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Community supported agriculture membership: The benefits of spousal involvement

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Abstract

Fresh vegetables originating from alternative food networks (AFNs) are an increasingly popular choice all over the world. Being part of an AFN frequently redefines consumption and participation of family members in food-related activities. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a type of AFN, providing increased access to produce in a form of risk-sharing model between farmers and consumers, which at the same time influences organization of household resources. Thus, not only the given member of a CSA, but also his/her spousal activities in household processes should be taken in account. It is clear that entering into CSA significantly affects lifestyles and frequently requires a great deal of adaptation, possibly leading to a crisis of whether to stay within the CSA or cease membership. The objective of this study was to reveal how spouses influence CSA membership. Using an explorative design, this study has identified three emerging patterns of spousal influence: coherent, integrative and neutral/antagonistic. The spousal influence on CSA membership may represent partner activities regarding food issues but also has an effect on food preparation and culinary choices at home. Our findings suggest that membership in CSA presents challenges and thus spousal support is crucial in the long term. As a consequence, spousal influence should be examined in relation to CSA participation. Inconveniences associated with CSA membership could be avoided by providing more information about the importance of spousal support.

KEYWORDS

alternative food networks, community supported agriculture, consumption, local food, spousal influence, spousal support

1 | INTRODUCTION

Consumers increasingly desire natural foods (Euromonitor International, 2017; Gagliardi, 2015; Malota, Gyulavári, & Bogáromi, 2019), and one possible way of achieving this can be found within the rapid growth in sales of alternative food networks (AFNs). Some consumers associate high-quality food with the direct consumer–farmer relationship which serves their desires to purchase tasty, healthy, locally grown food (see Jarosz, 2008; Zoll et al., 2018). Not surprisingly, there is a significant interest in relation to the health implications of local foods, social relations uniting producers and consumers or what activities are behind AFN involvement (Bingen, Sage, & Sirieix, 2011; Jarosz, 2008; Pascucci, Dentoni, Lombardi, & Cembalo, 2016; Salois, 2012; Sarmiento, 2017; Tregear, 2011).

The consumer–farmer relationship is best characterized by the integration of food production and consumption as a feature of AFN, including such forms as community gardens, farmers' markets and community supported agriculture (CSA) (Tregear, 2011). These relatively new organizational forms seem to satisfy consumer needs, ensuring direct access to produce: freshly harvested and local products; free of synthetic fertilizers or pesticides or genetically modified seeds. As a growing economic and cultural niche market, this parallel channel to mainstream consumption has been steadily increasing in number both in the United States and Europe (European CSA Research Group, 2016; Goodman & Goodman, 2009; Low et al., 2015).

Being part of an AFN frequently redefines consumption and participation of the family members in food-related activities (Opitz, Specht, Piorr, Siebert, & Zasada, 2017; Uribe, Winham, & Wharton, 2012). Thus, in addition to the involvement of CSA's members, which is largely the focus of the relevant literature, his/her family should also be taken into account (Uribe et al., 2012; Wharton, Hughner, MacMillan, & Dumitrescu, 2015; Wut & Chou, 2013). Choosing CSA as a source of healthy food provides a great deal of information about the consumer's attitude toward food and its source, while the consumption of items conveys much more information about the type and extent of the cooperation between household members (see Birtalan, Rácz, & Bárdos, 2019; Cone & Myhre, 2000; Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007; Uribe et al., 2012; Wharton et al., 2015).

CSA is one of the AFN possibilities in which the farmers provide freshly harvested vegetables to be shared weekly with the members, and customers buy shares for a season by paying a fee in advance. By increasing access to fresh food produced in organic farming or in horticulture, CSA membership has a role in promoting health (Allen, Rossi, Woods, & Davis, 2017; Cohen, Gearhart, & Garland, 2012; Kis, 2014; Rossi, Woods, & Allen, 2017; Wharton et al., 2015). From a consumption point of view, purchasing from CSA can minimize dysfunctional searching or frustration due to information overload, which can occur when shopping for groceries. First, this risk-sharing partnership takes away the purchase-related stimuli and decreases the pressure of decision making for the primary food shopper, and in addition, because of organic and agro-ecological practices, unknown or uncertain amounts of products can also be considered and handled among participants and family members in practice (Cohen et al., 2012; Galt, Soelen Kim, Munden-Dixon, Christensen, & Bradley, 2019; Landis et al., 2010; Russell & Zepeda, 2008).

