

## Conventionalisation? Organic farmers bite back!

Convenors of the working group:

Julien Blanc, Ika Darnhofer, and Stéphane Bellon

The development trends within organic farming and especially the thesis of conventionalisation have been debated for over ten years, yielding various viewpoints and empirical evidence to support them. Most authors contributing to this debate report that in many countries a number of certified organic farms display a range of practices closely resembling those on conventional farms. Although conventionalisation has so far not been identified as the dominant trend, does it represent a threat for the development of organic farming? Among others, would it compromise organic farming's ability to implement ecologically sound farming practices and to fulfil the expectations as to its contribution to rural development?

To counteract this threat, and strengthen organic farming's transformative potential, the debate must move beyond its focus on the bifurcation between artisanal and conventionalised organic actors, to understand better the complexity of organic farming and propose more reliable descriptors of conventionalisation processes.

This working group seeks to assess the implication of developments within organic farming for rural areas and identify the range of options used by organic farmers to fight against the 'dilution' of organic farming, fight against a reductionist understanding of organic farming limiting it to the legal requirements. We aim to concentrate on three major areas of debate:

**The perception of organic farmers:** Some fear that organic farming might lose its identity and become little more than a production method, thereby losing the holistic concept embodied in its principles. How does the increasing number of actors in the organic sector affect the self-identity and self-perception of organic farmers? More generally, how different views among stakeholders affect the dynamics of the organic movement?

**The organic practices:** Although 'conventionalisation' is widely used as a term it lacks clear criteria that can be used to assess what is or is not conventionalisation, much less the degree of conventionalisation. Can criteria, indicators or assessment methods be identified? What examples are there that best illustrate social and production practices that fulfil legal requirements but are in stark contrast with organic principles?

**Future options:** New regulations and incentives at various scales tend to redefine the roles of organic farming and its contribution to rural development. Would they open new avenues to extend organic food and farming in alternative patterns? How would they participate in designing other options beyond bifurcation? Which way forwards can be identified? How can organic farming keep its distinct identity yet be able to adapt to change and integrate new opportunities?

If you have worked on one of these issues, please send us an abstract and contribute to the debate during the XXIII Congress of the European Society of Rural Sociology in Vaasa!

### Key dates

28 Feb.: Deadline for submitting your abstract (max. 250 words). Please send it per email to: [ika.darnhofer@boku.ac.at](mailto:ika.darnhofer@boku.ac.at) and [jblanc@mnhn.fr](mailto:jblanc@mnhn.fr)

10 March: Deadline for us to notify you of acceptance of your abstract

Working group 2.6, room D103 (Tervahovi building)

## **Conventionalisation? Organic farming bites back**

Convenors:

**Julien Blanc** *Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle, France (jblanc@mnhn.fr)*

**Ika Darnhofer** *BOKU Univ. of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Austria (ika.darnhofer@boku.ac.at)*

**Stéphane Bellon** *INRA SAD Ecodevelopment Unit, France (bellon@avignon.inra.fr)*

Tuesday, August 18<sup>th</sup>: 8.30–10.30

*The organic-conventional relationship*

**“Almost organic anyway”:** Case studies of low input farming in the UK

Lee-Ann Sutherland, *Macaulay Land Use Research Institute, UK*

**Organic matter management and self sufficiency**

André Blouet and Xavier Coquil, *INRA-SAD, France*

**Organification: n. the tendency to assume social and environmental orientations associated with organic production**

Christopher Rosin and Hugh Campbell, *University of Otago, New Zealand*

**Brazilian multifaceted ecologically-based agriculture: Between conventionalization and agro-ecological principles application**

Lucimar S. de Abreu, *Embrapa Environment, Brazil*

Stéphane Bellon, *SAD Ecodevelopment Unit, INRA, France*

Maria de C. F. Alencar, *Embrapa Environment, Brazil*

**Organic farmers searching for alternatives to conventionalisation**

Ika Darnhofer, *BOKU - University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Austria*

Tuesday, August 18<sup>th</sup>: 11.00–12.30

*Struggling with implementing the organic principles and values*

**Belgian organic farmers' practices and perceptions between regulation, market and ethics**

Audrey Vankeerberghen, *Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium*

**Organic poultry production in the Czech Republic and its consequences for sustainable food production**

Lukas Zagata, *Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, Czech Republic*

**The European certification system for organic products against Agro-ecology: Promoting conventionalisation trends by penalizing deep organic approaches**

Carmen C. Padilla and Eduardo S. Guzmán, *Córdoba University, Spain*

**Converting to organic farming – Needs of eco-extension in Germany**

Henrike Rieken and Hermann Boland, *University of Gießen, Germany*

Tuesday, August 18<sup>th</sup>: 16.00–18.00

*Development pathways: Searching for alternatives*

**Organic farming: An exclusive concept?**

Heidrun Moschitz, *Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL), Switzerland*

**Back to the future: Long-term trajectories in organic farms in the South of France**

Stéphane Bellon, Stanislas Poudou and Natacha Sautereau *Ecodevelopment Unit, INRA Avignon, France*

**Strengthening the organic farming development : From the conventionalisation debate to the sustainable perspective**

Jean-Luc Favreau, Mohamed Gafsi, Bernard Mondy and Agnès Terrieux, *Ecole National de Formation Agronomique, France*

**The end of organic consumerism: Strategic changes in the organic movement?**

Matt Reed, *Countryside and Community Research Institute, UK*

## **Back to the future: Long-term trajectories in organic farms in the south of France**

**Stéphane Bellon, Stanislas Poudou and Natacha Sautereau** *Ecodevelopment Unit, INRA Avignon, France*

Considering conventionalisation as a process, this work aims at characterizing the various evolutions patterns in organic farms. We assumed that the process, if present, should be visible at the time scale of a generation. Building on interviews conducted in the 1980s with early converters, we returned to the field and interviewed farmers on the same farmstead. The data was collected in the department of Drôme, South-Eastern France. The issue of conventionalisation is approached regarding autonomy (in terms of inputs and marketing outlets) and diversification (*versus* specialisation). Although we focused on technical changes at the farm level – i.e. choices and practices on crops, livestock, land and equipment – possible farm redesign were also addressed. Preliminary results show that farm trajectories differ significantly. Some of the farmers reproduced the mixed crop-livestock organic farming model, albeit with new equipment and market outlets, supported by networks and communication skills. In this case, autonomy is a key driver. Others followed regional production patterns in fruit production, with new technologies in orchard protection and diversification (crops or livestock). In another group, farmers appear highly adaptive, with major changes in terms of combination of activities, cultivated area, joint farming arrangements, and marketing. As a whole, change is on-going and farmers still have a range of projects. Over the time span of a generation, such changes cannot be reduced to conventionalisation. They also reveal internal capabilities and future directions for organic farming dynamics.

## **Organic matter management and self-sufficiency**

**André Blouet and Xavier Coquil** *SAD-ASTER, INRA Mirecourt, France*

In the ruminant livestock farms, profitability speaks in favour of a strong fodder self-sufficiency. This self-sufficiency seems easier to reach if the mixed farming system is diversified. However this requirement of self-sufficiency leads to a large share of forage crops (e.g., ley, leguminous meadows with seeds) in cropping plans and consequently leaves little place for cereals in straw. However, the straw resource is crucial to insure comfortable bedding for animals, and also for producing solid manure, which is often preferred to the liquid manure in organic farming. Where winters are long (4-months and more), the straw resource is often insufficient to provide the animal bedding. Organic stockbreeders thus ask their conventional neighbours to supply them with the straw that they are lacking. On the organic farms this imported, conventional straw is then transformed into manure, which is essential to ensure the organic fertility of soils and useful for the mineral fertilization of the crops. As the organic regulations authorize the use of this "biological fertilizer" since it is composted, we understand why the straw coming from conventional farms rarely returns to them. Such a use of the straw compromises the organic fertility of the conventional farms and thus leads to an ethical criticism of the practices of the biological farmers: can they leave it to the conventional farmers to produce a part of the resources they need according to modalities that their own regulations forbid?

## **The European certification system: Promoting conventionalisation by penalizing deep organic approaches**

**Maria Carmen Cuéllar Padilla and Eduardo Sevilla Guzmán** *Córdoba University, Spain*

The organic guarantee system established as compulsory in the EU is the third party certification, based on the annual examination of the farms by technical staff. In 2005, different organic groups of small and medium producers in Andalusia denounced some of the effects of this system. They reported that its structure of costs and bureaucracy was discouraging them to get officially certified, and pointed out that an alternative guarantee system was an urgently needed. We started a research project with these groups, analysing: a) the social dimension of the problems they were denouncing and of building an alternative guarantee system through a participatory process; b) the legal dimension, developing the options that this alternative system needed to have to be officially recognized; and c) the political dimension, analysing the participants' view of the organic production and the power relations they aimed to change. We present some of the results of this project, focusing on how the European organic certification system penalizes small and medium producers, especially those who conceive of organic production in a holistic and comprehensive way. We analyse the points of view of these producers, who decided to work on the construction of an alternative guarantee system, to show how the official certification system promotes the conventionalisation of the organic sector. Our results show that the current system ignores and penalizes the possible transformative potential of the organic sector. Following this assertion, we argue that participatory guarantee systems are an instrument to support alternative patterns in the organic sector.

