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## **Approaches of selected organisations in the Czech Republic to promoting the concept of sustainable development and corporate social responsibility**

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**Abstract:** Sustainable development is a concept that is constantly evolving, being discussed at the global, national, and local levels, not only among individuals but also within organisations. However, the importance of this concept lies in its complexity. The article's main goal is to identify the approaches of selected Czech companies to promote the concept of sustainable development and evaluate the basic factors that impact competitiveness. The data were obtained based on quantitative research (questionnaire survey of data collection) in selected organisations ( $n = 179$ ) and additional qualitative research in the form of individual interviews with representatives of agricultural enterprises ( $n = 8$ ). Data were processed using chi-square tests and factor analysis to identify latent variables. Key approaches to promoting the concept of sustainable development include an emphasis on process approach, non-financial business performance, and sector stability. The basic factors for competitiveness are quality relationships with stakeholders and the implementation of an integrated management system.

**Keywords:** agricultural enterprises; competitiveness; factor analysis; integrated management systems; process approach; stakeholder value; survey

The primary theme of sustainable development (SD) was the relationship between man and nature and human settlement and the landscape (Mebratu 1998). An important publication that marked an important milestone in the development of society and environmental thinking in 1987 is "Our Common Future" (Mebratu 1998; Ebner and Baumgartner 2006; Sneddon et al. 2006). This publication has focused on a variety of considerations regarding the relationship between a human being and the environment (Langhelle 1999; Jabareen 2008).

The most common definition of SD comes from the United Nations' (1987) publication: "Sustainable

development is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". However, Parris and Kates (2003) state that sustainable development has broad appeal and little specificity, and Parkin et al. 2003 states that there are more than 200 SD definitions. Speth (2003) agreed that sustainable development is part of the mission of international, national, multinational organisations and institutions, cities and town districts, and last but not least, non-governmental organisations, with the main idea of integrating aspects of sustainable development into business management (Ebner and Baum-

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gartner 2006). The lack of a comprehensive theoretical framework does not allow understanding of the complexities of sustainable development (Mebratu 1998; Jabareen 2004; 2008). Jabareen (2008), for example, emphasises the ethical paradox, where sustainability is considered a characteristic of the process *ad infinitum*, on the other hand, there is environmental development, which requires deep intervention into nature and resource extraction. Elkington (1997) emphasises that organisations should not only focus on increasing their value by maximising profits but equally focus on environmental and social issues. By putting the principles of sustainable development into corporate and business practices, developing sustainable development measures, and involving employees, it will be easier to implement SD principles into all organisational activities (Bansal 2002).

Many authors (Ebner and Baumgartner 2006; Moon 2007; Baumgartner 2014; Kolk 2016) study the relationship between sustainable development and corporate social responsibility (CSR). According to the European Commission, CSR is described as: "To create favourable conditions for sustainable growth, responsible business behaviour and durable employment generation in the medium and long term" (EC 2011). Ebner and Baumgartner (2006) recommend applying CSR as a social element of sustainable development. The authors offer an integrated view of the importance of SD and CSR aspects for selected organisations and integrate these aspects of sustainability at different levels of management. The concept of CSR enjoys positive feedback in many respects in the scientific and professional community (Hung et al. 2019). However, there are several critics; for example, Friedman (2007) considers social responsibility as subversive teaching that is applied only to improve the organisation's image in the eyes of society. Murray (2008) and his comprehensive view of criticism make the most common arguments, such as that CSR is too specified, may suppress the main purpose of the business and thus restrict the free functioning of the market, or that corporate goals are not achieved through corporate social responsibility. Fleming and Jones (2013) state that corporate social responsibility never really started. Toft (2015) mentions that consumers are becoming sceptical about CSR due to events, scandals and environmental disasters. Therefore corporate social responsibility can be seen as a form of response to new social and environmental criticisms (Chiapello 2013). The article's main goal is to identify the approaches of selected Czech companies to promote the concept of sustain-

able development and evaluate the basic factors that impact competitiveness.

**Theoretical background.** The subject of this article is the motivation of business activities for sustainable development through CSR. Definitions of CSR focus on key characteristics: economic pillar, social pillar, and environmental pillar (Ciegis et al. 2009; Cancino et al. 2018; Ciccullo et al. 2018; Klarin 2018; Fortunati et al. 2020). In addition to these pillars, Sarkar and Searcy (2016) add stakeholder focus, volunteer focus, longevity, and resilience focus. The essence of the SD concept is based on the so-called Triple bottom line (Klarin 2018). The balance between the three pillars of sustainability – the environmental capacity to maintain the quality of the environment, social sustainability focusing on ensuring human rights and equality, cultural identity, respect for cultural diversity, race and religion and, last but not least, the need for economic sustainability.

