and Consumption

Community-supported agriculture can be analyzed with the framework of values-based modes of production and consumption (FoodAlternatives.at., 2022), referring to the niche projects and initiatives, which oppose the corporate food regime in diverse ways. VBMPC represent producers as well as social movements, which strive for fairer and more sustainable production. These bottom-up initiatives are based on values such as trust and solidarity and they aim to reshape the traditional producer-consumer relationship, which is dominant in the corporate food regime. In this model, the focus is not solely on profit, but on creating products that benefit society and the environment. These models aim to create a more equitable and sustainable economy that values the environment, people, and social responsibility.

Plank et al. (2020) introduce an interdisciplinary conceptual framework for analyzing VBMPC, which consists of three analytical dimensions: values, materiality, and institutions.

This framework is depicted in figure 1. These analytical dimensions determine the practices of food production and consumption. In my thesis, I am going to look at CSA initiatives through the lens of VBMPC. To adapt it for my research, I have interpreted the analytical dimensions as follows:

Values

The term "values " has its origins in Latin, stemming from the word "valeare ", which means to be "to be of worth" (Spates, 1983). Values can be interpreted as principles that influence choices of people towards what is considered desirable (Parson et al., 1951) or as the standards for what is viewed as morally right or wrong (Frese, 2015). Values play a significant role in shaping social life, as they influence norms which, in turn, govern behavior (Parson, 1966). Values can be held subconsciously, and they may be sometimes contradictory. It is important to note that values are not to be perceived as static but as continually evolving (Kallio, 2022).

Plank et al. (2020) understands the analytical dimension of values in terms of social capital, which involves relationships in which values such as solidarity, trust and community play a key role. Social capital can be metaphorically linked to the glue that keeps a group of people together and the grease that helps people work together effectively (Kay, 2006). In my thesis, I extend the metaphorical "glue" that binds individuals not only to each other but also to nature. Putnam (2001) defines social capital as the social norms and networks that empower individuals to cooperate on shared objectives. In the social capital literature, the distinction between bonding, bridging, and linking social capital is commonly used (Furness et al., 2022). Bonding social capital is marked by close relationships and strong ties within a specific community, promoting reciprocal support. Bridging capital encompasses weaker ties that connect unrelated individuals, enhancing the ability to change as well as the adaptability of community. Linking social capital focuses on establishing connections between individuals of varying social status, enabling interactions between people with different levels of resources and influence. These connections can facilitate positive change through dialogue and collaboration. This highlights the importance of solidarity and community (Plank et al., 2020). In my thesis, I aim to explore the underlying values that

motivate individuals to participate in CSA initiatives and the core values upon which these initiatives are founded.

Materiality

The analytical dimension of materiality, as described by Plank et al. (2020), refers to the close connection between food production and consumption and the physical environment. Territoriality approaches highlight the inherent connection between the physical and material aspects of food production and social relations (Dorn and Hafner 2023). The concept of territoriality provides a framework for studying how individuals and communities engage with and navigate physical spaces. Physical environment can be understood as the foundation upon which social processes and arrangements are built. This interplay between society and nature significantly influences the ways in which food is produced and consumed (Plank et al., 2020). In my research, I will investigate the social and material challenges that CSA initiatives encounter. In this context, materiality might, for example, encompass aspects such as the ecological effects of cultivation methods and strategies for managing adverse weather conditions. Social challenges are related, for example, to the financial sustainability of CSA model, to the communication and collaboration within the CSA group or the community building.

Institutions

The analytical dimension of institutions, as introduced by Plank et al. (2020), refers to the structures and dynamics that shape the interactions between various societal actors, particularly focusing on the role of the state. By employing critical state theory, as proposed by Jessop (2002), the role of actors and institutions is explored, shedding light on the relation between CSA initiatives and the nation-state. This includes understanding how power struggles and relationships between different groups influence the development of the state and its policies. Institutions encompass both formal governmental bodies and informal social relationships, impacting laws, regulations, and socio-economic arrangements. Examining institutions allows to explore how civil society engages with the state, the negotiation of consensus and control, and the potential for broader societal changes. The focus within this analytical dimension is to examine how CSA initiatives become integrated into the existing food system while simultaneously working to reshape it through their

values-driven approach. This analytical perspective involves identifying the institutional obstacles faced by CSA initiatives and developing strategies to overcome them. In my research, I am going to examine which institutional support and barriers do the CSA initiatives in the Czech Republic encounter and how are they influenced by it.

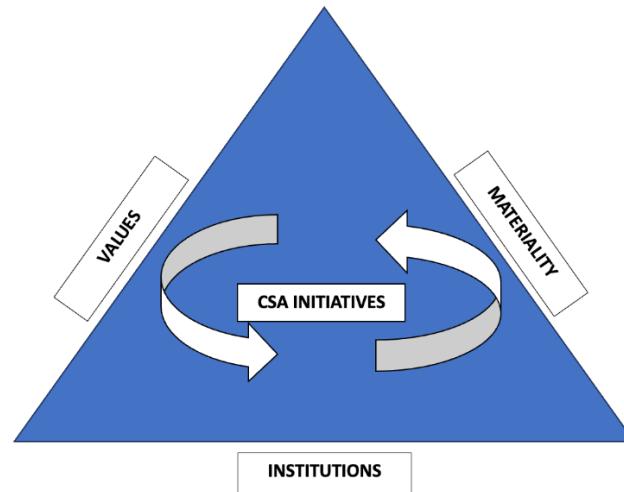


Figure 1: Interdisciplinary conceptual framework for analysing values-based modes of production and consumption (own illustration based on (Plank et al. 2020, p. 53))

3. Methodology

In the thesis, I am focusing on CSA initiatives in the Czech Republic, which embody VBMPC in contrast to the dominant corporate food regime. More specifically, I explore the role that CSA initiatives play within the food regime in the Czech Republic. I have chosen to concentrate on the Czech Republic as it is my native country, and I can speak the Czech language. Moreover, I am familiar with the historical and socio-political context of the country which allows me to explore my research objectives in greater depth. My research approach involves qualitative methods including literature research, semi-structured interviews according to Kallio et al. (2016), and qualitative content analysis by Mayring (2004). Prior experience with conducting semi-structured interviews and research on alternatives to the dominant food system in my bachelor and master thesis increase my competencies to conduct this research.

The research is embedded in the research project exploring VBMPC in the corporate food regime funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF). One of the aims of the project is to explore regional food chains and the CSA initiatives in Argentina, Switzerland, and the Czech Republic. The focus of this project is on interdisciplinary research, which combines insights from Sociology, Geography, and Political Sciences. Conducting this research allow me to benefit from this already existing international and interdisciplinary research community and compare my results with similar research projects carried out in other countries (FoodAlternatives.at, 2022).

The main research question of the thesis is:

- How can values-based modes of production and consumption, represented by CSA initiatives, be characterized within the third food regime in the Czech Republic, and how might they contribute to its transformation?

To answer the main research question, I aim to address the following sub-questions:

1. What are the defining characteristics of the third Czech food regime?
2. What is the role of CSA initiatives in the third Czech national food regime?

3. What are the key values and motivations that drive individuals to participate in CSA initiatives?
4. What are the social and material challenges that CSA initiatives encounter?
5. How do institutional factors, both barriers and support, influence the development and functioning of CSA initiatives?

In my thesis, my primary objective is to address the main research question through the exploration of five sub-questions. The third, fourth, and fifth sub-questions are closely linked to the interdisciplinary conceptual framework by Plank et al. (2020). The third sub-question addresses analytical dimension values, the fourth focuses on materiality, and the fifth examines institutions.

To answer the first and second sub-questions, I conducted an extensive desk research. I primarily focused on analysing academic literature and online books. This approach allowed me to develop a comprehensive understanding of the Czech Republic's socio-economic context and create a solid foundation for the interview phase of my research. To gain deeper insights into the dynamics and operational processes of the CSA initiatives, I joined Komunitou podporované zemědělství (KPZ) Žižkov, a CSA in Prague, as an active participant. However, I have not informed all other members about the fact that I am writing master thesis about CSA initiatives. I have not made detailed notes or documented my participant observation, I have only engaged in the process of collecting the food shares. Although I have not directly used my observations for the analysis, being part of KPZ Žižkov has influenced my views to some extent.

To answer the third, fourth and fifth research question, I conducted qualitative research using the method of qualitative semi-structured interviews according to Kallio et al. (2016). I created an interview guide based on the interdisciplinary conceptual framework for analyzing VBMPC by Plank et al. (2020). Subsequently, I conducted qualitative content analysis, as conceptualized by Mayring (2004).

I began writing my master thesis in September 2022, a time when Artificial Intelligence (AI) was not yet in use. While writing, AI technology became available, however, there were not

clear rules on how to use it for academic purposes. Recognizing its potential to enhance research efficiency and outcomes, it seemed impractical not to use AI at all. For that reason, my supervisor and I agreed on the extent and manner in which I could integrate AI into my research. I used AI to check grammar and style, aiming to enhance the overall quality of my writing and to communicate my ideas more clearly. During the analysis of my interviews, conducted in Czech, I had to translate direct quotes and codes into English. For this task, I used ChatGTP for the translation work. The translated content was carefully checked to maintain accuracy and coherence, especially for technical and domain-specific terms.

3.1. Literature Research

Extensive research of existing literature was conducted to establish the theoretical foundation for the analysis. It involved systematic exploration and analysis of academic books, articles, research papers, and other relevant sources, to understand and synthesize the current state of knowledge. I placed the topic of CSA initiatives and AFNs within larger academic discourse on social-ecological transformation and food regime theory. Through the review, I identified gaps where further research is needed. I characterized the third food regime in the Czech Republic, and I described the role of CSA initiatives in this regime based on the examination of the available literature. I was primarily working with Google Scholar for finding relevant academic literature.

3.2. Semi-structured Interviews

According to Kallio et al. (2016), qualitative semi-structured interviews is a research method employed to gather detailed insights from participants. These interviews are characterized by a flexible structure that allows for both predefined questions and the freedom to explore emergent themes in depth. The interviewer prepares a set of open-ended questions, which serve as a starting point for the conversation, but the order and wording of questions is adjusted based on the participant's responses. The process begins with selecting participants who possess relevant knowledge and experience related to the research topic. The interviews are audio-recorded and transcribed to ensure accurate representation of the data. Following transcription, a thematic analysis approach is employed to identify recurring

patterns, themes, and meanings within the data. This analysis involves categorizing similar codes into themes and interpreting the findings in the context of the research objectives.

3.2.1. Creation of the Interview Guide

I created an interview guide for semi-structured interviews, which encompassed the focal points of my thesis: methodology, target group, research questions, interview themes, introduction, and open-ended questions. Based on my research questions, I defined the following three themes to be explored during the interviews:

- Key values and motivations that drive individuals to participate in CSA initiatives
- Social and material challenges encountered by CSA initiatives
- Institutional barriers and support that influence the development and functioning of CSA initiatives

For each theme, I formulated approximately seven questions, alongside introductory and closing questions. The original interview guide can be found in Appendix A.

3.2.2. Selection of Respondents

The online database "Adresář Farmářů" lists 111 Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) initiatives in the Czech Republic, as illustrated in figure 2 (Adresář Farmářů, 2023). To narrow down my focus, I chose to focus on CSA initiatives located in Prague, where approximately 25 are listed. In Prague, there is an NGOs, "Asociace místních potravinových iniciativ (AMPI)", with one of its initiatives being "KPZkoALICE". This initiative plays a key role in supporting the CSA initiatives in the Czech Republic. The mission of KPZkoALICE is to serve as a platform for collaboration and mutual support among participants in local food initiatives, particularly those engaged in CSA. The organization aims to connect farmers and consumers involved in these initiatives, facilitating the sharing of experiences and knowledge to create a sense of community (KPZkoALICE, 2023).

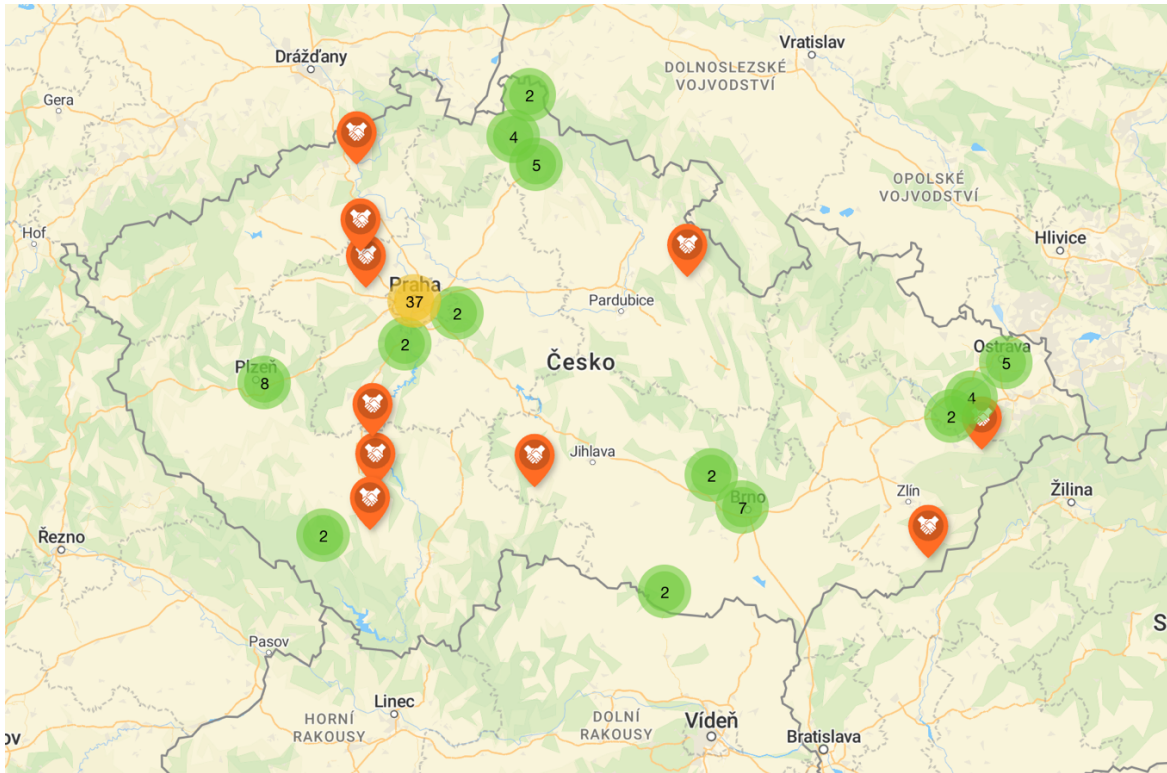


Figure 2: Online database of CSA initiatives in the Czech Republic called Adresář Farmářů

My goal was to interview people who are actively involved in CSA initiatives in Prague. I aimed to have a diverse group of respondents. For the selection of my respondents, I chose the snowball sampling method, which is a research technique used in social sciences and qualitative research to identify and recruit participants for a study (Naderifar et al., 2017). It involves starting with a small group of individuals who meet certain criteria. Researchers then asks these initial participants to refer or recommend others who also meet the criteria, thus gradually expanding the sample size. This method is called "snowballing" because, like a snowball rolling downhill and accumulating more snow as it goes, the researcher's sample size grows as more participants are added through referrals.