## **Organic farmers searching for alternatives to conventionalisation**

**Ika Darnhofer** *BOKU – Univ. of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Austria*

In the last 10 years there have been numerous publications on the 'conventionalisation' of organic farming. In many of these studies long marketing chains are identified as a key driver of conventionalisation. In these approaches the agency of farmers is often under-theorised. Farmers are pictured as passive and powerless, forced to comply with the demands of large processors and retailers. Some authors indicate that the only alternative is for organic farmers to engage in on-farm processing and direct marketing. However, this option is not open to all farmers as it is strongly dependent on the labour availability on-farm and the proximity of a consumer centre. Based on interviews and on discussions following presentations in front of farmers, I doubt that farmers are as powerless as they tend to be depicted by scientists. Either farmers are complicit, i.e. it suits them to streamline their farm, focus on the legal requirement for organic certification and sell to large retailers. Or the farmers are actively shaping their options, but in ways not captured by researchers. Indeed, organic farmers have several options to 'bite back': searching for an alternative individually, cooperating with neighbouring farms or becoming active in an association. The presentation will focus on approaches farmers have implemented to 'work around' the aspects of 'conventionalisation' that does not suit their understanding of organic farming, emphasizing the need to revalue the heterogeneity of farms.

## **Brazilian multifaceted ecologically-based agriculture: Between conventionalization and agroecological principles application**

Lucimar S. de Abreu *Embrapa Environment, Brazil,*  
Stéphane Bellon *SAD Ecodevelopment Unit, INRA, France*  
Maria de C. F. Alencar *Embrapa Environment, Brazil*

In Brazil, recent legal changes have included several agricultural systems in the organic agriculture legislation, i.e., organic agriculture *per se*, biodynamic agriculture, permaculture, agroecology. However, some consider agroecology as being the umbrella for these ecological forms of agriculture, including organic agriculture. As a result, many initiatives were launched by various stakeholders: government institutions; research, training and extension organizations; NGOs or farmers groups. This debate illustrates the different interpretations of organic agriculture among farmers groups and researchers. Based on an analysis of documents (Brazilian congress proceedings and journal articles) as well as data from interviews, meetings and fairs, we analyse the current development of organic farming in Brazil. The conventionalization debate in Brazil is posed in specific terms, as organic agriculture is often interpreted as a method substituting conventional inputs and practices with alternative eligible practices. Other forms of agriculture are considered as genuine alternatives to conventional farming, i.e. based on redesigning farms and agroecosystems on the basis of new ecological processes. Organic agriculture is thus seen as favouring large scale producers, supermarkets (packaging enhancing visual quality of products) and export markets. As a whole, the discourse is not explicit in scientific publications, although the literature discussing the industrialization model of Brazilian agriculture is extensive. We conclude that in most cases research and field work does not address the development of organic agriculture in terms of conventionalisation, but as interpretations of organic agriculture and oppositions between alternative agricultural models.

## **Strengthening the organic farming development: From the conventionalisation debate to the sustainable perspective**

Jean-Luc Favreau, Mohamed Gafsi, Bernard Mondy and Agnès Terrieux *UMR Dynamiques Rurales, ENFA, France*

The current debate about conventionalisation thesis of organic farming reminds us of the importance of values and principles which are behind this type of agriculture: the search for a coherence connecting agricultural production, ecological management, ethics, and public health. But to address the topic of conventionalisation through the general principles of organic farming and its founders' intentions might put us at risk of being restricted to a narrow framework and thus missing important points of the debate. To avoid this risk, we suggest using a notion whose principles and objectives are close to those of organic farming, yet more global: sustainability. Rather than creating new indicators to estimate the conventionalisation, we assess the sustainability of farms committed to different degrees in the process of conventionalisation and compare them to others, which are using pioneering organic farming methods. To do this, we built and used an indicator system adapted to the specificities of organic farming. Results show various forms of sustainability, closely related to the forms of entrepreneurial farms and the ways they mobilize economic, social or natural capitals. This is illustrated by case studies of farms of the Region Midi-Pyrenees, in south-west of France.

## **Organic farming: An exclusive concept?**

**Heidrun Moschitz** *Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL), Switzerland*

Consuming organic products is often seen as part of political consumerism that may affect future society. It is thus relevant to reflect on who has the power to take part in, and who is excluded from such political action. Being a farming system which provides food mainly to the middle class of well-educated concerned consumers, organic agriculture could be seen as a highly exclusive concept. In the food supply chain, exclusion can work through the quality, the price and the location. All three ways seem possible for organic farming. First, it is a distinct quality, which, secondly, often is more expensive than conventionally produced food. In terms of location, organic products have become less and less exclusive during the past years as they are increasingly available in supermarkets. Organic shops or organic farmers' markets however remain exclusive shopping places that attract a specific clientele, not least of the above-mentioned 'well educated middle-class'. Exclusion can take both an economic and a cultural form. While being economically inactive (as e.g. unemployed) remains an important source of social exclusion, the cultural form becomes increasingly relevant. Thus, the organic sector attracts only a few consumers while many others do not feel affinity with its values and cultural identity. This contribution addresses the external effects of the value debate within the organic movement. It conceptualizes options for the organic sector to meet the argument of social exclusion without giving up its identity.

## **The end of organic consumerism: Strategic changes in the organic movement?**

**Matt Reed** *Countryside and Community Research Institute, UK*

Whilst accounts in the popular media have focused on the impacts of the global recession on the sales of organic products, there has been an increased questioning of the entire strategy of the movement within the British organic movement. A number of movements, arguments and interventions have come together to question the validity of advancing the movement's aims through a consumerism. Concerns about 'peak oil' and climate change, embodied in the transition movement point to the need for a rapid transition to another modality of organic farming. Whilst campaigns about the public health impacts of a diet constructed and dominated by oligopolistic food retailers have debated the role of the state in the provision of adequate food. After nearly thirty-five years of using organic products as a 'strategic intervention in the market place' the fragility of the strategy has become increasingly apparent. Although deriving from different perspectives these critiques question the use of consumerism as a form of political participation. Viewing the organic movement through the lens of social movement theory this paper explores the tensions within the contemporary organic movement as it debates the limitations of cultural politics.

## **Converting to organic farming – Needs of eco-extension in Germany**

**Henrike Rieken and Hermann Boland** *University of Gießen, Germany*

Currently the value of the organic food market in Germany is approximately 5.8 billion Euros and is rapidly growing. However, this growth is not reflected in the number of organic farmers. This imbalance results in a gap between supply and demand and in a high import quota. This is not in accordance with the principles of organic farming and is instead reminiscent of conventional agribusiness. A return to short-distance transport and local production would require more organic farmers in Germany. To facilitate this development, eco-extension is one key instrument. Currently eco-extension faces challenges with the

initial contact and acquisition of conventional farmers. But the diverse strategies within the agricultural extension sector of Germany (chambers of agriculture, government ministries, private individuals and organizations) and the limited importance of organic farming within conventional agriculture apprenticeship may hinder communication between farmers and eco-advisors. We thus focus on following questions: How to address conventional farmers and how to enhance their readiness to adopt the innovation of organic farming? We analyse how different actors assess the situation: apprentices, practicing farmers, and advisors. Moreover, it is of interest how the surrounding society (family, colleagues and villagers) – rather than government payments – influences the decision to convert or not to convert. We aim to develop a theory about farmer decision-making, taking into account the pre-decisional phases. Understanding farmer decision-making helps eco-extension to adapt its frameworks, particularly during the phase of initial contact.

### **Organification: *n.* the tendency to assume social and environmental orientations associated with organic production**

**Christopher Rosin and Hugh Campbell** *CSAFE, University of Otago, New Zealand*

In an interrogation of the concept of the conventionalisation of organic agriculture, Rosin and Campbell (2009) utilised a Conventions Theory framework to reassess the development of New Zealand's organic sector. Based on this assessment, the authors argued that 'organic' – as a quality designation attached to (or a valuation of) agricultural products – was best understood as an emergent set of conventions. As such, contemporary definitions (or 'tests') of organic are active elements of temporally contingent coalescences of agreements that help to coordinate social interaction in the global food system. These tests are further subject to constant challenge by philosophically committed organic and conventional interest groups that occupy roles throughout the social relationships that define agriculture (from producer to consumer, scientist to salesperson). An important implication of this approach is the acknowledgment of the multifaceted influence of the organic designation throughout global agriculture, including its influence on 'conventional' commercial agriculture. In this paper, we use the example of audited best practice schemes (developed as an alternative quality designation to organic) in New Zealand to argue that conventional agriculture has, to some extent, been subject to organification. We argue that the insistence on documenting more acceptable social and environmental practice in 'non-organic' production is largely the result of consumers' growing awareness of the shortcomings of conventional agriculture which are most starkly evident in comparisons with idealised organic practice.