Many authors mention the benefits of implementing CSR: increased profits through reduced production costs and increased productivity, better availability of capital (Sprinkle and Maines 2010), improving the learning and innovation cycle (Vilanova et al. 2009), improved image, gaining new customers, achieving higher customer loyalty (Sprinkle and Maines 2010; Camacho and Fernandez 2018), better opportunities in recruiting and retaining quality employees including talent retention (Jenkins 2009; Sprinkle and Maines 2010; Hansen et al. 2011), risk reduction and risk management costs, increased performance (Sprinkle and Maines 2010; Hung et al. 2019). The most frequently mentioned benefit is maintaining competitiveness (Gallardo-Vázquez and Sanchez-Hernandez 2014; Jorge et al. 2015). Dorzhieva and Dugina (2015) or Mikhailushkin et al. (2018) stated the importance of factors for competitiveness growth.

CSR and the change in companies' approach is in many ways from the point of view of the economic pillar reminiscent of total quality management (TQM) philosophy, where the primary goal is to compete and be exceptional in business. In the social field, we can mention philanthropy, effective communication with stakeholders (Axelsson et al. 2011), respect for and observance of human rights, especially with regard to labour law. It is evident that the environmental pillar extends both socially and economically (Baumgartner and Rauter 2017; Tröester and Hiete 2018). Efforts to protect the environment have led to today's form of sustainable development, which, however, emphasises the social and economic level.

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Despite extensive research into sustainable business models, there is no comprehensive picture of how companies in different industries can implement sustainability into their business models (Nosratabadi et al. 2019).

CSR is not regulated in the Czech Republic; it is a voluntary instrument managed by the Ministry of Industry and Trade, and the support of the concept of social responsibility in the Czech Republic is not solved centrally by the state. Agricultural and forestry enterprises not only in the Czech Republic face a number of problems, namely adverse weather (extreme fluctuations in drought, heat), climate change (Davidson 2016), reduction of subsidies and their differences (Vrabcová et al. 2019), declining acreage of agricultural land (Janků et al. 2016), ageing workforce, rising costs for seeds, fertilisers, plant protection products, fuels, labour or renting agricultural land. It is necessary to perceive the agricultural sector as a principled manager and assess its economic and social significance in the context of production and in the context of non-productive and landscaping functions.

It can be summarised that sustainable development is a comprehensive set of strategies that enable economic tools and technologies to meet people's social needs when fully respecting environmental limits while adapting the perception of individuals, organisations and their organisational processes. The CSR activities can be one of several criteria based on which the customer chooses the company from which to purchase services or products. The results present the direction of setting the concept of sustainable development in selected organisations.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

The quantitative data was obtained by a questionnaire survey in Czech organisations (quota-based selection). A total of  $n = 179$  organisations participated in the survey. The survey occurred from 06/2020 to 12/2020. The results can only be generalised for the research sample. The sample was based on the ALBERTINA database of organisations (which contains important data of more than 2 700 000 organisations registered in the Czech Republic). The questionnaire was distributed to companies by e-mail, 850 companies were contacted twice (with a reminder), the rate of return of the questionnaire is 21%. The basic identifying features of the questionnaire survey include the sector of operation of the organisation (primary, secondary, and tertiary), size of the organisation, majority owner-

ship, type of organisation (private, public, non-profit) and year turnover.

The questionnaire was completed by the mid-tier or higher management of the organisation, in the case of smaller organisations, by the owner itself (thus, the responses reflected the point view of their heads/owner/manager). Dependencies between selected qualitative features were tested. To test the hypothesis of homogeneity and independence, chi-square tests with  $(r - 1)(s - 1)$  degrees of freedom were applied ( $r$  = number of columns,  $s$  = number of rows).

The results were analysed using statistical tools – the dependence test ( $\chi^2$ ) and the power of dependence test (Cramer's  $V$ ). The chi-square tests are used to test the hypothesis of homogeneity and independence, rejecting the null hypothesis of dependence or homogeneity at a given level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$ . Good approximation requirements were always met in the computations if theoretical frequencies were larger than or equal to 5 in 80% of instances, and never dropped below 2 even in the remaining 20%. The dependence strength was calculated using the Cramer's  $V$  measure, which is within  $0 \leq V \leq 1$ .

