



The employer representative system in the agricultural sector. Origin, theoretical framework and influences on the agrarian employer associations

SUMMARY: 1. Introduction. – 2. The employer representative system in agriculture. – 3. Particular origins of employer associations. – 3.1. An attempt at a theoretical reclassification of the agricultural employer representative system. – 3.2 The (in)adequate representation of employer interests. – 4. The effects of trade union activity of agricultural representation associations on the world of work. – 4.1 The influence of the associative world on the contractual system: the agricultural workers 20 January 1977 CCNL [Italian collective bargaining agreement] (referral). – 4.2 The influence of the associative world on the contractual system: from the 20 January 1977 CCNL to the last renewal of the contract (cont.). – 5. Two collective bargaining agreements and a single criterion of representativeness – 6. Some issues still unresolved – 7. A possible “main method”.

1. Introduction

A first element to clarify in order to understand the peculiar primary sector is the concept of agriculture itself. It should not be considered as the simple combination of working of the land and care of the herds, but as a "kaleidoscope" of activity that ranges from the classic production of edible goods to services, even to the creation of *public goods*.

Considering that agriculture has been described within a broader production context, a *second important aspect is clarified*. If, in fact, the cultivated/reared agricultural good is subsequently also

transformed and/or "assembled" with other agronomic products and, finally, sold on the market, *the agricultural production becomes a single phase of a production process defined as "agro-industrial"*.

In fact, modern agriculture is "now to be considered as a manufacturing sector" thanks to the improvement of the relationships between the participants of the so-called "agro-food supply chains", where the moment of cultivation and breeding are the initial stages of a long production process that passes through the processing and food industries, reaching the "organised large-scale retailing" (OLR) that sells the finished product. This chain of production - created thanks to intense and numerous economic relationships between the various subjects that make up the aforementioned supply chains - has long been authoritatively defined as "*Agribusiness*".