### **“Almost organic anyway”: Case studies of low input farming in the UK**

**Lee-Ann Sutherland** *Macaulay Land Use Research Institute, UK*

This paper explores the meaning and implications of the descriptor 'almost organic anyway', as expressed by farmers in relation to organic conversion. Qualitative field research comparing organic and conventional farming cultures in England found a number of farmers who described themselves as 'almost organic anyway': operating extensive farming systems with few chemical inputs. Many of these farmers had no plans to undertake conversion, citing concerns about production standards, animal welfare, paperwork and the politics of the organic movement. Those who had converted identified the limited changes required to their systems as important motivators. The author explores the tissues underlying the 'almost organic anyway' descriptor, comparing conventional and organic farmer perceptions of organic farming practices, the economic and cultural contexts in which low input agriculture has emerged, and the degree to which conventional farmer responses to organic conversion subsidies differ from their responses to environmental subsidies. Findings suggest that widespread



misconceptions of organic farming techniques among conventional farmers augment long term cultural barriers to organic farm conversion. At the same time, perceived similarities in farming practices at small to medium scales suggest that current threats to maintaining organic farming standards come not only from commercialisation at large scale, but also from blurred distinctions at small and medium scales. Findings in this paper are drawn from the RELU funded SCALE (An Integrated Analysis of Scale Effects in Alternative Agricultural Systems) project

## **Belgian organic farmers' practices and perceptions between regulation, market and ethics**

*Audrey Vankeerberghen* *Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium*

This paper analyses the tensions between the regulation, the market constraints and the stakeholders' perceptions and practices in the Belgian organic food and farming sector. It is based on the ethnography of a case study: the re-negotiation of the Belgian regulation on organic chicken rearing. Certain aspects of the EU regulation on organic farming are left to the Member States to be defined, such as the age at which organic chickens are to be slaughtered. Unhappy with the market distorting effect of these variations in regulation, a faction of the organic chicken sector asked for a revision of the Belgian regulation. This revision occurred through an official dialogue with the organic farming movement and created a strong debate among stakeholders. Through a 14-months ethnographic fieldwork inside the Belgian organic farming movement, I describe the whole regulatory change process and consider the divergent opinion of the stakeholders involved: rearers, commodity chain managers, officials from governmental administration and organic farming organizations and unions. In doing this, I focus on the diversity of organic chicken rearers' practices, perceptions and motivations. I seek to understand how chicken rearers define their activity and how they build their self-identity by differentiating themselves from other farmers. I examine also how these perceptions and practices are embodied in the organic farming movement discourses. I explore, in particular, how various stakeholders build and use a common discourse of a sense of loss of ethics in organic agriculture and how this discourse is instrumentalised in the negotiations with opposed discourses.

## **Chicken à la organic: Case study on organic poultry production in the Czech Republic**

*Lukas Zagata* *Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, Czech Republic*

This work seeks to contribute to the discussion on the practical implementation of the organic values by exploring the situation in the Czech Republic. The empirical evidence is based on the explorative case study of organic poultry production ("bio eggs" and "bio chicken meat"). It is widely acknowledged that the current conventional poultry production is closely associated with industrial agricultural methods, which regularly result in various negative externalities. Altering this model, with regard to the transformative potential of the organic agriculture, therefore posits a clear challenge for contemporary organic farming. The goal of the study is to empirically investigate how this potential is implemented and to what extent results of the transformation meet the principles of sustainable food production. The case study tackles three inter-related questions: (1) what forms does the organic poultry production in the Czech Republic really take, (2) what factors shape these forms and (3) how do the particular realities contribute to sustainable food production and rural development. Results of the study contribute to the conventionalization debate by recognizing specific enabling/disabling factors of the organic food production and also by providing more nuanced perspective on contemporary organic sector, which challenges the limited focus of the conventionalization thesis.




# Conventionalisation? Organic farming bites back!

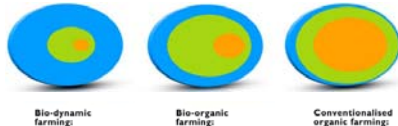
**Julien Blanc, Ika Darnhofer, Stéphane Bellon**

XXIII ERSR Congress, Working Group 2.6  
Vaasa, 18. August 2009






## Conventionalisation...



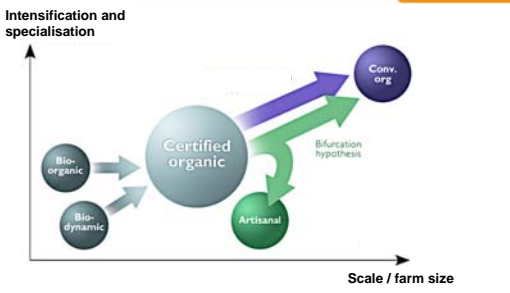
- Principles and values
- Ecology
- Economics

- Organic farming has changed
- Organic farming must go on changing!
- The question is:
  - How should it change?
  - Who should shape that change?


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## Diversity of current practices




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## Current issues in Austria

- How to strengthen principle-based organic farming?
  - as opposed to standard-based organic farming = ,OF light'
- How are ,pioneers' still managing?
  - Short food chains, speciality products
- What are the options used by farmers to fight against a reductionist understanding of organic farming?
  - Practices on individual farms
  - Cooperation between farmers (information exchange, machinery)
  - Cooperation along the food chain
  - Tug-of-war within organic farming associations
- Fair trade? (prices, quality of life/work)

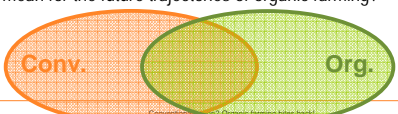


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## Structure of the Workshop

- 4 presentations (8:30 – 9:30):
  - 10 min. presentation
  - 3-5 min. for most pressing questions of clarification
- Break (9:30 – 9:45)
- Discussion (9:45 – 10:30)
  - The organic-conventional relationship: what forms of alternative agricultures 'compete' with organic farming? What does that mean for the future trajectories of organic farming?



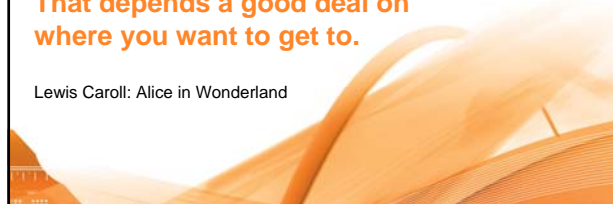
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**Would you tell me, please,  
which way I ought to go from here?**

**That depends a good deal on  
where you want to get to.**

Lewis Carroll: Alice in Wonderland





## “Almost Organic Anyway”: Case Studies of Low Input Farming in the UK



Lee-Ann Sutherland  
Macaulay Land Use Research Institute  
Aberdeen, Scotland



## The RELU-SCALE project

- **RELU: Rural Economy and Land Use Programme**
  - Funds interdisciplinary research projects between 2004 and 2011 in order to inform policy and practice with choices on how to manage the countryside and rural economies.
  - Multiple research councils and government rural research
- **SCALE: An integrated analysis of scale effects in alternative agricultural systems**
  - what causes organic farms to be arranged in clusters
  - Assess how the ecological, hydrological, socio-economic and cultural impacts of organic farming may vary due to “neighbourhood effects” at a variety of scales.



## Types of Farmers

- “Almost Organic Anyway”



## Types of Farmers

- “Almost Organic Anyway”
  - Conventional
    - Committed
    - Pragmatic
    - Environmentally conscious but not organic
  - Organic
    - Idealist
    - Pragmatist
- (Darnhofer et al 2005)



## “Almost Organic Anyway” Farmers

- “we didn’t have to fundamentally change the way we were farming. OK we got rid of the fertiliser spreader and sprayer, um...but we were still growing pretty much the same crops. We still had pretty much the same size flock of sheep and we increased the beef a bit. Um...and it just...you know it wasn’t too drastic a change, it suited this farm to do it and it wouldn’t suit a lot of others.”
- “Yeah you are almost anyway, you just don’t bother with that bag of fertiliser, you have to go and chop your thistles instead of spraying them, which I mean...some of the livestock here, we are not organic but we are not very many steps away. But um...if I see a bed of stinging nettles, or a bunch of thistles coming I am going to go out and spray them. Patrick Holden isn’t going to tell me how to farm.”



## Promotional Issue

- Definitions of organic
  - conventional farmers still think it just means not using pesticide, fertiliser and antibiotics
  - very limited knowledge of animal welfare issues, or environmental differences
  - Potential for ‘organic solutions’
    - New technology
    - Family farming
    - Valuable commodity



## Underlying Issues

- Changing dynamics in farming
  - low economic returns are making farmers rethink
    - movement towards lower input
  - regional suitability
  - path dependencies
    - dual choice for conventional in the south: contract or contract it out
  - new entrants
  - local food
  - certified food



## Surrounding Issues

- Credit crunch, food security, climate change



## Surrounding Issues

- Credit crunch, food security, climate change
- Consumer choices – ‘good enough’ food?
- Farmer choices – ‘good enough’ farming?
- Policy choices – ‘good enough’ agriculture?



## Surrounding Issues

- Credit crunch, food security, climate change
- Consumer choices – ‘good enough’ food?
- Farmer choices – ‘good enough’ farming?
- Policy choices – ‘good enough’ agricultural industry?
- Middle road or multiple paths to sustainable farming?

