

Values of organic producers: Results of focus groups



organic
Revision

Susanne Padel
University of Wales Aberystwyth



Outline

- Context in the project
- Approach
- Values of producers in relation to 4 principles
- Areas of conflict
- Scoring 1st IFOAM draft
- Conclusions



Context in the project

WP2 Identifying and integrating basic ethical values of organic agriculture in the development of EU Regulation 2092/91

- Review historical and present material (Jointly with IFOAM task force)
- Philosophical case studies of interplay and compromises between conflicting values
- **Empirical enquiry through focus groups**
- Develop procedure for balancing of values



Objectives

- Identify values of organic producers through focus group
- Explore value differences
 - between early and later producers
 - between producers and other stakeholders (“From fork to farm”)
 - between European regions.
 - Only partly completed



What are focus groups ?

- Qualitative research method
- Frequently but not only used in market research
- Intensive discussion with 6 to 15 participants
- Focusing on the subject using discussion guide
- Moderated by an experienced person
- Participants can influence direction, add new ideas
- Recorded and transcribed
- Analysis through coding, computer software



Approach in this project

- Focus groups in 5 EU countries
 - Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Netherlands and UK
 - Experienced and newly converted organic producers
 - Researchers, consultants, and IFOAM EU group
- Discussion guide includes personal motives and discussion of collective values
- Comparison between groups, regions and with other stakeholders



17 Producer groups

all countries

- 5 CH, 2 IT, 3 AT, 3 UK, 3 NL
- Established and recently converted
- Various farm types and enterprises
- Substantial income from farming
- Both farming and non-farming background



Grundwerte

persönliche allgemeine

Für mich die
Ursprünge von Landwirtschaft

gesunder Boden - 3
Pflanzen - Tiere
Mensch.

Reaktion
Markt-/Kunden
Bedürfnis

Beziehungs
qualität sozial 4
Nachhaltigkeit

gemeinsame
Vermarktungsstruktur

Agronomische
Herausforderung
- neue Herausforderung
Neue Konzeption

ökologisch 6
Nachhaltigkeit

ökonomisch 3
Nachhaltigkeit

Unabhängig-
keit 1

- Umstellung war kein
grosser Schritt

natur-
gemäss

Personalität

positiv
Volksgesund



Results: Values of producers

- Grouped by IFOAM principles
 - Health
 - Ecological
 - Fairness
 - Precaution/care
- Additional values mentioned by producers
- Areas of conflict



Values related to PRINCIPLE OF HEALTH

Important to all producer groups

Values mentioned include

- **Health**
- **Food quality**
- Cycle of health (soils, crops, animals, people)
- Better taste
- Safe food
- Responsibility for public health
 - Consumer health
 - Using organic food in Schools and Hospitals



Values related to ECOLOGICAL PRINCIPLE

- **Environment**
 - Minimising negative impact on environment
 - Bio-diversity promotion & conservation
- **Sustainability**
 - Responsibility for future generations
- **Closed cycles**
- Lower energy/resource use
- Genetic diversity
- Self-regulating system
- Self sufficiency



Values **directly** related to FAIRNESS PRINCIPLE

- Financially sustainable
 - Fair price
 - Farm diversity/mixed enterprise structure
 - Food security and good yields
- Social sustainability (social well-being/quality of life)
 - Opportunities for both genders
- Fair trade/opportunities for third world



Values **indirectly** related to FAIRNESS PRINCIPLE

- Own Independence (Self-reliance)
 - Flexibility
- Local/regional production
 - Unclear how local is local?
 - Affordable for consumers
 - Direct links with consumers
 - Low food miles



Values related to PRECAUTION PRINCIPLE

Not in all countries obvious associations

- Non-polluting (3 countries)
- No GM (2 countries)
- Inform about risks
- Education
- Related issues covered under health and environmental issues