I started to interview people from the NGO AMPI as they are the most experienced and networked regarding CSA initiatives. At the end of each interview, I asked for referrals. After that, I contacted potential respondents via email and asked if they would be willing to participate in an interview with me. Since I was uncertain about who would respond, I did not establish any strict selection criteria. However, my goal was to have a diverse sample. I

wanted to include various types of CSA initiatives and various roles within these to ensure a comprehensive representation.

According to Krčílková et al. (2015), there are three types of CSA initiatives in the Czech Republic. The majority of CSA initiatives belong to the first type, Community Subscriber Group, in which a group of consumers makes a commitment to a specific farm for a defined period, often a season. Members agree to pay in advance to secure their membership. The group collaboratively manages administrative tasks and determines distribution locations, while the farmer remains the primary producer responsible for cultivations and harvesting. This type of CSA initiative usually has a coordinator. This approach fosters a sharing of risks and rewards, as members usually receive portions of the farm's output based on its production.

The second type, the so-called Community Shared Farms, refer to a specific form of CSA initiatives where a community takes the lead in organizing the arrangement. In this model, the community or NGO employs a farmer to oversee cultivation on land that is owned or rented. Costs and benefits are distributed among the members of the community or NGO. The farmer, who is often a member as well as an employee, assumes primary responsibility for all farming activities, which may involve coordinating volunteers. In this arrangement, risks and rewards are shared collectively among the members, fostering a sense of shared ownership and collaboration (Krčílková et al., 2015).

The third type, a Subscription CSA group, is a model in which the farmers offer their agricultural products to consumers, who subscribe to receive shares throughout an entire season at a discounted price. The farmer takes care of delivery and distribution. Unlike some other CSA types, there is no sharing of risks and rewards. However, the success depends strongly on community involvement (Krčílková et al., 2015).

I interviewed people from the following nine CSA initiatives: KPZ Pospolí, KPZ Metro Farm, Komunitní zahrada Pastvina, Svobodný statek na Soutoku, KPZ Žižkov, KPZ Horoměřice, KPZ KomPot, KPZ Kuchyňka, KPZ Malostranská. I conducted all the interviews in the spring and summer of 2023. Most of my respondents were from Community Subscriber Groups.

Most of the time, there are three roles in each CSA initiative, the farmer, consumer, and coordinator. However, some CSA initiatives do not have any coordinator. In my thesis, I use the term "consumer" based on its prevalence in academic literature. However, it is worth mentioning that in their study, Plank et al. (2020) employs the term "eaters" in the same context. I aimed to include individuals from a range of CSA initiatives with different roles, including experts. It is important to note that these roles often overlap. In the following paragraphs, I will explain in detail the roles in CSA initiatives.

The farmer is at the heart of the CSA initiative, serving as the primary producer of the vegetables. Their role involves cultivating, growing, and harvesting the produce that is distributed to the CSA members. Farmers employ sustainable and often organic farming practices to ensure the quality of the crops. They are responsible for making planting decisions, managing the land, and overseeing the entire agricultural process. Additionally, farmers may interact directly with consumers, providing insights into their cultivation methods, offering farm tours, and fostering a sense of transparency and connection between the consumer and the farm.

Consumers are the beneficiaries of the CSA model, as they actively engage in supporting local agriculture and gaining access to fresh, seasonal produce. Consumers commit to purchasing a share from the farm at the beginning of the growing season, which entitles them to a portion of the harvest over a set period. Their role involves picking up their share of produce at designated distribution points. Consumers share the risks and rewards of the agricultural season, and they often have opportunities to participate in on-farm events, workshops, and activities that enhance their understanding of the food production process.

The coordinator acts as an intermediary between the farmers and the consumers, facilitating the logistics and communication necessary for the CSA to function smoothly. This role involves organizing the distribution of shares, coordinating pick-up locations and times, and ensuring clear communication between farmers and consumers. Coordinators may also assist on resolving any issues that arise, managing payments, and providing information to consumers about the produce, farming practices, and the broader CSA community. They play

a key role in fostering a sense of community among CSA members by organizing events, workshops, and opportunities for interaction between consumers and farmers.

The experts I interviewed are all working in the NGO KPZkoALICE and they are all engaged in CSA initiatives. The interviews with experts were very helpful for my research, as they have a comprehensive overview about CSA initiatives and their operation in the Czech Republic.

Table 1: Sample of respondents

Respondent	KPZ type	Role	Gender
1.	Community subscriber group	Consumer	Female
2.	Subscription CSA group	Farmer	Male
3.	Community shared farms	Consumer	Female
4.	Community subscriber group	Expert	Female
5.	Community subscriber group	Coordinator	Female
6.	Community subscriber group	Coordinator	Female
7.	Community subscriber group	Coordinator	Female
8.	Community subscriber group	Expert	Female
9.	Community shared farms	Coordinator	Female
10.	Community subscriber group	Expert	Female
11.	Subscription CSA group	Farmer	Male
12.	Community subscriber group	Coordinator	Female

3.2.3. Interview Process and Transcription

I recorded twelve interviews, as outlined in Table 1. The duration of these interviews varied from 30 to 120 minutes, depending on the time availability of respondents. Among these, eight interviews were conducted face-to-face, while the remaining four were carried out online using the Zoom communication platform. I conducted all interviews in Czech. I prepared an informed consent form, which was signed by all respondents. The informed consent form can be found in in Appendix B.

I had the opportunity to visit three distinct farms: Metro Farm, KPZ Kompot, and Komunitní zahrada Pastvina. This hands-on experience provided me with valuable insights into the operational dynamics of CSA farming.

3.2.4. Analysis of the Interviews

After completing all interviews, I transcribed them in order to use them as the foundation for the next phase of my research, the qualitative content analysis according to Mayring (2004). This method allowed me to thoroughly examine and interpret the gathered data, uncovering underlying meanings, patterns, and themes that emerged from the responses of participants.

Qualitative content analysis, as conceptualized by Mayring (2004), is a systematic and interpretative approach used to analyse textual data in qualitative research. This method involves a structured process that transforms raw data into meaningful insights. It begins with careful material preparation, where the researcher selects and organizes relevant data, such as interview transcripts and documents. Subsequently, categories are defined based on research objectives, representing concepts or themes of interest. The coding phase follows, during which the researcher systematically applies these categories to the data, identifying patterns and recurring themes. As coding progresses, similar codes are grouped into broader themes. The next step involves interpretation, wherein the researcher seeks connections, relationships, and meaning within and across the emerging themes. Finally, the results of this analysis are presented in a comprehensive report, which may include the summarization of key themes, illustrative quotes, and interpretations grounded in the analysed data.

As my material preparation, I conducted and transcribed twelve interviews. I defined following categories: motivations, values, social challenges, material challenges, institutional support, and institutional barriers. I coded the interviews with the qualitative research tool ATLAS.ti. Subsequently, I grouped the codes, which led to the emergence of various themes within each category.

For the categories of values and motivations, the following themes emerged: environmental awareness and protection, community and solidarity, local and ethical consumption, as well as health and quality food. In the category of social challenges, the themes economic and financial challenges, community building and participation, communication, coordination and time challenges were developed. Within the category material challenges, the themes seasonality and crop diversity, climate and environmental factors, and technical and resource constraints arose. When examining institutional support and barriers, the available data did not provide sufficient codes to delineate additional themes. I divided the institutional support into financial and non-financial support, moreover, I also addressed the potential institutional support for CSA initiatives.

In the process of structuring the subchapters in my empirical section, I initially formulated general descriptions based on the coded data. To enhance the depth of my analysis and provide a more comprehensive understanding of CSA initiatives, I revisited the interviews, seeking direct quotes that offered personal perspectives and situated the issues within specific contexts. Subsequently, I approached the data anew, employing an interdisciplinary conceptual framework tailored to analyze VBMPC. This framework served as a valuable tool, enhancing the depth of my analysis, and providing a comprehensive understanding of the complexities inherent in CSA initiatives. Finally, based on the analysis, I created figures 3,4 and 5 to highlight the values and challenges specific to the roles defined within CSA initiatives.

4. Characteristics of the Third Food Regime in the Czech Republic

The third food regime in the Czech Republic refers to the dominant food system that has emerged in the Czech Republic since the 1990s with the fall of communism and the subsequent transition to a market-based economy (Brada, 1991).

During the communist era in the Czech Republic (formerly Czechoslovakia), which lasted from 1948 until the Velvet Revolution in 1989, the food regime underwent significant changes influenced by the centralized and planned economy of the communist government (Heimann, 2011). The communist government controlled most aspects of the economy, including food production and distribution. The state-owned enterprises were responsible for producing and distributing food, which often led to shortages and inefficiencies due to centralized planning. Rationing of food was common due to supply shortages. People often had to stand in long lines to get essential items like bread, meat, dairy products, and vegetables. Agricultural sector was collectivized, meaning individual farmers and landowners were forced to join large state-controlled farms. This led to a decline in private farming and often resulted in decreased agricultural output and efficiency (Rychlík, 2014). This significant shift disrupted the long-standing tradition of family farming (Štěpán, 2019).

The transition from a centrally planned economy to a market-based economy in the Czech Republic brought about significant changes in the food regime. This period witnessed shifts in food production, distribution, and consumption (Brada, 1991). With the market-based economy, there was an increase in the variety and availability of food products. Importation of goods from Western countries increased, leading to a wider range of options for consumers. State-controlled enterprises were gradually privatized, allowing private businesses to enter the food production and distribution sector. The market-oriented economy went hand in hand with the rise of supermarkets and retail chains. These modern shopping outlets provided consumers with convenience, choice, and a shopping experience. They became the primary source of groceries for many households. The agricultural sector underwent changes as well (Žídek, 2018). Private farming regained importance, and there was a shift toward more market-oriented and export-focused agricultural practices. While the market-oriented economy brought many benefits, it also introduced challenges. Income

disparities could impact the ability to access a diverse range of foods. Additionally, concerns about the potential loss of traditional foods emerged as global influences became more prominent (Rychlík, 2014).

The industrialization of Czech agriculture began during the communist regime and continued to shape the agricultural landscape during the transition to a market-based economy (Kuskova, 2013). Industrialization brought significant mechanization and technological advancements to Czech agriculture. Large-scale machinery was introduced to increase productivity, and modern agricultural practices were adopted to maximize output. This mechanization trend began under communism and continued during the market-based transition. Industrialization encouraged specialization in certain crops and livestock, enabling farmers to focus on what they could produce most efficiently. Intensification of production methods, such as the use of fertilizers and pesticides, aimed to increase output and meet growing demands. While ownership structures shifted from state-controlled collectives to private ownership during the transition to a market-based economy, the industrialized mode of production persisted (Grešlová et al., 2015). Many large farms that were once collective enterprises continued to operate as private agricultural businesses, often maintaining the industrialized practices they had adopted under communism. While industrialization brought benefits in term of increased production efficiency, it also raised concerns about environmental impact and sustainability. Intensive agricultural practices can lead to issues such as soil degradation, water pollution, and loss of biodiversity (Garnet, 2013).

In the Czech Republic, the concentration of power in the agricultural sector resulted in fewer opportunities for small and medium-sized farmers to compete, as larger companies dominate the market (Doucha, 2002). Moreover, large agricultural corporations tend to have significant influence over government policies and regulations, which can create policies that are favorable to their interest, while ignoring the needs of smaller farmers and local communities. Furthermore, the concentration of power in the hands of a few large agricultural corporations has caused a lack of transparency and accountability in the Czech Republic.

The standardization of food is another characteristic of the third food regime (Mertens et al., 2022). This has led to the proliferation of packaged and highly processed foods that are typically high in salt, sugar, and fat. This trend contributes to the rising rates of obesity and other diet-related diseases.

The Czech Republic, like other countries, has been influenced by the globalization of food systems in the third food regime (Janda et al., 2000). The country has undergone many significant changes in the ways food is produced, consumed, and distributed. One of the main impacts of globalization has been the increased availability of imported foods. Czech consumers now have access to a broad range of foods from all around the globe, including vegetables, spices, exotic fruits, and processed foods. The globalization of food in the Czech Republic has had an impact on the country's agriculture sector. Farmers have faced increased competition from cheaper imports, and many have struggled to keep up with the global market. Globalization has also increased reliance on long-distance transportation, which has negative environmental impacts and contributes to climate change.

In Czechia, consumerism in the food sector can be observed in the increasing popularity of large supermarket chains that offer a wide range of products from different parts of the world at low prices (Smith and Jehlička, 2007). Consequently, locally produced food is less consumed and there is a decline in traditional food practices. The emphasis on speed and convenience leads to a reduction in the amount of time and effort that people are willing to spend on cooking and preparing meals. The third food regime in the Czech Republic is characterized by a food system that is industrialized, centralized, standardized, globalized, and consumerist. These features have negative environmental and social impacts and contribute to a food system that is unsustainable and inequitable.

5. The Role of CSA Initiatives in the Third Food Regime in the Czech Republic

Community supported agriculture is a relatively new phenomenon in the alternative food networks in the Czech Republic (Asfourova et al, 2015). These initiatives started to emerge only since late 2000s.

The CSA initiatives are the least developed form of AFNs in the Czech Republic, as they have only been operating for a very short time (Spilková, 2016). The first initiative was founded in 2009 and others started to emerge from the year 2012 onwards. Therefore, it can be said that they are mostly still in the initial phase and much of the Czech population still does not know about their existence. When considering food consumption, the CSA initiatives currently play only a marginal role in the food regime in the Czech Republic. However, these initiatives bring more than just food, they foster the development of social relationships, and they strengthen community ties with the local environment. At the same time, there is a certain amount of skepticism toward CSA initiatives among farmers as well as consumers. This skepticism can be observed in the attitudes towards building relationships based on trust, more specifically towards providing payment in advance. The CSA initiatives are only beginning to establish their place in the food regime.

In recent years, dynamic development in the number of CSA initiatives can be observed in the Czech Republic (Žižková, 2017). From an organizational point of view, most CSA initiatives are producer-oriented, and they connect small and ecologically successful farmers with consumers. Consumer groups were mostly formed based on the initiative of NGOs in larger cities in the Czech Republic. These groups buy food from farmers in their surroundings, and they provide financial support to the farmers in advance. Apart from food production and distribution, these initiatives also support the development of social life in the surroundings, for example through the organization of small festivals and gatherings. Moreover, they help to recultivate previously neglected and unused public spaces.

When considering the geographical distribution of CSA initiatives in the Czech Republic, it is noticeable that the majority of consumers are residents of larger cities (Jehlička and Smith

(2011). In comparison to other Western European countries, Food Self Provisioning (FSP) is still quite common in the Czech Republic, especially in the countryside and smaller urban settlements. These areas have access to good quality food from their gardens and they do not feel the need to find another alternative food channel (Jehlička, et al., 2013).