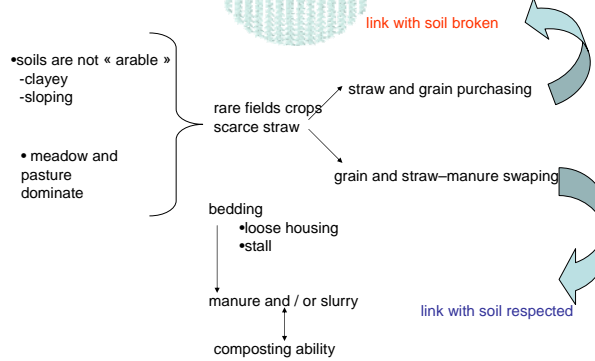
# self-sufficiency in organic dairy farms

## question and outlook

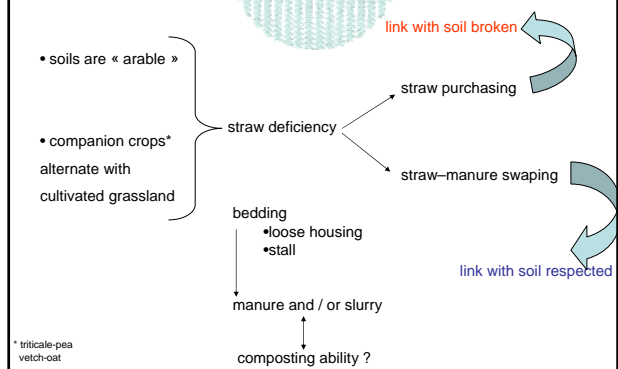
# viability and self sufficiency

- The organic grains and fodder are expensive
- If we assume that OF must be sparing with money and resources
- That's why the cattle breeder prefers to produce than to purchase them
- But...are the edaphic conditions right for produce these ingredients ?
- 2 main cases can be considered :
  - the farm in a cattle-rearing country
  - the farm in an under-cultivation country

## cattle-rearing country



## under- cultivation country



# questions

- trading partners
  - who : organic or conventional?
  - where : « fodder miles »
  - how : contract-based solution
- soil fertility maintenance
  - here and elsewhere
  - other organics matters : mowing , wood
- viability
  - added value products or commodities
  - farm designing
- breaking inheritance from conventional model
  - land or inputs productivity
  - size
    - building capacity
    - surface
    - milk quota
- deterministic view



## Organification

Chris Rosin and Hugh Campbell  
CSAFE  
University of Otago



## Broad terms

- **Conventionalisation (both academic and popular use)**
- **Bifurcation (Constance et al 2008 identify 10 different binaries that are used in describing bifurcation)**



- **Pragmatic versus Pure**
- **Conventional versus Artisanal**
- **Agribusiness versus Lifestyle**
- **Domestic/Small scale versus Export/Large**
- **Chemical/Lite versus Movement**
- **Productivist/Reductivist versus Holistic**
- **Lifestyle versus Conventional**
- **Philosophical versus Pragmatic**
- **Organic Lite/shallow versus Deep Organic**
- **Old Guard versus New Entrants**



## Rosin and Campbell 2009 – beyond bifurcation

- **Only two trajectories?**
- **Relations between organic and other 'environmental' systems?**
- **Convention theory suggests that bifurcation is only deploying two of the many 'worlds of justification' in agricultural practice.**



## This paper – Beyond Conventionalisation?

- **What is conventional?**
- **Does it have a coherent inner logic as a meta-category (eg. like 'capitalism')?**
- **If it doesn't, then is the term conventional bundling together disparate dynamics that may have no relationship to each other?**
- **In which case, stop using 'conventionalisation'.**

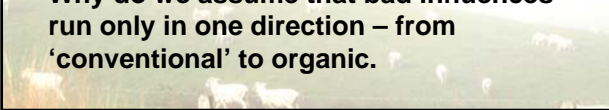


## Organification?

- **Literature using 'conventionalisation' seems to pose only one direction of influence.**
- **Is it possible to think of what the opposite to conventionalisation might mean?**
- **Does organic agriculture have key sites and dynamics of influence on non-organic agricultural practice?**

### **Three reasons to re-think our assumptions.**

- **Conventional is a useless word that obscures massive heterogeneity of agricultural practice.**
- **Why only two trajectories in a binary?**
- **Why do we assume that bad influences run only in one direction – from ‘conventional’ to organic.**



## AGROECOLOGICAL TRANSITIONS IN BRAZIL

Lucimar Santiago de Abreu  
EMBRAPA MEIO AMBIENTE  
Stéphane Bellon  
INRA Ecodevelopment Unit  
Maria C. Alencar  
EMBRAPA MEIO AMBIENTE  
(08/2009)

### OUTLINE OF THE PRESENTATION:

- 1) Present situation of OF in Brazil
- 2) Development of OF in some Brazilian States
- 3) Case studies: in two Brazilian States (Amazon, São Paulo, ) and OF present challenges and social justice

Conclusions

### 1. PRESENT SITUATION OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE IN BRAZIL

- Late formal recognition (December 2003 "Organic Law"), which integrates under one single "umbrella" term Organic Agriculture several production, marketing and certification patterns (Agroecology, Permaculture, Ecological Agriculture, Regenerative Agriculture, Low Input Agriculture, Biodynamic Agriculture, etc.)
- In 2008: among 6.5 million hectares of cultivated area, 5.7 million hectares (88%) are occupied by certified wild collection (Brazil nut, açaí, pupunha, heart of palm, rubber, fruits and other agroforestry products, mainly in Amazon)
- Brazil is currently the tenth largest world producer in OF&F

### 1. Map of Brazilian regions

- NORTH REGION
- NORTHEAST REGION
- CENTER-WEST REGION
- SOUTHEAST REGION
- SOUTH REGION

Organic products:  
coffee, honey, milk,  
meat, soya, heart of  
palm, sugar, poultry,  
vegetables, fruits  
(pineapple, banana,  
orange, mango, etc).



70% are exported  
certified products

Region	State	Area	Number of Producers	Value (R\$ mil)
North	AC	Acre	7	12,128
	AP	Amapá	1	4,807
	PA	Pará	3	3,709,718
	TO	Tocantins	1	1,049
Northeast	BA	Bahia	30	12,200
	CE	Ceará	101	4,217
	MA	Maranhão	10	10,400
	PE	Pernambuco	214	3,710
Center-West	DF	Distrito Federal	388	107
	MS	Mato Grosso do Sul	11	1,800
	MT	Mato Grosso	30	817
	RO	Roraima	1	302
Southeast	ES	Espírito Santo	10	1,000
	MG	Minas Gerais	101	12,200
	RJ	Rio de Janeiro	10	1,200
	SP	São Paulo	10	1,200
South	PR	Paraná	10	1,200
	RS	Rio Grande do Sul	10	1,200
	SC	Santa Catarina	10	1,200
	Total		10,800	4,000,000

Data 2005

### 1. THE POTENTIAL OF OF&F for FAMILY FARMERS IN BRAZIL

- Importance of family farming in Brazil : 4.8 million farms
- This concerns 77% of active population in agriculture
- Meaning 12 million persons
- 30.5% of national agricultural area
- 70% of food production

(Source: Family Agriculture National Program, 2007)

20,000 organic producers (most of them are family farmers)

### 2. OF&F DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS IN TWO BRAZILIAN STATES

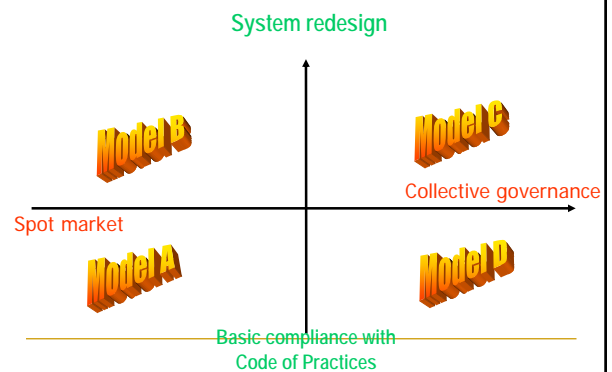
- Would Organic Agriculture correspond to a suitable paradigm for small family farming ?
- If yes, which are the ecological, moral and ideological orientations ?
- Can family farming benefit from the development of conventional outlets in the roganic sector?



## 2. DEVELOPMENT OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE IN BRAZIL

- The coexistence of different forms of production and organization entails different agricultural styles, sustainable or in ecological transition.
- Several trends of thought; a same trend can correspond to different social categories.
- Complex networks of inter-relations
- Difficulties in the identification of unique thought actors, except with "pioneers" and militants
- Different concepts of OF and market: from input substitution to system redesign (ESR)

## Four models for OF&F



## 3. Case studies: Ecological experiences in Western Ouro Preto (Rondônia, Amazon) and Ibiúna (SP)

### Methods:

national literature review (journal "agriculturas", congresses in agroecology, tracking conventionalisation and associated terms as key-words)  
reconstruction of trajectories of the conversion processes, based on interviews with:

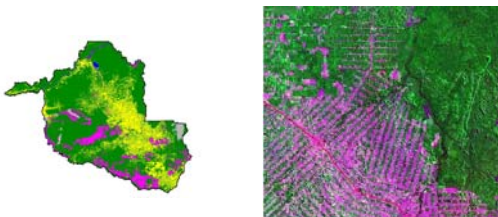
- local stakeholders.
- political representatives (councilmen) of the local population,
- environmentalists

## 3. Case study 1: Ecological experiences in Western Ouro Preto (Rondônia, Amazon)

- Various certification systems (certified by third party; in groups or individual or participative, or without certification!);
- It occurs in several points of amazonan territories, independently of government support;
- But almost every time associated to social movement (MST/Ambiental) and supported by non governmental organizations.
- Experiences that receive the institutional support from Ministry of Environment (public policies/ Recognition of Environmental Services) and Embrapa research projects.