The questionnaire was designed to comply with ethical rules and with the requirement for anonymity and contained 60 questions. Within this article, 3 questions – approaches according to Hyršlová et al. (2015) to promote the concept of sustainable development, implementation of selected activities, integration of sustainable development into a corporate strategy and 5 identification questions (sector, size, ownership, type, turnover) were evaluated with multiple answer options. A probabilistic selection was made in accordance with the established statistical rules. Therefore, the results can be generalised only to this sample. The questions were close-ended (allowing only provided response options) and with more response options. The structure of the organisations participating in the research ( $n = 179$ ) is listed in Table 1.

Factor analysis was applied to identify latent variables, and the purpose of factor analysis was to reduce the number of individual items to a smaller number of dimensions. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin ( $KMO$ ) measure of sampling adequacy was used:

$$KMO = \frac{\sum_{i \neq j} r_{ij}^2}{\sum_{i \neq j} r_{ij}^2 + \sum_{i \neq j} u_{ij}} \quad (1)$$

where:  $r_{ij}$  – correlation matrix for the  $j^{\text{th}}$  row and the  $i^{\text{th}}$  column;  $u_{ij}$  – partial covariance matrix.

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

Characteristics	Categories	Percentage (%)
Sector of operation of organisation	primary	4.5
	secondary	40.2
	tertiary	55.3
Size of organisation (number of employees)	< 50	26.8
	51–249	27.9
	> 250	45.3
Majority ownership	domestic	45.3
	foreign	54.7
Type of organisations	private	86.0
	public	11.2
	non-profit	2.8
Year turnover	< 10 million EUR	38.5
	11–50 million EUR	38.0
	> 50 million EUR	23.5

Source: Own survey

This measure varies between 0 and 1 (values closer to 1 are better). A value of 0.6 is a suggested as a minimum. An appropriate extraction method was selected, principal components is the default extraction method in SPSS. After extracting the factors, Varimax method has been used, Varimax attempts to maximise the value of  $V$ :

$$V = \frac{1}{p} \sum_{j=1}^m \left\{ \sum_{i=1}^p \left( \frac{\hat{l}_{ij}^*}{\hat{h}_i} \right)^4 - \frac{1}{p} \left( \sum_{i=1}^p \left( \frac{\hat{l}_{ij}^*}{\hat{h}_i} \right)^2 \right)^2 \right\} \quad (2)$$

where:  $V$  – Varimax method value;  $p$  – specific variances;  $\hat{l}_{ij}^*$  – estimator for the factor loadings;  $\hat{h}_i$  – communalities for the  $i^{\text{th}}$  variable.

Varimax is an orthogonal rotation method that tends to produce factor loading that was either very high or very low. Using factor analysis, a reduced number of factors were identified that are related to the aim of the article.

The qualitative survey is based on individual online interviews ( $n = 8$ ) with owners and managers from agricultural organisations (they have business activities in the field of crop and animal production in agriculture across sectors) which focus on sustainable development and CSR. The IBM SPSS Statistics 24 statistical software was used to evaluate the results (Bryman et al. 2011).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results showed that the largest group of addressed organisations (41.3%) always assesses processes and projects concerning their economic, environmental, and social aspects and impacts; followed by the approach of organisations, where they prefer economic and social goals, and the company's approach to the en-

Table 2. Business approaches to promoting the concept of sustainable development

Characteristics of the organisation	Mean*	Standard deviation
Involvement in the supply chain	3.04	0.905
Innovation activities	3.40	0.691
Productivity (valuation of inputs, use of production factors)	3.47	0.698
Differentiation from the competition	3.49	0.752
Reputation (good name), brand	3.69	0.664
Attractiveness of the company as an employer	3.41	0.755
Market share	3.20	0.828
Company communication (internal and external)	3.46	0.751
Creating value for the customer	3.50	0.730
The willingness of the customer to pay for the high perceived value of the products	3.14	0.740
Payment morale of the company	3.29	0.838
Ability to generate profits (long term)	3.49	0.737
Impact of government measures	2.99	0.768
Human resources competence	3.19	0.733

\*Mean – 1 – completely insignificant, ..., 4 – very important

Source: Own survey

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vironment is addressed in the areas given by environmental protection laws (26.8%). However, only 22.9% of the organisations surveyed pursue economic goals in compliance with the law, and the remaining 8.9% of the organisations emphasised economic, environmental goals, while the social sphere is addressed only when it is required by law.