This study is part of a broader effort to understand the unique set of aspects which explain why and how CSA members are often able to accept strict and serious commitments—called CSA inconveniences (Laird, 1998)—and to maintain their membership for many years. The objective of this study has been to reveal how the spouse of the primary food shopper influences CSA membership.

2 | THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Household consumption relies on spousal decisions which may often conflict with each other as family members often do not share the same purchasing motives, selection criteria or preferences of product. The home food production chain begins with deciding "what to eat", and continues with purchasing, preparation, consumption and cleaning up (disposal) of food, although in the case of alternative sources, "what to eat" may bring changes in family eating habits (Uribe et al., 2012). Choosing an organic, fresh food alternative source from the local environment could consume a significant time and also requires a significant amount of attention due to the variety and amount of fresh vegetables, or due to reconsideration of initial consumer dispositions or perceptions (see Bingen et al., 2011; Scholderer & Grunert, 2005). The alternative path from the farm to the consumers' table is short but could be complex, especially when producers and consumers share farming risks (Hayden & Buck, 2012).

The typical CSA consumer is described in the literature as one with definite motivations for involvement with local food, being able to purchase high-quality, healthy products and/or with environmental concerns (Cone & Myhre, 2000; Lang, 2010; Pole & Gray, 2013; Shi, Cheng, Lei, Wen, & Merrifield, 2011; Zoll et al., 2018). Members usually have higher levels of education and higher incomes, and women participate more often (e.g., Cohen et al., 2012; Cone & Myhre, 2000; Kane & Lohr, 1996; Lang, 2010; Minaker et al., 2014; Samoggia, Perazzolo, Kocsis, & Prete, 2019; Uribe et al., 2012).

CSA provides predetermined boxes of unprocessed and freshly harvested products on a weekly basis, mostly satisfying the needs of a family. This purchasing interaction is fixed for a season by a contract, and actual goods are received by the member almost every week with only yearly influence over the content of the CSA boxes (Balázs, Pataki, & Lazányi, 2016). Due to timing members do not know in advance the amount of food they will receive as this depends on organic farming methods, farming practices, weather extremes and other circumstances such as the local workforce (Cohen et al., 2012; Perez, Allen, & Brown, 2003; Uribe et al., 2012; Vasquez, Sherwood, Larson, & Story, 2017). Meal planning (usually the first part of the consumption phase) is possible only after the harvested vegetables have been received at the weekly pick-up times and is influenced strongly by the actual CSA box: the type, amount and lifetime of the harvested produce. This therefore increases food preparation time and limits the selection of specific items, although it is more settled versus utilizing a smaller set of staple foods as with conventional market purchases (Goland, 2002; Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007). However, despite the advantages of participation, the turnover is high; it may reach as much as 40% in its formative year, possibly due to unexpected outcomes and inconveniences (Galt et al., 2019; Goland, 2002; Lang, 2005, 2010; Strohlic & Crispin, 2004).

The unprocessed CSA produced, and its storage requirements are linked closely to food utilization within the home (Landis et al., 2010). The 1-week pick-up period during the CSA season represents a challenge for the handling of harvested produce since their properties influence cooking practices. Joining an AFN—and particularly a CSA—forces members to change their food processing, meal preparation practices, eating or cooking habits (see Cohen et al., 2012; Izumi et al., 2018; Minaker et al., 2014; Rossi et al., 2017; Russell & Zepeda, 2008; Vasquez et al., 2017; Wharton et al., 2015). It seems members develop

TABLE 1 CSA membership and consumption stages

	1. Purchase	2. Planning meal	3. Preparation	4. Eating	5. Waste and disposal
Objectives	Contracted seasonal period	Weekly basis	Freshly harvested, unprocessed food	Vegetable in selected box-size	Unpackaged food
Challenge	Pick-up times per week	Actual CSA box 1-week period	Amount and variety of vegetables	Vegetable dishes home-meal	Avoiding loss of own share