Other values important to producers



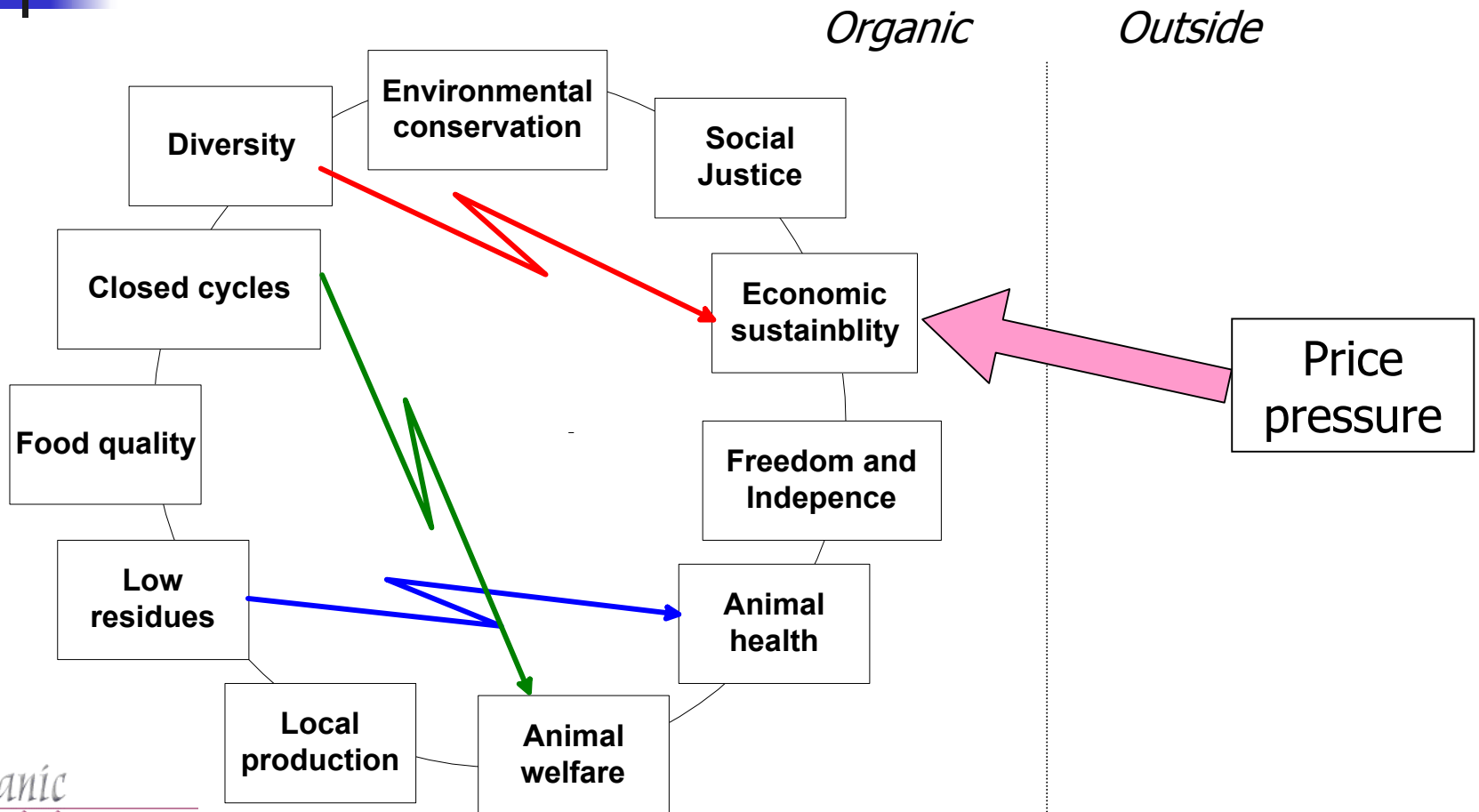
- Job challenge and satisfaction
 - Positive future, positive attitude
 - Be connected to the land (lifestyle)
 - Innovation (developing new ideas)
- Farming with nature/naturalness
 - “Looking after god's creation” (AT, CH)
 - Connect to soil/land/growing
 - “Organic is a lifestyle” (especially UK, IT)