The positive results can be seen in the fact that most of the addressed organisations have integrated sustainable development into a corporate strategy at least in a concise form (scales 1 – completely, 2 – partly, 3 – just mentioned, 4 – not at all; average 1.85) and pay attention to social aspects beyond the law obligations (average 1.82) while aiming at setting the concept of CSR (average 2.12). A much-discussed area in the survey was whether organisations must set the concept of sustainable development beyond the law obligations (average 2.40), where most representatives of organisations see the primary duty of compliance at the state level and in the case of duty for organisations only within the applicable laws.

However, it was found that there are exceptions, e.g. 2.2% of the addressed organisations have integrated systems (implemented quality management system, health and safety management system, environment management system); 3.4% of the address organisations have integrated management systems (implemented according to ISO 9000 or other standards); a total of 2.8% of the organisations support social innovations in the corporate strategy; 2.2% of the organisations have social innovation and integrated management systems according to ISO 9000 or other standards; totally 5.0% of the organisations have social innovation and health and safety management systems; only 2.2% of the organisations have health and safety management systems or 2.2% of organisations have only quality management systems. A total of 10.1% of the organisations do not have a system leading to sustainability beyond their legal obligations.

Table 2 shows the attitudes of the surveyed companies within the individual factors affecting the competitiveness of the company within the scale 1 – a completely unimportant factor, ..., 4 – a very important factor.

Table 2 shows that companies that are perceived as socially responsible not only have a better reputation in the eyes of the public (median 3.7) but are also considered more attractive employers (median 3.4). How the customer sees CSR is also influenced by the fact whether the company manages to fulfil CSR and inform about its activities. The process of creating value for customers (median 3.5) is focused on the cus-



Figure 1. Implementation of selected activities to increase competitiveness (relative frequency)  
Source: Own survey



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tomers' perceived advantage in the form of higher consumer benefits at an affordable price. In the long run (sustainable development), it is a rational choice to redesign business processes so that the organisation is competitive, innovative, and less dependent on scarce resources. The results showed that the impact of government measures (2.99) is lower than for other organisational characteristics. This is due to the fact that sustainability and its direction is not primarily enforced by the state, legislation but primarily by the perception of the leadership of organisations and their strategic perception and direction.

Figure 1 evaluates the degree of implementation (relative frequency) of selected activities to increase competitiveness.

Figure 1 shows that to increase competitiveness, entrepreneurs (91% of respondents) develop activities to improve relationships with suppliers who are strategic business partners as well as customers. For a company that wants to improve supplier relationships, first

of all, it is important to set a clear goal for improvement. Customer relationship management (CRM) (88% of respondents) allows you to ensure an individual approach and respond quickly to changing needs. A corporate culture is an important tool in building a company's good name internally and externally (86% of respondents reported improving the corporate culture).

Furthermore, the obtained data were evaluated by multidimensional statistics. The total amount of variance accounted for is redistributed over the three extracted factors (Table 3). The first factor has a strength of approximately 47%, the second approximately 8%, the third 7%.

Varimax rotation tries to maximise the variance of each of the factors. Table 3 contains the cumulative percentage of variance accounted for by the current and all preceding factors (62%). Table 4 shows the results of the factor analysis in detail. The higher the correlation, the more the factor is saturated with this variable.

Table 3. Resultant factors by the Varimax method – Approaches to promoting the sustainable development concept

Factor	Total variance	Total % of variance (%)	Cumulative % of variance (%)
1	6.585	47.038	47.038
2	1.080	7.714	54.753
3	1.014	7.241	61.994

Factor 1 – emphasis on process approach; factor 2 – non-financial business performance; factor 3 – sector stability  
Source: Own survey

Table 4. Resultant factors by the Varimax method – Approaches to promoting the sustainable development concept