Source: Based on Grunert (2003); Scholderer and Grunert (2005).

preferences towards vegetables and experience greater motivation to introduce new food types they had not eaten before (Hayden & Buck, 2012; Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007). Thus, there is a higher fundamental vegetable consumption than they would otherwise attempt (Cohen et al., 2012; Minaker et al., 2014). Since members feel guilty when unprocessed products go to waste, they try to avoid the loss of their own share and to reduce waste at earlier stages of consumption (Hayden & Buck, 2012; Uribe et al., 2012).

The route from the farm to consumer use is determined by CSA as the farmers' decisions, weather and so forth, and thus consumers have to cope with a degree of unpredictability in their consumption habits, requiring significant attention, extra work, learning and adaption (see Feagan & Henderson, 2009; Grunert, 2003; Scholderer & Grunert, 2005). Table 1 summarizes the main features regarding CSA membership and consumption stages.

Participation in a CSA community may significantly change the food shopping habits of the primary food shopper of the family, and also often impacts on the food consumption of the whole household (Kis, 2014; Russell & Zepeda, 2008; Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007). It is evident that the family has a strong effect on individuals' healthy eating, sustainable consumption or eating local (Bingen et al., 2011; Neulinger & Simon, 2011; Salazar, Oerlemans, & Stroe-Biezen, 2013). Not surprisingly, family involvement in food preparation, shared approaches in regard to CSA vegetables use among participants, and family members are important elements of experiences of belonging to a CSA (Uribe et al., 2012; Wharton et al., 2015).

As family consumption preferences cannot be predicted by individual family members' buying preferences alone, spousal influence on particular consumption is crucial (see Ashraf, 2009; Grønhøj & Thøgersen, 2011; Menasco & Curry, 1989; Webster, 2000; Wut & Chou, 2013). Nevertheless, the literature body does not provide comprehensive information on the influence of family members, especially spouses on CSA membership. To address this gap in the research, the objective of this study has been to explore spousal influence on CSA membership, and to discuss whether long-term membership would have been possible without the spouse's active support.

3 | METHODOLOGY

3.1 | CSA in Hungary

CSAs were practically unknown in Hungary a decade ago. The first 3 CSA farms were founded in 2011, and 15 of the existing 16 CSAs provide fruits and vegetables as their main products (Tudatos Vásárlók Egyesülete, 2019). The majority of them are primarily concentrated around the largest cities in Hungary (Réthy & Dezsény, 2013). The number of members ranges from a dozen people up to 60 per CSA, who are primarily urban, conscious consumers with higher levels of education and in most cases a family (Balázs et al., 2016; Réthy & Dezsény, 2013; Samoggia et al., 2019). The Hungarian CSAs fed approximately 1,800 people in 2015 based on the first European-wide census of CSA groups (European CSA Research Group, 2016). Although CSAs have had only rudimentary success in Hungary, data shows an approximate 20% increase in the market share of food products in Hungary between 2014 and 2017 (Tudatos Vásárlók Egyesülete, 2017, 2018).

3.2 | Participants and data collection

An explorative research design based on qualitative methods has been applied since little was known about how spouses influence the length of CSA membership (see Sutton & Austin, 2015). In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 35 (4 male, 31 female) current or previous members of several CSAs operating in Hungary. Interviewees were recommended by CSA farmers and by other interviewees (snowball technique) and were also contacted via an email list of CSAs. Anyone could apply, but a strong relation to their CSA membership was also considered during recruitment. The length of CSA membership varied among them: 6 were first year (beginners) and 29 had been a CSA member for at least 2 years (advanced members). Thirty-one participants were in households comprised of couples (see details in Table 2).