The spread of CSA initiatives in the Czech Republic is supported by international organizations (Strnadel, 2013). For example, URGENCI, the international CSA network, has organized several information meetings with international guests. There is great potential for the development of CSA initiatives in larger cities, especially Prague, given the growing interest in a healthy lifestyle and environmentally friendly produced food. The CSA initiatives attract particularly educated people with higher incomes who are concentrated in larger cities.

CSA initiatives in the Czech Republic work similarly to the CSAs in other countries, however, there are some unique characteristics that reflect the local context (Nosko, 2019). CSA members usually sign up for a share of the harvest in advance, which helps farmers plan their production and reduces the risks of crop loss. They receive a share of the harvest on a regular basis throughout the growing season, usually weekly (Žižková, 2017). The food is typically distributed through a pick-up point, where members can collect their share. CSAs in the Czech Republic can be seen as a way to support the local food system and promote regional food sovereignty. Moreover, they help to strengthen social ties and help to build community. Many CSAs organize events such as cooking classes, farm visits, and community meals so as to bring members together and foster a sense of shared ownership over the food (Strnadel, 2013). The model of community-supported agriculture in the Czech Republic has gained popularity in recent years, reflecting a broader trend towards local food systems and sustainable agriculture (Asfourova et al., 2015). Although there are some regional differences in how CSAs operate, the key principles of CSA are widely shared.

6. Key Values and Motivations that Drive Individuals to Participate in CSA Initiatives in Prague

Values are defined in terms of social capital, as a glue that keeps a group of people together and enables effective cooperation (Kay, 2006). In my research, the metaphorical glue not only refers to the interpersonal relationships between participants in CSA initiatives, but also includes their deeper connection with the natural world. This expanded perspective acknowledges that the cohesion within CSA communities is not solely derived from human interactions but is intertwined with a shared commitment to and appreciation for the environment.

From the interviews, four main themes emerged that highlight the key values and motivations that drive individuals to participate in CSA initiatives: environmental awareness and protection, community and solidarity, local and ethical consumption and health and quality of food.

6.1. Environmental Awareness and Protection

Coordinators, farmers, experts, and consumers in CSA initiatives perceive their relationship with the environment and its protection as their driving motivation to engage in CSA initiatives (Interview 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12). They are aware of the intricate link between human actions and ecosystems and the consequences of these actions on the environment. One consumer expressed the core idea underlying CSA initiatives, emphasizing partnership and collaboration with nature rather than dominion:

"I think CSA initiatives probably stem from the idea that it's about respect for nature or respect for the environment. It's not just about not destroying it; on the contrary, it's about adding something to it, like improving soil quality and so on. Improving the environment not only for humans but also for animals, insects, and so on. Alongside this, the quality of the food is naturally higher because it's not treated with chemicals and harsh methods that devastate the environment, like heavy machinery, for instance. I believe it's fundamentally based on the value that humans are part of the environment; they are not separate from it.

Consequently, they should not fight against their environment or manipulate it for their purposes but rather establish a cooperative relationship with it." (Interview 3)

The driving motivation behind participation in CSA is a shared commitment to sustainable practices that support ecosystems and protect biodiversity, such as regenerative soil management and soil care, ensuring not only healthier vegetables but also the health of the soil for future generations (Interview 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10). This value was expressed by consumers, coordinators, experts as well as farmers in CSA initiatives. One consumer highlights the importance of healthy soils and ecosystems:

"So, what is important to me in CSA is... Why I really support it and why I am there is definitely the care for the soil as the very first thing. I believe that not many people are aware of it; many think it's all about healthy vegetables. They associate CSA with an ecological system, with organic farming, or simply some kind of nature-friendly management. For me, what is crucial is primarily the soil and the ecosystems on which the farm operates and how farming supports it." (Interview 1)

A central value in CSA initiatives is a profound connection with the land and a deep sense of stewardship (Interview 2, 6, 11). This perspective was mostly expressed by farmers, as they live in a direct relationship with their farm or garden. Farmers view themselves as caretakers of the environment, actively shaping the soil and landscape while preserving its inherent beauty:

"What I enjoy the most is that in the process of cultivation, I am creating the garden. From spring to autumn, I watch how the garden looks, and I am actually shaping a piece of land, leaving my mark there. That is what I find fascinating; it's kind of like artistic work." (Interview 11)

One farmer presented the stewardship and shaping the environment as opportunities to support biodiversity and healthy ecosystems and to create diverse habitats for various forms of life:

"We also try in some ways to support biodiversity in the garden, where the foundation is healthy soil. It contains various types of creatures, plants, fungi, from all three organic kingdoms. In fact, we try to operate so that our gardens are like a mosaic. We have grounds where vegetables are grown more intensively; some grounds are just a pile of manure and compost, which also provides a home for various insect larvae, for example. And some areas, we just let them be, leaving them to their fate." (Interview 2)

Mitigating climate change through carbon-neutral food production and regenerative soil management was presented by one coordinator as a benefit of CSA initiatives:

"The great benefit of participating in CSA initiatives is that you receive organically grown, local food with nearly zero carbon footprint. So, CSA members can actually avoid mass consumption and can instead go to the garden and have their own greengrocer and trust in what they eat." (Interview 9)

The values rooted in environmental awareness and protection act as a unifying element (metaphorical glue) within CSA initiatives, contributing significantly to the cohesion and unity of group members. This shared commitment not only fosters a sense of collective responsibility toward the environment but also forms the foundation for collaborative efforts in promoting sustainable agricultural practices and community well-being. While the shared commitment to environmental values unites participants in CSA initiatives, potential challenges may emerge in navigating diverse interpretations of sustainability. Differences in perspectives could lead to varying expectations within the group, raising questions about how to reconcile these divergent views on sustainable agriculture and community well-being.

6.2. Community and Solidarity

Participation in CSA initiatives is driven by a core value of community and solidarity, which is underpinned by several interconnected principles and motivations. At its heart, CSA fosters a sense of belonging, where individuals come together to build strong relationships through shared experiences (Interview 1, 3, 5, 8). Trust is a fundamental element in CSA initiatives, as

members rely on one another and local partnerships to ensure the success of their endeavours (Interview 1, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11). These values were mostly mentioned by consumers, coordinators, and experts. One coordinator presented CSA initiatives as a tangible and fulfilling way to live out values, making them an integral part of the everyday life. Values are presented as the most important motivation for the participation in CSA and the following quote illustrates that they can empower individuals to work on a shared vision:

"Values are what interests me the most and keeps me engaged. Within CSA are contained values like reciprocity, cooperation, solidarity, ecological awareness, and the creation of close relationships among people, a sense of belonging, and care, care for the landscape and the community. These are values that resonate with me, and I like that through CSA, these values become integrated into my daily life, I simply live them." (Interview 8)

Solidarity is an important value for all roles in the CSA initiatives, extending even to the financial aspect (Interview 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12). One coordinator mentioned concrete manifestations of solidarity. For example, some members can choose different prices for the season, depending on their financial situation. This exemplifies the commitment to ensuring that all members can participate, regardless of financial constraints:

"Solidarity is about little things in how CSA operate. For example, if someone cannot afford their share, there is always some way to work it out. In our CSA, everyone takes their turn in service during distribution, but when someone cannot do it, perhaps because they have young children, they do not have to." (Interview 12)

In Interview 1, CSA initiatives were depicted as an opportunity to do things differently, collaborating with others toward a shared objective while promoting sustainable and ethical consumption practices. CSA initiatives were portrayed as "a big alternative, which is also incredibly beautiful and can be inspiring". In this sense CSA can be seen as a pioneer of change, getting people to think that there is another way.

One consumer from Community Shared Farms explained that through activities like joint gardening and shared meals, CSA cultivates a sense of belonging and trust, enabling effective

collaboration. This helps to foster local partnerships, strengthening bonds among members and enriching their shared experiences:

"And I find that really great, I actually think it is incredibly important, that in the garden, you experience feelings that you just would not experience otherwise in Prague. That we sit outside in the garden, cook together, and then eat it, that is nice. And in some way, we are building the garden, and it is just beautiful. When we started 10 years ago, there was basically nothing, and now it is a functioning group on a functioning garden that produces quite a bit." (Interview 3)

The values of solidarity and community within CSA act as a metaphorical glue, fostering a cohesive and supportive environment that keeps members together. The shared commitment to sustainable practices and local food systems creates a sense of collective responsibility, reinforcing the idea that members are part of a broader community with a common purpose. This shared identity encourages mutual support, open communication, and a genuine connection between members, contributing to the resilience of the CSA initiative. Ultimately, the values of solidarity and community serve as a binding force, enhancing the overall experience and commitment of individuals within the CSA initiatives.

6.3. Local and Ethical Consumption

Values, when viewed in the context of social capital, can be understood as the social norms and networks that empower individuals to cooperate toward shared objectives (Putnam, 2001). This term encompasses not only close relationships but also weaker ties that connect unrelated individuals. Furthermore, social capital facilitates connections between people with varying social status and levels of influence. In most cases, CSA consumers tend to opt for the CSA with the closest pickup point, especially since the vegetable shares tend to be quite heavy. Consequently, CSA consumers often come from the same neighbourhood, providing them with the opportunity to connect with people from diverse backgrounds who share similar values and establish relationships with them.

Participation in CSA initiatives is rooted in the values of local and ethical consumption. This value was highlighted mostly by coordinators, who are motivated by a commitment to supporting their local food system (Interview 2, 5, 6, 7, 10). They prioritize direct farmer-consumer relationships, valuing the transparency and ethical sourcing that CSA offers. The coordinators recognize the importance of fair pricing for farmers and the benefits of sustainable agriculture (Interview 5,7).

Throughout the interviews, consumers, experts and coordinators often emphasized the importance of personally knowing the farmer (Interview 4, 5, 6, 8, 10). They have a preference for purchasing food grown in close proximity to their residences. One expert mentioned trust in the farming methods employed by local farmers, as well as better taste of food sourced from CSA initiatives compared to supermarket alternatives:

"Important to me is that I know who I am paying for what I get. That means I know where the money goes. And I know that I am actually supporting a person who farms sustainably, ecologically. Those are values that are important to me. It is more the idea of locality, that I can actually have vegetables or some products from someone I know personally and who I also have within the reach, in some proximity. That it is not imported, that it is directly from someone here in the vicinity." (Interview 10)

The direct relationship with farmer was highlighted as an important value by a coordinator, as it allows participant not to see the vegetables only as commodity:

"For me, the relationship with the farmer is important, like I really know that person, I know where the food grew, so when I cook, that food is no longer a commodity, but it is a relationship. So, when I am cutting that carrot, I remember that person and I see the place where it grew." (Interview 8)

It was mentioned by a coordinator that for some CSA participants, their commitment to ethical consumption goes beyond taste, it encompasses a philosophy of sustainability and responsible sourcing:

"For some participants, it is important to have quality food. I think there is the connection there, just with food. But I think most people have more of a philosophy of sustainability, consuming locally sourced food that you do not have to transport from elsewhere."

(Interview 7)

One farmer expressed concerns about the wider food system, highlighting the absurdity of shipping produce across vast distances:

"I mean, I do not think everyone has to grow their own carrots, but in a broader context with specific conditions, it is just not normal for pears to be shipped from Argentina in January and February, or for onions to be shipped from New Zealand. It is completely insane even in terms of economy. I cannot imagine how it can be cost-effective to load containers of onions and transport them to Europe from New Zealand." (Interview 2)

In Interview 5, a coordinator emphasized that CSA initiatives are built upon the principles of locality, fostering direct relationship between farmers and customers, and a deep respect for the landscape. Furthermore, she portrayed CSA initiatives as a means to establish fair pricing that benefits both consumers and farmers, promoting reciprocity and mutual support within the community.

It is worth noting that determining fair prices in CSA initiatives is not a straightforward task, particularly when considering the competition posed by supermarkets. In Interview 10, an expert emphasized the urgent need to raise awareness in society about the actual cost of food and questioned why the current price of vegetables is so low. She expressed concerns about the lack of transparency in pricing within the context of food production, including questions about the distribution of earnings between farmers and intermediaries, as well as the allocation of funds for marketing and other purposes.

6.4. Health and Quality of Food

Initially, the primary incentive for engaging in CSA is the acquisition of healthy and high-quality vegetables. However, as participants continue their involvement, these vegetables

begin to represent more just healthy food. Over time, CSA participants come to value community and solidarity, environmental protection, as well as local and ethical consumption. Their understanding of value broadens as they engage more in CSA initiative.

Participation in CSA initiatives is driven by the values of health and the pursuit of high-quality food. This motivation is especially strong for consumers, as it constitutes the primary benefit offered by the CSA model (1, 3, 4, 9, 11, 12). Most of the consumers are motivated to join CSA due to the belief that it provides a unique opportunity to obtain fresh and nutritious produce that surpasses what is typically found in supermarkets (1, 3, 4, 12). CSA consumers perceive their involvement as a gateway to better dietary choices and increased access to fresh vegetables, ultimately contributing to their overall health and nutritional well-being (Interview 3).

It was explained in the interview with one expert that initially, people are primarily motivated by their desire for nutritious, fresh, and healthy food. However, as time passes within the CSA initiative, their motivations tend to expand:

"At the beginning, the motivation among members was mostly 'I want healthy vegetables.' And then gradually, it transitioned to 'I want healthy vegetables while also knowing where I get them from, and I also want to support the farmer.'" (Interview 4)

One farmer emphasized the significance of health and food quality, particularly underscoring the importance of nutritious food for children:

"The vegetables are grown organically and are fresher than those from the store. So, I think there is a health benefit, that the nutritional aspect is quite strong because you are eating some seasonal, freshly grown, organic vegetables. It is important, actually it is important for children as well." (Interview 11)

In Interview 10, an expert noted that it is quite common for women with small children to become more conscious about the nutritional value of the food their children eat. In

Interview 3, it was mentioned that having children was one of the primary motivations for joining CSA as consumers:

"I was motivated to do that, well, it was more things, but mostly it was the guilty conscience that motivated me. Also, I had children, and I was looking for better food for them, and overall, that lifestyle didn't really suit me, going to the supermarket and all..." (Interview 3)

One consumer mentioned meaningful spending of time, along with the health benefits of gardening and being in the fresh air, as secondary motivations for participating in CSA:

"The benefit for me is that I have a sense that I am spending my time meaningfully. I feel it is better to go to the garden on the weekend than to the gym because you do the same amount of exercise, and it is good for something. Additionally, you are outdoors in the fresh air, and you do not have to think of ways to spend time outside, it just comes naturally." (Interview 3)

This consumer further explained that vegetables from CSA initiative are grown through organic farming practices, minimizing the use of chemicals. However, these vegetables might occasionally have mold or be infested with pests, which could pose negative health effects if consumed.