Variables	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Involvement in the supply chain	0.744	0.105	-0.130
Innovation activities	0.379	0.663	-0.068
Productivity	0.637	0.502	0.170
Differentiation from the competition	0.375	0.571	0.251
Reputation (good name), brand	0.543	0.474	0.452
Attractiveness of the company as an employer	0.071	0.733	0.283
Market share	0.237	0.446	0.586
Company communication	0.724	0.252	0.373
Creating value for the customer	0.581	0.488	0.221
The willingness of the customer to pay	0.590	0.280	0.250
Payment morale of the company	0.234	0.615	0.337
Ability to generate profits (long term)	0.727	0.147	0.444
Impact of government measures	0.110	0.049	0.819
Human resources competence	0.159	0.709	0.005
Total % of variance (%)	47.038	7.714	7.241

Factor 1 – emphasis on process approach; factor 2 – non-financial business performance; factor 3 – sector stability  
Source: Own survey

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Table 4 shows 3 identified factors related to approaches to promoting sustainable development in the addressed companies in the Czech Republic. These are: emphasis on process approach, non-financial business performance, and sector stability. The process approach undoubtedly contributes to the effectiveness of the quality management system and the satisfaction of stakeholders, including customers (Bakker et al. 2014). We can state that the process approach helps to improve the existing processes in the organisation. Major activities in the organisation are described in advance, the competencies and responsibilities of employees are determined, there is a reduction in the risk of non-conforming products, environmental accidents, and the number of accidents at work. The process approach requires the systematic definition and management of processes and their mutual relations to achieve the intended results under the organisation's quality policy and strategic focus. Furthermore, the management of processes and systems can be implemented as a whole using, for example, the plan-do-check-act (PDCA) cycle. The process approach helps to manage

the mutual relations and dependencies between system processes to increase an organisation's performance.

Continuous improvement is an essential prerequisite for maintaining and improving the organisation's performance. The growing share of non-financial indicators in corporate management and evaluation systems is currently very significant.

Non-financial indicators are expressed in time, in percentages, in pieces, as an average; therefore, there is no common factor for non-financial indicators. That is why the non-financial indicators must have a causal link to the company's objectives, expressed in financial indicators. In this context, it is possible, for example, to apply the method of assessing the vitality of companies according to Rydvalová and Antlová (2020) who evaluated the vitality and continuity of family businesses through 3 modules (I – legal, II – management and III – economic). The sector's stability goes hand in hand with the implemented government measures and with the market share of the company, which is usually measured as the share of the company's sales in the turnover of the relevant market for a certain defined period.

Table 5. Resultant factors by the Varimax method – Factors for the growth of competitiveness

Factor	Total variance	Total % of variance (%)	Cumulative % of variance (%)
1	4.794	43.585	43.585
2	1.432	13.017	56.602

Factor 1 – high-quality relationships with stakeholders (stakeholder value); factor 2 – implementation of an integrated management system

Source: Own survey

Table 6. Resultant factors by the Varimax method – Factors for the growth of competitiveness

Variables	Factor 1	Factor 2
Use of the environmental management system	0.210	0.798
Active environmental communication with external stakeholders	0.100	0.779
Active internal environmental communication	0.070	0.791
Improving customer relationships	0.822	0.066
Improving relationships with suppliers and business partners	0.741	0.094
Improving relations with state administration and self-government bodies	0.320	0.563
Improving relations with the local community and the public	0.594	0.358
Increased quality of human resources	0.740	0.250
Improving corporate culture	0.704	0.327
Use of occupational health and safety management system	0.435	0.504
Involvement in the CSR initiative	0.383	0.597
Total % of variance (%)	43.585	13.017

Factor 1 – high-quality relationships with stakeholders (stakeholder value); factor 2 – implementation of an integrated management system; CSR – corporate social responsibility

Source: Own survey

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The government is mitigating the negative impact on companies and the labour market by taking measures to support the economy and maintain liquidity.

The Table 5 shows the total amount of variance accounted for is redistributed over the two extracted factors, which cumulatively recorded 57% of the variance.

In Table 6, the basic factors for competitiveness are identified using the Varimax method 2.

Stakeholder value involves creating the optimum level of return for all stakeholders. In this context, organisations must identify relevant stakeholders, identify the requirements of these stakeholders, monitor information about these stakeholders and their requirements, and review information about stakeholders and their requirements, which complies with the researches of Ebner and Daumgartner (2006); Ciegis et al. (2009).

