

# Synergic strategies in reinforcing the pluralistic paradigm, inclusion and diversity as a catalyst for social sustainability focusing on agribusinesses

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**Abstract:** Addressing social sustainability, gender dynamics, strengthening educational diversity and ensuring inclusive partnership structures are all key components of promoting inclusion, not only in the agricultural sector. Diversity management is a human resource trend based on respect for inclusive culture, gender and ethnic diversity, multifaceted equality or the use of virtual teams under the right working conditions, but when not applied correctly it may produce undesired effects in agribusinesses as well as in other economics sectors. This paper aims to identify effective approaches to setting working conditions used by organisations to promote inclusion, management diversity and the development of social sustainability. The data were obtained through quantitative research using the Computer Assisted Web Interviewing method ( $n = 202$ ) and processed using the chi-square test at a 0.05 significance level as well as through qualitative research involving focus groups ( $n = 10$ ). The study results have demonstrated that investment in diversity education remains crucial. Not only agricultural but also other businesses have begun to use metrics to monitor their diversity and inclusion progress. Organisations are beginning to use artificial intelligence (AI) to remove prejudices in recruitment, identify inequalities in remuneration and ensure inclusion in online communication.

**Keywords:** diversity management; corporate social responsibility; inclusive partnerships; virtual teams; gender; HR processes

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Diversity management is essential for promoting sustainability and inclusion in general, but especially in agricultural organisations (Waldman and Sparr 2023); however, despite its growing social and business importance, the research into diversity in working teams remains inadequate and fragmented (Ponomareva et al. 2022). Diversity management focuses on integrating various employee groups into organisational processes. In agriculture and forestry, it emphasises the effective integration of seasonal and foreign workers, addressing gender inequalities, and promoting intergenerational cooperation. Social sustainability is particularly important, as it influences the well-being of farmers and farm households, the overall state and development of agriculture and rural households, and the participation in overall social governance (Bachev 2017). Social sustainability highlights the quality of the working environment, primarily focusing on decent working conditions, fair wages, equal employment opportunities, and support for rural communities dependent on these sectors in agriculture and forestry. Agricultural sustainability involves balancing economic, environmental, and social factors. In addition to protecting soil, water, and biodiversity, it also addresses social aspects, such as ensuring stable employment and fair working conditions for employees. In the context of agricultural sustainability, the relation between employed labour input, especially family labour input, and the achieved effects in the form of total output value, particularly income from the family farm, is crucial for social sustainability (Czyżewski et al. 2018). Social integration, in the context of agriculture and forestry, primarily refers to the integration of seasonal workers and the creation of an inclusive working environment for all employees. Top management creating a supportive organisational culture and climate is crucial for effective diversity management (Hoang et al. 2022). Diversity management initiatives in organisations tend to focus only on diversity, while basically neglecting an equally important element: organisational unity (Waldman and Sparr 2023) based on an organisational culture embraced by all employees. This is a problem that should be addressed by the management of organisations because diversity and unity represent an organisational paradox in terms of seemingly contradictory but interdependent elements (Chen and Hassan 2022; Hoang et al. 2022; Waldman and Sparr 2023). Waldman and Sparr (2023) identified two organisational strategies to address diversity in all sectors of the economy:

- i) woke,
- ii) integrative.

The woke strategy represents a unilateral approach to diversity, with diversity concerns being viewed without concerns about potentially detrimental effects on unity and slowing down the development of psychological capital in diverse teams. By contrast, integrative strategies activate the benefits of both diversity and unity while neutralising their drawbacks.

Although diversity and diversity management are presented as modern HR trends, these are primarily necessities brought about by demographic trends, constant changes in labour markets and their globalisation. It is precisely demographic development, the specificity of job content and its demanding nature that influence the perception of diversity management and the need for inclusion within agricultural businesses. Through appropriately applied diversity management, human potential can be used, motivation and job performance can be improved, and last but not least, loyalty and willingness to transfer knowledge between generations of employees can be improved, as is also confirmed by the research of Burmeister et al. (2020), Hitka et al. (2021a), Otike et al. (2022). Thus, an appropriate organisational climate based on trust, tolerance and respect should be promoted. A key success factor is effective and open communication within the organisation and the regular review of diversity management in the workplace by monitoring the progress of diversity and inclusion on a regular basis. There is a shortage of skilled labour in agriculture, which is very often solved by hiring workers from other countries. This leads to widening of diverse groups of people in businesses, primarily on ethnic and nationality basis (Gallo et al. 2021). A key priority is to understand the so-called cultural norms in the organisation or new working group which the individual is joining. Cultural sensitivity represents a crucial managerial competency that enables a manager to view differences within the multicultural environment as a source of mutual enrichment (Göl and Erkin 2019; Benuto et al. 2021).