Figure 3 illustrates the most dominant key values and motivations to participate in CSA according to specific roles. Farmers find their primary motivation in a profound connection to the soil and environment, driven by a strong sense of stewardship and a genuine enjoyment of caring for nature. In contrast, consumers are primarily motivated by the value of acquiring healthy and nutritious vegetables. Moreover, they aspire to build relationships with fellow members, seeking participation in a broader community where shared experiences can be enjoyed together. Coordinators, on the other hand, are propelled by values centred around community building and advocating for local and ethical consumption. As for experts, their engagement in CSA initiatives is rooted in a commitment to supporting a sustainable food system and local farmers. It is essential to note that the perception of values is highly subjective and varies significantly from person to person.

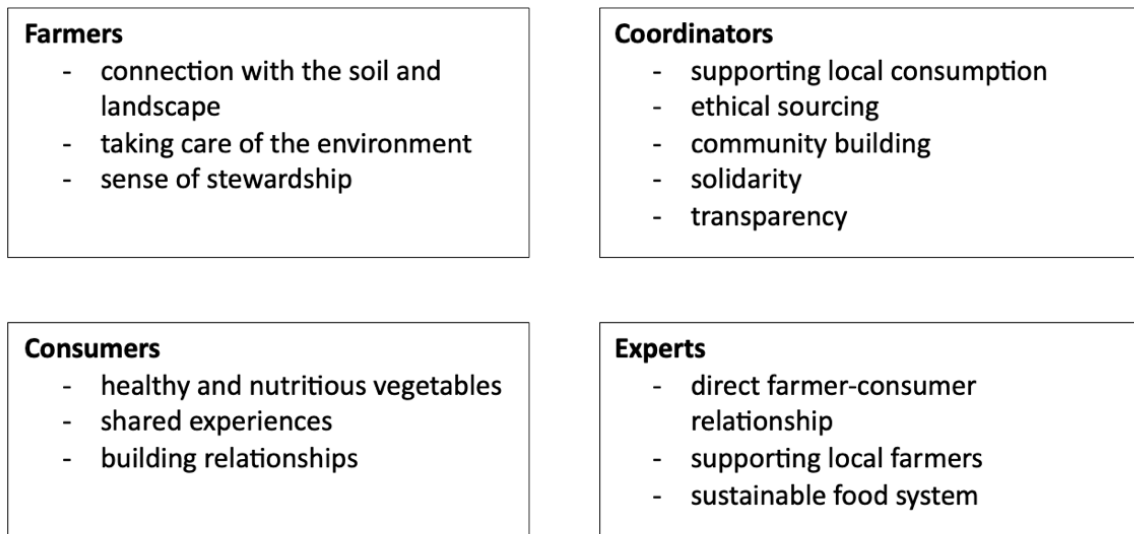


Figure 3: The key values and motivations that drive individuals to participate in CSA initiatives, specific for each role (own illustration)

7. Social and Material Challenges in CSA Initiatives

Social challenges in the context of CSA initiatives in Prague refer to the difficulties and obstacles that arise due to interactions among individuals, groups, and society. Material challenges in the context of CSA initiatives refer to the practical difficulties and physical constraints that arise during the process of sustainable farming and food distribution.

7.1. Social Challenges Encountered by CSA Initiatives

Based on my semi-structured qualitative interviews, I defined the following main themes which emerged from the coding: economic and financial challenges, community building and participation, communication, coordination and time challenges and social attitudes and perception.

7.1.1. Economic and Financial Challenges

CSA initiatives encounter a set of economic and financial challenges that affect their sustainability and growth.

In recent years, CSA initiatives have been influenced by the ongoing economic crisis, leading to widespread financial uncertainty and reduced consumer spending on organic and environmentally friendly products (Interview 2, 8). As one farmer expressed in Interview 2, the demand for higher quality and environmentally friendly products, which are also more expensive, naturally decreases when people face financial constraints. In Interview 8, a coordinator reflected on how the functioning of CSA has been influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent economic crises. She suggests that during times of crisis, people tend to revert to familiar and simpler patterns, potentially opting for more convenient solutions like ordering food online. I assume that this observation indicates a shift in consumer behaviour, potentially impacting the level of participation and engagement in initiatives like CSA, as individuals might prioritize convenience and ease of access to food sources during challenging times. In my own observation, in the Czech Republic over the past year, the impact of inflation has resulted in an increase in food prices, while salaries

have largely remained unchanged. This poses challenges for individuals and families striving to maintain a balanced standard of living.

Inflation-driven rise of vegetable price can affect the affordability of CSA membership (Interview 5, 6). As cost of living rises, potential members may find it more challenging to pay for CSA subscriptions, potentially leading to a decline in membership enrolments (Interview 3). In the face of rising vegetable prices, consumers may become more price-sensitive and prioritize economical food options. One coordinator describes the current situation as follows:

“After the recession and partly due to the war in Ukraine, we felt quite a significant financial uncertainty, and for many people, organic quality food and this whole system stopped being a priority. So, we actually lost quite a few members because of this.” (Interview 6)

Additionally, the financial inaccessibility of CSA programs for some individuals, often due to the upfront payment required for a season's share, can limit their inclusivity (Interview 1, 8, 10). The reduction in consumer purchasing power during economic downturns affects the demand for CSA membership and produce. Lower-income individuals and families may find it difficult to commit to CSA membership, which require periodic payments, as they prioritize essential expenditures. In Interview 8, a coordinator mentioned addressing this challenge through an individual repayment calendar, recognizing the financial constraints faced by potential participants.

The competition from supermarkets, which can offer lower prices for vegetables, poses a challenge to CSA initiatives in terms of attracting and retaining members (Interview 3, 4). This was emphasized by one consumer as follows:

“Well, first and foremost, price is a challenge, it is usually significantly more expensive, and sometimes it also requires some involvement, so it is quite discouraging. Then, I think just competing with the supermarket's offerings or even at the markets is actually very difficult because, of course, when you go to work, it is complicated to, for example, wait somewhere for a box with vegetables every Wednesday at five.” (Interview 3)

Cheap food imports, often driven by global trade dynamics and economies of scale pose significant challenges for CSA initiatives (Interview 9). Members of CSA might be drawn to the lower prices of imported goods, leading to a perception that CSA offerings are comparatively expensive, despite their locally sourced, fresh, and sustainable attributes (Interview 11).

The financial sustainability of CSA farms can be a concern, particularly if they struggle to cover their operational costs (Interview 3, 11). The lack of financial literacy among some producers may further exacerbate financial challenges (Interview 9). CSA initiatives rely on consistent and sustained financial support from their members to cover operational expenses and support farmers. Ensuring that farmers receive equitable pay while managing cost constraints is a difficult in the context of rising prices in the Czech Republic. Determining appropriate pricing for CSA shares and calculating production costs accurately are crucial for sustaining the initiative. Without proper financial literacy, farmers may set prices too low, undermining their profitability. Farmers may encounter challenges when seeking loans or financing to support their operations or invest in necessary equipment and infrastructure (Interview 2). It was explained by a coordinator that many farmers do not have sufficient business education, which might potentially limit them:

“We lack business education; I see that in comparison to England. There we learned a lot of basic business things. Cashflow, all those general business aspects, and people here today do not know how to calculate it. Planning, perhaps project management in business. They might know how to grow vegetables, but when it comes to the actual skill of putting it all together...” (Interview 9)

These economic and financial challenges underscore the complexity of sustaining CSA initiatives in a dynamic economic landscape. They impact both the demand for CSA memberships and the financial sustainability of participating farmers, necessitating careful consideration and strategies to overcome these challenges. Addressing these economic and financial challenges is essential for the long-term success and resilience of CSA programs.

7.1.2. Community Building and Participation

Community building and participation represent significant challenges within CSA initiatives, highlighting the complexities of fostering collaboration and engagement. Building a cohesive community can be difficult, as finding consensus among diverse members with varying expectations and preferences can be a daunting task (Interview 2, 3, 6, 8, 12). Building trust between participants and farmers proves to be another challenge that often requires a long-term effort (Interview 5). Effective communication within CSA initiatives is essential but can also be very challenging, leading to misunderstandings and conflicts (Interview 1, 3, 4, 8, 10, 11). Addressing these issues requires conflict resolution mechanism and trust-building efforts (Interview 10). Scepticism and frustration within broader society, often rooted in individualism and reluctance to collaborate or join communal efforts, can further hinder the functioning of CSA initiatives (Interview 3). The demanding task of attracting and retaining members over a long period of time while keeping them actively participating presents another challenge encountered by CSA initiatives (Interview 3, 12).

It was pointed out by farmers, that a significant challenge for CSA initiatives is to find individuals with relevant farming skills, especially in Community Shared Farms where participants actively engage in farming (Interview 2, 11). In Interview 11, a farmer explained that many CSA initiatives operate on a semi-professional basis, primarily involving small-scale farmers who are more like enthusiast rather than professionals. He emphasized that the field lacks professionalization, and the challenge lies in providing support to those who are acquiring and advancing their skills in the field of farming. The interviewee highlighted the potential role of practical agricultural education programs of high quality, emphasizing the importance of hands-on learning that familiarizes individuals with the practical aspects, challenges, and costs involved in farming.

Participants are often primarily engaged in picking up of the vegetables at agreed time, with limited involvement beyond that. The organization of meetings for interaction and dialogue is proving to be challenging, given the time constraints many CSA members face (Interview 1, 7). While the idea of contributing through voluntary work such as helping farmers is

appealing to CSA members, practical implementation is often hindered by time constraints.

As one coordinator explained:

“I feel like there is theoretical interest in some kind of gathering or a visit to the farm, but in practice, it usually ends up with zero or maybe one person showing up. So, I sometimes try to suggest something, but at the same time, I do not want to force it.” (Interview 12)

A farmer highlighted the challenges in reaching a consensus about the organization of CSA, pointing out the diverse perspectives and opinions of the participants as a significant challenge:

“Often, it just fades away because there simply are not enough people. It is extremely difficult to put together a community that functions as a community. The question is, what should be the good functioning, well, ideally what suits all members. It is hard to find a consensus in that.” (Interview 2)

In CSA initiatives, conflicts may arise, necessitating significant time and effort to resolve, particularly concerning the fair distribution of tasks, especially on farms or gardens (Interview 3). This challenge becomes especially pronounced in Community Shared Farms, where the workload on the farm or garden is more substantial compared to other types of CSA. One consumer explained that there is a respect among members, but practical challenges arise, leading to necessary negotiations and occasional conflicts. This quote illustrates the complexities of balancing ideals with the practicalities of shared labour:

“Well, theoretically, we respect each other and try to be solidary, but in the real world, it is often quite challenging. I do not want to say we argue, well, sometimes we argue, but it is just that negotiations are necessary. It is nice to say we are solidary, but then someone has to mow the grass when someone else does not want to. But it more or less works because we have that common goal, the garden, the food, and everything else follows from that.” (Interview 3)

It is important to recognize that these experiences are more prevalent in Community Shared Farms, where the shared workload is more substantial, necessitating closer cooperation among CSA members. In contrast, Community Subscriber Groups and Subscription CSA Groups are less labour-intensive, requiring less immediate cooperation. As a result, the interpersonal bonds among individuals in these groups might be weaker when compared to the strong connection often found in Community Shared Farms.

7.1.3. Communication, Coordination and Time Challenges

Effective communication and coordination are crucial for the success of CSA initiatives, yet they often present notable challenges (Interview 1, 3, 4, 8, 10, 11). Moreover, the extent of engagement in CSA initiatives is influenced by time constraints, the impact of which varies depending on the roles of CSA participants. CSA initiatives rely on clear and efficient communication between farmers and members, particularly regarding produce distribution, schedules and updates (Interview 1, 3, 4, 8, 11). The following quote highlights the critical role of communication in the CSA model, distinguishing it from conventional consumer-business relationships:

“CSA is a system based on communication, and it is very demanding in terms of communication. Unlike a classic relationship with a store or a business where a person just goes in and buys something when they feel like it, there is actually no need for communication beforehand. In CSA, everything needs to be communicated in advance, what, when and how much.” (Interview 12)

However, communication challenges can arise, leading to misunderstandings and different opinions among members (Interview 2). The successful management and organization of CSA initiatives necessitate significant effort, often requiring some participants to take on the role of coordinator (Interview 4, 5, 10, 12). However, it is important to note that these coordinators typically fulfil their roles voluntarily and do not receive monetary compensation (Interview 10). In some cases, they might be receiving their share of vegetables for free as a non-financial reward. Notably, individuals who undertake the role of coordinators often include mothers on maternity leave (Interview 8). They tend to have more flexibility in their

schedules and vested interest in promoting healthy options for their children. However, when their maternity leave concludes (typically lasting 3 years in the Czech Republic for each child), they usually re-enter the workforce and they tend to lose the capacity to continue in the role of coordinator in the CSA initiative. As one expert pointed out, it is very difficult to find people who are willing to take on this responsibility without the financial compensation:

“Very few people sign up to take on responsibility without getting paid for it. It is a very common thing that a coordinator tries to pass on that role, but no one wants to do it. So, most of the time, it is a difficult decision making process to determine whether the group will function for another year. For farmers, it is actually quite stressful because if the coordinator does not find a successor, there is a risk that the group will not exist at all because they might not be able to take it on themselves anymore. So, it is really about volunteer work.”

(Interview 10)

A coordinator pointed out in Interview 12, that typically, CSA members tend to fulfil their obligations that are essential for the functioning of the CSA, such as collecting their food shares at the agreed-upon times. However, active involvement in organizing community-building events or farming is not as common. While there might be an initial inclination for greater engagement, practical constraints often come into play as people are occupied with busy schedules and find it difficult to allocate time for CSA additional activities.

The time and workload challenges within CSA initiatives vary significantly depending on the roles of the members. The role of a farmer is the most time-intensive, however, provides financial reward and some farmers can dedicate their time to farming as a full-time employment (Interview 2, 8, 11). Nevertheless, many farmers also engage in part-time jobs, especially outside the growing season. Learning the necessary farming skills is a lengthy and demanding process (Interview 11). Farmers within these initiatives dedicate substantial time to cultivating and caring for the garden or farm the growing season, leaving limited opportunities for breaks or other activities. The continuous care for the garden or farm makes finding replacements or assistance difficult due to the scarcity of individuals with proficient farming skills. Mastering farming takes years, involving physically intensive and time-consuming work with limited financial returns. Consequently, the number of young

individuals with expertise in farming remains low, reflecting the challenges faced by CSA farmers. One farmer portrayed the situation as follows:

"Farming requires knowledge and skills that you learn over a long period. Well, those five years might just turn out to be too short. And during the learning process, you are not as efficient, of course. That means you are producing vegetables with a relatively high time or financial investment. And economically, it might not make any sense at all." (Interview 2)

The role of a coordinator in CSA initiatives demands a significant amount of time, especially when considering the fact that the work is mostly done on voluntary bases (Interview 4, 10, 12). While some coordinators might receive a vegetable share for free, there is not mention in any interview of coordinators receiving financial compensation. As discussed in the previous chapter, finding coordinators is a challenging task, and often, these roles are taken up by mothers on maternity leave. One expert shed light on this issue, stating:

"Now, coordinators are missing, and perhaps the societal pressure plays a role too. Women often return to work instead of staying on maternity leave and are not as active in communities because typical Czech communities are based entirely on volunteering, zero financial support, which cannot be sustained continuously like this." (Interview 4)

Within CSA initiatives, the role of consumers is the least time-intensive within CSA initiatives. However, it is important to consider that consumers pay for the services provided by farmers, so it is understandable that their workload is relatively light. In comparison to buying vegetables at supermarkets, participating in CSA initiatives demands more effort (Interview 1, 3, 6, 4, 11). Committing to picking vegetables every week or every second week requires consistency, which can be challenging for many individuals. This challenge becomes apparent, especially during vacation or for people whose jobs involve frequent travel, making it difficult for someone else to collect and store the vegetables on their behalf. Unlike supermarket purchases, CSA vegetables cannot be skipped, necessitating consumers to always find a solution. In Interview 4, an expert pointed out that during discussions between consumers and farmers, consumers expressed a strong preference for not having

to pick up vegetables regularly, indicating the challenges associated with this aspect of CSA participation.