Other values continued

- Animal welfare
 - Ethology
 - Animal health
 - Animal integrity
 - Animal nutrition

Examples of conflicting values for producers





Internal value conflicts related to HEALTH Principle

- With ecological principle
 - Higher farm diversity > greater farmer workload and lower health?
- With fairness principle
 - Higher yields > lower product quality?
- With animal welfare and integrity
 - Treatment of suffering animal, residues?
 - Negative impact of animal welfare on human health?



Internal conflicts related to ECOLOGICAL principle

- With fairness principle
 - Higher production but lower biodiversity?
 - Longer transport but better farm income?
- With animal welfare
 - Damage/leaching from outdoor runs & pastures but higher freedom of animals?



Internal conflicts related to FAIRNESS principle

- In general
 - Farm income and survival with other values
- Within fairness principle
 - Local production and international trade
- With health and precaution principle
 - No use of copper, lower production, higher consumer price, lower residues in products and environment?
- With animal welfare
 - Good welfare but lower farmer income?



Scoring of 1st IFOAM draft

- First draft proposed 6 principles
- Producers were asked to score according to importance (1=important, 5=not important)
- Rank order based on average scores

Health	1.3	Lower in IT
Soil	1.5	Higher in UK
Ecological	1.5	
Livelihood	1.6	Lower in IT
Animal welfare	1.6	Higher in UK
Precaution	1.8	Higher in IT



Conclusions

- Convergence of producer values with 4 proposed IFOAM principles
- Financial sustainability (maintaining income) is important to most producers, but should not dominate over all other values
- Producers express important values not fully covered:
 - Own independence and personal and job-satisfaction
 - Animal welfare, health, integrity
 - Biodiversity and conservation
 - Local production and regionality
 - Integrity of the system



Challenges for IFOAM

- Are the principles too general to express range of values held in the movement?
- Are the principles too broad?
 - For example fairness relates to farmers, farm workers, consumers, third world, animals
- Do the principle help in solving conflicts
 - Conflicts with external values?
 - Internal conflicts between organic values?



What will happen next

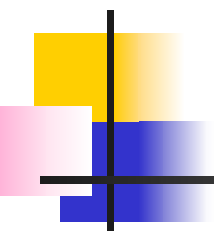
- Further analysis of data, including contrast with consumer values
- Final report on Focus groups to EU (May 2005)
- Input into development of procedure for balancing conflicting values and proposal how basic principles can be included in the EU regulation



Acknowledgements

- Thanks to the EU Commission for funding of the project (Contract NO FP6-502397). The views expressed are those of the author, not of the commission
- Thanks to all participants in the group focus group discussions
- Thanks to all involved in developing the procedure and running running the groups

Thank you for your attention!





Other difficult questions?

- Growing in soil or substrate?
- Local or organic inputs?
- Global or local trade?
- Social justice?
- Use of conventional breeds and seeds?
- Use of hybrid varieties?
- Ban on use of human faeces as soil fertilizer?



Consumers first associations with „organic“ (Source: OMIARD)

- **Healthy**
 - contain little or no pesticides and other chemicals
- **Fresh**
 - unprocessed products like fruit and vegetables, milk and dairy products, meat and bread
- **Tastes good** and/or different
- **Locally** produced
 - farmed naturally, from small companies,
- **Animal** and **environmentally friendly**

But also

- **Expensive** and “elitists”
- **Poor appearance**

What does organic mean to consumers?

(Source: OMIARD)

- Buying organic is related to a sound and aware lifestyle
 - However, a great number of participants do not see this as feasible for all consumers
- “Organic” is related to fresh produce
 - Processed or convenience foods (e.g. soups, tinned vegetables, jams, spreads) and (unhealthy) treats for special occasions are not thought of as organic products
- Price is main reason for not buying, followed by poor availability and lack of variety