## 3. Deforestation: Ouro Preto do Oeste, Rondônia, Amazon

Integrating agriculture in forest areas versus designing agroforestry systems?



## 3. Case studies: Ecological experiences in Ouro Preto do Oeste, (Rondônia, Amazon)

**Local issues at stake:** Search for autonomy and transition towards agroforestry systems

Nowadays, there are payments for environmental services via social contract between the government and local communities

### What are eligible environmental services?

- - Restoration of degraded areas and/or from forest covering
- - Resources conservation: soil, water, biodiversity
- - Fire risk reduction
- - Elimination of agrochemicals use
- - Carbon sequestration Exchange of energetic matrix

### Can they support OF dynamics?

- Selection or combination of measures likely to contribute to project implementation at farm level, consistent with local dimension

### How to assess social justice?

- Use of indicators: income, labor, education, housing, health environment or living conditions.

3. Case studies: Ecological experiences in West Ouro Preto, (Rondônia, Amazon)

Benefits of transition process, after 7 years (1/2):

- Increase in the **number of species** (more than 60 cultivated species) - Agroforestry systems with more than 35 species, among them forestal fruits, fruits & vegetables, fire wood and medicinal plants. Recovery and revalorization of creole seeds (40 varieties). Maintenance or integration of animal raising;
- Strategies for **agroecosystem fertility management**: high level of internal resources utilization and low dependence on external inputs leading to increased technical autonomy;
- Generation of **diversified income** and higher **food security**; Corn, coffee, cacao, fruit pulps, heart of palm, vegetables, cassava and agroforestral products represent 68% of the family income
- Other products generate **non-monetary benefits**, as they produce inputs and residues utilized in other activities enriching food quantity and quality (and providing medicinal herbs).

3. Case studies: Ecological experiences in Ouro Preto do Oeste, (Rondônia, Amazon)

Benefits of the transition process, after 7 years (1/2):

- Environmental improvement of the agroecosystems - Soil quality (earthworms and insects) and landscape renewal
- Incorporation of a **production planning system** on product organization and commercialization;
- New values: valorization of the knowledge on environment and woman and children innovation capacity.
- Strengthening of **cooperation** relations among neighbors and relatives - man power economy and equipment acquisition
- Management of natural resources and social practices dynamizing local economy knowledge dissemination - income circulation within the community.
- Economic stability and leisure. Health improvement due to food quality and Phytotherapy use;
- New knowledge acquired in communitary net - health and environmental young agents.
- Different forms to valorize a same product - Animal or human consumption, for utilization either for input or for sale - system stability
- Seed commercialization at local market - farm income source - sold or exchanged
- Production commercialization directly to consumer - local market
- Manufacturing processes and insertion into international market known by Alter Eco (IBD)

3. Case studies: Ecological experiences in Ouro Preto do Oeste, (Rondônia, Amazon)

Challenges and barriers

- Differentiated formation and technical assistance (technical staff learning with farmers; + farmers dedicated to support)
  - Consumer involvement/local market
  - Differentiated financing policies, keeping into account the specificities of ecological production;
  - Local logistic development for sale and to prioritize sales in institutional markets
- Leading to a minimum social risk of re-conversion !

For the expansion of activities : increase in labour demand, animal raising diversification - equipment necessity and compatibility credit with system management



3. Case study 2: The community of Ibiuna, São Paulo

Social benefits 10 years after conversion:

- Group of pioneers - Income increase
- Average number for farmer in activities organic: 04/person/minimum plus external labor
- Residence acquisition, before that they lived in barracks
- Personal computer use for production planning
- House electric equipment acquisition, etc.
- Health improvement generally speaking;

Environmental benefits 10 years after conversion

Water, soil and air quality improvement  
This indicate biodiversity increase  
Protection of riverside forest areas.



3. Case studies: The community of Ibiuna, São Paulo

What are the Challenges?

- The intensive systems of vegetable production in small structures put into question the continuity of this production model;
  - Marketing problems (low Farms gate prices, uneven distribution of added value);
  - Besides the production income fall down, fall down of the prices and offer increase.
- This do not indicate generally speaking, improvement in the relation among the producers - Intensification of commercial concurrence, offer increase and the consumption increases, but there are many consumers who can not pay for the high prices.

Social justice is not guaranteed: The small producers survivorship is very endangered and the de-conversion risk appears.



Possible scenarios for organic agriculture in Brazil

- i) Agribusiness, strongly external market-oriented and certified: Sugar, soya, fruits, etc;
- ii) Family farms. Sales for wholesalers, or cooperatives: Vegetables, coffee, oranges and fruits in general.

However specialization and input substitution can occur with coops;

- iii) An alternative path? : Family farming production inspired by agroecological model.

- Local market (farmers, direct sales and local stores). Inclusion in production and marketing local networks, strengthened by social relationships;
- Organic or participatory or ethic certification;
- Production diversity (vegetables, fruits, grains, forest products, farm manufactured products).
- Support to OF dynamics with the recognition of environmental services
- On-going research work on scientists' trajectories and publications

Thank you very much for your attention!



"The health of soil, plant, animal and man is one and indivisible" Lady Eve Balfour (1943)

**Embrapa**

*Meio Ambiente*

## Belgian organic farmers' practices and perceptions between regulation, market and ethics.

Audrey Vankeerberghen  
PhD Student - Aspirante FNRS  
Laboratoire d'Anthropologie des Mondes Contemporains  
Université Libre de Bruxelles

### ■ Case study : the redefinition of the slaughtering age for organic chicken in Belgium

#### ■ Background :

- Belgium : 81 days (no list)
- Several EU countries : 70 days (slow-growing strains defined in a list)
- variations in regulation among European countries → market distorting effects

### ■ Organic chicken rearing in Belgium :

- mixed-farming
- "small breeders" : not affected by market distortion
- "new breeders" and chicken companies : affected by market distortion

### ■ Chicken chain managers ask for a revision → demand submitted to the Regional Department of Agriculture

### ■ Consultation Committee on Organic Farming

#### ■ Actors involved in the process :

- representatives of the organic sector, officials from the Regional Department of Agriculture + experts invited, chicken chain managers invited
- EU regulation and Regional regulation
- "concepts" : organic farming principles, quality of taste

#### ■ The Committee : meetings (face-to-face) and electronic communication (emails)

### ■ From 81 to 70 days :

- market distortion versus organic taste quality

### ■ Organic taste quality :

- Red Label versus differentiation with standard meat

### ■ A test contested

- Lack of neutrality and professionalism

### ■ broader debate on OF, redefinition of its principles and limits

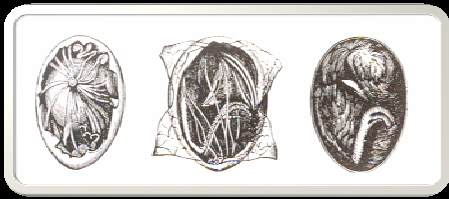
- natural cycle / no import/export / no combination of OF and non-OF on the same farm / no low price commercialization for the supermarkets / illegitimate request
- realism / meeting consumers' demand / market competition

### ■ the new rule : 70 days for a precise strain

### ■ qualification : reminding and reinforcing the organic principles

- definition of a slow growing strain
- the balance between feed production and animal consumption

- Legal rule = result of the process, reflection of the divergences
- Companies managers “partly won”
- The Consultation Committee :
  - building organic farming principles and identities
  - defining legitimacy



## CHICKEN À LA ORGANIC

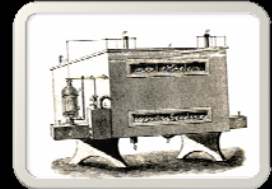
Lukas Zagata  
Czech University of Life Sciences Prague

## CASE STUDY ON ORGANIC POULTRY PRODUCTION IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Why is organic chicken missing in stores?