7.1.4. Social Attitudes and Perception

CSA initiatives, which are still a relatively new phenomenon in the Czech Republic, encounter a certain degree of public scepticism rooted in various factors (Interview 3). This scepticism can be attributed to the country's history, marked by unfavourable experiences with communal ownership during the era of communism and property collectivization (Interview 2). As a result, there is a prevailing tendency to distrust social structures and models of societal functioning reminiscent of these historical periods. The scepticism is also linked to the climate crisis, people tend to have the feeling that CSA initiatives are too insignificant to make a meaningful impact in the context of larger environmental issues. This sentiment was expressed by one consumer as follows:

“And I think it is also due to the upcoming climate crisis, which, in my opinion, cannot really be addressed. So, I believe it creates a feeling in people that it does not really matter what they do, which is true.” (Interview 3)

In reflecting on the social challenges faced by CSA initiatives, one farmer highlighted concerns about pushing individuals into community participation due to a perceived lack of trust among people in Czech society:

“It does not make sense to push people in this regard. I rather think it is a Czech specificity. When you mention the word community, people tend to distance themselves from it. It is somehow related to a lack of trust among these people. Perhaps it is partially a Czech characteristic, I do not know, I do not dare to say.” (Interview 2)

One consumer shed light on a potential challenge faced by participants, particularly the negative reactions and perceptions they may encounter regarding CSA activities:

“Then I think some people face a bit of ridicule, like why buy muddy, twisted carrots when I can get clean ones straight from the supermarket, right? Especially in our country, where any green activities are perceived as some form of ecoterrorism.” (Interview 3)

Another noteworthy aspect emphasized by a consumer concerns the initial enthusiasm that often accompanies involvement in CSA initiatives. The interviewee explained that this tends to fade away after some time, especially when members are faced with unpredictable challenges and difficulties:

“I think that when a person joins CSA with high expectations, they will inevitably encounter reality and, as a result, leave. I also believe that one should not overdo it when, for example, joining a community that requires some work, it does not have to be like ten hours a week, but just two hours can suffice to see if it suits them or not because that enthusiasm can wear off.” (Interview 3)

In reflecting on the challenges faced by CSA initiatives, one farmer offered a perspective on the changing attitudes towards locally sourced produce, emphasizing the importance of embracing a mindset that normalizes the consumption of local food:

“On one hand, we have seen this madness recently, especially with things like peppers and various deliveries of fresh produce. We have managed without peppers for the past few thousand years, so we could probably continue without them. Or in the UK, when they do not have pears in February. It is unfortunate, but there is nothing to be done about it. And this is related to people's mindset, either they voluntarily embrace it, or they will be pushed towards it, that it is normal to consume local food.” (Interview 2)

In Interview 6, a coordinator described the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on CSA initiatives. These initiatives experienced a surge in interest during the pandemic, as more people stayed at home and focused on home-cooked meals. Heightened awareness of healthy eating led to increased interest in CSA memberships, with more individuals having the financial means to participate (Interview 10). However, after the pandemic, a significant number of CSA members left for various reasons. One major factor was the return to in-

person work and dining out, making it challenging to consume the vegetables provided by CSA. Additionally, economic uncertainties stemming from the recession and the conflict in Ukraine diminished the priority of organic food and CSA participation for many. Consequently, the CSA community saw a decline in membership as the priorities of members shifted away from these initiatives (Interview 4). It is important to acknowledge that responses in the interviews were not uniformly consistent, and participants held varying perceptions of the situation.

In figure 4, the social challenges encountered in CSA by specific roles are portrayed. For farmers, notable challenges include competition from supermarkets, cheap imports, and an insufficient number of people experienced in agriculture. Additionally, they often encounter a certain amount of scepticism in society. Consumers, on the other hand, grapple with higher vegetable prices and financial constraints, exacerbated by the worsening economic situation in the Czech Republic over the past two years. For many consumers, CSA membership may be too expensive. Coordinators face challenges in resolving conflicts within CSA, retaining members, and keeping them engaged. Moreover, as the work of coordinators is mostly unpaid, there is usually a shortage of individuals willing to take on this role. For experts, the challenge lies in finding the most suitable ways to support local farmers and contribute to a more sustainable food system.

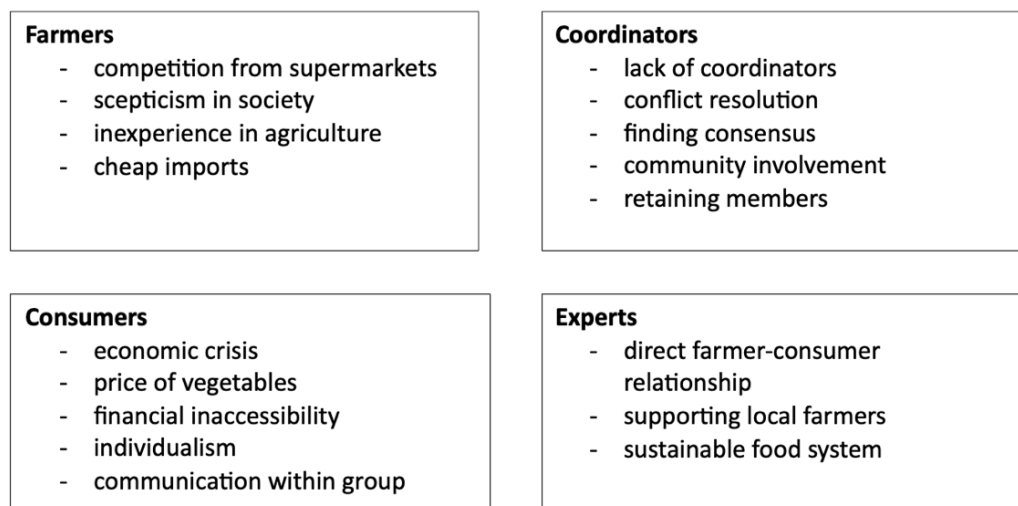


Figure 4: The social challenged encountered by CSA initiatives, specific for each role (own illustration)

7.2. Material Challenges Encountered by CSA Initiatives in Prague

Based on my semi-structured qualitative interviews, I defined the following main themes which emerged from the coding: seasonality and crop diversity, climate and environmental factors, and technical and resource constraints.

7.2.1. Seasonality and Crop Diversity

In CSA initiatives, dealing with the changing seasons poses a significant challenge. Unlike the constant availability of various vegetables in supermarkets, CSA members encounter a narrower range of options (Interview 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 10, 12). The CSA participants cannot choose what types of vegetables they receive in their food share. For instance, a CSA food share might include several types of salad greens. If someone does not like those particular vegetables, it may be difficult to find a use for them. A coordinator explains the issue as follows:

“Often, CSA members struggle with the fact that the system does not work like when you go to a supermarket and pick up what you want, but instead, it operates in a way that the farm sends the vegetables they have available. I think that for many people, the difficulty lies in receiving vegetables they either do not know or had planned to use something else, or simply find it hard to tune in to the season to such an extent. For example, in the spring, there is a lot of salad, and conversely, there may not be peppers or pumpkins, and I believe this indicated a certain dependency on supermarkets, where people can have anything anytime.”
(Interview 6)

A farmer emphasized the significance of creativity and having enough time when confronted with the challenges of managing seasonality and handling a surplus of similar vegetables:

“I am the kind of person who simply cooks with what I have, and I do not shop based on what I want to cook, so it does not bother me at all. But you need to be creative and also have the time for it.” (Interview 11)

The challenges of managing a continuous influx of vegetables and the opportunity it presents for learning new culinary skills were pointed out by one coordinator:

“The challenge is that you need to process the vegetables, and when someone does not cook, they will not process it, and there is this constant pressure, like every week, a new package of vegetables arrives. Which, as always, a person can approach either as a disadvantage or an opportunity. So, I approached it as an opportunity and learned how to cook and process it. Honestly, yes, sometimes you can get overwhelmed with the supplies, so you need to do something about it. I started fermenting and drying, and I do not know, various things.” (Interview 8)

It was emphasized by a farmer that the current expectation of perfectly looking vegetables from supermarkets contrasts with the aesthetic of vegetables produced within CSA initiatives. For some CSA members, this might be surprising and difficult to get used to:

“For some CSA members, the challenge might be the lower quality of various aspects of the vegetables, such as cleanliness, appearance, size, or that they may not meet certain standards. So, the vegetables look different and are different, so someone might perceive it as a disadvantage, so they might not want it because of that, it is individual.” (Interview 11)

In Interview 10, a coordinator mentioned that people might perceive CSA participation as a financial burden. This perception can stem from uncertainties about time constraints, meal preparation, family members being absent, or the challenge of consuming the produce before it spoils. Adapting to the seasonality is essential for participating in CSA initiatives, and it can require a significant adjustment in one's lifestyle, which not everyone is willing to make.

7.2.2. Climate and Environmental Factors

The CSA initiatives and farming in general are strongly dependant on favourable climate and environmental conditions. Farmers are faced with uncertainty regarding the eventual crop yield, which is putting them under pressure (Interview 1, 2, 5, 8, 11). As they receive payment in advance, the pressure intensifies if they are not able to provide the full range of

vegetables or if the crops are damaged due to unfavourable weather conditions. In theory, CSA members are expected to share the farming risks with the farmer. However, one researcher explained that farmers often feel a sense of responsibility and try to make up for such situations in various ways, showing a concern that goes beyond strict risk-sharing:

"Farmers encounter a shortage of water, for example, farmers in southern Moravia face significant problems, and they feel it. Even our farmer, who has been growing since the 1990s, started experiencing problems with the weather, such as drought issues and fluctuations. He used to have fruits, but then, for a very long time, we didn't have them because they would always freeze. Consequently, for the farmer, this presents another barrier, making it even harder for him. One of the important values in the CSA is sharing the risk, or at least it should be, it's part of the fundamental principles. This means that CSA members should be willing to accept it when it's a bad season and nothing grows or when there is a low yield. However, I'm not aware of many CSAs where this risk is actually applied in practice. Even the farmers themselves are often afraid to implement it because they don't want to disappoint CSA members. It's a stressful situation for them. For some, it can also act as a barrier to entering this system because they feel responsible. When someone pays them for the entire season, they want to fulfil those commitments, and mentally, they may struggle to accept this principle themselves." (Interview 8)

The material challenges faced by CSA initiatives are closely linked to the microclimate and surrounding environmental factors that influence their specific location. Some CSA initiatives face water scarcity issues, requiring careful irrigation management (Interview 8, 9, 10). Conservation of soil quality appears to be a critical concern for all CSA initiatives, given their critical reliance on it (Interview 4, 11). While climate change could potentially affect CSA initiatives, the exact nature of this influence remains less clear to respondents:

"For several years, we have been dealing with a water problem. There is one well dug there, and it is no longer sufficient, so we had to address it due to climate change, as it rains less. In the end, we dug another well, but in fact, for the last three years, it hasn't been necessary. It has rained enough, so actually, it has been quite okay. We have also started growing some different things." (Interview 3)

According to insights from Interview 11 with a farmer, the initial phase of CSA farming presents the most significant challenges. Learning to cultivate crops ecologically, efficiently, and with financial sustainability is a demanding journey with considerable challenges. Among these challenges associated with preserving soil quality and implementing a balanced approach to managing pests within the realm of organic farming. Farmers face significant challenges in maintaining soil quality and implementing a balanced approach to managing pests within the realm of organic farming. The necessary expertise and knowledge are extensive, making it a difficult task that not many people can handle.

7.2.3. Technical and Resource Constrains

CSA initiatives are often faced with a lack of suitable agricultural equipment, which makes the work of farmers more difficult, and the initiatives less competitive (Interview 9, 10). Securing finances for technological advancements within these initiatives is often very challenging. As one farmer pointed out:

“Compared to the Netherlands, we are 40 years behind in terms of technology and cultivation. We simply did not do it here, so it is not available now. Technological debt, well, that is actually quite significant shortcoming. For example, to build a greenhouse here, you have to book it a year in advance for someone to come and complete it.” (Interview 9)

Moreover, securing access to land emerges as an ongoing challenge, given its scarcity within the Czech Republic:

“I assume that CSA initiatives face development efforts or efforts by large-scale farmers to claim land and territory. One must have the space to cultivate, and that is really quite difficult and uncertain, especially in urban conditions. Many of these farms and gardens are constantly relocating.” (Interview 3)

The preservation of soil fertility constitutes another notable challenge (Interview 11). CSA initiatives typically follow organic practices, avoiding chemicals and synthetic fertilizers.

However, challenges arise in managing pests and diseases, occasionally resulting in damaged vegetables for CSA members. Furthermore, limited access to water resources coupled with high cost of irrigation presents another obstacle for CSA initiatives (Interview 3, 7, 9, 10, 11). These factors, alongside with others, can culminate in reduced agricultural yields, which can damage the perception of the farmer's efforts (interview 11).

In Interview 9, one farmer mentioned that dealing with irrigation poses a significant material challenge, particularly due to its substantial cost. She explained that securing investment for irrigation is possible through effective project management skills. People with the necessary expertise can write a project proposal and seek funding from various sources such as banks, philanthropists, or foundations. According to her, the resources are available, the key is to find the right solutions. However, she emphasizes that the process can be very time-consuming. For instance, her farm had been waiting for irrigation installation since January, and it had not been completed yet. The delay was due to their lack in precision in planning and execution.

In figure 5, the material challenges encountered in CSA initiatives by specific roles are portrayed. For farmers, the primary material challenges involve uncertainty in crop yield, weather fluctuations, and the necessity for irrigation. Water scarcity and soil degradation may also pose problems in certain CSA initiatives. Consumers face the material challenge of consuming a large quantity of a specific type of vegetable and ensuring its consumption before spoilage. Coordinators note that the reduced variety of vegetables due to seasonality might challenge the recruitment and retention of CSA members. Furthermore, CSA members cannot choose the composition of their food share. Experts express concerns primarily about the impact of climate change on CSA initiatives and the associated uncertainty in crop yield.