This article aims to identify organisations' effective approaches to setting working conditions for promoting inclusion, diversity management and the development of social sustainability.

In terms of farm management, trade-offs between economic, environmental, and social sustainability are studied, highlighting the need to balance technical efficiency, farmers' commitment to the environment, and contribution to on-farm and community well-being (Sidhoum et al. 2022). In agriculture and forestry, even

more in the current era of negative demographic trends, shortage of skilled labour, high inflation and rising prices of agricultural production, it is necessary to emphasise the development of HR activities, even in small agricultural businesses and farms (Ybema et al. 2020). Strengthening diversity and improving inclusion to increase social responsibility, including setting effective internal communication, has been confirmed not only by the survey conducted for this article but also by the research of Martos-Pedrera et al. (2022); naturally, the resulting effects must be monitored and attempts to utilise them to the benefit of the whole organisation must be made. Some employees may have an excessive workload in agricultural businesses, either with the employer being aware of it (approved overtime) or without the employer's consent (the employee is overloaded without asking for overtime pay).

The research by Hughes (2023) shows that diversity management has not yet been as successful in companies as it could be. Hughes (2023) emphasises the need for strategic efforts in the workplace to value people and technologies.

Favourable working conditions have a positive impact on the health, satisfaction, motivation, skills, performance and behaviour of employees and are a prerequisite for the successful performance of the agreed work and the achievement of the required performance (Hitka et al. 2021b). Favourable working conditions stabilise employees and strengthen their sense of belonging to the job and the employer's objectives. At the same time, they increase the attractiveness of the job and improve the employer's reputation. The professional development of employees is one of the employer's duties under the Labor Code. Any direct discrimination in the workplace on the grounds of race, ethnic origin, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, belief or world view is also prohibited. However, in practice, indirect discrimination occurs more often than direct discrimination, where a seemingly neutral decision, criterion or practice puts a particular person at a disadvantage compared to the others on one of the above discriminatory grounds. Within the agriculture and forestry sectors, the higher proportion of heavy labour makes it more difficult to employ women in all positions, but despite these specifics, diversity is important. Wu et al. (2022) report that high rates of gender diversity result in more organisational innovation, which ultimately improves organisational performance. Likewise, the research by Ferrary and Déo (2023) has found that gender diversity at two

organisational levels (top and middle management) positively influences organisation's economic performance and contributes to its competitiveness. Gender diversity at these levels is a strategic resource that provides sustainable competitive advantage by creating value in the organisation that cannot be easily and quickly imitated by competitors (Wu et al. 2022; Ferrary and Déo 2023). However, it is necessary to set an effective reward system across the team of women and men and build an appropriate team structure of senior management (Chen and Hassan 2022).

To develop diversity and inclusion and to increase social responsibility in organisations, there must be regular monitoring of achieved results. It is advisable to focus on sustainability and efficiency. Sustainability addresses feasibility, considering the limited resources of the organisations, at three levels: institutional or organisational feasibility, technical (technological) feasibility, and financial feasibility. Efficiency indicates how workforce diversity management impacts on the cost-efficiency of a business (Otike et al. 2022). Nguyen et al. (2022) emphasise the impact of diversity management on business performance. Diversity management practices bring new and favourable opportunities in an organisation because if the right diversity management practices are in place, more capable and efficient employees will be hired from diverse backgrounds, which is highly important specifically for agricultural and forestry organisations. Current research in diversity management is shifting from a focus of how diversity management influences organisations to how and why the diversity management can be applied correctly and effectively (Ponomareva et al. 2022).

It can be summarised that effective diversity management in agriculture and forestry enhances sustainability, innovation, and competitiveness, especially amid labour shortages and rising costs. Research highlights the benefits of inclusion and gender diversity, particularly at management levels, for economic performance. However, achieving meaningful diversity requires strategic HR practices, structured reward systems, and continuous monitoring.

Based on the above global literature review of current research findings, a knowledge gap can be identified in the lack of comparison across all sectors (with emphasis on agricultural and forestry organisations) and different organisations together, focusing on the development of diversity and inclusion in agricultural and forestry organisations and identifying the importance of this area for the organisation (the orientation of the organisation's philosophy). The existing theory does not answer the

question about the differences in diversity management setting and its perception, and in the last few years, the studies on this issue have not specifically dealt with agricultural and forestry organisations. Therefore, this study will concentrate on this specific sector and will identify directions for the development of diversity and inclusion.