All semi-structured qualitative interviews used open-ended questions. Interviews took between one and two-and-a-half hours. These took place within the interviewee's own environment. During the interviews the way, timing and circumstances of participation were

TABLE 2 Type of CSA participation among interviewees

		Household type	
Type of CSA participation	Total	couple	single
beginner (first-year membership)	6	6	0
advanced member (at least second-year experiences)	29	25	4
Total	35	31	4

TABLE 3 Interview Topics

General personal preferences of purchasing and home-meal processing
Circumstances of entry to the particular CSA
Participating in CSA (experiences, associations)
Their own member situation at CSA
Home routines due to membership
Opinion of other members
CSA from outside
Other: The farmer, inconveniences, present, future and so forth

explored, including a description of their own household and the introduction of the way participants previously organized their shopping and food processing (before joining CSA). The participants' view of the particular CSA and of its members, and of their own membership was also discovered including how CSA looks from the point of view of conventional consumers. Finally, participants were asked about their opinion of farmers, the CSA related inconveniences and perspectives of CSAs in general. The topics of the interviews are summarized in Table 3. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed prior to the analysis of the data.

3.3 | Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used as processing method, which "tends to provide less of a rich description of the data overall, and more of a detailed analysis of certain aspects of the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 12). This type of analysis is a widely used qualitative analytic method within psychology and is usually adopted when existing theory or research literature on a phenomenon is limited: it goes bottom-up from the coded interview data and, in this manner, is helpful in theory-building (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke, & Braun, 2017). Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within an entire data set (interviews). Codes and analysis should be an accurate reflection of the content of the entire data set, thus patterns were examined, organized and identified from actual sentences and phrases in the text. Based on this data-driven, descriptive and interpretative coding at the conclusion of the process, specific patterns have clearly emerged related to the primary food shopper's spousal influence on CSA membership. As different codes may be combined to form an overarching pattern, three main spousal influences on CSA membership have emerged.

4 | RESULTS

Although CSA provides some enjoyment in the sensory experience of eating such as discovering the taste of fresh seasonal food, or new culinary experiences by offering meals cooked from scratch, it certainly creates pragmatic inconveniences on the consumer experience resulting in an effect on the interactions between spouses in regard to CSA membership.

Even long-term members mentioned that the weekly fixed pick-up time in a season-long contract period, time restraints of preparation processes and increased frequency of home vegetable dishes make CSA membership challenging. In almost all cases, the primary food shopper expressed the need for the supportive spouse to take part in CSA (e.g., by picking up vegetables, food preparation), and talked about expectations, activities and interests of his/her spouse in regard to CSA as a part of the interviews.

4.1 | How can the spouse influence CSA membership?

The results of this study provide an insight into the patterns of spousal influence related to CSA food consumption. Regardless of the form of membership and household type, most of the interviewees have had a large number of CSA experiences regarding the role of their spouses which enabled a detailed understanding of spousal influence on CSA membership. Throughout the interviews a rich picture of spousal influence emerged, as the role of interactions between spouses is significant during the whole food consumption process. The identified spousal interactions demonstrated an important impact on the maintenance of CSA membership. In order to evaluate and explain patterns of spousal interactions, quotes from the interviews are introduced below to illustrate interpretations.

Three patterns of spousal influence on CSA membership have emerged and have been identified relating to the following consumption stages: (a) logistics and purchase within CSA activities, (b) meal selection, (c) food preparation and cooking or (d) waste and disposal practices as summarized in Table 4.

4.1.1 | Coherent spousal influence pattern

In the pattern of the coherent spousal influence, both members of the couple are committed to taking part in the CSA with common and equal decisions about purchasing and consumption: "We talked, saying we should have a farmer who works for us all year round" (Interview 3, beginner). These spouses are concerned about what and where the product is purchased: "In fact, in relation to our shopping habits we have become more sceptical - my husband and me too" (Interview 27, advanced member). They support each other mentally and physically throughout the whole consumption process, for example, while organizing pick-up (even replacing each other) or storing: "Usually we go for vegetables alternately, so it is also completely shared that when vegetables come who picks it up is the one for whom it is most convenient" (Interview 27, advanced member). Members of the couple are equally involved and affected: "We have an established system, we have designed storage boxes for this [CSA vegetables]" (Interview 24, advanced member).