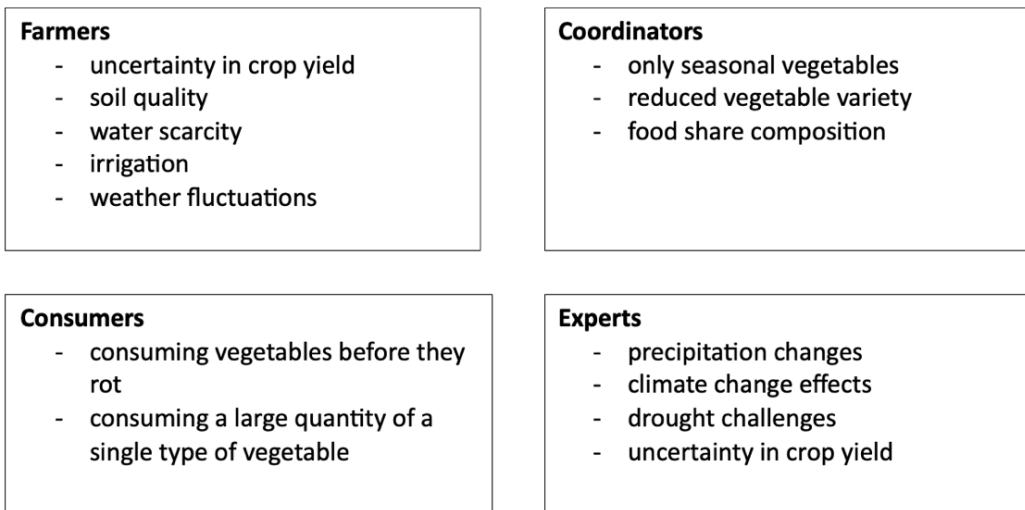


Figure 5: The material challenged encountered by CSA initiatives, specific for each role (own illustration)

8. Institutional Support and Barriers to CSA Initiatives

When discussing institutional support and barriers, numerous participants noted that CSA initiatives often operate independently from other institutions (Interview 4, 6):

“In my opinion, CSA initiatives stand outside the system. I do not perceive any negative or positive intervention from the state. Of course, I am glad that the state does not put any obstacles in our way, but at the same time, I do not perceive any significant support.”

(Interview 6)

However, it is important to acknowledge that CSA initiatives are still influenced to some extent by institutions. Some respondents proposed potential institutional support which could foster further development of these initiatives.

8.1. Institutional Support to CSA Initiatives

8.1.1. Financial Institutional Support for CSA initiatives

CSA initiatives operate independently, securing their financial income from the payments made by CSA members (interview 2). However, certain farmers can also seek grants, which can be used for various purposes such as acquiring solar panels and improved irrigation technology (Interview 1, 9). Although agricultural subsidies present an option for financial support, they are generally not tailored to suit small-scale farmers (Interview 3). One coordinator also highlighted the potential to secure funding through open calls to further develop CSA initiatives (Interview 9). Open calls in this context refer to public announcements or invitations made by organizations, governments, or funding bodies to encourage proposals and applications from various projects with social impact. However, this demands specific skills and time investments, posing a challenge for some farmers. One farmer mentioned receiving funding for specific smaller projects from institutions such as the European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT) and the Via Foundation (Interview 11). Additionally, Norway grants were mentioned as a possibility of obtaining financial support for CSA initiatives. One farmer described her experience with securing financial support as follows:

“We received the very first financial support from a grant to support agriculture from the European Institute of Innovation and Technology. So, opportunities exist, but one has to find them. They are explicitly tailored for CSA, but rather open calls that, when you reach out, can also be tailored to those systems.” (Interview 9)

The farmer emphasized that CSA initiatives often need smaller grants for specific purposes like purchasing equipment (e.g., tractors or greenhouses):

“Certainly, smaller project calls are useful, for example, the VIA Foundation focuses on community gardens, and it is usually for some small project. We received solar panels and irrigation technology. That completely solved our biggest problem. It was great, and it was 150 000 CZK (approximately 6162 EUR), and it was actually enough.” (Interview 9)

However, it is worth noting that these grants are frequently tailored for larger-scale projects, making them less suitable for the needs of CSA initiatives (Interview 2). In addition, one coordinator expressed a preference for not receiving financial support from external institutions (Interview 12). She values the self-sufficiency of CSA initiatives and appreciates their independent operations.

8.1.2. Non-financial Institutional Support for CSA initiatives

While the state provides only marginal support to CSA initiatives at the national level, more significant cooperation can be observed at the regional and local levels (Interview 4, 8). In some cases, municipalities rent or provide land to these initiatives. For instance, the CSA initiative MetroFarm has been allocated a significant space near Císařský ostrov in Prague by the city authorities (Interview 9). Additionally, CSA pick-up points are sometimes distributed in public buildings which have multiple functions, however, this is mostly a coincidence rather than targeted support. In Prague, it is also quite common that smaller cafes serve as pick-up points:

“For example, our distribution takes place in a private establishment, in a private pub owned by our friends. However, I know a few CSAs that operate in some kind of infrastructure that is at least partially supported by the city. For instance, there is a distribution point in the building of the Academy of Fine Arts or in the Kampus Hybernská, which are all places that are indirectly supported by the city or the state, so there is some form of support there”.
(Interview 7)

In Interview 9, a farmer highlighted the availability of grants for establishing community gardens, although these grants are not exclusively designated for CSA initiatives but are intended for various food-related projects. The farmer noted that their farm, situated on city-owned land, represents a form of indirect state support. However, individuals or groups interested in receiving support must proactively take the initiative to submit proposals for consideration.

The CSA initiatives are supported by the NGO AMPI, which is dedicated to fostering collaboration between existing CSA initiatives and actively promoting the establishment of new ones (KPZkoALICE, 2023). Regular gatherings, webinars, seminars, and lectures are organized, facilitating the exchange of knowledge and insights. Moreover, people in AMPI gather valuable know-how and share inspiring stories related to CSA initiatives. They are also developing an online platform called kpzinfo.cz which helps to guide people to important information and contacts. Additionally, they run the *Adresář famářů*, which is a website that allows for easier connection between farmers and consumers. Being part of the international URGENCI network, they bring innovative ideas from abroad to enrich their local efforts. Moreover, they publish a newsletter that offers updates from the world of CSA initiatives, sharing the latest development.

An expert from AMPI discussed their role in providing consultancy and support to communities, individuals, and organizations interested in CSA initiatives. They create informational resources, raise awareness, promote the concept of CSA, and share stories about CSA. Despite their efforts, obtaining support has been challenging:

“Recently, we have not been successful in obtaining support for this topic, maybe it is us, perhaps we cannot explain the topic...Maybe for the city council, it is more comprehensible to support an educational program where we offer educational workshops for schools than the CSA topic.” (Interview 8)

In Interview 10, an expert explained how in AMPI, efforts are under way to inform different organizations about organic farming and to raise awareness among politicians regarding organic food. The researcher also mentioned that collaboration with multiple European organizations have resulted in joint grants. These grants are aimed at integrating the issues of organic farming and CSAs into the political agenda. It was also mentioned that these initiatives have begun to make an impact on politicians within the Ministry of Agriculture and Social Affairs.

Another form of indirect non-financial support for CSA initiatives is the establishment of the institution called Farmářská škola, which addresses the issue of a shortage of people experience in agriculture in the Czech Republic (Interview 1). Farmářská škola is a higher vocational school specializing in ecological and biodynamic agriculture (Farmářská škola, 2023). The primary goal of this institution is to introduce and familiarize a diverse range of individuals with the principles and practices of ecological farming. The mission of Farmářská škola is to empower participants to select the most fitting approach and connect them with a community of like-minded peers. The institution is composed of experienced ecological farmers, university professors, non-profit organizations, and sustainability driven companies. The core value of this institution is sustainable and socially conscious agriculture that does not exploit the landscape and considers the well-being of future generation. Farmářská škola offers a comprehensive three-year program, comprising practical engagement on selected ecological farms in both local and international contexts (roughly 400 hours per year), supplemented by theoretical modules guided by field experts. Farms that cooperate with Farmářská škola is depicted in figure 6. This pedagogical framework is notably influenced by the German model of ecological agricultural education.

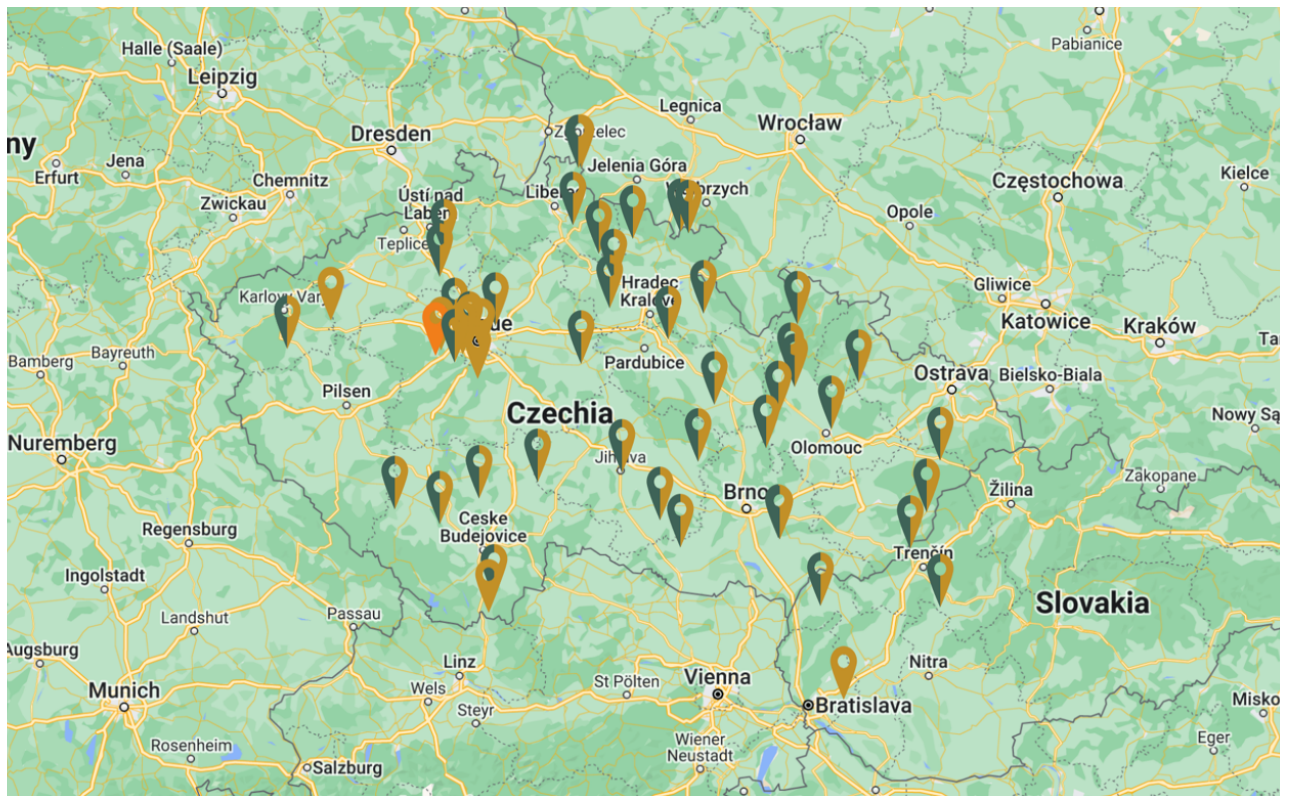


Figure 6: A map of farms offering practical farming experience in collaboration with Farmářská škola (source: Farmářská škola, 2023)

8.1.3. Possible Institutional Support to CSA Initiatives Enabling their Further Development

As a form of institutional support that could foster the further development of CSA initiatives, one farmer highlighted interest-free loans for CSA projects and specialized farmer-focused incubators:

“I like that we are outside of that system. It would probably be better to get the support through some kind of loans, perhaps through interest-free loans.” (Interview 11)

It would be good if banks supported it more, but I understand that small businesses are not certain for starting entrepreneurs. And then maybe some incubators specifically focused on farmers because there are incubators for entrepreneurs, for example, I am part of the one for farmers here? at Czech University of Life Sciences.” (Interview 9)

One coordinator proposed the development of a user-friendly app that would enable participants to select their preferred vegetables from the available options (Interview 10). Another coordinator suggested organizing workshops to assist participants in the application process for grants (Interview 9). Additionally, a consumer recommended exploring collaborations between CSA initiatives and diverse forms of social enterprise (Interview 1).

8.2 Institutional Barriers to CSA Initiatives

In the context of Czech Republic, CSA initiatives encounter a series of institutional barriers. In Interview 2, it was explained by a farmer that in terms of regulations, the existing legal framework in the Czech Republic is more focused on larger farms, leaving CSA initiatives without clear guidelines for their operations. This lack of tailored regulations creates uncertainty and can hinder the growth of the CSA initiatives. Another challenge is the absence of tailored support for small and medium-sized farmers. Currently, the subsidy framework predominantly favours large agricultural conglomerates, leaving smaller players at a disadvantage:

“The subsidy system in the Czech Republic is still really set up for large agricultural conglomerates, for understandable reasons, not really for small or family farms. I hope that with this government, it will start to change, and there are some indications that it might be getting better.” (Interview 2)

I suppose that by “understandable reasons” the farmer refers to the historical development in the Czech Republic. The subsidy system in the Czech Republic has been influenced by the transition from a centrally planned economy to a market-oriented one after the fall of communism (Brada, 1991). During this period of transition, the government aimed to stabilize the agricultural sector, which was largely dominated by state-owned farms. Subsidies were initially directed towards these large farms to ensure their survival and maintain food production. Over time, as economy further liberalized, these subsidies persisted, benefiting the established large agricultural conglomerates.

In Interview 11, a farmer pointed out that another barrier for further development of CSA initiatives is the complexity of support programs. These programs require substantial administrative engagement, which can be particularly time-consuming due to the bureaucratic nature of the Czech Republic. This administrative burden becomes an obstacle that many farmers struggle to overcome. Securing grants and financial support presents a challenging task due to the competitiveness that characterizes the process.

An expert from AMPI discussed in Interview 8 collaborations with networks such as URGENCI, a European network uniting national organizations at the European and global levels. Together, they submit projects aimed at developing initiatives that facilitate direct connections between farmers and consumers, which includes CSA initiatives. However, it was noted that competition for project funding in this domain is intense. For example, she mentioned that their application for a major European project was delayed by six months due to the high number of applications.

Collaboration with governmental entities tends to be problematic in some cases. Slow and inefficient cooperation with the ministry has been pointed out in Interview 8 by a researcher, even for positive initiatives such as organizing exhibition related to CSA. In Interview 4, an expert mentioned that specialized consultancy services are often financially out of reach for many CSA initiatives, which can impede their development and growth. Moreover, the expert highlighted the absence of strong food policies which further constrain the potential of CSA initiatives.