Based on existing research on diversity management across various economic sectors, this study examines whether similar approaches and practices are applicable in the agricultural sector. Given the increasing emphasis on inclusion and social sustainability in workforce management, it is essential to assess whether diversity strategies in agribusiness align with those observed in other industries. To address this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

$H_1$ : The approaches to diversity management and inclusion in the agricultural sector are consistent with those observed in other economic sectors, as documented in existing literature.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

The quantitative data ( $n = 202$ ) were obtained through computer assisted web interviewing (CAWI) by interviewing respondents from the larger organisations, where a respondent was approached as a representative of middle and senior management, and for smaller organisations, the owner was interviewed. The respondents were sent an e-mail with a link to a website with a questionnaire and unique login details; after signing-in which the questionnaire was made available in the Google Form. The data were subsequently evaluated using descriptive statistics and multivariate statistics.

The research was carried out in March and April 2023, and the evaluation of the data collected has been conducted since May 2023. In this paper, 4 questions and identifying variables of the surveyed organisations have been evaluated (there are 73 questions in 6 sections in total in the questionnaire survey.). The questionnaire used in this study was designed to examine organisational approaches to age management and workforce diversity. It includes sections on general organisational characteristics (sector, size, ownership, and workforce composition), the application of age management strategies, employee development programs, and workplace flexibility policies. It investigates gender distribution, the proportion of foreign employees, and the employment of individuals with disabilities. The final section addresses key challenges in workforce diversity management. The structured design ensures a comprehensive assessment of factors influencing the implementation of age management practices across different organisational contexts. The description of the organisations that participated in the research is in Table 1.

The basic identification of organisations involved in the research by their demographics include Figure 1.

Given the graphical representation of the sample organisations exported from the Albertina database [2 700 000 organisations in the Czech Republic (CR)], one can conclude that the research sample of organisations is characterised by most organisations in the tertiary sector, followed by the secondary sector and the least represented primary sector, which corresponds to the sectoral distribution of business entities in the Czech Republic. Within the agriculture and forestry sector, a total of 33 166 organisations are registered,

Table 1. Organisations that participated in the research – basic data

Characteristics	Categories		
Sector of operation of the organisation	primary	secondary	tertiary
	11	60	131
The size of the organisation	$\leq 50$	51–250	$> 250$
	74	61	67
Majority ownership	domestic	foreign	–
	157	45	–
Type of organisations	private	public	non-profit
	130	46	26
Year turnover	$\leq$ EUR 10 mil	EUR 11–50 mil	$>$ EUR 50 mil
	70	34	38

Source: Own survey

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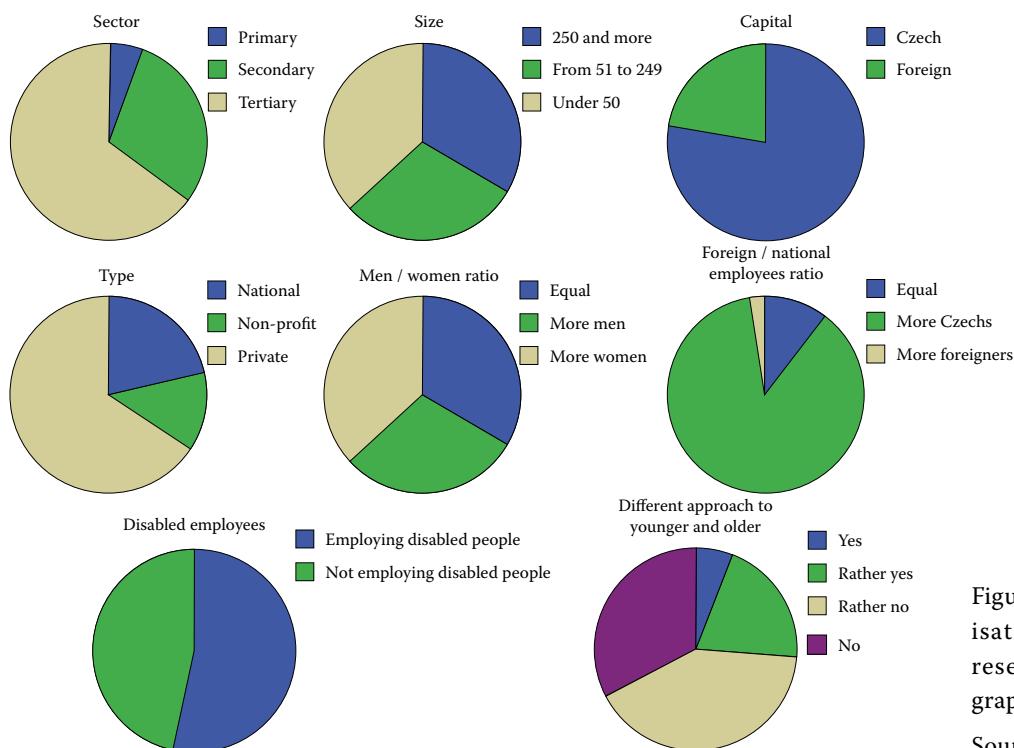