TABLE 4 Type of spousal influence patterns in relation to CSA consumption stages

	Coherent pattern	Integrative pattern	Neutral/Antagonistic pattern
CSA logistics, purchase	Common task	Decision of the primary food shopper and a supportive spouse	Decision of the primary food shopper, but spouse cannot reduce the challenges: different food sources and purchase
Meal selection	Common creativity and learning	Spouse's confidence in the primary food shopper, spouse's preferences taken into account	Different food preferences and tastes
Preparation and cooking	Common openness including new diets, solutions	Proactivity of the primary food shopper for acceptance: combination of flavours, blending, masking vegetables	Parallel preparation, duplicated cooking
Waste and disposal	Rare, common guilt	OR Social proactivity of the primary food shopper: sharing vegetables in order to minimize loss, disposal by social events	Waste and guilt

This kind of involvement maintains common openness and flexibility regarding meal selection. CSA membership adds new common routines to their family life, and also stimulates new habits/behaviours regarding preparation processes or eating practices: "I guess we do not lead an average household. This applies not only to me, but also to my husband, because we look for something unique in everything, we look for environmentally friendliness and I think it affects every aspect of our lives" (Interview 13, advanced member). Consumption of raw food or more vegetable dishes (with a decrease of meat consumption) are accepted culinary choices for these couples: "It is such a major principle in our lives that every day we have fruit and vegetables" (Interview 6, advanced member). CSA responsibilities are shared as well as experiencing the joy that comes from a shared activity: "This is very good for us, we like all of this" (Interview 3, beginner). Furthermore, both members of the couple feel guilty when their vegetables go to waste: "and we prepare the vegetables even when rotten. Usually we both get annoyed when we see something in the fridge that is …" (Interview 2, advanced member). These members adjust their lives to the demands of CSA and are open to renew their membership in the long run.

4.1.2 | Integrative spousal influence pattern

In the integrative spousal influence pattern, one member of the couple is the main motivator and actor for entering the CSA: "Okay, obviously there are a lot of these green aspects that I'm trying to enforce. I live in a family, we have two kids, I have a wife. My wife is open to these greening experiments to varying degrees, and she has pretty much got used to it" (Interview 5, advanced member). For the primary food shopper, the CSA provides an alternative to obtain vegetable produce from a reliable source beyond reproach: "which I know comes from a safe source, or at least I can cook healthily with it" (Interview 15, beginner). In the case of these couples, the spouse is open to the prepared family meals differing in preparation or differing in ingredients as compared with those consumed earlier: "My husband is the consumer. And the quality inspector: you can cook this another time as well, or, well, it was not bad, but maybe let's not repeat this too often" (Interview 10, advanced member). The spouse behaves as a supportive and cooperative partner who supports CSA membership. He/she gives positive feedback: "When we got the first box, I remember that my husband took a picture. It was so beautiful that he actually took a picture and immediately posted on Facebook that we are already consumers, [and promoted] come on it's beautiful and delicious" (Interview 33, advanced member) and participates in some consumption stages: "If there is a party, or if we have to set off and I have to cook, then he helps to clean them [vegetables], but he doesn't cook" (Interview 29, advanced member).

The position of the primary food shopper is crucial since they may wield significant control over the types of foods eaten (Bove, Sobal, & Rauschenbach, 2003). The preferences of the spouse are taken into account by preparation and cooking at least through sensory acceptance of the practices. Interviewees talked about practices in order to influence the taste of her/his spouse: "I know what we both love, what I can slip into the meal, what he still eats" (Interview 9, advanced member) Accordingly, the primary food shopper should be proactive while feeding their spouse/family with CSA food. The most typical methods applied by them relate to the combinations of flavours, for example, vegetable pancakes, smoothies and blending (blended vegetable soup): "I do not fight with them: blending, some roasted bread, and bon appétit" (Interview 19, advanced member) or even to the masking of unknown or non-preferred tastes with other tastes (in order to change perception by the spouse or children): "And I put the fennel in, and they did not notice it" (Interview 17, advanced member).