In Interview 11, a farmer emphasized the unfair disparities in farmer support conditions across the European Union. He mentioned the need for a re-evaluation and alignment of EU objectives to create a more favourable environment for CSA initiatives. That could empower CSA initiatives to navigate institutional challenges more effectively.

9. Discussion

The initial paragraph outlines the emergence and defining characteristics of the third food regime, both globally and in the specific context of the Czech Republic. The subsequent section explores the connection between CSA initiatives and the third food regime, focusing on the role of values in shaping these initiatives. The third paragraph highlights the contribution of CSA initiatives to social-ecological transformation. In the fourth and fifth paragraphs, I compare the empirical research findings with those presented in the theoretical framework. The sixth paragraph delves into the institutional dynamics impacting CSA initiatives, while the seventh addresses the challenges these initiatives face. The eighth paragraph discusses potential future scenarios for CSA initiatives and explores how challenges could be addressed. Finally, the concluding paragraph describes the significance of CSA initiatives within the framework of the third food regime.

The emergence of the third food regime, also known as the corporate food regime since the 1980s, is defined by the liberalization of trade, neoliberal globalization, and the concentration of market power, predominantly in the hands of global corporations (Burch and Lawrence, 2009). This regime is marked by the ecological and social contradictions of global capitalism, employing mechanisms such as accumulation through dispossession, leading to the displacement of peasant cultures and the conversion of land for agricultural exports (McMichael, 2005). In the context of the Czech Republic, the food regime has been shaped by the historical transitions of the country (Rychlík, 2014). After the fall of communism, the Czech Republic underwent significant agricultural reforms, leading to the privatization of farmlands and the emergence of larger agricultural conglomerates (Grešlová et al., 2015). This transition has influenced the dominance of industrialized and commercialized farming practices in the country, with a focus on efficiency and export-oriented agriculture. The third food regime in the Czech Republic, arising in the post-communist market-based era, is defined by industrialized agricultural practices and standardized, processed foods contributing to health concerns. Globalization increased competition for local farmers and fostered consumerism, favouring large supermarket chains (Janda et al., 2000).

CSA initiatives in the Czech Republic emerge as complementary forces within the context of the third food regime, as introduced by Philip McMichael and Harriet Friedmann (1989) and elaborated on by McMichael (2005) and Burch and Lawrence (2009). They embody alternative approaches to food production, consumption, and distribution. The empirical findings in this thesis underscore the strong foundation of values in these initiatives. CSA participants are primarily motivated by the perceived value of environmental protection, community, solidarity, and access to healthy food. Engaging in CSA initiatives demands more time and financial commitment compared to purchasing vegetables from supermarkets. This suggests that CSA members are driven by motivations and values beyond mere convenience or cost-efficiency. However, it is essential not to oversimplify and label the third food regime as devoid of values. Instead, it can be assumed that the underlying values of the third food regime differ in nature from those emphasized by CSA initiatives and can be further researched.

In the context of the social-ecological transformation as conceptualized by Brand and Wissen (2017), CSA emerges as a grassroots-level initiative that challenges the limitations of top-down approaches to environmental governance. CSA plays a vital role in fostering a bottom-up, community-driven response to socioecological crises. CSA embodies a decentralized and community-centric model, promoting localized food systems and sustainable agricultural practices. By reconnecting consumers directly with local farmers, CSA contributes to a shift in power dynamics, challenging the prevailing structures favouring specific regions and countries. The emphasis on values, such as environmental protection, community, and solidarity within CSA initiatives, aligns with the need for a profound societal transformation highlighted by Brand and Wissen. CSA offers a tangible example of how communities can actively participate in redefining their relationship with the environment, thereby contributing to a more equitable and sustainable food regime.

My research findings align with the conclusions of Spiková (2016), who argues that CSA initiatives are founded on principles such as solidarity, social equity, community building, and even offer potential for bottom-up political mobilization. Emphasizing the importance of personal relationships as a metaphorical glue binding CSA initiative together, acting as a form of social capital, Cone and Myrhe (2000) also highlight the benefits derived from a

connection to a specific piece of land and awareness of seasonality. In my thesis, I came to similar conclusions, uncovering the significance of the relationship to nature and environmental awareness as pivotal motivations driving CSA participation. According to Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007), CSA initiatives can be viewed as expressions of ethical consumerism that involve non-traditional market interactions. Furthermore, they argue that these initiatives serve as a counteractive response to the expansionist goals of corporations, organizations, and nations, providing an alternative viewpoint. While my research aligns with these conclusions, participants did not explicitly criticize the corporate food regime and its expansion. Nevertheless, in a more subtle manner, they underscored the values of diverging from the problematic aspects of the prevailing food regime.

Feagan and Henderson (2009) emphasize that, from an economic standpoint, CSA initiatives operate on principles that differ from the prevailing market economy. The dominant focus on short-term profit maximization in industrial agriculture and market capitalism contradicts the endeavour to establish a socially and environmentally sustainable organization of the food system. Furthermore, the market mentality tends to diminish mutual relationships within the food system. The conclusions of my research reveal that, in contrast to the dominant third food regime, CSA initiatives prioritize localized, small-scale, and sustainable agricultural practices. By nurturing direct relationships between consumers and local farmers, CSA initiatives challenge the centralized and profit-driven nature of the mainstream food industry. CSA emphasizes ecological responsibility, social solidarity, and fair treatment of farmers, contrasting with the exploitative practices often associated with large-scale agribusinesses within the prevailing food regime. Additionally, CSA initiatives often operate outside conventional market structures, emphasizing shared risks and benefits among community members. This cooperative model contradicts the individualistic profit-maximizing approach of mainstream agriculture. Furthermore, CSA initiatives challenge the prevailing narrative of constant economic growth and unlimited consumption by promoting seasonal and locally available produce.

My research findings on institutional dynamics affecting CSA initiatives in the Czech Republic reveal a complex interplay between independence and external influences. Financial challenges persist due to subsidy systems favouring larger farms, with potential solutions like

grants facing obstacles in accessibility and tailoring. Non-financial support, such as land allocation and public space use, demonstrates collaborative potential. Key organizations like the NGO AMPI or Farmářská škola play an important role, emphasizing the need for comprehensive support structures. However, institutional barriers, such as for example financial constraints and lack of institutional support, hinder the transformative potential of CSA initiatives within the broader food regime. Similar findings were also published in the study by Forbes and Harmon (2008). The authors emphasize the institutional complexities confronting CSA initiatives. They argue that financial and logistical challenges demand inventive solutions such as payment plans, working shares, and subsidies. The study underscores the multifaceted nature of CSA initiatives, where regulations, financial considerations, and community outreach intersect.

The challenges encountered by CSA initiatives in the Czech Republic are determined by the complex relationship between social and material aspects of food production and consumption. The social challenges identified, including economic, financial, and community-related obstacles, align with the broader literature on CSA initiatives, for example Strohlic and Shelley (2004), emphasizing the fragile balance required for these community-driven models to thrive. Challenges arising from seasonality, uncertain crop yields, and the need for sustainable practices emphasize the connection between food production and the physical environment. When addressing the question of characterizing VBMPC within the third food regime in the Czech Republic, the identified challenges emphasize the tensions between CSA principles and the dominant practices. These tensions were also found and analysed in the master thesis written by Brunner (2022), which explores CSA initiatives in Argentina. CSA initiatives have the potential to bring about transformative change by addressing these challenges. CSA initiatives offer valuable insights that can contribute to reshaping the current food regime, making it more resilient and equitable.

Various future scenarios exist for the development of CSA initiatives in the Czech Republic. CSA initiatives may grow and integrate into mainstream food systems as sustainability awareness rises, leading to increased consumer participation (Interview 1, 4, 9, 10). This integration could prompt policy changes and greater government support. Technological advances may revolutionize CSAs, with online platforms simplifying membership processes

and enabling home deliveries. Collaboration between CSA initiatives and urban agriculture projects may increase, integrating rooftop gardens and community gardens into CSA distribution networks. Government policies supporting CSAs, through tax benefits and grants for farmers, might encourage broader participation. Global expansion could facilitate knowledge exchange among farmers from different regions, fostering sustainable farming practices. Educational efforts, such as food literacy programs, could raise consumer awareness. Lastly, CSA initiatives might invest in climate-resilient farming methods and innovative technologies, ensuring food security in changing climatic conditions.

It is important to acknowledge that within the third food regime, CSA initiatives currently play only a marginal role, primarily due to their limited capacity to meet larger demands. However, it is essential to recognize the substantial potential these initiatives hold for diverse modes of production and consumption. Despite their current limitations, CSA models offer valuable insights into alternative and sustainable approaches, indicating the possibility of further development and adaptation to address broader demands in the future.

10. Conclusion

The third food regime in the Czech Republic, emerging since the 1990s with the transition from communism to a market-based economy, reflects significant shifts in food production, distribution, and consumption patterns. During the communist era, a centralized and planned economy led to food shortages, rationing, and collectivization of agriculture, disrupting traditional family farming. The shift to a market-oriented economy brought increased food variety, imports, and the rise of supermarkets. Industrialization of agriculture, initiated in communism, persisted, promoting mechanization, specialization, and intensive practices. However, this industrialization raised concerns about environmental sustainability. Concentration of power in large agricultural corporations led to a lack of opportunities for small farmers, and globalization increased the availability of imported foods, impacting local agriculture negatively. Consumerism, symbolized by large supermarket chains and processed foods, has led to a decline in traditional food practices and locally sourced foods. The third food regime in Czechia is characterized by its industrialized, centralized, standardized, globalized, and consumerist nature, contributing to environmental and social challenges and an unsustainable and inequitable food system.

CSA initiatives in the Czech Republic are a relatively recent phenomenon within the AFNs. They started emerging in 2009 and, while still in their initial phase, have gained momentum in recent years. Even though they currently play a marginal role in the Czech national food regime, these initiatives are instrumental in promoting local food systems by connecting consumers with local farmers. CSAs provide small-scale, family-owned farms with a guaranteed market, enabling them to maintain stable incomes and practice sustainable farming methods. They have the potential to reshape the food regime in the Czech Republic by supporting local economic development, promoting sustainable agriculture, and offering an alternative to conventional food production. The collaboration between consumers and farmers within CSAs fosters a sense of community, reduces environmental impacts through shorter food transportation routes, and supports regenerative farming practices, thereby contributing to more resilient and equitable food systems.

Participation in CSA initiatives in the Czech Republic is driven by four main themes reflecting the values and motivations of individuals involved. Environmental awareness and protection stand as fundamental values, with participants prioritizing sustainable production, regenerative soil management, and a deep respect for nature. Community and solidarity play a central role, fostering relationships, trust, and reciprocity among members. Local and ethical consumption is another key value, with CSA members seeking transparency, direct farmer-consumer relationships, and support for their local food system. Health and food quality are strong values, as participants perceive CSA as a source of fresh, nutritious produce that benefits their overall well-being. These values evolve and expand over time as individuals engage more deeply in CSA initiatives, shaping their understanding of the significance of food beyond mere nutritional value, encompassing broader societal needs and environmental considerations.

CSA initiatives in the Czech Republic face a range of social challenges. Economic and financial obstacles, including susceptibility to economic crises, financial inaccessibility, and competition from supermarkets, affect both CSA coordinators and participants. Community building, participation, and time challenges present difficulties in fostering collaboration among diverse members, building trust, and ensuring active engagement. Effective communication and coordination are essential but often hindered by misunderstandings, lack of dedicated coordinators, and the demanding nature of CSA communication. Time challenges vary for farmers, coordinators, and consumers, with the labour-intensive nature of farming, coordination demands, and the need for consistent consumer involvement posing significant challenges. Additionally, social attitudes and perceptions, rooted in historical distrust of communal ownership and scepticism about CSA impact, contribute to challenges in attracting and retaining participants. The COVID-19 pandemic influenced CSA dynamics, drawing initial interest but later seeing a decline due to shifting priorities and economic uncertainties.

In the context of CSA initiatives in the Czech Republic, three prominent material challenges have emerged from qualitative interviews: seasonality and crop diversity, climate and environmental factors, and technical and resource constraints. Seasonality poses a significant challenge as CSA members receive a limited range of vegetables based on the

farm's availability, contrasting with the constant variety in supermarkets. Adapting to seasonal produce demands creativity and time, and some members find it demanding to adjust their cooking habits accordingly. Climate and environmental factors also play a pivotal role, with farmers facing pressure due to uncertain crop yields caused by weather conditions. While CSA principles involve shared risk, farmers often feel a personal responsibility to compensate for any shortfalls, creating stress and pressure. Additionally, water scarcity, soil conservation, and organic farming practices pose significant challenges. Technical and resource constraints further hinder CSA initiatives, with a lack of advanced agricultural equipment and limited access to suitable land and water resources. These challenges make CSA initiatives less competitive and create obstacles in implementing sustainable farming practices.

In the context of CSA initiatives in the Czech Republic, participants noted that CSAs often operate in a somewhat independent "grey zone" within the institutional landscape. While CSA initiatives operate independently, they are not entirely free from institutional influence. Some potential forms of institutional support have been suggested to bolster the development of these initiatives. Financial backing, although challenging to secure due to existing subsidy systems favouring larger farms, could be obtained through grants from organizations like the European Institute of Innovation & Technology and the Via Foundation. However, the complexity of accessing these grants and tailoring them to the specific needs of CSA initiatives remains a hurdle. Non-financial support at regional and local levels includes initiatives such as the allocation of land by municipalities and the use of public buildings as pick-up points. The NGO AMPI plays a crucial role, offering consultancy, knowledge exchange platforms, and promoting CSA through various channels. Additionally, the establishment of institutions like Farmářská škola, specializing in ecological farming education, acts as indirect support by addressing the shortage of agricultural expertise. Despite these efforts, CSA initiatives face institutional barriers such as the absence of tailored regulations, bureaucratic complexities, and limited financial accessibility, with subsidies primarily favouring large agricultural conglomerates. Participants have suggested interest-free loans, specialized farmer-focused incubators, user-friendly apps, grant application workshops, and collaborations with social enterprises as possibilities for future

institutional support, aiming to empower CSA initiatives to navigate these challenges more effectively and sustainably.

In the Czech Republic, CSA initiatives challenge the dominant industrialized food systems by prioritizing localized, sustainable agriculture and fostering direct relationships between consumers and farmers. They oppose exploitative practices associated with large-scale agribusiness, promoting shared risks, and benefits among community members. By advocating for seasonal, locally available produce and transparent consumer-producer relationships, CSAs challenge the constant growth and unlimited consumption paradigm of the third food regime. Despite their current marginal role, CSA models offer valuable insights into sustainable approaches, suggesting potential for further development. Strategic partnerships, technology integration, and collaboration with local food policies could enhance their impact, shaping innovative pathways in the evolving landscape of food production and consumption.