Figure 1. The list of organisations involved in the research by their demographics

Source: Own survey

which operate on 3 521 ha (53.2% of the national area) according to the Czech Statistical Office. The sample is relatively balanced in terms of size (1 150 302 small and medium-sized organisations in the CR), with more than 78% of organisations having the Czech majority share and often operating in the private sector. In terms of employment, the number of organisations is relatively balanced by gender in the workplace, but most organisations employ Czech employees, and more than half of the organisations have experience in employing disabled people. With respect to age diversity, most organisations do not implement a differentiated approach to the age categories of employees. The composition of the sample sufficiently reflects the overall structure of organisations in the CR according to the sector and size. The Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic states the size structure of organisations in Czech agriculture differs significantly from that of enterprises in other, particularly Western European member states of the European Union. Organisations with more than 50 ha of agricultural land (large organisations) account for the majority of the total cultivated agricultural area (approximately 92.2%).

Diversity indices, which have the same meaning for abundance data, as mean, median, standard deviation etc., for concentration data were used in processing the data. For the diversity indices, careful considera-

tion was given to the interpretation of the individual indices and whether their combination would produce more informative results than using a single index or, conversely, whether the indices used were redundant with each other and therefore unnecessary.

Statistical methods such as one-factor ANOVA to compare groups, the Cramer's  $V$  to measure associations between dichotomous variables, and the Pearson correlation coefficient to evaluate linear relationships between continuous variables were used to analyse the data. In accordance with Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the minimum number of respondents in this research ( $n = 164$ ) was met.

The focus group was conducted as a qualitative research method to complement the quantitative survey and provide in-depth insights into diversity management and inclusion practices. A total of ten participants took part in the discussion, representing various levels of organisational hierarchy, including senior managers, HR professionals, team leaders, and employees from different departments. The selection criteria aimed to ensure diversity in terms of industry sector, company size, and workforce composition to capture a broad spectrum of perspectives on inclusion and diversity strategies.

The session was moderated by an experienced facilitator using a semi-structured discussion format. Participants were encouraged to share their experience

and perspectives on key topics related to diversity management, workforce inclusion, and social sustainability. The discussion covered a range of themes, including organisational approaches to fostering an inclusive work environment, challenges in implementing diversity policies, and the effectiveness of current HR practices. Example questions included: How does your organisation approach diversity management? What challenges have you encountered in implementing inclusive policies? What role does leadership play in fostering workplace inclusion? Are there specific initiatives or programs that have been particularly successful in promoting diversity? How do employees perceive efforts to create an inclusive workplace?

The focus group was recorded and transcribed with participants' consent, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study confirm that diversity management practices in the agricultural sector generally align with those in other industries. The survey data indicate that organisations prioritise inclusion and diversity as part of broader social sustainability strategies, similar to trends observed in corporate and public sector organisations. The focus group discussions highlight the role of leadership, training programs, and policy implementation as key factors influencing diversity outcomes – paralleling findings from other sectors where structured diversity initiatives contribute to organisational performance and workplace cohesion. Despite these similarities, certain sector-specific challenges were identified, such as the demographic composition of the workforce, the prevalence of seasonal labour, and traditional gender roles, which are more pronounced in agriculture compared to other industries. These nuances suggest that while the overall principles of diversity management remain comparable, the sector requires tailored strategies to address its unique workforce dynamics. Based on these findings,  $H_1$  is confirmed, as the core elements of diversity and inclusion practices in agriculture correspond with those in other sectors, though with some adaptations necessary for the sector's specific challenges.

The degree of diversity support varies from organisation to organisation in practice and the differences are presented below. Therefore, four questionnaire questions and identifying variables were used to assess the results. The purpose of the analysis conducted was to present an overview of the organisations involved

in the setting of working conditions to promote inclusion, diversity management and the development of social sustainability.

The organisations surveyed have, to a greater or lesser extent, elaborated the organisation's attributes in the organisational strategy (Figure 2). The results show the absolute frequencies of the responses. The individual attributes were measured on a dichotomous scale. Based on the results, the most frequently found attributes in the strategy are:

- i)* defined mission and vision,
- ii)* defining priority goals and
- iii)* defining responsible persons for planning and implementation.