In the integrative spousal influence pattern, participation expands spouses' horizons regarding sharing food, as a number of interviewees reported. If CSA vegetables are not the right fit for the members of the family, or the primary food shopper feels the quantity of vegetables creates too much pressure, they frequently try to reduce the excess amount of the products by giving away food directly: "Well, I'd rather cook them, and I'm trying to distribute." (Interview 8, advanced member), or in the form of social events: "And then we had an idea to invite friends for playing board

games and make a dinner. Thus, the pressure [of the amount] is resolved" (Interview 24, advanced member). It also seems that if the integrative pattern functions properly, it can build up consensus between spouses regarding CSA membership: "And I think for sure, this has helped a lot in his health. And then we got used to it" (Interview 33, advanced member). The supporting partner's attitude and behaviour helps to reduce the tension of the new practice in the kitchen including schedules, changing ingredients and new tastes: "My husband repeatedly voices that this is fine, and that's a good feeling, and I think it [CSA food] has a big role and it has a family role, I think." (Interview 15, beginner). In integrative spousal influence on CSA membership, both the social support of the spouse and the proactivity of the primary food shopper have been shown to be important.

4.1.3 | Neutral/Antagonistic spousal influence pattern

In some cases, especially by members who are uncertain as to whether to renew membership, CSA membership provides only a second food source in addition to the earlier and mostly conventional family food consumption source. There are similarities in this pattern to the integrative spousal influence that one member of the couple is the main motivator of entering the CSA membership, but in this case the spouse cannot reduce the challenges of the new situation coming from the CSA participation and he/she does not want to change his/her food attitude, food habits or food behaviour: "Since he was so negative about the whole thing, he said that he did not need it and I think that also contributed to some degree in staying in my comfort zone and exiting [from the CSA]" (Interview 31, advanced member). Conflicts also enhance uncertainties towards culinary products, thus the initial expectations of the food shopper are lessened (Cong, Olsen, & Tuu, 2013). If the diverse meal preferences cannot be changed into a compromise and the couple are not able to find a common solution, two different food shopping and preparation processes have to be handled in parallel: "Well, tell this to a man: okay, we eat vegetables every day, and you eat the same vegetables every day, because it's healthy. So, I could not manage to keep the system running" (Interview 31, advanced member). Interviewees talked about spouses, who reject the new food source and insist on the earlier habits: "So if you bring this CSA system home and you don't have a partnership or you don't have enough partnerships or they laugh at you: oh, this stupid thing again …" (Interview 11, advanced member). Partners' preferences result in conflicts regarding the food and are more influential than the initial desire to take part in CSA. The CSA purchase decision turns into an individual project parallel to the family system of consumption: "I cannot solve any of them [pick-up times] because of the children, because there the husband cannot, or does not want to help - this alone is difficult to solve" (Interview 10, advanced member) and the duplication of processes (purchase, preparing, eating) stimulates an exit from the CSA: "But the girl wanted it, the boy didn't, and the girl didn't want this constant conflict: that is ok, then we should stop [leave CSA]" (Interview 12, advanced member).

5 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Growing interest in the origins of food and food sources creates opportunities for short supply chains, such as direct purchases from farmers. Due to the features of a CSA model (pick-up times, organic farming, seasonality, seasonal contract and so forth) participation means more than just a single purchasing decision, it has a significant effect on every stage of the food consumption process. According to this study, whereas grocery purchases are perceived to be part of consumers' everyday life, CSA-related food consumption practices require spousal interaction, communication and consensus. Beyond personal factors like attitude, knowledge and behaviour, the influence of the family environment (e.g., spouse's/household decision making) was shown to be critical for the creation of a stable and fruitful CSA membership. While the majority of the local food systems literature considers AFN membership from the primary food shopper's point of view (see Galt et al., 2019; Goland, 2002; Hayden & Buck, 2012; Landis et al., 2010; Lang, 2005; Russell & Zepeda, 2008; Zepeda & Li, 2006), this study has aimed to provide an insight into the role of spousal influence on CSA.

This qualitative-based research orientation proved to be useful in helping to highlight the depth and variance of the spouse's influence. Our research results show how a spouse has an impact on purchase decision making—particularly in CSA—and how new domains and forms of cooperation or conflicts may develop in a couple regarding food issues. Although the primary food shopper's purchasing attitude leads to CSA membership, presence or lack of social support of the spouse—time and effort wise—has an influence on every consumption stage. The patterns of spousal influence affect food preparation procedures and/or culinary choices, and some partners may cause conflicts, while others may be the facilitator of maintaining CSA membership. Different spousal influences have shown different experiences regarding CSA consumption stages.