Production of organic chicken is a challenge to organic sector

Goal was to explore farm practices of poultry producers



## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Organic farming as a representative of *alternative food networks*

Organic agriculture obtains a *transformational potential*

Current scholarships on organic farming shows its different forms



## RESULTS

26 farms – three groups of producers

Highly concentrated sector



PROCESS	INDICATOR	SMALL (65%)	MIDDLE (25%)	LARGE (10%)
Specialization	Egg production without meat production	+	+	++
	Chickens not hatched on farm	-	--	++
Appropriation	Most feed come from external sources	--	--	±
	Use of final hybrids	-	--	++
Intensification	The lifespan is strictly limited	--	±	++

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Organic sector is becoming differentiated –

*is there several “organic farming(s)”?*

Different forms differently accord with the model of sustainable food production –

*what are the general limits of transformational potential or organic farming?*



XXIII European Society for Rural Sociology Congress

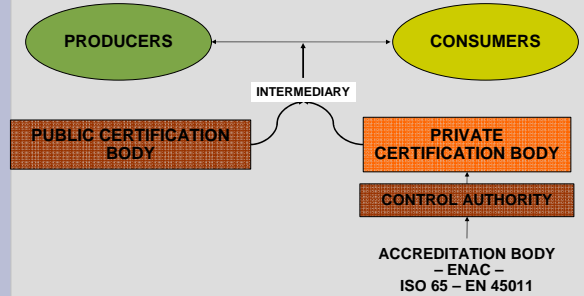
VAASA, 18 AUGUST 2009

THE EUROPEAN CERTIFICATION SYSTEM: PROMOTING CONVENTIONALISATION BY PENALIZING DEEP ORGANIC APPROACHES

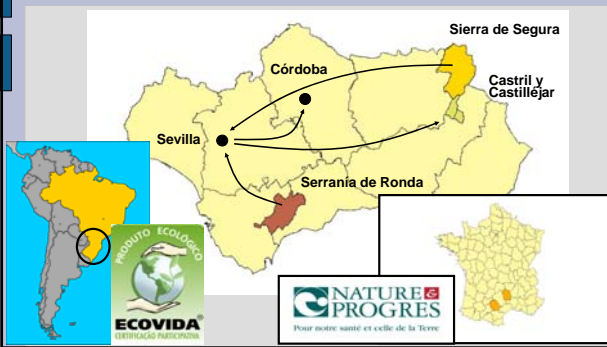
Mamen Cuéllar Padilla  
Eduardo Sevilla Guzmán

ISEC – CORDOBA UNIVERSITY - SPAIN

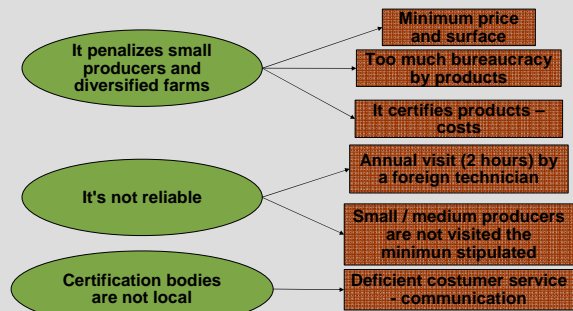
Third party certification (ER 834/2007)



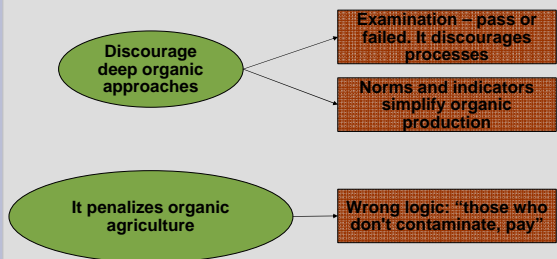
Building a Participatory Guarantee System in Andalusia



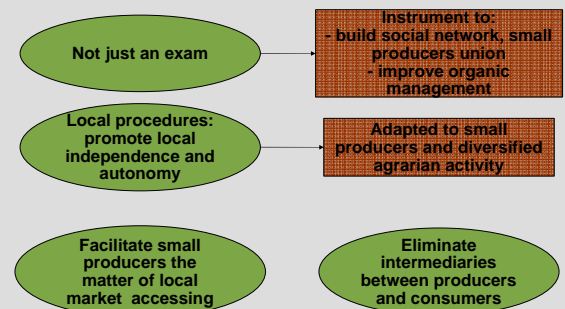
Third party certification (ER 834/2007) Critiques



Third party certification (ER 834/2007) Criticism



An agroecological guarantee



**THANKS!**

VAASA, 18 AUGUST 2009

**THE EUROPEAN CERTIFICATION SYSTEM:  
PROMOTING CONVENTIONALISATION BY  
PENALIZING DEEP ORGANIC APPROACHES**

[ma2cupam@uco.es](mailto:ma2cupam@uco.es)

ISEC – CORDOBA UNIVERSITY - SPAIN



## Converting to organic farming – the needs of organic extension in Germany

"First, I think I'll have to get some advice in order to know exactly what a conversion means. Then I'll think about the conversion phase."  
(Farming apprentice, Germany)

XXIII Congress of ESRS  
Vaasa, 17 - 21st of August 2009

**M. Sc. agricultural economics Henrike Rieken**  
University of Giessen  
Institute of rural sociology and extension

## Contents

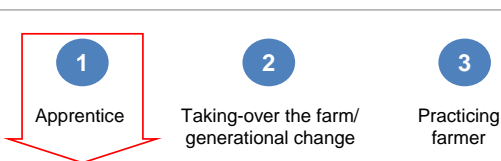
- Current situation in Germany:  
Not enough organic operations → High import quota!
- Not in accordance with the principles of organic farming

### Purpose of the study

As seen from the "organic-extension" point of view:

- **How to reach** conventional apprentices and farmers?
- **How to enhance** their readiness to adopt the innovation of organic farming?

## Problem: different stages and target groups



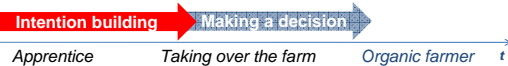
### Next generation of potential organic farmers:

Organic farming: progress or regress?  
→ How to address them?

## Influence of knowledge

### 1st phase: Knowledge

- Socio-economic characteristics,
- Personality variables,
- Communication behavior. (ROGERS 2003)



## Conventional apprentices

### Preliminary results

- Environmental protection is no reason for conversion.
- A lack of knowledge keeps prejudices against organic farmers alive.
- Communication behavior of the farm manager influences the intention building process of the apprentice.

## How to reach the target group?

### Suggestions:

- Emphasize economic more than environmental impact.
- Bringing together with organic farmers: group advisory.
- Train the communication skills.

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**Thank you for your attention.**

## **Funding**

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<http://www.schaumann-stiftung.de>**

## Organic farming – an exclusive concept?

- > Heidrun Moschitz, Research Institute of Organic Agriculture
- > ESRS Conference, Vaasa, August 2008

www.fibl.org



## Organic development

- > **Organic farming is further developing**
  - > Surface, farms, markets
  - „We are not as naive as in the beginning when we believed that it was all for saving earth“ (Jacqueline, 18 May 2009)
- > **Development of organic sector involves a widening of the scope of actors (from farmers to consumers)**
- > **Within organics this development is discussed in the framework of conventionalization etc.**
  - > Is such an internal debate sufficient to contribute to the current development?

www.fibl.org



H. Moschitz, ESRS Conference, Vaasa, 2009

## Two aspects of organics: 1. ‚Movement‘ organics

- > **Value debate: conventionalization etc.**
  - „[Organic] does not fit to the philosophy of these discounters. An organic product is something precious, [...] the belief behind [organic products] is a high valuation of nature, people, and animals“ (Cornelia, 19 May 2009)
- > **Social exclusion**
  - „[The motto is to] keep the mercedes star shiny. Not in the pub 'round the corner, but in the garage with the marble floor“ (Martin, 19 May 2009)

www.fibl.org



H. Moschitz, ESRS Conference, Vaasa, 2009

## Two aspects of organics: 2. ‚Individualistic‘ organics

- > **Personal motivations for consuming organic**
  - „I would like to eat healthy, also as a ‚normal [person]“ (Monica, 18 May 2009)
- > **The movement’s values are not important**
  - „I do not have to go to an organic shop [...] I would like to buy [organic] in the shop where I go anyway. And this is not asking too much.“ (Monica, 18 May 2009)
  - „I just want to have the right to buy organic products in [a discounter]“ (Annemarie, 18 May 2009)

www.fibl.org



H. Moschitz, ESRS Conference, Vaasa, 2009

## Further questions

1. **Is there any way of integrating the internal value debate within the organic movement and the attempt to develop the organic sector?**
  - > Can ‚movement‘ organics and ‚individualistic‘ organics meet?
2. **What could a meeting ground between „core organic values“ and „broad society“ look like?**
  - > Shopping places
  - > Public procurement
  - > Media
  - > ...

www.fibl.org



H. Moschitz, ESRS Conference, Vaasa, 2009

ESRS Congress– August 2009 “Conventionalisation”

### Back to the future: long-term trajectories in organic farms in the South of France

S. Bellon, S. Poudou, N. Sautereau

Inra SAD UR 767 Ecodéveloppement, Site Agroparc, 84914 Avignon Cedex 9, France



## Issues and objectives

OF&F at a (new) turning point in its evolution (newcomers, conversions, development, transfer of farms converted by « pioneers »)

- Considering conventionalization as a process, what trends can be observed in organic farm dynamics beyond conversion *per se*?
- Conversion entails changes in relationships with nature, technology, consumers: relevant scales (spatial and time spans to consider)?
- Contribution of pioneers to OF development?