With the right formulation of the organisation's mission and vision emphasising sustainability not only of human resources, the right formulation and prioritisation of goals in the context of human resource effectiveness (diversity, inclusion, and social sustainability), and, last but not least, defining authorities and responsibilities in this area, a synergic strategy can be achieved through the effective integration of attributes. The strategy evacuation plan was least integrated in the strategies of the businesses that participated in the survey.

The Cramer's  $V$  (Figure 3) was used to determine the relationships between the attributes that the organisations have integrated in the strategy (shown in the Figure 2 below). The higher the value of Cramer's  $V$ , the stronger the relationship between two attributes is.

The results clearly show that almost all attributes have statistically significant relationships with each other. The strongest relationships were identified in the pairs of setting up the implementation management ↔ creating a hierarchical work structure; implementation schedule ↔ strategy evacuation plan; implementation budget ↔ communication plan for strategy implementation. In view of the results obtained, it may be concluded that the organisations need to build general awareness among all employees and stakeholders (effective communication) in these key attributes of social sustainability and continuously improve the expertise and qualifications of managers and employees. Linking this to the Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG) strategy is advisable to help identify the right priorities and set specific targets to achieve. These need to be evaluated and reported on within a given timeframe, while continuously revising the selected strategy, optimising diversity, inclusion and social sustainability practices to meet the expectations of all stakeholders and regulatory requirements.

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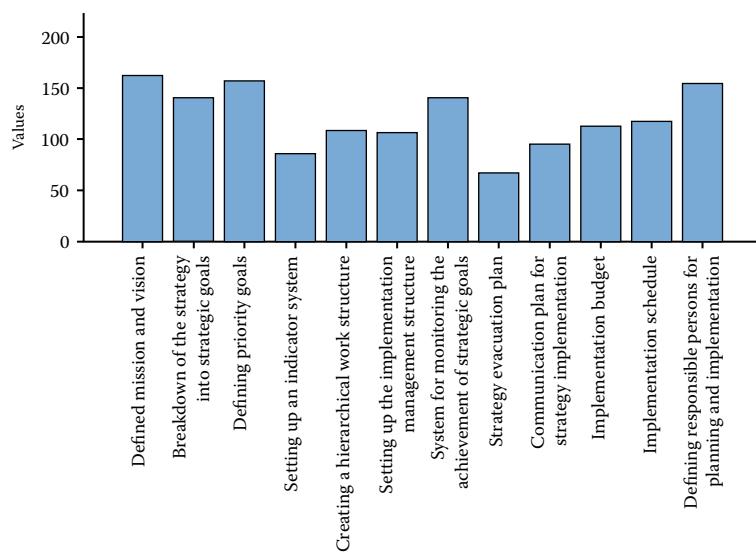


Figure 2. The overview of attributes integrated into the strategy of organisations

Source: Own survey

Given the ordinal nature of the questions, the organisations' approaches to promoting the concept of sustainability were evaluated through descriptive statistics and detailed analysis. The most preferred approaches of organisations to advancing the concept of sustainable development were identified, as well as the extent to which these sustainable development principles are incorporated in the organisation's strategy (Table 2).

Based on the average values, it can be stated that the most preferred approach is Focus on social aspects. Although all pillars of sustainable development

are equally important and inextricably linked, the social aspect of sustainability, which is interconnected with people and their care (diversity, inclusion), is key in terms of HR activities, HR trends and the labour market direction. This has also been demonstrated in the research and therefore this direction needs to be enshrined in the organisation's strategy (sustainable development in strategy). These approaches of the organisations (ordinal variables) were further evaluated for their correlation structure using the Pearson correlation (Figure 4).