Results show that spousal interactions regarding CSA membership require increased family time and a change in family efforts or decision making: picking-up, cooking, preparation and storing CSA vegetables has an impact on the organization of the family schedule and also influences family interaction. This study shows how and to what extent spouses become involved in the process of taking part in a CSA and how it influences CSA membership. The coherent spousal pattern is characterized by a pleasant social atmosphere; as the integrative pattern on the primary food shopper rearranges her/his preparation/cooking practices or strengthens the social dimensions of food consumption, whereas the neutral/antagonistic spousal pattern frequently means duplication in the overall food consumption processes (using CSA together with earlier, regular food sources).

Even if only one spouse is interested in CSA membership, the support of the partner is required for a successful and long-term participation. The longer the CSA participation lasts, the more spouses

tend to tune into each other's norms and to converge regarding food choice, resulting in a possible effect on the level of involvement in CSA (Bove et al., 2003). While the neutral/antagonistic spousal pattern stimulates an exit from the CSA, the coherent spousal influence pattern stimulates long-term membership. If the integrative spousal influence pattern on CSA membership works properly, it also can facilitate long-term membership.

These findings mirror those noted by some CSA studies, as the role of family in membership is important (Birtalan et al., 2019; Uribe et al., 2012; Wharton et al., 2015; Wut & Chou, 2013). Overall, these results are fairly consistent with the current literature, as consumers who are committed to eating local require important adaptations, implying conflicting values and attributes and thus eating local is a relevant setting for exploring the issue of insights concerning consumer reactions when facing difficulties (Bingen et al., 2011).

The findings of the study point to specific strategies which can be used by CSA farmers and managers to increase retention rates. The data obtained suggest that many problems associated with involvement and staying in a CSA could be avoided by providing more information about how this way of family life operates. If the family or at least both members of the couple attend introductory sessions, the information provided may help them to decide on participation, to organize their lifestyle in a more adequate way and to endure participation for a prolonged period. Results suggest that social- and knowledge-based support related to CSA activities, such as batch cooking, kitchen techniques, storage tips; social techniques such as distribution and sharing could strengthen the relationship with the community and contribute to an active and stable membership. Repeated informative sessions—both offline and online—may also help to solve tensions and to improve cooperation both within the family and between consumers and producers.

6 | LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES

This study focused only on CSAs, but the results can also contribute to the understanding of similar short food supply systems like box schemes. Entering a CSA significantly affects lifestyle and frequently requires a great deal of adaptation; thus, it may lead to a crisis of whether to stay or to quit participation. As programmes designed to reduce obesity are likely to be effective in a supportive environment, CSA participation is more likely to retain members who reconsider family support for their decision to eat locally (Bingen et al., 2011; Salois, 2012; Story, Kaphingst, Robinson-O'Brien, & Glanz, 2008).

Thus, further research on the social environment seems to be worthwhile, including interactions with family, friends or others in the CSA group in AFNs. This study has dealt with the spousal influence on CSA membership and has not addressed the question of those rules and habits which in general describe spousal decision making, which would be interesting to include in future research.

It is not yet clear how the different types of AFNs can create an extra workload on the family and spouses regarding everyday home practices. This research was only a first step to explore spousal influence in AFNs and should be complemented with other qualitative data collections such as observations of pick-up processes and home food preparations of members of different types of AFNs. Further exploration of the spousal influence on farmers' markets, community gardens and so forth could also contribute to a better understanding of healthy food choices (see Feagan & Morris, 2009; Lucke, Mamo, & Koenigstorfer, 2019). In addition, quantitative data collection regarding household consumption and family decision-making processes in the context of AFNs would be beneficial for the systematic empirical investigation on the subject.

Further limitation of our study is the relatively small, nonrandom, convenience sample which restricted the generalization of our results. Nevertheless, the qualitative-based results were informative and may set the course for the future in CSA studies.

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