## Context

⇒ Drôme = leading French department in OF:

- 615 farmers
- 24 078 ha
- 10,7 % of UAA

⇒ All agricultural productions represented

⇒ Availability of material from “pioneer” studies in the 80’s (social and technical sciences)



## Methods

⇒ 21 pioneer organic farms studied : 30-year evolutions (from end 1970’s-early 1980’s to late 2000’s)

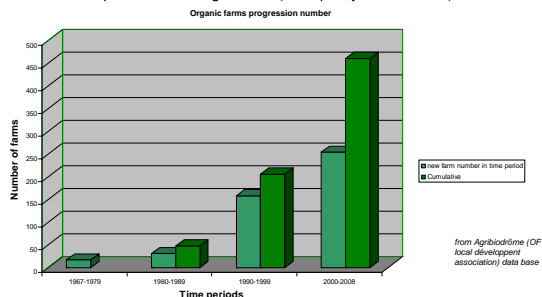
Interviews and systemic approach in each farm



## Results

### • History of OF, national and local, as a framework

- ⇒ From marginalization to recognition and extension
- ⇒ Development of local agriculture (with quality identification)



## Results: general trends (1/2)

### Diversification vs Specialization

- Diversification of productions and activities (11 farms)
- Specialization of productions and activities (7 farms)
- Conservation of the original mixed crop-livestock system (3 farms)

⇒ Opportunities

- AOC area
- Touristic area
- Direct marketing
- Association with others farmers

⇒ Motivations

- Installation projects
- Diversification of incomes
- Reduction of available labor force and work time

## Results : general trends (2/2)

### Autonomization vs Integration

⇒ Input management (*farm "upstream"*):

Agroecosystem approach (interactions between techniques and crops)

→ Farms #10 to #21

Higher levels of external inputs (fruits and wine productions)

→ Farms #1 to #9

**Key evolutions:** technical combinations with synergistic effects; use of organic fertilizers (instead of calcareous soil amendments)

## Results: trends translation at farm level

### • Autonomization vs Integration

⇒ Changes in processing activities and marketing strategies (*farm downstream*)

- **Processing** of farm productions → 12 farms

#### - Marketing

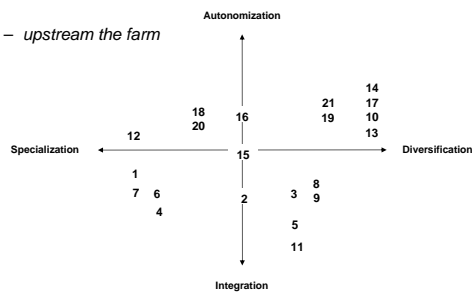
- Direct marketing: contact with consumers (*single selling outlet in farms 13 & 17*)

- Gross market: development of organic trade marks and rise of demand (*single selling outlet in farms: 1, 4, 7, 11 & 20*)

⇒ *Combination of both marketing strategies in 14 farms*

## Results

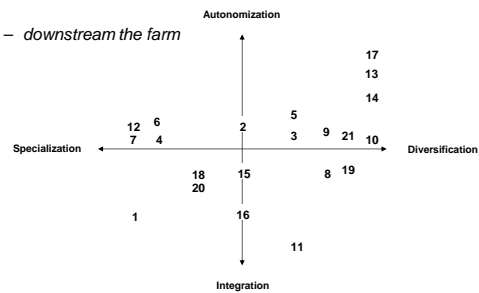
– *upstream the farm*



## Results

### • Typology: 2 schemes

– *downstream the farm*



## Results

### • Half of the farms (9/21) in the same quarter upstream & downstream

– **C:** farms 10, 13, 14, 17, 21 ⇒ diversification and autonomization

– **D:** farms 8 & 11 ⇒ diversification and integration

– **A:** only farm 1 ⇒ specialization and integration

– **B:** only farm 12 ⇒ specialization and autonomization

4 among 8 farms in mixed crop-livestock follow the double trend diversification – autonomisation.

## Results

### • 'Switching' farms (in two different quarters)

– **B → A:** farms 18 & 20

⇒ Input wise autonomization and marketing integration

*Abandonment of animal husbandry, specialization in field crop production (also farms 15 & 16, but same production system)*

– **D → C:** farms 2, 3, 5, 9, 19

⇒ input integration and marketing autonomization

*Fruits wine and vegetables farms, production diversification*

– **A → B:** farms 4, 6 & 7 ⇒ dependence on external inputs and marketing autonomization

*Specialization in nuts productions ('AOC' quality label)*

## Results

*Upstream autonomization (vs integration) linked with production systems*

For instance, specific inputs management with permanent crops

*Downstream autonomization more related with others factors:*

*Installation projects*

*Geographical opportunities*

*Reduction of labor force*

## Conclusions

- Maintenance of farms - with entry to farming - and of the canonic mixed-crop livestock model
- Diversity of trajectories, at least in two directions: autonomy and diversification
- Such evolutionary paths can reflect properties to acquire within a mid-term project
- Increasingly a collective dimension, beyond past individual approaches and direct sales
- Reference frameworks, public policies and technical assistance should be adapted accordingly
- Possible bifurcation between ecology and technology?

## Strengthening organic farming development: From the "conventionalisation" debate to the sustainability perspective

J.L. Favreau, M. Gafsi, B. Mondy, A. Terrieux

National School of Agronomic Training (ENFA)  
Research Unit « Dynamiques Rurales », France



## Background

- Rapid growth of OF
- Great demand of organic products
- Social expectations (environment, social role)

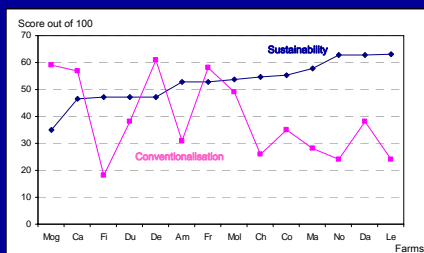
Major and strategic change of OF

Risk of conventionalisation

Recognition and sustainable alternative

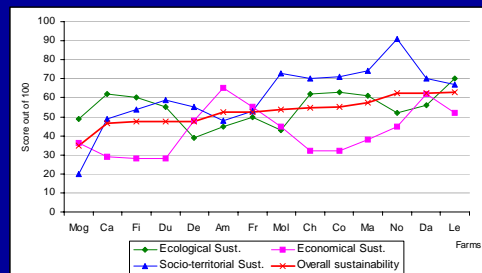
1. Is the OF a sustainable agriculture?  
*How to measure ?*  
*What are the key factors?*
2. What link conventionalisation -

## Results (1)



- Farms have an average sustainability (53/100)
- Opposing tendencies between conventionalisation and sust.
- Conventionalisation does not always reduce

## Results (2)



- Good level of socio-territorial sustainability (61/100)
- An average ecological sustainability (55/100)
- An economical sustainability rather weak

## Discussion - conclusions

### 1/ Sustainability:

- Good socio-territorial score ← social and professional recognition
- Globally a same average sustainability, but a lot of strategies (entrepreneurial forms) of farmers
- Weak economical sustainability : troubles of OF (low prices, lack of better organisation of the collecting and marketing, ...)

### 2/ Link conventionalisation and lack of sustainability is not systematic




# The End of Organic Consumerism ?

Strategic changes in the organic movement ?

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# Premises

- Organics as cultural social movement
  - Aimed at cultural values
  - Targeted at individuals
  - Decentralised & participatory
  - Education, awareness raising
  - Indefinite time frame
- Previous phases; network, science focus & current strategy of consumerism.



# 4th phase

- Consumerism - a stalled strategy?
  - This is not a niche market. It is a strategic response to unprecedented threats our food systems are facing
  - (Patrick Holden, Soil Assoc.2009)
- Peak Oil - Climate Change - Cuba - TT
  - The transition initiatives currently in progress in the UK and beyond represent the most promising way of engaging people and communities to take the far-reaching actions that are required to mitigate the effects of Peak Oil and Climate Change (Rob Hopkins, Transition Towns)



# Indications

- Journalistic interventions
  - I don't blame her...but I'm f\*\*king angry. I'm f\*\*king angry and I don't know who with or what with (Jamie Oliver - The Ministry of Food 2008)
- IFOAM definitions
  - Organic Agriculture should build on relationships that ensure fairness with regard to the common environment and life opportunities
- Limits to a cultural movement
  - Towards a political movement?
  - Focused on govt policies, institutions, centralised, lobbying & elections, bounded campaigns



## Questions

## Suggested questions

- 1/ In some situations, traditional and organic agricultures are considered as close to each other. What are the facilitating conditions and the challenges of a formal transition (for producers) towards organic farming and its recognition (for consumers)?  
This issue is perhaps particularly relevant for new EU member states
- 2/ More specifically, one can wonder why OF is whether criticized in some countries and absent in debates with related alternative agricultures, whereas it is eligible (see Brazilian case) and cornerstone of regulations, or assimilated to input substitution?  
More generally, can the arguments supporting OF&F be fine-tuned when knowing the criticisms against OF (see paper on organization, « organic matters »! And recent debates following FSA review)

- 3/ Facing an inflation in the number of qualification of « alternatives agricultures », what is the role of OF&F and isn't it superseded by competing proposals? In other words, could not OF be standardized, to the benefit of other « scientific » patterns (i.e. agroecology)?  
In what conditions can OF&F maintain its pioneer role?
- 4/ What oppositions or differences can be identified in literature and practices among several candidate agricultures? For instance oppositions between:
  - Concepts (science) vs principles (agriculture)
  - Environment/ agriculture
  - Ecology/ agronomy
  - Transition/conversion
  - Economy/ market
  - ...