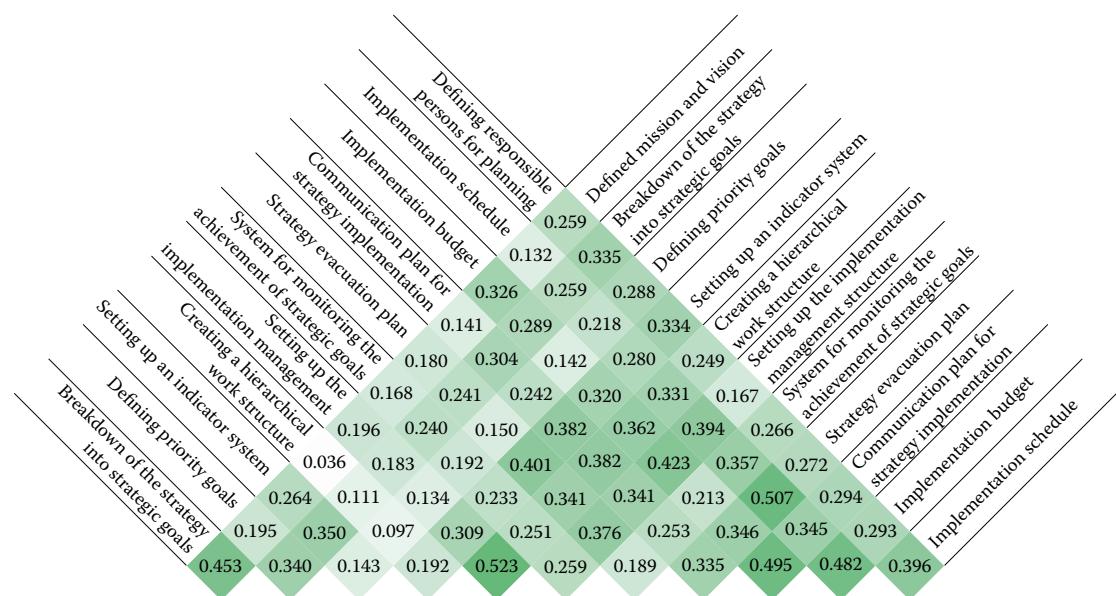


Figure 3. Cramer's  $V$  values of individual attributes of organisations

Source: Own survey

Table 2. The identification of organisations' approaches to advancing the concept of sustainable development

Characteristics	Sustainable development in strategy	Voluntary environmental protection tools	Focus on social aspects	Socially responsible company projects	Compliance with sustainable laws
Mean	2.840	2.810	2.960	2.780	2.490
SD	0.784	0.764	0.812	0.843	0.893
Skewness	-0.391	-0.332	-0.424	-0.312	-0.145
Kurtosis	-0.110	-0.109	-0.320	-0.444	-0.743

SD – standard deviation

Source: Own survey

The strongest relationship is the Socially responsible company project ↔ voluntary environmental protection tools and the relationship of sustainable development in strategy ↔ voluntary environmental protection tools. Interestingly, the weakest relationships to other variables were found for Compliance with sustainable laws. One can infer that this is since laws leading to sustainability are becoming very burdensome for organisations, even in administrative terms, as the duty to report arises for small and medium-sized organisations, among other things, in the environmental and social areas. However, this leads to the reporting of comparable information and allows to compare the effectiveness of different approaches. All correlation coefficients, with one exception ( $r = 0.114$ ), were statistically significant, which indicates the need for the organisations to apply these approaches as a prerequisite for promoting sustainable development.

The synthesis of the results is presented in Table 3, which shows the statistically significant differences between the approaches of the organisations promoting diversity analysed above. The table includes  $P$ -values obtained by the analysis of variance (ANOVA).

All relationships with values under 0.050 are statistically significant and in these cases the responses of the organisations' representatives are statistically different (applying different approaches). Table 3 indicates that in most cases, there is a statistically significant difference between the attributes integrated into the strategy of organisations promoting diversity and inclusion and the organisations' approaches to promoting the concept of sustainable development. The most statistically significant relationships can be identified between the attributes integrated in the strategy and the 'Sustainable development in strategy' approach (excluding the system for monitoring the achievement of strategic goals,  $P$ -value = 0.170) and 'Socially responsible company projects'. On the other hand, the least statistically significant relationships can be observed between the attributes integrated in the strategy and 'Compliance with sustainable laws'. One can conclude that this is precisely due to the inconsistency of current legislation, recording and reporting.

The approaches of the organisations were therefore compared with respect to the characteristics of the organisations, similarly to the above analysis. Statistically significant differences were tested by considering

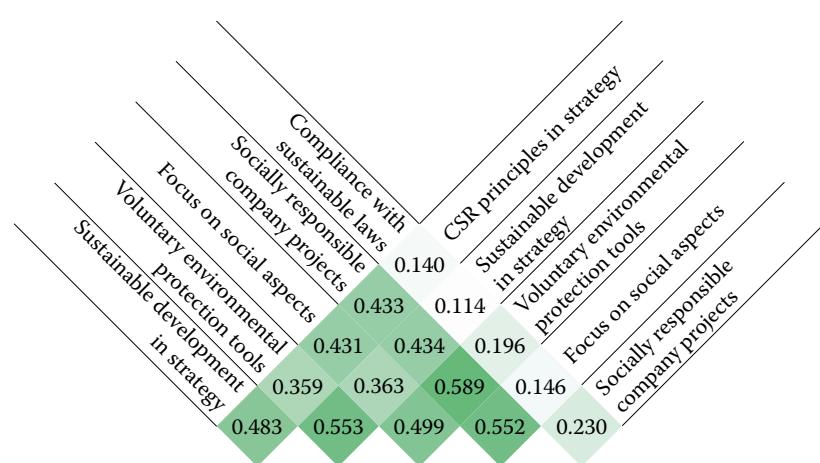


Figure 4. The Pearson correlation of identified approaches of the organisations to promote the concept of sustainable development