Systems integration means combining QMS (quality management system), EMS (environmental management system), and occupational health and safety systems into one unit. Generally, it is an integration of the three best known and most used, which are: quality management system according to the international standard

ISO 9000 series, environmental management system according to the international standard ISO 14000 series, occupational health and safety management system according to British standard BS OHSAS series 18000. These standards are generally applicable to any business or non-business entity. In addition, there are certain common elements within these systems, such as recommended practices and practical measures, output control, or customer feedback. It is not uncommon for these systems to be managed by a single manager, as confirmed by the researches of Jenkins (2009), Hansen et al. (2011), Jorge et al. (2015).

Last but not least, the dependence of selected variables on the identification marks of the company (sector, company size, ownership, type of business, year turnover) was examined (Table 7).

The interviewed representatives of agricultural enterprises ( $n = 8$ ) stated that in the primary sector it is necessary to emphasise social goals and the approach of the enterprise to the environment under environmental protection laws, however, not all of them apply to this. If they have a suitably set strategy, then it is appropriate

Table 7. Testing of dependencies between selected qualitative features

Variables	Sector ( <i>P</i> -value/ Cramer's <i>V</i> )	Company size ( <i>P</i> -value/ Cramer's <i>V</i> )	Ownership ( <i>P</i> -value/ Cramer's <i>V</i> )	Type of business ( <i>P</i> -value/ Cramer's <i>V</i> )	Year turnover ( <i>P</i> -value/ Cramer's <i>V</i> )
Sustainable development has been incorporated into company's strategy	0.908/–	0.007/0.316	0.003/0.280	0.884/–	0.038/0.273
Voluntary tools and approaches (beyond the law obligations) focused on environmental protection and pollution prevention are being used	0.147/–	0.301/–	0.023/0.231	0.268/–	0.207/–
We pay great attention to the social aspects of business activities (beyond the law obligations), especially the issue of safety and health at work and relations with the company's environment and other important stakeholders	0.599/–	0.112/–	0.091/–	0.205/–	0.076/–
We profile ourselves as a socially responsible company; we implement projects focused on environmental protection, projects beneficial to employees, the location, or other relevant stakeholders	0.835/–	0.008/0.312	0.001/0.308	0.692/–	0.015/0.297
The concept of sustainable development is a matter for the state, the business sphere concerns primarily in the area of compliance with the law	0.580/–	0.896/–	0.014/0.243	0.632/–	0.600/–

Source: Own survey



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that everything in such an agricultural enterprise is always assessed by management concerning economic, environmental, and social aspects and impacts.

Most respondents stated that they use voluntary tools and approaches (beyond the law obligations) aimed at environmental protection and pollution prevention, and this is a trend in the primary sector; however, not every farm has a sustainable development integrated into the corporate strategy. However, most respondents agreed that sustainable development is a priority at the state level and only the state's approach influences the given companies in a further direction.

Most of the representatives of agricultural enterprises agreed that sustainability in the primary sector is necessary primarily in supply chains, innovations, and the current need for digitisation, including increasing labour productivity. Such an approach helps them present themselves externally to end-consumers and helps them achieve better financial results, which complies with Hung et al. (2019) or Fortunati et al. (2020). The concept of CSR, its principles and tools implemented in agricultural and forestry activities are crucial (food safety, negative externalities not only of food production, genetically modified organisms, use of pesticides and other chemicals, animal welfare, water management and waste). The application of CSR in agricultural and forestry enterprises is solved by several authors (Bisogno 2016; Syamni 2018; Bavorová et al. 2020; Pacana et al. 2020), research in the Czech Republic was carried out by Haltofová and Adámek (2014).

## CONCLUSION

The result part of this article shows that the key approaches to promoting the concept of sustainable development include an emphasis on process approach, non-financial business performance, and sector stability. Responsible business enterprising is a concept in which companies voluntarily incorporate social and environmental aspects into their business operations and stakeholder relationships. It is, therefore, the overall relationship of the organisation with all stakeholders – customers, owners-investors, employees, public authorities, suppliers, competitors, communities. It includes the commitment of the organisation to develop its economic activities effectively and responsibly towards society and the environment, taking into account the interests of all stakeholders.

The following were identified as two basic factors for competitiveness: *i*) high-quality relationships with stakeholders and *ii*) implementation of an integrated

management system. One of the most important aspects of management systems is a strong focus on the requirements and needs of customers and other stakeholders. Therefore, we can consider management systems as one combined system. It is an integrated (unified) management system focused on quality, environment, and health and safety at work, which ensures the joint implementation and maintenance of these systems.

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