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List of Abbreviations

AFNs: Alternative Food Networks

AMPI: Asociace místních potravinových iniciativ

CSA: Community Supported Agriculture

EU: European Union

FSP: Food Self-Provisioning

FWF: Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung

KPZ: Komunitou podporované zemědělství

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

VBMP: Values-Based Modes of Production and Consumption

Appendix A: The Interview Guide in English and Czech

Interview guide

Topic: Values-based modes of production and consumption: The role of community-supported agriculture in transforming the third Czech food regime

Method: qualitative, semi-structured (guided) interview, preferably face-to-face or video call (if necessary), duration approx. 60-180 minutes per interview; then transcription and evaluation (qualitative content analysis)

Target group: people from KPZkoAlice

- Šárka Krčílková, Alena Wranová, Jana Kožnarová

Research Questions:

- **What are the underlying values and driving motivations of the CSA initiatives to transform the current Czech food regime?**
- **What social and material challenges and institutional barriers do the CSA initiatives face?**

Interview themes:

- A) Underlying values and driving motivations of the CSA initiatives**
- B) Social and material challenges which CSA initiatives face**
- C) Institutional barriers to the further development of the CSA initiatives**

Introduction:

My name is Veronika Nováčková and I am writing my master thesis about the role of community-supported agriculture in the Czech food regime. I am studying master's degree at the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna (BOKU) called Environment and Bio-Resources Management. I would like to conduct an interview with you which I am going to record, transcribe it and then analyze. The collected data will be anonymized. I would like to ask you for your consent with the recording.

Introductory question:

- Why are you engaged in the CSA community in the Czech Republic?
 - What is the role of KPZ koalice in the Czech movement?
- *In the first part of this interview, I am going to ask you about the underlying values and driving motivations of CSA initiative in the Czech Republic, after that, I would like to discuss with you the challenges which these initiatives face.*

A) Characterization of CSA initiatives

- Can you explain (what is CSA) and how do CSA initiatives differ from traditional agriculture models?
- How many people are usually involved in CSA initiative?
- Are there different types of CSA initiatives in the Czech Republic? How would you describe them?
- How are the costs of running a CSA initiative distributed, and how are prices determined for customers?
- What methods do CSA initiatives use to ensure their products are of high quality?
- What are some of the benefits of participating in a CSA initiative, both for customers and for the local community?
- How are deliveries or pickups organized, and how often do customers receive their produce?
- How do CSA initiatives ensure that their farming practices are environmentally sustainable?

B) Underlying values and driving motivations of the CSA initiatives

- What inspired you to get involved with CSA initiatives, and what motivates you to continue this work?
- What do you see as the core values underlying CSA initiatives in Czechia, and how do these values guide your work?
- In your opinion, what are some of the key benefits of CSA initiatives for farmers, consumers, and communities in Czechia?
- How do CSA initiatives align with broader social and environmental goals, such as sustainable agriculture and food justice?
- How do CSA initiatives relate to the concepts of food sovereignty and food security?
- How do you measure the impact of CSA initiatives, and what metrics do you use to track success?

C) Social and material challenges which CSA initiatives face

- What are some of the biggest social challenges that CSA initiatives face in Czechia, and how do they impact the ability of these initiatives to thrive and grow?
 - How is it in Prague? Does it differ from the rest of the Czech Republic?
- What are some of the most significant material challenges facing CSA initiatives in Czechia, such as access to land and space, resources, or climate conditions?

- How do CSA initiatives in Czechia balance economic viability with social and environmental goals, and what strategies do they use to promote financial sustainability?
- How do CSA initiatives in Czechia address issues of food waste and food insecurity, and what role do they play in promoting a more sustainable and just food system?
- How do CSA initiatives in Czechia navigate issues of social equity and inclusion, and what strategies do they use to ensure that their services are accessible to all members of the community?
- What are some of the most successful examples of CSA initiatives in Czechia, and what factors have contributed to their success?
- How do CSA initiatives in Czechia respond to changing market conditions and consumer demands, and how do they adapt their services to meet these changing needs?
- How do CSA initiatives respond to different social and economic crises such as COVID, inflation and so on?

D) Institutional barriers to the further development of the CSA initiatives

- How do regulatory frameworks in Czechia impact the development of CSA initiatives, and what changes could be made to these frameworks to better support CSA initiatives?
 - How is it in Prague? Does it differ from the rest of the Czech Republic?
- Do CSA initiatives receive any institutional support? How does it work and what are their institutional links?
- What role do policymakers and government agencies play in shaping the development of CSA initiatives in Czechia?
- What institutional barriers do CSA initiatives in Czechia face, and how do these barriers impact their ability to grow and thrive?
- How do issues of funding and financing impact the ability of CSA initiatives to develop and expand in Czechia, and what strategies do they use to address these challenges?
- How do CSA initiatives in Czechia collaborate with other actors within the food system, such as farmers, retailers, and consumers, to address institutional barriers and promote the growth of CSA initiatives?
- What policy changes or institutional reforms do you think would be most effective in supporting the further development of CSA initiatives in Czechia?

Closing questions:

- How do you see CSA initiatives evolving in the future, and what role do you see them playing in shaping the food system in Czechia?

- What advice would you give to someone who is interested in getting involved with CSA initiatives in the Czech food regime, either as a farmer or a consumer? What key considerations should they keep in mind?
- I am going to contact some CSA initiatives in Prague, would you recommend me some or potentially provide me some contacts?

Polostrukturovaný rozhovor

Téma: Způsoby výroby a spotřeby založené na hodnotách: Role komunitou podporovaného zemědělství (KPZ) při transformaci třetího českého potravinového režimu

Metoda: kvalitativní, polostrukturovaný rozhovor, nejlépe osobní setkání nebo videohovor (v případě potřeby), délka jednoho rozhovoru cca 60-180 minut; poté přepis a vyhodnocení (kvalitativní obsahová analýza)

Cílová skupina: lidé, kteří jsou součástí KPZ a aktivně se angažují

Výzkumné otázky:

- Jaké jsou základní hodnoty a motivace iniciativ KPZ k transformaci současného českého potravinového režimu?
- Jakým sociálním a materiálním výzvám a institucionálním překážkám čelí iniciativy v oblasti CSA?

Témata rozhovorů:

- A) Základní hodnoty a motivace lidí k participaci na KPZ
- B) Sociální a materiální výzvy, kterým iniciativy KPZ čelí
- C) Institucionální překážky, které brání dalšímu rozvoji KPZ

Úvod:

Jmenuji se Veronika Nováčková a píšu diplomovou práci na téma: Role komunitou podporovaného zemědělství (KPZ) při transformaci třetího českého potravinového režimu. Studuji magisterský obor Environment and Bio – Resources Management na Univerzitě BOKU ve Vídni. Ráda bych s Vámi vedla rozhovor, který si budu nahrávat, následně jej přepíšu a budu analyzovat. Získané údaje budou anonymizovány. Rád bych Vás požádal o souhlas s nahráváním.

Na začátku rozhovoru se Vás budu ptát na základní hodnoty a motivace, které lidé angažující se v iniciativách KPZ sdílí. Dále bych s Vámi ráda probrala výzvy, kterým tyto iniciativy čelí.

A) Základní hodnoty a motivace lidí k participaci na KPZ

- Co Vás inspirovalo k tomu, abyste se zapojil/a do KPZ? Co Vás motivuje k tomu se v KPZ dále angažovat?
- Jaké jsou podle Vašeho názoru hodnoty, na nichž jsou KPZ iniciativy v ČR založeny? Jak se tyto hodnoty propisují do praxe?

- Jaké jsou podle Vás hlavní přínosy KPZ iniciativ pro zemědělce a spotřebitele v ČR?
- Jakou roli hraje v KPZ komunita? Pomáhají KPZ iniciativy budovat komunitu? Jakým způsobem?
- Jako roli hrají KPZ iniciativy v transformaci k udržitelnějšímu a spravedlivějšímu potravinovému systému?
- Jak souvisí KPZ s koncepty potravinové suverenity a potravinové bezpečnosti?
- Jaké jsou podle Vás kritéria úspěchu pro KPZ iniciativy?
- Jaké KPZ iniciativy jsou podle Vás v ČR úspěšné? Jaké faktory přispěly k jejich úspěchu?

B) Sociální a materiální výzvy, kterým iniciativy KPZ čelí

- Jakým výzvám čelí KPZ iniciativy v Česku a jakým způsobem tyto výzvy ovlivňují jejich schopnost fungovat a prosperovat? A jak se toto případně změnilo v důsledku krizí, jimž v posledních letech čelíme?
 - o Jakým společenským výzvám čelí KPZ iniciativy v ČR? Jakým způsobem to ovlivňuje schopnost těchto iniciativ prosperovat a růst?
 - o Jakým materiálním výzvám čelí KPZ iniciativy v ČR? Např. klimatické podmínky, kvalita půdy, nedostatek vody, přístup k půdě...
- Jak KPZ iniciativy reagují na sociální a ekonomické krize, jako např. COVID, inflace, atd.?
- Jaké strategie používají KPZ iniciativy k podpoře finanční udržitelnosti?
- Jak KPZ v ČR vyvažují ekonomickou životaschopnost se sociálními a environmentálními cíli?

C) Institucionální překážky, které brání dalšímu rozvoji KPZ

- Jak rozvoj iniciativ KPZ ovlivňuje stát a jeho instituce, legislativa, politické vedení? Došlo v této oblasti v posledních letech k nějakým změnám či reformám?
 - o Jak ovlivňují regulační rámce/legislativa v ČR rozvoj iniciativ KPZ? Jaké legislativní změny by podpořily rozvoj KPZ?
 - o Dostávají KPZ iniciativy nějakou institucionální podporu? Jakým způsobem funguje?
- Jakým institucionálním překážkám čelí KPZ iniciativy v ČR? Jakým způsobem ovlivňují jejich schopnost růst a prosperovat?
- Jaké politické změny nebo institucionální reformy by podle Vás byly nejučinnější pro podporu dalšího rozvoje KPZ iniciativ v ČR?
- Jakou roli hrají politikové a státní správa v rozvoji KPZ v ČR?
- Jakým způsobem ovlivňují otázky financování rozvoj KPZ iniciativ v ČR? Dostávají KPZ nějakou finanční podporu od státu nebo od města (nebo jiných grantů)?

Závěrečné otázky

- Jakým způsobem se podle Vás budou KPZ iniciativy vyvíjet v budoucnu?
- Co byste poradil/a někomu, kdo má zájem se zapojit do KPZ v ČR, ať už jako zemědělec nebo spotřebitel?
- Chystám se kontaktovat nějaké KPZ iniciativy v Praze, doporučil/a byste mi nějaké? Popřípadě poskytl/a kontakt?

Appendix B: The Informed Consent Form in Czech

Informovaný souhlas s účastí ve výzkumném projektu a se zpracováním osobních údajů

Informace o výzkumném projektu:

Výzkumný projekt Food Alternatives (potravinové alternativy) je společným výzkumem dvou rakouských univerzit: Univerzity Boku ve Vídni a Univerzity v Innsbrucku. Jeho cílem je porozumět potravinovým a zemědělským systémům ve třech různých zemích, Švýcarsku, Argentině a v České republice, ze sociologického, geografického a politologického hlediska. V expertním rozhovoru nás zajímají především Vaše názory na aktéry, současné trendy a dlouhodobý vývoj v potravinovém a zemědělském režimu v České republice.

Projekt Food Alternatives probíhá v letech 2021–2025 a je financován Rakouským vědeckým fondem (FWF) částkou 1,2 milionu EUR. Projekt zkoumá potenciál malých a středně velkých iniciativ změnit zdola potravinový a zemědělský režim, ve kterém dominují konkurenčně a na zisk zaměřené globální řetězce. Cílem výzkumu je analyzovat tyto iniciativy z hlediska toho, jak fungují a jak ovlivňují moc podniků a státní struktury v dominantním potravinovém režimu.

V rámci první projektové fáze proběhnou ve všech třech zemích expertní rozhovory za účelem lepšího pochopení národního zemědělského a potravinového režimu. Za tímto účelem vedeme rozhovory s odborníky a odbornicemi z politiky, byznysu, občanské společnosti, vědy a výzkumu. Rozhovory jsou nahrávány, přepisovány a anonymně vyhodnocovány pomocí kvalitativní obsahové analýzy. Nejdůležitější poznatky budou posléze shrnuty do výroků, které budete mít možnost posoudit na nepovinné následné schůzce.

Veronika Nováčková píše jako studentka oboru Environment and Bio-Resources Management na Univerzitě Boku ve Vídni v rámci tohoto výzkumného projektu diplomovou práci na téma: Role komunitou podporovaného zemědělství (KPZ) při transformaci třetího českého potravinového režimu.

Máte-li jakékoli dotazy týkající se tohoto výzkumu, kontaktujte prosím osobu odpovědnou za tento výzkumný projekt, Christinu Plank na emailové adrese christina.plank@boku.ac.at, nebo

výzkumnici Michaelu Pixovou na emailové adrese: michaela.pixova@boku.ac.at nebo Veroniku Nováčkovou na emailové adrese: veronika.novackova@students.boku.ac.at.

Informace o účastnících/účastníkovi výzkumu:

jméno a příjmení:

telefon:

e-mail:

Prohlášení

Já níže podepsaný/-á potvrzuji, že

- a) jsem se seznámil/-a s informacemi o cílech a průběhu výše popsaného výzkumného projektu (dále též jen „výzkum“);
- b) dobrovolně souhlasím s účastí své osoby v tomto výzkumu;
- c) rozumím tomu, že se mohu kdykoli rozhodnout ve své účasti na výzkumu nepokračovat a svůj souhlas s použitím svých osobních údajů odvolat bez udání důvodů a bez jakýchkoliv nepříznivých následků pro mne;
- d) jsem srozuměn/a s tím, že jakékoliv užití a zveřejnění dat a výstupů vzešlých z výzkumu nezakládá můj nárok na jakoukoliv odměnu či náhradu, tzn. že veškerá oprávnění k užití a zveřejnění dat a výstupů vzešlých z výzkumu poskytují bezúplatně.

Zároveň prohlašuji, že

- a) souhlasím se zveřejněním anonymizovaných / pseudonymizovaných dat a výstupů vzešlých z výzkumu a s jejich dalším využitím;
- b) souhlasím se zpracováním a uchováním osobních a citlivých údajů v rozsahu v tomto informovaném souhlasu uvedených ze strany Univerzity Boku (BOKU - University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna), adresou Peter-Jordan-Straße 76/I, 1190 Vídeň, Rakousko, a to pro účely zpracování dat vzešlých z výzkumu, pro účely případného kontaktování z důvodu zpracování dat vzešlých z výzkumu či z důvodu nabídky účasti na obdobných akcích a pro účely evidence a archivace; a s tím, že tyto osobní údaje mohou být poskytnuty subjektům oprávněným k výkonu kontroly projektu, v jehož rámci výzkum realizován;

Výše uvedená svolení a souhlasy poskytují dobrovolně na dobu neurčitou až do odvolání a zavazují se je neodvolat bez závažného důvodu spočívajícího v podstatné změně okolností.

Potvrzuji, že jsem převzal/a podepsaný stejnopis tohoto informovaného souhlasu.

Místo a datum

Podpis účastníky / účastnice výzkumu

Podpis výzkumnice