Source: Own survey

Table 3. Statistically significant differences between the approaches of the organisations

P-values based on ANOVA tests	Sustainable development in strategy	Voluntary environmental protection tools	Focus on social aspects	Socially responsible company projects	Compliance with sustainable laws
Defined mission and vision	0.001	0.118	0.000	0.009	0.153
Breakdown of the strategy into strategic goals	0.000	0.071	0.021	0.000	0.387
Defining priority goals	0.021	0.003	0.000	0.001	0.975
Setting up an indicator system	0.000	0.002	0.009	0.000	0.028
Creating a hierarchical work structure	0.005	0.001	0.176	0.001	0.067
Setting up the implementation management structure	0.006	0.004	0.042	0.014	0.301
System for monitoring the achievement of strategic goals	0.170	0.064	0.237	0.087	0.339
Strategy evacuation plan	0.000	0.000	0.010	0.000	0.054
Communication plan for strategy implementation	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.060
Implementation budget	0.000	0.002	0.001	0.000	0.126
Implementation schedule	0.000	0.000	0.007	0.000	0.103
Defining responsible persons for planning and implementation	0.000	0.006	0.005	0.001	0.178

ANOVA – analysis of variance

Source: Own survey

identifying characteristics instead of questions about attributes that are integrated in the strategy. Table 4 presents the *P*-values obtained through ANOVA.

The analysis has identified only three statistically significant relationships (highlighted in bold). The setting of 'Sustainable development in strategy' relates to the controlling ownership share (0.043) and 'Socially responsible company projects' relate to the size of the organisation (0.032) and the employment of disabled persons (0.000). In view of the results, one can therefore summarise that organisations' approaches to the setting of working conditions to promote inclusion, management diversity and the development of social sustainability vary, but this is a priority topic in all sectors of the economy and the sector of agri-

culture and forestry is no exception. The economic sustainability of agriculture has long been advocated by the common agricultural policy, which creates conditions to support the sustainability of providing agricultural, forestry and food products and services. Economic measures support social integration, e.g. by providing subsidies to small farmers and redistributive payments for small farmers, all of which can be seen to be important for social sustainability; however, agriculture and forestry contributes to sustainability at all levels of society through its policies and measures (see Common Agricultural Policy).

The results of the focus group have revealed that the majority of respondents perceive a pluralistic approach as beneficial, especially in the diversity of opin-

Table 4. Statistically significant differences between organisations' approaches and their identifying characteristics

P-values based on ANOVA tests	Sector	Size	Capital	Type	Men / women ratio	Foreign / national employee ratio	Disabled employees
Sustainable development in strategy	0.758	0.127	<b>0.043</b>	0.094	0.170	0.997	0.533
Voluntary environmental protection tools	0.183	0.500	0.054	0.392	0.502	0.627	0.075
Focus on social aspects	0.507	0.545	0.534	0.319	0.518	0.664	0.026
Socially responsible company projects	0.431	<b>0.032</b>	0.686	0.151	0.509	0.215	<b>0.000</b>
Compliance with sustainable laws	0.557	0.141	0.271	0.949	0.396	0.622	0.056

ANOVA – analysis of variance; numbers in bold – statistically significant relationships

Source: Own survey

ions and experience. The respondents have agreed that team diversity often leads to innovative solutions that would not have been discovered otherwise, and different perspectives contribute to more effective problem solving in the workplace. Inclusion and diversity have been identified by the respondents as key elements of social sustainability as they contribute to greater stability and cohesion in working teams.

Some participants have highlighted that an inclusive environment encourages open communication and collaboration between employees. Particular attention was paid to gender diversity, where only sporadic experience with the inclusion of women in leadership positions was mentioned. The respondents have also discussed the challenges in implementing inclusive strategies, which include prejudices and stereotypes in the agricultural sector. It has been noted that educational programs and training can effectively help overcome these barriers (Hitka et al. 2021c).