- 5/ How to integrate the various dimensions of sustainable development in OF&F, namely social processes? In other words, do other agricultures exhibit a better integration of such dimensions or what are the assets of OF&F in this respect?
- 6/ What are the properties of organic systems/ models than can be fostered to ensure their evolution and maintain their innovative capability, in order to think « post-organic »?
- 7/ What are the evaluation criteria for organic performances, beyond usual ones that often prioritize yield and its variability?
- 8/ What are the pathways which enable imagining evolutions in OF1F, beyond the formal conversion period?
- 9/How to enhance comparative approaches, whether within OF&F (diversity of expressions within a country and among countries), beyond federative approaches tending to reduce such diversities?

## WG 2.6: Conventionalisation? Organic farming bites back!

Convenors: Ika Darnhofer and Stéphane Bellon

### Summary of discussions

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Session: The organic-conventional relationship

There are a range of alternative agricultures that compete with organic farming (for farmers, consumers and policy support), e.g. agro-ecology, fair trade, eco-labels (food miles, carbon foot print), local food, origin labels (PDO, PGI), industry standards (GlobalGAP). This diversity is not least influenced by regional conditions (soils (e.g., composition, slope), predominant animal housing systems (path dependency), density of organic farms in the region, availability of local markets, necessity to integrate trees, etc.

For farmers: option of low-input farming, i.e. ‘almost organic anyway’ or ‘green conventional’ as a way to avoid the cost-price squeeze and close nutrient cycles to avoid ‘fodder miles’.. many benefits do not require organic certification. For policy makers and consumers: other labels might be ‘good enough’.

Each of these production methods (and food ‘qualities’) change over time, and influence each other’s trajectories, as well as organic farming’s future trajectories.

We need to be aware that the term “conventionalisation”, while useful in every-day language, is not theoretically useful, as it is not internally coherent. There are different internal dynamics, different logics to different developments that are referred to as ‘conventionalisation’ (see publication by C. Rosin and H. Campbell, 2008 in J. of Rural Studies). Conventionalisation refers to a number of trends that are not necessarily related to one another, it is not one coherent dynamic. Rather, it is a layered phenomenon with different trajectories and a range of unrelated developments.

There is not ONE right trajectory for organics to evolve, there will be different qualities, different styles of production. We need to learn to capture this diversity. The inherent tension between a ‘systems redesign’ and a ‘compliance with standards’ approach to organic farming will remain; quantity vs. quality; volume vs. value.

Organic quality: mostly relates to conventional standards (appearance, nutritional content). Cf neoliberal discourse: quality must be auditable so as to be marketable = translated into prices. No organic-specific qualities, such as socio-economic criteria (e.g., fair trade, quality of life). Consumers believe (and are, cynically led to believe) that these criteria are part of organic production (see example of the UK: negotiations between fair trade and organic broke down in animosity 2-3 years ago). And what about fair prices for consumers? Is in opposition to premium branding! Interestingly: GlobalGAP does include social criteria (worker welfare, local cultural heritage, no child labour)

Role of industry, of retailers as drivers of change in organic production. Role of the language retailers use when promoting organics.

Need to be aware of an ‘Eden narrative’ that is often associated with organic farming: there was once purity in organic farming, but we now live in a fallen world. This narrative avoids the reality of needing to make compromises and to adapt. Organic farming (esp. the principles) can be seen as a utopia: what we aspire to be, even if we do not live up to it. This utopia is politically powerful!

Take a post-structuralist approach to studying the changes within organic farming: as an assemblage, a historical development, a temporary configuration. This approach shows that there is not necessarily a coherent system dynamic in organic farming. Rather made up of multiple contingencies. Might allow to better understand heterogeneity.

Just as organic farming was disruptive to the agricultural (modernist) discourse, so conventionalisation is disruptive of the organic farming discourse. Thus seen as a

provocation, a challenge to established wisdoms. Might explain why there is little discourse within the organic community about conventionalisation.

In the 1980s organic farming had a big influence on environmental certification, through having the knowledge of alternative production methods. But currently organic farming has lost touch with the current issues, it does not offer a solution to current problems. It seems organic farming is out of step with the time. Has it ossified? Is there a lock-in tendency? It seems to have lost its responsiveness (e.g. not tied to fair trade or local food). An example might be the rigidity of its certification system (very rigid compared to GlobalGAP, where the criteria that will be audited are reviewed every year by a technical committee).

We know very little about the 'almost organic' groups of farmers, esp. those who are not audited. Unclear if it is a group that will disappear (e.g. because it is not ideologically driven, e.g., made up of old, retiring farmers or hobby farmers), or if it is a group that will grow (as providers of local food).

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Session: Struggling with implementing the organic principles and values

Presentations showed good case studies illustrating the challenge:

- BE: Role of large producers in changing the standards of organic production: achieved a reduction of the min. age of chicken from 81 to 70 days, at least for a certain breed of chicken.
- CZ: Influence of regulations such as veterinary and hygienic requirements for eggs: must be sorted and perfectly clean, which requires expensive machinery and thus pushes towards larger producers to benefit from economies of scale (path dependency).
- ES: third party certification does not reward those farmers who go further, does not encourage local cohesion and knowledge exchange. In Spain certification cost depends on the number of products produced, thus penalises diversified farms. Committed farmers might have to build a dual system (such as Nature et Progrès in France)
- GE: Young farmers might be interested in organic farming, but it is difficult for them to find reliable information or opportunities for apprenticeships

Chicken production is the most industrialised animal production system in Europe, often vertically integrated. Very difficult for organic farmers to have other breeds that are more suited to organic production methods (most conventional hybrids are actually suffering when they are kept for 80 days). Interesting what arguments are used (and thus accepted as valid) when discussing a change in the organic standards (see example of BE). Animal welfare rarely invoked as a value per se, but often instrumentalised for other ends (leads to a better product, a better price).

Role of the government in influencing the trajectories of organic farming: can foster or stop a development, e.g. through procedures for changing standards, offering organic extension services, including organic farming in the curricula of vocational schools for farmers. The state has a large role on how the debate is staged. What role does the EU play in the homogenisation of organic farming? Various technologies of governance can be found (inclusion/exclusion of participatory processes). Pattern of institutionalisation is different in different states of the EU, some have a more consensual, others are more confrontational political traditions.

Organic farming was transformational at a global level (created production and consumption of environmentally friendly products). But it has not created a space for citizenship, mutuality, reciprocity, dialogue, democracy. In organic discourse: keep talking about consumers, not about citizens. A participative guarantee system (supported by IFOAM) requires engaged citizens. Regions are free to recognize this system as valid (just like the third party certification).

Limited role of organic farmer associations in supporting participation, or participative guarantee systems. Some may have much at stake and not be interested in a change (e.g.

some of the top officials have large farms, providing inputs for supermarkets... they may fear that they could loose in a change)

There has been some discussion of diffusion of innovation, but what generates innovation? Where are the people who will innovate and thus change organic farming? Change might come in waves. Those who brought about the change in the 1980s-90s might feel they have done enough. Where is the new 'rebels'? Does neoliberalism constrain our imaginations about how food systems could work? Local food movement seems to be more innovative than organic farming (which is more associated with big business!). Are farmers even interested in alternatives to the current developments in organic farming?

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Session: Development pathways: searching for alternatives**

Representing pathways, with their potential "drivers": Diversification (in its various forms) vs specialisation; integration vs. striving towards autonomy (from input markets, and in processing, marketing). Clarifying the relationships between organic farming and sustainable agriculture (how organic farming and food contributes and what dimensions of sustainable agriculture challenge organic farming)

What is the goal of organic farming, what is it trying to achieve? How to measure its 'success'? 1% of consumers for 40 years of efforts, is that 'success'?

In the 1990s the organic movement has chosen consumerism as a strategy to advance its goals. Has been lifted by the neo-liberal wave and has benefited from it. It is now difficult to disentangle from this alliance. Drawback: now only address people as consumers. But if want to sell a product, it limits the communication compared to addressing people as citizens! Often assumed that only consumers (i.e. those who buy organic foods) have something to say about organic!?

Organic farming has no social identity, no social strategy. It does not speak to the citizen, it offers no answers to political issues of the day. Organic movement will need a shift in strategy if it wants to remain relevant.

Organic food is often said to be consumed for individualistic reasons (what's in it for me?) which follows the neoliberal discourse. This is challenged if individual benefits are contested. Some are purchasing organic foods to advance reasons/values created by the movement. These values are used for marketing and communication. There is often a deliberate confusion: advance values through consumption? More generally, development pathways can't be described as a linear process starting with individuals and ending up with movements, organisations or institutionalisation. Conversely, institutions can also support individual conversions.

Tesco sees organic as a pillar brand (similar for Sainsbury who uses organic for 'greening' its image). For many supermarkets, organic is a brand or a product, not a production system, not a quality. Need to be aware that those who control terms (e.g. defining organic as a 'brand') also controls the discourse. A 'brand' obscures all the processes of production. Sainsbury speaks of the 'halo effect': organic produces a glow that covers all the other products green.

Organic movement may need a new strategy to face the current feeling of urgency (cf. climate change, fear of ecological collapse in 10-15 years, thus need to do something now!). By introducing a time pressure, it changes the discourse.

The strength of 'conventionalisation', is that it provided a narrative that included the whole food chain, albeit "with an indefinite time frame"... We need another model to explain what is going on, a model that also includes the whole food system and takes time into consideration.

**Thank you for the very stimulating discussions!!**