It is essential to recognise that the implementation of inclusive strategies in the agricultural and forestry sectors faces several key barriers, including structural and economic (seasonality, high turnover, low wages, limited resources, sector fragmentation), social and cultural (traditional conservative environment, gender inequalities, etc.), legislative and administrative (complex bureaucracy, lack of targeted measures, etc.), and technological and educational (insufficient awareness, lack of training, etc.). Several participants stressed that such training sessions should be tailored to the specific needs of the agricultural sector and should include practical examples and interactive teaching methods. It has also been suggested that education and training

should focus on removing prejudices and promoting open communication to create a more inclusive working environment. Another important area discussed by the respondents was the need for support from the management of agribusinesses. The participants have agreed that managers play a key role in implementing inclusive strategies and that their active involvement and support is essential for the success of these initiatives. It has been emphasised that managers should lead by example and actively support various diversity and inclusion initiatives. In addition, it has been suggested that companies establish internal committees or working groups to monitor and evaluate progress in inclusion and diversity. This would ensure that these values are integrated into the day-to-day running of businesses and become an integral part of their culture. The focus group results also show that synergic inclusion and diversity strategies have the potential to become a catalyst for social sustainability, which leads to better working relationships, innovation and overall employee satisfaction in agribusinesses.

Based on the achieved results, practical applications can be summarised as follows for organisations in agriculture and forestry: it is essential to establish a clear diversity and inclusion strategy within internal guidelines and define measurable goals. They should conduct regular employee training on diversity, inclusion, and anti-discrimination measures while supporting language courses. Additionally, providing flexible working conditions (e.g. for parents or older workers), enhancing the recruitment process, and implementing mentoring programs are crucial. Lastly, fostering collaboration with professional organisations and communities should also

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be a priority. The conducted research shall also be utilised for policy recommendations.

The results obtained in the Czech environment have confirmed the findings of Wu et al. (2022) that to promote innovation, development and sustainability of organisations, it is necessary to promote diversity in the workplace, including the implication for the inclusion of women in senior and middle management (Wu et al. 2022), as well as increasing their number in all positions in organisations, including agricultural and forestry, where their physical condition allows them to perform the work.

Based on the results presented, the validity of Waldman and Sparr (2023) assertion that diversity management leads to the promotion of sustainability can also be confirmed, however, synergistic strategies with an emphasis on inclusion must be used. The strengthening of the pluralistic paradigm, inclusion and diversity in organisations is still not widespread, which is also highlighted by the research of Ponomarev et al. (2022). It is necessary to work with the characteristics of organisations that influence the approach of organisations to diversity, inclusion and sustainability by appropriately setting the internal conditions in the organisation. Although the labour market in general is lacking in skilled labour, these negatives are most evident in the primary sector, i.e. agriculture and forestry, due to its specifics, and due to the significant reduction in employment and low demand for labour for young workers on the part of these organisations ('entry barriers'). The low proportion of Czech agriculture's employment is saturated by the intensification of work. It is important to note that while some agricultural sectors may require higher labour intensity, the overall trend is moving towards further reducing reliance on human labour and increasing process automation. The key challenges remain the availability of investments in technology, particularly for smaller farms, and ensuring a sufficient number of skilled workers for specific tasks that technology has not yet fully replaced. Finally, there is the age diversity of farmers and foresters and the ageing of the workforce not only in this sector. All the more reason to use effective strategic human resource management and to encourage intergenerational cooperation and knowledge continuity.

## CONCLUSION

The results have shown that there are statistical differences between organisations' approaches to diver-

sity and inclusion promoting the development of social sustainability. The research has identified the organisations' attributes integrated into the strategy, including the interdependencies of these attributes. The organisations' approaches to advancing the concept of sustainability have been identified, with the 'focus on social aspects' being the most preferred approach. 'Socially responsible company project' and 'Voluntary environmental protection tools' most influence each other, while the organisations' characteristics do not play such a significant role in choosing the approach to diversity and inclusion.

In summary, although the sector of agriculture and forestry is highly specific compared to other sectors of the economy, it creates conditions for diversity, equality and inclusion comparable to the other sectors, with large organisations in these sectors taking the lead in terms of organisations' role.

The theoretical contribution consists in extending the theory of human resource management by identifying variables and their influence on the setting of diversity and inclusion in organisations and the promotion of sustainable development. The results can be used within the teaching of professional courses and for developing best practices for management of organisations.

The paper is limited by its geographical focus of research on the Czech Republic, where the composition of the workforce is diverse. Despite this, it can be concluded that the results presented here confirm the conclusions of major foreign research teams. Another limitation is the sample size and its representativeness. In this research, the sample consisted of 202 organisations, which implies a mean detection power of statistical methods. Despite these limitations, the presented study offers an exploratory perspective on the issues of diversity and inclusion promoting sustainability of organisations and can be a useful theoretical and practical source of information for wider professional discussion.

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